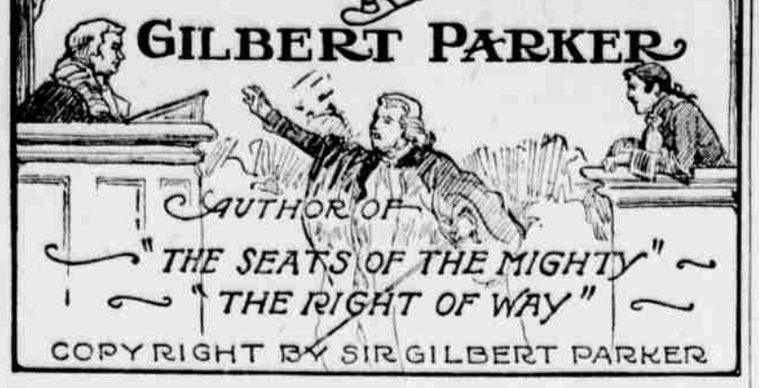
NO DEFENSE

By GILBERT PARKER



AUTHOR OF
"THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY"
"THE RIGHT OF WAY"

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"TO VIRGINIA!"

Synopsis. — Returning home after a day's shooting, Dyck Calhoun, gifted young Irish gentleman of the time of the French and American revolutions, meets Sheila Llyn, seventeen-year-old girl visiting in the neighborhood. They are mutually attracted. Sheila never knew her dissipated father, Erris Boyne, her mother having divorced him and resumed her maiden name. Reaching home, Dyck finds Leonard Mallow, son of Lord Mallow, with a message from the attorney general summoning Miles Calhoun, Dyck's father, to Dublin. They go to Dublin and there Mallow quarrels with Dyck and a duel is arranged. They fight with swords and Dyck is victor. Erris Boyne, secretly in French employ, gets Dyck drunk and tries to persuade him to join in revolt against England. They quarrel and Dyck is overheard to threaten Boyne. While the former is overcome with drugged wine, Boyne's second wife enters the room and stabs her faithless husband to the heart. Dyck is arrested on a charge of murder. He does not know if he killed Boyne or not, he was so muddled with the drugged wine. Sheila begs her mother to go to Dublin with her to help Dyck. Mrs. Llyn opposes the idea.

CHAPTER VI—Continued.)

Sheila took the letter. It ran as follows:

"Dearest Sister:

"It is eleven years since I wrote to you, and yet, though it may seem strange, there have not been eleven days in all the time in which I have not wished you and Sheila were here. Sheila—why, she is a young woman! She's about the age you were when I left Ireland, and you were one of the most beautiful and charming creatures God ever gave life to.

"My estate is neither north nor south, but farther south than north. In a sense it is always summer, but winter in my place would be like summer in Norway—just bitingly fresh, happily alert. I'm writing in the summer now. I look out of the window and see hundreds of acres of cotton fields, with hundreds upon hundreds of negroes at work. I hear the songs they sing, faint echoes of them, as I write. Yes, my black folk do sing, because they are well treated.

"Not that we haven't our troubles here. You can't administer thousands of acres, control hundreds of slaves, and run an estate like a piece of clockwork without creaks in the machinery. I've built it all up out of next to nothing. I landed in this country with my little fortune of two thousand pounds. This estate is worth at least a quarter of a million now. I've an estate in Jamaica, too. I took it for a debt. What it'll be worth in another twenty years I don't know. I shan't be here to see. I'm not the man I was physically, and that's one of the reasons why I'm writing to you to-day.

"I want you and Sheila to come here to me, to make my home your home, to take control of my household, and to let me see faces I love about me as the shadows infold me.

