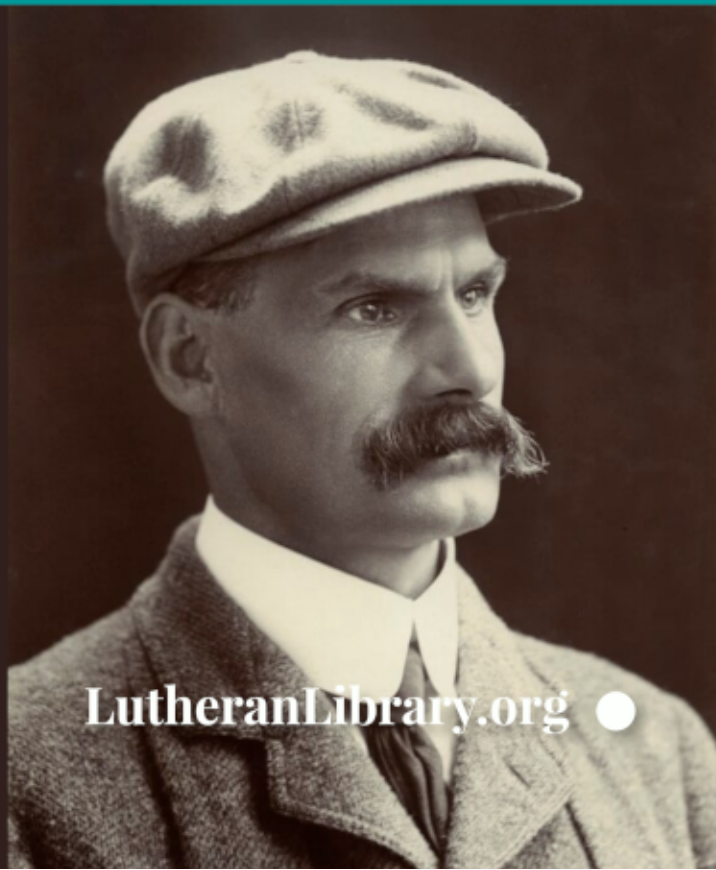


**Joseph Hocking**

**The Woman of  
Babylon**



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost.  
– Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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"HE PLAYED THE ACCOMPANIMENT ON THE NEW PIANO."  
(p. 115.)

THE

# WOMAN OF BABYLON

BY

JOSEPH HOCKING

*Author of "A Flame of Fire,"*

*"The Scarlet Woman,"*

*"The Purple Robe," etc.*

22ND THOUSAND

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# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
A DOMESTIC PROBLEM . . . . .	3
CHAPTER II.	
FATHER BRANDON PAYS A CALL . . . . .	13
CHAPTER III.	
FATHER BRANDON MAKES INQUIRIES . . . . .	23
CHAPTER IV.	
"LEGAL, BUT NOT LAWFUL!" . . . . .	33
CHAPTER V.	
"I SHALL HAVE TO TAKE COUNSEL" . . . . .	41
CHAPTER VI.	
"A JESUIT IS A DIPLOMATIST ALWAYS" . . . . .	51
CHAPTER VII.	
THE COMING OF FATHER RITZOOM . . . . .	59
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE LAWYER AND THE PRIEST . . . . .	69
CHAPTER IX.	
THE SHADOW OF THE PRIEST . . . . .	80
CHAPTER X.	
JOYCE'S HOME-COMING . . . . .	90
CHAPTER XI.	
FATHER AND DAUGHTER . . . . .	100
CHAPTER XII.	
THE OLD, OLD STORY . . . . .	110

	PAGE
CHAPTER XIII.	
" WE CAN DO IN ENGLAND WHAT WE CANNOT DO IN SPAIN "	121
CHAPTER XIV.	
" I LOVE YOU—BUT I AM AFRAID ! " . . . .	132
CHAPTER XV.	
THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH . . . . .	143
CHAPTER XVI.	
HARRINGTON AND RAYMOND . . . . .	154
CHAPTER XVII.	
THE FATHER AND THE PRIEST . . . . .	164
CHAPTER XVIII.	
THE LOVER AND THE JESUIT . . . . .	174
CHAPTER XIX.	
" AN ENGLISH CONVENT IS A SEALED HOUSE " . . . .	184
CHAPTER XX.	
THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH . . . . .	194
CHAPTER XXI.	
THE CONVENT OF OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS . . . .	203
CHAPTER XXII.	
FATHER JETSAM'S OPINIONS . . . . .	212
CHAPTER XXIII.	
PREPARATION . . . . .	221
CHAPTER XXIV.	
TAKING THE WHITE VEIL . . . . .	231
CHAPTER XXV.	
RAYMOND AND HARRINGTON . . . . .	241
CHAPTER XXVI.	
FATHER RITZOOM'S CLEVERNESS . . . . .	251

CONTENTS.

vii

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXVII.	
HUSBAND AND WIFE . . . . .	261
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
THE LAW IN RELATION TO CONVENTS . . . . .	271
CHAPTER XXIX.	
FATHER RITZOOM'S CONFIDENCE . . . . .	280
CHAPTER XXX.	
RAYMOND GOES TO THE OLD HOME . . . . .	289
CHAPTER XXXI.	
THE NEWSPAPER PARAGRAPH . . . . .	298
CHAPTER XXXII.	
HARRINGTON AND RITZOOM . . . . .	308
CHAPTER XXXIII.	
HARRINGTON'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR . . . . .	318
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
THE WOMAN AND THE NUN . . . . .	328
CHAPTER XXXV.	
A REBELLIOUS NUN . . . . .	337
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
GREEK MEETS GREEK . . . . .	347

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

" He played the accompaniment on the new piano " . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
" The children knelt around his knee and offered their simple prayers " . . . . .	<i>To face page 50</i>
" ' Guard yourself against him in every way ' " . . . "	102
" ' Will you obey God or Mammon ? ' " . . . . "	144
" ' To what am I indebted for the pleasure of your visit, gentlemen ? " . . . . .	170
" He made a movement as if to leap from the bed " . . "	200
" A look of terror came into her eyes " . . . . "	254
" She flung herself into his arms " . . . . .	308

# THE WOMAN OF BABYLON.

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# THE WOMAN OF BABYLON.

## CHAPTER I.

### A DOMESTIC PROBLEM.

WALTER RAYMOND walked home from his office in a very thoughtful frame of mind. He felt that the subject which for months had been occupying his attention had become pressing. Action of some sort must soon be taken. His eldest daughter was now eighteen years of age, and in the ordinary course of things her education should be approaching completion. But he knew that such was not the case. In spite of his utmost endeavours, he had never been able to send her to a good school, and, even had he been able to afford the necessary money, his wife's health was so delicate that the girl could be ill spared from home.

Walter Raymond had married for love, and, in spite of the hardships which his marriage had entailed, he had never regretted it. The nineteen years which had passed since he had refused to obey his father, who commanded him to take another woman for his wife, had been, on the whole, very happy. But for his wife's delicate health, and the smallness of his means, scarcely a cloud had appeared in his sky. Even when he thought of what might have been if he had obeyed his father, he did not repent. For he felt that his father had been harsh and unreasonable. He was a rich man, who seemed to believe in little else than the power of riches; therefore his great desire concerning his only son Walter was that he should marry a rich wife. Such a one he had chosen for him. But Walter had learnt to love another,

and, threaten as old Walter Raymond might, he could not alter his boy's decision.

"I tell you," cried the older man, "I know what poverty means. For years I struggled on a crust, and although at length I made money, my struggles made me an old man before my time. And I tell you this: unless you obey my wishes, not one penny of my money shall you have—no, not one penny."

"But," answered the son, "I do not love Miss Blight. No doubt she is all you have described her to be, but she is six years older than I, and looks old enough to be my mother."

"All the better," replied the father. "She is not one of your dressy, expensive minxes. She knows the value of sixpence, and will not throw it foolishly away. Besides, just think of it. She will bring you £40,000, if she will bring you a penny. Put that beside the sum which I will give you, and you will be the richest man for miles around. Anyhow, I have made up my mind. Either you marry her, or you get not a brass farthing from me. Why, think of that little doll Lucy Bennett that you are so fond of! Her father is despised everywhere. And no wonder, for he's willing to sell himself to any blackguard for five pounds, and yet if you sell him up to-morrow he isn't worth five pounds. A ditchwater lawyer with ten children! What can he do for you?"

"I have known Lucy for years, and loved her," replied the lad.

"Like father, like child. A rogue's child is sure to have some of her father's blood. Besides, even if she's all you think she is, you can't live on love."

"Life is worth nothing without it," was the lad's reply.

The next time he saw Lucy Bennett he had told her what his father had said, and when the tears welled up into her eyes as she besought him to give her up, young Walter, boy-like, proposed that they should get married right away.

It was a mad thing to do, but a few days later they were married by special licence in a Congregational church. The minister who officiated had just left college, and knew nothing about them. Moreover, it was the first time he had performed the marriage ceremony, and he thought far more about the strangeness of the ordeal through which he was passing than of the boy and girl who made their marriage vows in his presence. The registrar smiled as they walked



into the vestry to sign the necessary papers, and as he pocketed his fee he wondered what old Walter Raymond would say when he heard of what had been done.

What Walter Raymond did say when his son told him was very expressive. He drove him from his house, and forbade him ever to darken his doors again.

And so it happened that young Walter Raymond, having only just taken his degree at Cambridge, was married at twenty-two years of age, and possessed, after paying his marriage fees, just twenty-two pounds ten shillings, being the sum he had saved out of the allowance his father had made him while he was an undergraduate.

Old Ezra Bennett grinned when he was told of the marriage. He reflected that his son-in-law's father was a very wealthy man, and, although he would be angry at first, would finally relent and restore him to favour. In that way his daughter Lucy would become one of the wealthiest women in the county.

So he wrote to a lawyer in London, who was at length persuaded to give young Walter a clerkship in his office at a small salary.

Thus it came about that Walter and Lucy came to London, and obtained apartments in the region of Battersea Park, where lodgings were plentiful and comparatively cheap.

Walter was not a brilliant young man, but he possessed a fair stock of common sense and a capacity for work. During his spare hours, therefore, he studied law, and through the kindness of the lawyer for whom he worked he obtained his articles, and presently became qualified to practise.

When their first baby was born a year after their marriage, he sent his father a letter, telling him of the event, and also informing him that they had named the little baby girl Joyce, after his (Walter's) mother, who had died years before. To this he had received no reply, and although the young fellow wrote on three subsequent occasions, no answer of any sort was elicited. Indeed, his last two letters were returned unopened.

Lucy's health, never robust, was always very unsatisfactory after the birth of Joyce. She was constantly ailing, and then Walter, who had been tenderly reared and surrounded by many luxuries as a boy and youth, found himself as a married man doing the work of a domestic servant. He was up before seven each morning, he lit the fire, cooked the breakfast, cleaned his boots, and did a great deal of house-

hold work before going to his office. But he never complained. He loved his wife very dearly, and she, in spite of the natural irritation which results from debilitated nerves, was a fond and devoted wife.

As the years went by other children were born to them, first a boy—who died at his birth—and then two more girls, whom he named Rachel and Madaline respectively. In spite of his increased family, however, his circumstances were not so hard as they had been during the first three years of his marriage. He had joined three others in the rent of an office, and, although he had never obtained a large practice, he made an income which met their frugal needs. Indeed, as I have said, Walter Raymond was very happy, although having to exist on very slender means. Had Lucy been in better health, and could he have obtained his father's forgiveness, he would have been perfectly happy, even although he lived in comparative poverty.

When Madaline was four years old, a son was born to them. This boy they named Walter, not because he desired to perpetuate his own name, but because of his father, of whom he still thought with affection.

But now a problem faced him. At the time this story opens Joyce, the eldest child, was eighteen years of age—a bright, beautiful, and impressionable girl. Had she possessed educational advantages, she would have made good use of them, for she was quick to learn and eager for knowledge; but, owing to her mother's delicate health, the child had been obliged to take a great many of her mother's duties upon herself. At eighteen, therefore, although bright and clever, she could not have passed a fifth standard examination at a Board school. This grieved Walter greatly. He had done his best during the evenings to help her, but there were so many household duties to perform, and so many things to do for the younger children, that the poor child was little more than a drudge.

“If anything were to happen to me,” reflected the poor fellow, “I can see nothing for the children but domestic service.”

And he was perfectly right. Even Joyce, the eldest, was, sad to relate, behind Board school children of twelve or thirteen in general knowledge.

Lately, however, things had taken a brighter turn. Lucy's health had so much improved, and Walter's position had so much bettered, that he seriously considered the ques-

tion of sending Joyce to a good school. But here his difficulty came. The fees at good schools were more than he could afford. He had made diligent inquiries, and he discovered that, economise as he might, he could not send Joyce away to school, bearing in mind clothes and ordinary necessities, for less than sixty or seventy pounds a year. It was true there was a middle class school near where he lived, and where the fees were not exorbitant; but he reflected that there was little chance for Joyce to attend to home studies, and the girl had become so accustomed to household duties that he knew she would want to help her mother when she ought to be doing her school work.

He had noticed, moreover, that Joyce had shown quite a gift in languages. It was remarkable with what ease she picked up words in French and German, and Walter longed that his child should become proficient in these tongues.

An educated man himself, he felt Joyce's ignorance very keenly. And yet he could not have helped himself. Being the eldest child, she had naturally taken her mother's place and attended to the younger children, while her own education had suffered. In vain he cudgelled his brains. In spite of his increased practice, he could not afford to pay seventy to a hundred pounds a year for Joyce to go to a good school. He was a proud man, and he could not bear the thought of his child being dressed less stylishly than the other children who would be her companions. Thirty or even forty pounds he might have managed by rigid economy, but not more. He remembered the other three, and that he must do his duty by them.

Once he thought of appealing to his father, but he refrained. His last two letters had been returned unopened, and he was too proud to write again, especially when the next communication would probably suffer the same fate.

On the day my story opens, however, something had happened. Not much, but enough to send Walter Raymond from his office in a thoughtful frame of mind. About four o'clock that afternoon a client had called, and after he was gone Walter noticed that he had left a paper behind him. It was of no consequence, he thought; people do not trouble about penny newspapers. So he let it lie on the chair, while he went on with his work. When closing hour had arrived, he prepared to go home, and was on the point of throwing the paper into the waste-paper basket when he noticed the heading—*The Catholic Times*.

“ Oh, I remember,” he said; “ Dilton is a Roman Catholic. I wonder what this thing is like? ”

He glanced through its pages casually, but, seeing nothing of importance, was about to throw it down, when he was struck by the educational advertisement column.

“ My word,” he said to himself presently, “ I had no idea of such a thing. Here should be all I need,” and he read for a second time an advertisement that particularly struck him.

“ School of St. Mary the Martyr. High-class educational establishment. French and German by native teachers. Drawing, mathematics, history, literature, etc. etc. Special attention to English girls, who are prepared for educational vocations. Liberal table. Fine old house and grounds. Gymnasiums, swimming baths, fields for sports, comforts of home. All the teachers have the best diplomas. No religious bias. Terms, £20 per annum. Apply the Mother Superior, School of St. Mary the Martyr, Bruges, Belgium.”

“ Twenty pounds a year! ” cried Walter. “ Why, even I could afford that. I could even send Rachel at the same time,” and he read the advertisement again.

“ Evidently it is one of those Roman Catholic schools,” he considered. “ I suppose all the teachers will be nuns, and will therefore work for nothing; but I should have thought that even then they could not afford to keep a well-grown girl for twenty pounds a year.”

With that he started to walk from the City towards Battersea, still pondering over what he had seen.

“ I don't altogether like it,” he thought presently, as he made his way along the Embankment. “ This school will be completely under priestly control, and the idea doesn't please me that Joyce shall be placed amidst such associations. Still, I daresay that, like all Protestants, I'm prejudiced. My father brought me up with the idea that Romanism was an enemy to the race, and, although history seems to support his contention, I've no doubt it's all exaggerated. Besides, it's clearly stated that there would be no religious bias. Yes, this is surely my way out of the difficulty.”

And yet he was not quite satisfied. Not that Walter Raymond could be accused of having narrow religious ideas. Indeed, some would not have called him a religious man at all. It was not often he went to any place of worship. Occasionally of a Sunday evening he went to church if any preacher of note visited the neighbourhood, but this did not often hap-

pen. Moreover, on these occasions he did not trouble whether the preacher were a Nonconformist or an Episcopalian. He went because he liked to hear a well-reasoned address, and then came away thinking but very little about it. On the other hand, he was not irreligious. He was as honest as the day, and hated anything like meanness and lies. He had taught his children to be truthful, and pure, and upright, and to believe in an over-ruling Power. If anyone had asked him for his religious creed, he would have said with Tennyson, "I believe in One Who watches over us, and that personality does not cease with death." But he allied himself to no church, even although he encouraged his children to attend some place of worship every Sunday. Those who knew him best thought of him as a quiet, thoughtful, hard-working man, honest to the heart's core, and one who tried to do his duty by all men.

Thus, if he hesitated about sending his eldest daughter to what he imagined was a convent school, it was not because of narrow religious prejudices. Rather, it was something which he could not very well put into words.

"After all," he said to himself again presently, "my father is a strong Protestant, and his Protestantism has made him neither kind nor forgiving. Anyhow, I will speak to Lucy about it to-night, and then we shall be able to decide."

When he entered the house Joyce ran to meet him. As I have said, she was a bright, handsome girl, and promised to be a beautiful woman. Walter kissed her affectionately, and laughed more heartily than usual as side by side they walked into the dining-room, where Mrs. Raymond sat.

"Well, Lucy, how have you been to-day?" he asked.

"Oh, much better, Walter," she said brightly. "I am really hoping that I have at last lost those terrible headaches."

"Thank Heaven," said Walter, as he looked at her pale face. "Perhaps," he said presently, "I shall be able to take you to Broadstairs, or some such place, for a few days."

"Why, has business been better?" she asked eagerly.

"It hasn't become worse, anyhow. Besides, I'm inclined to think that a good thing will come in my way. If it does—well, we shall see. But I am glad you've had a good day, little wife."

Lucy Raymond had somewhat faded during the nineteen years of her married life, but it was still plainly to

be seen that she must have been very pretty in her girlhood, and that even now, if she could regain her health, could become a handsome woman.

"Oh, yes, I have had a good day; indeed, for weeks I've been better, and with the summer coming on I'm full of hope."

During dinner the little family chatted pleasantly together. It was easy to see that perfect trust and confidence existed between them. Moreover, it was evident that there was a perfect comradeship between father and children. They told him of their experiences through the day, while the wife trusted and loved him completely.

Later, when the children had retired, Walter broached the subject of which he had been thinking.

"Read that, Lucy," he said to his wife, passing her the advertisement.

"It is very cheap, but I do not like it," she said.

"Why?"

"I do not like these Catholic schools."

"Do you know anything against them?"

"No, indeed; I have heard that the education given is exceedingly good—far better than can be found in most other schools. But still, the teachers will be all nuns."

"Yes, I suppose so; but you see what they say: 'No religious bias.'"

"Do you believe that?"

"Why not? I do not see how they could dare to urge Catholic dogmas when they promise not to. You see, whether Catholic or Protestant, we must assume that they are honourable people. All the same, I think I understand your feeling. The whole atmosphere and influence of the place will be Catholic. Must be, in fact. The children must be constantly associated with Catholic forms and Catholic expressions. Still, I don't think we need to fear for Joyce. She is a bright, intelligent girl, although her education has been so sadly neglected. Besides, you see how cheap it is. Twenty pounds a year!"

"But I don't suppose she would be able to go to a Protestant church. I doubt whether one exists in Bruges."

"Well, and what then? There is nothing much in the churches here, Protestant though they pretend to be, that would help her much."

"Still, I don't like the idea of Joyce becoming a Catholic."

"There is no reason why that should happen. I should

have a good talk with her before she went away; indeed, I should make every possible inquiry before taking any definite steps. But here is the truth, Lucy. The child's lack of education saddens me terribly. Of course, we couldn't help it, and no one is to be blamed. Even now my income is very small—so small that I could not afford to send her to such a school as I should like here in England. Indeed, unless we take such a step as this, I do not see how she is to have an education befitting a lady. If this turns out all right, the other children could go later, and thus they would all have an inexpensive but a really good education."

"Yes, there is a great deal in it," conceded Mrs. Raymond. "How did you get hold of the paper?"

"Mr. Dilton left it at my office."

"Oh, I see. Of course, I know Mrs. Dilton a little. They are very respectable people, and they might know a good deal about it. What do you say to my calling on Mrs. Dilton and asking her to tell me what she knows?"

"Not at all a bad idea," replied Walter. "There's the bell ringing. I should not be at all surprised if that is not Harrington."

"Who's he?"

"He's a young barrister who is sure to rise. I think I shall brief him if the affair of which I spoke to you comes off."

"You'll not speak to him about Joyce's school?"

"Not at present, certainly. He knows nothing of our circumstances."

A minute later a young fellow stood in the room who from personal appearance perfectly justified Walter Raymond's prophecy concerning him. He was a keen-eyed yet happy-looking fellow, full of vivacity and merriment; at the same time one who gave evidence of a sane judgment, and with intellectual powers beyond the ordinary.

The two men chatted an hour over a pipe concerning a law case in which they were both interested, and then Walter Raymond prepared to go to bed.

"I almost wish I'd spoken to Ned Harrington about that school," remarked Walter to his wife when he had gone.

"Why?"

"He's such a sane fellow. I never knew a man who could go to the bottom of things so quickly. Moreover, young as he is, he has had a great deal of experience. Mark my words, Lucy: in less than ten years from now that fellow will be at the top of the tree."

“ I should like our boy Walter to be a barrister.”

“ So should I. Still, there’s time enough to think about him. Joyce is my supreme care just now. You’ll be sure and call on Mrs. Dilton to-morrow, won’t you? ”

“ Yes, I’ll not forget.”

“ But meanwhile we will say nothing about it to Joyce. I should not like to raise hopes in the child’s heart which might never be fulfilled.”

“ I’ll be careful. Oh, Walter, I’m hoping now that the future will be really bright. I know, owing to my bad health, I’ve been an awful burden—and—and if you had only married as your father desired——”

“ You be quiet, little wife,” said Walter, kissing her. “ I could never have been happy with anyone else. Besides, in spite of our poverty, we have been happy. And now you are going to get better—I feel sure of it. So, with Joyce’s education provided for, and my prospects a bit brighter, why, it’s simply grand.”

The next night, when Walter Raymond came back from his office, there was a look of pleasant excitement in his wife’s eyes, as though she had good news to communicate.



## CHAPTER II.

### FATHER BRANDON PAYS A CALL.

“WELL, I’ve seen Mrs. Dilton,” said Mrs. Raymond, as soon as she was alone with her husband.

“That’s right. Well, what did she say?”

“She said she knew of several children of Protestant families who had been to Catholic schools on the Continent.”

“Yes, and how did they turn out?”

“Splendidly. She says that the children have returned, and have not ceased to be Protestants. It is true they have had a lot of silly prejudices destroyed, but nothing more. Do you know, she’s sending her own girl there, so she would be a nice companion for Joyce.”

“Did she give you the address of any of these parents?”

“Yes; she gave me two—here they are.”

“Well, this seems perfectly straightforward. Still, I’ll make further inquiries.”

“There is something else I have to tell you. Mrs. Dilton says she knows a priest who is perfectly acquainted with the school. He has lived in Bruges, in fact, and often visited it. He knows the Mother Superior personally, and could give first-hand information.”

“Yes,” said Walter, slowly and thoughtfully.

“Besides, Mrs. Dilton told me that she was constantly seeing Father Brandon, and that she would tell him to call on us. I told her you were never home except during the evenings,” she added.

“But we cannot expect a busy priest to call on us,” said Walter.

“That’s what I remarked to Mrs. Dilton,” replied Mrs. Raymond, “but she said that Father Brandon would be delighted. He is an Irishman, it appears, and is the very soul of kindness. I should think he must be a very nice man, too; Mrs. Dilton made me laugh immoderately at some of his stories. I should like you to hear them.”

“Did she say when she thought he might be able to call?”

“ No, but I told her that one evening was almost as good as another to us, as you always stayed in with me. Then she asked me if to-night would do, and I said you would be in to-night.”

“ So he might call to-night? ”

“ Of course, he might. I do not suppose he will, but after his work is over he might drop in.”

“ Anyhow, I'll write a letter to these people whose addresses you have given me,” said Walter, “ and I might also drop a line to the Mother Superior right away. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that this is the right step to take. The curriculum of the school is exceedingly good ; languages are taught by native teachers, while everything else seems satisfactory. For the life of me I cannot see how they can afford to do it for twenty pounds a year, though.”

“ There are other advantages too,” said Mrs. Raymond eagerly. “ Mrs. Dilton says that if there are a certain number of pupils they can travel to Bruges at a specially reduced rate.”

“ In any case, the travelling cannot be very dear,” said Walter. “ The fare from here to Dover is only a few shillings, while I know it is very cheap to get to Brussels. I've often seen advertisements. And Bruges is far nearer to London than Brussels. Why, I daresay we might avail ourselves of cheap trips, and go across ourselves sometimes—that is, if my practice goes on well.”

“ That would be splendid,” said Mrs. Raymond, and Walter noted with pleasure how much better she seemed.

He sat down and wrote the three letters of which he spoke, and scarcely had he finished the last when the door-bell rang.

Walter went to the door himself, and when he opened it saw a man dressed in clerical attire.

“ Excuse me for calling at this unearthly hour,” said that gentleman, “ but I was just passing, and as Mrs. Dilton told me that you were interested in a school in Bruges I thought I might as well drop in.”

“ You are Father Brandon? ” said Walter.

“ Yes, that's my name.”

“ This is indeed kind of you,” said Walter heartily. “ I am very glad to see you ; come in, will you? ”

Father Brandon was a well-dressed, well-fed-looking man of about forty years of age. Moreover, he looked young for

his years, and had an air of *bonhomie* that was very pleasant to the hard-working lawyer. He looked as cheerful and light-hearted as a boy, and his round, clean-shaven cheeks fairly shone.

"He does not look as though he fasted much, at any rate," thought Walter. "Well, all the better. I hate these cadaverous, bloodless-looking parsons."

"I smell tobacco smoke," said the priest with a laugh, after he had been introduced to Mrs. Raymond.

"Yes," said Walter. "Will you have a cigar?" And he turned to the cupboard which contained a box of cigars which he could not afford to smoke himself but kept for visitors.

"I would rather join you with a pipe, if I may," said the priest. "There's nothing like a pipe for real comfort. Ah, this is splendid!"

He sat down in the armchair beside the fire, and stretched out his legs with evident enjoyment.

"The English winters last as long as they can, don't they?" he said. "Here we are at the beginning of April, and still the nights are cold. Still, thank God the winter is drawing to a close. My parishioners are mostly poor, and the suffering through the cold weather has been terrible. Look here, sir; the Government ought to do something definite. Work should be provided for every man. It's the only remedy, sir—the only remedy. I have begged and borrowed, and almost stolen, for my people, and still I've only been able to touch the fringe of the poverty. But in a rich country like this it is a shame. A million or so a year devoted to relief works, and poverty would be impossible—impossible. And yet we spend untold millions on warships, and leave people starving!"

He grew quite enthusiastic. He spoke with fluency and fervour, and manifested such heartfelt sympathy with the poor that Walter's heart warmed towards him.

"This is a man, and not a priest," he said to himself. "What do I care what his creed is when he gives his life to working for the poor?"

"But I must really ask your forgiveness," said Father Brandon at length. "I did not mean to talk in this way, but my people tell me I am a perfect fanatic when I get talking about such questions. Mrs. Dilton told me that you had seen an advertisement about a school in Bruges, and thought of sending your daughter there."

"Yes," said Walter, "and my wife tells me that you know it intimately."

"I worked in Bruges for two years, and visited the school often. A first-rate school, Mr. Raymond. In fact, you might search the Continent all over, and not find a better."

"You know the Mother Superior?"

"Yes, I know her."

"Can you tell me something about her?"

"I am almost afraid to do so, Mr. Raymond. You are a lawyer, I'm told, and lawyers always suspect extravagant statements. But I only know one fault that she has."

"And that?"

"She is too good, too kind, too indulgent."

"You mean that she is not a good disciplinarian?"

"Yes and no. The truth is, she rules by love. She does not believe in punishment of any sort. As a consequence you find a different atmosphere there from that of any school I know of. There is so much freedom, so much laughter. And yet, mark you, the pupils never break over the traces. Although she never uses force, they all love to obey her."

"Of course, it is a Catholic school?"

"Certainly."

"I notice that the advertisement states that no religious bias is given."

"Certainly not. It is a school, and is carried on on strictly educational lines. Not a word is said to Protestant children about religion—not a word. They are not asked nor expected to go to church. Some go, I suppose, out of curiosity, but no influence is exerted. It is a sort of go-as-you-please establishment in that direction; nevertheless, there is no better governed school in Europe."

"It's not a charity school in any form?"

"Most decidedly not. And yet, let me be exact. The school, which was an old mansion, was given to the Church for educational purposes. A rich Flemish gentleman who believed in education, gave it, and fitted it up as a school, only stipulating that the education should be cheap, and that it should be open to all religions and all nationalities. Splendid idea, wasn't it?"

"I have wondered how it could be done for the money."

"It does seem wonderful, doesn't it? But the Mother Superior went into figures with me. First of all, there are no teachers' salaries. Neither Mother Superior nor nuns

take a penny of any sort. Then the grounds given to the school grow nearly all that is necessary for food. Besides, things are cheap in Belgium, and what has to be bought can be obtained for sums that seem impossible here in England. As a matter of fact, the fees just cover the cost of keeping the pupils. And I can tell you they feed well. I have been there, and I know. Ha—ha ! ”

“ On Fridays ? ”

“ I’ll be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Raymond. On Fridays all the pupils, Protestant as well as Catholic, live on a fish and vegetable diet. That is a rule, and is strictly adhered to. ”

“ Well, I see nothing to object to in that. Plenty of fish once a week is not going to hurt anyone. For that matter, although I don’t carry it out, I’m in theory a vegetarian. ”

“ So am I—in theory ; but in practice, ha—ha ! No, no ; not in practice ! Give me a good juicy steak, in spite of all the vegetarian arguments. As for the girls—you should see them, Mrs. Raymond. Rosy-cheeked and plump, every one of them. Oh, you need have no fear on that score. ”

After this, both Mr. and Mrs. Raymond asked many other questions, which the priest answered readily and frankly. An hour after, when Father Brandon left the house, all their fears had disappeared.

“ I never saw a nicer fellow, ” said Walter heartily. “ Not a bit of a parson about him, except his clothes. ”

“ And so broad-minded too, ” said Mrs. Raymond ; “ far more so than the Church of England clergy, or, for that matter, than many Nonconformist ministers. ”

“ Just what I thought, ” said Walter. “ He had no pious cant, neither did he adopt any professional airs. ”

“ Yes, he’s just splendid. I’m glad you asked him to drop in and smoke a pipe with you sometimes. It must be very tame for you, having only me and the children. ”

“ That’s all nonsense, ” said Walter ; “ all nonsense. I’ve never felt the want of anyone but you. It’s true we have not made many friends, and that fact, I expect, has drawn us more closely together. But it will be a hard pull to part with Joyce, even although we know she’s well cared for. ”

The answers to the inquiries which Walter sent out proved so eminently satisfactory that it was eventually decided for Joyce to go to Bruges, and a week or two later she went away

with a light heart and many pleasant anticipations. It is true Walter could not help feeling sad at her departure, and, as he declared again and again, the house did not seem the same without her. Still, as he received letters, full of good news and pleasant experiences in connection with her school life, he felt as though the paper which Mr. Dilton had accidentally left in his office was almost like a dispensation of Providence.

Meanwhile, Father Brandon paid an occasional call at the house when Walter was at home. He read Joyce's letters with evident satisfaction, and laughed heartily at the stories which she related.

"Didn't I tell you?" he said again and again. "I tell you there's not a better girls' school in Europe—no, not in Europe. You mark my words: when she comes home at the end of a year or so you'll hardly know her. You'll find her brighter, smarter, and with that air which only the Continent can give. Oh, I know what you would say, and no one can admire the sterling worth of the English character more than I. But there is something about those people on the Continent. 'Style' is the best word I can give it. Why, place two girls before me now, one educated in your best English schools and the other educated at such a school as that where your daughter is gone, and I could tell in a moment. The girl educated in the English school would lack the *verve*, the *esprit*, the *savoir-faire*, and the polish of the other. Let them both seek a situation as governess in a high class family, and I know which would get it. Let the English schoolgirl try and talk French and German, and then let the other speak. There is all the world of a difference!"

To this kind of talk both Walter and his wife listened with eagerness, and at each visit both had a higher opinion of the happy, hard-working priest.

Unconsciously too—and especially was this true of Mrs. Raymond—all their prejudices concerning Roman Catholics were removed.

"What does it matter?" said Walter again and again. "Religion is only a matter of association and temperament. If I had been born in a Catholic country, I should have been in all probability a Catholic. And even if I had—well, what then? You can't expect all the world to see alike, and there are good people among all religions."

As for Mrs. Raymond, her association with Father Brandon had led her to attend some of the services at a Roman

Catholic church, and each of these had impressed her very much.

"They are not like services at the Protestant churches," she was led to say. "There is something different; something which I can scarcely explain. In the Protestant churches, especially in the Nonconformist churches, it is all so matter-of-fact. You know the meaning of everything. The hymns and the lessons and the sermon—well, you know all about it. But in the Roman Catholic it is all so wonderfully strange. The Latin prayers, the candles, the incense, the vestments—it's all so solemn and so mysterious that I feel quite awed."

Walter, on the other hand, who went with her, was not so impressed.

"I like Brandon out of church tremendously," he said, "but I'm hanged if I like this mummerly. There's not enough of sunshine and open air in it to please me. Besides, you've to take too much on trust."

Still, he never made any objection to his wife going, and was, on the whole, perfectly contented that she should prefer going to the Roman Catholic services to those of the Protestant order.

When midsummer drew near, and the question of Joyce coming home for the long vacation was mooted, they were reluctantly led to the conclusion that it would be better for her to remain in Belgium. First, there would be the expense of the journey; but also, Father Brandon convinced them that it might upset her if she came home so soon.

"It's always the hardest time, this coming home from school after the first term," he urged. "You see, she will not be quite settled down to school life, and thus will feel it hard to return after a long holiday. If I were in your place, I'd give her a year. Let the delights of school—aye, more, let the joy of successful competition be hers before she returns home. Then you'll find her eager to go back again."

So Walter yielded, thinking that, all things considered, it would be best, although the thought of it made his heart sore. When he received Joyce's letter, however, telling him that she would not be alone during the vacation, but that at least thirty girls would remain with her, and that she looked forward to a very happy time, he was comforted.

One day during August Father Brandon called in the afternoon. He found only Mrs. Raymond at home, but did not seem at all dismayed on that account.

"I should like to thank you for the lovely sermon you preached last night, Father Brandon," she said. "I do not think I ever heard anything like it before."

"I dealt with a very profound truth, Mrs. Raymond," said the priest solemnly, and assuming for the first time since she had known him an air of authority. "The sermon could not be otherwise than impressive if I were at all faithful. 'He that is ashamed of Me before men, of him will I be ashamed before God and His holy angels.' It is a terrible thing to be ashamed of Christ."

"Oh, I felt that last night," said Mrs. Raymond. "I have felt it ever since. I have often thought that Walter and I have been wrong in not going to church oftener."

"It is not simply a matter of going to church, Mrs. Raymond. It is a matter of being received *into* the Church," replied the priest solemnly.

"I was brought up in the Church of England," said Mrs. Raymond, "and was confirmed when I was sixteen. Walter, on the other hand, was brought up a Nonconformist."

The priest was silent.

"So, of course," went on Mrs. Raymond timidly, "I have been received into the Church."

"Pardon me, I do not think so," said Father Brandon.

"But I was confirmed, and have sometimes gone to Holy Communion," urged Mrs. Raymond.

"Where?" asked the priest.

"At St. Mary's."

"That is what is called the Church of England?"

"Yes."

"Have you reflected, Mrs. Raymond, that there can be only one Church, one real Church. Our Lord, when He was here upon earth, came to establish a Church. Of course, you know that?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then where is it?"

"Where is it?"

"Yes, where is it? Our Lord gave power to His apostles and to their successors, and only to them. Where are those successors? As far as I know, they are to be found only in the one Church, the Catholic Church—the Church which existed from the first. It was on Peter that Christ built His Church, and St. Peter became the first Pope. Then the blessed apostles went everywhere, preaching the gospel and extending the Church—the one Church, the only Church."



“ But,” said Mrs. Raymond weakly, “ the clergymen of the Church of England claim to belong to the apostolical succession.”

“ Claim—yes, of course, they do. But think, Mrs. Raymond. During that sad age of apostasy the Church in England became reprobate and schismatic, and although the Holy Father was very kind, he was at length obliged to excommunicate this branch of the Church. When it was excommunicated, it was no longer a part of the Church. It never can become a part of the Church until it is received back into the fold by the great Head. Has it ever been received back? When Mr. Gladstone pleaded with the Pope to admit the validity of Anglican orders, how was his plea regarded? The Holy Father was very clear and plain. He declared the so-called Church of England to be no Church, but a schismatic body—that there was no difference between all the Protestant Churches of England, whether belonging to the State or Nonconformist.”

“ So, then, you do not regard my confirmation as an admission into the Church? ”

“ What you did, you did in ignorance, my child.”

“ Then you do not think it wrong to remain a member of the Church of England? ”

“ You listened to the only voice you heard, Mrs. Raymond ; but now, having heard the voice of the true Church, what now? I say this most solemnly : you have heard the voice of the true Church ; you have been urged to rest your head on its bosom. After having heard that voice, it is at your peril that you refuse to obey.”

The priest had marked his time carefully. For months he had been studying Mrs. Raymond's character ; he had watched her at the services, and little by little he had prepared her mind for this time.

“ I will admit,” said Mrs. Raymond presently, “ that I have received great help from your services. They are so soothing—so restful. For years I have been troubled about matters of faith, and I have felt too weak and ignorant to face them. When I have been at your church I have felt that I could rest.”

“ Ah, that is it, Mrs. Raymond. What does our blessed Lord say? ‘ Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ That is what He is saying to-day through His Church. Why should you seek to answer questions of faith? The Church answers them for

you. Why should you struggle and strive? The Church does that for you. All you have to do is to lean your tired head on her great broad bosom and rest. Have you difficulties, trials, sins? It is for you to come to the priest of the true Church and confess them. Then you will receive guidance and absolution."

"I must speak to my husband about it," said Mrs. Raymond weakly.

"Is your husband the one to whom you can go on such a matter?" said the priest. "If I were in a legal difficulty, I should go to a lawyer; if my body ailed anything, I should go to a doctor; but if it were a matter of my soul, I should go to a priest. I have no doubt your husband is a kind and honest man; but do you think he could help you? Think, my child; think."

"I have never kept anything from Walter since we were first married," said Mrs. Raymond with tearful eyes.

"And, broadly speaking, you have been right," said the priest; "but is not this a matter which is of a different nature? Remember our Lord's words: 'He that loveth husband or wife more than Me is not worthy of Me.'"

For more than an hour they talked together, the woman raising her little difficulties and the priest answering them. When at last Father Brandon rose to go, he felt sure of the future.

When by-and-by Walter Raymond returned from business, his wife received him affectionately, but she did not tell him that Father Brandon had called. This was the first time that a secret had ever existed between husband and wife.

## CHAPTER III.

### FATHER BRANDON MAKES INQUIRIES.

A MONTH later Mrs. Raymond was received into the communion of the Roman Church. She had never spoken to her husband about it until a few days before the ceremony, but she had no need to have feared. Walter Raymond was not altogether unprepared. He had noticed the frequency with which she attended the Roman Catholic services, and drew his own conclusions. He was not a talkative man, and so did not harass her with questions about her course of action.

"If she wants to be a Romanist, let her, poor thing," he said to himself. "I imagine a woman must have some sort of religious authority in order to be happy, and on the whole I think the Roman Catholic faith is a very good thing for women. Of course, to a man who has the slightest critical faculty, it is so much nonsense; but for women it is a different thing. They are moody and imaginative. They have all sorts of fancies, and need some kind of ghostly adviser; so if she can get any comfort from Latin prayers, and incense, and the rest of it, let her have it. As for the confessional, Brandon is a sensible, healthy-minded man, who may comfort her. Besides, Lucy's confessions would trouble no confessor. A fit of temper now and then, an attack of nerves which makes her unreasonable and querulous, are among her worst faults. No, I'll say nothing."

And yet he was not pleased when she told him that she intended joining the Romish Church. Perhaps it was his Protestant blood, perhaps it was because he knew something of history; but he felt that somehow a new element was coming into their lives. For the first time they were in a way to be separated. He did not know why it should be so; but the thought of his wife telling another man, even although he were a priest, what hitherto she had only told him, was repellent. Nay, more; she might tell the priest what she would not tell him.

"You have quite decided, Lucy?" he said.

"Yes, Walter; quite decided."

“ But why? What has the Catholic Church to offer you that you do not possess in the Protestant religion? ”

“ Everything. Oh, Walter, the Protestant religion is not a religion at all. As its very name suggests, it is a negation.”

Walter smiled. “ That’s one of Brandon’s phrases,” he reflected. “ It seems to me very positive,” he went on quietly. “ I have troubled very little about matters of doctrine ; but I find that the Sermon on the Mount is about as positive as anything in the world.”

“ Oh, Walter, you don’t know. Everything has been so different of late, and I have been so happy. I come to the Church as I come to a mother. I tell her my doubts and fears and receive comfort.”

“ Poor little Lucy ! ” said Walter kindly.

“ Oh, Walter, if you only knew ! You see, there is no Church other than the one to whom our Lord gave authority in the beginning. She is the great storehouse of grace, and those who stay outside her do so at their peril.”

Walter was silent, for in spite of himself a fear came into his heart. Yet, because during the last few weeks his wife had seemed more cheerful, he held his peace.

Nevertheless, he would not go to church to witness her reception.

“ No,” he said firmly, “ if you have made up your mind to take this step, I will not try to hinder you ; but—I tell you honestly—I don’t much like it. But promise me one thing, Lucy : this business shall not interfere with the happiness of our home life.”

“ Interfere with our happiness? Walter, I have not always been a good wife to you, but I will be in the future. I will never cease praying that God will bring you into the light.”

“ Pray for me as much as you will, Lucy. God knows I need all your prayers, but do not let anything disturb our trust in each other, and our happiness.”

“ But you will come with me to the church? Think : I am to be received into the true fold.”

“ As though every true, God-fearing woman is not in the true fold,” he said, almost impatiently. “ No, Lucy ; I don’t believe in this step. To me it is so much nonsense, and I cannot pretend to countenance it by my presence. But I will not put anything in the way of your doing what you believe to be right. Go and be happy.”

So Mrs. Raymond was received into the Roman Catholic communion, while many of that faith smiled to each other as they spoke of the progress their religion was making in a heretic country.

"We shall get the whole family," said Mrs. Dilton to her husband.

"I doubt it."

"But I don't. Mrs. Raymond's conversion is only the thin end of the wedge. Her husband really dotes upon her, and will do anything for her happiness. Mark my words: in less than two years from now the whole family will have been received into the Church."

"Yes, I know that Walter Raymond is fond of his wife," said Dilton, "but he's not a man to be led by a string. Besides, he's one of those fellows that nothing can move when he's made up his mind. He's not a brilliant man, and yet by sheer doggedness he's rising in his profession. I find that little by little he's getting a name as a safe lawyer, and that's not the man to be moved as easily as you think."

On the night after Mrs. Raymond had publicly avowed her faith as a Roman Catholic, Father Brandon sat in his study alone with his assistant.

"I've been inquiring into Raymond's antecedents," he said, "and I find the whole case very interesting. Look here, Kelly; I want you to go down to his old home and hunt out everything."

"What?"

Brandon lit a cigar, and sat back in his easy-chair.

"Several things," he answered presently; "several things. First, I have discovered that Raymond's father is a very rich man, and that he disinherited his son for marrying Mrs. Raymond, who was poor. I want you to make inquiries about Mr. Raymond, senior, and to discover the value of his estate. I want you to discover exactly the kind of man he is. Then I want you to find out all about Mrs. Raymond's family. Her name was Bennett, and her father is a lawyer. But more than all, I wish you to discover the circumstances of the marriage. Where was the service performed? Who performed it, who were the witnesses, and so on."

