

The Great Hallow'een Trial.

BY BARNEY O'REGAN.

Macintosh' Corner was in a furore of intense excitement, such as had not been known for years, and compared to which the stir caused by the famous school meeting, the history of which I gave my readers several months ago, was as the pattering of a summer sun shower on the rose leaves to an equinoctial storm which tears to ribbons everything that is loose. The fever of excitement was almost equal to that which follows a new discovery of gold on the Klondike. Hallow'een had come and gone, and among the many tricks performed by the boys was one more heinous than it had hitherto been supposed the rising generation of The Corner, mischievous as some of them were, dared attempt, though to the outside world it was not such a terrible affair after all, not quite so bad, at least, as some of those "delicious massacres" which are giving several of our Canadian towns quite a name and "fame" these days.

Big Rory Macintosh' dog had been spirited away, and neither hide nor hair of him had since been seen, and Jamie and Bonnie Rafferty, sons of Michael Rafferty, and Thaddy Morrison, son of John Morrison, had been arrested for the crime, chiefly on the information of the complainant's son, Sam Macintosh, the most detested boy in the neighborhood. Their trial was to take place before John McGillivuddy, the only Justice of the Peace at The Corner, who had been appointed only a few days before, and who was a regular electro plated representative of the majesty of the law, considering himself the embodiment of Queen, Lords and Commons, so far as Macintosh' Corner was concerned. Yet, with all his exalted ideas of his own immense judicial importance and power, McGillivuddy was a good-hearted fellow, and was at the same time endowed with no little hard-headed common sense, a commodity which often stands even a magistrate in better stead than that profound knowledge of the law which some of the most bumptious of the profession assume to possess.

The trial was about beginning, and the big front room of the Squire's residence was crowded with the people of The Corner, including those directly interested in the case, and a number who came merely as spectators, as fun was expected, and "wigs on the green" were quite within the range of possibilities. The conversation was almost entirely confined to a discussion of the peculiar phases and local bearings of the case, and it was at times of a somewhat heated nature, as the partisans of the parties concerned vigorously argued and debated the pros and cons.

As the clock struck two, "Squire" McGillivuddy, who was resplendent in a great expanse of white shirt front and a collar that bordered him a good deal, rapped on his table and commanded—"Order in the Court." Silence ensued.

"There is a case to be tried before me to-day," said the Squire, after due deliberation, and examination of the legal documents before him, and I find it is the most important case that ever came before me. (Remember it was his first). It's the case of big Rory Macintosh, an' that same Rory's a dom bad tempered man, foreinst these young lads here, Jamie Rafferty, Benny Rafferty and Thaddy Morrison, and decent b'ys them Raffertys are too, for they come of good old stock, for taking his dog on Hallow' Eve, an' I hope that same dog'll not come back again, so that my sheep will be safe. The information," continued the Squire, as he once more examined the papers, "is all right, as it's sworn to before me, John McGillivuddy, Justice of the Peace in and for Prince County, God Save the Queen. The first witness on this case is Sam Macintosh, and he's none too sweet a young cub at the best of times. I wouldn't trust him out of mischief as far as I could throw a bull by the tail. I'm told he's a grand hand to work, at meal times, but mighty careful of himself all the rest of the day. Oh, he's a nice boy, ha! ha! ha! Samuel Macintosh, take the stand."

"Before you proceed to swear the witness, Your Honor," interrupted a young lawyer, rising and addressing the court, "I wish to say that I represent the complainant in this case."

"And I," said another young aspirant for legal honors, "represent the accused."

The Squire paused, looked both sprigs of the law over from head to foot, deliberated a moment or two, scratched his head, and said, "Look here, gentlemen, you may be smart men and good lawyers, but I have no doubt you are, but this court is well able to take care of its own business, and to look after itself without any squabbling and hairsplitting lawyers to bother it, and when this court wants a lawyer it'll send for one."

"But, Your Honor," began the plaintiff's attorney, you will allow me for one moment—

"No," interrupted the Squire, "I'm dom sure I won't allow you to take up the valuable time of this court even half a minute. I'm able to run this case, an' I don't want any lawyers asking dom fool questions. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down and keep quiet, or I'll have you both put out."

