GUY THORNE

A LOST CAUSE

Guy Thorne

A Lost Cause

EAN 8596547339854

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Table of Contents

A few words are necessary in preface to this story. After *When It Was Dark* made its appearance, the writer received a great number of letters from his readers, and up to the present moment he still continues to receive them.

Out of nearly two hundred communications, a large proportion are concerned not so much with the main issue of the tale, as with controversial matters in the Church of England arising from it.

The definitely Catholic[1] tone of the first book aroused, as might be expected, vigorous protest, and no less vigorous commendation. The five or six Bishops—and many other dignitaries—who preached or lectured about the story avoided the controversial sides of it. But the writer has received innumerable letters from the clergy and others to the following effect.

It was pointed out to him that while the extreme "Protestant" party was constantly employing fiction as a method of propaganda, churchmen were almost unrepresented in this way. The Catholic Faith has been bitterly assailed over and over again in books which are well enough written, and have sufficient general interest to appeal to the man of the world, who is often indifferent to the points debated.

After considerable discussion, the writing of *A Lost Cause* was resolved upon. The author desires to thank those priests who have assisted him with their counsel and

experience, and begs leave to explain here something of his aims in publishing the tale.

At no period in modern Church history has the Church been assailed with such malignance, slander, and untruth as at the present. "Protestantism" within the Church is a lost cause, it is dying, and for just this reason the clamour is loudest, the misrepresentation more furious and envenomed. Shrewd opportunists are taking their last chance of emerging from obscurity by an appeal to the ignorance of the general public on Church matters. Looking round us, we see dozens of uneducated and noisy nobodies who have elected themselves into a sort of irregular prelacy and dubbed themselves "Defenders of the Faith," with about as much right as Napoleon crowned himself emperor.

Church people do not take them very seriously. Their voices are like the cries of hedge-birds by the road, on which the stately procession of the Church is passing. But the man in the street is more attentive and he enjoys the colour and movement of iconoclasm. He believes also that the brawlers have right on their side.

But there is an inherent fairness in the man in the street, and, if this story reaches him, he will have his opportunity to hear the Catholic side of the argument.

The author begs to state that no single character in this tale is a "portrait" of any living person, or of any real person whatever. The imaginary folk are designed to be merely typical, their methods are analogous to much that is going on to-day under the pretences of patriotism and love for religious liberty, but that is all.

There will probably be the usual nonsense written, and the braves of "Protestantism" will give the usual war-whoops. Whether this is to be so or not, the author is profoundly indifferent.

He attacks those of the extreme "Protestants" whom he believes to be insincere and who rebel against the Truth for their own ends. He does not say or think that all "Protestants"—even the extremists—are insincere. He has endeavoured to point out that there is as much difference between the street-corner "Protestants" and the pious Evangelical Party within the Church as there is between Trinitarians and Unitarians.

The incident in the tale where the Archbishop of Canterbury compels a "Protestant" publicist to give up the Blessed Sacrament, which he has stolen from a church for purposes of propaganda, is founded on fact. It has not before been made public, except in a short letter to the *Church Times* a few months ago, which was written with the design of preparing Church readers for the detailed publication of such a painful incident. The facts, however, have been supplied to the writer to make such use of in the story as he thinks fit. The authors of this disgraceful profanation have, naturally, been silent on the matter. It is not an isolated instance. But it is not to be thought that the imaginary characters concerned in the affair in the story, are intended to represent, or do in any way, the real heroes of this great blow struck for "Protestant" truth.

Finally, the noisiest "Protestants" are hitting the Church as hard as they can. The author has endeavoured to hit back as hard as *he* can—of course, in that spirit of Christian

love in which the "Protestants" themselves tell us these controversies are always conducted.

The brawlers have enjoyed an astonishing immunity hitherto, and it is only fair that battle should be joined now. And, however inadequate his forces and generalship, that is the writer's aim. He is, of course, a *franc-tireur*, but he fires his musket on the right side, and with a perfect assurance of the justice of his Cause.

G. T.

[1] The term "Catholic" is here, and throughout the book, used in the sense in which it is employed by a certain division of the Church of England and of the Episcopal Church of America.—The PUBLISHERS.

A LOST CAUSE

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

THE INTERRUPTED EUCHARIST

Table of Contents

The Church of St. Elwyn was a building of brick that went up to a great height.

In the crowded district between Hornsey and Wood Green, it was one of the largest buildings, and, though not externally beautiful, acquired dignity and impressiveness from its setting of small villa houses, which made an interminable brick wilderness all round it.