"Of course I'll go," said Father Kelly. "At the same time, I do not see the need of it."

"Why?"

"Because now that Mrs. Raymond has become a Catholic you can ask her what you like, and she will tell you."

“ Yes, but I wish to have a man’s version of the business, and, besides, I want to be primed in every detail. In addition to all that, I am not at all anxious to ask Mrs. Raymond too many questions just now. When ice is thin, one must skate warily. You must remember that up to a few months ago she had strong Protestant prejudices, and while, like most converts, she is far more eager to convert others than those born into the Church, yet several generations of Protestant blood cannot be eradicated in a day. I do not desire her to think of me as one who wishes to know her private affairs, even although I have a right to know them.”

“ You have some scheme in your mind.”

“ I always have schemes in my mind.”

“ Of course, Raymond is nobody.”

“ He may become somebody at any time.”

“ How? ”

“ Well, for one thing, there is a big lawsuit coming on, and Raymond is the solicitor for the plaintiff. If he is successful, it may lead to his father’s reconciliation. Then again, as I told you, if my information is correct, his father is a wealthy man.”

“ I see.”

“ I’m glad of that.”

“ When do you want me to go? ”

“ To-morrow.”

“ All right ; I’ll go and do my best.”

“ But do not go as a priest. I don’t want the Church to be seemingly identified with the matter. Luckily you make up well as a layman, and no one would take you for a priest when you wear a suit of tweeds and a bowler. So go right away and get ready. I want to be alone to think.”

When Kelly had gone, Father Brandon took a diary from his desk and made many notes, which he presently read with great care.

“ Those seem to me the leading facts,” he said. “ I must now prepare a list of questions for Kelly, and then I think I have done all I can do for the present.”

Two days later Kelly returned. It was late at night when he arrived at the priest’s house, and came in a cab. Father Brandon evidently waited his coming with interest. He scanned the other’s face as if desirous of reading his thoughts.

“ Well? ” he said, when the two were comfortably seated.

"I don't think my journey was altogether in vain," said Kelly quietly.

"No ; I was sure it would not be. You are a good detective, Kelly. Neither of us was trained as a Jesuit for nothing."

"Of course," went on Kelly, "there is nothing startling ; but there is some very interesting material. There is nothing that need concern us among the Bennetts. Old Bennett is a lawyer, a clever but unsuccessful man. He has been handicapped by a large family. He has never been able to leave the little town wherein he lives, and in that town there is but little scope for a man of his peculiar ability."

"Peculiar ability?" repeated Brandon.

"Yes; he has the name of not being over particular. His name has not been struck off the rolls, however."

"I see."

"Most of his children are married in a humdrum way. I need not trouble you with particulars just now. I have carefully written up all the facts, so that nothing may be wanting in that direction."

"Exactly."

"The interest lies with old Raymond."

"Tell me about him."

"To begin with, he is one of those narrow-minded Protestants, and he is a bigoted Dissenter. He has the name of being a very just man, but hard as nails—an old-fashioned Puritan of the Spartan type. That is where he fell out with his son. The son went to Cambridge, and got imbued with liberal ideas, and so—well, he did not get on well with his father."

"I see."

"Old Raymond wanted his son to marry a woman after his own heart, who would have brought a fortune of from forty to fifty thousand pounds. The son refused, and married one of Bennett's daughters, who did not bring him a penny."

"Yes, I was pretty well acquainted with all this before. But now tell me about old Raymond."

"For one thing, he is a millionaire."

"A millionaire! Nonsense!"

"I mean it. Literally he is a millionaire. I should not be surprised if he is a multi-millionaire, as the Americans call them ; but certainly a millionaire."

"Pounds?"

“ Yes, pounds; not dollars, or francs, but pounds. And more, his money is piling up like mad. He has been a remarkably keen man of business. He began in a small way, but everything he touched turned to gold. People knew he was doing well, but few suspect the extent of his fortune. It's simply colossal.”

“ Is he a miserly old chap? ”

“ He's a funny mixture. Up to a few years ago he lived in a small way, and thus but few guessed the extent of his wealth. But about three years ago the Earl of ——'s house fell into the market. You know the case. He went it like mad. Horse-racing, theatres, wine—the whole thing. Then the Jews got hold of him, and—well, I need not go further. The estates were sold for three hundred thousand pounds.”

“ Yes, I remember reading about it.”

“ For a time it was a secret as to who bought them. Some said a syndicate, others said some rich American. But only those in the circle knew the truth. Well, he bought them.”

“ Three hundred thousand pounds! Does he live at the great house? ”

“ Not he. I am told that the farms are all let, and everything is kept in thorough repair; but no one lives there, except a housekeeper and a few servants.”

“ You are sure you are not mistaken? ”

“ Do you think I would be? I've worked like a galley-slave over the matter, and have verified every particular. You'll see when you read my notes.”

“ Yes, well? ”

“ Well, he owns a whole fleet of ships. He has had large connections with the Government, and has property everywhere. The greater part of the little town where he made his money belongs to him.”

“ No? ”

“ It is so, I tell you.”

“ Well, and how does old Raymond regard his son? ”

“ He scarcely ever mentions his name, but I have discovered that he's actually yearning for him. You see, the old man was in a terrible passion when the Raymond we know married Lucy Bennett. He drove him out of the house, and said he would leave all his money to charities. I really believe he would have forgiven his son if he had married anyone but a daughter of old Bennett. You see, old Raymond has made his huge fortune in a perfectly legitimate manner. He has the reputation of being a strictly honourable man, and



as such he has a perfect hatred for the ways by which Bennett manages to keep a house above him. All the same, I have discovered that he loves his son, even although he will not own it. I think I told you that he is a strong Nonconformist, and contributes largely to societies which exist for fighting Popery."

"Ha—ha!" laughed Brandon.

"You seem merry."

"Is there any wonder?"

Kelly looked at his senior steadily.

"Another scheme?" he said quietly.

"I always have schemes, as I have told you. The truth is, I am not cut out for a parish priest. I work in the parish because it is my duty to do so, and because I have my orders from headquarters. All the same, I want to convince the Provincial that it is not my strong point. But there's more yet. Raymond married Lucy Bennett—tell me the particulars of the wedding."

Kelly was silent for a minute.

"There could easily be trouble in that direction," he said presently.

"Trouble? How?"

"It was a civil marriage."

"No?"

"Yes. It is true it took place in a Dissenting chapel, but the thing was no real marriage."

"How? Tell me."

"Well, it seems that Raymond got a marriage licence, and went to a young fellow who had just come out of an Independent college. He had not even gone through the mockery of a Nonconformist ordination. Of course, he read the Nonconformist marriage service, and repeated the necessary legal words; but, knowing you as I do, I know that you will regard it as irregular."

Father Brandon stroked his chin.

"This is serious," he said thoughtfully.

"I knew you would regard it in that way. You see, these Independent ministers take a church oft-times before they are what they call ordained. In this case I find that the ordination did not take place until a month after the marriage. Indeed, he performed this wedding ceremony before he had preached his first sermon in the place as minister of the church. Thus, even from a Nonconformist standpoint, he was simply a layman. However, it seems that they take

but little note of such matters. Of course, the registrar was there to make the thing legal."

Father Brandon started to his feet.

"I did not think of this," he cried. "I assumed that they would be married by some Episcopal minister. Not that this would make any difference, as no Episcopal minister's orders are valid in the eyes of the Church. All the same, we regard such as valid, though not lawful. Let me think a minute, Kelly; let me think." Evidently the priest was really perturbed. "It complicates matters," he said presently. "It makes the work more difficult. I am afraid that—that——"

"What?" said Kelly.

"I was hoping I could carry this thing through by myself, but I don't know. It is a very delicate piece of work—very. Let me think, now. Mrs. Raymond has become a Catholic. One of her children is at a convent school in Belgium. The rest—well, I have my plans concerning them. Raymond is an easy-going man, who dotes upon his wife, and will do anything to please her. Still, at present he is not inclined much in our direction. He is, however, in a fair way of rising in his profession. Indeed, he is in such a position that, if I think it wise to do so, I can do a great deal for him. Old Raymond is fond of money, isn't he?"

"He is one of those who despise failures."

"Exactly. If his son were recognised as a man of eminence, he would be softened towards him. But he hates Popery, eh?"

"As he hates the Devil himself."

"Just so. Is he a healthy man?"

"One of those hale, strong men who do not know what sickness means."

"Hm! I see. He may live many years!"

"He's over seventy."

"Still, men of his sort live to eighty—ninety sometimes."

"They often go off suddenly."

"True, true. Still, we have to recognise the other possibility. No, that does not trouble me; it is this so-called marriage. I see no way out of it."

"Out of what?"

"I'm afraid I must get Ritzoom down."

Kelly smiled.

"He's the cleverest man I know," said Brandon, "and has been dealing with this kind of thing all his life."

"Yes," replied Kelly; "I do not believe Europe knows his equal."

"He has what I do not possess."

"What is that?"

"Courage. He will dare anything. He is never afraid of making a bold move."

"He has more than that."

"What?"

"He has a far-seeing mind. Really he does not make bold moves—they are bold only to the outsider. He thinks out everything to the minutest detail, and then he acts. In reality he is the most cautious man in our Order, although his actions seem bold and daring. If the facts of this case were laid before him, he would see a hundred things which I do not see."

Again Father Brandon became silent. For fully ten minutes he sat staring into vacancy, while Kelly gave him occasional searching glances.

"So far," he broke out presently, "we have not made a single mistake. It is true I did not see the possibilities of the case when I became interested in it. I regarded it only as a means of saving the souls of this family. I knew that Raymond was anxious about the education of his daughter. That was why Dilton left the paper in his office. It seemed like an accident, and thus the first move in our direction apparently came from them. But it has borne fruit. Already the eldest daughter is under our influence, while the wife has become one of us. I did not think then of what we know now. Of course, I knew that old Raymond had money—but—but——"

Again he ceased thinking aloud. He lit another cigar, and lay back in his armchair with closed eyes.

"I think I see my way," he said presently.

"I don't think you do," said Kelly.

"Why?"

"Well, if I know the plan you have in your mind, you have not considered one factor."

"Is there some woman of whom I am ignorant?"

"No."

"Tell me, then."

"Do you know Raymond's greatest friend?"

"To be perfectly honest, I think I am his greatest friend."

"Ah! I thought I was right."

"What do you mean?"

“ Why, you’ve forgotten the man Harrington.”

“ Who’s he? Oh, yes, I remember now. He’s a barrister whom Raymond has briefed for this lawsuit.”

“ Yes, and he’s a brother to our Harrington. Have you ever talked with him? ”

“ No; I met him once or twice, when I have been at the Raymonds’, but he struck me as a peculiarly dull sort of fellow. He scarcely spoke a word to me, and seemed to me to have no interest beyond that of playing with the children.”

“ That’s where he deceived you. He’s one of the cleverest young men at the bar. Oh, I’ve made inquiries. Directly I knew he was a friend of the Raymonds I made it my business to find out all I could. I inquired of young Rycroft, whom we both know, and on whose judgment we can depend. He assured me that he was bound to rise to the top of the tree, because of his extreme cleverness. But, more than that, he’s a militant Protestant.”

“ Ah, I see.”

Again Father Brandon was quiet for a time.

“ Thank you, Kelly,” he said presently. “ I think I’ll go to bed now.”

The next day, after Walter Raymond had gone to his office, Father Brandon made his way to his house. He looked more thoughtful than usual, his lips were firmly set, and his face had a look of fixed determination, as though he had settled upon an important matter.

“ It must be gone through at once,” he said. “ There is nothing like dealing with such circumstances as these with decision. Besides, it is bound to lead to important issues.”

And he was right.

## CHAPTER IV.

“LEGAL BUT NOT LAWFUL!”

MRS. RAYMOND was glad to see Father Brandon that morning. She was suffering a reaction from the excitement of the events of the previous days, and was depressed in consequence. Two of the children had gone to school—a cheap school in the neighbourhood—her husband had gone to his office, leaving her alone in the house except for the servant girl (for they were now able to keep a maid of all work) and the youngest child Walter.

Her husband, she reflected, had not been so thoughtful and attentive as usual. He had showed annoyance at the sight of her rosary and crucifix, and had looked almost angry when she told the children to cross themselves when grace was said at breakfast. It is true he had kissed her as usual when he rushed away to catch his train, but she felt as though there was a cloud between them. Besides, she did not feel the joy and the elation which she had felt when she had received her first communion. Then all was calm, and joyous, and beautiful; but now she was, in spite of herself, haunted with a sense of unreality.

As I have said, she was glad to see Father Brandon, and yet his coming was not an unmixed pleasure. Little by little she had become slightly afraid of him. During the last month he had assumed an air of authority which at times she felt like resenting. Had her husband adopted a similar attitude towards her she would have grown angry, and perhaps have refused to speak to him for twenty-four hours. And while she had outwardly fallen in with the priest's wishes she had none the less felt irritated at his assumption of the right to command. It was out of accord with the habits of a lifetime, and while she was not a strong woman, either mentally or morally, she resented anyone making requests in the tones of command.

Still, she looked up with a wan smile when Father Brandon entered, and hoped that he would be able to explain away or charm away the sad thoughts and feelings which possessed her that morning.

"I did not see you at Mass this morning," said the priest after they had shaken hands.

"No; I did not feel very well, and I wanted to be home when Walter left for his office," she replied.

The priest was silent.

"Did you expect me?" she asked timidly.

"Of course," was the reply.

Again Mrs. Raymond felt slightly irritated. It was not pleasant to be treated as though she were a child.

"The sacraments of the Church are for the sustenance and guidance of her children," said the priest. "You are now one of the Church's children."

At this Mrs. Raymond's overtaxed nerves gave way, and she began to cry.

"You are not happy, my child," said the priest.

Mrs. Raymond still continued crying.

"You are not happy, my child," repeated Father Brandon solemnly. "I will tell you why."

At this Mrs. Raymond looked up questioningly. She hoped he would now say some kind and comforting words.

"You are now a child of the Church," went on Brandon, "and as such I must now speak to you. You have been snatched as a brand from the burning, and have been in a most remarkable way led into the light."

Mrs. Raymond did not notice the mixing of metaphors; she wondered too much about what the priest wished to say to her.

"I think I made it plain to you," he went on, "that in giving yourself to the Church, which is the spouse of Christ, you must give yourself completely, absolutely, keeping nothing back. The Church has always demanded that, even as did our blessed Lord when He was upon earth. On no other condition did He receive, and on no other condition can the Church receive. Without that there can be no peace, no joy."

"I thought I was very submissive, very penitent," said Mrs. Raymond.

"Yes," said Father Brandon, "you promised to obey in everything; but, pardon me, I do not think you have fulfilled your promise."

"Not fulfilled my promise?"

"No, not fulfilled your promise. Do not mistake me. I am not angry, for I do not expect impossibilities. Nevertheless, I am come here to speak very plainly to you."

Mrs. Raymond looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"First of all," went on the priest, "there is the question of your children. They are not yet the children of the Church."

"I am sure," said Mrs. Raymond, "that Walter would never consent to that. Oh, you don't know, Father Brandon; but my husband has been different these last few days. He has been annoyed at my having a crucifix in my bedroom, and he spoke almost mockingly about my rosary."

"Then our work is all the greater, all the more important, my child," said the priest. "You can, of course, see that. Having entered into the light yourself, you cannot rest until your husband and children are also safe."

Mrs. Raymond sighed.

"I judged from your daughter's last letter that she was beginning to be influenced by the Church," went on the priest.

"Yes, I think so; but, Father Brandon, if Walter had the slightest idea that Joyce was likely to become a Catholic he would take her away at once."

"Then he must not have the slightest idea."

"But, Father——"

"There can be no 'buts,' my daughter, when it is a question of an immortal soul. Do you not remember how the blessed Apostle Paul caught certain with guile? That must be our work. If your husband is likely to hinder the working of the truth, then he must be kept in ignorance. I speak strongly on this subject, because it is a matter of such importance. How would you like to know that your child was in hell because you had failed to do your duty?"

"No, it would be terrible. But what can I do?"

"Your part is very simple. As you know, your eldest daughter's mind is beginning to be influenced. That is natural. It is true that no direct Catholic teaching is given in her school, nevertheless the whole atmosphere of the school is in favour of the Church. How could it be otherwise? And the atmosphere of a school matters more than direct teaching. If she were taught the errors of Protestantism, she would begin to argue and find reasons in favour of holding fast to it. But you cannot argue against atmosphere. You can only yield to it insensibly. She has been made to feel by a hundred things that Protestantism is no religion at all, and by those same hundred things she has been made to realise that there is no spiritual refuge save in the Church.

That is why no Protestant child can go to one of our schools and still have the same feelings towards Protestantism. As a consequence your daughter Joyce has been drawn, almost unconsciously, towards the one true faith. Her heart is now ready for the seed which you must sow."

"But my husband said——"

"We will not consider your husband for the moment. No man must stand in the way of a soul's salvation. I say it is your work to begin to sow the seeds of truth in your daughter's heart, the heart which is now prepared for that seed."

"But what can I do?"

"You can write a letter to her, telling her that you have been led to embrace the truth, and that you have been received into the one true Church. Then you must tell her that the great hope and desire of your life is to see your children also safe in the same great home."

"Yes, yes, I will gladly do that, Father Brandon; but my husband commanded me to use no influence to make our children follow my example."

"I have just told you that we will forget your husband for the moment. How can one into whose heart the truth has not come be a safe guide in this matter? This is the question of an immortal soul, my child. Its eternal joy, or its eternal doom; yes, its eternal doom. Besides, all I am telling you to do is to write a motherly letter, such a letter as any true child of the Church should write to her daughter."

"Of course, I desire to see my child converted, Father Brandon, and, of course, I feel with you that my husband can be no guide in spiritual matters. But don't you see, Father? Joyce will naturally, in reply to my letter, repeat what I have written, and make remarks about it. Then, as Walter always opens her letters, he will see what I have done."

"You will have no need to fear on that score," said the priest, with a smile. "Your daughter will only write what your husband can read with perfect safety. Indeed, he will be reassured by the letter she will write."

There was a look of fear in Mrs. Raymond's eyes as she looked at the priest's face; but he went on quietly:

"Think of the joy of knowing that your child is safe. Think of what she can do for God. She is a bright, intelligent girl, and I have had glowing reports concerning her. She is distancing all the other girls in her studies, and promises to have a brilliant career. Think of what such a one can do for the Church, my child."



"Yes, yes, it would be beautiful," assented Mrs. Raymond.

"There is something else she will write," went on the priest. "She will say that she has received an invitation to spend her Christmas holidays with a friend in France. This friend will be of a Protestant family, and she will plead very hard to be allowed to go."

"But she has looked forward with so much eagerness to coming home for Christmas, and Walter has promised himself such a good time with her."

"That will be all right," said Father Brandon. "Mr. Raymond will be so busy by that time that he will be almost relieved at the thought of her not coming home, especially when he knows she will be going to a Protestant house. As a matter of fact, I know that this lawsuit, which has been such a long time coming on, will begin early in the New Year. It is a much bigger thing than was anticipated, and your husband will be eager to spend all his spare time during Christmas in working it up. Besides, I am not sure that he will not be relieved at the thought of Joyce being away from you."

"From me!"

"From you."

Mrs. Raymond was silent. She felt for the first time the reality of the barrier that was growing between herself and her husband.

"And now we have settled about Joyce," went on the priest, "there are the other children to consider. It must not be long before they are baptised."

"But they have been baptised."

"By whom?"

"I am sorry to say by a Nonconformist minister. As you know, all my husband's early associations were Nonconformist, and so when I mentioned their baptism he suggested a very good old man whom he much respected."

"And you took them to this—chapel."

"Well, you see, both Walter's father and mother were of this persuasion, and two of our children are named after them—Joyce and Walter. I must confess, too, that I thought it a beautiful service at the time."

"What did the minister say at the baptism?"

Mrs. Raymond hesitated.

"He said," she went on presently, "that we must not think that he was doing the children any specific good by

baptising them. That he was not granting them any grace. That he was not changing them from the devil's children to God's children, for all children were God's children. What the service meant was that we were bringing them to dedicate them to God and His service, and promising to train them as Christian children."

"What were the words he used?"

"It was something like this," said Mrs. Raymond. "'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I give thee the name of Walter, and I dedicate thee to the service and life of God.' After that he prayed."

"Did he use water?"

"I think so. In one case I believe he did, but not in all."

"Not in all?"

"No; really, I did not trouble at that time, and Walter cared but little about it."

"Do you call that baptism?" said the priest solemnly. "Now tell me about your marriage."

"Oh, ours was a runaway marriage. The minister was such a nice young fellow."

"Tell me about it."

"There is not much to tell," said Mrs. Raymond. "Walter and I had been fond of each other before he went to Cambridge. When he had taken his degree, his father told him that he must marry a rich woman he had chosen, or else he would disown him. When Walter told me, I urged him to marry this woman, but he would not, and asked me to come to a registry office, and get married that way. I did not like this, so after my husband had obtained the licence we went to a Congregational church, to which a young man, fresh from college, had just been appointed. You never saw anyone so nervous as he was. Walter and I were bad, but he was worse. Still, he conducted the service beautifully, and I have often wondered what has become of him."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then, my child, I am sure you would be much happier if you were married by a priest of the Church."

"Oh, if I only could be!" cried Mrs. Raymond, after which the two talked very earnestly together.

Little by little the woman's weaker will yielded to the stronger will of the man, backed as it was by the authority of the Church she had accepted. The priest was to her more than a man: he was the mouthpiece of a great mystical

power which held her in thrall. Behind this man was the authority of the Roman Church, the Church which she had accepted as the manifestation of God's will on earth.

"Oh, what can I do?" she wailed.

"Do, my child? God has called you to a great work—a very great work. Your husband loves you, does he not?"

"A better husband, a more loving husband, never lived," said Mrs. Raymond almost hysterically. "He has borne with my weakness for years. Ofttimes I know I have been very trying and irritable, especially when I have been ill, but he has never murmured. He has been patient and loving through all."

"You must use his love for you as a means whereby you can lead him to embrace the faith."

"Oh, if I only could; but you do not know Walter, Father Brandon. He is not one who talks much, but he is one of those quiet, strong men. He will do nothing by force, neither will he do anything without being convinced in his own mind."

"Oh, I think I know; but that must not daunt us. I do not say that he will be converted in a month or a year; but we must never give up. The first step will be to lead him to marry you."

"Oh, he never will—never. That is, not as you think."

"But you say he loves you."

"Yes, but what has that to do with it?"

"Everything. When he sees how unhappy you are, when he finds himself alienated from you—what then? Your husband is a man of the world. At present all that we have been speaking about is so much nonsense to him. He will regard marriage as the union of hearts, the binding together by mutual vows. Very well, but he loves you. Presently he will be led to say, 'My wife is very unhappy. We are estranged. Why? Because I will not go through a ceremony that means nothing to me. But she is a woman. She is comforted by this new religion of hers. Why should I not, just to make her happy, yield to her will?' I know men, my daughter, and that is how he will see things. This may not come in a day, or a month; but it will come. Then, when he has taken this step, he will have also taken the first step towards his conversion."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"But what am I to do?"

“ For the present, nothing.”

“ But I must tell him of our conversation.”

“ No, not a word. Not until I tell you—then, of course, you may.”

Again Mrs. Raymond wept bitterly.

“ Until a few weeks ago there was never a shadow between us,” she said. “ We freely told each other all our thoughts. He has never kept anything back from me—even his business matters ; and I have never failed to tell him everything.”

“ And I believe in the confidence which should exist between man and wife,” said the priest, “ but that can only be when they are both bound by the same ties. When your husband has embraced the faith, then a truer confidence will come back, and joys hitherto unknown will be yours. But until then we must be ‘ wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’ ”

The priest rose to go.

“ I think I have made my meaning plain,” he said quietly.

“ Remember, our work is to save the immortal souls of the man you call your husband and of your children, and to unite the family in the Holy Church. Be wise, my child, and be sure to consult me often.”

Mrs. Raymond bowed submissively, but her heart was very sore. As for the priest, he walked away in a very thoughtful frame of mind.

“ I must be very careful,” he said. “ Old Raymond and his son must be reconciled, but that will never be if the son accepts our faith. The whole matter bristles with difficulties. I am afraid, after all, I shall have to ask Ritzoom’s advice.”

## CHAPTER V.

“ I SHALL HAVE TO TAKE COUNSEL.”

WALTER RAYMOND'S first impression concerning Father Brandon was not correct. He had been so delighted with his cheerfulness, his unclerical method of speech, and his sympathy towards the poor, that, as he declared to his wife, he impressed him as a man rather than as a priest. As a matter of fact, however, Brandon was an ultramontane Catholic of the deepest dye. By nature he was cheerful and sociable. He loved a joke, loved a glass of wine, and a good cigar. When speaking of ordinary matters he appeared broad-minded, almost to latitudinarianism, but in all matters of the Church he was an extreme ecclesiastic. Not that he had any great love for the duties of a parish priest. He believed in the office of the priesthood most intensely, believed in his sacerdotal powers without a shadow of doubt. He loved to be engaged in delicate pieces of work; he took great delight in affairs which presented difficulties and required careful handling. That, perhaps, was why the Raymond family had so interested him. He was not a thinker or a scholar, and yet he delighted in meddling with sophistries, loved to discuss niceties of doctrine. Not that he was successful in such matters. Truth to tell, although he was trained as a Jesuit, he often made mistakes, and allowed his prejudices to overrule his judgment. In short, Father Brandon, who longed to be regarded as a diplomat, was, to use his own friends' opinion of him, “ a bungler.”

The case which now presented itself to him fascinated him beyond words, and yet, while it fascinated him, he felt his incompetence to deal with it.

When he reached his house, therefore, he fell into deep thought.

“ Of course, in a sense the Church does accept baptisms and marriages as valid, even when no priest has been present,” he said to himself. “ Let me think, now.”

He turned to a Catholic manual, and referred to the part of the book which dealt with marriage.

“ “ In those parts of the world (as in England) where the

decrees of the Council of Trent respecting matrimony have not yet been published, the presence of the Catholic parish priest is not essential for the validity of the sacrament; it is only required in order to render it lawful; but in those parts where the Council of Trent is officially published his presence is required to render the contract valid as well as lawful in the eyes of the Church.' "

He started up and walked around the room, evidently in deep thought.

"Then follows the question of baptism," he went on presently. "Here, again, all baptisms are accepted as valid, even if they are performed by infidels and Jews. But here again are qualifications. First it must be in case of necessity, if these extraordinary means are used. Then the proper matter and form must be observed, and the one who baptises must intend to do what Christ ordained. Now was this the case with the Raymond children? First, it was not a case of necessity. They were in a state of ignorance at the time. Then the proper matter and form were not used. And, more still, the minister did not intend what Christ ordained. He did not use water; he did not use the correct words; he did not regard the baptism as a sacrament at all, but simply as a dedication service. Evidently, therefore, no baptism was here intended, so it cannot be accepted."

As I said, Father Brandon, while partial to diplomacy, was a sacerdotalist of the strictest order, and, while he desired to act judicially, was from the standpoint of a Jesuit far from being a diplomat.

"What had I better do?" he said presently. "Two courses are before me. One is to go to Raymond boldly and tell him what his duties are. The second is to write to Ritzoom. But I do not like Ritzoom. I am afraid of him. Besides, he has become such an autocrat that I long to deal with this matter without consulting him. Why, let me think—if I can convert this family, and at the same time bring old Raymond's millions into the Church, I shall be a made man. I shall be admitted into the highest councils. But I must think. There is no immediate hurry, and I have need to be careful."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Raymond sat alone thinking. She was not at all happy. Somehow Father Brandon's visit had brought none of the joy that she hoped. Instead, he had imposed new burdens upon her, and told her of duties that she knew not how to perform.

"Walter will be in presently," she thought, and immediately a feeling of fear came into her heart. Hitherto she had always looked to his home-coming with joy, but now she dreaded to hear his footstep. Would he get to hear what the priest had said to her? She knew him to be a trustful man, but she knew, too, that he was not a man to be trifled with. When his mind was made up nothing could move him, and he rarely turned aside from the path he marked out.

"Walter," she said to her little boy, "come here a minute."

The child ran up to his mother.

"Did you notice anyone here to-day?"

"Yes, mother, that man with a shiny face—the man that has been here so often."

"You mean Father Brandon. You love him, don't you?"

"Don't know."

"But you should. He is such a good man, and has made your mother so happy."

"You used to look happier before he came here. What have you been crying for all the afternoon?"

"Crying? Nonsense, Walter."

"It's not nonsense," said the child stoutly. "I'm going to tell dad not to allow him to come again. I'm going to tell him that he makes you cry."

"Then you will make me very unhappy; and you would not like to do that, would you?"

"No—o," said the boy hesitatingly.

"Would you like to make mother very happy, Walter?"

"Course I would."

"Then you'll not say anything to dad about my crying, or about Father Brandon being here."

"But I don't like your crying," said the boy; "and before, when you used to cry with your bad headaches, dad always made them better."

"But things are changed now, Walter, and Father Brandon makes mother happy."

"Then he shouldn't."

"Not make mother happy! Why?"

"'Cause nobody but dad should do that."

"But you wouldn't like to make mother unhappy, Walter, would you?"

"Course not."

"Well, if you tell dad that I have been crying, or that

Father Brandon has been here, you will make me very unhappy. So I want you to promise not to tell dad nor anybody."

"All right," said Walter, "I won't tell anybody if it would make you unhappy, but I wish that man would never come again."

"You shouldn't say that, Walter. He is a very good man, and God has given him great power, and if we do what he tells us we shall all be very happy."

Walter thought over his mother's words a moment, like one in doubt. Then a bright light flashed into his eyes.

"That's dad at the door," he cried, and he rushed down the passage to meet him.

Mrs. Raymond flew to the looking-glass to assure herself that her eyes were not red, and then prepared to meet her husband. In spite of herself, she knew that matters had changed between them, and that she could not meet him as in the old days.

"Well, Lucy," said Walter, "have you had a good day? No more headaches, I hope?"

"No, none at all. Walter, my child, run up into the nursery. Dad wants his dinner in quietness."

"Let him stay," said Walter. "I like to have the young scamp around; he is such good company."

"Walter, really, I can't bear it just now. I'm afraid I'm going to have an attack of the nerves."

"I'm sorry for that," said Walter, sending the boy away. "Never mind, old man; I'll come up to you directly, and I'll tell you a jolly good story before you go to bed."

The lad went away with a sad heart, while Mrs. Raymond heaved a sigh of relief.

"Anything taken place through the day?" asked Walter, as he sat down to dinner. "Any friends called?"

"No, nobody in particular," said Mrs. Raymond, thanking her stars that she had sent the child out of the room before the question was asked. "Of course, Father Brandon is no one in particular," she said to herself, trying to ease her conscience.

"That's all right," said Walter. "I say, Lucy, you don't look well."

"It's my nerves again," she said. "Please don't say anything more about it, Walter."

Walter was silent. In his heart he blamed what he called the *fiasco* in which she had taken part during the last few days, but he said nothing. "She's a woman," he



thought to himself, "and I suppose that kind of thing suits her."

"I must write to Joyce to-night," he said presently.

"Have you anything special to say to her?"

"No, but I know she likes to hear from home regularly, and you don't like letter-writing."

"To tell you the truth, Walter, I am afraid I am just suffering from my nerves a little because I have written to Joyce. I posted it a little while ago. I wanted to be in time for the five o'clock despatch; also I wanted to save you the trouble of writing."

Walter looked up questioningly.

"You are indeed turning over a new leaf, Lucy," he said. "What did you say to her?"

"Oh, nothing particular. Just a newsy, gossipy letter."

"I suppose you told her of your—of what—what do you call it?—conversion?"

"Of course, I told her that I had been received into the Church. There is nothing against that, I hope?"

"Oh, no; of course, she must know some time." He was silent a minute. Somehow, the thought of her being in a convent school jarred upon his nerves, and he wondered if his finances would in a few months stand the strain of sending her to a good English school.

"Tell me just what you wrote," he broke out presently.

"You are getting very suspicious, Walter."

"Suspicious?" he replied. "Suspicious? I am only anxious to know just what you said to our child."

"And I told you that I said nothing in particular." She said this petulantly, as if she were an injured person.

Walter sighed, and went on with his dinner.

"I am hoping Harrington will come in to-night," he said presently.

"I hope not," said Mrs. Raymond.

"Hope not! Why?"

"I don't like him."

"Don't like Harrington? A better fellow never breathed."

"A bigoted Protestant!" she answered sharply.

Walter laughed a little bitterly.

"Oh, I see," he said. "You wish to inquire into the theological whereabouts of my friend."

"It's not that," said Mrs. Raymond, "but I am sure that man has embittered you against my religion. But for

him I believe you would have been present when I was received into the Church. I know he laughs at my faith, and regards it as pure nonsense. Indeed, he said as much before he knew my opinions about the Church."

"Lucy, don't drag your Church between me and my friendships," said Walter. "Harrington is one of the best fellows I know. He is a brilliant fellow, too, and I am more and more glad that I've briefed him in this law case."

"All the same, I don't like him," said Mrs. Raymond, "and I shall leave you together if he comes."

"Lucy," said Walter, "I've not interfered with your religion, but don't let it break up my friendships—don't let it alienate us."

By this time Mrs. Raymond was in a very nervous condition, and not able to completely control herself.

"It will only break up what is wrong," she said. "And if you fail to understand me it will be because your heart is closed to the truth."

Walter looked at her earnestly.

"What is the matter, little woman?" he said. "Surely something has put you out."

"How can it be otherwise while my husband fails to understand me?" she cried. "When he won't try to understand me, when he mocks my faith, the faith which is dearer to me than anything else."

"I have not interfered in the slightest degree with you," he said.

"No, but you have opposed me in your quiet way. I can see now that you've made up your mind that the children shall not be baptised into the true Church. You've acted just like an atheist."

Mrs. Raymond did not often lose control of herself so completely, and for a moment her unjust remark caused an angry retort to rise to her husband's lips. He restrained himself, however. He reflected that she was yet far from strong, and so he said nothing.

"I will go and have a romp with the children," he said. "Perhaps when I come down you will be better."

"I shall never be better until——"

"Until what?"

Mrs. Raymond burst into an uncontrollable fit of crying. Walter remained by her side until her passion had subsided, then he put his question again.

"Until what?" he repeated.

"Oh, Walter, you don't know," she sobbed. "I am so miserable, and yet I could be so happy."

"Happy! We always have been happy until these last few months."

"Oh, Walter, my eyes have been opened! I am in the Church, and you are outside. I am safe, while you live in peril."

A gleam of anger came into Walter Raymond's quiet-looking grey eyes.

"Don't talk nonsense, Lucy," he said.

"I must say what is in my heart," she cried. Ever since the priest had left her she had been thinking about the advice he had given her, and now it seemed that her opportunity had come. "You do love me, Walter, don't you?"

"Love you? Of course I do."

"And you want to make me happy, don't you?"

"Why, yes, Lucy; you know I do."

"I know the things I believe in seem like foolishness to you, but, still, I think you might respect my wishes."

"I always have respected your wishes. Even although this step you have taken has been against my judgment, I have never opposed you."

"Yes, yes, Walter," she said, changing her tactics somewhat; "you have been very kind, but, oh! you don't know—you don't know."

"Don't know what?"

"How miserable I am."

"What about?"

"Oh! the children, myself and you."

"Well, tell me."

It was harder than she thought to tell him, but she continued in her method of attack.

"I do so want to be your wife really, Walter," she said.

"I want to be a good wife. And since I have become a true Christian I have desired this more. But, Walter, has it ever occurred to you that we were never properly married?"

"Never properly married? Good Heavens, no!"

"Oh, I know we were legally married; but we were not married by a priest of the true Church; therefore—oh, Walter, it would make me happy if you would let Father Brandon marry us according to the rites of the Church—so happy."

"Is that all?" said Walter quietly. His heart felt a little hard and bitter, but he did not show it in his speech.

"It would mean nothing to you, would it?" she said eagerly.

"No, nothing."

"And no one need know."

"Is that all?" he repeated.

"Of course, it is not all. I shall never be supremely happy until you are also received into the Church."

"We'll rule out that," he said quietly. "I understand that what you want now is that we go through another marriage ceremony with Father Brandon. Is that all?"

"There are the children."

"Well, what about them?"

"They've never been properly baptised."

"I see."

"Oh, Walter, you will consent to making them safe, won't you? It's nothing to you; but it is so much to me. This afternoon I could not help thinking about the possibility of their death. Suppose, because of any neglect on my part, they were to go to hell!"

Walter Raymond was silent. He could not trust himself to speak.

"I know it means nothing to you. It did not to me until I was led into the light. But seeing it means nothing to you and it means so much to me, will you not be kind to me, Walter? It can be done rightly. No one will know—except Father Brandon."

An irreverent expletive rose to Walter Raymond's lips, but he did not allow it to escape him.

"Will you, Walter, dear? You will please your foolish little wife, won't you?"

Suiting the action to her words, she rose and put her arms around his neck.

"And if I will not?" he asked quietly.

"I will not consider that," she said. "You will not deny me, will you? Call it my foolishness. Say I am just silly and childish, like most women are. It can't do any harm, and, oh! it will make me happy."

"If I will not?" he repeated in the same quiet tones.

"Then—oh, Walter, I dare not think. Perhaps—perhaps I shall have to decide that I cannot be your wife any longer. I shall have to take counsel."

"Counsel? Of whom?"

She sobbed convulsively on his shoulder.

"Of Brandon, I suppose. It was he who suggested this

to you. It was he who caused you to speak to me about this. It is he to whom you will report our interview."

At this she was silent. She dared not speak.

"I suppose you tell him everything now?" he went on. "You tell him what you will not tell me."

"You do not understand, Walter. How can you? You are outside the fold. He is appointed by the Church to hear confessions and grant absolution."

"Tell me this. Has this man already assumed the office of your adviser? Is he to stand between you and me?"

"Walter, you know you could not advise me on spiritual matters. But you will make me happy, won't you? As you say, it means nothing to you, but it means everything to me—everything, Walter."

She moved from him that she might have a better look at his face. She could not understand the strange tones of his voice; his pale, set features almost made her afraid.

"I promised to go into the nursery and play with the children," he said presently. "The boy is waiting for me. I will certainly think over what you have told me."

"And you can make me so happy," she said as he left the room.

Walter Raymond did not stay long with his children. He found himself moody and silent even in the midst of his games with them; and when at length he tried to tell them a story he utterly broke down.

"Dad's head is aching," he said at last.

They came to him and kissed him. Bright, happy children they were, without a care in the world. It is true the nursery was only an attic, and it was by no means comfortable; but they did not seem to heed its shabbiness or discomfort. Rachel was a brown-haired, brown-eyed girl of fourteen; Madaline was twelve, a quiet, grey-eyed little maiden; while Walter was a sturdy, argumentative boy four years younger.

"Put us to bed, dad," said Walter. "I always like you to put me to bed."

"How many of you have your bath to-night?" asked the father.

"Only me; the girls have theirs in the morning," said Walter junior.

"Very well," said the father. "I'll give my little sonny his bath, and then I'll come and hear you girls say your prayers."

A little later the children knelt around his knee and offered their simple prayers. "Please God, bless dad and mother, and Joyce and everybody. Make me a good boy, and, please God, may everybody have enough to eat, and may all little children have a good dad nearly as good as mine ; and save the heathen, and bring us all home to heaven when we die. Amen. I say, dad, what does mother mean about the Virgin Mary and the saints? Last night she made us say a lot of funny stuff."

Young Walter asked this question in the same breath with his prayers.

"I'll find out, old man. Good-night, and God bless you."

"Good-night, dad. God bless you."

Practically the same prayer was offered by the girls, followed by the same "Good-night, dad. God bless you."

"Good-night, my darlings," he said as he left them, "and God will bless you."

He hurried downstairs, and then, without going to the room where his wife was, took his hat and went out alone.



"THE CHILDREN KNELT AROUND HIS KNEE AND OFFERED THEIR SIMPLE PRAYERS."





## CHAPTER VI.

“ A JESUIT IS A DIPLOMATIST ALWAYS.”

WALTER RAYMOND walked rapidly. He wanted to get away from the streets to a place where the air was freer and more open. He had forgotten that his friend Harrington might call that night. His wife's words had given him so much food for thought that he was able to think of but little else. Somehow he felt as though his conversation with his wife, followed by the hour he had spent with his children, had introduced him into two different worlds. He felt that the world in which his wife lived was artificial, morbid, unhealthy; while that of the children was sweet, and pure, and natural. Even as he walked through the noisy streets he heard their voices. “ Good-night, dad. God bless you.” In spite of himself, the simple prayer made his heart light. He did not call himself a religious man in the orthodox sense of the word; nevertheless, he had the consciousness that the prayers of these pure, happy children in some way reached the Great Loving Heart of all things.

“ And these children must be baptised by some priest fellow to save them from hell! ” he said to himself.

He felt himself angry at the thought. The suggestion of such a thing was blasphemy. Did not Jesus tell His disciples that unless they were converted and became as little children they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

Presently he reached Clapham Common. Here the air was purer, sweeter. He was able to breathe more freely. Summer had now gone, and the leaves had become brown, but in spite of this the night was beautiful; the moon sailed among the silver clouds which hung overhead, the stars bedecked the sky, and the wind coming from the sweet country which lay southward made it a gladness to live. For more than an hour he paced the Common, thinking of what his wife had said. After all, she had deceived him by telling him that no one of note had called. He felt sure the priest had been at the house, and put these thoughts in her mind, and that as a consequence they were no longer the same to one another.

“ I see the whole thing,” he said to himself. “ Brandon has unsettled Lucy’s mind. He has made her feel that we ought to be re-married, and that the children should be re-baptised. Poor little Lucy! Well, and why shouldn’t I consent, after all? As she says, it means nothing to me, and it means everything to her. It’s the line of least resistance. She’ll make my life a continuous misery by constantly appealing to me in one form or another. Hadn’t I better let her have her way? It can’t do me any harm, it can’t do the children any harm, while it will make her supremely happy. After all, a woman is a woman, and she can’t be judged according to the standard by which a man is judged.”

For a moment he felt like yielding. He was very fond of his wife, and he loved peace. He wanted his home to be happy, and he wanted his wife’s life to be full of joy. Well, why could not these things be? The old days of poverty were at an end—at least, so it seemed. Work which he did not expect came to him; his prospects were brightening on every hand, and, although his means were still straitened, he felt sure that within a year or two he would be in affluent circumstances. If the future turned out as it promised just now, he would be able to take a house a few miles out in the country, a house with a good garden, and the green fields stretching around him. This was the dream he had been cherishing for years. Things had wonderfully changed with him even during six months, and there seemed no reason why they should not continue to improve. He thought of a house situated at Dorking, or Sevenoaks, or Epping Forest, or Hadley Woods. He pictured his children romping in a big garden, and of his picking flowers with them in country lanes. What if his wife did continue to insist on re-marriage? What if the children were baptised into the Roman Church? It mattered nothing. They could all continue to be happy. He should only consent for the sake of peace and quietness, and then, with bettered circumstances, life might be very happy.

But, although this side of the question appealed to him strongly, he could not make up his mind to do what his wife asked. There was something morbid, something repellent, in the whole procedure. He thought of his children, whose prayers he had just heard, and he remembered the question his boy Walter had asked :

“ What does mother mean about the Virgin Mary and the saints? Last night she made us say a lot of funny stuff.”

It was only a child's way of expressing himself, but it affected the father. Would he like his children's minds filled with all these stories about the Virgin Mary and the saints? Besides, it meant more than this. Once baptised into the Church, he would have to consent to their being reared as Catholics. The whole thing jarred on his nerves. When he had on one or two occasions gone to the church where Father Brandon had officiated the whole service seemed to him tawdry and poor. His quiet, strong nature revolted against it; his intelligence laughed at it. And then there was the deeper objection. Was it not wrong, even for the sake of peace, to consent to a thing against which all that was best in him revolted? In a sense, he would be acting a lie, and Walter Raymond was a lover of truth. It is true he had had little to do with the Church since he was a boy; perhaps his father's hardness was largely responsible for this. All the same, his father had taught him to despise lies of any sort. Doubtless the old man was possessed of a worldly spirit, but he was strong in his integrity. Besides, his mother, whom he still remembered, was a fine, good woman, and taught him a simple faith in a loving, just God—taught him the beauty of an upright, pure life. He was not aware that he had any prejudice against those who held the Romanist faith; nevertheless, he felt that he should be a coward if he took the step his wife desired.

