

*The Priest and the Miser*  
by Andrew Forrester, Jr.

IN a portion of the great metropolis, described in the Postmaster-General's map of London as the North Western district, is a congeries, or braided mass, of narrow streets, squares, courts, and alleys, the dingy and dilapidated houses of which are thickly tenanted by men, women, and children, who (dock labourers and Spitalfields weavers excepted) perhaps find it harder to make "both ends meet" than any other corresponding number of the Queen's subjects. The neighbourhood is one in which the O'Mulligan of Bally Mulligan (Mr. Thackeray's acquaintance) might hope to find lodgings suitable to his means, if not to his taste; but any gentleman residing thereabout might also be reasonably excused if he did not press his hospitality upon his friends, and preferred to give his address at "the club." Some of my readers may have heard of the district I refer to—a few may know it—under its title of Somers Town.

In a room in one of the best houses standing in one of the best streets of this quarter, described by otherwise conflicting testimony as "a miserable garret," a few years ago, a lone, unfriended old man was slowly dying. As I am in truth, not writing romance, but history in the garb of fiction, it may be just as well to be a little precise and minute, and say that this narrative opens on the 28th of February, 1847. It was Sunday morning. The old man's name was Carré—Maturin Carré. He was seventy-seven years of age, and looked quite as old as his baptismal register indicated. He was a native of France, but had been many years in England. He came to London from Jersey, and arrived on that speck of debatable geography from the South of France.

People who knew him best, with one exception, commiserated him most. His age, and the external indications of poverty, elicited many delicate attentions from the needy Irish devotees who frequented the Roman Catholic chapel adjacent to his home, and at the same time it screened him so well from the notice of the richer members of that communion, that neither the lawyer who will figure in this story, nor the priest who afterwards made oath that he had been for three years preceding his death Carré's spiritual director, was apparently at this exact moment aware of the existence of such a person. It is presumed that he never went to the confessional, and it is said that he attended the chapel more for the purpose of obtaining material relief than spiritual guidance or consolation.

A mystery surrounded the man which nobody cared to penetrate. Rumours had been heard about a marriage to which he had been a party—a child, and a faithless wife; but these reports died away almost as speedily as they were uttered. His principal means of subsistence were unknown. It was thought he earned a few shillings now and then by teaching his native and other languages. He had, in fact, been in his earlier days much employed in that way, and until utterly prostrated by the illness which had brought him into contact with the grim fiend, he made a little income by teaching.

The reader may also perhaps be concerned to know that Maturin Carré was a political refugee. His exile was caused by his attachment to the fallen fortunes of Charles X. He had many years received a pension from a fund which had been raised for the sustenance of the refugees of that party. At one time it was forty pounds a year, but it had dwindled to fifteen pounds.

When his usual reticence forsook him, he would tell stories about Robespierre and the Reign of Terror, and there is no reason for supposing him guilty of untruth when he asserted that, if he had been content to serve under the merciless dictator, he might have played an important part in the terrible drama of the French revolution, instead of being compelled to find safety in a miserable exile.

The interesting rumours about a wife and child were, however, pure fictions. It is doubtful whether that repulsive nature had ever been softened by the gentle emotions of love. He was a bachelor, and for a long time had uniformly betrayed an aversion to the society of women. It is said that as long as possible he performed every domestic office with his own hands, and his bed in Somer's Town had never, as far as he knew, been smoothed or adjusted by fairy or crone in human shape. His fare was the simplest and cheapest which markets that contain no luxury offer to a purchaser. If the reader will imagine the most wretched condition that solitary old age could bear, he will have a true conception of the existence led by Maturin Carré.

I described the old man as dying. He was conscious of the fact, but anxious, as nearly all men are—not excepting the most forlorn and woe-begone—to prolong the remnant of his days to their utmost span. Christian charity is, after all, not quite so rare as it is often said to be. Medical aid is, at all events, within the reach of the poorest and the most obscure. The doctor's advice, and his physic, are to be had without pay, by everybody who chooses to ask for them on these terms. Maturin Carré was not a proud old man. He asked for the assistance of a doctor, who belonged to the church he attended, and that gentleman was directed to visit the exile. He called to see him very early on the morning of Sunday, the 28th of March, 1847.

The miserable patient lay stretched on a sort of box, rather than bedstead. When the surgeon, after early mass, looked in to see and prescribe for his necessities, the landlord of the house, who showed the pious son of Esculapius to the garret, was present at an interview between them, and noted their conversation.

Maturin Carré, it was as obvious to the shrewd nonprofessional eye as to the most skilful in diagnosis, had not long to live, and no landlord could be altogether indifferent about the fate of a dying lodger, so that we may excuse his presence as a third party on this occasion. It is to be observed, however, that the hopeless sufferer was not at all desirous to partake of those spiritual consolations that I have been told the Roman Catholic faith can bestow at such a time more liberally than a Protestant creed.

It was not the doctor's first visit to Carré, and the man of physic had previously recommended that a priest should be called in; but the advice was more unpalatable than the contents of his bottles and pillboxes. On the Sunday morning I speak of, the surgeon repeated the obnoxious suggestion. Bronchitis had almost done its work upon a feeble system. Drugs might as well have been thrown to the dogs, or into the common sewer, as down the wheezy throat of the expiring champion of decayed Bourbonism. The only real means of relief to the sufferer were not kept in gallipots, or the drawer of a surgery. The diet suited to a man *in extremis*, Carré had no visible funds to purchase, and the doctor had no money at his disposal to expend in obtaining them.

“Well, well,” said the doctor in French—after feeling the pulse of his patient—for he was a Frenchman—“I must tell you, I think you are a little worse than you were the day before yesterday. Shall I ask Father Andrews to call and see you?”

The old man, with an effort, shook his head, and muttered a word of dissent.

“I will send you another draught,” rejoined the surgeon, who observed by the shock his former advice produced, that the approach of death had not excited the latent religious feelings of the patient.

“I think our friend had better let me ask Father Thomas to call,” in a few moments the doctor said, turning his eyes in the direction of the landlord, as if to obtain some further influence from this direction, and in the hope that it might be a personal objection to the priest whose name had been first mentioned, which led to the rejection of his ministrations.

The landlord expressed his concurrence; but the lodger spasmodically ejaculated “No!” and fell backwards.

It was quite plain that M. Carré had no wish to avail himself of the comforts of the faith he professed. May I not say it is certain that he had no faith in the efficacy of the religion he professed! Is it not reasonable to suppose that the dying man had for some time, and up to this moment, been an unbeliever in all religions, and although not unconscious that the hand of death was upon him, its approach had not broken through the gloom which unbelieving selfishness, and the lack of sympathy from and towards his fellows, had engendered during his isolated existence? Without extending hypothesis, it may surely be written down as a truth, that Maturin Carré was not, on that Sunday morning, entitled to be regarded as “a good Catholic.” So thought the Doctor; and although he was not, consequently, disposed to withdraw from attendance at the old man’s bedside, or inclined to then resent the ungracious disbelief in his creed, by stopping the supply of physic, he saw it was useless on this occasion to follow up what had all the appearance of undoubtedly kind, disinterested, and seasonable advice to call in either of the priests he had named.