It was nearing the time of the High Celebration on a Sunday morning in summer. Matins had been said in a side chapel, to a scanty congregation, at half-past nine, and now the central act of the day was to take place.

The interior of St. Elwyn's was severe but beautiful, save for one or two minor blemishes here and there.

The eye was caught and carried away down the aisles till it found its focus on the high altar which was set like a throne, above many marble steps, in the curve of the distant apse. The sanctuary was lighted from the sides and so the eye was not disturbed and distracted by hideous windows of stained glass with their clamorous coal-tar colours, but could rest quietly upon the altar with its green and gold, its flowers and central cross.

The organ was hidden away in a side gallery and the pulpit was a stone bracket high in the sweep of the chancel arch, to which it clung like the nest of a bird on a cliff side.

All this was as it should be. In so many English churches the object of the builders appears to have been to destroy all the dignity and beauty possible in a service. The organ and the pulpit are elevated to the importance of shrines, and dominate everything like Gog and Magog in the Guildhall. Everything is done to minimise the place and office of the altar, to exalt the less important functions of worship, and to prevent comfortable consciences from being uneasy in the realisation of the presence of God.

Only one tawdry note could be detected in this beautiful church. The pictures which hung on the walls round the aisles, and represented the stations of the cross, were ill-drawn, and stiff in colour and design. These pictures, which were said by the ignorant and unimaginative to be idolatrous, or at least "Roman"—a little understood but very efficacious term of reproach in the parish—were sufficiently like the hideous stained-glass figures in the Evangelical Church of St. Luke hard by to have satisfied the most pious lover of ugliness. But those folk, who so vehemently preferred the medallion portraits of their respectable ancestors on the walls of a church to any other form of symbol or decoration, did not see this. They spoke bitterly of the pictures as being "high," suggesting to outsiders unfamiliar with the parrot cry of the partisan that they had been kept too long in a warm place.

Since Father Blantyre had been appointed vicar of St. Elwyn's, the congregation had increased until few of the rush-bottomed chairs were empty, and on days of great festivals, people would be found kneeling in the aisles. The opposition party in the parish frequently commented on this

custom, which was thought to savour of heathenism or worse. One or two people who had spent holidays in continental towns, and had made excursions into foreign cathedrals in much the same spirit as they went into the chamber of horrors in the wax-work exhibition, had brought back news that this habit was in vogue among "the Catholics." It was felt that real salvation could only be found in a pew, with one's name legibly written on an ivory tablet at the end and the vestry-clerk calling for the rent once a quarter in the decent old-fashioned way. Any one who knelt on the uncushioned stone showed an anxiety to worship and a superstitious abasement quite unworthy of a bluff, honest, British Christian; and his doings must be displeasing to a Deity who, the objectors were persuaded, was—though they did not say so in actual words—a great *English* God.

The single bell that summoned the people to Mass—that word which church-people are becoming less afraid to use in this century—had ceased. The server was lighting the Eucharistic candles with a long taper.

As the people came in, it was noticeable that they proceeded to their places without side-looks at each other, or muttered social greetings. They went to their seats, young and old, men and women, and began to kneel and pray.

No one, apparently, had come there to be seen by his fellows.

Since the Catholic Revival in the English Church, no fact has been more obvious and easily determined than this. It is one which the bitterest opponent of churchmanship has never been able to deny and has never attempted to deny.

The most prejudiced observer paying an alternate visit to a church where the Faith is taught and to another which is confessedly "Protestant" cannot fail to observe the difference. At the celebration of the Eucharist in a church of the former type, there is an absolute stillness and reverence. The congregation kneels, it worships.

In the latter, there is an unrest. People do not show marked consciousness of being in the presence of mysteries. Whatever they may think, they do not give the observer the impression that they think God is there. They sit rather than kneel, they notice the clothes of other people, there is a certain sense that they are doing the right thing in "patronising" the church, and the Sunday dinner looms large over all.

The man lit the candles. A moment afterwards Father Blantyre entered with the servers and the service began.

The singing was simple but harmonious. There was nothing especially noticeable in the hymn or the chanting of the Kyries after the commandments.

The priest went into the pulpit, kissed the white stole, and placed it, as a yoke, upon his shoulders. Over his head was a crucifix. He was a small man, dark of hair, and swarthy of complexion. The nose was prominent and aquiline, the eyes bright, with a net-work of fine wrinkles round them, the mouth large and mobile. There was almost a suggestion of the comedian in his face, that is, in its extreme mobility and good-humour. One could imagine him as a merry man in his private life. But mingled with this, one saw at once the lines of an unalterable purpose, and of conviction. Any strong belief stamps itself upon a man's

face in an unmistakable way. When that belief is purely holy and good, then we say that the man has the face of a saint.