Still, he would think about it. He would allow the thought to simmer in his mind for a week or two; meanwhile, he would continue to be kind and thoughtful towards his wife.

Presently he found his way back to his house again. It was not yet late, being scarcely ten o'clock, and he wondered whether Harrington had called to see him. When he opened the door he found that the house was perfectly quiet.

"I expect Lucy has gone to bed," thought Walter. "Well, I'll have a pipe, and then I'll turn in as well. But what's that? Surely I smell tobacco smoke."

He opened the little dining-room door, and saw the young man of whom he had been thinking sitting alone.

"Ned!" cried Walter. "Well, I am pleased to see you. I was wondering whether you might not call to-night."

"Yes," replied Harrington, "I called about half an hour ago. Mrs. Raymond said she expected you in every minute, and then excused herself on the plea of a bad headache. However, I thought I'd wait."

"I am glad you have waited, Ned," cried Walter. He was ten or twelve years older than Harrington, but they had become very friendly, and called each other by their Christian names. "We haven't seen so much of each other lately," he went on. "I suppose you've been busy."

"Yes, I've had a great deal of work—work which has called me away in the country. Walter, I've been down to your old home. I've met your father."

Walter looked at his friend eagerly.

"Yes," he said. "How does he look?"

"Oh, he's a hale, strong man. He looks wonderfully well and vigorous."

"I'm glad of that," said Walter quietly. He lapsed into silence for a minute or two. "I've not heard anything about him for years," he went on presently. "I wrote to him several times, but he returned my letters, so I concluded he had shut me out of his heart and life. I would gladly have made further overtures, but I thought it was useless. Besides——"

"Besides what?" said Harrington, when he saw the other hesitate.

"I've never said anything about it to anyone else," said Walter, "but I was told that he said insulting things about my wife. A man can't help having some pride," he added.

"Just so."

"Did you talk with him, Ned?"

"Oh, yes, a good deal. Of course, you know he's a very rich man?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I hope his money brings him happiness."

"I have my doubts about that. Besides, perhaps he's not as hard as you think. He struck me as a very just, upright man. I find, too, that he gives away a great deal of money, anonymously."

"Indeed."

"I mentioned you to him."

Again Walter looked up eagerly, almost yearningly.

"Yes, I told him that I knew you. It came about in a very natural way. After I was introduced to him I took the opportunity of telling him that I knew a lawyer by the name of Walter Raymond. He closed his lips with a snap as I said this, and drew himself up in a very frigid manner, but I took no notice of this. I went on to say that you were the solicitor in an affair which I imagined would become import-

ant in the annals of lawsuits, and that you had briefed me. I think that softened him somewhat, although he said nothing. I then told him that your practice was steadily growing, and that you were becoming much respected in the best sense of the word."

"Thank you, Ned," said Walter. "Of course, I could not tell him that myself, but I am afraid you over-coloured the picture."

"Not a bit of it. I said I had visited your house, and I described your children. I grew quite enthusiastic about Joyce who is away at school, and I told him that she was a beautiful girl between eighteen and nineteen."

"Did you tell him the kind of school to which she had gone?" asked Walter.

"No; I did not think of it. Besides, if I had told him, it would have done no good. I find that, like myself, he is a very strong Protestant."

"Yes," said Walter, with a smile, "he hates every form of priestcraft. By the way, Ned, do you know that my wife has been received into the Roman Church?"

"No; I did not know that. Is it so?"

"Yes."

"How long ago?"

"Oh, quite lately."

Ned Harrington was silent for a time.

"I am afraid I cannot congratulate either her or you," he said, "although I cannot say I am altogether surprised."

"No?"

"You see, I was here once or twice when that man Brandon called. I saw what he was aiming at. At the same time, it has come sooner than I expected. I suppose——"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing; it's no affair of mine."

"Yes, it is. You are one of my very few friends in this world. Tell me what you were going to say."

"That's unlike you to be so curious, Walter."

"Yes, perhaps so; but I think this business has upset me more than I thought it would. Tell me."

"Well, to be candid, I am afraid I see trouble ahead."

Walter Raymond did not answer for a time. "Tell me more about my father," he said at length.

"There's very little to tell," replied Harrington. "He's very rich, and greatly esteemed. But I am told that he never mentions your name."

Walter sighed.

"All the same, I am sure he thinks kindly of you."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because, in spite of himself, he could not help showing his interest when I spoke about you. He did not say a word, but he listened like a dog."

"Poor old father!" said Walter. "I should like to see him again. I should like to know he'd forgiven me."

"I am afraid you never will."

"Why?"

"When he knows your wife has become a Romanist he will be more opposed to you than ever. That is, unless you disassociate yourself from her and her doings."

"Of course, that's impossible," said Walter, quietly.

"Of course," said Harrington. "But be sure of one thing, Walter; that man Brandon knows all about your early history."

"Why do you think so?"

"He's a Jesuit."

"Well, what then?"

"A Jesuit is a diplomatist—always. He loves to live in the world of intrigue and mystery. His training makes him."

"Nonsense, Ned. Do you know, I think you are faddy on this point? Your hatred of priestcraft has become a kind of disease with you, and you can't judge them fairly."

"I don't think so; but, even if what you say is true, there is but little wonder."

"Why?"

"I have a brother who is a Jesuit priest."

"What?"

"Yes. I have never told you, have I? He was an impressionable boy—very imaginative, and impressed by the mysterious. Hurrell Froude over again. Well, they got hold of him; he has been under their influence for eight years—first as a novice, then as one who took the vows. Three weeks ago I saw him. He's learnt their lessons."

"Tell me," said Walter eagerly.

"He is two years my senior; thus as a boy I looked up to him. He was as transparent as a running brook, as easy to read as a child's school book. As a youth he was quite an expert in legendary lore. He might have been a poet."

"Well?"

"It's all gone. He's no longer frank and transparent.

He tries to appear so, but you can see the effort. He boasts of his frankness and outspokenness, while all the time you know he has something at the back of his mind which he's trying to hide from you. I tell you, I am as certain as that I am sitting here that Brandon knows all about your early years, all about your father, all about his property—aye, and all there is to know about your wife's family."

"Well, let him. It can do me no harm."

"It seems mean, I know."

"What seems mean?"

"This talking about your wife's spiritual adviser and confessor; but you don't mind a word of advice, do you?"

"Of course not; but what do you wish to say?"

"Well, be careful with Brandon. Yield to him in nothing."

"I'm not likely to."

"That's right. Only he'll be sure to want your children to be reared in his faith. He'll want to convert you."

Walter laughed; then he became quiet for a minute.

"Do you know, Harrington," he said presently, "I am not quite easy in my mind about Joyce?"

"Anything the matter?"

"Not that I know of. Only—well, you see, I haven't seen her for eight months. As you know, she's at a convent school, and, although it was guaranteed that there should be no religious bias in the teaching, my wife's conversion has made me afraid for her."

"You told me you did not much trouble about that sort of thing when you sent her," remarked Harrington.

"No, I didn't. Not having given the matter much thought, I didn't see that it mattered greatly what religion she adopted. You see, my father's treatment did not cause me to be enamoured with Protestantism, and I knew several decent people who were Catholics."

"Just so. Have your ideas changed?"

"I hardly know. All the same, I don't like the thought of my Joyce becoming one of them."

Harrington was silent.

"You see," went on Walter, "she's bound to be influenced by the step her mother has taken."

"Well, take her away."

"I can't, and that's the positive truth. As you know, my prospects are improving, but even yet money is scarce, while that school is cheap. I've been thinking it all over,

and I can't see my way to sending her to a good English school."

"You may after Christmas. If we win this case, it will go a good way towards making both our fortunes."

From this time they drifted into talking about the *pros* and *cons* of the great trial which was soon to come off.

The next evening Mrs. Raymond pleaded with Walter to allow Father Brandon to baptise their children into the Catholic Church; but he refused to give his consent, and, try as she might, his wife could not shake him in his decision.

"All I can promise to do at present is to think it over," he said.

"But when will you decide?"

"I don't know."

"But meanwhile the children's souls are in peril."

"Nonsense," said Walter with a laugh.

When Mrs. Raymond told Father Brandon what he had said the priest looked grave.

"You do not know Walter, Father Brandon," she said. "I know he is a kind and indulgent husband; but he is not a man to be forced to do anything. Besides, if he takes this attitude about the children, what hope can I have that he will yield in the other matter?"

"We must never give up," said the priest. "Remember, my daughter, the children must be saved and your husband's conversion must be brought about. We must be prepared to be vigilant, prayerful, and self-sacrificing."

"Yes, I will do anything," said Mrs. Raymond.

A week passed away, and still Walter remained obdurate.

"It must be done, after all," said Father Brandon, and, accordingly, he sat down and wrote a letter to Father Anthony Ritzoom, Convent of St. Joseph of Arimathæa, Dublin. It was a long letter, and it occasioned Father Brandon much anxious thought. When he had finished it he heaved a sigh, half of relief, half of disappointment.

"It will take a great burden from me," he said, "for Ritzoom can succeed where nearly every other man would fail; but I should have liked to have carried this thing through myself."

Three days later he received a letter with a Dublin postmark.

"I will be with you as soon as possible," he read; "meanwhile, do nothing.

"(Signed) A. RITZOOM."



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE COMING OF FATHER RITZOOM.

THREE weeks passed away, and still Ritzoom did not make his appearance. Father Brandon tried to discover the reasons for this, but failed to do so. Ritzoom was noted for prompt action; and, while oft-times brusque, almost to the point of rudeness, to members of his Order, he had the reputation of eagerly taking up cases of a delicate nature, especially if there was a possibility that his Church could be advanced.

"Three weeks, and never so much as a further line," thought Brandon. "Meanwhile I seem to be making no headway whatever. How can I, when he has told me to do nothing?"

In spite of this exhortation, however, Father Brandon had not been idle. He had set himself the task of persuading Raymond's children to be ready to be received into the Roman Church. This work he did, not ostensibly, but quietly and unobtrusively. He had persuaded Mrs. Raymond that it was their duty to do this without their father's knowledge.

"You see," he said, "it is evident that the children were never really baptised, and we must leave no stone unturned to save them from the peril in which they now stand."

"But if my husband——"

"Mr. Raymond is not your spiritual adviser," interrupted the priest, "and, if their souls cannot be saved with his consent, they must be saved without it. There is no need that he should know, and if they are wisely treated they will not tell him of the influences which are at work."

"But he is becoming suspicious."

"Then we must allay his suspicions."

"How?"

"Easily enough. One thing, however, you must manage. You must not give him the opportunity of hearing them say their prayers at night."

"That will be easy. He has become so engrossed in his great lawsuit that he never gets home until very late, and when he does get home he is very tired."

"All the better for our purposes."

"But on Sundays he takes them out for a walk."

"Leave that to me. If I can be with them an hour or so each day, you need not fear that they will tell him anything."

"But I tell you he will never consent to their being baptised and received into the Church."

"The great thing is that they be baptised into the Church," replied Brandon. "When that is done, all will be well. You must help me in this."

"I am sure I do all I can. I am constantly telling them what a good man you are, and that, being a member of the one true Church, God has given you special power. I have told them also that it is their duty to obey you in everything."

"And does Mr. Raymond seek to counteract your influence?"

"To do him justice, he has always made the children respect my word. Even when I have been in the wrong, he has maintained my authority. Moreover, he does not believe in prying into the secrets even of children. He says that if we are to get the best from our children, we must always trust to their honour."

The priest smiled as though he were pleased.

"Does he ask you about my visits?" he asked presently.

"Never. He never mentions your name unless I introduce it. He asks me if I have had visitors, and if I say 'No' he says nothing more."

"This is all in our favour, my child. I think we shall find it our duty to receive the children into the Church without his consent. It would be better to obtain it, but if we do not, then at all hazards we must care for their souls."

"Oh, but I am fearful what he will say when he finds out the truth."

"You need not fear. Probably soon his own views may alter, then all will be easy. But even if they do not, you need not be afraid; you are now a child of the Church, and will have the Church's protection."

Mrs. Raymond sighed. The thought of plotting against her husband was terrible to her. She remembered how in the days of old she never had a secret from him, and no shadow of any sort stood between them. Now, on the other hand, there were many things which she strove to hide from him. She did not tell him of the priest's constant visits, nor of the influence he was exercising on the children's minds.

There was also another matter concerning which she troubled greatly. This was about Joyce. She was told that a letter would shortly arrive from her, stating that she wished to spend the Christmas holidays with a school friend in France. A letter would also come from the parents of this friend urging the visit. Father Brandon had mentioned this on more than one occasion, and this letter was now expected daily.

"I doubt if Walter will consent," said Mrs. Raymond. "He is just longing to see her, and, for that matter, so am I."

"But if it is good for the child's soul that she stay away a little longer?" said the priest. "You will not stand in the way of her conversion; indeed, you must not."

"No; I quite realise that," she replied, "and I will do all in my power. But I shall do harm rather than good. He is always talking about Joyce's homecoming, and if I were to favour her spending Christmas in France I am sure he would oppose me."

"Then you must not favour it."

"What do you mean?"

"You must not favour it. You must rather say that you do not like the idea of her going with these French Protestants, who are sure to be opposed to the Church. By that means you will reconcile him to her going."

"But are they real Protestants, Father Brandon?"

"They come of an old Huguenot family," replied the priest. "The father of Gertrude de Villiers is certainly not a Catholic."

Mrs. Raymond glanced up timidly at him, and sighed. She was getting accustomed to his manner of speech.

"So, you see, your course will be perfectly easy," went on the priest. "Meanwhile, you must use your influence, wisely and quietly, to bring about the baptism of your younger children."

Although Mrs. Raymond's heart was sad, she bowed her head in acquiescence. She felt that to save her children's souls she would do anything.

As for Father Brandon, he was, in spite of the success which had attended his efforts, growing impatient. After all, there was more in the question of the conversion of the Raymond family than the conversion of their souls; there was the reconciliation of the son with the father, which meant a vast sum of money.

“That money should come to the Church,” he mused as he wended his way to the house. “It would be glorious if all these hundreds of thousands of pounds which old Raymond, the hater of priestcraft, has amassed, should come into our hands. But I do not see how this can be. Raymond is not an easy man to deal with. These quiet men never are—well, easy to manage. No, Ritzoom is the only man who can do it, and it is now three weeks since I received his letter. Why on earth does he not come?”

He opened the door with a latch-key, and let himself into his house.

“I’ll write again,” he said; “I’ll send a letter this very night.”

Whereupon he opened his study door, and then started back aghast.

“You see, there is no need for you to write again.”

“But how did you know I meant to write?”

“I know you, Brandon. I knew you as a novice, and I can measure to a nicety the length to which your patience will go and the steps you are likely to take. Besides, I am a believer in mental telepathy.”

By this time the two men were grasping each other’s hand; Father Brandon, somewhat nervous and excited by his visitor’s presence and words, the other impassive, sardonic, grim. Instinctively Brandon felt himself in the presence of a stronger man than himself—a man, self-contained, mysterious, possessing a hundred secrets, the framer of so many far-reaching plans.

Years have passed since some of my readers were first introduced to Father Ritzoom, the famous Jesuit,\* but there is but little need to give a fresh description. The man who stood before Father Brandon was scarcely different from the man as we saw him first. It is true his hair had grown slightly grey and the lines on his face had somewhat deepened, but that was all; it was just as difficult to tell his age as ever—he might be a man of sixty or he might be only forty. When his face was in repose, it would be easy to think of him as one who had passed his threescore years; but when he became a man of action, when his eyes gleamed with interest, and when he saw work of a difficult and delicate nature to be done, he could easily pass for forty or forty-five, a man in the prime of life, full of vitality and energy. He still carried himself erect, his broad, square shoulders and deep chest still

\* “The Scarlet Woman” and “The Purple Robe.”

revealing great strength and power of endurance. He still impressed you with his air of mystery, as one who delighted to deal in secret things ; but, more than all, the square jaw and black eyes told of indomitable will, told of a man who could never be beaten. Even in the hour of defeat he pondered over plans for a fresh attack, and when another man would have give up a scheme as impossible Father Ritzoom worked quietly but determinedly to obtain the ends upon which he had set his mind.

It was impossible not to be impressed by his evident strength. It was just as impossible to love him. Even those who admired him most had no affection for him. On every hand he was regarded as a faithful servant of the Church to which he belonged, and to the Order in which his influence was enormous. It was believed, and perhaps the belief was justified, that he would suffer even unto death to advance the interests of his faith ; and yet those who knew him best thought of him as one who regarded the Roman Church as a great machine, a mighty and far-reaching political and social institution, rather than the spiritual home of those who sinned and repented.

By years of steady service he had lifted himself high in the councils of the Jesuit Order. Although he occupied no great official position, he was master of those who did. Some said that the General of the Order was afraid of Ritzoom, for all knew that, although his name was not known as a great official, it was because of his own desires, and because his influence was greater as a seeming private in the ranks of the great army. For Father Ritzoom was a strange compound. He was a cruel enemy, and yet he even had a kind of affection for a man who was a foeman worthy of his steel. He swept aside everything that stood in the way of fulfilling his desires, and yet, the more skilful and the more dangerous his opponent, the more kindly did he feel towards him. Besides all this, there was no ordinary selfishness in what he did. He worked for his Order and his Church, and cared nothing for worldly considerations. Money in itself had no attractions for him, and yet he rejoiced to sweep wealth into the coffers of his Church. His selfishness lay in his desire to increase his own power, to accomplish the thing he had set out to do. He loved, moreover, to work in secret, to guide the factors in some far-reaching plan, to pull the hidden springs of some complicated machinery. Moreover, he demanded freedom of action. There is no institution or society in the world more

hedged about by rules than the Society of Jesus. Men are but pawns on a great chessboard. Individuals are sent hither and thither without apparent meaning or purpose; they know not why, they dare not ask. But this did not apply to Ritzoom. It was he who sat at the table and played the game: his was the mind behind, and thus, although others were technically far higher in the councils of the Order than he, it was he who in reality ruled them.

In short, he was a Jesuit by education, by desire, and by fitness. Long years of training had made him one of the most powerful men in his Order. Whenever he was approached that he might be persuaded ostensibly to guide the wheels of the Order he would shake his head, as if to say, "I could not do what I do now if I did. I should have to concern myself in a thousand things in which I have no interest. As I am, I can choose and select. I can interest myself only in those things which promise great results."

When he had first received Father Brandon's letter he did not feel disposed to take any interest in it, but when he saw its difficulties, and when he saw that with careful management the vast fortune of old Walter Raymond might be made to come into the service of the Church, he altered his mind. That was why he wrote the letter to Brandon telling him that he might expect him.

"I expected you at least a fortnight ago," said Brandon presently.

"I daresay." Father Ritzoom took a cigar from his case and lighted it deliberately.

He was dressed in the garb of an ordinary layman. There was not the slightest suggestion of the cleric in his appearance. He might have been a barrister, or he might have been a political refugee—anything but a priest. Not a muscle in his face moved, not the slightest interest did he show in the younger man, who looked at him steadily and inquiringly. He might have been thinking deeply, or he might have been enjoying his cigar in lazy content; it was impossible to tell.

But now that his face was in repose he looked older. His skin was sallow, the lines on his cheeks deepened.

"I wonder what he's thinking about?" thought the other. "He's as deep as the Pacific Ocean, but he does look old and careworn. . . . Are you well, Ritzoom?" said Brandon presently.

"I never have anything the matter with me," was the reply.

"I thought you looked disconsolate."

Ritzoom sighed; for a moment he seemed to forget himself.

"There is nothing the matter, is there? I have heard of wonderful things about you. Only last week I heard that you had converted a Protestant countess."

Ritzoom laughed scornfully.

"Is it not true?"

"Oh, yes, it's true enough."

"I hear, too, that a number of important people have been led through you to lean toward the Church."

"Yes, yes—but what does it all amount to?"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! It's easy enough to persuade a lot of *blasé*, overfed women, who have tried every form of amusement under heaven, to take a turn at being religious. It provides a new sensation for them, and it looks well in the newspapers. Very likely they'll have forgotten all about it in six months."

"Something has surely upset you."

"Upset me! My dear fellow, we always diligently announce all converts; we don't announce those who lapse, and yet the number of the latter is far greater than the former."

"You cannot mean that."

"I am sure of it."

Again Father Ritzoom became silent.

Brandon was eager to introduce the subject of Ritzoom's visit; but he dared not. Something in the older priest's face forbade him.

"Surely our work of converting England goes on satisfactorily?" he said presently.

"Nonsense."

"Then are the reports in our papers all lies?"

"Oh, no, they are mainly true; but then they tell only one side of the truth."

"What side?"

"They don't tell of the thousands who come from other countries who cease to be Catholics the moment they set foot on this cursed island. They don't tell how these same one-time Catholics become imbued with the spirit of Protestantism. They don't tell how, in spite of the tremendous number of Catholics who come into this country, the percentage of Catholics is less per thousand of the population than it was twenty years ago. Converts! Oh, yes, I know them! Catholics one week, Christian Scientists the next, Heaven

knows what the week after! And what are they? Women—mainly women on the look-out for a new sensation. But the conversion of the country! The bowing of the neck, as Manning puts it, of an Imperial race! There's our weakness."

"But see how convents and monasteries have increased."

"Yes—monks and nuns who have been expelled from Catholic countries. The Englishman is a tolerant animal, and gives a home to all the world. But that is not converting the country."

"But these monks and nuns are bound to influence the neighbourhoods in which they reside."

"Are they? I wish I could see it. Your stupid Englishman shrugs his shoulders and passes on. He goes, perhaps, to a popular Catholic church, pays his shilling to hear the singing, and then says it's a poor show for the money. As for seeing the greatness of our ideals, the majesty of the Church, your Englishman is blind to it. And your Englishman is a fool."

"Why are you saying that now?"

"Because he insists on thinking for himself on subjects which he cannot understand."

Evidently Father Ritzoom was in an ill-humour.

"When are you going to have dinner, Brandon?" he said presently. "I had a cold passage across the Channel and a cold journey since."

"It will be only five minutes."

"Thank Heaven for that. I don't feel inclined to talk until I've had something to eat."

"You would like a wash?"

"I would. I always feel as though I want a wash when I am in this dirty country. The very air makes me feel as though I am in an enemy's land."

Five minutes afterwards the two men sat down to dinner. During the meal nothing of importance was said. Both seemed to enjoy the food which Brandon's cook had provided.

"And now," said Ritzoom, when they had again adjourned to Brandon's study, "we'll talk about this affair of yours. You know of no new developments?"

"No."

"I suppose you know you've bungled the business?"

"No, I did not know."

"But you have. This is a bigger thing than you imagined. It offers all sorts of possibilities."



“ Yes, I realise that ; but wherein have I bungled? I have arranged for the eldest daughter to be at one of our schools in Belgium, and she will soon be received into the Church. I have converted the mother, and received her into the Church. Before long all the children will belong to us.”

“ But the father? ”

Brandon was silent.

“ Because there, judging from my standpoint, is the hub of the whole business.”

“ The man nearly always is,” said Brandon.

“ And therefore needs the most careful handling. As you say, old Raymond is enormously rich. We are a poor people in England, Brandon, and the Church needs money.”

“ Exactly. I enlarged upon that in my letter.”

“ Yes, but you have precipitated things ; your rapid movements have alienated the man. The woman’s conversion has been too sudden ; it should have taken years. The man should have been slowly accustomed to the idea. Of course you did right about the school, for by so doing you have obtained an entrance into the house and succeeded in having influence with the family. But to convert the woman in a few weeks was to set the man’s back up. You ought to know the Englishman’s character by this time. Always remember, Brandon, that the chief characteristic of the Englishman is a sense of his own importance. The next thing after that is to remember that he should be always made to believe that he is master in his own house—very few of them are ; but they like to think they are. Thus it comes about that you have wounded this man’s vanity in two places. The conversion has taken place without his consent, and it has meant that the wife’s will is now opposed to that of the husband. *Ergo*, he is annoyed.”

Father Brandon looked vexed.

“ The next thing that has to be remembered is that old Raymond is a bigoted Puritan. Now if he hears that his son’s wife, in addition to being the daughter of a penniless lawyer who, professionally speaking, is daily walking on eggs, is also a convert to his pet hatred, he will be more than ever angry with his son. You can surely see this, although you have lived so long in this stupid country.”

“ But surely I had my work as a parish priest. It was my duty to convert this woman.”

“ Of course it was, but your greater work was to convert the man.”

“ But I hoped to convert the man through the woman. He has been exceedingly fond of her, and has suffered all sorts of hardships because of her.”

“ Yes, and now you have created dissensions in the home. The man no longer trusts his wife as he did. He has grown bitter towards you and the Church. She, like all women brought up as Protestants and then persuaded to become Catholics, has become an ardent missionary.”

“ How do you know? ”

“ How do I know everything? But that’s not the point. The woman has begun to doubt their marriage.”

“ But—but——”

“ Yes, yes, I know. But you are not a ritualistic parson of the Anglican order. They may be silly enough to suggest such a course of procedure within a few days of coming into contact with a Dissenter, but you should be wiser. A wise man should always know how to wait.”

After that they talked long and earnestly—the one asking questions, the other answering them, until when Father Ritzoom retired to bed he was in a better humour.

The next day, when Walter Raymond sat in his office, the office boy brought in a card.

“ Anthony Ritzoom,” he said. “ I wonder who he is? ”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LAWYER AND THE PRIEST.

It may be thought that such a far-seeing man as Ritzoom would not have sent his name to Raymond, remembering the mission upon which he was engaged. But Ritzoom knew that he risked scarcely anything by so doing. While well known to members of his Order and to those with whom he came into personal contact, he was practically unknown to the great world. He spoke at no big gatherings, his name did not appear on important councils, neither did he do anything to make his name known to the community. He worked in the dark. His hands touched secret springs, he guided public affairs while he himself remained unknown.

As a matter of fact, Walter Raymond had never heard the name in his life, and when he glanced at the card he had no suspicion as to whom he was. The name appeared to him to have a foreign sound, and that was all.

“Will you be seated?”

Raymond's office was neither large nor luxurious. Up to a year ago he had shared two inexpensive rooms with several other men, not being able to afford an office of his own, and now, although he managed to pay for the room in which he sat, as well as a little box behind, where a boy, dignified by the name of “clerk,” copied letters and ran errands, there was no evidence of anything like affluence.

Ritzoom noted this at a glance, and drew his conclusions accordingly. Whatever the results of the great trial on which he had been so long busily engaged might be, he was at present only a poor, struggling lawyer, eager for any work that might fall in his way.

“Are you very busy, Mr. Raymond?”

Raymond looked at his visitor before he replied. As I have said, he was not a brilliant man, but he had a large fund of common sense, and he was not one who could be easily carried away by the impulse of a moment.

"A lawyer is always busy," he replied; "but seldom too busy to see clients."

Ritzoom laughed quietly. The answer seemed to please him.

"Then you can give me a few minutes of your time?"

"If I can be of any service to you, I shall be very glad."

For a moment Ritzoom scarcely knew how to begin. This quiet, honest-looking man baffled him somewhat. In early years he had failed to attain his purpose by underestimating the strength of the man he had to deal with, and he had grown wiser by experience.

"The business about which I have come to consult you," he said, "is rather delicate. It is not quite in the way of conveyancing, neither does it run in the line of litigation."

Here he stopped and looked at Walter Raymond steadily, but the lawyer made no sign whatever. He waited in stony silence for Ritzoom to proceed. This was undoubtedly, from a professional point of view, bad policy, as every lawyer is supposed to try and impress a client with his own special interest in that client's welfare. But Walter Raymond was not a man after that order: he assumed nothing which he did not feel, and he was not altogether at ease in his visitor's presence.

"In short," went on Ritzoom, "I want a lawyer whose name is free from all shadow of taint, who is the soul of integrity, and who can be in sympathy with the aims and objects of my visit. With regard to the first two qualifications my visit here is a sufficient guarantee that you are just the man I need."

Raymond bowed his head slightly.

"The question is," went on Ritzoom, "are you disposed to take the matter in hand?"

"When I know the nature of the business, I will tell you," replied Raymond quietly.

"It is of such a nature that I could not give details until I have some assurance that you will take the matter up."

Walter Raymond hesitated a second, and was about to reply, when Ritzoom continued:

"Of course, the qualifications I have mentioned—a stainless career and strict integrity—are a sufficient guarantee that the business is of the most honourable nature. At the same time, there are certain things about which one must be absolutely discreet."

Again Raymond looked at Ritzoom, and noted the strong

face and unfathomable eyes. He felt that his visitor was no ordinary man, and that he had come on no ordinary commission. Moreover, he was far from comfortable in his presence. Instinctively he felt that the man before him was secret, mysterious, and out of the ordinary run of men: as such he disliked him. On the other hand, he was sure that he had not come to him about some trivial matter, and he was eager, for his children's sake, to obtain lucrative business.

"I need scarcely remind you," he said, "that no solicitor would obtain a reputation for integrity without being very careful about the cases he meddles in. Again, I am sure you are well aware that he would be driven out of the profession if he did not regard all confidences as sacred. I have refused many cases in my life, but no would-be client has had to complain that I have betrayed his confidence."

He spoke very quietly, but Ritzoom felt that here was a man who was not easily moved.

"I know I am making a strange request," said Ritzoom; "I know that every solicitor should have the general outlines of a case before he decides whether he will take it up. On the other hand, I am in no ordinary position. I give you my word of honour that no lawyer's reputation could possibly suffer by being engaged in that about which I have come to consult you; at the same time, I could not make it known to you without the assurance that you will devote your best energies to it."

Walter Raymond rose from his chair.

"I am sure I need not detain you any longer," he said quietly.

Ritzoom, however, did not move from his chair, and Raymond's attitude made him unbend somewhat.

"Your conduct makes my desire to secure your services stronger," he said with some degree of warmth. "It is not often one meets a man so scrupulously particular."

"I think you are mistaken," said Raymond, still remaining on his feet. "No lawyer would take blindfoldedly a case which may be utterly hopeless or utterly beyond him."

"It is neither hopeless nor beyond you," said Ritzoom. "It is simply a matter which requires special treatment. As a consequence, it is of great importance, it is of a very remunerative nature, and if successfully carried through it would lead to other things of a very desirable character. Indeed, it is almost in the nature of an appointment."

"In that case," said Raymond, "there is still less need to detain you."

Still Ritzoom did not move from his chair. While not looking the lawyer straight in the face, he was studying him closely. He seemed to be reckoning up the man before him, and to be weighing him in the balances.

"I will go as far as I can," he said presently. "I said at the beginning that I required three qualifications in a lawyer, independent of professional ability."

"Yes," said Raymond quietly, "you insisted on sympathy with the matter in hand without stating its nature."

"True," said Ritzoom blandly. "The fact is, Mr. Raymond, I am a bit of a bungler. Having but little experience with men of the legal profession, and having been led to believe that this same profession is full of subtleties of which I have no knowledge, and with which I have no sympathy, I have doubtless acted foolishly. To be perfectly frank, then, I want a lawyer who is in sympathy with religious objects—one who would work, not simply for his fees, but for the cause he is engaged in."

Raymond sat down. "What are the religious objects?" he asked. "Personally, I am aware of no religious objects which require a solicitor to promise to engage himself on their behalf without knowing their nature."

Ritzoom was silent again; then he went on like a man speaking excitedly.

"No doubt you are perfectly right. You are, of course, in sympathy with religious objects?"

"I trust I have sympathy with all objects which tend to benefit mankind," said Raymond guardedly.

"Thank you," said Ritzoom, rising, "I will think over what you say and probably call again. Good-morning."

Walter Raymond opened the office door and bowed his visitor out.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked. "That was no ordinary man, and if I mistake not he was here on no ordinary business. However, I have doubtless got rid of him for ever. He will find another man who will engage in his mysterious work."

He toyed with the card that was left.

"Anthony Ritzoom," he said. There was nothing more. No address, no indication of profession or station. The name was engraved on an ordinary piece of cardboard and suggested nothing out of the common.

As for Ritzoom, he walked away evidently in deep thought. Presently he found himself in Temple Gardens, where he sat down. He took no notice of those who sat near, nor of the people who passed to and fro. Men and women walked close to him—some idlers, others busy people on their way to an appointment; some strolled moodily by, others were eagerly talking, but he took no notice. He might have been in the heart of the country, far from the haunts of men, instead of being in the centre of the greatest and busiest city in the world.

Presently he lifted his eyes. He could just see the traffic on the river beyond the palings of the garden. The ancient obelisk which stands on the river's bank attracted his gaze.

"Very old, very interesting, but very useless," he muttered; "besides, this climate—this cursed climate——"

He moved impatiently, and was silent for a minute.

"Yes," he went on presently. "This climate destroys everything. Even my faith grows weak when I am in England, while my confidence goes from me. Somehow the typical Englishman baffles me. It is only when they lose their peculiar characteristics that I can manage them. This quiet, dogged strength is disconcerting. An Italian would have swallowed my bait, so would a Spaniard, so perhaps would a German; but I don't know. There is something in the Saxon blood which saps my confidence."

Ritzoom rose and walked towards the Temple station, but before he reached the gates of the gardens he turned back and again seated himself.

"A difficult man, a difficult case," he mused. "Let me sum it up. Old Raymond, a millionaire and a bigoted Protestant. Young Raymond, an impecunious lawyer, who has just begun to get on; a quiet, honest man—a man with no strong religious convictions, but a schismatic at heart; one who would quietly snap his fingers at priestly authority. His wife a weak woman, who yielded to Brandon's first attack, but who, with him to aid her, can make her husband's life miserable; a woman who is feverish to convert everyone to the Catholic faith, and who has set about to convert her children. Because of this there is already a barrier between her and her husband. This man and woman are married according to English law, but in the eyes of the Church—well, I must leave that to Brandon. Children have had a sham baptism. Eldest daughter in one of our schools. Let me think, now, let me think!"

Ritzoom sat back and closed his eyes. Some who passed by thought he was asleep. They wondered why a well-dressed man should care to fall asleep in Temple Gardens on a raw, chilly day. But, as may be imagined, he was not asleep. Some men say they can only think at the end of a pen; but Ritzoom was not one of those. By the end of half an hour every detail of the case before him was outlined—everything was clear before his mind; he had made up his mind concerning the course of events.

For Ritzoom shared the belief and feelings of the hero of Alexandre Dumas' great novel: he wanted to be Providence himself, and believed he could be.

"Any fool can sit down and wait for what comes to pass," was one of his favourite sayings; "a wise man shapes things according to his own desires."

Not that he altogether liked his present work: it was somewhat mundane, a trifle sordid. Ritzoom greatly delighted in work which affected the destinies of communities. He loved to convert a man of influence and power to his way of thinking, and thereby to silently influence the course of public events. He had often said that had he lived in the time of Henry VIII. there would have been no dissolution of monasteries, and that, had he had the position of Father Parsons, he would never have allowed Philip II. of Spain to be concerned with the miserable fiasco of the Great Armada.

"A wise councillor at the elbow of Elizabeth would have made her willing to marry Philip, fool though he was," Ritzoom maintained, "and then England would have become Catholic again, and not embittered against the greatest Catholic force in the world."

Still, the affair at stake was important. The Church wanted money, and to convert the Raymond family wisely would mean the gathering in of old Raymond's treasures. This did not mean direct influence upon public events, but it did mean the sinews of war.

He walked towards the new Westminster Cathedral, which was in course of erection. When he reached it he saw a sea of scaffold poles.

"The world has been scoured to raise a few thousand pounds to build this," he reflected, "and we are hampered on every hand for money. Besides, this place will be hidden, even when it is built. We cannot afford to buy enough land. We, the great Church of Christendom!"



He walked away sadly, still thinking deeply.

"A quiet, strong man," he reflected, "but still a kind and honourable one. I must see to it that he succeeds. That will soften his father. A reconciliation will follow. But the old man must know nothing of the conversion of his wife and children. It requires care—great care."

Three days later, when Walter Raymond returned from his office, his wife passed him a letter.

"I do not read French well," she said, "but I think I've made it out. I don't like the idea a bit."

Walter took the letter and read it carefully. It was signed Gertrude de Villiers, and contained a strongly worded request that Joyce should be allowed to spend the Christmas vacation at the De Villiers' château in Normandy.

"I hope you will consent to this," the letter ran. "Your daughter Joyce has become a great friend of my daughter Gertrude, so much so that they have become almost inseparable. I expect this is because they are both Protestants, and are therefore practically alone in a Catholic school. We belong to an old Huguenot family, and thus their influence upon each other is very desirable. There is also a French Reformed Church close to the château. Of course, no religious influence is directly brought to bear upon them at the school; nevertheless, the atmosphere is sure to be Catholic, and that is why I am so pleased that Gertrude and Joyce have become such friends. Please say she may come. I enclose a picture of the château, which will show you, I hope, that her surroundings will be pleasant. We also keep up the English fashion of observing Christmas, and will promise to take every care of your daughter."

"I don't like it," said Mrs. Raymond when she saw that her husband had finished reading.

"Why?" asked Walter.

"You need scarcely ask why."

"But I do."

"I suppose these French Protestants are very bitter to my religion," said Mrs. Raymond.

"Scarcely," said Walter, "seeing that the De Villiers have sent their daughter to a Catholic school."

"That may be; still, you see what this Madame de Villiers says. Besides, I hoped that——"

"Hoped what?" said Walter, when he saw her hesitate.

"I hoped that—that, well, she would be led to the truth."

"That is, I suppose, you intended trying to convert her?" said Walter.

Mrs. Raymond was silent.

"I'll think about it," said Walter. "I do want to see her badly. My heart is aching for her—in fact, just aching for her—but I shall be terribly busy this Christmas. Work is coming in that I did not expect, and this lawsuit presents new difficulties. Even if she comes home, I shall be able to give her very little time."

"Yes, but I shall have her," said Mrs. Raymond. "I shall have her all to myself. She will be able to tell me about the services at the beautiful church connected with the school, and about those lovely processions through the old town of Bruges. And I shall be able to tell her all I've experienced since I became a Catholic. Oh, Walter, if you only knew the joy of faith!"

Walter sighed. "I must think about it," he said, and then he went on with his dinner.

"I'm inclined to agree with you," he continued presently. "No doubt it would be pleasant for Joyce to go to this old château, for it is a beautiful place, but I feel as though I must see my little girl."

"She'll want new dresses if she goes there," suggested Mrs. Raymond.

"She'll have to have them anyhow," said Walter. "She will be quite a grown woman now, I suppose. And then there will be the expenses from Bruges here. Still, I feel I must have her home, and I will be with her all I can."

Mrs. Raymond did not seem pleased at the trend of the conversation, but she evidently tried to show no sign of it.

"Yes," continued Walter; "I must write to this Madame de Villiers, telling her of our decision. I'm afraid my French is very rusty, but I dare say I shall be able to manage it."

Mrs. Raymond burst out crying.

"What is the matter?" asked Walter anxiously. "There is nothing wrong, is there? You see we are of the same opinion about Joyce coming home."

"Yes, yes, it's not that; but, oh, Walter, I am miserable."

"Miserable! Why? Are you ill?"

"In body, no. I believe I should be quite well, only——"

"Only what?"

"Oh, Walter, you surely know."

Walter's face hardened.

" I can never be happy until—— Oh, Walter ! "

" Has that fellow Brandon been here to-day ? "

" No one has called to-day. "

" Then you've not seen him ? "

" I told you no one has called to-day. "

She had been to confession that day, and had had a long conversation with the priest, but she did not mention it.

Walter looked at her steadily, as though he would read her thoughts. The old trust had gone. Still, he did not press his questions further, but took his pipe from the mantel-piece and began to fill it.

" Walter, Walter, I must tell you. "

" Tell me what ? "

" I cannot go on like this any longer. "

" Like what ? "

" Living with you as your wife. "

Walter was about to say something of an angry nature, but he kept silent.

" I have borne it as long as I can, Walter, and it's so little for you to do ! "

" I think you had better go to bed, Lucy, " he replied ;  
" you are overwrought. "

" No, no. This must be settled, and for ever. Unless you will be married according to the rites of the Church, we must be strangers for the future. "

" Strangers ? "

" Yes, strangers. "

" Think, Lucy, what you are saying. "

" I have thought, and I have made up my mind. "

" Do you mean to say that you will leave me ? "

" No; I do not mean that. But I can no longer be your wife. "

" Listen, Lucy, " said Walter quietly. " Even your religion does not demand re-marriage. I have looked up the matter, and I find that non-Catholic marriages are accepted by your Church. "

" I don't care, I don't care. I must obey my conscience. I have thought it all out, and I have come to a decision. For my children's sake I will live in the house ; but only as a stranger to you. "

Walter looked at her steadily. Her face was flushed with excitement. A look almost amounting to terror was in her eyes; evidently she was much wrought upon.

" Oh, Walter, Walter, " she went on, " it is so little I

am asking of you, so little. Just to go with me to the church and take me as your wife according to the rites of our faith. No one will know, no one can know. We can go late at night or early in the morning. Won't you do this for me, Walter—for the children's sake?"

The promise was almost upon his lips. As we have said, he troubled very little about the niceties of theology, and he was by no means strict about matters ecclesiastical. Moreover, he was very fond of his wife, and wanted to make her happy. What she had suggested was the line of least resistance, and he longed for the peace and trust of the old days. But there was one thing in what she had said which kept him from yielding to her wishes.

"For the children's sake," she had pleaded.

The words opened up before him an avenue of thought. If he yielded to his wife's wishes, he could no longer refuse to have them baptised into the Roman Church. It meant, moreover, that he had consented to his wife's conversion, and put his seal on that consent by practically participating in her new faith. It would be the first step on a road which, if he entered, would compromise his whole future.

"No one need ever know, Walter; no one. I will never tell anyone. I will take my oath on the crucifix. No one can ever know."

Again she struck a false note. There would be something cowardly about the act. He did not like to do something which he was afraid for the world to know of. The thought was repellent to his truth-loving nature.

"No," he said quietly, "I shall not do it."

Mrs. Raymond threw herself into a chair, and began to sob bitterly, but Walter's heart had become hardened. He felt more than ever that the priest had ruined his home life.

He took some papers from a drawer, and began to write. Evidently the letter cost him much labour, for he wrote slowly and it took him a long time. Mrs. Raymond remained in the armchair, but he paid her no attention.

Presently he finished. The letter was written in French. When he was addressing the envelope Mrs. Raymond looked up. Her curiosity had overcome her grief.

"Who are you writing to?"

"As we are to be strangers in future, it can scarcely interest you."

"Who are you writing to?" she repeated.

"To Madame de Villiers."

“ Have you declined her invitation for Joyce? ”

“ No. I have accepted.”

He stamped the letter, and went out to post it. When he was gone Mrs. Raymond rose to her feet. “ At least Father Brandon will be pleased that I have succeeded in this,” she said to herself.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SHADOW OF THE PRIEST.

ONE afternoon, several weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, Walter Raymond returned early from his office. He had been working very hard, and, as there was nothing which called for his immediate attention, he determined to go home and spend an hour or two with the children. He felt his estrangement from his wife keenly. She assumed a martyr-like attitude whenever she was in his presence. She cried often; and when she spoke it was in aggrieved and wounded tones. When she went to bed at night she said "Good-night, Mr. Raymond," and then he saw her no more until the following morning. Sometimes she did not get down until he had gone to business, and when he returned home at night it was only to be met with a chilly reception.

For the first few days he took but little notice of this.

"She will soon get over it," he said. "After all, Lucy is an affectionate creature, and will soon see that this kind of thing is so much nonsense." But presently he grew somewhat irritated. While retaining his quiet attitude, he was nevertheless deeply annoyed by her behaviour. Not that she changed his opinions in the slightest. The more he reflected over the matter, the more both mind and heart revolted against taking part in what was to him worse than a fiasco. Nevertheless, he was miserable. The old happy home life was now a thing of the past. The priest had cast his shadow everywhere. When he entered his house of a night, the place reminded him of a vault more than anything else. As a consequence, he stayed at the office later than he otherwise would have done.