"This place, which I have called Moira, is to be yours,—or, rather, Sheila's. So, in any case, you will want to come and see the home I have made—this old colonial mansion, with its Corinthian pillars and veranda, high steps, hard-wood floors polished like a pan, every room hung in dimity and chintz, and the smell of fruit and flowers everywhere. You will want to see it all, and you'll want to live here. I have placed to your credit in the Bank of Ireland a thousand pounds. That will be the means of bringing you here—you and Sheila—to my door, to Moira. Let nothing save death, prevent your coming. As far as Sheila's eye can see—north, south, east and west—the land will be hers when I'm gone. Dearest sister, sell all things that are yours, and come to me. You'll not forget Ireland here. Whoever has breathed her air can never forget the hills and dells, the valleys and bogs, the mountains, with their mist of rain, the wild girls, with their bare ankles, their red petticoats, and their beautiful, reckless air. None who has ever breathed the air of Ireland can breathe in another land without memory of the ancient harp of Ireland. But it is as a memory—deep, wonderful, and abiding, yet a memory.

"Oh, believe me, I speak of what I know! I have been away from Ireland for a long time, and I'm never going back, but I'll bring Ireland to me. Come here, colleen, come to Virginia. Write to me, on the day you get this letter, that you're coming soon, because I feel the cords binding me to my beloved fields growing thinner. They'll soon crack, but, please God, they won't crack before you come here.

"Now with my love to you and Sheila I stretch out my hand to you. Take it. All that it has worked for is yours; all that it wants is you.

"Your loving brother,
"BRYAN."

As Sheila read, the tears started from her eyes; and at last she could read no longer, so her mother took the letter from her and read the rest of it aloud. When she had finished, there was a silence—a long warm silence; then, at last, Mrs. Llyn rose to her feet.

"Sheila, when shall we go?"

With frightened eyes Sheila sprang up.

"I said we must go to Dublin!" she murmured.

"Yes, we will go to Dublin, Sheila, but it will be on our way to Uncle Bryan's home."

Sheila caught her mother's hands.

"Mother," she said, after a moment of hesitation, "I must obey you!"

"It is the one way, my child—the one thing to do. Some one in prison

As Sheila Read, the Tears Started From Her Eyes.

calls—perhaps; some one far away who loves you, and needs us, calls—that we know. Tell me, am I not right? I ask you, where shall we go?"

"To Virginia, mother."

The girl's head dropped, and her eyes filled with tears.

CHAPTER VII

Dyck's Father Visits Him.

In vain Dyck's lawyer, Will McCormick, urged him to deny absolutely the killing of Erris Boyne. Dyck would not do so. He had, however, immediately on being jailed, written to the government, telling of the projected invasion of Ireland by the French fleet, and saying that it had come to him from a sure source. The government had at once taken action.

Regarding the death of Boyne, the only living thing in his favor was that his own sword-point was free from stain. His lawyer made the utmost of this, but to no avail. The impression in the court was that both men had been drinking; that they had quarreled, and that without a duel being fought Dyck had killed his enemy.

That there had been no duel was clear from the fact that Erris Boyne's sword was undrawn. The charge, however, on the instigation of the attorney general, who was grateful for the information about France, had been changed from murder to manslaughter, though it seemed clear that Boyne had been ruthlessly killed by a man whom he had befriended.

On one of the days of the trial, Dyck's father, bowed, morose, and obstinate, came to see him.

Miles Calhoun looked at his son with dejection. His eyes wandered over the grimly furnished cell. His nose smelled the damp of it, and suddenly the whole soul of him burst forth.

"You don't give yourself a chance of escape, Dyck! You know what Irish juries are. Why don't you tell the truth about the quarrel? What's the good of keeping your mouth shut, when there's many that would profit by your telling it?"

"Who would profit?" asked Dyck.

"Who would profit?" snarled the old man. "Well, you would profit first, for it might break the dark chain of circumstantial evidence. Also your father would profit. I'd be saved shame, perhaps; I'd get relief from this disgrace. Oh, man, think of others besides yourself!"

"Think of others!" said Dyck, and a queer smile lighted his haggard face. "I'd save myself if I honorably could."