For a moment or two, Mr. Blantyre looked round the church. The eyes, so puckered at the corners, very much resembled the eyes of a sailor, who is ever gazing out towards a vast horizon and through furious winds. Men who are much occupied with the Unseen and Invisible sometimes have this look, which is the look of a man who is striving to see God.

The subject-matter of the sermon itself was not very remarkable. It was a sermon dealing with the aids to worship that symbol gives, showing how a proper use of material objects may focus the brain upon the reality behind them. During the last week or two, the local paper had been printing some violent attacks upon the services at St. Elwyn's, for there was a by-election in progress and one of the candidates was seizing the opportunity afforded by a "No Popery" cry.

The local writer, the vicar pointed out, was obviously alarmed lest people should worship too much. He spoke of the attacks with sincere good humour and more than once his words provoked a smile. The journalist, with the sublime ignorance of lesser local scribes, had spoken of Queen Elizabeth and expressed a fervent desire that the times of "good Queen Bess" would come again and that the Royal Spinster could descend on the purlieus of Hornsey and sternly order all Romish toys to be removed. Father Blantyre quoted Elizabeth's letter to Sandys:

> The queen's majesty considered it not contrary to the Word of God—nay, rather for the advantage of

> the church—that the image of Christ crucified,—together with Mary and John, should be placed as heretofore in some conspicuous part of the church, where they may the more readily be seen by all the people.

The last few words of the sermon were preparatory for the mystery that was about to begin, an earnest exhortation to all there to make themselves ready to receive the Lord, who was presently coming among them.

There was nothing in the short discourse that was remarkable, but its delivery was extraordinary. The words were uttered with a great tenderness and solemnity, but quite without any formal note. There was almost a gaiety in them now and then, a spiritual gaiety that was very impressive. Father Blantyre leaned over the rail and talked to his people. The voice, which sank into a whisper at times, and at others rang out with a sharpness that echoed up in the lofty roof, never once lost its suggestion of confidential intimacy with those to whom it spoke. In the entire absence of the usual "preaching" note, the sermon gained immensely in value with this particular audience. Anything academic would have been endured, but it would not have gone home.

While the offertory sentences were being sung, the congregation saw that a small group of people had entered the church, presumably to hear Mass.

One of the churchwardens was able to find seats for the party about half-way down the central aisle. The new-comers were four in number. All of them were men.

It is perhaps strange to speak of one of their number as being the "leader" of the party, but that was the impression he gave to those members of the congregation immediately around him. At the close of the service, moreover, several worshippers agreed with each other that this person had suggested that to them.

He was a shortish, thick-set man of some five and forty years of age. His large, intelligent face was clean-shaved. The eyes were small and very bright, shifting hither and thither in a constant flicker of observation. The mouth was large, and though the lips were thick and loose, there was nevertheless a certain resolution in them. They were frequently curved into a half-smile which had something indescribably sinister and impudent about it. One saw that, in whatever situation he might find himself, this person would not easily be abashed or unready.

He wore a frock-coat of shining broadcloth. The waistcoat was cut low, not as well-dressed people would wear it, showing a large expanse of imitation shirt-front through which a black stud was thrust. A small bow of black ribbon served as necktie. In some nameless way, he suggested a peculiarly unpleasing type of irregular dissenting minister in his appearance, and this was enhanced by the fact that under one arm he carried a large Bible of limp leather, secured by an india-rubber band.

Yet, with all this, the new-comer had a remarkable and even arresting personality. Wherever he went, he would not easily escape notice.

By his side sat a tallish youth with sufficient likeness to him to proclaim a near relationship.

The young fellow's complexion was somewhat muddy, his hair was smooth and mouse-coloured, his mouth resembled his father's, except that it had not the impudent good-humour of the elder man's, and was altogether more furtive and sly.

The two remaining members of the party were men apparently of the prosperous small-tradesman type, pursy, flabby with good living, who had added mutton-chop whiskers to their obvious self-esteem.

To one or two members of the congregation there, the father and son were not unknown. The thick-set, clean-shaved man was Mr. Samuel Hamlyn, the editor and proprietor of a small local journal,—the *Hornham Observer*, —and the youth was his son, who acted as reporter to the paper and signed himself S. Hamlyn, Junior.