But it was not only the attitude of his wife which troubled him. Try as he would to think otherwise, he felt that his children had changed towards him. Somehow the old feeling of comradeship had gone. He saw that they did not refer to him as in former days. They never asked him to come and tell them stories. Rather they glanced at him furtively, and then went to their mother with messages which they delivered in a whisper.

He was not an inquisitive man, and he had always insisted on bringing up his children in the belief that he trusted them entirely. Whenever he asked them a question, he never doubted their answers. Moreover, he never sought to pry into their secrets. "They will be sure to tell me everything if I trust them," he said; and up to a few weeks before his trust had been justified. But lately he had seen a change. They seemed to regard him as a pariah—he was the ghoul at the feast. Even Walter, the joy of his life, seemed to look at him suspiciously, as though he were a creature to be feared.

To Walter Raymond this was bitterness itself. A fond father, he had been ready to sacrifice anything for his children, and now to feel that they were becoming estranged from him was terrible. He persistently drove away the thought that his wife was responsible for this. "It cannot be as bad as that," he said to himself again and again; "it is because I have given them so little time. Business has been so exacting that I have scarcely seen them. I must be more with them, and then the happy old times will come back again."

That was why he hurried home on the afternoon in question. "I shall be in time to meet them as they come in from school," he reflected, "and we'll have tea together, and then I'll romp with them."

His heart warmed at the thought of meeting them. He was not tired as usual, and he looked forward with pleasure to having a long evening at home.

He opened the door with his latch-key, and then went straight into the little dining-room, where his wife sat busily writing. This was an unusual occupation with her, as she had never shown the least disposition in this direction.

She looked up at his entrance, and seemed to be somewhat confused.

"You seem surprised to see me, Lucy."

"Naturally," she replied.

He bent his head to kiss her, but she moved away.

"No, thank you," she said, "I do not wish to be kissed."

Walter sighed as he went out into the passage and took off his coat. "A warm welcome," he said to himself bitterly; "but never mind, the children will be here presently."

He went to his bedroom and changed his clothes. He wanted the evening to be free from even a suggestion of

business worry or work of any sort. Just before he returned to the dining-room he heard his boy Walter's voice. The boy spoke loudly and cheerily, as was his wont, but something seemed to have happened, for he became suddenly silent. When he entered the room he saw the boy give his mother a letter, which she with evident confusion hid from his sight; he saw also that his wife was whispering to him.

Walter gave his boy a kiss, which the lad returned shyly, looking at his mother all the time. A cold fear came into the father's heart; still, he tried to drive away unsettling thoughts.

"Don't hide the letter from me, Lucy," he said. "Who is your correspondent?"

"I do not see that it is any concern of yours."

"You refuse to let me know, then?"

"Certainly. Walter, leave the room."

"No," said the father, "stay, my lad. I want to speak to you."

The boy looked at his father, then at his mother. He walked straight to the door.

"Walter, stay."

The boy hesitated. The tone of his father's voice was peremptory, but he looked at his mother again, and turned the handle of the door.

Walter Raymond caught his son by the arm. "No," he said quietly, "I do not wish you to leave."

He sat down again, and drew the boy between his knees; then he turned to his wife.

"Lucy," he said, "I am sorry things are taking this course, but surely I am entitled to some kind of explanation."

"I shall give you none."

"Who is that letter from?"

"I shall not tell you."

It was not often that Walter Raymond lost control of himself; at that moment, however, he felt that a crisis had come in his life. Still, he kept himself in check.

"Lucy," he said, "I am very sorry you have adopted this attitude. Do you think it is right?"

She was perfectly silent, but she looked threateningly towards her boy, who was pinioned between his father's knees.

"During the whole of our married life I have kept nothing from you," he went on; "even in my business matters I have consulted you."



"Have you told me your clients' secrets?" she asked.

"I have told you everything which has concerned myself," he replied; "I have given you my fullest confidence. Up to a few months ago you returned that confidence. Why am I shut out from that confidence now?"

"You know why: our relations are changed."

Still he kept himself under control.

"I do not like talking about such things before our boy, but you have compelled me," he said; "besides, I do not wish the woman who bears my name to carry on a clandestine correspondence."

Again Walter saw a threatening look pass from mother to child.

"You refuse to tell me anything about that letter?"

"Certainly. You have no right to it. As you know, I do not regard you as having any right to ask."

"Walter," said the father, turning to his boy, "you brought that letter to your mother. From whom did you get it?"

The boy looked at his mother and was silent.

Walter repeated his question quietly, holding the boy's face towards him and looking into his eyes. "You know your old dad trusts you, Walter, and that he has always trusted you. Tell me—from whom did you get that letter?"

"Father Brandon," said the boy.

He opened his mouth to ask other questions, but refrained. He felt sorry now that he had taken this step, sorry that the boy had been brought into the matter. He kissed the lad tenderly. "I'll come up and have a romp with you presently," he said; "and if you like I'll give you your bath and put you to bed to-night. You can run away now."

Young Walter ran away, evidently glad to get out of the room, while Walter turned to his wife.

"Now that you've frightened your child into disobeying his mother, I suppose you are satisfied," she said.

"Oh, I see," he replied. "You had commanded him not to tell me."

She saw her mistake. In her anger she had revealed more than she had intended.

"It would be interesting to know the nature of your correspondence with Father Brandon," he went on.

"I daresay; but I shall not tell you."

"Then you have secrets between you which you will not tell your husband."

"I do not regard you as my husband: you know that."

"But I am your husband. In the eyes of the law I am your husband—aye, even in the eyes of your Church——"

"You know nothing about my Church," she interrupted.

"Anyhow, you tell this priest what you will not tell me?"

"Certainly. As I told you, I do not regard you as my husband."

"You outstep your creed, Lucy; you go beyond even what your Church——"

"What can you know of a Catholic conscience?" she again interrupted.

"Certainly, it seems a curious commodity," replied Walter gravely. "You set our children against their father, and you tell another man what you will not tell me."

"Certainly. You know why."

"And if I were to do what you wish, what then? Do you think it would be right to tell a priest what you would not tell your husband?"

"Of course I would," she replied.

He was about to ask another question, when Rachel and Madaline returned from school. At the sound of their voices he rose to meet them. After all, there is always something in the sound of young voices which dispels angry thoughts.

But again he was disappointed. Try as he might to dispel the thought, he could not help feeling that all was changed between them. A subtle influence had been at work which had raised an invisible barrier. The children no longer rejoiced in his presence. They seemed to regard him with a kind of fear, as one with whom they could not speak freely. He did his best to break this down, but failed. Still, he stayed with them. He had come home to spend the evening with his children, and he determined to do it, and gradually he felt that in spite of everything the barrier was being removed.

This feeling, however, was presently dispelled.

"I'll hear you say your prayers to-night," he said. "Of late I've not got home soon enough to hear you, but to-night I will."

Immediately there was a chilling silence.

"Don't you want me to?" he said, kissing Madaline.

"No."

"Why?"

"I'd rather not, please."

“ Rather not have dad with you when you say your prayers? ”

“ It isn't that, dad? ”

“ Someone told you not to. Is that it? ”

The child nodded.

“ Did Father Brandon tell you? ”

“ Yes, dad.”

Walter did not wait longer. The atmosphere of the home seemed poisoned. His children had been taught to distrust him, avoid him. Another had taken his place to exercise authority over those who had hitherto loved to do his will.

I will not repeat the words which Walter Raymond uttered as he left the house.

Never until now did he realise the change which had come over his home. That his wife had been alienated from him he felt bitterly, but he still rejoiced that his children loved him and trusted him. Their young hearts were free from the canker that had entered his wife's heart. Now, however, he felt that they had been slowly poisoned against him. During the hours when, early and late, he had been away from home the work had been going on. Slowly, little by little, and almost imperceptibly, they had been taught to despise him.

“ It is all owing to that advertisement,” he said between his teeth, as he walked towards Chelsea Bridge. “ It is all because I wanted a cheap school for Joyce.”

This led him to consider how he stood.

“ After March I shall have money,” he reflected, “ but at present I am simply tied hand and foot.”

The case to which we have referred had not yet been settled, but he felt sure that when it was settled it would be in favour of the side for which he had been engaged. Still, this did not bring him ready money, and he was not one who would mortgage his future in any way. Up to the end of March, therefore, he would have to be careful of every penny.

“ Yes,” he said, “ after March I will make an end of this I'll send all the children away to good schools—good, healthy, Protestant schools—where they shall be free from the —”

But he did not finish the sentence. He saw the difficulties which arose. Even after March he could not afford to send all four children to good English schools. They must remain at home, and while they were home they would be under their mother's influence. Still he could manage to do something

for Joyce and Madaline. Evidently Joyce was not so much influenced by the teaching of the school in Belgium; otherwise she would not have desired to spend her Christmas with a girl who was a pronounced Protestant and who lived in a Protestant home. For the present, therefore, she would be safe, and so he could leave her at Bruges without fear.

But oh, the tragedy of it all! All the old trustfulness and happiness destroyed in less than a year! It was now the end of January; thus only nine months had elapsed since Brandon had first entered his doors.

What should he do? Should he prohibit his entrance to the house, and forbid him to hold converse with his children in any way? But what was the use of that? His wife would set his every wish at defiance, and she would refuse to tell him what had taken place. Or, even if she told him, he was not sure she would tell him the truth. More than once he had been doubtful about the statements she had made; now he saw that she had deliberately deceived him. No doubt she would try and justify her deceit; nevertheless, she had deceived him, and he could never trust her again.

Still, he must think about it. When the great lawsuit was over he would have more time, and he would take wise and necessary steps. After all, he might be unable to undo the evil which had been done.

"Is that you, Walter?"

"Why, it's Ned!"

"I was just on my way to your house, Walter."

"And do you know, Ned, although I had no definite thought of going to your diggings, I am sure I was on the way there."

"Well, and which shall it be now? Shall I go to your house or will you come to my 'digs'?"

"Let us go to your 'digs'—we shall be quiet there."

Harrington turned without a word. He saw that something was the matter with his friend, and, although he asked no question, he longed to know what troubled him.

"Spring will soon be with us," said Harrington, as they passed by Cheyne Row.

"Will it?" said Raymond. "Everything feels very wintry with me."

"Anything gone wrong?"

"Yes, everything."

"Nonsense. The case is ours, my friend; I am perfectly sure we have no need to trouble on that score."

"Oh, no, it's not the case. We are safe there, and work is coming in like one o'clock; but, but—I say, Ned, I want your advice."

"What about?"

"Wait until we get to your diggings, and I'll tell you."

No further word was spoken until both sat by a good fire in Harrington's sitting-room. The young barrister opened a box of cigars, and the two began to smoke. But Raymond was silent: he was not a talkative man, and even to his friend he felt a difficulty in broaching the subject which lay so heavily on his heart.

"It's this—this——" he stammered at length; but he did not complete the sentence.

"I quite understand," said Harrington.

"I expect you know what I would say."

"In a degree I daresay I do."

"The worst of it is, the children seem to turn against me. That fellow seems to be getting them more and more under his thumb. I should not be surprised if—if he isn't scheming to get them baptised into his Church—and all the rest of it."

"Didn't you know?" said Harrington.

"What?"

"Your children have been baptised."

"When they were babies, yes."

"No, not that. Three days ago they were baptised into the Roman Church."

"What!"

"It is as I say."

"You are sure?"

"A man who knows Brandon well told me only this afternoon. That was one of the reasons why I was on my way to see you to-night."

Walter Raymond said nothing. He sat quietly looking into the fire. The news he had just heard explained many things.

"This is very—interesting," he said presently.

"But surely you knew?"

"This is the first I have heard of it."

Again he lapsed into silence, while Ned Harrington, true friend that he was, did not make matters worse by talking.

"Thank God, I have Joyce left," he said presently.

Ned Harrington shook his head.

"Surely you have heard nothing about her?"

“ No; only I doubt your words. You must remember that Joyce has been the best part of a year under their influence, and from what you have told me she is an imaginative, sensitive, impressionable girl.”

“ Yes, yes, she is all that; but she is very intelligent, she can see through a fallacy easily.”

“ How old is she? ”

“ She must be about nineteen now—yes, nearly nineteen. Quite a young woman in years.”

“ She is the only one of your children I have never seen. What is she like? ”

“ A beautiful girl, Ned. I know I am prejudiced in her favour, but she is a beautiful girl—no man can help seeing that. She never had a chance. You know why. I have been so beastly poor. Then my wife’s health was so bad that Joyce had to be housekeeper and servant and nurse altogether. Her education was terribly neglected, and I was unable to pay for her to go to a good school. That was why I sent her to this place in Bruges. It was so cheap, and it sounded all right. It is nearly a year ago since I saw her, and my heart is just hungering for a sight of her.”

“ Why hasn’t she come home for her vacations? ”

“ Well, the truth is, I was persuaded that to let her come home for the midsummer vacation would unsettle her mind. You see, it was the first time she had left home, and I was led to believe that it would be better for her to stay at school. Besides, even the journey from Bruges and back costs money, and I had the others to think of. Well, when we were nearing Christmas, I got a letter from some French Protestants, whose daughter is at the same school, beseeching me to let Joyce spend the Christmas vacation at their château in Normandy. They pleaded that they were Protestants, and as Joyce had made such friends with their daughter, it would be mutually agreeable to the girls if Joyce could go to their house. I should not have accepted, but, as you know, my wife has become a very ardent Papist, and she told me she was longing to get Joyce home that she might lead her to the true faith. This and other things decided me. I did not want Joyce to come home and see that—well, the truth is, Ned, we have no home-life now.”

“ So you consented? ”

“ Yes, I consented.”

“ What is the name of these people? ”

“ De Villiers. They belong to an old Huguenot family,

and are strong Protestants. They sent me a picture of the château, a beautiful place, and I suppose Joyce had a splendid time."

"And yet you are a lawyer, and took a very respectable degree at Cambridge!" said Harrington.

"What are you driving at?"

"Can't you see, my dear fellow? Do you think that strong Protestants, old-fashioned Huguenots, who live in a château, would send their daughter to a Catholic school? Can't you see that it was a ruse to keep her away from your influence a little longer?"

"But my wife protested against her going there. She objected to her going to a house where there was such a strong Protestant feeling."

Harrington was silent, but Walter Raymond saw an amused smile playing around his lips.

"I'll see that she comes home this coming Easter, anyhow," said he grimly.

"Yes, I should insist on that," said Harrington; "but—but——"

"But what?"

"*Nous verrons*," said Harrington.

"Of course you'll come and see us when she comes home," said Raymond.

"Of course," said Harrington.

The next two months brought Walter Raymond very little pleasure; but when April came a new light shone in his eyes, for the time drew near when his eldest daughter Joyce, who was now a woman grown, should come home from school.

## CHAPTER X.

### JOYCE'S HOME-COMING.

A WEEK before Joyce was expected home, Walter Raymond again sat in his friend's room.

"I'm as excited as a boy," he said. "You do not know, you cannot tell how I feel, Ned. I have not seen her for a year. Just think of it—a whole year! We were always such chums, too, Joyce and I. Do you know, I am going to be downright lazy this Easter! At last I can afford it. We have won our case, and, although matters are not all squared yet as far as I am concerned, I am actually comfortably off where money is concerned."

"Serve you right," said Harrington. "I know you've waited long enough and worked hard enough."

"Yes, I have. Of course, I am not in clover yet; but the way is plainer. I've been able to send Joyce enough money to make her believe in a fairy godmother. I should have liked to have seen her face when she read my letter. I told her to go to the best costumier in Bruges and get a real lot of finery. Bless her heart! The thought of her coming has made me feel twenty years younger. People will think us a pair of lovers when they see us walking out together."

"Have you asked her whether she has changed her religious views?" asked Harrington.

"No," replied Raymond. "My Joyce would have told me if she had."

"I say, Raymond, did you ever instruct your children in such matters? Did you ever explain why England became a Protestant nation, and tell them of those things for which our forefathers suffered and died?"

"No," said Raymond, "it has always been my belief that children are like plants. Place them in the sunshine and amidst pure surroundings, and they'll grow all right."

"Yes, but even plants need to be given the right direction in life. Do you think either your wife or children would have been led as they have been if you had done your duty?"



Raymond was silent, but a frown settled upon his brow.

"You never told me what you said to Brandon after you learnt that your children had been baptised into the Roman Communion."

"No," said Raymond quietly. "Besides, there's not much to tell you. When I left you that night I considered all sorts of ways by which I could kick up a row ; but, as you know, I am one of those fellows who sleep on things. Still, I did go to him."

"Ah!" said Harrington eagerly.

"Yes, I called at his house the next night. I followed him home, so that I might be sure of finding him in."

Raymond was quiet a minute. He seemed to be trying to repress feelings of anger that were arising in his heart.

"It was no use," he said presently.

"Why? Do you mean to say he got the better of you?"

"We had no common ground," said Raymond. "I spoke as a man, an Englishman. I spoke from the standpoint of honour and fairplay. He spoke as an ecclesiastic, a Jesuit. I was cold and sarcastic, but I could not pierce his hide. I asked him whether it was a part of his code of honour to creep into a man's house and seek to poison the mind of his family. He replied by saying that he was a priest who worked for eternity. That by-and-by I should thank him for leading my family into the light, but that meanwhile he was willing to bear persecution for the sake of one whom he called his Master. Oh, he was urbane, suave, and smiling all the time."

"And you kept your temper?"

"Oh, yes, I managed to do that ; but I found it very difficult. You see, the fellow's hide was as tough as that of a crocodile. He adopted an air of superior pity : I was in darkness, and that sort of thing. He said that, like his Master, he was come to set husband against wife and child against parent, and that he did it for their eternal salvation. Embittered lives and desolated homes seemed nothing to him if thereby he could extend his creed. In fact, he almost made me an atheist as I listened."

"And yet people will send their children to Catholic schools—for cheapness."

"Yes, I was wrong, I know. But I did not know, I did not care. One religion was as good as another to me, if men were kind and true and loving. But now I see my mistake. Never mind, Joyce will be home soon."

"I hope she'll not disappoint you."

"Why so, Ned?"

"I can't forget that this is one of the Romanists' most popular methods of winning converts. They are establishing schools everywhere, and advertising the fact that they will give a liberal education for the most absurd prices. Their teachers are nuns who work for nothing, and so they can afford to do what honest, healthy schools cannot afford. Thus the poor and the unwary are trapped. We English give a home to all the outcasts of Europe, and in one way I am proud of our position; nevertheless, we ought to be careful. Monasteries and nunneries are being shut up in Catholic countries because their governors will not abide by the law; so they come to Protestant England. Here they can do what they like. These institutions are dumped down in our midst, and they are not subject to the same conditions which obtain in other similar places. We have no right to inspect or make inquiries. Children can be born and people can die in these places, and the outside world be no wiser. And we purblind English people make but very little stir."

"Oh, you bigoted Protestant!"

"I don't think so. I have simply read the history of my own and other countries, and I know that wherever the priest gains power, ruin and desolation follow."

"My Joyce shall leave this place, at all events," said Walter.

"Don't be too sure," said Harrington.

"Why, man, do you mean to say that——"

"I say nothing, Walter. All I know is that when an impressionable, imaginative girl, with no very strong religious convictions, is placed for a year in a convent school, where all the influences are in favour of Roman Catholicism, you can be sure of only one result."

"And that?"

"Think for yourself," said Harrington.

A few days later Walter Raymond went to Dover. He had arranged for Joyce to come by the boat which arrived from Ostend in the middle of the afternoon, and he determined to be there to meet her. He said nothing to anyone of his determination, for he was beginning to realise a vague fear which he could not understand. He felt that somehow underground influences were at work, and that it behoved him to be watchful. It might be that events had simply poisoned his mind; all the same, a vague uneasiness possessed

him. His home was no longer the same. His wife maintained her cold distant behaviour, his children seemed to regard him with distrust and fear, and all this was owing to the influence of the priest in his home. This made him fear for Joyce, and he wanted to have a talk with her before she met her mother. He had gone to Dover from Holborn Viaduct, and arrived there an hour before the boat was due. He therefore walked towards Dover Castle, and then, when he saw what he believed to be the boat from Ostend appear, he hurried back to the landing-place.

He was passing the Lord Warden Hotel when he stopped suddenly. Standing in the vestibule of the hotel, he saw two men in clerical attire. One was Father Brandon ; the other, although his appearance seemed strange, reminded him of someone. Scarcely knowing what he was doing he stood and looked at them, and presently their eyes met. Father Brandon gave him a bland smile, but the other turned away his head.

Annoyed as Walter Raymond was to see Brandon, his thoughts turned to the stranger rather than to him. Where had he seen the man before? He could think of no cleric like this man, and yet he felt sure he had seen him before. The large and somewhat fleshy face, the square features, the unfathomable eyes, where had he seen them before?

The stranger's presence made him feel uncomfortable, too. Somehow the thought of meeting Joyce did not give him so much pleasure as before. What was Father Brandon doing at Dover? And who was the dark, strong, mysterious-looking man who spoke with him?

The sound of the boat's whistle, however, caused him to hurry towards the pier, and a few seconds later he forgot the priests in his endeavour to pick out Joyce among the passengers who stood on the deck of the vessel.

Nearer and nearer she swept to land, while Walter Raymond's heart beat loud with expectation and joy. To meet his eldest daughter after a year's absence may seem a little thing to many people ; but to the fond father it was an event of no small importance. His eye passed swiftly from one to another, but he saw no one like Joyce. Could it be that something had kept her away?

" Is this the boat from Ostend? " he asked of a sailor.

" Yes, sir. She's pretty crowded, ain't she, sir? You see, lots of people are coming over for Easter. "

" Have they had a good passage, do you think? "

"A bit choppy, sir. You see, there's a stiff breeze against 'em. I expect a good many will be rather seedy."

Presently his heart gave a leap. Yes, that was Joyce, with several other girls. But why were they clustered around those nuns? He supposed that they had accompanied them across.

There was the usual crush up the gangways. Many of the passengers hindered progress by carrying baggage which they found difficult to manage. Others looked pale and ill, as though they had spent a miserable four hours, as undoubtedly they had.

Walter tried to attract Joyce's attention, but in vain. She kept with the other girls, while the nuns evidently watched them with a jealous eye.

As they drew nearer Walter Raymond saw that the year's absence had made a great difference in his daughter's appearance. Whatever else the school had done for her, it had evidently agreed with her health. Moreover, he could scarcely believe that this tall, handsome girl was the child he had nursed, and who had been maid-of-all-work in his home. She was no longer a child—she was a woman. She had put up her hair, and the new clothes she had obtained were those of a young lady, and not those of a school girl.

He could have shouted for joy as he saw her. Yes, the year had changed her wonderfully. She was no longer the shabbily dressed child, who had suffered so many disadvantages because of his poverty, but a healthy, finely-grown, and beautiful young woman. The keen wind had brought the colour to her face, and she was apparently full of vitality and energy. Father Brandon was evidently right when he told him that the school was healthy, and that the girls had a happy time.

"Joyce," he cried, as she stepped on to the landing stage.

It was evident that she had not expected to see him, for she gave a start of surprise. For a moment Walter was not sure that she was pleased to see him, but only for a moment. A still brighter colour mounted her cheeks, and her eyes flashed with joy.

"Dad!" she cried, and they were locked in each other's arms.

The nuns looked on disapprovingly, but they did not speak. Walter had forgotten all about them—he held his child in his arms.

"I am glad to see you, my darling," he cried again and

again. "Do you know I could not wait until your train got to London? I felt I must be here. In fact, I once thought of going over to Ostend, but my business would not allow me. But you do look well, my little maid! I hardly knew you at first. And Joyce, those new clothes look nice."

"And I'm so glad to be home, dad."

"You can still talk English, then?"

"Just simple sentences, dad. But do you know, after hearing and speaking nothing but French and German for a year, English seems a bit funny."

"Does it? Well, you have the Continental air. By the way, Joyce, I've been awfully extravagant, I have taken a first-class ticket for you."

The girl's face fell.

"What's the matter?"

"I have to go in the carriage with the others."

As if to confirm his words, he heard a woman's voice in French saying: "Now then, all this way. Mademoiselle Raymond, we await you, and Father Brandon has some tea for you."

The girl turned to obey, but Walter Raymond would not have it.

"I will take care of my daughter," he said. "I have secured a seat for her."

"I have orders from Father Brandon," said the nun, still speaking in French. "Come, mademoiselle, there is no time to wait. I am sure monsieur does not wish to interfere with the arrangements of the school. When we are arrived in London I will hand over my charge to monsieur."

"Ah, Mr. Raymond, I quite understand your desire to have your daughter with you, but really I think it will be better for the discipline of the school if all the pupils travel together, and I am sure you do not wish to upset our arrangements. Come, my child."

"Thank you, Father Brandon, but I will relieve you of all responsibility; my daughter goes with me. Come, Joyce, my darling."

He saw a look pass between his daughter and the nun, but his mind was so full of the thought of having Joyce with him that he scarcely heeded it. Nevertheless, he could not help noticing that the glad look had gone from his daughter's eyes.

"Lucky," said Walter Raymond, as he entered the carriage. "I believe we are going to have the compartment

all to ourselves. There's the boy with the tea ; that's right. Here you are, Tommy," and in his gladness of heart he gave the boy a liberal tip. "The tea is actually hot," he said to Joyce ; " isn't this splendid? "

The train moved away from the pier, and as Walter Raymond thought that he would have his child all to himself until they reached London, he felt that he was the happiest man in England.

"I can't make it out, my little maid," he said.

"Can't make out what, dad? "

"That you are my little maid, Joyce. Why, you are actually a young lady, and you look so well, and, if it will not make you vain, so bonny."

The girl laughed with pleasure. Yes, she was a beautiful girl, and the sight of her father and the pleasure of home-coming made her heart beat high with joy

"I must really have another kiss."

"Dozens, dad. There, let me sit on your knee, just as I used to in the old days."

He caught her to his arms and kissed her as though he were her lover.

"God bless you, my darling," he said again and again.

"It is so good to have you."

"And it's good to be had," she laughed.

"And you've had a happy year, my little maid? "

"Very, dad."

"I can't think of you as a schoolgirl. You are so well grown, so much like a young lady who has left school."

"Yes, I've grown a lot. But even as it was, I felt my age awfully when I went. You see, I was so backward. But I've got over that."

"You have got on well in your studies."

"Sister Theresa says I've done wonderfully, while all the girls say I've put three years' work into one. Anyhow, when you look at my report you'll see that I've simply raced from form to form."

"That's splendid. And your languages? "

"That's where I've done best of all. You know I was always fond of studying French and German when I was at home ; and, of course, when I got there I found that nothing else was spoken. I was not allowed to speak English."

"Not even out of school hours? "

"No, not even then. You see, the sisters were ever with us, and they invariably spoke either in French or German."

Walter Raymond was silent a few seconds. He did not like the thought of the nuns always being with his child, still he hoped it was all right.

"Joyce," he said presently, "what did you think when your mother wrote to you and told you she had turned Catholic? Weren't you surprised?"

"Surprised? Oh, no."

"I thought you would be?"

"No, not at all. Why should I be? It was very natural."

Again Walter Raymond was silent.

"Do you know that your brothers and sisters have also been baptised into the Catholic Church?"

"Oh, yes, I knew the day after they were baptised."

"Who told you?"

"Mother wrote and told me. I say, dad, why have I to keep my conversion a secret?"

"Your conversion!"

"Yes, besides, I did not want to be received into the Roman Church, at least not then. I should not have consented had you not expressed your desire that I should be?"

"I expressed my desire, Joyce!"

Walter Raymond spoke in tones scarcely above a whisper; in fact, he could scarcely speak at all.

"Yes, mother wrote months ago, saying that she and the children were Catholics, and it was both her wish and yours that I should also be baptised. Don't you remember? I wrote to you about it, but, as I got no reply, I naturally concluded that you left it all to mother."

Walter Raymond was on the point of telling her that he knew nothing about it, but he reflected that to do so would be to tell his child that her mother was a liar. For a moment he longed to do this, but he was not a man who acted on impulse, and so he was silent.

"And so you are a Catholic now, Joyce?"

"Yes, dad."

"And are you happier since you became one?"

"No, I don't know that I am. Only, of course, I saw how wicked it was to be anything else, and how wrong it was to stay outside the Church."

"Did they seek to convert you, then?"

"No, I don't think so, only everything made me feel how wicked it was not to be. But even although I felt it was wicked, I didn't want to be like the others were, and, as

I said, I did not feel like consenting, but, as you know, dad, I wanted to do exactly what you desired."

"And do you feel that you are bound by the Church now?"

"Oh, yes, dad. How can it be otherwise?"

Walter Raymond's heart grew more and more bitter. It was with difficulty that he refrained from telling Joyce of the change that had come over their home, and of the way he had been deceived; but he was a forbearing man, and kept silent.

"You enjoyed your Christmas, Joyce. Oh, it was hard to let you go with those people!"

"Then why were you so anxious for me to go, dad?"

"I thought you wanted to go with your friend—Gertrude, I think you call her?"

"But I would rather have come home. Besides, two of the sisters went with me, and so it seemed as though I were at school all through the holidays."

"The sisters! Do you mean the nuns?"

"Yes, of course."

"But Madame de Villiers told me—that is, I thought that the De Villiers were Huguenots."

"Oh, no, they are very strict Catholics—that is, all except Monsieur de Villiers: he is an atheist and believes in nothing. I believe they were Huguenots at one time—in Cardinal Richelieu's days, I think; but now all the family except Monsieur are very strict in their religion."

Walter Raymond felt as though the ground were dug away from beneath his feet. On every hand he had been deceived; more and more he realised that a new standard of morality had been introduced into his family life.

"But, dad," went on the girl, "why have I been told that I must say nothing about my conversion?"

"Are you to say nothing about it?"

"Yes, and I can't understand it. If it's my duty to be a Catholic, and of course it is, for, as it was soon made plain to me, there can be no other true religion. But I do not see why I should keep it a secret. Of course, I can't help talking with you about it; but why do you wish me to say nothing to Walter and Madaline?"

"Were those your orders?"

"Yes. When I went to confession this morning Father Leclerc told me to talk to no one in England about my change of faith, except my mother."



“ And you will obey him? ”

“ Why, dad, of course I must; I cannot do otherwise. Father Leclerc is terrible in his penance—simply terrible, and I dare not think of disobeying him.”

“ I wonder that you dared to tell me.”

“ Why he meant you, when he told me to speak about religion only to mother. How could he think of excepting you? Still I cannot understand.”

Walter Raymond thought a moment. “ I think I see the reason,” he said to himself. “ The priest *did* mean that she was not to speak to me about it. That is why Brandon and those nuns wanted to have her to themselves from Dover to London. They were afraid of what I should say and do; they did not want me to know how I have been deceived all this time. It is all plain enough. Well, on the whole, I am glad, for I don't want it to be known that Joyce is a Catholic. No, I'll say nothing to anyone about it, not even to Harrington. I should be ashamed to tell him.”

Walter Raymond was only partly in the right. The reason why Joyce was commanded to say nothing about her conversion lay far deeper than that he should be kept in ignorance of the way he had been deceived, for Walter Raymond did not know Father Ritzoom had been at work.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"OH, isn't it lovely, dad?" cried Joyce, as the train swept through Kent. "It is so different from Belgium. There everything is as flat as a table. These hills and dales are perfectly enchanting."

"Yes, there's no place like England after all, is there? No wonder Browning sighed for England in the springtime even although he was in Italy."

"And look at the blossoms on the fruit trees. I'm so glad to come back in the springtime. I didn't notice it when I went away a year ago."

"No, spring was late last year. Besides, Easter is late this year, that is why you have not got home until the middle of April."

"Oh, but I *am* glad to be with you, dad," and again she kissed him affectionately.

Walter Raymond felt a thrill of joy in his heart in spite of everything. After all, Joyce was still his own child. She had not learnt the lessons which the other children had learnt. She was gay and trustful; her mind had not been poisoned against him. He suspected that the seeds sown in the Catholic school in Bruges had not taken deep root. Her mind might have been influenced by the teaching there, but her nature was still open and free from guile. There was a refreshing frankness and simplicity in her demeanour which warmed his heart.

"And did you like the school, Joyce?"

"Oh, yes; that is, for most things."

"What did you not like?"

"Well, there was an air of distrust in the school which I did not like. I got into trouble once for refusing to spy upon another girl. I was awfully scolded, but I'm still glad I refused. It seemed so mean. But that is the feeling throughout the whole school. You never seemed to be put upon your honour, and all the time you had a feeling that

someone was watching you and suspecting you of doing something wrong."

"Ah, you found that there, did you?"

"Yes, at first especially. I think they found out their mistake in treating me in that way after a time. You see, although I was awfully backward when I went, I was almost the oldest girl, and so I naturally resented being distrusted. As you know, dad, you never once suspected me of deceiving you, and of course I should never think of doing such a thing. When they got to know me better they seemed to trust me more, and they did not set me to watch others. But lots of the girls there are regular spies."

"Thank God they've not spoilt her," thought Walter Raymond, and he determined that she should be sent to a good healthy English school after the Easter vacation was over.

When the train stopped at Herne Hill Father Brandon stepped into the carriage.

"Ah, there you are, like a pair of lovers," he cried, with seeming gaiety. "Does not your daughter look well, Mr. Raymond? Was I not right when I told you of the good effect a Continental school would have upon your daughter?"

"She looks very well," replied Walter, "very well, indeed."

"And she has improved intellectually too. Don't you see that? I daresay you've been catechising her."

"No, I catechised her very little; but naturally she has told me a great deal."

The priest looked uncomfortable, but he went on quite glibly: "Sister Theresa has given me a glowing account of her. She has simply done wonders from an educational standpoint, while her behaviour has been all that can be desired."

"That is no surprise to me," replied Walter. "You see, she has had a good healthy upbringing. I never knew Joyce do a mean thing in her life. She was sometimes a bit headstrong and mischievous, but she never did anything of which I was ashamed. I always trusted her completely, and she never betrayed my trust. Now that she's quite a young woman I am sure she'll not be untrue to her early training."

"Ah, that's the ideal English way of looking at things. Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. But you must admit that the Continental schools give style and smartness."

The train had now left Herne Hill and swept on towards Victoria, but Father Brandon remained in the carriage with them. He seemed to be anxious to get a word alone with Joyce.

"Was your baggage examined on the boat, Joyce?" asked Walter Raymond, as the train crossed Grosvenor Bridge.

"All except my big box, dad."

"Ah, if you will give me the key, I'll attend to it in the Customs House."

"The sister has it," replied Joyce.

"That's right," broke in Father Brandon. "You see, they did not expect you, and so desired to save the child any trouble. But if you ask Sister Theresa for the key she'll give it you, Mr. Raymond. I'm sure she'll be very glad of your help."

Directly the train stopped at Victoria Station Walter Raymond leapt on to the platform. "You stay here, Joyce," he said, "and I'll engage a cab and look after the baggage."

No sooner was he out of hearing than Father Brandon turned to Joyce.

"Did you speak to your father about your conversion, my child?" he said.

"Yes, Father Brandon."

"But were you not instructed before you left to speak to no one about it save your mother?"

"Yes, but I never thought that Father Leclerc meant dad. I never kept anything from him in my life."

"My child, you now belong to the Church, and the Church expects her children to obey her implicitly—implicitly. Do you understand?"

Joyce was silent. She felt uncomfortable under the priest's gaze.

"I wanted a few minutes' conversation with you, child, and I was much displeased that you yielded to your father's wishes instead of coming with us. Still, I will say no more about that now. I wanted to warn you against your father."

"Warn me! Against dad!"

"Yes, against your father. He has caused your mother a great deal of pain; he opposed her conversion and her proper wish that your brothers and sisters should be baptised into the Church. He has also put every obstacle in the way of your mother's religious life. That is why I wished to warn you against him. Very likely he will try and turn



““ GUARD YOURSELF AGAINST HIM IN EVERY WAY.”

(p. 103.)



you against the Church, even as he tried to turn your mother against it."

"But mother wrote and told me that it was by his consent and wish that I should be received into the Church."

"You must have misinterpreted your mother's letter," said the priest, after hesitating a second. "He has all along acted as the bitter enemy to the Church."

"Then have mother and the children been received into the Church without his consent?" asked the girl.

"There is no time for me to explain all these things now," said the priest. "What I wish to say to you is this: your father's heart is closed against the truth, he bitterly opposes the work of grace in your mother's heart, he is angry because the children are safe in the Church's fold, and I have no doubt that he will try to poison your mind. Be on your guard against him, my child; close your ears against any of his poisonous teaching. Be with him alone as little as you can. It was my desire that you should not tell him you had become a Catholic, but since you have disobeyed you must guard yourself against entering into any conversation about it. Above all, say nothing to your brother or sisters about your conversion."

"Are they not to know?"

"No, they must not know. No one must know."

"But why?"

"I am thinking of your father's conversion, so for the present be silent. I am sure he will not say anything about it; thus I am hopeful that your disobedience will work no harm. None of the girls in the school know anything about it, do they?"

"No, Father Brandon."

"That is well. There, your father is coming, so we must cease talking. Remember what I have said, and do not let him lead you away from the truth. Guard yourself against him in every way. You must be one of our secret disciples, my child. For that reason you must not attend any of our churches during Passion week or the Easter festivals. I will arrange for you to come to me for confession, and I will attend to your instruction while you are at home."

Joyce felt like crying. All the joy of home-coming was gone. She was to distrust her father and to treat him as a stranger. It was bewildering, and her bewilderment increased as, when her father came up, Father Brandon met him with a genial laugh.

“ Give Joyce a good holiday, Mr. Raymond,” he said. “ She has worked very hard at school, and now she deserves three weeks of absolute pleasure. Just neglect business for once, so that she may have a good time.”

“ Thank you, I will do my best,” said Walter Raymond quietly. “ Now, Joyce, my darling, get into the cab ; it is a good drive.”

For the first few minutes of their ride Joyce did not speak. She felt unable. Again and again did she repress the sobs that rose in her throat. The spell of the school was strong upon her, and thus, while disobedience to Father Brandon was not to be thought of, the idea of being warned against her father had been terrible. She knew how he had given his life to make his home happy, while to her he had been more than a father. He had been an elder brother, a lover and a father combined. She had told him her troubles, her fears, and her hopes. They had discussed his fortunes and her future together. He had been her comrade and her protector throughout her life. Much as she loved her mother, her father was nearer to her. His strong hand had guided her, his brain had thought for her, and on him as a consequence her affection had been bestowed.

And she had been told to avoid him, to distrust him, to be on her guard against him ! Her fresh, impulsive nature rebelled against the dictum of the priest, and yet the influence which had been at work on her sensitive young life during the last year made her afraid to do so. Walter Raymond had taught his children no dogmas ; he had not sought to influence their minds in the direction of any special form of religion, and thus when she went to the convent school she was easily brought under the sway of ecclesiastical dominion. She had a feeling that if her father did not sympathise with the Catholic religion he would never have sent her there, and so when she was taught there was no other Church than the Roman Church, and that it was a sin to remain outside its fold, she yielded herself to its demands.

“ Has the travelling wearied you, my little maid ? ”

“ No, I’m all right,” she said, and then in order to divert her mind to more pleasant channels she said :

“ Business must be better with you, dad. I cannot get over my wonder at coming home in a first-class carriage.”

“ Oh, yes, it’s much better. I’ve been very fortunate lately, so fortunate that I hope to be able to send you to a really good English school next term.”



“ An English school ! ”

“ Yes, or else to a good school in Germany. I've not yet made up my mind.”

“ Why, don't you like the school at Bruges ? ”

“ I don't like what you say about the distrust that exists there. But don't let's talk about your going away just yet. You are hardly home yet, and I want you to have a good time. By the way, we are going to have a special dinner to-night in honour of your home-coming, and a friend of mine is coming to dine with us.”

“ Who is he, dad ? ”

“ He is a barrister by the name of Ned Harrington. A very clever fellow, and the best friend a man ever had. You must put on the nearest approach to an evening dress which you possess so as to live up to the occasion.”

“ And you, dad, are you going to put on evening clothes ? ”

“ How can I do otherwise ? By the way, Joyce, you must not be surprised at any change in the behaviour of your mother towards me. We don't hit it as well as we used to.”

“ Why ? ” asked the girl, her heart becoming heavy as she spoke.

“ Oh, we don't see eye to eye on matters of religion. I would not have mentioned it, only I thought I would rather tell you than that you should find out for yourself, as you would be bound to do. But you and I must be the same to each other, Joyce. Your becoming a Catholic must not make us poorer comrades. We will be just as we have always been, won't we ? ”

The priest's words rushed into her mind, and in spite of herself she felt an estrangement between herself and her father ; but as she looked into his eyes, and saw the tender affection which burned there, Father Brandon's words became as nothing.

“ Always, dad,” she said, as she held fast by his arm, “ always ” ; and again Walter Raymond felt what it was to be a happy man.

Mrs. Raymond unbent a little when Joyce entered the house, while Rachel, Madaline, and young Walter shouted for joy. The home-coming of Joyce was an event which could not be passed over lightly. The reserve which had existed for months was for the time broken down, and Walter felt that home was home once more.

“ Now, children,” cried Walter presently, “ go and dress

for dinner. We must be all very fine to-night, and I expect Harrington here in less than half an hour."

"I think it very thoughtless and very unkind of you," said Mrs. Raymond when they had gone.

"What is thoughtless and unkind?"

"To invite that man here to-night. You know how I dislike him, and, besides, I think it a shame to spoil Joyce's home-coming by the presence of a stranger. But there, it is what I might have expected."

"Yes, I am rather sorry he's coming to-night," replied Walter, "but he's hardly a stranger. He's the best friend I have, and I'm sure he'll make Joyce enjoy her home-coming all the more by his presence."

"Yes, and he'll make my evening miserable; but there, you care nothing for my feelings."

"I'm afraid the lack of consideration has been somewhat mutual lately," said Walter. "You told me that since I would not fall in with your wishes we must go on our way regardless of each other. And certainly you on your part have taken full advantage of the arrangement. You have had the children baptised into the Roman communion without my consent; and more, you have actually written to Joyce telling her that it was my wish that she also should follow your example. To say the least of it, Lucy, I did not know you had sunk so low as that. Now mind," and Walter Raymond's voice became so stern that his wife felt afraid of him, "there must be no more of this. I should imagine that you are pretty well satisfied now. You have by means of deceit decoyed the children to take part in this affair, and so far I have said but little to you about it. But I am not going to bear much more. For months you have deliberately deceived me, for months you have, under the cloak of religion, carried on secret arrangements with that priest, and I have said but little. You have also set the younger children against me, so that my home has been no longer home. But there must be no more of this. If you seek to set Joyce against me, if you seek to blight the child's life, if you drag in your miserable religious prejudices between me and her, then I tell you once and for all this separation between us, which you have insisted on, shall be made legal. I will take the children from you, and I will leave you severely alone to pursue your own line of conduct. Let there be no mistake about the matter. I have borne enough, and the limit to my patience is reached."

This was a long speech for Walter Raymond. Usually a quiet, reserved man, he felt a great deal more than he said ; but the news of Joyce's conversion had angered him more than he knew. He was not a man given to making vain threats ; no strong man ever is. Usually he did more than he said. And Mrs. Raymond felt this as he spoke, and a great fear came into her heart. She had not dreamed during the last few months, throughout which time she had obeyed her spiritual adviser, and not her husband, that he would ever adopt this attitude, and for the moment the priest, in spite of his ghostly authority, took a second place. She looked into her husband's eyes, and as she saw the light of a stern resolution there her heart failed.

" I need not tell you I am serious," went on Walter. " I mean every word I say, and more. So let there be no misunderstanding. If you ever deceive me again, I will do all I have said. If you seek to poison Joyce's mind against me as you have poisoned the others, I will break up the home, I will submit the case to a court of law, and allow you such a sum as my income will admit of ; anyhow, this kind of thing must not continue. And more, my friends are to be received kindly. When Ned Harrington comes he must be treated as my friend, and therefore as an honoured guest. That is all I wish to say now, and I hope there will be no need to return to the subject again."

On saying this Walter went out of the room, leaving his wife alone. He had spoken quietly, and apparently without passion ; but there was such intensity in his tones that Mrs. Raymond cowered in her chair. She had never dreamed that such thoughts would ever come into his mind. For twenty years her will had been law. He had yielded to her slightest wish. His love for her had been unquestioning, unflinching. For the first time, moreover, the unreasonableness of her own claims presented itself to her ; she felt, too, that she had been deliberately deceiving him. Not that she repented of her behaviour. The salvation of her children and the claims of her religion had become more to her than the claims of her husband. Nevertheless, for the first time she felt what it was to fear the man who to marry her had sacrificed home and fortune.