In a few minutes, after the patient had somewhat recovered himself from the shock produced by this conversation, the doctor withdrew.

As he descended the stairs he observed the landlord close upon his heels. This person had left the garret with the surgeon in order to perform a simple office of courtesy by opening and closing the street door upon the beneficent visitor. As he did so they exchanged a few words.

“Poor man,” said the surgeon, “it’s little or nothing I can do for him; he wants port wine and arrowroot, and such things; but it’s impossible he can get them. It’s a melancholy case.”

These fragmentary sentences took the landlord by surprise, but why they should have done so is yet unaccountable. All we know is, that the reserve of the auditor forsook him, and that he yielded up at once a real or pretended confidence, which he had long treasured as a secret of value.

“Oh no, sir,” somewhat hastily replied the landlord, “he’s got plenty of money. Order what you think he wants; he can buy anything.

A critical person, or one skilful in detecting hidden thoughts and half-concealed emotions, might possibly have observed a slight change pass over the countenance of that unimpassioned French Roman Catholic charity doctor. The landlord noticed nothing of the kind. The surgeon shook his learned head, as if he doubted the accuracy of the intelligence. He went on his way, and the landlord closed the door.

The words of the landlord appeared to have had a rather grotesque or eccentric influence upon the mind of the doctor.

While it seemed impossible to procure those small luxuries he prescribed wine and arrowroot; but when told they were at the command of the patient, this medical genius, judging by his conduct, deemed them unnecessary. The reputed wealth of the dying man awakened a new and extraordinary solicitude for his spiritual welfare.

When the doctor first saw his patient, he certainly recommended him to call in a priest, yet, as I have said, he did not press the suggestion; but now, having reason to presume that the dying man had an abundance of cash, it became necessary to save his soul, if that were possible, against his will. The surgeon did not, therefore, return at once to his own house, but went straightway to the chapel hard by, and held a consultation with Father Andrews.

Let me here say a word or two on behalf of this zealous priest. I will not attempt to sketch his features in pen and ink. The portrait of one Roman Catholic clergyman is so very like the picture of another, that I should be needlessly wearying the reader. The discipline, or system, which crushes, or extinguishes, the mental individuality of its professional exponents, somehow mutilates those salient distinctions which Providence marks upon every human face in infancy. Did the reader ever see two Romanist priests walking in the street, side by side? If so, unless there was a great disparity of age between them, or one had the advantage of six inches in stature over his brother, none but a most intimate acquaintance could trace an intelligible line of distinction in their features. The countenance of any two Roman Catholic priests of the same age will, in juxtaposition, be found to resemble each other almost as nearly as two peas extracted from the same pod. It will therefore be enough to say that Father Andrews was a man of portly bearing, who trod the earth like one aware he exercised enormous power over his fellows. He was about fifty years of age, but the cares of life and the severity of his penances had been met by a vigorous constitution, so that he might have been mistaken for a younger man. If it were safe to predicate anything about his character from his physiognomy, it would be that Father Andrews had a resolute will of his own, controlling, if not overpowering, his native caution.

He had the reputation of being a zealous priest, but he was not a Jesuit. He was indeed most anxious the world should know that he looked unfavourably upon the institutions and followers of Ignatius Loyola.

Yet I should be doing him an injustice if we did not admit—what this narrative demonstrates—that he regarded the advancement of the interests of his Church as the cardinal, or perhaps the sole object of his existence.

This was the person sought without delay by the doctor. He had not long finished the celebration of an early mass when his friend entered the chapel.

“Good morning, doctor,” was the solemn greeting of the priest.

“Good morning,” responded the surgeon, in livelier tones. The worthy men glanced at each other knowingly, and coldly shook hands. There was a slight pause on the threshold of the conversation. The priest may have thought it the business of his subordinate to make the communication he had to make without waiting for the formality of being asked. The doctor being conscious of the value of the suggestion he had to make, was in no hurry to part with it.

The priest broke silence by asking, “What news, doctor? Does any rich patient of thine, standing on the verge of eternity, need the offices of our holy Church?”

“No, reverend father,” replied the surgeon, “but a decrepid old man, who lives in an adjoining street, and reputed so poor that he has partaken of our pious charities, is dying, and I have discovered that he is in fact a cheat and a miser, who has a hoard of wealth. I have urged him to make his peace with God and our holy Church. I think you had better see him, sir.”

The quick-witted priest readily comprehended the urgency of the matter, and promised to give it immediate attention. The clergyman then shook hands rather heartily with the doctor, who went on his round of calls. Father Andrews trotted home, ate a substantial breakfast, and after duly considering the part he was about to engage in, he paid a visit to the dying miser.

Maturin Carré was sitting or leaning, half erect, on his miserable pallet, when Father Andrews entered the room unbidden, within a short hour or two after the doctor had left it. What passed at this solemn interview no living man, except the priest, can tell. I will not draw upon my imagination for a description of the mode by which the strong will of the priest conquered the obstinate selfishness of the exile, or pretend to relate how the hoary-headed sinner was led to penitence. All I have ascertained for a fact is, that Maturin Carré laid open his heart to the ken of his spiritual adviser. He confessed how he had obtained money from time to time, and how, by extreme self-denial, by falsehood, the simulation of poverty, and miserly thrift, he had saved it, invested principal with its usufruct, until the whole amount had reached the total of nearly £10,000, which sum then stood to his credit in the reliable custody of the State. Then, whether on the recommendation of Father Andrews, or in obedience to his own penitential emotions, I offer no opinion, Maturin Carré sought to make his peace with the Almighty by bestowing a small portion of his accumulated wealth upon his poor kindred in France,

and the greater part thereof to a Roman Catholic charity. The zealous priest was delighted to perceive that he had already secured the very acceptable sum of £7,000 for the propagation of his holy faith, by a process which relieved the conscience of the testator. Maturin Carré, however, entreated the holy father to bestow upon him, in return for these bequests, the consolations of religion.

The priest hesitated for a moment. There was yet a little secular formality—it might be a test of the penitent's sincerity—to be gone through ere that boon was granted. Upon a scrap of paper the holy man wrote in pencil a few words; he read them over to the dying penitent, who, in a sort of gasp, conveyed his assent to this appropriation of his estate: and having done all it was that morning possible to do for the advancement of his faith, Father Andrews gave the forlorn miser absolution for a long career of greed and deception. He stayed a few minutes longer, until the wearied penitent, overcome by the trial he had passed through, dropped almost insensible upon his bed, and in the softest tones a priest could utter, he whispered "Goodbye," urged poor Carré to devote all his thoughts to God, and quitted the house. The scene had been a trying one to both parties, and the conclusion was a relief to each of them.