The old man fumbled with a waistcoat button. His eyes blinked hard.

"You don't see," he continued, "the one thing that's plain to my eyes, and it's this—that your only chance of escape is to tell the truth about the quarrel. If the truth were told, whatever it is, I believe it would be to your credit—I'll say that for you. If it was to your credit, even if they believe you guilty of killing Erris Boyne, they'd touch you lightly. Ah, in the name of the mother you loved, I ask you to tell the truth about the quarrel! In the name of God——"

"Don't speak to me like that," interrupted Dyck, with emotion. "I've thought of all those things. I hold my peace because—because I hold my peace. To speak would be to hurt some one I love—aye, to hurt some one I love with all my soul."

"And you won't speak to save me—your father—because you don't love me with all your soul! Is that it?" asked Miles Calhoun.

"It's different—it's different."

"Ah, it's a woman!"

"Never mind what it is. I will not tell. There are things more shameful than death."

"Yes," snarled the old man. "Rather than save yourself, you bring dishonor upon him who gave you birth."

Dyck's face was submerged in color.

"Father," said he, "on my honor I wouldn't hurt you if I could help it, but I'll not tell the world of the quarrel between that man and myself. My silence may hurt you, but it would hurt some one else far more if I told."

"By God, I think you are some mad dreamer slipped out of the ancient fold! Do you know where you are? You're in jail. If you're found guilty, you'll be sent to prison at least for the years that'll spoil the making of your life; and you do it because you think you'll spare somebody. Well, I ask you to spare me. We've been a rough race, we Calhouns; we've done mad, bad things, perhaps, but none has shamed us before the world—none but you."

"I have never shamed you, Miles Calhoun," replied his son sharply. "As the ancients said, alis volat propriis—I will fly with my own wings. Come weal, come woe, come dark, come light, I have fixed my mind, and nothing shall change it. You loved my mother better than the rest of the world. You would have thought it no shame to have said so to your own father. Well, I say it to you—I'll stand by what my conscience and my soul have dictated to me. You call me a dreamer. Let it be so. I'm Irish; I'm a Celt. I've drunk deep of all that Ireland means. All that's behind me is my own, back to the shadowy kings of Ireland, who lost life and gave it because they believed in what they did. So will I. If I'm to walk the hills no more on the estate where you are master, let it be so. I have no fear; I want no favor. If it is to be prison, then it shall be prison. If it is to be shame, then let it be shame. These are days when men must suffer if they make mistakes. Well, I will suffer, fearlessly if helplessly, but I will not break the oath which I have taken. And so I will not do it—never—never—never!"

"But of one thing have you thought?" asked his father. "You will not tell the cause of the quarrel, for the reason that you might hurt somebody. If you don't tell the cause, and you are condemned, won't that hurt somebody even more?"

For a moment Dyck stood silent, absorbed. His face looked pinched,

"I Have Never Shamed You, Miles Calhoun."

his whole appearance shriveled. Then, with deliberation, he said:

"This is not a matter of expediency, but of principle. My heart tells me what to do, and my heart has always been right."

There was silence for a long time. At last the old man drew the cloak about his shoulders and turned toward the door.

"Wait a minute, father," said Dyck. "Don't go like that. You'd better not come and see me again. If I'm condemned, go back to Playmore; if I'm acquitted, go back to Playmore. That's the place for you to be. You've got your own troubles there."

"And you—if you're set free?"

"If I'm acquitted, I'll take to the high seas—till I'm cured."

A moment later, without further words, Dyck was alone. He heard the door clang.

He sat for some time on the edge of his bed, buried in dejection. Presently, however, the door opened.

"A letter for you, sir," said the jailer.

The light of the cell was dim, but Dyck managed to read the letter without great difficulty, as the writing was almost as precise as print. The sight of it caught his heart like a warm hand and pressed it. This was the substance of the letter:

"My Dear Friend:

"I have wanted to visit you in prison, but my mother has forbidden it, and so, even if I could be let to enter, I must not disobey her. I have not read the papers giving an account of your trial. I only know you are charged with killing a bad man, notorious in Dublin life, and that many think he got his just deserts in being killed.