" I suppose I must do as he bids me," she said to herself. " I dare not be uncivil to Mr. Harrington after what he has said. As for Joyce, well, I must have a good long talk with Father Brandon ; he will tell me what to do."

By the time the family sat down to dinner all ruffled feelings were evidently smoothed. Joyce looked very beautiful in her well-fitting clothes, while the other children were happy in the thought of seeing their big sister at home again. Walter Raymond looked ten years younger in evening clothes, while even Mrs. Raymond had lost something of her faded appearance.

"I wish Ned would come," said Walter. "Still, we must not be angry with him. He told me he might be late, and that we must on no account wait for him. Ah, there's the bell; that is he, I expect."

"I am sorry I am late, Mrs. Raymond," said Ned as he entered the room. "I did my best to be here in time, and I made the cabby drive me like mad."

Mrs. Raymond unbent as she held out her hand to him. She could not help feeling that no man could have a worthier friend than he; moreover, he carried with him an air of intellectuality which influenced her.

When Ned Harrington spoke to Joyce a change passed over his face. Evidently he had expected to see a shy, awkward schoolgirl, and instead he found a young woman who would have graced any room he had ever entered. There was a sweetness and purity in her face, moreover, that captivated him immediately. And more, the well-shaped head and large lustrous eyes suggested powers of thought which were not common. Ned Harrington was not a lady's man. For several years he had been wedded to his profession, a profession which gave full scope for the best powers of his intellect, and as a consequence he gave but little thought to anything else. The society of women had not attracted him. Women, he said, were, on the whole, shallow and little. As a rule, there was very little behind a pretty face. A woman's outlook was small, and her way of looking at things lacked breadth of view and largeness of purpose. It is true he had been brought into contact with what had been called brainy, advanced woman. But they had attracted him less than the others. It seemed to him that they had lost the glory of their womanhood in obtaining what they craved for, and had made a miserable bargain in consequence. It had not been his fortune to meet a woman who was his equal in intellect, and yet one who retained all that charm of sweetness and modesty which is the glory of a woman's life.

He had not been sitting by Joyce more than a few minutes before he realised that he was in the presence of a new

revelation. Here was a girl who was as fresh and sweet as a spring flower, and yet one whose mind, now largely enriched by experience and books, understood his best thoughts and interpreted them in lights which were strange to him.

Again and again he found himself looking at her in wonder, while Walter Raymond's eyes shone with pleasure as he saw the way Joyce impressed him. Never, surely, did a dinner-hour pass so quickly. Laughter was on every lip, the shadows of the past few months rolled away. Even Mrs. Raymond seemed to forget that their visitor was a deadly enemy to her religion, and thus she appeared to enjoy to the full the pleasure of his presence.

"At least for this evening we shall be happy," thought Walter, as Mrs. Raymond and the children found their way into the little drawing-room. "To-night is like home again"; and taking a box of cigars from a drawer he handed it to his friend, and then threw himself into an armchair.

"I think I never felt so happy in my life, Ned," he said. "For once the shadow of the priest does not seem to rest on my home"; but as if to contradict his statement the servant entered, bearing a card on which was inscribed the name of Father Brandon.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE OLD, OLD STORY.

"It's Brandon," said Walter to his friend. "No, don't go, let him come in here. We'll get rid of him as soon as possible."

Father Brandon came in smiling and suave. His round, clean-shaven face fairly shone with apparent health and happiness. No one could conceive of a more innocent and harmless man than Father Brandon appeared to be. When he saw Harrington, however, a change passed over his face. Evidently he was not pleased at the young barrister's presence. Nevertheless he maintained his apparent cheerfulness.

"Ah," he cried, "here are you two limbs of the law discussing deep-laid schemes. As a poor, simple-minded priest, I am almost afraid to come into your presence. May I smoke a pipe? Thank you."

He took the chair offered him, and filled his pipe, while Walter Raymond and Harrington remained quiet. For once the priest found it difficult to speak. The atmosphere of the place was not congenial to him. He heard the laughter of the children in the next room and wished himself with them.

"I wanted to talk with you about the school at Bruges, Mr. Raymond," he said. "I did not know that your friend was here. Never mind, I'll call again another time, when I may find you alone. No doubt you are wanting a quiet chat now. Let me go and join in the children's games, leaving you together."

"No," said Walter quietly, "I would rather hear what you have to say now. It is not likely I shall have another evening so much at liberty. Besides, you need not fear to say anything before my friend. You and I, at all events, have no secrets from him."

Ned Harrington studied the priest's face as Walter spoke. No doubt the man wished he had not called. Still, he was evidently determined to make the best of it.

"Well, it's this way," said the priest. "Of course, the Easter vacation is not long, and I wanted to speak to you

about Joyce's future at the school. You see, she has quite distinguished herself there. As the sisters tell me, she has managed to put three years' work into one, and naturally I am anxious that her future there shall be——"

"Excuse me interrupting you," said Walter, "but it is not my purpose that she shall return there."

The priest gave a start. Evidently he was not prepared for this.

"You cannot mean that, Mr. Raymond. You will not be so unfair to your child!"

"I certainly do mean it," said Walter. "As for being unfair to my child, I think I know my duty to her without outside interference."

"But have you considered, Mr. Raymond?"

"I have considered every point very carefully."

"But think of your obligation to the school."

"What obligation?"

"Well, you see, special attention has been paid to Joyce."

"Why? What special attention?"

The priest felt he had taken a false step. Walter Raymond was different from the man he had first met at this house twelve months before, and as a consequence Father Brandon felt somewhat nervous.

"Well, you know," he said presently. "Joyce was very backward when she went. I therefore gave instructions that her education should be specially considered."

"You are one of the governors of the school, then?"

"That is, I have sufficient influence to secure privileges to anyone I may name."

"I have not heard of any special advantages from which Joyce has benefited," replied Walter. "Certainly I never asked for any. On an evil day I saw the advertisement of the school, and foolishly made inquiries. However, I have myself to blame for that, and God knows I am paying the penalty. But that has nothing to do with the question. I have decided not to send Joyce back."

"May I ask what are your plans for her future education?"

"I have not quite settled yet."

"Of course, you know that, as in all good schools, a term's notice is required when taking a pupil away."

"In lieu of a term's fees," replied Walter. "Very well, I will send a cheque."

"Might I ask the reason for this remarkable decision?"

"Yes, I do not like the influence of the school."

"And yet I find your daughter vastly improved from every standpoint."

"In spite of the influence of the school, not because of it."

"Surely I am entitled to an explanation."

"Certainly. I will speak freely."

A strange flash came into Father Brandon's eyes. Evidently he had come to a sudden resolution.

"No, no, Mr. Raymond," he cried with a laugh, "not to-night. Besides, I owe you an apology. I ought not to have come here on the night of Joyce's home-coming in this way. It is very thoughtless, very wrong of me. You resent my presence, you want to be alone with your friend, and I have broken in upon your privacy. In addition to that, I am sure a discussion on the school must be very irksome to him. I will go now, and hope to have the pleasure of thrashing out the whole question with you another time."

"Very well," said Walter, rising. "I will see you to the door."

Again the priest looked confused.

"Thank you," he said, "but I just want to speak a word to Mrs. Raymond and Joyce. I shall find them in the next room, shan't I?"

"Excuse me," said Walter, "but I do not wish you to speak with Joyce."

"Mr. Raymond!"

"That is my decision."

"But surely——"

"I need enter into no explanation, Mr. Brandon. You know why I have adopted this attitude."

"But surely I may see Mrs. Raymond. As her spiritual adviser I think it is my right."

"Through you I have ceased to have any influence over my wife's actions. If you wish to speak with her I have no doubt you will find plenty of opportunities. All the same, I am perfectly willing to vacate this room, and to tell her that you wish to see her. As you may imagine, the thought is not pleasant, but I will do so."

"Certainly I will not insist if it is unpleasant to you. Am I to understand that you do not wish me to visit your house again?"

"Except when I am at home. I shall instruct the servant to that effect."



“ Thank you, Mr. Raymond, but you will repent of this one day. You utterly mistake me, and some day you will find out your mistake.”

Walter gave no answer, but walked quietly down the passage towards the door. Their conversation, although earnest, had been carried on in low tones, so low that those in the other room who had been laughing and talking did not know of Father Brandon's presence.

A few seconds later the priest was in the street. For some time he walked towards his own house with his eyes cast on the ground. He was thinking deeply ; nevertheless, he did not seem disturbed. Indeed, he laughed quietly but grimly.

“ As though he can keep me from the house,” he said to himself. “ I suppose he thinks himself very clever, but he does not know that every member of the household, servant as well, dare not disobey me in anything. Nevertheless, I must be careful—very careful. Yes, I am afraid I must tell Ritzoom of this new phase in the course of events, it may influence his plans.”

“ Well, he's gone,” said Walter as he came back.

“ Yes, he's gone.”

“ He did not get much change out of me.”

“ No, but he will.”

“ *Nous verrons,*” said Walter quietly. He had been speaking French with Joyce during the evening, and lapsed naturally into that language.

“ That's a dangerous man, Walter.”

“ He's not clever enough to be dangerous.”

Ned Harrington looked around the room, and noted the change of the ornaments. Every one of them suggested the priest's presence.

“ Yes, yes, I know what you suggest. I know I have let things drift, but I will do so no longer. I shall take more control. I don't think I had the worst of it to-night, did I? As I said, he's not clever enough to be dangerous.”

“ There's someone behind him,” said Harrington.

“ How do you know? ”

“ There always is with these Jesuits. The master-mind acts through such as Brandon. Moreover, none of them will ever confess themselves beaten.”

“ You know them.”

“ Yes, I know them. Besides, did you not notice the threat in his words? ”

“What words?”

“He said you would repent one day of your action, and that you were utterly mistaken in him.”

“Naturally. He wanted to appeal to the weak side of my nature.”

“I do not think so. I watched his face as he spoke, I saw the look in his eyes. He seemed to utter the words of wounded innocence, but he did not mean it. Innocent as his words seemed, they meant that you were utterly mistaken in thinking he would submit so tamely, and that one day you would repent arousing his anger. As surely as ever a man’s face said anything that man’s face said that. I tell you, Walter, you will be like a man walking on eggs.”

Walter thought a moment.

“I do not see what he can do more than he has done,” he said presently. “He has alienated my wife from me, he has caused my children to distrust me—that is, all except Joyce.”

“Well,” said Harrington, “and she is not to be considered?”

“I do not think it is possible for anyone to poison Joyce’s mind against me, Ned. We have been comrades from her childhood, we are comrades still. If you had seen us as we came home from Dover together, you might have thought us a pair of lovers newly engaged.”

Ned Harrington did not speak, but he seemed to be thinking deeply.

“Let us join the others,” he said presently. “That priest has spoiled my smoke.”

“By all means,” said Walter eagerly. “I say, Ned, it is my desire to give Joyce a really glad time. I want to take her everywhere, and to make her holidays full of pleasure. For once, thank God, I can afford it, and Joyce shall benefit by my prosperity.”

“And if I can be of any service, Walter, please make use of me. I shall be much at liberty through the Easter vacation, and thus have my time at my disposal.”

“That will be splendid. You may depend that I shall take advantage of your offer.”

“And I say, Walter, I may not have another chance of speaking to you alone to-night, so I want to repeat my warning. Be on your guard against that priest. If ever a man’s eyes meant mischief, his did.”

“But, my dear fellow, we do not live in mediæval times; he can do nothing more than he has done.”

“ No, we do not live in mediæval times ; all the same, you know the Roman Church is working night and day to get England into its power. There are schemes afloat of which we know nothing.”

“ But still, Ned, their schemes cannot encompass me ; that is, their only design upon me can be to convert me to their faith. Well, they will never do that. If I were rich, or if I held some diplomatic position, it would be different. Being only a hard-working lawyer I am not worth their trouble. However, I will bear in mind what you say. Trust me for that. A man cannot pass through such a year as I have done without being on his guard.”

“ And—and be careful for your eldest daughter.”

“ Yes,” said Walter quietly. “ I will—I will.”

They passed into the other room, and the two men gave themselves up to the joy of the hour.

Walter Raymond became as gay as a boy, while Harrington was as full of resource as a public entertainer in finding means of amusement. He seemed to have forgotten that he was a member of a learned and dignified profession, and that only a few days before he, in cross-questioning a witness, rebuked him for his levity. Moreover, he seemed to forget his impressions concerning women, for to all appearances he found Joyce's society vastly agreeable. Indeed, when, during the evening, it was suggested that he should retire into the next room with Joyce that together they might concoct a charade, he was all eagerness to fall in with the suggestion. The boy Walter, moreover, who was anxious for them to begin their acting, expressed his opinion that they were “ jolly slow in thinking out something.”

Altogether Ned Harrington revealed himself in a new light. He played the accompaniment on the new piano so that Joyce might sing to them, and presently, when the request came for him to sing, he found a song for Joyce to play, so that he might, as he said, “ assist in the fun.”

“ I say, Ned,” said Walter Raymond when he had finished, “ had you not succeeded so well at the Bar I should say you ought to have been a public singer. You would have done well on the operatic stage.”

“ You see,” said Harrington, “ Miss Raymond played the accompaniment with so much sympathy. Let me congratulate you, Miss Raymond, on your splendid touch.”

“ She's not Miss Raymond,” said young Walter, “ she's only Joyce, that's all. Call her Joyce, Mr. Harrington.”

"May I?" said Harrington, turning to Joyce.

"'Miss Raymond' does sound awfully strange," replied the girl, a bright flush mounting to her cheek; "besides, it makes me feel so old."

"Yes, Ned," said Walter, "she's only a child to me; call her Joyce. It will seem more homely."

It was very late before Harrington said it was time for him to be getting back to Chelsea, and even then he showed no eagerness about going.

"Positively, I think it is the jolliest evening I ever spent in my life," said the young barrister.

"Please God, we'll have many more of them," said Walter. "Now, children, what shall we do to-morrow? I am not going to do a stroke of work, and as the weather is so fine we may as well go for an excursion somewhere."

"Kew Gardens," cried young Walter.

"Brighton," said Madaline.

"Yes, Brighton," cried the others.

"Not a bad idea," said Walter. "There will be no trips there yet, the Easter Holidays not having commenced. It will be fine to have a day by the sea. What do you say; Lucy, will you go?"

"No, thank you," replied Mrs. Raymond, and yet in her heart she wanted to go. "There are so many things to attend to at home," she added.

"Let the things go hang for once," said Walter. His heart was warm under the influence of the evening, and he welcomed the thought of a day unclouded by the influences of the past few months. "Come, and let us have a good time together."

"No," she replied. She had arranged to have an interview with Father Brandon the next day, and dared not fail in keeping her appointment. "I do not care to go. Besides, I think the children would be far better at home."

At this there was dissent from every quarter.

"All right," cried Walter; "we are sorry mother cannot come, but the rest of us will go. Let me see, we had better go to Victoria and catch the fast early train, and then we shall have the day before us."

"But suppose it should be wet?" urged Mrs. Raymond. She was not at all certain what Father Brandon would say, and tried to do her best to upset the arrangement.

"Wet or fine, we'll go," said Walter. "It will be easy to put in the time at Brighton, although it pours all day."

"May I join you?" asked Harrington. He appeared to take great interest in the project, although he said nothing.

"Of course, my dear chap," said Walter. "I am afraid you will find it slow, but if you can come, why, the day will be all the jollier."

After this it was wonderful how eagerly both he and Joyce entered into the arrangements, and how quickly the young barrister made valuable suggestions for the day's programme. He might have been a boy looking forward to his first trip to the sea-side. One would have thought, moreover, that seeing he would have to be up betimes on the following morning, he would have hurried back to his rooms, and have gone to bed immediately in order to obtain a good night's rest. For Ned Harrington was thirty years of age, and had very strong views with regard to "his machine," by which term he designated his body. He maintained that it was the absolute duty of a brain-worker to secure so many hours' rest, and to make no exception to this rule whatever might happen. As a matter of fact, however, he did not hurry back to his rooms. For once, he felt that those same rooms were very lonely, and he took an unconscionably long time in covering the short distance which lay between the neighbourhood of Battersea and Chelsea. He stopped for a long time on Chelsea Bridge, gazing steadily into the river, noting the strange effect which the light had upon the water; and presently, when he arrived at his rooms, instead of lighting his pipe and reading the *Law Times* before going to bed, as was his custom, he sat looking into the fire. It is true he did light his pipe, but evidently he forgot all about it, for after sitting a long time he presently awoke to the fact that the ashes in his pipe were cold. But he did not seem to mind. There was a happy look in his eyes, while often a smile played around his lips as though his mind were filled with pleasant thoughts.

Then there was another thing. When presently he went to his bedroom he looked a long time into the mirror, a thing he could not remember doing for years. What does a man—and by no means a vain man—care about studying his features in a looking-glass? Not that he had any reason to be ashamed of what he saw. A strong, earnest, if not a handsome face was mirrored there. The large grey eyes, the broad forehead, the well-formed, clean-shaven face were striking enough to attract attention in any crowd.

"I'm thirty," he mused, as he kept looking at the glass,

"thirty last birthday. And I fancy I look my years. But I've not a wrinkle or a crow's-foot on my face; there's not a grey hair in my head," and then he sighed, but there was no sorrow in the sigh.

The next morning he was early at Victoria Station. He noted with gladness that there was every promise of a glorious spring day. The birds were singing on the trees in the squares through which he passed and a west wind was blowing.

"It's a day to rejoice in, a day to thank God for," he said in his heart. "I wonder now, I wonder—but I'm sure he won't mind."

He went to the booking-office and bought tickets for the whole party, and rejoiced that he was able to afford it, and then he went to the platform where the local train was to come in.

"I hope nothing will have made the train late," he said, as he marked the time. "Ah, there it is—capital! There's Raymond waving to me. Good!"

Really, for one of the keenest reasoners among the young men at the Bar, and one whose pleasure lay in his work, Edward Harrington was behaving in a remarkable way.

"Are you all here, Raymond? Ah, good-morning, Joyce—you told me I might, you know. Let me carry your macintosh; I really don't think you'll need it. We are going to have a glorious day. That's the weather forecast. Where are you off to, Raymond?"

"There's only just time to get the tickets."

"Oh, don't trouble. I thought you might be a bit late, so I secured them in order to save time."

"But I say, Ned——"

"Here we are. Let me see, we are six, and we shall just fill a first-class carriage. That's it, Joyce; won't you sit here, close to the window?"

Joyce said she would like to very much, and by this arrangement, although no one seemed to notice it, Harrington and Joyce were sitting side by side.

There's not much romance in a day at Brighton, I've been told. Everything is prosaic and commonplace there, but certainly to the Raymond family it seemed a city of wonders. As for Harrington, familiar as every scene must have been to him, he seemed to derive a wondrous amount of pleasure from it. By a strange coincidence, too, he very often found himself walking next to Joyce, while when they were

on the pier he seemed to regard it necessary to hold her arm as she leaned over the railings. There seemed no reason for this, not the slightest. Joyce had every appearance of strength and vigour. Her face shone with the glow of health, while her eyes sparkled with delight. Certainly there seemed no reason whatever to fear that the wind would blow her away, nevertheless she did not resent Harrington holding her arm; rather, I think it was pleasant to her to realise that a strong man was by her side.

Oh, that was a happy day to Walter Raymond. The old feeling of comradeship came back between him and his children. Young Walter walked with Rachel; he kept Madaline by his side; while, as if by mutual arrangement, Harrington kept by the side of Joyce. No, there is nothing romantic in spending a day at Brighton, especially for a man like Harrington, and yet, strange as it may seem, the hours passed by as minutes.

"Oh, I am hungry," said young Walter presently, a sentiment which was echoed by Rachel and Madaline.

"And you, Joyce?" said Ned Harrington. He seemed very fond of taking full advantage of the permission to call her by her Christian name.

"Ravenous," she laughed.

"It should be ready," said Harrington.

"What do you mean, Ned?" asked Walter.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I feared that we might find a difficulty in getting a nice place, so I telegraphed to the Métropole to arrange lunch for six. It saves such a lot of bother, you know."

"I say, Ned."

"Let's get there at once, for I am as hungry as a hunter myself. After all, there's no place like Brighton for giving one an appetite."

"Hasn't it been a splendid day?" said Walter Raymond when he reached his house that night.

"Simply glorious," was the testimony of everyone save Joyce, who remained for a long time awake that night, although one would have imagined that such a long day must have tired even her. Anyhow, she could not sleep. She was living the day all over again, and her heart was beating with a strange joy—a joy she could not understand.

There was another who did not sleep well that night, and that was Father Brandon. He happened to be at Clapham Junction when their train arrived, and he had noticed

the look of joyous triumph in Ned Harrington's eyes as he gazed upon the happy-looking girl at his side.

"This complicates matters," said the priest to himself. "I really must let Ritzoom know at once. Such a thing would ruin everything. No, it must not take place, it must be stopped at any cost."



## CHAPTER XIII.

“ WE CAN DO IN ENGLAND WHAT WE CANNOT DO IN SPAIN.”

FATHER RITZOOM sat in the study of his brother-priest, smoking. He had been silent during the burning of one long cigar, and now he had lit another. The fire burned low in the grate, for spring was in the air ; nevertheless, he occasionally meddled with the embers, as though the action helped him in his thoughts. For father Ritzoom was thinking deeply. Brandon had an hour before told him of what had taken place in connection with the Raymond family, and ever since the recital he had smoked in silence. He had made no remarks on what Brandon had told him, and neither by look nor gesture had he expressed anger or pleasure. His face was as expressionless as that of the Sphinx, and his companion had not the slightest idea of what was passing in his mind. For that matter, Brandon knew nothing of the plans which Ritzoom had formed. On the day when he had visited Walter Raymond in his office he had told his brother-priest that he had settled upon his course of action, and that he (Brandon) must carry out his instructions implicitly. He had also been told that he must report on anything which took place, so that he might act accordingly. But concerning the plans in Ritzoom's mind no one knew anything but that gentleman himself.

Brandon felt somewhat annoyed at this. He wanted to participate in his deepest thoughts. After all, it was he who had brought the case before Ritzoom's notice ; it was he who had revealed to him something of its possibilities ; it was he who had converted the main part of the family to the Roman faith, and he thought he had a right to know everything. Besides, he was a man of ambitions. He wanted to be renowned in those fields of action where Ritzoom was so famous ; he wanted to become prominent in the eyes of his superiors, and thus be promoted to perform more important duties than those which fell to the lot of the ordinary priest. He believed he had gifts in this direction, and had been sorry

more than once that he had communicated with the renowned Jesuit.

Still, he sat quietly, without speaking. Although he longed to make suggestions, he was afraid to do so. The strong, silent man by his side forbade him. He had been trained to obey his superiors without question, and the spell of those days of his novitiate, during which for years he had learnt only one lesson—that of obedience—was still strong upon him. Besides, although his vanity urged that he was equal to Ritzoom as a thinker, he knew he was not. Sometimes he gazed for minutes at the unspeakable face and mysterious eyes of the man, who, it was said, held even the General of the Order of Jesuits in awe.

“I cannot imagine what he’s thinking so long about,” thought Brandon. “After all, the case is not so difficult. And yet I expect he is thinking of contingencies which have never occurred to me.”

“You know nothing of this Harrington?” said Ritzoom at length.

“Next to nothing.”

“His brother was a novice at St. Silvester.”

“I know.”

“And Cecil Harrington tried very hard to convert him.”

“Ah, I see. Then he would speak with some freedom?”

Ritzoom gave Brandon one of his steady, searching looks, but he said nothing.

“For my own part, I take but little notice of this new attitude of Raymond’s. He is neither strong nor clever,” said Brandon presently.

“What are your reasons for believing that?”

“Oh, anyone can see that he is dull, and that he sees nothing beyond the immediate present. His behaviour all the way through has told me that.”

“Brandon,” said Ritzoom quietly, “you have ambitions to assist me in some of my work. You prefer what you call diplomacy to the work of a parish priest. Take a little advice from me. Whenever you come across a quiet, thoughtful man be always on the look-out for squalls. A quiet man is generally a strong one.”

“Or a stupid one.”

“Yes, and even your stupid ones have a great deal more brains than you credit them with; moreover, they are hard to move.”

“His wife could twist him around her finger even now.”

"No, my friend, you have made that impossible."

"How?"

"By making her so eager to convert him; by urging the conversion of the children. Still, I knew in time, so all is not lost."

"But I tell you it was easy to see that Harrington and Joyce were smitten with each other. Moreover, Harrington is Raymond's dearest friend, and Harrington is no friend of ours. What do you think about it?"

"I think, my friend, that if Harrington marries Joyce, all is lost."

"Why?"

"Because she would soon cease to be a Catholic. I'll tell you something, Brandon. It is not often I am afraid; but I fear Harrington."

"You think he is very clever?"

"I do not think—I am sure."

"And yet I never saw any evidence of it."

Ritzoom looked at Brandon steadily.

"No," he said quietly, "I do not suppose you ever did."

"Still," said Brandon, "a man who is in love is always a fool."

"If you were not a priest I should think you suffered from that malady," said Ritzoom. Evidently he was in a bad temper.

Brandon started like a man stung. This man seemed to take a delight in insulting him.

"Anyway, tell me what I have done wrong," he urged. "Tell me what I have done—that is, since you first came to see me—that I ought not to have done. Tell me what I have failed to do."

"Oh, nothing; you are a very good fellow, Brandon. Forgive me if I have been rude, but I am sadly upset."

"Why? The case is not hopeless, is it? There's nothing seriously wrong, is there?"

"It's not that. I am annoyed because something has seemingly happened that I had not planned for and prepared for. I quite anticipated the changed attitude of Raymond—that was bound to come; but I did not calculate that Joyce would fall in love with Harrington during a short holiday like this."

"Perhaps I am mistaken."

"But you are not."

Brandon looked at him questioningly.

“ Directly I got your letter this morning, saying you wanted to see me, I naturally considered what it might mean. Then it occurred to me. I accordingly made it my business to find out where Harrington was. I found that he had gone to Raymond’s house. During the afternoon I saw them walking together in Battersea Park.”

“ Did they see you? ”

“ No.”

“ But, of course, you saw them, and you drew your own conclusions.”

“ I have not the reputation of going around the world with my eyes closed, and I can still work out an arithmetic sum,” said the Jesuit.

“ If you could tell me your whole scheme,” said Brandon nervously, “ then, perhaps——”

“ You could muddle it for me. No, my friend ; I am now old enough to keep my ultimate plans to myself.”

“ I know you want old Walter Raymond’s millions.”

“ I? I want nothing. But surely it is the will of God that this heretic’s treasures should be devoted to the Church? It’s still the same want, my friend—money, money. The chariot wheels drag ; our progress can scarcely be seen because we lack money.”

“ We have done a great deal.”

“ Have we? I am glad you see it. It is true we have made a great deal of noise, and we have brought a great number of nuns and priests to this country from other lands ; but progress?—I tell you we need money. And we must have it.”

“ And we shall have it? ”

“ Oh, yes.”

“ Old Raymond’s? ”

“ Why, certainly.”

“ But I see so many difficulties.”

“ But I see through the difficulties and beyond them. Brandon, we have some stiff work to do.”

“ Tell me what it is.”

“ I will tell you as you need to know, my friend.”

“ You wish me to act blindfolded, then? ”

“ My dear friend, you can use all the eyes you have.”

“ But you treat me as though I were an automaton.”

“ No man is an automaton if he is fit for anything else. Nevertheless, you are a safe man, Brandon.”

“ Why? ”

“ Because you cannot read my thoughts. If you could, I should obtain the services of someone else.”

A look of anger shot from Brandon's eyes. He felt that Ritzoom was playing with him.

“ Yes,” went on the Jesuit urbanely, “ I have now thought out everything ; I am fully prepared for everything. I shall need your help, need it continuously. But I can tell you nothing. If you were fit to step into my shoes, as you think you are, Brandon, you would not need telling. You would know all that is in my mind.”

“ I do not claim omniscience.”

“ Before I go let me tell you something, my friend. When I was a young man I was employed by old Father Schneider, just as I am employing you. He was said to be the cleverest man in our Order. I did not believe it. Father Schneider was as secret and as silent as an oyster, but I discovered all his plans.”

“ How? He never told anyone anything.”

“ I thought everything out, my friend. I saw all the processes of his mind ; I read his thoughts. I saw the weak places in his calculations, too. I obeyed him implicitly, implicitly—that was my duty—I and others. But everything failed, my friend. Then, when he gave up the case as hopeless, I took it up, and did all he hoped to do and more. After that Father Schneider was no longer regarded as the cleverest man in our Order. But tell me, Brandon, do you read my mind? Have you worked out my plans? ”

“ No,” said Brandon, almost sullenly.

“ Then be content to obey me, my friend, and don't dream of doing anything on your own account ; do not think of it. For be assured I shall know of it before you have taken the first step that will lead you to ruin.”

“ Why do you say this, Ritzoom? ”

“ Because during the whole evening you have been planning how you can take this out of my hands, and act on your own behalf.”

“ How did you know? ” gasped the other.

“ Things like that come to me, my friend—that is all. But sleep in peace. There is difficult work to do, work which—well, will seem strange to you, but it must be done.”

“ And you have considered everything—calculated everything.”

“ Considered everything, yes ; but calculated—that is another matter.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, my friend, that the mind of such a man as Harrington is difficult to measure. But that is not all; his heart is a still more uncertain problem. Remember first, he is an Englishman, an Englishman to his finger-tips; but more, he is a Protestant, a Protestant by conviction.”

“And he is your chief difficulty?”

“Yes, my friend. I will tell you as much as that. We shall have to come into contact; we shall have to measure wits. Each will have strong motives, each will fight to the death. Oh, yes; I have seen it all while you have been sitting there watching me. It will be a hard fight; I can see that fairly enough.”

“And you will win?”

“Yes, I shall win, thanks to the scene of the battle being in England.”

“But why should that fact help you?”

“Because we can do in Protestant England what could not be done in, say, Catholic Spain.”

“But why is that?”

“Because the Englishman is a fool—that is why. Because in Catholic countries the authorities insist on strict supervision over all our affairs, while the Englishman lets us do as we please.”

The two men laughed. Evidently they enjoyed the situation.

“But look here,” said Brandon presently; “are no steps to be taken to keep Joyce and Harrington apart? You see the position is dangerous. Raymond has promised his daughter that he is going to give her a great deal of pleasure during this Easter, and Harrington is evidently keen on taking his share in the matter. As it happens, it is a slack time for lawyers, and Raymond’s recent success has made him flush with money. Hang his success, I say. I wish he had remained poor.”

“Yes, his success has made our work more difficult. I tried to get him into our power by offering to place certain work in his hands—work that would have made him afraid to offend us, work which would have bound him to us. But he had been embittered against us. The attitude of his wife had made him suspicious. Her too speedy conversion spiked my guns.” And Ritzoom looked steadily at his companion.

“Don’t be too cast down, Brandon,” went on Ritzoom. “I am simply obliged to go on another tack—that is all.”

But it should be a warning to you not to act again without consulting me."

"But concerning my question," suggested Brandon.

Ritzoom was silent for a few minutes, then he walked to the door and looked into the passage.

"Yes, my friend, I am coming to that, and in coming to it I shall to some extent satisfy your curiosity. Now listen, and listen carefully."

For some minutes the Jesuit talked earnestly, while Brandon's eyes dilated with astonishment. When Ritzoom had finished the other rose from his chair and walked around the room like a man greatly excited, as, indeed, he was.

"Stupendous!" he cried. "But—but——"

"But what, my friend?" interrupted Ritzoom quietly.

"Well—think of the risks."

"The essence of life is risk."

"Supposing it should miscarry?"

"It will not miscarry."

"I should never have dared," said Brandon presently.

"No, you would not. I know that. But what then?"

"Nothing. Only I——"

"You will do as you are told, my friend."

Father Ritzoom rose and left the house. He parted from his brother-priest as though nothing had happened; nevertheless, a thoughtful look was on his face as he walked towards Clapham Junction station.

"Now he thinks he knows everything," he said to himself presently. "Well, perhaps it is best he should think so. But that Scotch heretic was right. Englishmen are mostly fools—and Irishmen, too, for that matter; nevertheless, the Englishman laughs at us."

Meanwhile, Harrington and Joyce made their way towards Raymond's house. They had been out together all the afternoon, and the hours had sped by as minutes. Had anyone asked Harrington if he were in love with Joyce, he would probably have said that no such thought had entered his mind; that he was naturally interested in the daughter of his best friend, and that he enjoyed her society. As for loving her, well, he was not that kind of a fellow. Besides, beautiful and clever as she was, she was only a school-girl of nineteen, while he was a man of thirty, who had shunned women. In addition to this, he had only known her a couple of days. What foolishness, then, to talk of love! Nevertheless, he found himself constantly thinking of her.

As for Joyce, she simply realised that she was enjoying her holiday immensely, while Harrington's presence added to the enjoyment. Nay, more. Life had a gladness which she never dreamed of. No cloud hung in her sky; she lived in the blissful present. Had anyone asked her what she thought of Harrington, she would have said that he was her father's dearest friend, and that she admired him more than words could say.

And yet, although they knew it not, they were learning to love each other with a deep, abiding love. To Harrington Joyce was the fulfilment of his life's dream, while the sound of Harrington's voice set Joyce's nerves tingling, and caused her heart to beat wildly.

It came about that for several days the young people saw a great deal of each other. Walter Raymond had maintained the authority over his family which he told his wife he should maintain, and so he devoted his spare hours to taking them into the country and to places which give pleasure and gladness to young lives. Harrington generally accompanied them, and Raymond seemed to regard it as the most natural thing in the world that his friend should be Joyce's escort.

Neither of them had spoken of the dissimilarity between the religious views of Raymond and his wife; nor had Joyce told him that she had been received into the Catholic Church. Indeed, the girl had been so happy in the free, joyous life she was leading that the thought of the religious influences which had been brought to bear upon her in Belgium never troubled her at all. If at times the memory of these things came back to her, it was quickly dispelled by the realisation of her present happiness. The fact, moreover, that while her mother refrained from accompanying them she made no open protest against their recreations kept her mind from being disturbed.

And so the days passed on. Life at Raymond's house was happier than it had been for a long time. The events which were to happen later cast no shadows before them, and Walter Raymond hoped that the misery of the last few months was past for ever.

When Joyce had been home a fortnight Walter Raymond astounded his family with the news that he had secured a place for Joyce in a Moravian school in Germany. They had just finished dinner, and Walter announced the news suddenly.



“It will be only for a year, my darling,” he said to Joyce, as he saw the strange, haunted look in her eyes.

Joyce had been very quiet and subdued all that day, as she had been the evening before. But that might have been owing to the reaction which followed so many days of pleasure. Or it might have been because during the last three days Harrington had not visited the house. Be that as it may, Joyce had worn a sad and pensive look, while once, when Madaline had come upon her suddenly in her own room, she had found her crying.

“I have made every inquiry about the school,” went on Walter, “and I find that it is one of the best schools on the Continent. It was with difficulty that I was able to gain admission this term, as the school is very full. An unexpected vacancy has occurred, however, and so I succeeded. It is beautifully situated, the manner of life is of the healthiest nature, and the education is simply splendid.”

“But, dad, I shall have to go among strangers,” said Joyce, with trembling lips.

“Yes, but you will soon make friends. I find that the girls who go there come from very good families, and I am sure I can promise you a happy time. When you have been there a year we shall be able to reconsider our plans.”

“But—but, dad—I—I——” She did not finish the sentence. Instead, she burst out crying.

“What is the matter, darling? Less than a week ago, when I spoke about it, you told me that you liked the idea of it. Why, then, are you so upset about it now?”

At that moment the door-bell rang, and Harrington was announced.

“Ah, that’s splendid,” said Walter, not noticing the look of anger which shot from Mrs. Raymond’s eyes nor the glad light which shone from Joyce’s. “I haven’t seen Ned for two or three days, and he will be able to cheer us all up. Besides, he knows Germany thoroughly, and will very likely be able to tell us about the school.”

To his dismay, however, he found that Ned Harrington was far less gay than usual. He confessed that, while he knew Germany very well, he knew nothing about the school in question. Moreover, he did not seem to be enthusiastic at the thought of Joyce going away. So silent and thoughtful was he that Raymond, thinking he must have heard unpleasant news, suggested that the family should go into the next room while they had a smoke and a chat together.

"Anything the matter, Ned?" asked Raymond, when they were alone.

"Yes," replied Harrington quietly, "there is."

"Have you heard bad news?"

"No."

Raymond looked at his friend keenly. It was not like him to answer so abruptly and in such a way. However, he was not one to take offence; neither was it his nature to make indiscreet inquiries about his friend's troubles. He therefore smoked on quietly, and made no further remarks.

"Raymond," said Harrington presently, "I hope you'll not be angry with me."

"Angry, my dear fellow? Why should I be angry with you? Of course I shall not."

"Wait till you hear what I have to tell you," said Harrington.

Walter Raymond waited. He wondered much what was in his friend's mind, but said nothing. As we have said, Walter Raymond was not a talkative man.

"I want you to give me Joyce," he said presently.

"What!"

"I want you to give me Joyce," he repeated.

"What do you mean?" said Walter Raymond, astounded at his friend's words.

"Just that. I have discovered that I love her, Walter. I shall never be happy unless I have her as my wife."

"But she is only a child, Ned—just a school-girl."

"I know it all. For the last three days I have done nothing else but think about it. I do not think I meant to ask you to-night, but the thought of her going to Germany has upset me."

"But surely you have said nothing to her about it?"

"No, no. You see, for the first week of her holidays I did not think about her in that way. I simply delighted in being in her company. That was all. Then one night I happened to call when you were out, and Mrs. Raymond said that nothing would give her greater joy than that all her three girls should be nuns. That opened my eyes."

"But this is all so strange. Do you know, or do you think that Joyce—regards you in that way? She is only a child, you know."

"I don't know; but I hope so—I pray so. Will you give her to me, Walter?" he said. "That is, if—if she cares for me?"

Walter Raymond was not an emotional man—at least, outwardly—but for a moment he was unable to control his feelings. Tears welled into his eyes, and his body shook. He conquered himself presently, however.

“Ned,” he said, “she is only a child to me, and I have never once thought of such a thing. But I suppose my little girl will get married some day, and—and, Ned, I would rather you should have her than anyone in the wide world.”

The two men shook hands, but neither spoke. They looked into each other’s eyes without a word.

“Thank you, Walter,” said Harrington presently. “If she will have me, I will give my life to make her happy.”

“Yes, I’m sure you will, Ned. But not yet—not for a year or two. I cannot bear the thought of giving her even to you yet.”

“Very well,” said Harrington after a pause. “I suppose you are right, but—but—I say, Raymond, will you let me speak to her right away?”

“Yes,” said Walter Raymond, “and may God bless you, my friend.”

He went into the other room where the children were.

“Joyce,” he said, “will you come into the other room a minute?”

Joyce came with a wildly beating heart, wondering what her father had to say to her. But he said nothing. Instead he left Harrington and Joyce in the room together.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ I LOVE YOU—BUT I AM AFRAID ! ”

It was said among lawyers that Edward Harrington was one of the readiest speakers at the Bar, that he saw his way through every difficulty, and that he was never at a loss for words to express his thoughts. And yet, when he and Joyce were left together, he could not speak a word. She stood looking up into his face with great wonder in her eyes, and her lips parted as if by expectation ; but, although his heart was full, he could not speak a word.

“ Harrington, did you ever make love ? ” asked a friend of him one day.

“ Why ? ”

“ I should like to know how you did it. ”

“ You think I should do well ? ”

“ I am sure you would reason everything out with the lady, ” laughed his friend. “ You would be like a man speaking to a brief. You would have your case cut and dried. You would marshal your arguments in orderly array, and I think the lady would be so carried away that you would get a verdict. ”

“ Ah, then you have answered your own question, ” laughed Harrington. “ I have never yet got a verdict from a lady. ”

“ Then I should like to be an ear-witness when you make love. I am sure it would be a lesson in logic. ”

Yet this man stood dumb before the school-girl. He had no words to say ; his mind was confused. He had stood before the greatest judges in England, and had matched his wits against those of England’s cleverest lawyers, and had felt no fear ; he had waited with equanimity while grey-haired judges summed up the case in which he had been interested ; but now he stood dumb before a school-girl. Her verdict was more to him than the verdict of a judge, which

might make or mar his future position. The joy, the glory of life, was bound up in the life of this guileless girl.

She waited for him to speak, her lips tremulous, her heart beating tumultuously.

"Joyce," he said at length, "you know, don't you? You surely know?"

"No," she said; "I do not know. What is it?"

"Why do you look like that? Are you afraid of me?"

"Yes—no. Where is dad gone?" And she looked around the room like one frightened.

"He has left us together because I asked him. Joyce, I want to tell you something—to ask you something."

He caught her hands and held them fast. He felt her fingers tremble in his. There was a look almost amounting to terror in her eyes.

"I love you, Joyce. I want you for my own, my very own. Will you, Joyce? Will you?"

"Oh, no, no," she said in a whisper. "No, no. I dare not. You do not know."

"You are thinking of what your father will say," said Harrington. "But I have spoken to him. I have asked him to give you to me—that is, if you care for me. Do you, little girl? Tell me."

She fastened her eyes upon his face as though she were drawn by a magnet. Her eyes were full of a great wonder—almost of fear. She seemed to be trying to realise what his words meant.

"I love you, little girl," he repeated; "love you with all my heart."

"Oh, but you do not understand. It's wrong—that is, it is impossible."

"Do you mean that?" said Harrington. His voice was hard, and his lips became dry in a moment.

"Yes, yes; you see—that is, I must not think of such a thing." She seemed to be struggling with herself, like someone trying to recite a lesson. "I am so young," she said presently. "I am only a school-girl, and I have to go away again. You heard father say so, didn't you?"

"And you do not love me?"

The voice was not like Harrington's voice as he said this.

"You mean that I am mistaken," he went on; "that—that—you want me to go away, and never see you again?"

"No, no; I did not mean that. I did not really—that is——" She did not finish the sentence, but Harrington felt

her fingers clasp his tightly. "No, no; I did not mean that."

"Then you love me?"

"I must not tell you—it would be wrong. What you ask is impossible."

"Look at me, Joyce; look at me straight in the eyes. That is it. Do you tell me it is impossible? Do you tell me that you will be silent? I love you, little maid. You are all the world to me. You will not send me away, will you?"

The girl seemed to be struggling violently with herself. A hard, despairing look came into her eyes; her cheeks became as pale as death.

"Yes," she said slowly; "you must go away. I do not love you. What you ask is impossible."

Harrington dropped her hands, and looked at her steadily.

"You mean that?" he said presently.

"Yes, I mean it."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sure." She said the words very distinctly, and yet it seemed to Harrington as though it was not Joyce who was speaking at all. And yet he believed her. This man, usually so clear-sighted, was blinded by his love. The girl's words had not only seemed to blight his life, but they blighted his intelligence. He realised nothing, except that the girl to whom his whole life had gone out had refused him.

"Very well," he said quietly, "I will go. Forgive me for causing you pain, won't you? I did not mean to hurt you. I thought—that is—but never mind. I will go now; good-night."

He walked to the door.

"No, not that," she cried. Her hand was upon his arm; her eyes were filled with fear. "You must not go; you——"

"If you do not love me, I must go," said Harrington.

"But no, you must not go. I cannot bear that."

"Then you do love me. Look up, little maid, and tell me."

"Yes, yes," she sobbed.

He caught her hands again.

"Tell me again, Joyce," he cried. "I have been rough—cruel; I did not mean to be, but I am sure I have been. You do love me, don't you?"

"Yes—oh, God forgive me!—I do."

"And you will be my wife?"

“ If you will let me.”

He held her in his arms, and he felt that her whole body trembled.

“ Are you afraid of me? ” he asked.

“ No, not of you—not now.”

“ Look up and tell me that again.”

Their eyes met, and as he looked into her face he thought he saw her fear pass away like a cloud.

“ You won’t let—anyone harm me, will you? You will care for me always.”

“ Care for you? Always! ” he cried. “ I pity the man who would try to harm you.”

His strength seemed to give her confidence. As if by magic, the fear which had possessed her became a thing of the past. With a happy sigh she seemed to throw off the weight that had been upon her. She looked up into his face and laughed.