Let nobody complain that Father Andrews called in the aid of a lawyer on Sunday. The highest authority has declared the lawfulness of doing good on the Sabbath day. M. Carré was *in extremis*. Time was of the most precious value. The remnant of the miser's life was reduced to days, perhaps to hours. Even yet death might rob the Church of a penitent's bequest. The priest therefore sent a trusty messenger to a member of his congregation whose assistance had now become necessary. As this gentleman has gone to render his final account in a court of record where special pleas are not admitted, and where all virtue, as well as vice, is rewarded, we are warranted in believing that justice has been, or will be done to him, according to his merits; but this does not release us, as faithful chroniclers, from doing him immediate justice in this narrative. A cynic has declared that the memory of good men dies with them, and that the evil alone survives fragile mortality. This is a libel or a slander. We believe the poet who says that "the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom from the dust," is nearer the truth. At all events I will deal honestly with this lawyer. His name shall be emblazoned in type. It was Cooke—John Athanasius Cooke, Esquire, Barrister-at-Law. This gentleman had been for twenty years a member of what is called the "Equity bar," although some people (notably an illustrious novelist) have questioned the accuracy of the title. He was a famous "Equity draftsman," which phrase being interpreted for the benefit of the vulgar, means, in this instance, a clever hand at drawing wills and trust-deeds for Roman Catholic religious endowments. One special claim to the admiration of the enlightened British public in this dashing, adventurous age, presented by the life of Mr. Cooke, is the fact that, with a Roman chisel, he carved his way to fame, if not to fortune. He had been an attorney's clerk, and a Protestant in religion, but had lifted himself, or been lifted—by what power we know not, unless it were his own and that of the Romish Church—into an upper sphere of the legal profession, and the loftier faith of the Papacy. For eight years prior to the date of this narrative, Mr. John Athansius Cooke had also been a member of Father Andrews' congregation, and so by virtue of long communion, and a reputation for skill in such matters, my lawyer obtained the honour of that reverend gentleman's confidence on this occasion.

The lawyer obeyed the summons of the Priest with alacrity.

That Sunday afternoon witnessed their conference. The task he had to perform was set before him. Mr. Cooke explained that the whole transaction was “a little irregular,” and begged that the form of calling in a solicitor to instruct him might be gone through, just to comply with the etiquette of the profession, which looked upon such matters as this with a critical and suspicious eye. Father Andrews rebuked the lawyer’s scruples, and reminded him of his material obligations to the Church he had adopted. The priest sardonically inquired whether this was the first instance in which our barrister had, with his own hand, and without a solicitor’s intervention, done a little favour of the kind for a dying penitent?

Mr. Cooke yielded up his scruples. He felt that the power which had made could unmake him. He owed all that he possessed to the Church whose humble servant he was; and at whatever risk to his professional status, he must obey the orders of his priest.

Father Andrews drew from his pocket the memorandum he had drawn up in the chamber of M. Carré, and to which that poor wretch had in terror, or perhaps between fear and hope, given his assent.

Mr. Cooke having promised to draw a will according to these instructions, and neatly engross the same with his own hand, so as to limit the circle of confidence, he was allowed to quit the holy father’s presence. I must not, however, neglect to say that arrangements were made to meet next evening at Maturin Carré’s bedside. Evening was selected, because, as Father Andrews stated, a day’s remorseful thought and its exhausting effect upon a worldly mind, might facilitate the pious labour of completing the bequest. The morning was suggested by Mr. Cooke; but the priest replied, that at such a moment the greed and irreligious thoughts of the testator might prevail over all ghostly influence. So the next evening was determined upon for the execution of a will which the barrister agreed to bring in his pocket.

Reader, let us follow this astute lawyer to his chambers. We may be permitted to see the legal craftsman at his work. It will be a novel sight. You have probably seen a few manufacturing processes, but if you are a reflective person, nothing half so unique, and, perhaps interesting (although it certainly is not beautiful), as the machinery by which kindred—oftentimes widows, orphans, and aged parents—have been and are plundered, even in this enlightened country, by unscrupulous lawyers, who are the instruments of designing priests. Will you, dear reader, observe with care the various stages in the manufacture of Carré’s will?

The lawyer rose at daybreak, after a night of imperfect slumber. The conscience of his early manhood had not been moulded into the exact form, or taken the precise colouring, that his new masters could have wished. Yet he did not long hesitate. Some hours before the drowsy, ill-clad, sinister-looking boy, denominated a clerk, arrived, and to the astonishment of a blear-eyed old woman, called a laundress, who was supposed to be cleaning the dingy apartments, Mr. Cooke entered them! After dismissing the crone, he fell into a reverie, and thus soliloquized:—

“Ten thousand pounds! No—seven thousand and three thousand! Good—that is fortunate!”

So it might, indeed, have been fortunate for the priest, as this story will show.

He gazed vacantly at his bookshelves, and from thence to the blackened ceiling. No reproach came from the worthies whose thoughts were enshrined in those goodly tomes, nor through the roof from a just Heaven. Superstition lent her influence to the clients.

“A special Providence has so arranged it. It was not my division, nor that of Father Andrews. The funds are already divided into the proportions we require,” he continued; and this sagacious man half hoodwinked himself into the delusion that there was no trickery herein on his part.

“Seven thousand Reduced Stock; that is for our holy Church. Three thousand Consols; that sum is for relations. Let me see. One, two, three, four— seven hundred and fifty pounds each. Admirable. Faithful executors will administer the trust, and preserve the secret. How fortunate the money was not all invested in one Stock? The division by us might have awakened inquiry and caused trouble.” Thus proceeded the lawyer’s soliloquy.

Now he rose, paced the floor of his workshop; then he paused, sat down, and took a pen in hand.

“No!” he exclaimed, half audibly, but nobody was listening. “Executors are the first consideration, and I usually begin my wills by their appointment.” A grim smile passed over his hard features. He recalled an observation by the late Mr. Joseph Miller, of facetious renown,—“Leave your property to whom you please, if you make me executor.”

He now began to write in a distinct hand, like any clerk. The first executor was the Roman Catholic bishop of the district, then in the quiet enjoyment of a British and not a foreign territorial title.

“Should there be more than one executor? It would be as well.”

“Who shall I name as the second? Myself: why not? It would not, perhaps, look well.”