"I will not believe that your fate is an evil one, that the law will grind you between the millstones of guilt and dishonor; but if the law should call you guilty, I still will not believe. Far away I will think of you, and believe in you, dear, masterful, madman friend. Yes, you are a madman, for Michael Clones told me—faith, he loves you well!—that you've been living a gay life in Dublin since you came here, and that the man you are accused of killing was in great part the cause of it.

"I think I never saw my mother so troubled in spirit as she is at this time. Of course, she could not feel as I do about you. It isn't that which makes her sad and haggard; it is that we are leaving Ireland behind.

"Yes, she and I are saying good-by to Ireland. That's why I think she might have let me see you before we went; but since it must not be, well, then, it must not. But we shall meet again. In my soul I know that on the hills somewhere far off, as on the first day we met, we shall meet each other once more. Where are we going? Oh, very far! We are going to my Uncle Bryan—Bryan Llyn, in Virginia. A letter has come from him urging us to make our home with him. You see, my friend—"

Then followed the story which Bryan Llyn had told her mother and herself, and she wrote of her mother's decision to go out to the new, great home which her uncle had made among the cotton fields of the South. When she had finished that part of the tale, she went on as follows:

"We shall know your fate only through the letters that will follow us, but I will not believe in your bad luck. Listen to me—why don't you come to America also? Oh, think it over! Don't believe the worst will come. When they release you from prison, innocent and acquitted, cross the ocean and set up your tent under the Stars and Stripes. Think of it! Nearly all those men in America who fought under Washington and won were born in these islands. They took with them to that far land the memory and love of these old homes. You and I would have fought for England and with the British troops, because we detest revolution. Here, in Ireland, we have seen its evils; and yet if we had fought for the Union Jack beyond the mountains of Maine and in the lonely woods, we should, I believe, in the end have said that the freedom fought for by the American states was well won.

"So keep this matter in your mind, as my mother and I will soon be gone. She would not let me come to you—I think I have never seen her so disturbed as when I asked her—and she forbade me to write to you; but I disobey her. Well, this is a sad business. I know my mother has suffered. I know her married life was unhappy, and that her husband—my father—died many a year ago, leaving a dark trail of regret behind him; but, you see, I never knew my father. That was all long ago, and it is a hundred times best forgotten.

"Our ship sails for Virginia in three days, and I must go. I will keep looking back to the prison where lies, charged with an evil crime, of which he is not guilty, a young man for whom I shall always carry the spirit of good friendship.

"Do not believe all will not go well. The thing to do is to keep the courage of our hearts and the faith of our souls, and I hope I always shall. I believe in you, and, believing, I say good-by. I say farewell in the great hope that somehow, somewhere, we shall help each other on the way of life. God be with you!

"I am your friend,

"SHEILA LLYN."

"P. S.—I beg you to remember that America is a good place for a young man to live in and succeed."

Dyck read the letter with a wonderful slowness. He realized that by happy accident—it could be nothing else—Mrs. Llyn had been able to keep from her daughter the fact that the man who had been killed in the tavern by the river was her father.

Sheila's ignorance must not be broken by himself. He had done the right thing—he had held his peace for the girl's sake, and he would hold it to the end. Slowly he folded up the letter, pressed it to his lips, and put it in the pocket over his heart

BOOK II

CHAPTER VIII.

Dyck Calhoun Enters the World Again.

"Is it near the time?" asked Michael Clones of his friend, as they stood in front of the prison.

His companion, who was seated on a stone, wrapped in dark-green coverings, faded and worn, and looking pinched with cold in the dour November day, said, without lifting his head:

"Seven minutes, an' he'll be out. God bless him!"