“ You are afraid of nothing now, are you? ”

“ No, nothing.”

“ Then let us go into the other room at once. I want to tell your father, to tell them all, that you will be my wife.” Again a look of fear came into her eyes.

“ Need you do that? ” she asked.

“ Yes, I must. I want everyone to know that you are mine, that you are going to be my wife. It’s very wonderful to me, my little maid. A month ago I did not know what love meant; now nothing in the world matters to me but your love. My one thought is to make you happy. I shall haunt that part of Germany where you are to go to school. I shall be jealous of everyone who comes near you. I shall feel like murdering anyone who would dare to lay his hand on you.”

“ You will let no one harm me, will you—no one? ”

“ I will give my life to protect you, Joyce. You are mine now, aren’t you? Mine, mine to love, mine to protect.”

“ Oh, I am so glad, so happy,” sobbed the girl. “ But—but—”

“ But what, my little maid? ”

“ Oh, nothing. You are so strong, so wise, I do not fear anything—anyone. Only—”

“ Only what? ” he asked, as she hesitated.

“ It is when you will be away from me. What then? I feel brave and strong now; but then—what then? ”

“ Do you fear anything, Joyce? Has anyone been frightening you? ”

“ Oh, no ; I fear no one now—no one. You will always protect me, won't you? ”

For a moment Ned Harrington wondered what she meant. She had always seemed so strong, so capable, so self-reliant, that he could not understand why she should be constantly repeating the same question. But his happiness was too great to allow him to think much about it. He held the girl he loved in his arms. He looked into her eyes—eyes which burnt brightly with trustfulness and love.

“ Always protect you? Why, Joyce, but for the promise I made your father, I should insist on our getting married right away. I simply long to go house-hunting with you. Do you know, while you are away in Germany I am going to spend all my spare time in seeking a beautiful house somewhere on the outskirts of London. There is to be a large garden full of flowers. We will have roses everywhere, because you told me that roses were your favourite flowers. The house shall be embowered by trees. All the same, I will find a place where we can look through and beyond the trees to the smiling country in the distance. I can picture myself coming home from my chambers or the Courts all dusty and tired, and I shall hurry with glad feet to our house, where I shall find you awaiting me. You will have tea ready for me on the lawn, and the birds will be singing, while the scent of the roses and the honeysuckle will sweeten the air, and you will run to me when you hear the garden gate click. Can't you picture us, my little maid? For you do love me, don't you? ”

Again she looked up into his face with a happy laugh, her lips parted with joy, her eyes full of a great wonder.

He stooped and kissed her.

“ You want me to tell them all, don't you? ”

“ Yes, tell them,” she said. “ I am not afraid of anything now.”

A minute later they stood side by side in the next room.

“ My friend,” said Ned Harrington, “ Joyce has promised to be my wife.”

Evidently Walter Raymond had not said anything to his wife concerning the purpose of Harrington's visit, for she started as though a wasp had stung her, but her husband did not heed it. Instead, he went towards Harrington with outstretched hand.

“ God bless you, my friend,” he said. “ God bless you both. But not yet, Ned ; not for a year or two.”



“ I will wait your time, Walter,” said Harrington, “ but do not let it be too long.”

He turned to Mrs. Raymond.

“ I know it will be hard for you, Mrs. Raymond,” he said, “ but I will give my life to make her happy.”

For a moment she looked at them like one overwhelmed with a great fear.

“ I do not wish Joyce to be married,” she said. “ She is only a child, she does not know her own mind. I think it is wrong of you to unsettle her in this way. She is just a child at school—and—and I do not think married life is her vocation.”

“ Yes, yes, I know,” laughed Ned Harrington. “ I did not mean to speak so soon, Mrs. Raymond, but really I could not help it. And surely God meant it so, or He would never have led us to love each other. I will try to be worthy of your trust, Mrs. Raymond. It shall be the chief thought of my life to make her life a joy.”

“ I will take no responsibility,” she said icily. “ Neither my wishes nor my opinions have ever been consulted. As I told you, my hopes for my children are all in another direction. But Mr. Raymond has paid no heed to them. Even now you do not regard me. You do not think my consent worth asking for. Out of pure formality you have spoken to me, and you assume that I shall assent to an arrangement which is hateful to me. But I suppose that does not count. You have spoken to Joyce, and she, not knowing either what is good for her or her own mind, has been led to give a foolish promise. Mr. Raymond, not regarding my desires, has fallen in with your wishes. But I give no consent, and I take no responsibility ; therefore, whatever may happen, do not blame me.”

“ But that does not mean that you forbid our seeing each other ? ” said Harrington.

“ I do not suppose it would matter if I did. As Mr. Raymond has told me, this house is his, not mine. Legally he is the guardian of the children—not I.”

With this she rose from her chair and left the room, while a painful silence fell upon all who were in the room.

“ Lucy is not very well to-day, Ned,” said Walter Raymond, presently. “ Perhaps she will see things in a different light later on. But you are glad, aren’t you, Madaline, and you, Rachel and Walter ? You will be glad to have Ned for a brother ? ”

Now that the mother had gone the children seemed freer to speak.

"I think it is just ripping," said young Walter, who had picked up some slang phrases at school. "You are just the best chap in the world to go away with, Mr. Harrington."

"That's right," said Ned; "we'll have some fine times together, Walter. As for Rachel and Madaline, you can hardly realise it, can you?"

"Can't we?" said Madaline. "We'll just haunt you when you have a house of your own!"

Ned Harrington did not leave Walter Raymond's house until late that night, and the hours passed by swiftly. Practical and unromantic as he was said to be, it was wonderful the pictures he drew for Joyce of the blissful future that lay before them. He told her of the way his long vacations should be spent, of the glorious holidays they would have in old Italian towns and amongst old German villages. He told her of the cities he had visited in France and Spain, of the holidays he had had in Italy, and Corsica, and Capri, and Egypt, and Palestine.

"And we will go to them all, Joyce," he said. "You shall see Athens, and Rome, and Florence, and Venice. The glories of that wondrous old world shall be revealed to you; and then, when the holidays are over, we will come back to England to work. As a thank-offering to God we will make other lives happy, and help those who are less favoured than we."

He spoke eloquently, for love had fired his imagination and loosened his tongue, and Joyce listened like one entranced. So great was her joy in her new-found love that all fear was banished, all clouds passed from her sky. She saw with his eyes, and heard with his ears. Her fresh, pure young heart went out to him in all its fulness. His strong nature gave her confidence and joy. She had only known him for a few weeks, but he was king of her life; while as Ned Harrington looked at her pure, artless face, saw the brightness of her eyes, and felt her hands in his, he rejoiced with a joy unspeakable. Here was no artificial creature who had frittered away her affection in a dozen meaningless flirtations, but a child of God, who gave him the wealth of her virgin heart; no flower which had become tarnished and faded by contact with a cynical and material world, but a fresh young bud which grew in God's great garden, on which the dust from life's crowded highways found no resting-place.

“ God bless her,” he said again and again in his heart, “ and may He make me worthy of her.”

For several days he spent all the time he could spare in her company. He took her up the river and away into the country, and whenever she was with him her sky seemed without a cloud. Sometimes, it is true, she seemed sad and pensive when they met, but after she had been with him a few minutes her sadness fled, and she was happy in the gladness of his presence.

Meanwhile, the day drew nearer when Joyce had to go to the Moravian school in Germany. It had been arranged that she should not go until the school had opened for a week or two, so that her father might be able to go with her. Still, as the days passed by, the date of her departure drew inevitably nearer, and Ned Harrington's heart grew sad at the thought of it. The more so because an important case demanded his presence in the West of England, and obliged him to stay there several days.

“ Never mind, Joyce,” he said as he left her, “ I shall write you every day, and I shall be thinking about you all the time.”

“ Oh, I am afraid—I am afraid,” said Joyce.

“ Afraid! Of what, my little girl? ”

“ Oh, of everything—everything.”

“ But there is nothing to be afraid of, Joyce. No harm can happen to you or to me. We are in God's hands, little maid.”

“ Are we? Do you think we are, Ned? Say it again. Say you think He cares.”

“ I am sure He does, Joyce. I am sure He watches over you, even as I watch over you.”

“ But if you are very wicked, Ned? If you have displeased Him very much? If you have disobeyed Him? ”

“ Even then He cares—even then He loves you. But you are not wicked, Joyce; you have not displeased Him; you have not disobeyed Him.”

“ Do you think I ought to be your wife, Ned? Are you sure I ought to be? ”

“ Sure? Of course I am. Aren't you? ”

“ Yes, when you are with me, but when you are away from me, then I fear.”

“ What do you fear? ”

The girl was silent for a time. She seemed on the point of telling him something, but refrained.

"Mother is so angry," she said.

"That is because she regards me as such a heretic. Like all perverts to Romanism, she is anxious to convert everyone to her faith. She knows that I have, on more than one occasion, exposed the frauds of these priests, and as a consequence she is very angry with me. But she will get over it by-and-by. When she sees how happy you are she will be glad that you are to be my wife. For you love me, don't you, my little maid?"

"Love you? Oh, God forgive me for loving you so much!"

"Forgive you for loving me so much? Come now, Joyce."

"Yes, for loving you more than I love Him, because I think more of pleasing you than pleasing Him. I do not feel it now you are with me, but when I am alone, Ned, then I am afraid."

"I shall be back next Thursday," he cried when he left. "Just one week, Joyce, then I am going to take two days' holiday, so as to be with you the whole time before you leave for Germany on the Friday. I shall come straight from Paddington here on Tuesday night."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

It seemed as though she could not bear to let him go. Even after he had left the house she followed him, and called him back to assure her that he would return on the Tuesday, and that no harm could happen to her while he was from her. And Ned Harrington, rejoicing in her love, yet wondering at her fear, assured her that all would be as she wished.

When he was at length gone Joyce went to her own room, and remained there for a long time in silence. Throughout the whole evening she was silent and thoughtful, as though something was weighing on her mind. She constantly started, as if she feared someone was coming.

Presently, when she heard the door-bell ring, she trembled violently, and her face became as pale as ashes; then, as soon as she heard her father's step, the fear left her eyes, and she ran to him with a glad smile. Several times during the evening she seemed on the point of telling him something, but whatever was on her mind she kept to herself.

"What time will you be home to-night, dad?" she asked her father the following morning.

"Not till late, I am afraid," he replied. "You see,

Joyce, I have taken it rather easily lately, and there is a great deal of work to overtake. Besides, I must get things so arranged that I can spend a few days in Germany when I take you there."

"Do you want me to go there very much, dad?" she asked almost plaintively.

"I dread the thought of your going away again, darling, while Ned Harrington is worse than I. But I am sure it is the right thing. A year in one of the best schools in Europe will mean a great deal to you. You see, you must be fitted for a great future, Joyce. Ned Harrington is going to be a great man. Nothing is impossible to him, and, humanly speaking, there is nothing to hinder him from being one of the foremost men in England. Thus it is necessary for his wife to be fully equipped for her position."

The girl's face flushed with joy. Praise of Harrington was sweet to her. "Did you have any trouble about the Bruges school?" she asked.

"Oh, the Mother Superior was a trifle annoyed, and spoke about my not treating her fairly, and all that. But, of course, that is nothing. Besides, I am very glad that you are to be taken away from the unhealthy influences of the place. I trust," he continued, "that you have broken the spell which the place cast upon you. You do not wish to go back there, do you?"

"No—oh, no!"

She said the words almost feverishly.

"And you have forgotten all about that fiasco of joining the Roman Church?"

"You have never told Ned about it, have you, dad?" she asked, and her face was very pale as she spoke.

"Not a word. I was sure that as soon as you came under healthier surroundings you would see that you were led away by undue influence, and that you would regret the step you took. I notice that you have not been to any of the Romish churches, and so I have gladly come to the conclusion that you have broken with the whole business. You don't want to be a Papist, do you, Joyce?"

The girl burst out crying bitterly.

"There, there," said Walter; "I know just what you feel. But don't be afraid, little maid; no one shall trouble you. At home you have me and Ned to protect you; while in Germany you will be as happy as the day is long."

Walter Raymond had not gone to his office more than an

hour, however, before a note came for Joyce. When she read it, her face was as pale as the face of a corpse, and an hour later she left the house with a strange, haunted look in her eyes. It seemed as though a great dread filled her life. She did not return home for more than three hours, and when she again entered the house the black cloud which had overshadowed her had evidently not passed away.

Mrs. Raymond smiled with satisfaction as she saw her.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH.

“THE question lies here, my child—Who will you grieve: your father or your Lord? your lover or the Holy Mother of Sorrows? The choice is no light one. Unknown to your father, you went to the Church of our Sorrowing Lady on Good Friday evening. I saw you there. I saw, too, how much you were moved by the sermon. As Father McCarthy enlarged upon the sorrows of the Holy Mother, I saw how your heart was moved. As he enforced the truth that every disobedience to the Holy Church meant not only crucifying our Lord again, but renewed the pains of our Sorrowing Mother, I knew you vowed never to be guilty of such a hellish crime. I saw, my child; I saw and understood. But you have fallen away. You have allowed a sinful love to enter your life. You yielded first to the carnal influence of your father, the man who is one of the greatest enemies of your soul’s salvation. He has exerted an unlawful authority over your mother; he has claimed the right to govern his household according to his worldly nature, and you forgot that you had been baptised into the Church. Supported by your father’s authority, you defied your mother’s commands, you refused to obey the bidding of Father Brandon. You did not come to confession as you were bidden; aye, and you allowed yourself to be swept away by an unholy affection for that enemy of our faith. You, who have plighted your troth to our Holy Church, were led to be unfaithful, and to plight your troth to a man who is a sinner, a man who would lead you to eternal damnation. At last, after repeated solicitations and warnings, grace has again touched your heart, and you have obeyed the Church in so far as to come to one of her priests. And now the question of questions has to be faced. Will you obey God or Mammon? Will you come back to the Church, contrite, penitent, and obedient, or will you lose your soul? You know the penalty of disobedience. The Church is a great mother which comforts and blesses her penitent children, but for the un-

repentant there is no hope. Remember our Lord's words : ' He that putteth his hand to the plough, and then turneth back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God.' And what is the doom of those who are not fit for the Kingdom of God? You know that article of our faith which speaks of the doom of the unrepentant. Everlasting fire, my child; everlasting fire! And of what avail will your sinful love be then? "

Joyce Raymond sat looking at the face of Father Ritzoom, transfixed with a great terror. The man's strong face fascinated her; his deep, mysterious eyes mastered her. She felt not only the meaning of his words, but all they suggested. Her imagination was fired. Her conduct appeared to her as a crime against God; her future, if she followed her heart, would be the unending torments of a ghastly hell. And yet, even although she was sure of this, her heart went out to the man she loved; aye, had he entered the room at that moment, she would have dared what she believed to be the wrath of God, and flung herself into his arms with gladness. But he was not there. He was far away; and, meanwhile, she had yielded to the commands of her mother and the behests of the priests, and she had placed herself under the influence of a man whom, it had been said, no Catholic could refuse to obey.

" Remember," went on Ritzoom, " you are a Catholic; you have been baptised into the Church's communion; you have partaken of her sacraments; you have promised obedience to her commands. While you were outside the Church, your sin of disobedience to the Church might be forgiven—nay, even if you had died outside her communion, you might, if you acted up to the light you had, have at last entered heaven, because you were ignorant of the Church's claims and the Church's power. But you cannot plead that. You have been baptised into the Church; you know her claims; you know her powers; therefore you have sinned against the light knowingly; and now, if you die in your sin, there can be no forgiveness. There is nothing but the fires of an eternal hell for all Catholics who become heretics and die in their sins. Think, my child; think."

" I did not realise what I was doing," said Joyce, almost sullenly. " I was deceived; I was made to believe that my father wished me to become a Catholic, even as my mother and sisters and brother were. But my father knew nothing of it. He had been deceived, even as I was."

" That, of course, is a mistake," replied Ritzoom,





"'WILL YOU OBEY GOD OR MAMMON?'"

(p. 143.)



suavely. "Either your father did give his consent in a moment of indifference—that is, before he became an avowed enemy of the Church—or else you failed to understand the good father or the Mother Superior who spoke to you. But, in any case, it does not affect. You became a child of the Church willingly, you promised to obey her implicitly, and you have disobeyed, and you have promised to become the wife of an enemy to the faith. Thus there is a plain issue. What are you going to do? Obey man or obey God? Give a man of the world an hour's disappointment or crucify your Lord again? Live for the sinful happiness of a few short years, and thereby plunge yourself into eternal damnation, or determine to save your soul, even although you give momentary disappointment to the enemies of your soul? Which, my child—which?"

To Joyce Raymond it was a very real and a very terrible alternative. At that moment she believed every word which Ritzoom said. During her early years she had thought little or nothing about those great religious questions which had split Christendom in twain. Walter Raymond, her father, had, as we have said, troubled but little about such questions. "Let the children grow up healthy and pure," he had said, "and all will be well." And so he had simply taught them to love God, and to live the Christian life which Christ died to make known to the world. Churches and dogmas had never troubled him. Thus Joyce had grown up a simple-minded child of Nature, truthful and pure. She loved the God Who was revealed by His Son, and that was all. Left alone a few years longer, she would have been less amenable to the influences which afterwards surrounded her. But at eighteen she had been placed under influences which were utterly strange to her. She was but a child in feeling when she went to the school at Bruges; she knew nothing of the great world. She had not been there a month, however, when the subtle influence of the convent school pervaded her life. Unconsciously almost she was made to believe that to be religious, and to please God, she must become a member of the Roman Church. Not in so many words had she been made to feel this, but by a thousand stray sentences, a thousand suggestions. She found herself pitied as a Protestant; she was referred to as being one in the dark, knowing nothing of the truths of God or of the joys of those who were received into the Church. She knew nothing of the history of the

Papacy. The story of those dark days, when the Roman Church made Europe a scene of superstition, cruelty, and horror, was unknown to her. She did not know that almost every nation where the priest laid his hand in power had become paralysed and dwarfed. She knew nothing either of that ghastly story of infamy and cruelty to read which is to make the heart shudder. She was but a sensitive girl, and almost imperceptibly she had yielded to the influences by which she was surrounded. As the months passed by these influences increased in power. Thus, when the news reached her that her mother had become a Romanist she did not wonder. It seemed natural that both she and Rachel, and Madaline and Walter, should be baptised. As a natural consequence, moreover, when she was given to understand that both her father and mother wished her to be received into the Roman Communion, she succumbed to the influences of the past few months, and became, as Ritzoom had said, a child of the Church. The seeds sown at the school had taken deep root in her young life ; the influences of the last year had thrown a spell upon her. She had no arguments to rebut the Church's claims ; and thus, although under ordinary circumstances she was a strong, resolute girl, she became but wax in the hands of a clever man like Ritzoom.

What wonder, then, that she was made to feel that her father, in spite of her love for him, was an enemy to the Lord Whom she had confessed? What wonder that Ritzoom made her feel that her love for Harrington, who was a strong Protestant, and would inevitably lead her to think less and less of the Church and her claims, was a snare of the devil? There, in the presence of the priest, she felt as though her crime was almost unpardonable, and that only by the infinite mercy of the Church could she be forgiven. While she was with the man she loved she did not fear ; his strong presence, his healthy scorn of all priestly pretensions, made her think lightly of what had taken place at Bruges. Besides, she loved him ; her heart had gone out to him ; all the wealth of her young life had been given to him. Added to this, she had never told him she had been received into the Roman Communion. She had been commanded to keep this a secret, and she had found it easy to obey ; and, as her father was so annoyed at what had taken place that he had not even told Ned Harrington of his daughter's perversion, the two did not realise the cloud that hung over their lives. Now, however, all was different. Father Ritzoom made her feel the terror of

what she had done ; and when he told her what she must do in order to obtain the Church's pardon, and thus save herself from the Church's wrath and the fires of an eternal hell in the future, she saw no way of escape.

Presently she rose to leave the priest, and as she did so Ritzoom took her hand.

"Grace hath touched your heart, my child," he said. "You see the heinousness of your sin."

"Oh, God, forgive me!" cried the girl. "What shall I do?"

"I will tell you first what you must not do," said the Jesuit. "You must not open another letter from that man Harrington ; you must not mention his name to your father. You must not be afraid to disobey the man who, although your father, is an enemy to your soul. And then you must obey me implicitly—implicitly, my child."

"But what must I do?"

Ritzoom hesitated for a moment. Then he spoke to her in low, impressive tones. At first she did not seem to understand him, but presently, as his meaning became more and more plain, her face became as pale as death, her eyes dilated with terror.

"No, no ; not that!" she cried.

"And why, my child?" said the priest quietly. "Have I to go over all the old arguments again? The question is plain—are you going to obey God or the devil?"

"But—but, father——"

"What the Church demands she demands in love. She does not think of the happiness of a lifetime, but the happiness of eternity. She does not trouble about the ease, the comfort, of the body of flesh, but the destiny of the immortal soul. You have sinned grievously, my child, and this is your means of forgiveness."

"But my father said——"

"Is your father the keeper of your soul? Is the man who has closed his heart to grace, and who, by reason of his hardness of heart, has cast a shadow over your mother's life, to be your guide in spiritual matters? When the Church commands, your Lord has commanded. If you refuse, you refuse at your peril."

For a moment a feeling of rebellion rose in the girl's heart. All that spirit of independence, all that love of freedom which has been so characteristic of the British race, asserted itself. She was young, she was fair, she loved

liberty, she loved and trusted her father, and more, she loved the man to whom she had plighted her troth with all the wealth of her young life. How, then, could she yield to the priest's demands?

"But for the blackness of your sin, but for the fact that your nature has become so utterly perverted by your love for this heretic, I might not be obliged to insist on such strong measures," said Ritzoom; "but I can see you standing on the brink of an awful doom; the mouth of hell gapes wide, my child. It is for the Church to save you, even at the cost of all those sinful things which you hold dear. The wounds of your Lord bleed afresh at your sin; the tears of our Sorrowing Lady fall more copiously because of your apostasy from her Son. Will you not heal those wounds by repentance, my child? Will you not dry those tears by obedience? I say this to appeal to that spark of grace which still burns in your heart. I will not urge the doom which comes through disobedience—I will only plead."

When Joyce came into the open air again she did not feel the brightness of the sun, she did not hear the birds singing. The flowers that grew in the gardens, the mantle of green which God was placing upon trees and fields, had no message to her. She was blinded to beauty, she was deafened to music. She saw nothing but the shadow of a great darkness; she seemed to be walking towards a black midnight. The spell of the man with whom she had been speaking held her fast. His presence seemed to encircle her even as she walked across Clapham Common; the ghastly terror which his words contained followed her wherever she went. She was afraid to go home; her mother was there, and would echo the Jesuit's words. Her father was somewhere in the City—where, she knew not, but certainly not at his office. As for Harrington, he was away in the West of England, and she dared not go to him.

Should she obey Ritzoom's commands? Her whole heart recoiled against the thought, and yet she feared to do otherwise. The man had thrown his spell upon her, and she could not break away from its power.

She left Clapham Common, and walked through the grim streets towards Battersea Park. There she could find some quiet nook where she might rest and think. Presently she found herself in the sub-tropical gardens, where she wandered amidst the plants and flowers. But she saw no beauty in them. The terror of her interview with Ritzoom followed

her ; the ghastly alternative which he placed before her loomed grim and dark. If she followed her heart, she rushed headlong into hell ; if she did not, if she obeyed the Church, then earthly light and hope seemed gone for ever.

Presently she felt more tranquil. She need not decide that day ; and although it would be late before her father came home, she would see him before she went to bed. It is true Ritzoom had spoken of him as an enemy of her soul ; nevertheless, his frank honesty and his unvarying kindness always did her good. Perhaps, after all, he might speak some word which would guide her.

When she reached home, however, she found two priests in the house. It is true her father had forbidden Father Brandon to enter the house ; nevertheless, he, with another priest, sat with her mother in the little drawing-room. Again the spell of the Church grew stronger. How dare she refuse to obey her behests ? She had been baptised into her communion, she had promised to obey her teachings. No, she must not see her father ; she must not imperil her soul. She therefore went to bed early ; and as she sat looking at the crucifix before her she felt that she must obey the will of the Church.

The following morning she slept late. Through the night she lay sleepless ; but as morning came on she fell into a troubled slumber, from which she did not awake until her father had gone to his office.

When she came downstairs, she was met by her mother.

" I know what Father Ritzoom has said to you, Joyce," she said. " You must obey him, my dear. You must not break your mother's heart by disobedience."

Joyce did not answer. Instead, her eyes flew to the mantelpiece, on which Ned Harrington's letters were placed.

" Is there no letter for me ? " she asked.

" No."

" Are you sure, mother ? "

" Of course, I am sure. You expect a letter from Harrington ; but, my dear child, don't depend on him. ' Out of sight, out of mind,' is the motto of such men as he."

" It is untrue," said the girl ; " you know it is untrue."

" Oh, you poor, silly child ! He has told you he was never engaged before, hasn't he ? Do you believe it ? No, he is not that sort. I'll tell you when you would find if you went to his rooms. You would find the photographs of actresses and ballet girls on his mantelpiece. I expect that

even now he is enjoying himself down in Plymouth with some of them, and laughing with them about a silly schoolgirl in London who was foolish enough to believe in him."

Joyce sat down to breakfast, but she could eat nothing. She did not believe a word her mother had said; nevertheless, they made her feel more miserable. She told herself, when she rose, that she was going to destroy his letter unopened; nevertheless, she felt terribly disappointed at finding none.

Another day passed, and still no letter arrived. What could it mean? Was he ill, or did her mother speak the truth? Had he been playing with her affections? But for her interview with Ritzoom, she would have written him, asking him what he meant by his silence; but she was afraid to do so. Besides, she had promised the priest that she would not write. Perhaps he would be angry at her silence, even as she had been angry at his.

During the day Father Brandon and the other priest visited the house again, and Joyce could not help hearing the conversation. Ere long they began talking about Harrington's brother, who was a Jesuit priest.

"Yes," said Brandon, "I suppose he has been greatly grieved about his brother. Naturally, for Cecil Harrington is one of the best and most devout men in the world. The last time they met was a few weeks ago, when Cecil took him to task about his loose way of living. He told him in plain words what his theatrical suppers and wine-drinking parties meant. Of course, Cecil is very strict in his ideas; perhaps that is because of the rebound from his brother's way of living. Moreover, as a devout Catholic, he was grieved at his brother's atheism."

Joyce felt like rising to her feet and denouncing his words as a falsehood; but what could she say? She had no proof. Moreover, had not Father Ritzoom told her to drive the man she loved out of her heart?

Still another day passed, and still no letter arrived. She had seen little or nothing of her father. He was hard at work in order to snatch a few days from business so as to accompany her to the German school; therefore she had no society but that of her mother.

"Oh, God, help me!" she prayed again and again.

The next day she had another interview with Father Ritzoom, and the spell of this strange, mysterious man grew stronger upon her. Despair was in her heart, and yet there was no one to whom she could turn for help.



Meanwhile, Ned Harrington was wondering greatly why he had received only one letter from Joyce. He had written again and again asking the reason of her silence, and had even sent a telegram, asking what was the matter. Still he could not leave Plymouth. The case in which he was engaged was very important, and demanded his most vigilant attention. He had promised himself that he should be comforted each day by Joyce's letters, and therefore was the more disappointed when none came. He hoped for the best, however, and tried to believe that everything would be fully explained on his return.

At length the case in which he was engaged was completed as far as the Courts were concerned, and he promised himself that he would be able to catch the afternoon train from Plymouth, which would land him at Paddington shortly after ten that night. But in this he was disappointed. He found it necessary to hold a consultation with his clients and their solicitor, and when their interview came to an end the train had gone.

"It is a nuisance," thought the young man; "but it can't be helped. I will catch the first train in the morning, and drive straight to Raymond's house," and his heart warmed at the thought of meeting Joyce, although he was much disturbed at only receiving one letter from her.

That evening, as he was sitting at dinner in his hotel, a waiter brought him a telegram.

"Great trouble. Joyce. Urgent that you return immediately. Wire if I may meet train arriving Paddington 3.30 to-morrow morning.—RAYMOND."

He glanced hurriedly at his watch. It was now half-past seven, and the train which arrived at Paddington in the early morning left Plymouth at eight o'clock. Yes, he could do it. He hastily scribbled a telegram to Raymond, and then hurriedly packed his bags and paid his bill. By eight o'clock he was seated in the train just starting for London.

Alone in the carriage he was able to think. He had received only one letter from Joyce. He had received no reply to his telegram. This had a meaning. Following this was the ominous telegram from Walter Raymond. The words which troubled him were, "Great trouble. Joyce."

Ned Harrington was not a man to lose his head easily. His friends had often told him he had no nerves. In this they were mistaken. He felt things keenly, but his nerves

were of steel. Moreover, he knew from experience that only the self-contained man was a strong man. Nevertheless, for more than an hour he forgot his cigar, and presently, when he lit it, it was more from habit than anything else.

By the time the train had reached Exeter he had drawn his conclusions. He had reviewed the whole situation from beginning to end, and he felt sure that he knew what to expect. Nevertheless, there was something wanting in his chain of reasoning. He, of course, knew that Joyce had been for a year at a convent school, and that as a consequence her mind would be influenced towards the Roman Church; but he did not know that she had been received into the communion. Still, he had not the slightest doubt but that the priests were at the back of the trouble about Joyce. He called to mind the fears she had expressed when last he had been with her. Evidently the priests had something to do with those fears. He blamed himself for not taking her words more to heart, but he had been so happy that he had never imagined any immediate trouble from that quarter. Now, however, his eyes were opened.

By the time the train reached Bristol he had imagined many contingencies, and the way those contingencies would have to be met. But, in spite of all his imaginings, he had not happened upon the truth. He did not yet know Father Ritzoom.

At half-past three in the morning the train rushed into Paddington station. A few porters were around, but the place had a terribly empty appearance. To Harrington, as he looked out of the carriage window, it suggested a great desolation.

The train came to a standstill, but before it did so Ned Harrington was on the platform looking for his friend. They were not long in finding each other.

There were no exclamations of despair, no inarticulate, wild questionings. These two men did not belong to the order of those who waste time by making irrelevant remarks.

“What’s the trouble, Walter?”

“Joyce has left home. We do not know where she has gone.”

Ned Harrington did not expect this. He had thought of a hundred things, but not this. For a moment it staggered him, but only for a moment.

“When did she leave?”

“Some time during the day. I saw her this morning.”

“ Did she seem well? ”

“ Yes ; but I fancied that she looked worried. I told her so, but she assured me that nothing was the matter. Still, I wondered why she called me back a second time to bid me good-morning. ”

“ Then? ”

Ned Harrington did not try and comfort his friend by telling him that possibly Joyce had been called away to visit a friend, or something of that sort. He knew that Raymond would have considered all such contingencies.

“ But she left some message behind? ”

“ Yes, two letters. One for me and one for you. Here is yours. ”

## CHAPTER XVI.

HARRINGTON AND RAYMOND.

NED HARRINGTON did not open his letter. Perhaps he divined what it contained.

“Does your letter tell you why she left home?” he asked in a hard voice.

“Yes—no.”

Harrington waited, while after a moment's hesitation Raymond went on:

“It is only a few words. She says: ‘Father, forgive me. I cannot go to Germany to school as you ask me. I am a child of the Church, and I must obey her commands. I am going away because it is my only chance of happiness. Do not try to find me; that will be impossible. Do not grieve for me; I shall be perfectly happy and safe. Good-bye for ever.’”

“That all?”

“That is all.”

“‘A child of the Church,’” said Harrington, questioningly.

“Yes, I ought to have told you. She was received into the Romish Church at Bruges. I did not tell you because it made me so angry; besides, I hoped she would forget all about it, and treat it as so much foolishness.”

“That was a pity. She did not tell me either.”

“No; she was told to keep the fact a secret. I believe she was glad to do this, and I thought she desired to blot the whole business out of her life. But what does she say to you?”

Harrington opened the letter. His hands were very steady, although his face was pale to the lips.

“DEAR MR. HARRINGTON (the letter ran),—I have discovered that it would be wrong for me to ever see you, or communicate with you again. I am therefore going where you can never see me. Forgive me if I cause you pain in

doing this ; but there is no other course open to me. I wish you nothing but good.—Yours sincerely,

“JOYCE RAYMOND.”

He read the letter aloud, his voice never quivering once.

“Joyce never wrote that letter,” he said quietly.

“It is her handwriting.”

“Of course. But she never wrote it.”

“Nor mine,” said Walter Raymond presently.

“No, nor yours,” said Harrington.

They were standing beneath a lamp in the great station, oblivious to all that was around them. One by one the cabs had left their stand at the arrival platform, and only a solitary porter watched them from a respectful distance.

“Cab, sir?” said a cabby, who had been watching them for some time, and evidently regarding them as his fare.

“No, thank you.”

The cabman drove away sulkily.

“What are you going to do?” said Raymond presently.

“I will leave my luggage at the hotel,” said Ned Harrington.

He called a porter, and then the two followed the man, who took his bags away to the hotel.

“Want rooms, sir?” asked the man in charge there.

“No; I only want to leave my bags here till the morning. I will send a man for them. There is my card.”

“All right, sir.” Ned Harrington had stayed at the hotel and the man knew him again.

The two men walked away towards Chelsea. Neither spoke. Both realised that it was no time for much talking just then, and both knew that when the time for action came each could depend on the other. Raymond had had the facts before him for some hours, but to Harrington they were new, and he knew his friend well enough to be sure that he wanted to think quietly a few minutes.

There are few places on earth so lonely as London at half-past three in the morning. The occasional stray traveller who may be seen in the streets only adds to the loneliness. The morning was dawning, chill and drear, although spring was upon them; the young leaves shivered in the cold wind. Steadily they walked, side by side, their every footfall echoing in the silent streets, and each knew that the other was thinking of Joyce, for each knew that the other loved her. Ned Harrington needed no words to tell him that

his friend's heart was bleeding; but he had also no need to be told that he was planning in his own quiet way how to find his child, and bring her back to home and happiness. As for Walter Raymond, he trusted Harrington completely. A man as true as the sun, loyal and strong; a man, moreover, who would give the wealth of his heart and brain to bring back the helpless girl who had left her home.

"Of course, it is the priests," said Raymond presently.

"Of course."

"That fellow Brandon."

"No."

"You think not?"

"I am sure. This business shows a master-mind. Brandon has neither the courage nor the brains to arrange this. What we see on the surface is not half. When we have probed the thing to the bottom, we shall find that great stakes are being played for. Joyce is only the instrument used to carry out a big scheme."

"You have formed your conclusions as to where she is taken?"

"Only in part."

"But we must find out."

"Of course."

Again they strode on quietly.

They had entered Hyde Park, and were walking in the direction of the Albert Memorial. They left the Serpentine on their left, scarcely noticing the shadows which the trees cast upon the water.

Now and then Harrington stopped and glanced at the trees in Kensington Gardens, as though he were noting their beauty; but he spoke no word. Silently the two strode on, until they saw the gilt on the monument erected in memory of the husband of one of England's greatest queens.

"It is cold."

"Very cold. There's frost in this air."

"Yes, there must be."

Of course, they were not thinking of the weather. The words were only the mechanical utterances of two men who were face to face with a great difficulty.

Presently they reached Harrington's chambers. The young barrister let himself in noiselessly, and with steady fingers lit the gas.

"I will get some breakfast, Raymond," he said. "We are both cold and hungry. I know where the eatables are."

A few minutes later the fire was burning in the room, while a kettle was steaming over a spirit lamp. On the table a breakfast of tempting eatables was placed.

They ate in silence, and when they had finished, both drew their chairs to the fire.

Harrington passed his friend a box of cigars.

"No; a pipe, thank you."

"Yes; a man can think better over a pipe."

"The facts," continued Harrington presently, "are plain. Let us review them. A little more than a year ago, you came across an advertisement of one of those cheap convent schools in Belgium. They are placed in all the Catholic papers; they also exist elsewhere. They are intended as a bait to Protestants who have no strong religious convictions, and who may not be able to afford to send their children to good English schools. They offer a liberal education for minimum fees. You caught at the bait."

"You know why, Ned."

"Yes, I know why. You did what was intended. It is one of the means Romanists use to get converts to their faith. They succeeded. A priest came to your house; he impressed you with his pleasantness, his frankness, his *bonhomie*. Joyce was sent to this school, and the priest continued to visit your house. Your wife became a Catholic. Immediately afterwards came trouble. Your household was divided. The old trust was gone."

"Yes; God knows that's true."

"Then your children became baptised."

"Not with my consent."

"No, but they were. Joyce remained at the school; she was there a year. So far, it is the old story. It's been repeated a hundred times in a hundred different families. Your wife received me coldly. That is natural. I am an avowed Protestant. I know what priestcraft means. Still you and I remain friends. By-and-by Joyce comes home. You know what happens."

Ned Harrington became silent a few minutes; his face was very pale, and he looked steadily into the fire.

"Apparently no hindrance was put in the way of our meeting," went on Harrington presently, "and we learned to love each other. Then, with your consent, but against your wife's will, we became engaged. By the way, Raymond, have you heard anything about the ring I gave her? Has she left it in the house?"

“ No ; I have seen nothing of it.”

A look of satisfaction came into Ned Harrington's eyes.

“ For a time we were perfectly happy,” went on the young man in steady tones ; “ but when she knew I had to go to Plymouth she became afraid.”

“ She became afraid ? ”

“ Yes ; she seemed to dread something—to fear some calamity. She was afraid of those priests. I did not realise it ; I did not know she had been received into the Roman Communion. If I had known, I should have understood. I should have known she feared to go to confession.”

Raymond nodded his head.

“ When I was gone they got hold of her, they frightened her. They forbade her to go to you, they forbade her to correspond with me. I have written to her each day, but I have only received one letter from her. She wrote me on the day after I left. Never since. Evidently they have frightened her into leaving home. They have persuaded her that it is her duty to go away from you and from me. They have dissuaded her against going to that school in Germany.”

“ Yes.”

“ All that is plain. Now, then, there are two questions which face us. First, where is she gone? What is her hiding-place? Of course, you asked your wife ? ”

“ She says she is utterly ignorant. She appears in great grief.”

“ I see ; that was just what I expected.”

“ Yes, she vowed and protested that she had no knowledge of where she is gone. She says she knows nothing. That is our great work—to find out where she is gone.”

“ It is our work, yes ; but that is not all. The question behind is more important still.”

“ And that ? ”

“ What is their reason for this ? ”

“ They wish to retain her in the faith. Their first work was, as they would put it, to save her soul. Now they wish to save her from losing it,” and Walter Raymond laughed bitterly.

“ No, no ; that is not enough,” said Harrington ; “ that is not enough. I know a good deal of Brandon, and I tell you it is not enough.”

“ But what can there be besides ? I am still a poor man. It is true things have been better with me lately, but I am still one of the thousands of comparatively unknown London



lawyers. I live in a small house in the neighbourhood of Battersea Park, and that is all."

Ned Harrington did not reply ; instead, he sat smoking quietly for some time. Presently he aroused himself, and said :

"Walter, you began to tell me about a man who paid you a call at your office one day, but you never completed the story. I have forgotten now what hindered you."

Walter Raymond described the incident perfectly. Evidently the man must have impressed him greatly, for nothing seemed to have escaped his memory.

"Have you ever conjectured who this man might be?" asked Harrington.

"Yes ; but I have had no data upon which to go."

"Did he not give his name?"

"Yes ; it was Anthony Ritzoom."

Harrington started.

"Ah!" he said.

"Do you know it?"

"Know it?" said Harrington, in meaning tones.

The young barrister got up and walked around the room.

"It is no use crying over spilt milk, but I wish you had told me of this before."

"But why?"

"Ritzoom is the cleverest man in the Order of Jesuits ; he deals with their most delicate matters. He is not known to the world. He is not renowned as a preacher or anything of that sort. He is simply a wire-puller—a diplomatist. He works in quietness and in secrecy. A man who stops at nothing. In one sense he is the most conscientious man alive ; in another, he is without conscience. He is before all things a Jesuit. To serve his Order he will do all, suffer all. That is where he is conscientious. But let any man oppose him, or oppose his Order, then he is without conscience. He is faithful to the old Jesuit axiom that the end justifies the means."

"He is a priest, then?"

"Yes ; a priest who appears in a score of unpriestly disguises. That is to say, you may find him in a yachting suit one day, in riding breeches another, in flannels another. A man who absorbs information, but never imparts any ; one who knows everything, without being known to any but those who are acquainted with the inner circles of Jesuitism."

"That explains," said Walter Raymond.

“ Explains what? ”

“ Why, on the day when I went to meet Joyce at Dover I passed by the Lord Warden Hotel, and I saw two priests coming out. The one was Brandon ; the other I did not know, and yet his face was familiar to me. I knew I had seen it before, but I could not tell where. It was familiar to me, and yet it was strange. Now I know who it was. It was that man Anthony Ritzoom, who came to see me. Yes, that is the name, Anthony Ritzoom. I should not have remembered it, I expect, but it was an uncommon name, and belonged to an uncommon man. I wish I had told you at the time, but, as you know, every lawyer has a number of queer clients who come to him of whom he thinks it best to say nothing.”

“ Yes, yes ; I understand. Oh, but I wish I had known. I should have been on my guard. And yet one never knows. Anyhow, I know who’s at the bottom of things now.”

“ Does that fact help you? ”

“ In a sense, yes ; but in another, no. It is always well to know the man against whom you have to fight ; but, in another way, it’s terrible news. That man has never been outwitted half a dozen times in his life. He will never confess himself beaten while there’s a shadow of a chance left ; he’s as silent as death, and as secret as the grave. I tell you, Raymond, there’s a big thing on hand, depend upon it. Whenever Ritzoom takes a thing up, you may depend on it there’s a great deal at stake.”

“ How did you come to know so much about him? ”

“ My brother Cecil is a Jesuit.”

“ He told you? ”

“ What I have told you I gathered through conversations with him. As I have told you before, a Jesuit communicates nothing directly. You have to find out.”

“ And have you any idea as to what lies behind? ”

“ I dare not say ; I must think.”

“ One is so handicapped,” said Raymond presently ; “ one cannot place such a matter in the hands of the police.”

“ No.”

“ Nor use a private detective.”

“ No ; at least I am not acquainted with a private detective who would be of any service.”

“ Meanwhile——”

“ Ah, yes, meanwhile,” said Harrington bitterly.

“ You think no harm will happen to her? ”

"No," said Harrington, "I do not believe harm will happen to her—at present. Everything will depend."

"On what?"

"On the course which events take."

"Ned, you have something in your mind which you are afraid to reveal to me."

Harrington was silent for a few seconds.

"Yes, I have, my friend; I have. I am afraid to admit it to myself; I am afraid to think of it as a possibility; that is why I am afraid to mention it to you. No, and I'll not even entertain the thought seriously until I'm perfectly certain."

Again the two men lapsed into silence. They were neither of them hysterical; neither of them, indeed, showed much outward grief; but neither of them felt the less because of the lack of outward manifestation. Either of them was prepared to sacrifice anything in order to bring back Joyce, for both loved her as only strong men can love; but they knew that nothing was gained by unpremeditated action. Neither did one ask what the other was going to do. Each knew when the time came that confidence would not be wanting. Rather, they seemed to be nerving themselves for a great task, preparing themselves for a great battle.

The thought that Joyce had gone away willingly did not cross their minds. Both had looked too deeply into her heart for that. This healthy, happy child, who loved the air and the sunshine, who loved her father with a child's affection, and who loved the man to whom she had plighted her troth in a way which no woman can love but once, would never have left them save under circumstances which meant that some kind of force had been brought to bear. And it was not force of body that they feared; it was another force, more subtle and more dangerous.

Moreover, neither doubted but that the priests were at the bottom of the trouble. Ever since they had entered Raymond's house a dark shadow had fallen upon his life. His family had been alienated from him. His wife was no longer a wife; his children had been led to look upon him as a kind of pariah, one who was an enemy to their soul's salvation. They seemed to think it their duty to deceive him, to treat him as a stranger. Only Joyce had continued to love him with the old love, and she had been taken away from him.

"It's no use going home and asking further questions," said Raymond.

“Not a bit.”

“These men will have weighed my wife in the balances.”

“Yes.”

“Of course, the children will know nothing.”

“Nothing. Still, we must pay attention to that quarter, but it will come to nothing.”