Both were well known in local affairs; Hamlyn was a member of the school-board and held one or two kindred positions. His religious sympathies had hitherto been supposed to lie with the numerous dissenting sects in the parish, all of whom had their bills and other announcements printed at his office.

The momentary interest and stir created by the entrance of the party died away almost immediately and Mass continued. Certainly no one in the church realised that in a few short weeks the fat man with the smile would be notorious all over England, and that they were to be present at the very first step in the career of one of the shrewdest of vulgar opportunists the country had ever known.

The seats reserved for the churchwardens were on the opposite side of the aisle, but almost upon a level with those

in which the new-comers were seated—perhaps some two rows of chairs behind.

Accordingly Doctor Hibbert, the vicar's warden, had a clear view of the four men just in front.

Hibbert was an upright, soldierly-looking man, who had, in fact, been an army surgeon, and had now bought a practice in the parish. He was a skilful doctor, and a man of considerable mental strength, who had made himself indispensable in the district and was in the way of becoming a wealthy man. His earnest churchmanship had not militated against his success, even among the most extreme Protestants and Dissenters of Hornham. He was known to be a first-class doctor, and he was too strong a man for any one to take a liberty with, and of such superior power and mould to the mass of lower-class people whom he attended that his opinions were respected.

But going about as he did, among every one in the parish, the Doctor knew far more of its internal state than any one else. Nothing is concealed from a medical man in general practice. Confession is compulsory to him; he sees the secrets of men's lives, knows the tarnished story of the "respectable" person, as sometimes the heroism of the outcast. Hibbert had his finger on the public pulse of Hornham in a measure that Father Blantyre himself could hardly achieve.

It was therefore with some little uneasiness and a good deal of conjecture that the doctor had noticed the advent of Hamlyn and his party.

The disturbances to public worship which are so familiar to-day were quite unknown at that time. Hibbert anticipated

nothing of what actually occurred, but his eye was watchful nevertheless.

The Mass went on.

The servers knelt on the altar steps in cotta and cassock, the priest moved above them in his stiff, flowered chasuble, robed in the garments of the Passion of our Lord.

The Comfortable Words were said, and the Sursum Corda began.

A deep throbbing sound came from the organ, and, in one great outburst of solemn avowal, the congregation lifted up their hearts to God.

SURSUM CORDA!
HABEMUS AD DOMINUM
GRATIAS AGAMUS DOMINO DEO NOSTRO!

Ever since the days of the Apostles, the Mass had been said thus, the most solemn part of the service had begun with these profound words of adoration. The doctor forgot all else as he worshipped.

Let it be remembered, in the light of what follows, that the vast majority of the people there believed this, were waiting for *this*—they believed that when the priest said the Prayer of Consecration, our Lord Himself had come suddenly among them.

Throughout the rite there was a growing sense and assurance of One coming. Most of them were quite sure of it.

Human hearts, worn with the troubles of the week, sick to death, it may be, of a hard material lot, now bowed in contrition and repentance, or were filled with a certain

Hope. Everything in this world was as nothing, because, upon the altar before which the priest was bending so low, they believed that God had come.

In what way, or how, they did not know and could not have explained. Did they *imagine* it week after week as they knelt in church? Most of them *knew* that it was no imagination or delusion that caught at their hearts, that changed the air of the building in a swift moment, that caught up heart and soul and spirit in one great outpouring of love and faith and adoration.

Was *this* a fable, as folks sometimes told them? This which dissolved and broke the chains of bodily sense, banished the world, and enfolded them with its awful sweetness, its immeasurable joy? What else in life had power to do this, power to hurry away clogging, material things as in a mighty spiritual wind, to show them once more the stupendous sacrifice of the Saviour—what else but the indubitable presence of our Lord?

The priest held up the Host.

At that supreme moment, Doctor Hibbert, whose state of mind may be taken as typical of many others there, bent in humble adoration and contrition.

An absolute silence lay over the church; there was not the slightest sound or movement in it.

A chair was pushed harshly over the tiles, there was a heavy shuffling of feet. Such sounds in that holy moment affected some of the worshippers as a physical blow might have done.

But few people looked up. Many of them did not hear the sound, their ears being tuned to harmonies that were not of

this world.

The doctor heard the noise with his ears, but for a merciful moment it did not penetrate to his brain. And then with a horrid clangour the visible things of the world came rushing back to him.

He looked up.

The four men just in front of him had risen in their places. The two tradesmen were red in the face and manifestly uneasy. They breathed hard, a breath of ostentatious defiance.