"But, Your Honor," ventured the opposing attorney, "who is to pay us for our trouble in coming here from the city, if we are not allowed to plead for our clients?"

"You should have thought of that

that of affirming."

The Squire gazed, open-eyed and open-mouthed, at Barnasconi during this harangue, and when he finally recovered from his astonishment, he broke forth—

"Look here, Barnasconi, you're a dangerous man to be at large in the community, and I've a dom good notion to send you to the penitentiary, 'pon me soul I have. Any man that talks like you do about the sacred scriptures can't give any evidence in this court of Macintosh' Corner, before John McGillivuddy, Justice of the Peace in and for Prince County. I wouldn't believe a dom word you'd say, even if I knew it to be the truth myself. Sit down, for I won't take your evidence. Good heavens, to think that we have such men in the community?"

Barnasconi sat down, not at all displeased at being relieved from giving his evidence, for he was anxious to retain the good will and patronage of both parties to the suit, which he feared he might not be able to do if he told all he knew of the affair, of a good part of which he had been an eye witness.

"Mary Ann Macintosh," called the Squire, "take the stand."

Mary Ann, a plump and rosy-cheeked lass, came forward and was duly sworn, and instructed to "kiss the buk" and tell the truth, like the "dacent girl" she was.

"Now, Mary Ann, what do you know about this case?"

"Well, sir," began the witness, nervously, "it was Hallow'een, and Jack Rafferty and my sister Sally were getting ready to play some trick on Mr. Barnasconi, as she expected that night, and I heard Sally say that if Barnasconi made any fuss about it, she'd get Sam to split him right from his head to his toes with the potato drag—"

"Get to—out of the court, you dom faggot," roared the Squire, wrathfully. "You're a nice girl, ain't you, to give such evidence as that in the Queen's court, an' strangers here, too. Get to blazes out of this, you dom huzzy." And Mary Ann had to leave the stand, mortified and indignant beyond the power of words to express, but with the sympathy of the spectators.

No more witnesses for the prosecution were forthcoming, and so Squire McGillivuddy called upon the three trembling and anxious prisoners to produce evidence in their own defence. They had no witnesses to prove an alibi or otherwise clear themselves of the charge, and therefore the Squire, ignoring the technicalities of the law as at that time constituted, put them on the stand themselves, and swore them in a bunch, ending the formula thus—

"Kiss the buk, Jamie, and mind you tell the truth, you little devil, kiss the buk, Bonnie, and be dom careful what you say an' how you say it; kiss the buk, Thaddy, till we take the measure of a young Hieler. Now look here, you lads," he continued, after they were duly sworn and admonished, "this is a bad case, a mighty bad case, and it looks, from the evidence given by freckled Sammy Macintosh, very suspicious like that you b'ys stole big Rory's dog. In fact I think myself you did, but I guess it was only a lark, as I know you are no dom scallawags. But I would like to know mighty well what became of that same dog. Come now, Jamie, tell us the whole story. Don't be afraid to tell the truth, it'll be the best for you, my b'ys."

Thus adjured and encouraged, Jamie began, and after gulping down a few half sobs, and gaining confidence in himself, and assisted by an occasional question from the Squire, gave the following narrative of the affair:

"Please, sir, we took the dog all right, but just for a Hallow' Eve trick. We didn't mean anything wrong, or think any harm would come out of it. We wanted to tie him on top of Owen McGarrigle's flat-roofed kitchen, so as to give Jack a fright when he got back from Macintosh', and we knew the dog would scamper home as soon as he was let loose."

"Yes, yes, but what became of the dog after you tied him there?" asked the Squire who had become greatly interested, as Jamie hesitated and paused a moment.

"Please, sir, I was just coming to that. Thaddy and I got him up on the kitchen roof all right, and tied him to the chimney, but when we started to get down he howled so loud that old man McGarrigle came to the door to see what was the matter, and we had to go back and lay quiet with the dog, till he went in the house again. We had to do this three or four times, till we didn't know how to get down without the old man seeing us. At last Benny came up the ladder and whispered to us to throw the dog down the chimney and give the old folks a right good scare as they were sitting by the fireplace. We waited him, and then we dropped the dog down the chimney, and that was the last Thaddy and I saw of him. Benny can tell you the rest of it."