“And I say, Ned, the world must not hear of this.”

“No.”

“They must not know that she was inveigled into becoming a Romanist, or that she has gone away.”

“True.”

And here these two men made their first great mistake. It was a natural one, for neither father nor lover desired their affairs to be talked about. Both of them naturally shrunk from newspaper controversy and irresponsible gossip. It was something that they must lock up in their own hearts.

“If the world thinks she’s gone to Germany to a Moravian school I shall do nothing to undeceive the world,” said Raymond.

“No,” replied Harrington quietly; “and we may be sure that the priests will say nothing. But what about your other children, Raymond?”

“They were out visiting some friends yesterday afternoon,” replied Walter; “they did not get back till late, and nothing was said to them.”

“Your wife knows something, Walter. I was mistaken. She may not know much, but she knows something.”

“Why?”

“Was it only a coincidence, or was it planned that they should go away yesterday? Yes, she will know something, but only as much as we are sure of. What’s the time?”

“It’s nearly eight o’clock.”

Harrington rose to his feet again.

“Let us walk to your house, Walter,” he said.

Walter Raymond asked no question as to why Harrington had come to this sudden determination. Perhaps, although he was not a brilliant man, he read what was in the other’s mind.

As they came through Battersea Park they heard the sound of voices, and both men hastily turned into a side walk.

“It was jolly funny Joyce going away without seeing Ned, wasn’t it?” they heard Walter say.

“Oh, I expect he’ll meet her somewhere on the way; dad will have told him,” replied Rachel.

“ Still, it was funny.”

That was all they heard, but they saw Raymond's three children in holiday attire, accompanied by the children of the Diltons, and a rather austere looking lady. Evidently they were going away for the day.

Raymond and Harrington looked at each other, but neither spoke. They were only a few minutes' walk from Raymond's house, and they walked on as though nothing had happened.

“ I wonder if Lucy will be down yet,” said Raymond.

“ Oh, yes, she'll be down right enough,” replied Harrington.

Raymond let himself in quietly, and led the way into the little dining-room. Mrs. Raymond was quietly eating her breakfast alone.

“ Oh, Walter,” she said, “ have you heard anything about Joyce? ”

“ No, not yet,” replied Raymond quietly.

“ The children think she's gone to Germany to school,” she said almost hysterically. “ I thought it best to say nothing.”

“ Yes, I know.”

“ How do you know? ”

“ That does not matter. Lucy, I had no chance of saying much to you last night; besides, my mind was too unsettled to think very clearly. Now, however, we must have a clear understanding.”

She became very pale, but a sullen, determined expression came into her eyes.

“ What understanding? ” she asked.

“ I must know all you know concerning Joyce's disappearance.”

She opened her lips to speak, but as she saw Ned Harrington's keen, searching eyes upon her, she closed her lips without speaking a word.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FATHER AND THE PRIEST.

WALTER RAYMOND waited a minute, and then went on quietly.

"We know what influences have been at work. We know that Joyce would never have left without terrible pressure having been brought to bear upon her. A week ago she and Ned were a pair of happy lovers; a week ago the thought of going away never came into her mind. While he has been away I also have been very busy, and have spent very little time at home. Last night you told me you had no idea where she was."

"I told you the truth," she said stubbornly; "I did not know; I do not know; I have not a shadow of an idea where she has gone."

"But you knew she was going."

It was Harrington who spoke, and both saw that his words were true. She flushed painfully, and then became pale. But she evidently felt she had her part to play.

"I refuse to speak to you about the matter, Mr. Harrington," she said. "I refuse to recognise your right to interfere. I never gave my consent to your visiting here, still less did I consent to your becoming engaged to Joyce."

"You will have to speak to him if this affair figures in a court of law," said Raymond. "But that is not the point just now. Harrington spoke the truth. You knew she was going away."

At this Mrs. Raymond was silent.

"It grieves me to take this course, Lucy," said Walter Raymond. "I remember, of course, the attitude you have adopted towards me since you have been under the dominion of the priests. Nevertheless, I am sorry, for the sake of the happy years we once spent together. We were poor then—much poorer than we are now; but we were all in all to each other, Lucy, you, and I, and the children. However, you have elected to treat me—well, as you have treated me, and we will let that pass. But I am not going to allow my Joyce to pass out of my life. You knew she was going away. How long have you known?"

“ I refuse to tell you.”

“ The priests forbade you? ”

She sat with tightly compressed lips.

“ How often has Brandon been here since I forbade him to come? ”

Still no answer.

“ When was Father Ritzoom here last? ”

She gave a quick, frightened start. Whether he had been to the house or no, both men knew that she had seen him, and that she was afraid of him.

“ You were asked to encourage her to leave home—you, her mother; you, who should protect her.”

The words stung her.

“ I would rather see her dead than to go to that Protestant school in Germany, and—and lose her soul,” she snapped. “ I would rather see her in her coffin than be the wife of—of—him,” looking towards Harrington.

She said the last words through her set teeth.

A woman can always be made to divulge a secret more quickly than a man, because she has less control over her prejudices and her hatreds. The woman hated Harrington, and in her spite she admitted what otherwise she would have kept secret. They knew all she could tell them now. There was no need for her to admit in so many words that the priests had persuaded or commanded her to help them to do that which she believed would save her daughter's soul.

“ There is another thing, Lucy,” went on Walter Raymond quietly; but before he could say another word she rose and walked towards the door.

“ I will not stay with you, and I will not say another word,” she cried passionately. “ You are both of you enemies of God and of religion. I am glad she is out of the reach of your influence, and even if I knew where she was I would never let you know, for she is safe from those who would destroy her soul.”

Ned Harrington looked towards his friend sympathetically. It grieved him to see the strained relations between husband and wife; all the more because he knew the history of their alienation. The priest had entered the home, and in the name of religion he had set wife against husband, children against their father. The story was no new one. It had happened again and again all over the land. Moreover, as Ned Harrington saw the drawn, haggard face, and

the quivering lips of his friend, a great anger came into his heart.

"The priests' hand is very plainly to be seen, Walter," he said quietly.

Walter Raymond made some very strong remarks on the ancestry of these gentlemen.

"Still, the conversation has cleared the ground, Walter," he said. "We are now sure of two or three things. That man Ritzoom is in it, and your wife has also been a party to the business. Of course, it was their policy not to let her know where she has gone; nevertheless, she was their tool."

"Yes, she was their tool."

Upstairs, Mrs. Raymond was sobbing. Both men heard her, but Walter Raymond did not go to her. Time was when he would have rushed to her side when he saw her in sorrow; but that time was gone. Slowly she was crushing all feelings of love in her husband's heart. For her he had sacrificed home and wealth; for her he had toiled and suffered, and he had been glad to do it. She had never been a companion to him in the full sense of the word, but that he had not considered. He had sacrificed everything for her, and had rejoiced in the sacrifice. But now their interests and hopes were divided; all confidence was gone, all comradeship was gone. Love was fast dying, and all this had come to pass in the name of religion.

"One thing still baffles me," said Walter Raymond. "I cannot understand why these fellows allowed Joyce to become engaged to you. I wonder why they did not forbid her speaking to you."

"That is plain to me," said Harrington. "They knew that by allowing her to go, what they would term, deeper and deeper into sin, the stronger would be their hold upon her. To them I am a sort of anti-Christ, only fit for kindling wood for the nether regions. They would, therefore, make her feel that there could be no greater danger—indeed, no greater crime—than to become engaged to me. The fact of her love for me would be used as their strongest argument to persuade her to leave home. You see, from their standpoint, Joyce has two great enemies—you and me. You would take her to a heretic school, and thus endanger her soul, while I should marry her on her return from school, which to them would be a greater crime still. They would tell her, therefore, that it was her duty to oppose us both, and that her only chance to obtain forgiveness for past sins, and to obtain



security for the future, would be to place herself under their care, and thus escape from us both."

"Yes, I expect you are right."

"I am pretty sure I am. I have talked with my brother Cecil, and I know several of these fellows. But that does not get to the bottom of it."

"No?"

"No; fanatical though they may be, they would not place themselves in such a position to save a soul. Ritzoom is mixed up with the business, and he is not the man to mix himself up with anything unless great stakes are being played for."

"But what can they be?"

"As I told you, I am afraid to entertain my own suspicions. Walter, I must leave you now."

"Yes," said Raymond, "I can see that. We must have an interview with Ritzoom. You are going to find out where he is?"

Harrington looked towards Raymond with admiration. He had done his friend an injustice; he was a cleverer man than he thought.

"Exactly," he said quietly. "As for you, I presume you will go to your office as usual."

"Yes," said Raymond. "It is no use going to Brandon. He is but the tool of the other man."

"That is all. Moreover, I doubt whether even he has any knowledge of Ritzoom's plans. Of course, he will know something of what appears on the surface, but of those things which lie at the back of Ritzoom's brains he will know nothing."

"What time shall I see you this evening?"

"I will call at your office about five o'clock and report progress."

"He will be in London, I think."

"Yes, he will be in London. It will be impolitic for him to leave just now."

The two men separated, Walter Raymond after making some inquiries near his house to go to his office in London, Harrington to carry out the plans which had been born in his mind.

Thus it came about that Joyce Raymond's strange departure was unknown to all save those most deeply interested. Mrs. Raymond made believe that she had gone to Germany to a Protestant school; the children echoed those beliefs. The

priests said nothing ; neither did Walter Raymond nor Harrington. Thus there were no paragraphs in the papers about a "missing young lady." The reporters for the Press who are always so eager for such news knew nothing. There was nothing of note in the fact that a young English girl had gone to a Protestant school in Germany, and so no one gossiped about it. Nevertheless, there was a paragraph in one of the Protestant papers which neither Harrington nor Raymond saw. It was to the effect that, although great pressure had been brought to bear on Miss Joyce Raymond, who had for a year been to a convent school in Belgium, to join the Romanist Church, that young lady, true to the Protestant traditions of her name, had refused to yield to the demands of that Church and had elected to go to a Moravian school in Germany.

The Protestant paper in question was an insignificant production, and was read by but few save those persons to whom its owner sent it. No other newspaper copied from it, and its statements carried no great weight. One of the readers of this paper, however, was old Mr. Walter Raymond, the grandfather of Joyce. Moreover, the paragraph was blue pencilled, so that he could not fail to see it.

Old Walter Raymond read the paragraph several times with a pleased look on his face.

"Splendid," he said again and again. "I suppose the minx of a mother and the other children are out-and-out Papists ; but Joyce has elected to stand by the truth. I wonder what my wife would have said if she had been alive to see this?"

And then he heaved a deep sigh, for Walter Raymond was a lonely man, and longed for someone to cheer him in his old age.

"I'll wait till she's finished her schooling days," he said presently, "and then I'll approach Walter, and perhaps—perhaps—who knows?—I may be reconciled to my boy before I die, and have Joyce to come and live with me. But I'll never leave Walter a penny—no, not a penny. I vowed I never would, and I will not."

On the evening of the day when Walter Raymond had met Harrington at Paddington Station, the former sat in his office alone. The clerks had gone, and business had ceased for the day, but Walter Raymond remained.

He looked at his watch somewhat impatiently. It was after six o'clock.

“ I expect Ned has had a harder job than he imagined,” he said to himself. “ If Ritzoom is the man he says he is, his movements will be secret, and therefore he will find it difficult to lay hands on him. But it will be all right, Ned will do it.”

Walter Raymond had worked all through the day in a mechanical sort of way. He had been able to give but half his attention to his business, for all the time his mind had been full of Joyce. He did not fear that harm had befallen her in the ordinary way; nevertheless his heart was heavy with a great terror. Should he ever see his child again? He knew it was no use taking the ordinary means of finding her. The priests would see to it that she left secretly. They would have, if needs be, a hundred disguises whereby her identity could be hidden. Besides, she had left home several hours before he knew of her departure. In that time she could have gone hundreds of miles. Who would notice, among the tens of thousands of travellers who leave the great London termini every day, a girl like Joyce? It is true he had made certain investigations that morning after Harrington had left him, but they had ended in nothing. No, if she were to be found, it must be by the means which his friend had adopted, and he longed with a great longing to meet the man Ritzoom again.

At length he heard a quick, decided footstep on the stairs, and a few seconds later Harrington entered. The young barrister was very pale, and his face was drawn and haggard; evidently the trouble which weighed upon his life was telling on him. He was very calm and quiet, however, and his features were set and stern.

“ Are you ready, Raymond? ” he asked quietly.

“ Quite.”

“ I have a cab at the door. We can talk on our journey.”

“ Are we going far? ”

“ No; only to the Cosmopolitan Hotel.”

“ He is there, is he? ”

“ Yes.”

The two men got into the cab, which rolled westward.

“ Did you have much difficulty in finding where he was? ”

“ Yes; he has kept his movements secret. Still, I have found him. He leaves Charing Cross by the nine o'clock train for Ostend to-night.”

Raymond did not ask by what means Harrington had discovered this; there was no purpose to be served in knowing.

"He does himself very well," said Harrington presently. "He has a suite of rooms at the Cosmopolitan. Really, for a Jesuit who has taken the vow of poverty, he does everything handsomely."

"As I remember him, he is not a man who fasts overmuch," replied Raymond.

"Dispensations are wonderful arrangements," replied Harrington. "They save a lot of trouble."

"You have, of course, arranged your mode of entrance?"

"I have arranged everything satisfactorily, I think. I should not be surprised if our presence startles him."

"I shall leave most of the talking to you."

"You must judge for yourself. You are Joyce's father, but of course the visit may end in nothing. But it is a necessary preliminary step."

The cab drew up before the hotel, and a few seconds later a waiter led the way along a thickly carpeted corridor.

"Yes."

This was in answer to a knock at the door of a room at the end of the corridor. The waiter opened the door, and said, "Two gentlemen to see you, sir." With this he departed quickly, as though glad to get away. Walter Raymond and Ned Harrington were looking steadily towards Father Ritzoom, who sat in an easy chair, smoking a cigar.

For a moment he looked somewhat disconcerted, while an angry flush swept over his face; but only for a moment. He rose with a bland smile.

"To what am I indebted for the pleasure of your visit, gentlemen?" he asked.

Ritzoom was clothed in strictly clerical attire. At that moment he looked like some well-to-do rector of a rich country parish. The smile did not leave his face, as he waited for their reply, neither did he betray even by a movement of an eyelid the fact that he suspected who they were. His surprise and annoyance were only momentary, and his command over himself was remarkable. Nevertheless, he seemed to measure both of them at a glance, and the pupils of his eyes seemed to contract as he noted the quiet, yet determined, demeanour of the two men. He knew he had no blustering, excitable clowns to deal with, but men who were keen, and watchful, and wary. He wondered whether Walter Raymond remembered him or no, and he called to mind the quiet persistence of the lawyer on the only other occasion on which they had met.



“TO WHAT AM I INDEBTED FOR THE PLEASURE OF YOUR  
VISIT, GENTLEMEN?”

(p. 170.)



"I am given to understand that you have a great deal of influence at a convent called 'The Sacred Heart,'" said Harrington, blandly.

"It is possible," said Ritzoom quietly. "At least, I had some years ago. I have ceased during the last few years to take a direct interest in it. But excuse me, gentlemen, it is difficult to converse when one has not the advantage of knowing names."

"Yes," replied Harrington. "As a general statement, I think it is fairly correct. But I was under the impression that it might not apply in the present instance."

"But why?" asked Ritzoom, still with the same bland smile.

"I am supposed to have a very strong likeness to my brother Cecil," said Harrington quietly. "Besides, I have not changed in appearance since he pointed me out to you. As for my friend here, I am given to understand that you visited him as a would-be client some time ago. And you have the reputation of possessing a specially good memory for faces."

It was an open declaration of war, but Ritzoom did not seem to notice it.

"You see, you came in so suddenly," he said with a laugh; "so suddenly that one might have supposed you had an understanding with the waiter."

"I had."

Still Ritzoom kept on smiling, although a strange gleam shot from his deep, unfathomable eyes.

"There was no need, I assure you, gentlemen. I am always easily to be found by my friends. I am always ready to be consulted on such matters as fall within my domain."

"Ah, then we have done right in coming to see you. We wish to consult you on a matter which certainly falls within your domain. My friend here wishes to ask you a question."

"Any question I am able to answer shall be answered willingly," said Ritzoom.

"I wish to know, then, what you have done with my daughter, Joyce," said Walter Raymond.

"I presume this is a bit of pleasantry," said the priest, still smiling.

"Anything but that. I am in deadly earnest."

By this time the Jesuit had not only measured his men, but he had weighed the circumstances. He was a man who

came to conclusions quickly, and he was seldom wrong. He saw the haggard, anxious face of Walter Raymond, saw the despairing yet determined look in his eyes, he noted the quiet strength and the self-suppression in every movement of his body, in every sound of his voice. But if he had had only Walter Raymond to deal with he would not have been afraid. It is true the lawyer was intelligent, dogged, persistent; but he did not possess a mind of the first order. It was true, too, that he was the father of the girl who was lost to him; but Ritzoom had dealt with such before. He felt that his great battle would be with Harrington. He had heard of him as a deadly cross-questioner, a brilliant advocate, and as a man who riddled every case he took in hand. He did not like his cool daring; he came very near to fearing the man, who was the lover of a girl he had lost, and yet who could wear an easy smile and a perfectly calm demeanour.

"I think I grasp the situation, although your information has been anything but copious or minute," he said. "I take it that this gentleman's daughter—Joyce, did you call her?—has left home, and that he has some idea that I am cognisant of her whereabouts. Is that a correct statement of the case?"

"Yes," said Walter Raymond.

Ritzoom still continued to smile, but otherwise not a muscle of his face moved. He kept his eyes upon Walter Raymond, as though he were the principal party concerned.

"I quite understand, Mr. Raymond," he went on. "It is true that as a priest I am debarred from the privilege of having children of my own. At the same time, I think I understand a father's feelings. Of course, it is naturally a mystery why you should come to me, but all the same I shall be glad to help you if it is in my power."

"Then you will kindly tell me where my daughter is," said Walter Raymond.

The priest spread out his hands like one in dismay.

"Really, Mr. Raymond, I must ask for some information before I can render any assistance. This gentleman asked just now for information concerning the Home of the Sacred Heart. Am I to understand that your daughter has been there, and has, unknown to you, left it? If so, any service I can render in tracing her shall be at your service. As I told you, however, my connection with that institution has largely ceased, and therefore I cannot do much."



Walter Raymond noted the smile on the Jesuit's face, and his heart burnt with anger.

"Am I to understand that you refuse to give me the information I seek?" he asked, quietly.

"On the other hand, have I not just placed my poor services at your disposal?"

"I wish to ask a plain question," said Walter Raymond. "Do you, or do you not, know where my daughter is?"

"Does not your question take a great deal for granted, sir?" said Ritzoom. "Does it not take for granted that you have a right to ask me, an entire stranger, a question which any man in my position would refuse to answer? Does it not also assume that I am in some way connected with your daughter's—what shall we call it—absence? Really—well, I am led to suppose that a change has come over the—what shall we call it?—the formalities of English courts of justice."

He still spoke in a suave, bland manner, his lips parted by a smile, his voice quiet and calm. Nevertheless, Harrington saw a cold, cruel gleam in his eyes, which did not accord with his manner of speech.

So far he had had the best of the conversation, and Raymond was angry with himself for not having kept to his determination and allowed Harrington to do the talking, and yet, as he felt afterwards, it seemed that Ritzoom had compelled him to speak, in spite of himself.

Nevertheless, the next words were spoken by Ned Harrington.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LOVER AND THE JESUIT.

“ I THINK you are quite right, Father Ritzoom,” said the young barrister quietly ; “ nevertheless, as one whose profession it is to help the distressed, I am sure you will forgive my friend for putting his question so bluntly. But here is the truth. Mr. Raymond’s daughter has been at a school in Bruges—a school with which you are connected. While there she became a convert to your faith. But this you will doubtless know? ”

He waited for a reply, which the priest hesitated to give.

“ It is probably as you say, Mr. Harrington,” he said presently ; “ and please forgive my not recognising you when you came in so suddenly just now. Of course, young girls going from Protestant homes—I presume Mr. Raymond is a Protestant—naturally embrace the truth when it is presented to them.”

“ Be that as it may, she joined your communion without her father’s knowledge.”

“ That is lamentable,” said the priest. “ Mr. Raymond should have been informed, of course. That matter must be inquired into.”

“ On her return home a few weeks ago, her father decided to send her to another school—a Moravian school in Germany. This, of course, you also know, as well as the fact that she promised to be my wife.”

“ This is very interesting, Mr. Harrington ; very interesting. But pray how was such a matter as this to come to my knowledge? ”

“ I spent an hour or so with my brother Cecil to-day,” said Harrington quietly.

For the first time the Jesuit changed colour. Instinctively he felt that in dealing with Harrington he was not dealing with a man who used such blunt weapons as Walter Raymond.

“ Well, here comes our difficulty,” went on Harrington, apparently not noticing the changed look on the Jesuit’s

face. "Yesterday Miss Joyce Raymond left home, without letting even her father or myself know where she had gone."

"Ah! I presume she was unhappy at home."

"Far from it," replied Harrington. "She was very happy."

"Strange—strange," said Ritzoom, like one musing. "But young girls have curious fancies. But did she leave no letter—no message of any sort? I ask this," he added quickly, "because sometimes circumstances occur in a girl's life which may lead to some sudden act, but which may be easily explained afterwards."

There was not a suggestion of irritability in his manner. He might have been a lawyer to whom clients had come for advice, and who was trying to understand the whole case before offering an opinion.

"Yes," said Harrington, "she left letters for her father and myself. In her father's letter she said she was a child of your Church, and gave that as a reason for leaving home."

"It is very sad when families are not united in religion," replied Ritzoom; "very sad. But what would you, gentlemen? If she found the truth, she must be true to it. Of course, this doubtless seems brutal to you; but to a priest of the Church it is easily explained. From what I can gather, your daughter, Mr. Raymond, felt that she must save her soul, even although she sacrificed her home. As a man of conscience, do you not feel this?"

He addressed himself to Walter, as if he were the questioner, and not Harrington.

"I have no doubt you have stated your side of the case correctly," said Harrington; "still, that does not explain everything. She had become engaged to me, and yet, while I was away in the West of England, she took this step."

"Excuse me," said Ritzoom, with a laugh. "I am afraid I know very little about the relations between lovers. But cannot this be explained? Just think, Mr. Raymond. Is it not natural that during Mr. Harrington's absence the claims of conscience had to be dealt with?"

"That depends," said Harrington, not giving Raymond time to answer.

"On what, my dear sir?"

"On what outside influence was brought to bear."

"Ah, yes; doubtless you are right; but I am sure you will see that I am rather out of my element in an affair like this—and I am a busy man."

In this Ritzoom rather overstepped the mark. In the game of fencing at which they were playing, it gave Harrington his first chance of touching his antagonist.

"Yes; I know you are a busy man," he replied. "It has often been a mystery to me how you have the time to engage in matters so numerous and so varied. I should hardly have thought you would find time to become confessor to a school-girl."

Evidently Ritzoom's mind worked quickly. His eye flashed dangerously for a moment, but he went on quietly:

"Of course, years ago a great deal of work of this nature fell to my lot; but it is not a matter to be talked about. The Confessional is secret, Mr. Harrington. We cannot deal with cases as you deal with them in the law courts."

"No," said Harrington; "the reporters are always present with us. It is the business of lawyers to bring truth to the light."

"Yes, yes," said Ritzoom, parrying the thrust; "but do you think, Mr. Harrington, that the ends of justice are really served by making everything public? It is a debatable question, I know. Why should the world know of all the doings of individuals with whom it has no concern?"

He evidently intended to divert Harrington from the path he intended to tread; but the lawyer replied quietly:

"The criminal is afraid of public opinion, Father Ritzoom—that is why."

"Ah," said Ritzoom with a laugh. "I do not know the particular nature of your work, but men who practise at the criminal bar are prone to take a sordid view of matters. They attribute all matters which are secret to crime, not always realising that the sensitive mind loathes publicity."

The Jesuit was getting his way. He was leading the conversation into generalities, and thus into less dangerous ground. Moreover, he knew that in matters of cut and parry he could hold his own with any man.

"No doubt there is much in what you say," said Harrington; "but to come back from generalities to the case in question. As Joyce Raymond's confessor, she will naturally have told you what her intentions were."

"I have never yet abused my office as confessor," said Ritzoom. "It is a very solemn matter with us, Mr. Harrington. As a priest I should no more think of betraying what took place at confession than you would think of betraying the confidence of a client."

“Nor of making known the penances which you imposed?”

“Think of a priest’s position, and remember——”

“Not when that penance meant a young girl leaving her father’s house?”

He had pricked the priest deeply at last, and for a moment Ritzoom was thrown off his guard.

“You are making a serious accusation, Mr. Harrington,” he said.

“Never since I have been in practice have I ever been known to make an accusation without being in a position to substantiate it,” he said. “That is why we have come to you.”

The Jesuit lifted his head, and for a moment the two men’s eyes met. “How much does he know?” said the man of the Church to himself, and he felt that the time had come for him to change his tactics.

“It is little I know of the English bar, Mr. Harrington,” he said, “but I have been told that you follow a method which, while momentarily successful, is not held in high esteem by those who have the dignity of their profession at heart. You assume a certain number of things which you think will prove your case, and then try to make your witnesses give evidence in favour of these things.”

“I never assume anything,” said Harrington. “It has always been my endeavour to bring truth to light. Moreover, I have often succeeded.”

“Of course, your witnesses have had to take an oath to give evidence.”

“Naturally.”

“Ah!” said Ritzoom.

“There are things which compel witnesses to speak the whole truth, other than an oath before a judge,” said Harrington.

“What, may I ask? It would be interesting to know.”

“Fear of publicity.”

“But when one has no fear of publicity?”

“When one has no fear of publicity, then one has done nothing which he desires to hide.”

“Pardon me, I do not think you are right.”

“No?”

“No; as a matter of debatable interest, I do not think you are right. When one is absolutely certain that what he has done cannot be brought to light, he has no fear.”

He no longer used the subterfuge of ignorance. He felt, after a few minutes' conversation, that Harrington was not a man to come to him lightly, neither would he come without a case.

"There is another factor which I am surprised that a man of your profession should have forgotten," said the barrister.

"And that?"

"Conscience."

"Oh, no; I had not forgotten. When a man's conscience approves of what he has done, then there is calm. Of course, we are considering a case in the abstract."

So far no ground had been gained. Neither Raymond, by his plain blunt questions, nor Harrington, by his more guarded insinuations, had extracted anything from Ritzoom of which they were not certain before.

"Of course, I need not urge that, acting upon the advice of her confessor, Joyce Raymond has left her father's house."

"I should say that you would have infinite difficulty in proving it," replied the priest.

"Being a minor, the law is on her father's side. In the eyes of the English law, he has full control over her actions. You will see that he has a case to go before the courts. He could demand that the place of residence be made known."

"And then?"

"It would become known."

The priest smiled blandly.

"You do not think so?"

"I am only a plain man, Mr. Harrington. I am not versed in the intricacies of the law. No counsel would refer to me as 'my learned friend,' " and he imitated the manner of a popular advocate. "I am only an obscure and humble priest, trying to save people's souls; but I should say this: before any court would give you a hearing, you would have to give some substantial evidence which would go to prove that this said priest not simply advised her, but used some compulsion to get her away from her father's home. I say you would have to prove this. Even your English law cannot compel a priest to divulge the secrets of the Confessional. You would also have to prove that the priest was cognisant of her whereabouts. To a poor layman's eyes you would have no case, Mr. Harrington. Even if you had, that priest can be utterly ignorant of the place where she resides."

"He can be?"

"I repeat, he *can* be."

"He can also be made to divulge it."

"Under what compulsion?"

"The compulsion of facts."

"What facts?"

"Facts that can be adduced."

The Jesuit hesitated a moment, as if he were in doubt as to the course he should pursue. Should it be a course of silence, or of speech? He chose the latter.

"Family histories, however humdrum, are very painful when reported in the newspapers, Mr. Harrington. Moreover, when lovers are advocates—well, the public has a curious way of laughing. Then there is the question of proofs. They are so illusive, aren't they? To prove that a certain priest advised a penitent to go away from surroundings inimical to the faith, that is scarcely criminal, is it? And even if it were, it is exceedingly difficult. Then, go further; to prove that this same priest decoyed her to some place he knows of—ah, that would be more difficult still."

"Still, the father has a right to know his daughter's whereabouts."

"He has the right to try and find out, undoubtedly."

"And when he finds out?"

"Ah, that is an assumption."

"An assumption which can become an actuality."

The Jesuit smiled confidently.

"An assumption which can become an actuality," repeated Harrington quietly.

"Do you know," said Ritzoom pleasantly, "that your conversation is very interesting? I have always maintained that education, that is, primarily, is looking at life through the eyes of other men. Now naturally I look at life through the eyes of a priest; it therefore becomes very refreshing to look at it through the eyes of a lawyer. Let us assume for a moment that your accusation is true—only for argument's sake, of course. Well, here is a priest who, you say, has advised the daughter of a Protestant father to go to some place of hiding. The daughter, desirous of saving her soul, follows his advice. The father sets out to find her. Now, as one who has practised in criminal law, what steps would you advise the father to take?"

"The first step," said Ned Harrington, watching the priest closely, "would be to find out to what convent he has taken her."

“ And then? ” said the Jesuit.

“ Then the rest would be plain.”

“ Pardon me if I do not agree with you. You see, Mr. Harrington, even the English law, Protestant country as England is, recognises the sacred rights of a Catholic institution. Even in the case of a laundry—think of it, Mr. Harrington—in the case of a laundry, a humdrum place where clothes are washed and ironed, if that laundry is a Catholic institution, no one has the right of entrance. And this applies not only to a layman, to a man having no official standing, but even a Government inspector has no right of entrance. I daresay you have noticed the discussions in the House of Commons, Mr. Harrington. Interesting, were they not? But it was those awful Irishmen again, and the few English Catholics. But, you see, your Prime Minister shelved the question. Protestant country as you profess to be, he feared the Catholics, and as a consequence——” The priest shrugged his shoulders expressively.

“ Nevertheless, convents have been known to reveal secrets, Father Ritzoom.”

“ Ah, that introduces another question, Mr. Harrington. Have you observed how little notice has been taken of the stories of runaway nuns? You see, these nuns generally get married, or get mixed up in some unsavoury incident, and then—hey presto! But your Protestant public grows very charitable towards the poor, misrepresented Catholics.”

Father Ritzoom laughed quietly as he spoke.

“ Not always,” said Harrington, still watching the priest steadily.

“ No? ” said Ritzoom. “ It would be interesting to know of exceptions.”

“ Those cases on the Continent, especially the notorious case in the South of France.”

“ The Continent—ah! ” And again the priest shrugged his shoulders.

“ Yes, the Continent,” went on Harrington. “ There, in those Catholic countries, you have the fewest rights.”

“ Ah, but do you not boast that England is the home of the free, the land of liberty? It is a very awkward thing to have a reputation to live up to.”

Harrington pressed this point no further. He felt sure he had gained the knowledge he desired.

He rose to go, while a look of relief came into Ritzoom's eyes.



“ Naturally, it would not apply in this case,” said Harrington, as though a thought struck him suddenly. “ But I put it to you as a general principle. Suppose—I say, only suppose, for in this case it is out of the question—but suppose that the question of money came up in connection with such a case as we have been discussing? ”

Harrington’s eyes were very keen as he spoke, but he did not see a muscle of Ritzoom’s face move. The young barrister, however, was sure that a faint tinge of red coloured his cheek.

“ These things do not trouble me,” said Ritzoom; “ they are out of my beat, somewhat. But in such a case the Church can always show a pair of clean hands.”

He rose as he spoke, a sardonic smile still playing around his lips.

“ I am sorry I cannot help you, gentlemen,” he said, “ and you have my deepest sympathy. My own opinion—I do not say it is worth much—but my own opinion is that in such a case as you have represented you are practically helpless. You see, everything rests on assumption—everything.”

“ Oh, no, not everything,” replied Ned Harrington. “ As I told you, I never take up a case on assumption, and I always keeps my master cards until my opponent has led his strong suit. Some people say it is bad play, but I find that it works out very well. Pray forgive us for occupying so much of your valuable time.”

Neither of the men held out his hand, but the priest walked to the door and opened it.

“ I assure you, gentlemen, that you have my sincerest sympathy. Good-evening.”

“ Good-evening,” said Harrington. “ A pleasant voyage to you, Father Ritzoom. It’s not far from Dover to Ostend; still I have known some nasty passages. But doubtless you are a good sailor, and it looks as though it would be a fine night. At the same time, one can never tell. Sudden squalls often spring up at this time of the year.”

The priest bowed gravely, and the two men passed out. When the sound of their footsteps died away he went back to his armchair and lit a fresh cigar. Ritzoom could always think best when he was smoking.

“ How did he know I was going to Ostend to-night? ” he said to himself. “ And what will he deduce from it? ”

He looked at his watch. He still had plenty of time, but he went to the next room and began to examine his baggage

as if he were impatient. Then he came back to the sitting-room again.

"A lawyer and a lover," he said. "It is a strong combination. Besides, he is one of those quiet, self-restrained fellows. An Italian or a Russian would have conducted the case differently. There would have been more shrugging of shoulders, more innuendo, but there would be less danger. He is a man who never gets into a passion, and he hides a great deal. I wonder how much; but he has got nothing from me which he did not know before. But for his brother he would have known nothing. Still, it is, perhaps, best as it is. Apparent openness and frankness always looks well. Yes; it is a difficult case, and the piloting must be skilfully done. But it must be won—we cannot afford to lose it. There are many reasons why we cannot afford to lose it."

He sat for some time smoking and thinking. To judge from his face, he was not easy in his mind; on more than one occasion he bit the end of his cigar rather savagely, and once he clenched his fist as if in anger.

Again he looked at his watch.

"He is a minute past his time," he said, "and I must leave in ten minutes." He rung the bell.

"I shall want a cab to be at the door in five minutes from now," he said to the man who came.

"Very well, sir."

"No one has called since those two gentlemen left?"

"What two gentlemen, sir? I did not know of any. No one has called to my knowledge, sir."

"Thank you; that is all. Stay—you can send the porter for my baggage."

"Yes, sir."

A minute later Father Brandon entered, but Ritzoom scarcely spoke to him. When they got into the cab, however, he said, quietly:

"Well?"

"That is the word."

"The postulant made a strong appeal for admission?"

"Naturally."

"I have only one word of advice, Brandon, before I drop you where the traffic is thickest."

"I thought I was going to the station with you."

"There is no need. There is only one word of advice I have to give you, and it is literally one word. Nay, it is a command, and it must be obeyed implicitly—absolutely."

“ Yes ; what is it ? ”

“ Silence.”

Father Brandon bowed his head. The cab shot into Pall Mall, where there was much traffic. Ritzoom motioned the cabman to stop.

“ Get out here. Good-night.”

“ When shall I hear from you again ? ”

“ When ? When there is need.”

The cab drove on, leaving Brandon on the pavement with an angry look on his face.

“ Something has gone wrong with him,” said Father Brandon. “ What, I wonder ? ”

Meanwhile, Harrington and Raymond walked westward. After they had left Ritzoom’s room they had sat sipping tea for some time in the vestibule of the hotel. They were seated behind a pillar, but in such a position that, while they were hidden, they could see everyone who came to and went from the hotel. Harrington was very particular in choosing his place. While they had sat there, they had exchanged scarcely a word.

“ We have made very little headway,” said Raymond as they walked westward.

“ But we have made some,” said Harrington.

“ What ? ”

“ Wait until we get to my rooms,” said the other. “ I can tell you there.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ AN ENGLISH CONVENT IS A SEALED HOUSE.”

“ THERE was very little got out of him.”

“ I did not expect much. At first I was in doubt as to whether we should go to him, but I came to the conclusion that it would be better. I am glad we did.”

“ But have we not put him on his guard? He knows now what our views are.”

“ He knew them before we went. Even if he did not, he would have suspected, and acted accordingly. No, there is nothing lost in that direction. Throughout the day I have been making minute inquiries about Ritzoom, and all my discoveries have confirmed previous information and impressions. For the last twenty years he has devoted his life to what are called ‘ delicate questions ’; if a young heiress has had to be converted, or a member of Parliament led to see the Catholic view of things, Ritzoom has been the man chosen for the work. If there has been a question of an influential Protestant marrying a Romanist, Ritzoom has invariably represented Catholic interests. Moreover, it has generally come about that either the Protestant has become a Catholic, or that all settlements have been in favour of the side Ritzoom has represented. He is a man of infinite resource. His name never figures in the papers. He never makes speeches for the Catholic Truth Society; he works in secret, and he works with marvellous effect. As a rule, there are large interests at stake when Ritzoom interests himself. He is regarded as a deadly opponent because he prepares himself for every contingency. Of course, he has been known to fail, but only rarely. Oh, there is not the slightest doubt but that he had considered the possibility of our associating him with the business.”

“ You feel sure he has been associated with it? I thought he was trying to throw us off the track.”

“ I should say his connection with the matter is of such a nature that it will be exceedingly difficult to trace it to him; but his is the mind behind everything. As I told you, he

works in secret. He pulls the strings, and his puppets move."

"All the same, it seems to me we have made very little headway."

"And, as I said, we have made some."

Harrington and Raymond were sitting in the former's rooms. They had walked thither almost in silence, but now they spoke freely.

"What headway have we made, Ned?"

"We have located the position of Joyce's hiding-place."

"What!"

"No, do not build your hopes too high. It is not much we have done. You know that game we played at your house on the night Joyce came home from school? One thought of something, and the others had to find out what it was. You see, the whole business lay in narrowing the ground of inquiry. First, was it animal, vegetable, or mineral? Then, where did it exist? And so on. You know the process. Well, I went on that line with Ritzoom. I felt sure he knew of her hiding-place—but where was it? You see, the Roman Church has institutions all over the world. There are thousands of convents in Belgium, in France, in Spain, in Italy. Where had she been taken? Well, I am firmly convinced that she is in England."

"Why?"

"Do you remember the conversation about the privileges which Catholics had in Continental countries? Do you remember the expression on his face when he referred to them?"

Walter Raymond sat quietly thinking for a moment.

"You are probably right," he said presently; "but surely it is not enough to accept such an inference as proof."

"Not by itself, no; but when it is supported by other things——"

"Yes, what?"

"First, I discovered that Brandon left his house at noon yesterday, and that he took a cab to St. Pancras. Now St. Pancras is not the station we should use if we intended going to the Continent. Second, I have discovered that he told his housekeeper of his intention to join Father Kelly, who is a kind of curate to him, and that they would be back to-day. Third, Brandon took only a light, thin overcoat. It is true the weather is fine, but when a man is crossing the Channel in the spring he——"

"Yes, yes; I understand," said Raymond.

"Then there is another consideration. I saw Brandon come to the Cosmopolitan to-night."

"I did not."

"You did not expect him, and therefore were not looking as eagerly for him as I was. Now, if he had been on the Continent, and knowing that Ritzoom was just starting for Ostend, he would not come to London to meet him. They would meet at Ostend, or Brussels, or Bruges, or——"

"You are right, Ned. Still, we have not covered all the ground. Would Brandon directly associate himself with the business at all?"

"Not directly, but either he or Kelly would keep a watchful eye on the matter. You see, Ritzoom is not the man to multiply agents, especially as Kelly, who, I am told, is a man after Ritzoom's own heart, was at hand. Moreover, Kelly has seldom been to your house, and has been kept in the background all the way through. No; Ritzoom would wish to appear as little as possible in the matter. Especially would he refrain from going there after what I said to him—if she was there."

"True; but how do you know he has gone?"

"I am waiting for assurance. I thought I should have had it by this time. But even if these calculations are all right, they do not give me my strongest reason for believing that Joyce is in England."

"No?"

"No; I believe she has been taken to an English convent, because the laws of no country are so favourable to the Catholics as English laws. Ritzoom was quite right when he said that no one had the right of entry into an English Catholic institution. As was fully demonstrated at the discussion in the House of Commons only a week or so ago, anything can be done in a Catholic convent—*anything*—and yet no one need be the wiser. There could be birth or death; there could be cruelty or outrage, and the world need know nothing. The heads of such institutions can snap their fingers in the face of the world. Even if we were sure that Joyce was in a convent in London, I doubt if we could find a means of entrance. Once immured there, she is for ever powerless."

Walter Raymond started to his feet; for a moment he seemed like losing his self-control, but he conquered himself.

"It must be altogether a matter of wits," he said quietly.

“ Yes; we have to match our brains against the cleverest schemer in the Jesuit Order. And the country does not know this—the privilege of the Roman Catholic institutions. The country does not realise it. Ever since Henry VIII. dissolved the monasteries the Jesuits have been fighting for their own hand. What one generation has failed to do the other has taken up. They have taken advantage of the crass blindness of the British public; they have taken advantage of the Englishman’s known love of fair-play, by obtaining more than anyone has the right to obtain. They have their spies and envoys everywhere: political wire-pullers are at every corner. To such a pass has it come that when a measure is brought before the House, demanding the right of public inspection for Roman Catholic institutions, the Papists arouse such a storm that the Prime Minister shelves everything. Ritzoom was right; a nunnery is a sealed house as far as public inquiry is concerned.”

“ Then anything may be done to Joyce.”

“ Anything.”

“ And no one be the wiser? ”

“ No one. Once within the walls of an English convent, and the heads of the convent have absolute control over the inmate. Mark you, I am not saying that they abuse their power. Moreover, in most cases parents are cognisant of their children’s whereabouts, and all postulants and novices have a period of probation before they take their vows. During that time they are supposed to be allowed to converse with visitors, and, if they feel so disposed, they can leave. Anyhow, that is what the public are told. After they have taken vows, however—that is, in the exclusive orders—they can only see visitors through an iron grid. I have not yet gone into the question closely, but, as far as I can gather, the register of deaths which they keep is supposed to be final and authoritative.”

A look of despair came into Walter Raymond’s eyes; his face became more haggard than ever.

“ My poor little Joyce! ” he cried. “ My dear, dear little maid! Oh, Ned, we must save her.”

“ We will,” replied Harrington quietly; “ besides, I do not think you need fear. I believe no harm will happen to her at present. I believe, too, that she will be kindly dealt with. I have no doubt that at the present time she is treated with all courtesy and consideration. The danger will come later.”

“What do you mean?”

“The danger will be when Ritzoom plays his trump cards. All this is for some ulterior purpose. There is something behind it all.”

“But what?”

Harrington opened his mouth to reply, but at that moment a servant entered with a telegram. He read it, and then passed it to Raymond.

“*Saw priest on board Ostend boat.*”

That was all. It had the Dover postmark.

“You sent a man down?”

“Yes; the fellow is indebted to me in various ways, and I occasionally employ him. In his own way he is very valuable. Of course, I had to make special arrangements to get a wire at this hour.”

“Ned,” said Walter Raymond after a few seconds’ silence, “I can see no way out of it. It is a veritable *cul de sac*. Perhaps it is because my brain is dazed by anxiety and want of sleep, but I see no loophole anywhere. I believe with you that she will have gone to an English convent; but how can we find out which? If what you say is true, they are all as secret as death. We have no right of entry, we have no right of inquiry. As you know, these Catholic places have multiplied tremendously. Other countries, Catholic countries, demand certain things of them; they refuse these demands. Then they leave those countries and come to England, and, according to you, they may be veritable prison houses. I have not gone into the law of these places, but I will. I will sift everything to the bottom. But meanwhile, Ned—meanwhile?”

“Yes, meanwhile,” repeated Harrington grimly.

“If anything could be gained by making the matter public, I would make it public; but it would do no good. As far as I can see, we can prove nothing.”

“No, nothing would be gained by making it public. As you say, we can prove nothing yet.”

“You believe we shall?”

“I am sure we shall.”

“You have something in your mind, Ned. Tell me what it is.”

“Walter, do I know the story of your life?”

“Yes, everything worth telling. Since my marriage it has been very humdrum, very uneventful, until—the priest entered my doors.”



“ Never mind ; tell all your past history as though I knew nothing of it. Your boyhood, your quarrel with your father, your marriage, your early life in London.”

Walter Raymond did as he was bidden. He told his story simply, but vividly. He seemed to take a delight in it. After all, the old boyish days, in spite of his father's harshness, were happy and full of gladness. He lingered over the early years of his married life, told of his joy when the children were born, described the struggles of those early years when clients were few and fees were small.