"And save him and protect him!" said Michael. "He deserved punishment no more than I did, and it's broke him. I've seen the gray gather at his temples, though he's only been in prison four years. He was condemned to eight, but they've let him free. I don't know why. Perhaps it was because of what he told the government about the French navy. I've seen the joy of life sob itself down to the sour earth. When I took him the news of his father's death, and told him the creditors were swallowing what was left of Playmore, what do you think he did?"

Old Christopher Dogan smiled; his eyes twinkled with a mirth which had more pain than gaiety.

"God love you, I know what he did. He flung out his hands and said, 'Let it go! It's nothing to me.' Michael, have I said true?"

Michael nodded.

"Almost his very words you've used, and he flung out his hands, as you said."

"Aye, he'll be changed; but they've kept the clothes he had when he went to prison and he'll come out in them, I'm thinking—"

"Ah, no!" interrupted Michael. "That can't be, for his clothes was stole. Only a week ago he sent to me for a suit of my own. I wouldn't have him wear my clothes—he a gentles man! It wasn't fitting. So I sent him a suit I bought from a shop, but he wouldn't have it. He would leave prison a poor man, as a peasant in peasant's clothes. So he wrote to me. Here is the letter." He drew from his pocket a sheet of paper, and spread it out. "See—read it. Ah, well, never mind," he added, as old Christopher shook his head. "Never mind, I'll read it to you!" Thereupon he read the note, and added: "We'll see him of the Calhouns risin' high beyant poverty and misfortune some day."

Old Christopher nodded.

"I'm glad Miles Calhoun was buried on the hilltop above Playmore. He had his day; he lived his life. Things went wrong with him, and he paid the price we all must pay for work ill-done."

"There you're right, Christopher Dogan, and I remember the day the downfall began. It was when him that's now Lord Mallow, governor of Jamaica, came to summon Calhoun to Dublin. Things were never the same after that; but I well remember one talk I had with Miles Calhoun just before his death: 'Michael,' he said to me, 'my family have had many ups and downs, and some that bear my name have been in prison before this, but never for killing a man out of fair fight.' 'One of your name may be in prison, sir,' said I, 'but not for killing a man out of fair fight. If you believe he did, there's no death bad enough for you!' He was silent for a while; then at last he whispered Mr. Dyck's name, and said to me: 'Tell him that as a Calhoun I love him, and as his father I love him ten times more. For, look you, Michael, though we never ran together, but quarreled and took our own paths, yet we are both Calhouns, and my heart is warm to him. If my son were a thousand times a criminal, nevertheless I would ache to take him by the hand.'"

"Hush! Look at the prison gate," said his companion and stood up.

As the gates of the prison opened, the sun broke through the clouds and gave a brilliant phase to the scene. Out of the gates there came slowly, yet firmly, dressed in peasant clothes, the stalwart but faded figure of Dyck Calhoun.

Terribly changed he was. He had entered prison with the flush upon his cheek, the tilt of young manhood in his eyes, with hair black and hands slender, and handsome. There was no look of youth in his face now. It was the face of a middle-aged man from which the dew of youth had vanished, into which life's storms had come and gone. Though the body was held erect, yet the head was thrust slightly forward, and the heavy eyebrows were like a penthouse. The eyes were slightly feverish, and round the mouth there crept a smile, half-cynical, but a little happy. All freshness was gone from his hands. One hung at his side, listless, corded; the other doffed his hat in reply to the salute of his two humble friends.

As the gates closed behind him he looked gravely at the two men, who were standing not a foot apart. There swept slowly into his eyes, enlarging, brightening them, the glamor of the Celtic soul. Of all Ireland, or all who had ever known him, these two were the only ones welcoming him into the world again!

Michael Clones, with his oval red face, big nose, steely eyes and steadfast bearing, had in him the soul of great kings. His hat was set firmly on his head. His knee breeches were neat, if coarse; his stockings were clean. His feet were well shod, his coat worn, and he had still the look that belongs to the well-to-do peasant. He was a figure of courage and endurance.