The lawyer recollected that he had not seen the testator. He thought it possible the old man might object to a lawyer, and Mr. Cooke would not risk a miscarriage of the scheme by collision with such a prejudice. A blank was left for the second name, with the reserved intention to fill it by inserting that of Cooke, and the address of his chambers, if the testator did not object.

The remainder of the document was soon prepared. It would not do to make the £7,000 bequest directly and obviously to the Roman Church; that would render it legally invalid. The wisdom of the Legislature had, by an Act of Parliament, long ago declared this. It would not do to give the priest an apparently beneficial interest in it. The dying testator might object to this; and it was, moreover, against the policy of the Church of Rome. The fund must be left in trust for some pious object, so as to secure the interest or usufruct in perpetuity to the nominees of the Roman College, which undertakes this duty.



An English charity must be named as the beneficial legatee. What institution should it be? There was a girls' school attached to Father Andrews' chapel; that would do exceedingly well. There was, indeed, something pleasant in the notion. The idea of rescuing £7,000 from a miser, and devoting it to the education of young women, was a pretty idea.

So the lawyer wrote down "that the sum of seven thousand pounds should be given to the executors in trust to apply the dividends and annual income in perpetuity for the benefit of and for the maintenance and support" of the school referred to. That school might not, however, always have an existence. This contingency was easily provided against by the subtle craftsman. What lawyers call "a trust over," or provision, that if the one school should ever cease to exist, the fund should be held for and applied to some other like charitable institution, got rid at once of the peril of a failing trust.

There was another provision requisite. The artful people who thus extracted funds from the grasp of a dying miser, took care to guard its investment, and keep the proceeds in their own hands. Mr. Cooke inserted a provision, that in case one trustee should die, go to reside abroad, or decline or become incapable to act, the other trustee might appoint a colleague. Is it necessary to show how this would operate? The secular person appointed to save appearances in the eyes of the testator, and of any curious man who should ever go to Doctors' Commons, and pay a shilling to inspect Mr. Cooke's skilful performance—a mere creature of the Roman Church—would, or might, be called upon to resign his trust; in which case another priest would, or could be, nominated. Thus the fund would be effectually secured for the Church. It might be applied as a college at Rome, or its servants there, wished. Nobody would know; there was nothing even to suggest inquiry.

Cunning priest, clever lawyer—combination almost omnipotent! You think that the miser's hoard—or at least more than two-thirds of it—have been snatched from those very poor relations of Maturin Carré, who, a distance off, in the South of France, have only a dim, vague notion that the old exile lives, and think that he has amassed fabulous riches. You, priest and lawyer, are the only persons in England who know the names of Maturin Carré's relations. There may be time for a sister or a brother to pay a last tribute of affection to the lonely wretch. To such a man, that would, in all probability, be more consoling than the offices of your religion. It would, in any case, be a consolation to any dying man. It is, however, no portion of your plan or policy to let the Carrés in France know anything about their dying brother. You, Father Andrews, assert that he does not entertain any affection for them. You say that he wanted to bequeath the whole of his savings to your Church; that you vindicated the claims of family and of blood; that you induced the penitent to distribute about £3,000 among those poor people. Some folks will be ungenerous enough to doubt the truth of your assertion. I place your statement in this narrative, and leave the reader to judge of its credibility and its value. 'Tis, withal, a pity that your advocacy of family rights stopped short at the point it did. Perhaps you had some higher motive; but I know that you had a wish to save appearances. If you had only contrived, by the exercise of your spiritual influence, to reverse the arrangement—to have given £7,000 to relatives and £3,000 to the Church—the affair would undoubtedly have looked better. But I must not omit to explain all that the legal servant or slave of the Roman Church in England did, with his priest's concurrence, for Maturin Carré's relations. Maturin Carré had two brothers and a sister living, or supposed to be living,

when this will was made. One sister, after getting married and bearing children, died. To each of the three living kindred, £750 in Stock was given; while between the children of the deceased sister the like amount was divided.

The lawyer, having so far completed his task, rose from his chair again, and went out to enjoy a morning walk in the dusky purlieu of his manufactory. He had done his work skillfully, and perhaps enjoyed the consciousness of that little fact. One satisfaction his patrons might have felt if they were capable of duly appreciating it—the writing was a clear, intelligible, round hand. No other person had been taken into confidence—no heretical copyist had been employed. The advantage of this will be obvious to the reader.

That afternoon the lawyer and the priest were again closeted in the apartments of the latter, and the holy father graciously smiled as he perused the document, and bestowed an approving look upon his faithful friend.

“Well done, my son,” said the priest. “You have performed your duty to our holy Church excellently.”

Over the lawyer’s harsh countenance there glided a faint smile. A compliment was grateful to him. Then his features settled into their usual rigidity. Misgivings as to the propriety of his share in this business disturbed him. What if the plan should miscarry, notwithstanding all their devices and precautions? What if the Benchers of Lincoln’s Inn should hear about it? What if the case should be investigated by them or become sooner or later the subject of judicial investigation? From the first, he could never perfectly shake off that fear of detection.

The priest observed this moodiness with a feeling of contempt for his legal man-of-all-work, and was silent with reference to it.

“We shall require two witnesses, who are to derive no benefit from the will,” suggested Mr. Cooke, a little abruptly.

“Of course we shall. I am lawyer enough to know that, and have provided two of the right sort—persons who won’t see more than I want them to see. They’ll witness the old man’s signature, but see nothing else, I warrant you,” was the ready sardonic answer.

All arrangements had now been made by the friends and servants of the Church.

Shortly afterwards, the two gentlemen called upon the dying man. Marturin Carré was not in the frame of mind they expected. The influences of the day had not reduced him so low as had been calculated. They found him argumentative and stubborn. He doubted whether he had so short a time to live as the doctor had informed him. He said that he did not like to make a will, because it appeared like resigning all hope of recovery, and urged many other common pretexts for not completing the bequest.

During this conversation two ladies called at the house in which Carré lived. One of them was the priest’s housekeeper, the other was a schoolmistress, and a lady under many obligations to him.

Their business may be imagined. Their call explains the half mysterious response of the priest to the lawyer. The holy father knew, as he said, that the pious or charitable bequest would be inoperative unless disinterested persons saw the testator attach his autograph, and also placed their signatures at the foot of the document. Father Andrews, with benign forethought, had asked these ladies to follow him at a respectful distance, to the bedside of the testator. The landlord of the house and his daughter, or some fellow lodger, might have been relied upon to discharge the trivial obligation of witnessing the dying man's will, but the priest had sagaciously resolved that none but faithful communicants should have the honour. Beyond doubt no one could have been more gratified to play that humble part in the drama than either of the ladies.

But it was not so ordained. Carré was incurably obstinate.

The priest heard the expected knock of his female friends at the street door. He presented an appearance at that moment more easily imagined than described. His look half terrified his learned friend, but, strange to say, the enfeebled miser did not quail under the furtive glances of the confessor.