"All right, Jamie," said the Squire, who was now, like all present, intensely interested, and on the *qui vive* for the denouement. "Come now, Bonnie, tell us what happened next."

"Well sir," began comical Bonnie, who was almost hysterical between hardly suppressed laughter at the remembrance of the affair, and tears at the supposedly painful situation in which he stood before the offended majesty of the law, "I was watching in the window, and when the dog struck the fire, after Jamie and Thaddy dropped him down the chimney, he let one terrific yell, and sprang from the fireplace right through the window, taking out sash and all, and then he made off towards the river as hard as he could go, and we never saw him after that. I guess he scared the old folks pretty badly, for they both yelled millia nurther and the names of more saints than I can remember, and rushed out of doors and up the road like mad,

praying like everything as they went."

The roars of laughter that shook the Squire's house might have been heard for a mile, and none laughed more loudly or more heartily than the august representative of the majesty of the law himself. Here was the solution of a great Hallow'een mystery, which no one had hitherto even dreamed of connecting with the disappearance of Rory Macintosh' dog. Owen McGarrigle and his wife had that evening gone, scared and trembling and breathless and pale, to the Squire's, and in less than two hours the story was all over Macintosh' Corner (and the broken window was sufficient proof, if any indeed were needed to support the word of Owen McGarrigle, who had never been known to violate the truth in all his long life) that the devil, in the shape of a huge black animal, with eyes of fire and breath of brimstone and flames belching from his mouth, had come down McGarrigle's chimney and bolted out the kitchen window, and disappeared in lurid flame and smoke, leaving a trail of hades in his wake, and the McGarrigles had positively refused to re-enter their house until the demon was fully exorcised according to the prescribed rite.

"Now, look here, my lads," said Squire McGillivuddy, when "order in court" was finally restored, and vainly endeavoring to throw sternness and terror into his voice, "you have been charged with taking big Rory Macintosh' dog; you have had a fair trial before me, John McGillivuddy, representing Her Majesty the Queen as Justice of the Peace in and for all that tract, piece or parcel of land known as the County of Prince County, to wit; and you have been found guilty, in fact you have confessed it yourselves, though I must say that was a mighty good one you played on old McGarrigle, ha! ha! ha!" and his deep laugh reverberated through the house. Suddenly he checked himself, sternly commanded "order," and made a pretence of gravely consulting a formidable looking law book, after which he resumed—

"Well, my lads, I ought to send you to the penitentiary for seven years apiece—"

Hereupon the culprits looked very doleful, but his next words reassured them somewhat: "But I won't do that this time I guess big Rory's dog wasn't much good anyhow—"

"He wasn't worth five cents—let the boys go," broke in Rory, growing generous and mellow hearted all at once, to the surprise of all present.

"You shut right up, Rory, an' don't interrupt this court again, or I'll send you to the penitentiary, selpmegod I will. The dog, as I said before, was no good, and I intended to have him killed as a nuisance, by virtue of my office as Justice of the Peace. But the law, my b'ys, must be sacredly upheld to the very letter. The sentence of the court is, therefore, that you three lads be fined two dollars an' a half each, and if you haven't got the money to pay it, each of you come and give me two days thrashing next week, and I'll call it square an' mark it off the buks, but if you ever come before me again, I'll send you to the penitentiary for fourteen years, selpmegod I will. Court's adjourned."

Cheers loud and loud, led by big Rory himself, with a tremendous "tiger" as Rory's Tiger bounded into the room, bearing no marks of injury beyond a patch of scorched hair and coming from no one ever knew where, fairly lifted the roof off the house, and then the people dispersed, only to reassemble, a couple of hours later, and make the Squire's hospitable dwelling shake again with one of the greatest and merriest dances in the history of Macintosh' Corner. "But that is another story," as Rudyard Kipling is wont to say, of which I may tell you some other time.

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