Young Hamlyn was glancing round the church with swift, malevolent movements of his head. His eyes flickered hither and thither until they finally settled on the motionless figure at the altar, the figure with the upstretched arm.

The elder Hamlyn held a paper in his hand, from which he began to read in a loud, unsteady voice:

"*I, Samuel Hamlyn, a lawful parishioner of St. Elwyn's parish, Hornham, do hereby rise and protest against the illegal and blasphemous fable of the Mass as performed in this church. And as a member of the Protestant Church of England I give notice——*"

Every one had risen to his feet. In a distant corner of the church, a woman began to shriek. A murmur broke into shouts, there was a crash of some heavy body falling.

A horrid tumult seemed broken loose, as if it had been confined till now and had broken its bars with one great effort.

In a second, the four men were surrounded by a pushing crowd of men, beside themselves with horror and anger. Sticks began to quiver in the air, the crash of the chairs as

they were overturned was like the dropping rattle of musketry fire.

The hard voice of the brawler had gone up a full tone. In its excitement, it dominated an abominable chorus of shouting.

In half a minute, the doctor and other members of the congregation had Hamlyn and his son gripped by the arms and were hurrying them towards the west door without any answer to their frantic threats and menaces. The other two men followed stolidly.

Nearly every face was turned away from the altar.

The one or two people who had fallen trembling upon their knees when the riot was at its height saw that the vicar was also kneeling in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

A loud metallic *clang* resounded through the church. The door was barred, the brawlers were shut out.

When the maimed, polluted rite was at last concluded, amid deep sobs from men and women alike, Father Blantyre gave the blessing. They saw with deep sympathy that the tears were rolling down his cheeks also.

But the doctor saw, with a sudden quickening of the pulses, that the first finger and the thumb were joined still. It is the custom of the priest, after he has broken the bread, that the finger and thumb are never parted till Mass is said.

They were not parted now.

The fact comforted and cheered the doctor. He had been on battle-fields and had not known the fear and horror he had known to-day.

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

MR. HAMLYN AND SON AT HOME

Table of Contents

Mr. Hamlyn lived in Alexandra Road, Hornham. The actual name of his house was "Balmoral," and it was one of seven or eight other residences gathered together under the generic title of "Beatrice Villas."

The father and son turned into the little path which led up to the imitation satin-wood door some twenty minutes after the gate of St. Elwyn's had been barred to them. Their companions, Mr. Burgoyne and Mr. Moffatt, had left them at the corner of the street, very flustered at what they had done, and with a dull remorse flitting about their thick skulls, that they had joined in "Hamlyn's little game." Nor did the repeated assurances of the journalist, that Mr. Herbert—the Liberal candidate—would "see them through it," help them to recover their peace of mind. Visions of police-court proceedings and an unenviable notoriety in the daily papers were very vivid, and they parted with their chief in mingled sorrow and anger.

Mr. Hamlyn let himself and his son into the little hall of his villa. A smell of roast meat gave evidence that dinner would soon be ready. Both men turned into the parlour on the left of the passage. It was a room which showed signs of fugitive rather than regular use. Two or three long boxes bearing the name of a local draper stood upon the round table in the centre. The contents showed that Miss Hamlyn,

the agitator's only daughter, had been occupied in the choice of corsets.

The walls of the parlour were covered with a rich mauve and gold paper, which gave a dignity to the cut-glass lustres of the chandelier. The pictures, heavily framed in gold, were spirited representations of scenes from the Old Testament. On the rack of the rosewood piano—which stood open—was a song called "Roses that Bloomed in my Heart."

The chairs, arranged around the wall with commendable regularity, were upholstered in plum-coloured plush. On one of them was a card-box of a vivid green, containing several clean collars of the particular sort Hamlyn Junior wore; on another stood the wooden box where his father's silk hat was kept when not in use on Sundays and other important days.

Mr. Hamlyn took off his frock coat and removed the reversible cuffs that were attached to the sleeves of his flannel shirt by means of an ingeniously contrived clip. He then put on a loose coat of black alpaca. His son, having gone through something of the same process, followed his father to the sitting-room next the little kitchen.

As the parlour was not often used for ceremonial occasions, the Hamlyns not being very hospitable people, it served as an occasional dressing-room also, and saved running up-stairs.

The sitting-room window looked out into the backyard, immediately by the kitchen door, which led into it. As the Hamlyns came in, they were able to see their servant throwing some hot liquid—the water in which the cabbage