The landlord, who, as the reader may have supposed, did not belong to "the true faith," had begun to suspect a proceeding not altogether in accordance with his ideas of spiritual propriety. He opened the street door, and stopped the further progress of the ladies. He would not let them ascend the stairs until he had announced their names to his lodger. The message gave him an opportunity he desired, to see what was going on in the abode of death. His worst suspicions were strengthened.

The messenger announced the names of the fair visitors, and the impatient priest exclaimed:—"Tell them to go home, I don't want them today. I shall soon come after them."

And he did as he promised. Baffled, humiliated, and crestfallen, consumed by a rage he strove hard to conceal, it may have been through pride, or it may have been from cunning, and in the hope that disease would soon once more place Maturin Carré's handwriting in his control, the priest did not prolong the argument or the interview more than ten minutes after the ladies had returned.

The atmosphere of the close room affected him more than it did the expiring miser. The ghostly man longed for a breath of pure air. The lawyer, who had been silent during the latter part of the interview, saw, or fancied he saw, the priest's wish in the changing tints of his face.

The "equity draughtsman," like many other people, thought most during taciturn intervals. Although silent, he had now been very thoughtful. He was also a man for emergencies. More legal acumen had been exercised in the quiet breast of the will-maker in Maturin Carré's garret, and within five minutes, than in his own chambers, where he was at liberty to soliloquize during as many hours. All the possible objections to the will had been concentrated into one brief reflection. All the dangers to himself and his friends flitted across his mental vision like (if the simile be permissible) an electric panorama. He, too, was glad to make his escape from the loathsome presence of his aged victim, and the fetid air of the apartment.

Obstacles had sharpened his wits. He had struck out a new line of procedure. The Church should have its expected legacy, if death alone were not inexorable.

With this resolution in his heart, the lawyer's facile tongue began to move.

"Well, well, my good man, if you are unwilling to do it, we'll not press you," observed Mr. Cooke.

The holy father made a sign, and the old man trembled.

Summoning all his courage again, Maturin Carré, in broken but decided accents, exclaimed—

"I tell you I'm not going to die; I'll not make a will—you'll kill me. Leave me."

"Be calm, my friend," the lawyer rejoined; "we will leave you to think over the matter for a day or two. There, don't get excited."

As he spoke, he assisted the miser to lie down, and with considerable delicacy adjusted the pillow, so that a feverish head might rest upon it.

"Be calm," he said again, and turned his eyes from the rude couch. His companion readily took the hint.

"We'll call again in a day or two, say on Thursday, and see how you get on. Pray don't excite yourself," were the last words used at this meeting.

Priest and lawyer then quitted the house, without taking leave of the landlord. They went to the priest's residence, and there discussed what next, and next, should be done to secure the £7,000. The plan agreed upon and pursued will immediately appear.

Two intervening days have elapsed, but they are not taken into account in this narrative. None of the actors, except Mr. Cooke, the versatile and persevering lawyer, took any account of them. The doctor never called during Tuesday and Wednesday upon poor old Maturin Carré to ascertain whether he needed pills, powders, draughts, or lotions, or whether the miser had procured the wine and arrowroot that on Saturday had been considered of more use than physic.

Father Andrews who on Saturday, when informed that a miser was lying *in extremis*, hastened to the bedside of Carré, never called to see that wretched old man on Tuesday or Wednesday. Poor Maturin was left alone in his attic for two days by doctor, priest, and lawyer; but the last gentleman was not all this while idle. He had, in truth, been somewhat busy.

On Tuesday morning he went to the Bank of England, and bespoke an instrument, or the form of an instrument—called a power of attorney—that would enable the dying man, if he should be so minded, to get the £7,000 transferred from himself to the nominees of his Church, without removing from his bed. The authorities of the Bank, as Mr. Lawyer

knew beforehand, required two days to prepare this agent in the transfer. He went himself on Thursday and got the needful paper. He also worked diligently upon two documents which the new plan of operations required he should get ready before he visited Carré again.

On Thursday, after leaving the great institution in Threadneedle Street, the lawyer made the best of his way to the house of the priest in Somers Town.

“Well, I’m glad to see you,” abruptly exclaimed Father Andrews, as his satellite entered; “he’s still alive, I have had the house watched, although I have not been to see him since Monday.”

“I pray that all will be right. I have, I think you will say, done my part to accomplish the task we have set ourselves for the glory and advancement of our holy Church.”

The holy father was testy. In truth he began to fear that the prize would not be carried off, and that the ugly affair might get disclosed.

“You have been long enough about it,” the priest rejoined. “Suppose the old man had died while you were doing your part, our holy Church would not then have had much to thank you for.”

The lawyer timidly explained the fault was not his, but that of the authorities of the Bank; and he went on to show how profitably the time had been used by him.

He drew from his pocket a deed. It had been drafted by him, and neatly engrossed on parchment by a law stationer. The lawyer’s eyes glistened as he looked at this portion of his own work. It was a Deed of Gift. It was a specious document. By this, Carré was to “cut away from himself,” or with the power of attorney transfer the £7,000 at once from his own name to those of trustees. It was no small recommendation in itself of this Deed of Gift over a will that it saved the nice sum of £700, or thereabouts, which, as legacy duty, the Government would otherwise have received; but this was, perhaps, about the least recommendation of it in the eyes of the lawyer. He was consoled by the reflection that such a deed as this, when it passed only personal property, required no registration or enrolment.

As Maturin Carré’s family all dwelt a long way off, and were very illiterate persons, not at all likely to be able to unravel this wicked plot, its authors had, it would really seem, secured a practical impunity by their own device. All that remained to be done was to get this deed executed. Then the giver might die as soon as the Almighty pleased. If any of the miser’s kindred should visit this country, or instruct a friend to search the records of Doctors’ Commons, they would trace no will containing the remotest direct or indirect reference to this sum or £7,000. Was not this better than a document open to the inspection of anyone whose curiosity led him to expend a shilling for that liberty,—a paper, wherein the trusts under which the £7,000 nominally passed would have to be set out? All these things Mr. Cooke expounded to Father Andrews, whose cunning leer of satisfaction was the lawyer’s present reward.

“Then we shan’t require any will?” Father Andrews observed interrogatively, for he, as he said, knew a little law.

“Oh, yes,” said the lawyer; “there is the fund of £3,000 for Carré’s family. It will be desirable to have a will for several reasons.”

“And who are named in the deed as trustees?” inquired the holy father.

“The same persons as were executors in the former will; but I have added a provision by which, after my death, or if I should cease to act as trustee, every other succeeding trustee ‘shall be a bishop or priest of the holy Roman Catholic Church.’”

“Good!” ejaculated the priest.