Dyck's hand went out to him and a warm smile crept to his lips.

"Michael—ever-faithful Michael!"

A moisture came to Michael's eyes. He did not speak as, with a look of gratitude, he clasped the hand Dyck offered him.

Presently Dyck turned to old Christopher with a kindly laugh.

"Well, old friend! You, too, come to see the stag set loose again? You're not many, that's sure." A grim, hard look came into his face, but both hands went out and caught the old man's shoulders affectionately. "This is no day for you to be waiting at prison's gates, Christopher; but there are two men who believe in me—two in all the world. It isn't the killing," he added after a moment's silence—"It isn't the killing that hurts so. If it's true that I killed Erris Boyne, what hurts most is the reason why I killed him."

"One way or another—does it matter now?" asked Christopher gently.

"It is that you think nothing matters since I've paid the price, sunk myself in shame, lost my friends and come out with not a penny left?" asked Dyck. "But yes," he added with a smile, wry and twisted. "Yes, I have a little left!"

He drew from his pocket four small pieces of gold, and gazed ironically at them in his palm.

"Look at them!" He held out his hand, so that the two men could see the little coins. "Those were taken from me when I entered prison. They've been in the hands of the head of the jail ever since. They give them to me now—all that's left of what I was."

"No, not all, sir," declared Michael. "There's something left from Playmore—there's ninety pounds, and it's in my pocket. It was got from the

"Michael—Ever-Faithful Michael!"

sale of your sporting kit. There was the boat upon the lake, the gun and all kinds of riffraff stuff not sold with Playmore."

Dyck nodded and smiled.

"Good Michael!"

Then he drew himself up stiffly and blew in and out his breath as if with the joy of living. For four hard years he had been denied the free air of free men. Even when walking in the prison yard, on cold or fair days, when the air was like a knife or when it had the sun of summer in it, it still had seemed to choke him.

In prison he had read, thought and worked much. They had at least done that for him. The attorney general had given him freedom to work with his hands, and to slave in the workshop like one whose living depended on it. Some philanthropic official had started the idea of a workshop, and the officials had given the best of the prisoners a chance to learn trades and make a little money before they went out into the world. All that Dyck had earned went to purchase things he needed, and to help his fellow prisoners or their families.

Where was he now? The gap between the old life of nonchalance, frivolity, fantasy and excitement was as great as that between heaven and hell. Here he was, after four years of prison, walking the highway with two of the humblest creatures of Ireland, and yet, as his soul said, two of the best.

Stalking along in thought, he suddenly became conscious that Michael and Christopher had fallen behind. He turned round.

"Come on. Come on with me."

But the two shook their heads.

"It's not fitting, you a Calhoun of Playmore!" Christopher answered.

"Well, then, listen to me," said Dyck, for he saw the men could not bear his new democracy. "I'm hungry. In four years I haven't had a meal that came from the right place or went to the right spot. Is the little tavern, the Hen and Chicken, on the Liffeyside, still going? I mean the place where the seamen and the merchant-ship officers visit."

Michael nodded.

"Well, look you, Michael—get you both there, and order me as good a meal of fish and chops and baked pudding as can be bought for money. Aye, and I'll have a bottle of red French wine and you two will have what you like best. Mark me, we'll sit together there, for we're one of a kind. I've got to take to a life that fits me, an ex-jailbird, a man that's been in prison for killing!"

"There's the king's army," said Michael. "They make good officers in it."

A strange, half-sore smile came to Dyck's thin lips.

"Michael," said he, "give up these vain illusions. I was condemned for killing a man not in fair fight. I can't enter the army as an officer, and you should know it. The king himself could set me up again; but the distance between him and me is ten times round the world and back again! No, my friends, what is in my mind now is that I'm hungry. For four years I've eaten the bread of prison, and it's soured my mouth and galled my belly. Go you to that inn and make ready a good meal."

Dyck enlists as a quota man in the British navy.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)