“I hope you also approve of the will?” said the lawyer.

“I do,” replied the priest, who, astonished at the facility with which every species of property, except freehold land, could, under the present law of mortmain, be wrested from its owners, began to crave the remainder of the miser’s property. “But,” he added, “I now almost think it was wrong of us not to have taken the whole. I warrant no part of the old man’s hoard will be preserved save that appropriated to pious uses.” Then, again recollecting the old man’s positive refusal to sign the former will, the priest was haunted by a dread that he might this evening be as obstinate. So that it was perhaps as well, thought the holy father, to adhere to the original division, and let kindred have a dole of the miser’s wealth.

Looking his lawyer steadily in the face, the priest inquired how the £3,000 was to be disposed of.

“Ah,” said the lawyer, “exactly in the way arranged; it is cut up into four parts of £750 in Stock. You see,” he added, handing in the paper, “it is a very short and simple affair. Taking out the £7,000 has much simplified the will; but it is very complete. Nothing on the face of it can suggest to the inquiring mind that we took a huge slice out of the property just before its owner died.”

The priest was charmed by the skilful arrangements of his lawyer.

Lawyers have told me that no will need have been drawn if the simple purpose of it had been to secure the transmission of the £3,000 in the direction of the bequest. In the ordinary course of law, under letters of administration, it would have been distributed exactly as the will provided. The real, and indeed the sole, object of the will, was to hand over the administration of the £3,000 to friendly executors, who, by being thus brought into communication with the legatees, would stop inquiry into the use of, or indeed the existence of another fund—the £7,000.

The time had not yet quite arrived for calling upon the recalcitrant. All the preparations had, however, been made; so the two worthies who played leading parts in what I shall now venture to style the conspiracy, conceived they were entitled to a little enjoyment: and they had it. The remainder of the chat took a lively turn as it usually does over a

dinner table when the host provides such good cheer as Father Andrews was able to place before a guest.

When the priest conceived that the proper time for paying another visit to Maturin Carré had arrived, he had been joined at his house by two other persons. One was a lady, already introduced to the reader, whose profession was that of schoolmistress, and who, it may be here also stated, had before this supplemented her ostensible vocation by little odd jobs of the kind now about to be described. The other was a gentleman—that is to say, he was clerk to a private banker who then carried on business in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden market, and was greatly patronised by the Roman Catholic clergy and gentry, who suffered terribly when his bank broke a few years ago. The lady and gentleman had been invited by Father Andrews to be the witnesses of this nefarious scheme at its culminating point. It was a prudent step thus to conceal from heretical eyes how modern Roman Catholic priests can behave towards penitents who have money, in the days, hours, or moments which precede the soul's flight to its abiding place. Father Andrews had truly described these persons. The eyes of these witnesses would be able to see, or would certainly bear testimony to nothing dishonouring to the Church to which they were attached by solid material links, in addition to those of faith.

At length the proper time arrived. Priest, lawyer, and witnesses, all strangers to the testator, all well acquainted with each other, three of them without souls to call their own, but dependent upon the fourth, set out in company for Maturin Carré's house.

Carré had, however, not been quite so wretched or so feeble in mind or body as some persons hoped, during the interval between my second and third days. He had partially rallied, and was this evening somewhat stronger in intellect and muscle than he had been for a fortnight at least. Whether this was in any degree attributable to the doctor's nonattendance, the abstinence from physic, or the priest's forbearance, the reader, who is left by me to determine so many things, may decide. A self-willed spirit may perhaps be in a measure attributable to the influence of that Protestant landlord, who was the marplot of the whole design. He had been very much in the company of his lodger during the period I skip in order to abbreviate our story. This profane man had represented Father Andrews' conduct in anything but a favorable light, and he had cast shadows of doubt upon the honour of the Roman Church's standing counsel, Mr. Cooke. Maturin Carré had so been roused to a pitch of irreligious boldness, higher than that he attained on Monday, and had resolved that he would have nothing more to do with the priest, and the lawyer, or their projects. He had instructed the landlord of the house not to admit these pretended friends when they next called.

Upon the arrival of the *cortège* at Carré's residence—the priest leading the way, followed by the lawyer and the witnesses—the door was opened by the protecting landlord.

“Mr. Carré is very ill, and can't see you today,” said the host, half dismayed by the numerical, if not the moral, strength of the party.

The astonishment of the visitors at this abrupt announcement was naturally great. The pious schoolmistress afterwards confessed, in language more didactic than scholastic, that she was “regularly non-plushed;” and the Catholic banker's clerk also naively admitted that he began to fancy “something queer.”

Priest and lawyer glanced at each other and at the landlord who barred the passage, or staircase, from intrusion. There was safety for reputation in delay, risk to character by precipitation. Death was, however, imminent, the hours of the miser were numbered, and hesitation might sacrifice £7,000. The dominant characteristic of Father Andrews prevailed over his caution. In two or three seconds his decision had been taken. The stake, he thought, was worth the risk.

The priest's eye measured the landlord from head to foot, in order to judge the probabilities and capacity of resistance, and formed an opinion about them. As to the latter, I shall have occasion to explain what he thought. Of the former, it is enough to say that he saw no reason to apprehend "a scene" if the attack were dashingly made.

Father Andrews, within less time than this description has occupied, threw himself forward, simultaneously exclaiming, "I am not to be treated in this manner," and by a stroke of the arm removing the impediment from his path.

The priest rushed up stairs, turned the handle of the apartment, and stood before the trembling miser, who yet resisted his ghostly assailant.

The landlord then politely invited the embarrassed witnesses and the lawyer into the parlour, where, by a remarkable coincidence, there happened to be another gentleman, a friend of the host's, whose presence excited the barrister's notice, if not his fears.

The reader's imagination will be good enough to follow me up stairs after the priest.

"Pray let me alone, I can't do any business today. I don't know what I am about. What do you want?" were sentences, in English, that proceeded through the chattering teeth of the old man.

"Do you revoke your promise—your sacred gift to our holy Church, wretched man?" inquired the priest sternly.

"No, no; but do leave me; call another time. I can't do it today."

"Not today? Tomorrow will see your body in the grave, and your soul in—"

"No, no; I will, I will. Where are the papers?" And the dying wretch held out his hand as though he wished to grasp a pen, and by conveying all his worldly wealth to a priest, avert the completion of a sentence.

Father Andrews quickly went outside the room, and over the staircase shouted for the barrister and witnesses to "come up."

The witnesses proceeded upstairs at once. The lawyer, who would have given half his own expected legacy to have secured the absence of that stranger, and of the marplot landlord of the house, but knowing this desirable intermediate consummation was not practicable, he thought the next best thing was to make them observers, if not parties in the transaction.



He had great faith in the lower motives of the human heart, as nearly all the members of his profession have. It was just possible, he thought, that such a tribute to their self-importance might win over the fidelity or the silence of these persons. The barrister did not exactly know, or even conjecture, the true situation of affairs in “the second floor back” between the priest and the impenitent. The landlord and his friend accepted the invitation.

When the priest saw the landlord enter the room, he was terribly disconcerted, and embarrassment made him additionally rude.

“You are not wanted here,” he said.

The barrister became alarmed. He knew that any deed or will executed by that weak human creature, on the brink of the abyss of death, surrounded as he was by strangers, would be set aside if challenged by the next of kin. He was terrified by remembrance that his own conduct would be severely condemned by the heads of that honourable profession he was degrading, and he knew that public opinion would anathematise all the actors in the conspiracy according to their demerits.

“Let him stay, let everybody remain; I beg he will stay,” said the barrister, and the priest, who conjectured that there were reasons for desiring their company, made no further objection to their presence.

The landlord and his friend did remain, to tell afterwards all that took place.

The barrister, to keep up a show of appearances, and not doubting for a moment that Father Andrews had prepared the way, went to the bedside of Carré with the intention of explaining the documents. The old man who had been more than a little confused by the entrance of so many persons to his room, was frightened by the magnitude and solemnity of this “equity draftsman’s” work. The vulgar mind usually looks upon a parchment deed with something like awe, and Maturin Carré could not have been much more unnerved by the unfolding of a death warrant in which his own name appeared, than he was by the crumpling sound of this pious deed of gift.

His glazed eye wandered rapidly from lawyer to priest, and scanned as well as it could the other strangers, who came, as he thought, at that moment to rob him of his evil accumulations. Again and again, as he looked at the priest, he trembled, and the perspiration oozed freely through his fallow skin.

“Leave the papers,” he said, “till another day.”

A sensation ran through the company at this expression of dissatisfaction with the affair, uttered in the presence of the holy father. The lawyer observed it.

“Very well,” said Mr. Cooke, “we will leave them. I can, if you please, make another appointment.”

The lawyer was about to fold up the papers and take his departure, but the priest laid hold of his arm and bade him stay.

The priest stepped up to the wretched bedside, and addressed the dying man. What he said no living person can tell, for he selected a language which nobody else present, except Carré—not even the lawyer—could understand. Father Andrews slowly addressed the dying miser in French. Each word quickened the pulse of old Maturin, set his teeth chattering, and again brought the damp perspiration through his skin.

The French discourse, whatever it may have been, had not proceeded far when the dying wretch exclaimed: “Yes, yes, I will sign them; don’t leave me.”

After this, Mr. Cooke was anxious to make one or two explanations, which he thought might satisfy the scruples of the heretical witnesses. He explained to Carré the solemn mockery that this deed of gift would not deprive him of the beneficial interest in his £7,000 so long as he lived; that he had a life interest secured to him therein, and that although the trustees would take what lawyers call “the legal estate” in his money, they would have to pay him the interest thereof as long as he lived; that it also contained a power of revocation, so that he could at any time during his life, by another regular deed, call upon the trustees to cancel this one, and hand him back his wealth. All these sage and important announcements were, however, unintelligible to the penitent, and not understood by the landlord or his friend.

The will, too—that was explained. Old Maturin saw his landlord before him, and remembering odd kindnesses he had received from that quarter; requested that everything in the house at the time of his death, money and goods, should be given to him. Neither priest nor lawyer objected to this, because it placed the landlord under recognizances not to disclose the affair.

If the will were set aside, this legacy, worth about £100, would be lost to him as the informer. Father Andrews suggested to the penitent that the lawyer ought also to have a legacy. The poor old wretch agreed to this. Fifty pounds was the amount named. The barrister went through the form of saying that was not necessary, the priest urged it, and it was so written down.

The several documents were formally executed and witnessed, and the heroes of this extraordinary modern romance, as soon as they could with an outward show of decency, withdrew to congratulate themselves on the final success of their scheme.

The execution of these documents by M. Carré was no easy task. He had been so reduced by illness, and so prostrated by the French discourse of the holy father, that it became necessary to assist him. The priest raised him up in his bed, placed the pen in his hand, and supported his back while he feebly traced on each of the three instruments—Deed of Gift, Power of Attorney, and Will—the name of Maturin Carré.

But the transaction was not then quite complete. Suppose Maturin Carré should happen to die before the £7,000 Stock is transferred from his name to those of the trustees. If he should happen to die with what the lawyers call “the legal estate” in that Stock in him, it will pass to his next of kin. There will be a smart race between Death, the patron of the

next of kin, and Mr. John Athanasius Cooke, legal servant-of-all-work to the Anglo-Roman Catholic Church.

It was, after all, not a good arrangement on the part of Father Andrews, that the conferences with Maturin should take place in the evening, although it proceeded from an artful design. It prevented anything being done on the same day which might be necessary to give effect to the pious acts of the miser. A day, an hour—or as the result proved—even a few minutes, would determine whether the Roman Church should have the £7,000, or whether the money should legally pass to the kindred of the deceased.

Mr. Cooke did all that he possibly could, as he put it, “in order to carry out the benevolent intentions of the testator.” Nothing could be done at the Bank of England on the Thursday—the third day of my narrative. Nothing effectual could be accomplished until the Saturday—my fourth day.

In the interim, the lawyer made what preparations were necessary. Nothing could possibly exceed the vigilance of this learned gentleman. At the early hour of ten next morning (Friday), he paid a visit, in a cab, to the Bank, in company with a stockbroker of unquestionable orthodoxy, and entreated the officials to lose no time in making the transfer. The officers of the government and company who transact this business for the State are a rather torpid, or slowly moving set. The payment of an extra fee will, however, stimulate them a little. The barrister, duly sensible of the value of time in this instance, paid the “expedition money” and went home. There was no alternative. He could only wait another day, and hope that in the interval the old man would be good enough not to die, and so defeat the object of much labour and cunning.

Carré, during the same period, was fast sinking into his grave, and neither doctor nor priest sought to aid or comfort him. Neither of these gentlemen cared to send him physic, nor to soothe him by a prayer. This appears to be a grave mistake. A tonic, or an anodyne, and some dainty nourishing food might have extended the duration of his life, until the lawyer had, beyond all doubt, completed his work. The trial of the third day had much accelerated the crisis. His mind was now an almost total wreck. At moments he would resolve to send for the priest and demand that the papers should be delivered up to him, or cancelled before his eyes; but immediately afterwards he would repent the thought, and derive a scanty sense of pleasure from a partial belief that he had appeased the Almighty by yielding to the priest’s artifices. In this way, but approaching hour by hour nearer and nearer to his end, the Friday was tided over by Maturin Carré, and the Saturday approached.

Saturday, the 6th of March, 1847, beheld the completion of the priestly fraud.

The lawyer rose from his uneasy bed at an early hour; he had slept but little that night. Long training from an immature youth to ripe manhood had not been given him as to a priest, so as to warp his natural understanding, cloud or distort his vision, and prevent his really seeing this odious affair in its real light and situation. If he had not already gone too far, he would have drawn back; this he thought was now impossible. Apart from the hostility he would thus earn from his patrons, and the consequent poverty he would have to brave, he saw the peril of a disclosure from the adoption of such a course. Safety, or

the probability of avoiding detection, now assuredly lay in the direction he was expected to take. There was, practically, no course open but that he was pursuing.

By ten o'clock that morning he was in the office of a stockbroker, in one of the narrow thoroughfares of the city. This gentleman had not arrived, and was not expected for at least another hour, from his delightful suburban home.

Here, again, was a vexatious delay. Life was ebbing fast out of that wretched old man in Somers Town; and the barrister, in his impatience, took the clerk at a desk so far into confidence as to explain that "the benevolent intentions of the testator" might be frustrated if the broker should not soon arrive.

At length the stockbroker's carriage brought that important gentleman to his office door. Mr. Cooke, standing on the threshold, saw his arrival. As he was emerging from the vehicle the lawyer thrust him back, and stepped into the carriage himself.

"To the Bank Transfer Office," he said to the driver, who knew the place very well.

To the broker a few words of explanation were tendered, and accepted as apology for this unseemly haste.

Two or three minutes at most brought the carriage to the Bank. How long it took to get the transfer completed I am not able to say; but at half-past one o'clock that important ceremony was an accomplished fact.

Intense anxiety was seated on the countenance of the barrister as he passed out of the Bank of England. Was Maturin Carré yet alive? Vital question! Had death anticipated and baffled priest and lawyer? What if the scheme should wholly miscarry at the last stage? Exposure and ruin to him—scandal and injury to the Church. Conscience sorely punished Mr. Cooke that day.

As he halted to reflect an instant, an empty cab moved past. He hailed it, and told Jehu to drive as rapidly as he could to a certain street in Somers Town. As the horse was a good one, he traveled over the ground at a pace that would have been pleasant to a railway traveller, but a pace withal that Mr. Cooke considered torturingly slow.

In due course the miser's abode was reached.

The lawyer alighted, and knocked at the door. It was opened by the landlord in person.

"He is dead, sir," was the reply to an unspoken inquiry.

"How long has he been dead?"

"About an hour, sir."

"Are you sure? It can't be quite so long as that."

"Perhaps not quite. It might be a little more, it might be a little less."

How very tantalizing! Who can wonder that the barrister was a little excited. What a pity for the Church that the old man did not live, say another hour, so that witnesses might have seen him alive—say half-an-hour or so *after* the transfer of his Stock had been made. What a pity for those needy kindred of the miser in France he did not die an hour earlier, so as to make it clear that he was a corpse when the transfer was effected. One hour more or less, such as those which the remnant of his life was composed of, could not be of importance to the lonely exile and miser.

Wonderful efforts were afterwards made to show that Carré did breathe his last before the transfer of the stock was effected. Equal efforts were made to prove he survived that operation, of which, of course, he was unconscious. The best evidence I think went to show that, in reality, the last breath quitted his attenuated frame, and his pulse ceased to beat, as nearly as possible about ten minutes before the transfer was effected.

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The main thread of my story has run out, but there are a few incidents it is worth while adding as a sequel to this strange and true narrative. The landlord of the house and his friend were not satisfied with the proceedings I have described. In a week or two, accordingly, the former wrote to one of the relatives of the deceased, and told the story as well as he could. The family clubbed together their slender means, and deputed one of their number, a nephew of Maturin Carré, whose name, François Metarie, has become famous in the legal annals of this country, to visit England and inquire into the affair. Poor man, he was not equal to the task. When Metarie called upon the lawyer, whose address he obtained from the landlord, this gentleman Jesuitically assured him of the literal fact—presuming Carré died before the transfer was effected—that he died worth only £3,000. Metarie was also informed by many shrewd people in London, that even if it were possible to upset the deed of gift, he was not the man to effect this, because he was poor, and the machinery of our courts of equity could only be employed with advantage, if at all, by rich persons. The illiterate Frenchman went back to France. Still the family would not abandon the hope of recovering their due. Again and again Metarie came over here, no less than six times, until at length an eminent solicitor took up the case, and brought a suit into the Court of Chancery to set aside the deed on several grounds, but chiefly on the ground of fraud. I was employed to search into the case, and was not long in getting hold of sufficient facts to warrant a belief, in my own mind, and in that of my immediate employers, that foul play had been used towards the dying man or his relatives.

The primary merit of this discovery, however, belongs to a distinguished nobleman, who has rendered good service to this country, Lord Brougham, who has a chateau in the South of France. Carré's family got introduced to him. He heard their story, saw the fraud, and knew how it might be defeated. He induced this solicitor, who employed me, to take up the case, and there can be no doubt that all the money might have been recovered if the family of the deceased had not given way. But they had a taste of what else they might have expected from the hands of the priesthood and the mob in France. François Metarie was a handloom weaver at La Mayenne, near Bretagne. He had a large family. The part he took in this business exposed him to bitter persecution. Two of his

children were expelled the communal school; he was pointed at in the streets, and his wife was insulted in public; he was pronounced “a bad man,” and life was rendered so intolerable that he was ultimately driven from France, and had to find a home and a subsistence in this country. In this way the kindred of the miser were induced to compromise the suit. The arrangement was that the family should have a further sum of £4,500, and the priest and his party be allowed to retain the balance.

Of the lawyer it may be well to state that poetical justice overtook him. The censure of professional brethren, who ascertained the real nature of his avocations through these proceedings, the denunciations of Mr. Bethel (the present Lord Chancellor) in open court during the investigation, and the anathemas of the public threw him on to a bed of sickness, and accelerated, if they did not produce his death. Of the priest, it may also be well to explain that he had to endure for awhile in Somers Town treatment very like that François Metarie experienced at La Mayenne. People pointed at him in the streets, and spoke of him in terms the reverse of complimentary or polite. The populace of that demonstrative neighbourhood looked upon him as a thoroughly “bad man,” when they told him so, as they often did, they qualified their opinion by adjectives unfit for reproduction in these pages. The consequence was that his ecclesiastical superiors thought it desirable to remove him to some other locality, where his zeal for the Church was not so notorious. Poor François Metarie brought over his wife and all his children to London, set up in business as a cobbler, and by honest labour in this free and happy land he has been able to provide decently for them.

*The Revelations of a Private Detective* by Andrew Forrester, Jr. London: Ward and Lock, 1863. 5-49.