“ But we *were* happy, Ned. Our little family was united; we had no secrets from one another ; love and confidence were felt throughout every detail of our lives. Of course, Lucy's ill health brought me into close contact with the children. I had often to be mother as well as father to them. Then, as Joyce grew up, she little by little took work from my shoulders. Oh, you have no idea what a joy and gladness she was to me ! Poor little girl ! Her education suffered by it, but we became more and more to each other. I tell you the tears have come into my eyes, and a sob into my throat, often, when, after the other children had gone to bed, she came to me and asked me to help her with her lessons. Many a time, too, as I helped, her eyes would grow heavy, and she would go to sleep over her work. Then I would insist upon her going to bed, and scheme how I could get a kind of mother's help into the house, and send Joyce to a good school.”

“ But your wife—was she ever really a companion to you ? ” asked Harrington.

“ I suppose not ; but I never thought of it. We loved each other very dearly, and we were happy. No, in spite of our poverty, there was not a happier home in England until that priest darkened our doors. Just think of it, Ned. I have no wife now, and—oh, my God, my God ! I have no children.”

“ Don't say that, my friend.”

“ They shun me, Ned ; they have their secrets from me ; they have been taught to regard me as a kind of ghoul. I am looked upon as one who is crucifying their Christ again—as an enemy to religion. Their mother has taught them this. The old trust, the old comradeship, the old happy times, all are gone. Only Joyce remained the same to me, and now Joyce is gone.”

Walter Raymond was not an emotional man, but he

started to his feet as he spoke, and walked to and fro in the room like a man demented.

“ We must find her, Ned ; we must save her.”

“ Yes,” said Ned Harrington, “ we must find her, and we must save her. I feel that as much as you—perhaps more.”

“ Forgive me, Ned ; I had forgotten. But really it is difficult for me to think of anyone loving my little maid like myself.”

Harrington was silent. There was a far-away look in his deep-set eyes, and his strong, clearly-cut features were perfectly motionless, save for a tremor of his lips.

“ You had some reason for asking me to tell you of the past, Ned,” went on Raymond presently. “ What is this something at the back of your mind that you are afraid to tell me about ? ”

Still Harrington remained silent, while Walter Raymond sat looking at him. The older man did not repeat his question. He knew that he would tell him if he thought it wise.

“ It is a question of motive, Walter,” he said presently.

“ So you’ve said before. I have thought hours about it, and I can think of none—none, my friend, except the motive which appears on the surface. They will encompass heaven and earth to make one convert. I daresay, now, if I could have seen my way to yield to my wife’s wishes and join their communion, things would have been different.”

“ Perhaps,” said Harrington, like a man musing.

“ You do not think so ? ”

“ I have been interested in this Roman Catholic question for years, my friend. During those years I have heard a great deal about Ritzoom. To-day, as I told you, I have made more minute inquiries about him, and these inquiries have confirmed what I had previously believed.”

“ And that ? ”

“ Wherever and whenever Ritzoom interests himself in anyone, great stakes are at issue.”

“ Would he not regard the conversion of a family as a great stake.”

“ No ; not in the way you mean. If he did, he would become a mission preacher. No ; he is a Jesuit, and Jesuits from time immemorial have dabbled in mundane affairs. I will admit that their final idea has been conversion ; but their weapons have been carnal, my friend—carnal. Once upon a time they governed Europe through the throne rooms of every country. That power passed away, but for centuries there

has hardly been a political trouble of any sort but they have been mixed up in it. Look at French troubles—the Dreyfus scandal : who was at the back of it? The Jesuits. Think of the history of Spain, the Don Carlos rebellion, the struggle for the Crown, the death of General Pym, the thousand underground schemes ; who have been the prime movers? The Jesuits. Then there is the question of Irish Home Rule—who was responsible for the beginning of the business? Who backed the secret societies and fanned the flame of rebellion? Dublin is full of Jesuits. Ireland is full of Jesuits. Irishmen, well-informed Irishmen, tell me that it is not the Archbishop or the Bishops who rule even the Catholic Church in Ireland. It is the Jesuits. They, who profess to have no ambition for place or titles, they rule, they control, they supply brains and plans of campaign.”

“But, my dear Ned, how can this apply to me? I am only a poor struggling lawyer, who has just got his head above water. My poor little Joyce has no name, no influence, no money.”

“That is what baffles me, for, as I told you, wherever Ritzoom interests himself, there are large issues at stake.”

“But what, Ned—what?”

“If I knew that, Walter—-if I knew that, my way would be clear.”

“You see, Ned, I neither have money nor expectations of any, save that for which I work. It is true things in that direction look brighter, but at best my income can only be a thousand or two a year. Of course, my father is a rich man, but he has disinherited me. He crossed my name from the family Bible ; he swore that I should never have a penny of his money.”

“And Ritzoom knows that?”

“My wife knows it.”

“Then he will know it ; Brandon will know it ; the whole ring of them will know it. Walter, why do you not go and see your father?”

“Would he see me, Ned? Would he exchange words with me? You say that you saw him, and spoke to him about me. Do you think he would?”

“No,” said Harrington, after a minute’s hesitation, “I do not, on consideration, think he would.”

“Besides, you know his Protestant views ; you know how he hates anything that savours of Popery. If he is still interested in me, he will know that my family have joined the

Roman communion, and that will embitter him more than ever against me."

"Yes," said Harrington; "I expect you are right."

"Even if I were to let him know that I hate the whole business, if I tell him that priestcraft has blighted my home and alienated my wife and children from me, it would make no difference. He would blame me for not being master in my own house. You know his views on that question. And more, even if we became reconciled to each other, and he desired to give me some of his money, he would know that my wife and children would benefit by it, and, so great is his hatred of the Romanists, such a thought would keep him from giving me a penny. He is a strange man, difficult to understand; but on that question his position is clear."

"All the same, I must find Ritzoom's motive," said Harrington presently.

"You still harp on that."

"Yes, I still harp on that."

"But we cannot spend all our time finding out that. My child is taken away from me; she is immured somewhere—where I do not know. Whatever may be Ritzoom's motive in advising her to leave home—and, mark you, we have no certain proof that he did advise her—the fact is she has left home, and I do not know where she is."

"And do you think I do not realise that?"

Ned Harrington spoke harshly—almost bitterly. It was evident that throughout the whole of their conversation he had been fighting with the anger that was raging in his heart.

"I realise it, Walter," he continued more quietly; "only God knows how much. I have thought of a hundred plans of search, and some of them shall be put into action without delay. But we must be wary, my friend—wary and silent. They work in silence, so must we. They are prepared to wait results, and, hard as it is, so must we."

For a long time they sat talking. Scheme after scheme they discussed, weighing carefully the *pros* and *cons* of this and that plan of action. They forgot that they had had no sleep on the previous night, forgot the penalty which must follow the long, wakeful hours of anxious thought. When the morning light streamed through the windows they were still discussing, still thinking. They knew they had a difficult work to do, and neither was a man who acted thoughtlessly.

Presently, however, Walter Raymond rose to go.

“ I shall walk home now, Ned,” he said. “ I shall try to get two or three hours’ sleep. Perhaps my brain will be clearer then.”

Harrington looked at his watch. It had stopped—he had forgotten to wind it ; but the clock on the mantelpiece told him that it was after four o’clock.

“ Wait a minute longer, Walter,” he said. “ Ah! there he is.”

Raymond heard the roll of wheels in the street outside, while Harrington went to the door. A minute later he entered the room with a rather strange-looking man, who gave Raymond a keen, searching glance, and then began deliberately to throw off a heavy overcoat.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH.

THE newcomer was rather below than above the medium height. His hair was iron grey, and was cropped close to his head; his eyebrows, however, were long and bushy, which, overshadowing piercing black eyes, gave him a somewhat ferocious aspect. The lower part of his face, however, suggested a man of mild and gentle demeanour—one who would love to play with children and tell them fairy stories. If a bandage were placed over his eyes, therefore, he would be taken for a mild, unsuspecting, innocent-looking little man; but if the bandage were taken off, one would be led to give him a second thought, and then think of him as a “mysterious-looking little fellow.”

“Well, Signore Volpe,” said Harrington, “you have had a busy day.”

“Yes, sir; I have not, as you say in England, let much grass grow under my feet; but I slept in the train. Ah, yes, from Dover to Herne Hill, I slept; ah, yes, I slept like a—what do you call it?—a top; ah, yes.”

“I received your telegram.”

“Yes, ah, but the signore, *il prete*, he seemed much disturbed; he examined everything, everybody but me—ah, I was only a plain-looking little man. He is gone to Bruges.”

“To Bruges?”

“Yes, to Bruges. He met another priest on the *battello*—that is what you call the boat. He did not seem pleased to see him; but told him that he wanted a train to Bruges.”

“That is all?”

“That is all; if you had instructed me, I would have gone to Bruges. I speak not French well, but enough for *parlare*. He is a great man, Signore Ritzoom.”

“Why do you think so?”

“How do I know that a book is great, Signore Harrington? I read.”

“Yes, he is a great man. But you are tired.”

“*Un poco, si, signore*. Just a little, that is all.”

“How many hours’ rest do you require before you are ready for work again?”

"Six hours' sleep, and I am wide awake. It is just four. I go to my house. I take my basin of *pane e latte*, I go to bed, then it will be five; I sleep for six hours, that will make eleven. Then I will be awake, my brain will be clear, and I can work, *signore*."

"That is well. I shall expect you here at half-past eleven."

"*Buon giorno, signore*. You need me no more now?"

"No, you need rest."

The little man put on his heavy overcoat again, and with a comprehensive bow he left the room.

"*Signore Volpe* is in his own way a character," said Harrington.

"Is he to be trusted?" asked Raymond anxiously.

"Yes. Of course, I have told him nothing that you would not care for a stranger to know. Presently we may have to tell him more; at present, however, there is no need. I did not think of him yesterday morning when I said we would not use a private detective. Neither, for that matter, can he be placed under that category. But he is a useful man. He is an Italian by birth and education. He was trained for the priesthood, but he got mixed up with some of the secret societies in Italy which existed during the struggle for independence. His great enemies were the Jesuits, and he hates them accordingly. For years he was hunted like a fox. He came to England as a refugee, and even after the power of the priest was broken in Italy he remained in England. He says his life is not safe in Italy. Years of plotting, however, have made him a useful man. He knows the Roman Church, he knows the Jesuits, and he has a wonderful gift as a detective. I had to defend him once in a peculiar case, and he declares he owes much to me. I have had but little use for him in the past, although I have been glad to employ him on various occasions. He, however, has for years been asking me to give him work to do, and when I have employed him he has been overjoyed. He wants to repay me, he says, for my kindness to him. He is as cunning as the animal whose name he bears, and I believe him to be as faithful as a dog. I have an idea that *Signore Volpe* can help us a great deal. He has the advantage of being but little known. He lives in seclusion, and works in the dark."

"If you trust him, that is enough, Ned."

"I do trust him. If any man can find out where Joyce is, *Signore Volpe* is the man."

“ Ah, if he can find out ! ”

“ Yes, you see, we have the Habeas Corpus Act on our side. If we can find out where she is, we can demand that she be restored to us.”

Raymond shook his head despondently.

“ Yes—yes ; I know what you are thinking of. These holy fathers have a hundred ways whereby people can be hidden or removed to other convents. Still, we will succeed. Keep a brave heart, my friend.”

Walter Raymond left the house, and walked towards Battersea. At that time he saw no hope anywhere. He had no proof that Joyce had gone to a convent, and therefore he could not demand her whereabouts from ecclesiastics. Indeed, if he sought to enforce legal power, possibly Brandon and Ritzoom would protest entire ignorance as to her residence. He could not so much as prove that either of them had used any means whatever to influence her in leaving her home. He had no hold upon them in any way. He was perfectly certain they had influenced her, and that she was somewhere in their keeping, but he could prove nothing. It seemed to him, therefore, that the case was entirely hopeless. He could not bear the thought of making the affair public, and even if he could, he could not see that anything would be gained. Joyce was as much lost to him as if she was buried beneath six feet of earth.

Try as he would, he could think of nothing that would help in solving the problem. His eyes ached with much watching, his head throbbed with terrible pain. His whole nature cried out for sleep, and yet it seemed to him that he would never be able to sleep again. He let himself into his house. As he passed by his children's bedrooms he opened the doors and entered. They were sleeping quietly. But he did not stop at his wife's room. As he thought of her, his heart grew hard. He entered the little room which since his wife's decision he had called his own. It was the poorest room in the house—little more than a box, in fact. A narrow bed stood by the wall, and a few books stood on the little shelf above the bed. Without undressing, he threw himself on the bed.

“ I shan't be able to sleep,” he said, “ but perhaps I can rest.” Yet scarcely had his head touched the pillow than the events of the day seemed to recede from him, and in a few seconds he fell asleep.

Between two and three hours later the house of Walter



Raymond echoed to the sound of merry voices. The children had their baths, and descended into the little dining-room, where the servant had placed their breakfast.

"Is mother coming down to breakfast this morning?" said Madaline.

"I don't know," said young Walter. "When I went into her room a little while ago she seemed asleep."

"Did you go into dad's room?"

"No."

"I wonder if he's back yet?" said Rachel.

"I wish things were like they used to be," said Walter.

"Hush, Walter!" said Madaline. "You know what Father Brandon said."

"I don't care," said Walter. "Things aren't nearly so jolly as they used to be. It was always fun to go out with dad. And wasn't it grand when we went to Brighton that day?"

"Yes, and you know what Father Brandon said to us afterwards. You know he told us that if we did what dad told us to do, we should grieve the Holy Virgin and anger our Blessed Lord."

"Yes, I know," said Walter; "but I don't believe it."

"That's wicked," replied Madaline; "and if I were to tell Father Brandon what you say you would have an awfully hard penance."

"And I suppose you will," said the boy. "But I don't care. Why should it be wrong to do what dad tells us? He is always good and kind."

"Why, you know that he refused to let me be baptised, and he's been very cruel to mother."

"When?" asked Walter stoutly.

"Why, you know he has. Don't you know how Father Brandon said that until grace touched his heart he was an enemy to religion? He has taken Joyce to a Protestant school, and you know, too, that he has forbidden Father Brandon to come to the house."

"Then why has he come?" asked the boy. "It's dad's house. Besides, I'm not a bit better boy than I used to be, and it isn't half so jolly. I always used to like dad to hear me say my prayers; but since I've had to say those new prayers everything has been different."

"Hush, you bad boy!" said Madaline. "There, I believe mother is coming."

Mrs. Raymond entered the room as the girl spoke. There

was a strange, dazed look in her eyes, as though she had passed a sleepless night. She looked grey, and haggard too, as though she were in pain. When she had left her room she had stopped outside her husband's door. She had heard him come into the house more than two hours before, and ever since she had lain awake thinking. A year before all was different. Then all was trust, all was peace. Now a great barrier had arisen between them. The priest had stepped in between them, and the old confidence, the old comradeship, had ceased. Since she had become a Roman Catholic, and had promised absolute obedience to the Church, their aims had been different. She had been made to believe that the commands of the Church should be placed before everything, and she had eagerly obeyed. She had tried to make him a convert, and she had not rested until the children were received into the Church. And all this had taken place in a year.

She thought of Joyce, and a great terror came into her heart. Where was her eldest child now? What was she doing? Was she content—happy? She remembered her as a baby, a little, bright-eyed child, and later still when she grew up to be her sole help, and Walter's great joy.

Perhaps it was this thought which caused her to open the door, and enter her husband's room. She gave a start as she saw him lying on the bed. His hair was dishevelled, his face was drawn and haggard. She knew why he had been away. He had been trying to find their child, the child who was as dear to him as his own life. In spite of herself, her heart ached for him. She called to mind those long years of faithful devotion. After all, never had a woman a better husband than he. He had sacrificed everything for her. But for her he might have been a rich man, and his life might have been free from all the anxieties which had been his during the long years. She realised, too, the change that had come into his life. Yes, she had done her best to alienate the children from him; she had taught them to regard him as a heretic, as one who refused the light, and was therefore an enemy to her faith. Yes, he had been searching for Joyce, while she—

She left the room. What she had done, she had done from a sense of duty. She had promised to obey, and she had obeyed. He *was* an enemy to her religion. If he could, he would make all his children despise her religion. Had not her confessor bidden her beware of ever allowing natural affection to lessen her zeal for religion? Above all things,

she must see to it that she obeyed her Church, and allowed nothing to stand in the way of carrying out her mandates.

"Are you well, mother?" asked Rachel as she entered the room. "Have you slept well?"

"No, not very well."

"When shall we hear from Joyce?"

"I don't know—perhaps not at all."

"Not at all! Why, dad said that in the school to which she is gone all the girls are encouraged to write home."

"Yes, I know he said so."

"Don't you believe him?"

Mrs. Raymond was silent.

"I am sure it will be a good school," said young Walter. He was evidently prejudiced in favour of his father that morning.

"It is a heretic school," said Mrs. Raymond. "Perhaps the Holy Mother will interfere, and save her from going there."

"But dad has taken her there."

Mrs. Raymond was silent for a minute; then she said:

"If ever you have to go to such a place, remember the greatest sin you can commit is to be false to your religion, a sin which, unrepented of, will drag you into eternal ruin."

There was a terrible intensity in her voice, as though the thought of such a thing gave her agony.

"That is why you must beware of your father," she went on. "He despises our faith; he is an enemy to it. That was why he arranged to take away Joyce from the school at Bruges, and to take her to that Protestant place in Germany. As you love God, and as you care for your soul's salvation, never listen to him. His heart is hardened against the truth."

The children were all silent. In a way they could not understand they felt it an awful thing that their mother should warn them against their father.

As soon as possible she hurried them off to school. She did not want her husband to come down while they were in the house. They would be sure to ask him questions about Joyce, and she was afraid lest he might say something which she thought they ought not to hear. They had scarcely gone when a letter was brought to her. She broke the seal, and read the contents eagerly:—

"MY DEAR CHILD,—Everything is satisfactorily settled, and the one whose eternal welfare is so dear to us

both is now safe from the enemies of her soul. It will be best that you should not know her haven of rest—I need not explain why. Suffice to say that she is very happy and that she gives every evidence of fitness for the religious life. For the present it will be best that you should neither write to her nor receive any communication from her. It will be unwise to do anything to disturb the peace that has come into her soul, and, besides, we must remember that her enemies, especially the one of her own household, will be watchful. We must, at whatever cost, save her from the snares of the fowler. I would like to come and see you, but under present circumstances it would not be wise. Nothing must be done that can in any way arouse suspicion. Always remember, my dear child, that we, the children of the Church, must not set our affections on things temporal, but on things eternal. I have perfect trust in you.—Yours affectionately,

“PATRICK BRANDON.”

“Pray for me.”

She read this letter a second time, and then, as if her suspicions were aroused, she looked eagerly around her. She noted with satisfaction that the door was closed, and that there was no possibility of observers. But she did not seem to be satisfied. Hiding the letter, she crept out of the room, and went quietly upstairs. She listened eagerly at the door of her husband's room, and then quietly turned the handle of the door and entered. Walter Raymond was still asleep, but she saw by the look on his face that he was greatly troubled. Moreover, he moaned like a man in pain.

Like one fascinated, she stood and watched, and although she had been his wife for twenty years she felt like a culprit. It seemed to her that she had no right to be in the room, she who was the mother of his children.

“My own little maid! My own little Joyce!” she heard him say. “She is the only one whose mind has not been poisoned against me.”

Mrs. Raymond felt as though someone had stabbed her, but still she did not move. Walter Raymond slept on, sometimes moaning as if in pain, and again uttering words which were unintelligible to her. As he lay there he looked ten years older than he had looked a year before.

“Where have they taken her?” she heard him say presently. “We must find out that, Ned. Those accursed



"HE MADE A MOVEMENT AS IF TO LEAP FROM THE BED."

(p. 201.)



priests may be clever, and the law is all on their side ; but we must find her, Ned. We will never give up—never, never ! ”

He rose from the bed and opened his eyes as if he were awakened. He stared around the room, and she thought he gazed upon her ; but there was no suggestion of recognition or intelligence. The eyes were glazed and ghastly, his face was drawn with agony. He made a movement as if to leap from the bed, but he only fell back with a moan.

“ My own little Joyce—my own little maid ! Oh, may God help me—may God help me ! ”

After this he slept more peacefully. He ceased either to moan or to speak. Mother Nature was folding him in her arms and soothing him as only she can soothe.

Mrs. Raymond did not move, even when she thought her husband had awakened. It seemed as though she were held by a spell. The moans he had uttered, the look of agony on his face, made her incapable of action. When she left the room her face was pale as death, and her features were drawn as if by pain. Perhaps she thought of the long years they had lived together in happiness.

She took the priest's letter and read it a third time, and as she read a look of dogged determination took the place of fear. After that she left the house, and went out towards Clapham Common.

When Walter Raymond woke it was past eleven o'clock. At first he was dazed. Nothing seemed clear to him. His only sensation was a feeling of overwhelming loss—why, he could not understand. But this was not for long. All the ghastly tragedy of the last two days came back to him, and for a moment it stunned him. Nevertheless, several hours' sleep had restored his energies, and he was again capable of action. He had a cold bath, and then came downstairs. The house was in quietness. He rang the bell, and the servant entered.

“ Is anyone in the house, Martha ? ” he asked.

“ No, sir ; missis is gone out, and the rest are at school. ”

“ Just so. Will you please get me some breakfast, Martha ? Get it as quickly as possible. ”

“ Yes, sir. ”

“ Even the servant seems to be afraid of me, ” thought Walter as the girl went out.

Taking a law-book from the shelf, he read until the girl appeared with his breakfast ; then, after partaking of a

hasty meal, he prepared to go to the City. Just as he was leaving a boy brought a telegram.

“ Calling at your office about four.”

There was no signature, but Walter felt sure that it was Harrington who had sent it.

“ He has had less sleep than I,” thought Raymond. “ This was handed in at the Strand at half-past ten. I wonder if he’s done anything. Poor Ned, he’s terribly cut up ; but never mind. Please God, we’ll be even with them.”

He had no anxiety about his office work—he had told his confidential clerk that in all probability he should not be early that morning, and had as far as possible prepared for all contingencies. He left no message for his wife. He felt that they had nothing in common now. Rather, their interests were in opposition to each other. She sought to please a priest rather than her husband ; the demands of her Church were more to her than the desires of the man who had given his life to her.

Arrived at his office, he went through the letters which his clerk had placed before him for special attention, and then, having dictated his answers, he sat back in his chair and again tried to solve the problem that was constantly before him.

“ I can think of nothing,” he said at length. “ I shall have to depend on Ned for everything. Ah! that is surely his voice.”

A minute later Harrington had entered his room, and Walter Raymond, having shut the door, looked at him eagerly.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE CONVENT OF OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS.

JOYCE RAYMOND sat in her little cubicle in the Convent of our Mother of Sorrows. She had been in the convent a week, and now she was reviewing the time she had spent there. She was also searching her heart. She had left her home about noon on the day when Harrington had received the telegram from Walter Raymond. She had gone out of the house quietly and unobtrusively. Had anyone seen her, they would probably have thought that she was going for a walk. Her face was stern and set, and her heart was torn with agony ; but she felt that she must do as she had been commanded. More and more it had been brought to her that it would be a sin for her to obey her father's will, and go to the Protestant school in Germany ; while to regard herself as the *fiancée* of Harrington was a crime. Indeed, this, as she had been made to feel, was the crowning sin of her life, a sin which, if unrepented, would drag her into hell. Her heart had gone out to him with all its fulness, and she had promised to be his wife. But Harrington was a militant Protestant ; he was an enemy to the Church into whose communion she had been received, and here lay her shame and her crime. Ritzoom had made her feel this ; he had told her that for her, a child of the one true Church, to love a man who was an enemy to that Church, was to crucify Christ afresh, and to condemn her soul to hell. She knew, moreover, that while she remained in the world she would love him. If she went to school she would receive letters from him, she would write to him, she would look forward to meeting him and to being his wife. And this was sin. Her only hope, therefore, was to leave the world, to go away where her thoughts would be constantly directed to holy things, and where she could breathe the atmosphere of faith and piety. Ritzoom had urged this with terrible persistence. He had commanded her, and her mother had emphasised his commands, that she must not imperil her soul by obeying her father's wishes. If Harrington had been at home, all might

have been different ; but he was away from her, and thus she became the prey of those whose commands seemed to be the commands of God. The struggle against natural affections had been hard ; but she had obeyed the dictates of the priest, and had left her home. She had left it without saying good-bye to anyone, for so she had been instructed. She had walked across Chelsea Bridge to Fulham, where she had been met by two nuns, who accompanied her to a conventual institution. Here she had remained during the afternoon talking with the Mother Superior. This lady was very kind, very gentle, and she described in glowing terms the happiness of those who led the religious life. She told her of the great peace that entered the soul, the quiet joy that pervaded the life, while she grew eloquent concerning the ecstasy of those who became the spouse of Christ. She told her also of the sin and deceit of the world, of the worthlessness of a worldly man's love, and of the sin of loving one who was an enemy to the true faith.

Under her influence, Joyce became quiet and subdued. Nay, more, she looked forward with a certain pleasure to the thought of living a life of sinlessness and prayer. There are times in the life of everyone when we do not feel capable of being our own guides, and when we long for the voice of authority. Moreover, Joyce had been led to regard this Mother Superior as a holy woman, and the nuns had told her that when she commanded, it was as though God Himself commanded.

Little by little, therefore, this woman calmed her fears, and gave her a certain kind of hope. She made her feel more than ever the sin of loving an enemy to the faith, and caused her to realise that only by leaving the world altogether could she have salvation. She spoke to her, moreover, as a woman ; as a woman who had tasted of the joys of the world, and found them like Dead Sea fruit, but who, on entering the religious life, had realised the joy of God. And Joyce, her mind bewildered, her heart torn with pain, had listened eagerly, and had accepted the Mother Superior's words as the words of God, even as she had been told she should.

When night came on she was attired in the dress of a sister of mercy, her face being completely hidden, and, in the company of others, left Fulham. They entered a carriage, but whither she went she did not know. She had a vague remembrance of going to a great station, but she took no heed ; she also remembered that after travelling some time

she changed trains, and towards morning she alighted from the train at a small station. Here she was taken to a carriage, and was driven away into the country.

She had no idea where she was—indeed, she had not cared to ask. She had been made to feel that in going from home and love she was going into rest, and peace, and safety. She would be no longer guilty of loving the man whom to think of was sin ; and while her heart seemed numbed by a great sorrow, she believed that she was doing the will of God.

Presently, however, as she looked out of the carriage window she saw that she was away in the heart of the country. Scarcely a house was visible, the lane along which they drove was silent and forsaken.

“ Where are we ? ” she asked the nun who sat by her side, like one who had just awakened out of sleep.

“ I do not think it is best for you to know,” said the sister.

“ Where are we going ? ”

“ We are going to a place where you can rest, my dear.”

“ But I should like to know where.”

“ It is not best you should.”

“ But ”—and a fear came into the girl’s heart—“ surely I may know where I am going ? ”

“ No, you may not—at least, not at present. There, now ; you must not ask any more questions.”

The woman spoke kindly, but Joyce detected a change in her tone. She spoke like one who expected to be obeyed.

For the first time Joyce realised what she had done, and, girl-like, she began to cry.

“ There now—there now,” said the nun, “ this will never do. It is well that you should learn, little one, that the very greatest duty of a child of the Church is obedience—obedience without question. You have come to us for help and succour ; this we are giving you, but we can only give it on the condition that you obey implicitly. At present it is best that you know nothing, and that you should seek to know nothing. Rest, my child, rest, and do not trouble about anything, save how you can please the Holy Virgin.”

After driving some time, they came to the gates of a large house. Here they entered, and Joyce noticed that they drove through some park lands, and presently drew up before what appeared to her an old family mansion. Without a word they entered, and Joyce was taken into the presence of a tall, stately-looking woman, who came to her and kissed her.

"Welcome, my child," she said affectionately. "I am sure you must be very weary."

Then, turning to the sisters, she said :

"See that some breakfast is sent in at once."

Joyce was divested of her sombre garments, and thus stood before the lady, in the clothes which she had worn when she left her home the previous morning.

"Draw a chair to the fire, my child," said the lady. "Your hands are cold, and your face is very pale. I am sure you must be hungry and faint."

The kindly words and affectionate attention comforted the girl immediately, and trust took the place of fear. She looked towards the lady, and it seemed to her that this woman must have passed through great sorrow. She looked about forty years of age ; she might be more—or less. Her face was deathly pale, and her eyes were rather the eyes of a woman who had lived, than one who was living now. And yet at times it seemed to Joyce as though memories stirred within her—memories of a time when she, too, lived in the busy world, and felt the throbbings of love.

During breakfast she talked about various matters—matters of no moment ; but presently, when they had finished and they had both turned to the fire, the Mother Superior of the convent—for so she was—took Joyce's hand in hers, and said tenderly :

"Tell me all about it, my child."

For a moment Joyce could not speak. The kind, womanly tones caused her tears to flow, and her voice to be choked with sobs.

"That is well, my child," said the Mother Superior. "Cry all you can ; it will do you good. There—sit back in the chair. I will be back again in a few seconds."

When she had gone Joyce became more cool and collected again. There was something very soothing in the quietness of the place ; the very atmosphere seemed full of peace. She looked around the room and noted the *prie-dieu* that stood in the corner, and the religious pictures that hung upon the walls. The room was comfortably but not luxuriously furnished, and a woman's good taste was manifested everywhere.

"I never thought a convent would be like this," she thought. "I thought there were bare boards and poverty ; but it *is* quiet and peaceful."

The Mother Superior again returned, and sat down by her side.

“Tell me all about it, my child,” she said. “Tell me everything.”

And Joyce, nothing loth, told her. She described the happy days she had passed at home before she went to Bruges; told how her father had been for years a struggling lawyer, and how at length, when a little success came to him, he sent her to Belgium. Told of her mother's conversion to the Roman faith, and of the baptism of her sisters and brother into the Church. Then she told her of her own conversion, and finally of her home-coming. Then came the story of the alienation of her mother from her father, and of the latter's unvarying goodness and kindness. This led up to the coming of Harrington, and of how she had learnt to love him. She spoke of the happy weeks they spent together, of her father's determination to send her to Germany, of her engagement to Harrington, and then of what Ritzoom had said to her.

“And so, to save your soul, you came hither, my child?”

“I knew I should never cease—to—to love him unless—unless——” she stammered.

“Yes—yes; I understand,” interrupted the Mother Superior. “I understand. Yes, it was a sin, it is a sin—a terrible, terrible sin—to love such a man, my child. You have done right to leave the world. This life is nothing; the eternal life is everything—everything.”

But Joyce did not believe this even then. This life was something; Harrington's love was something; nay, her heart was bruised and bleeding now, because she had renounced him.

“Here you will forget him, my child; here you will be safe from the temptations which your father would put in your way. Oh, yes; you will forget him, and in days to come—oh, you will be thankful for the step you have taken.”

The words struck a chill into the young girl's heart. It seemed to her at that moment that it could not be right to forget him. She pictured him at that moment. By this time he would probably have read her letter, and would be seeking her.

“Oh, I never can forget him—never, never!” she sobbed.

“Oh, yes, you will. That is, you will cease to think of him save as one who was an enemy to your soul.”

The words, kindly as they were spoken, seemed harsh and cruel. She could not help thinking of the words he had spoken

to her—words full of tenderness and loyalty and devotion ; she remembered how her father had spoken of him, as one of the finest fellows he knew and the best friend on earth.

“ No, no ! I never can,” she cried. “ Oh, God help me ! ”

“ Oh, yes, God will help you. The saints will intercede for you ; many prayers will be offered for you.”

“ But you do not know—you do not know ! ”

“ Yes, I know, my child—I know.”

Joyce looked into her face, and noticed that her eyes had somehow changed. There was a look of tenderness, a sympathy, which had not struck her at first.

“ How can you know ? ” said the girl. “ You cannot.”

“ Yes, I can ; I do.”

“ You know what it is to love ? ”

“ Yes, I know.”

The woman seemed to forget their relative positions, seemed to forget that she was Mother Superior of a convent, and that the girl before her was only just come as a postulant. Perhaps the girl's story had made her remember that she too was a woman, and that she had loved as every woman should. Then Joyce's heart went out to her, for she saw tears well up in her eyes and trickle down her pale cheeks. Forgetting her own trouble for a moment, she put her arms around the other's neck and kissed her.

“ You have loved too, and have you forgotten him ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What ! You never think of him ? ”

“ Hush ! He is a priest.”

“ And do you ever see him ? ”

A knock came to the door, and in a moment the woman had changed. The tender, womanly look had gone ; she arose to her feet, erect and stern.

“ Yes ? What do you want ? ”

A nun entered and made her obeisance. She made some simple request, and when it was granted she bowed humbly, and said, “ Thank you, Reverend Mother.”

“ ‘ Reverend Mother.’ ” Joyce repeated the words. “ Are you the Reverend Mother Superior ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Forgive me,” said the girl ; “ I did not know. I was bewildered—almost beside myself.”

“ It does not matter. To-day you shall be as a guest ; to-morrow—then you must settle down to the ordinary life of the convent.”

"Thank you, thank you," said the girl; "I did not expect so much kindness, such consideration."

"You would like to go to bed and rest?"

"No, no," said Joyce; "I don't feel so tired now, and it does me good to talk with you. You will forgive me for kissing you, won't you?"

Again the Mother Superior turned and looked at the beautiful girl's wistful face. After all, she was but little more than a child, and her presence brought back a host of memories. For a moment she longed to be a woman again—a woman such as she was before she left the world. If she had married at the time she had hoped, she might have had a daughter of Joyce's age. For years she had been Mother Superior, first in Ireland, and now in England, and during that time she had attended faithfully to her duties. For years she had starved all thoughts of human affection, and had lived the life prescribed by her Order. Thus she had become more and more the creature of rules and formulas. She had received many postulants since she had been Mother Superior, but none had had the same effect upon her as this young girl. She had heard something of Joyce's story, and it had interested her; perhaps that was why she had asked Joyce to tell her in detail what had been briefly related to her in the letter she had received. Anyhow, the girl's presence and her story had affected her as she had not been affected for years. For the moment she did not feel like the Mother Superior of a large institution, but rather as a woman to whom a young girl had come for rest and peace.

Perhaps it was no wonder, for, like many another woman who wears a nun's garb, she had loved, and struggled, and sorrowed. Her story I have told in another narrative,\* a story of misunderstanding, of love, and finally of seclusion from the world. And yet the woman who once bore the name of Gertrude Winthrop, and who was affianced to Jack Gray, who afterwards became a Jesuit priest, could not altogether forget the past. It came back to her as she saw the pure young face and pleading eyes of the girl who sat by her side. That was perhaps why she had been so kind to her, and why, almost in spite of herself, she had spoken of that which she never thought would pass her lips again.

"And now you must rest," said the Mother Superior; "and remember you are here to find rest unto your soul. Drive all sinful thoughts from your mind, my child; if the

\* "The Scarlet Woman,"

vision of the man you loved comes to you, drive it from you ; if an affectionate feeling comes into your heart, crush it. Do not think of home or parents, especially do not think of your father. Remember the words of St. Jerome, 'The more tender the affection of a religious for her kindred, the greater her impiety towards God.' "

And so Joyce went away into quietness. At first everything seemed strange and unreal to her ; but little by little she became accustomed to her surroundings. She was treated kindly—far more kindly than some others in the same institution. Practically no duties were laid upon her. She seemed to be looked upon rather as a guest than as an inmate. On two occasions she had asked questions of one of the inmates ; but on each occasion an answer was refused. The woman had looked around, as if afraid someone was listening, and then said in a whisper :

" Hush ! You must not ask, and I must not tell. "

" But why ? "

" Against the rules. "

This had somewhat disturbed her ; but still she had no great fears. The silence of the building, the quiet hours of prayer, the services in the church, had all tended to soothe her, and, in a sense, a kind of negative peace had come into her life.

At the end of a week, however, when she had become accustomed to her surroundings, she began to think more calmly and collectedly. She realised that her heart ached more than ever for the man to whom she had plighted her troth. Perhaps there was sufficient reason for this. When she left home she had taken off the ring Harrington had given her. She had meant to send it back with the letter she had left for him ; but this she had not done. She had taken this ring with her, and owing to the fact that for the first few days she had been treated with so little strictness, she had retained possession of it. Now, as she sat alone in her little cubicle, she looked at it. This was the ring which Harrington had given her only a short time before, and the sight of it had aroused all the sweet memories of the past.

" God forgive me, " she said to herself, " but I love him more than ever. I wonder where he is now ? "

For a long time she sat thinking of him, thinking also of her father who loved her so dearly. She tried to drive both of them from her mind, but in vain. There in the quietness, the memories of both of them forced themselves upon her.



Then she thought of the future. Ritzoom had advised her, and his advice had amounted to a command, that she should go into a religious institution in order to forget those who would destroy her soul, and to enter into the peace of God. Since she had come her penances had not been severe, and the Mother Superior had been kind to her; nevertheless, she began to think of the future. Could she give up the world entirely and become a nun? She knew that such was Ritzoom's advice; and while she was with him she felt it to be her duty to obey him.

"No, I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it," cried the poor girl. "I will tell the Reverend Mother that I must leave, and that I want to return home."

With this thought she lay down to rest, and although vague fears still haunted her, the thought of again going out into the world chased the sadness from her heart and brought a smile to her lips.

The next day, however, when she tried to get courage to tell her desires to the Reverend Mother, she failed. The whole atmosphere of the place seemed to make it impossible. On every hand she was made to feel that to go out into the world again would be to go into sin, that for her to return to her father and her promised husband would be treason to her Lord. She knew not how, but she felt as though an invisible chain was being fastened around her. On the day following, an unaccountable dread came into her heart, and when she was told that Father Jetsam wished to speak to her it seemed as though a great blackness enveloped her. Nevertheless, she made her way to the Mother Superior's room, where the interview was to take place, with a fast-beating heart.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### FATHER JETSAM'S OPINIONS.

FATHER JETSAM was a little man, about fifty years of age. He was fat, and sleek, and suave. A continual smile rested on his smooth, clean-shaven face. He was wonderfully well preserved. Although past his prime, there was scarcely a grey hair on his head, nor a line on his cheeks. His voice, too, was soft and insinuating ; he seemed to be constantly endeavouring to make those with whom he came into contact believe that he was as simple-minded as a child. Sometimes, indeed, he adopted a sort of kittenish demeanour. He pretended to be playful and fond of mischief. Father Jetsam, however, had the reputation of being a very holy man. Although his presence gave no suggestion of it, he was supposed to be quite an ascetic, spending much time in prayer and fasting.

He was sitting with the Mother Superior when Joyce entered the room, and seemed to be discussing some matter of serious import. His mild and somewhat protruding eyes wore a very earnest look, and sometimes he rubbed his fat, smooth hands together as though, like Lady Macbeth, he was not quite satisfied as to their being stained.

"Yes," he had been saying to her, "our orders have been very strict. The child must be kept here, and no knowledge of her whereabouts must be guessed."

"Is there some particular reason for this?"

"There is always a particular reason when Father Rit-zoom shows so much interest as he has shown in this case."

"He has shown special interest, has he?"

"Very special interest. Does she know in what part of the country she is?"

"No ; she has not the slightest idea."

"That is well. Moreover, the sisters who brought her from London returned immediately, did they not?"

"Yes ; they went back to the station in the carriage which brought them here."

"That is well. Of course, you gave her particular orders not to tell her name to anyone here?"

“ Yes ; I was very particular about that. She is to be called Ursula here. Not that it matters much ; as, you know, none of the sisters ever go into the world.”

“ Exactly—exactly, Reverend Mother, and yet one can never be too careful. You see, it might leak out, and—well, you must remember that her father has become very much embittered towards us, and the man to whom she had promised herself in marriage is not only a hardened Protestant, but he is said to be one of the cleverest men at the English bar. I tell you, no stone will be left unturned ; it is well, therefore, that we should allow no possibility of discovery.”

“ Well, you need not fear. Not only have I given her implicit commands to tell no one anything of her name or history, but I have also given orders that no one is to receive any confidences which she may be disposed to offer. In fact, no one is allowed either to ask or answer any questions, nor to converse with her on any save strictly religious matters.”

“ That is well—that is well. Nevertheless, I must make sure at her next confession, and if she has inadvertently told anyone anything concerning her name or history—well, steps must, I am afraid, be taken accordingly.”

“ What steps ? ”

“ She will have to be removed to another convent.”

“ Her case is very important, then ? ”

“ Very important. As I told you, and as you very well know, Father Ritzoom, especially during the last few years, never interests himself unless there are very vital issues. We must remember that England is not yet under the rule of our Church, and we must take care to do nothing to prejudice ourselves in the eyes of these heretics. At present our position is very favourable, and is becoming more and more favourable. In fact, Protestant as England is, it is our great harbour of refuge. We are allowed to do pretty much as we like ; we have no official inspections, and while we are wise, we can do our work in such a way that no one will suspect our motives. If we take any rash steps, these English Radicals will demand a right of free entrance into our convents and monasteries ; they will claim the right to examine the inmates of our institutions ; they will take strict notice of all deaths which occur—ay, and they will insist that even those who have taken solemn vows shall have the right to walk out into the streets unfettered. The English are a very pig-headed race, Reverend Mother, and if these

Protestant Churchmen and the Nonconformists are once around, we shall be better off even in France than here."

"Yes; at present we are free from interference."

"At present we are very favourably situated. They give us every opportunity to do our work—in our own way. You see, we appeal to their sense of religious liberty. But we must be very careful—very careful. Our present danger is the Irish."

"The Irish?"

"Yes; we must see to it that they retain their places in the British Parliament. You see, they practically hold the balance of power. Let the Irish and the English Catholics determine on anything, and they can upset any government. But for that, the convent laws of England would have been terrible long before now—terrible. Why, the usefulness of conventual institutions would be nearly destroyed if the right of free investigation were given, and especially would this be true if scandals got afloat."

"What is it that makes this case so important?"

"That, Reverend Mother, must be kept a secret for the present, even from you. Even I am somewhat in the dark; still, we can wait. In a year or two everything will doubtless be made plain."

"Do you know, I doubt if the child has a vocation!"

"Ah, then we must see that whatever stands in the way be removed."

The man and the woman looked at each other: the woman's face was set and stern, but the man retained his mild, placid look. The smile did not leave his lips; not a muscle of his fleshy, clean-shaven face moved. But the woman understood.

"I hope severe measures will not be needed," she said, after a second's hesitation.

"Let us hope not," said Father Jetsam, his smile broadening somewhat. "Let us hope not. But we must remember that she has been brought up a Protestant, that she has only been under our influence for one short year, and that she loves her father very much, to say nothing of the other man. The natural affections must be crucified, Reverend Mother."

It was at this time that Joyce came to the room. Of course, she heard nothing of what had been said; she had no idea of the thoughts which were passing through the priest's mind.

“ Ah, my child,” said Father Jetsam, as she entered. “ I am glad to see you. Yes, you look better already ; there is a look of peace in your eyes, and I am sure that grace is more and more coming into your heart.”

Joyce did not speak, but stood before them silent. She knew not why, but a great fear was in her heart.

“ The Reverend Mother and myself have been talking about your future, my child,” went on Father Jetsam. “ Yes, we have been talking about your future. Ah, it is very beautiful—very beautiful to see such as you deciding to take the veil of purity ; for that is your evident vocation—the Holy Virgin loves to see such as you leave the world and take her Blessed Son as your spouse.”

“ Father,” said Joyce stammeringly, “ I am afraid it is not my vocation. I—I have rebellious thoughts, and I have many doubts. I—I should like to go home again.”

“ Then these rebellious thoughts must be destroyed, my child ; these doubts must be chased away.”

“ It is not that I doubt the Catholic faith, Father, but I do doubt whether it is my vocation to take the veil.”

“ When you doubt the latter you doubt the former also,” said the priest. “ What would happen if you went home ? Would not your father send you to a heretic school ? Would not your lover poison your mind against the one true faith ? To go out into the world would be to go into temptation. Here you are safe ; there you would be in danger. No, my child ; the thoughts in your mind are sinful, and must be chased away. To leave here would be to go back to the world, and to go back to the world would be to ruin your soul. We cannot allow that, my child. We have sheltered the lamb from the wolves, we have taken her to the fold, and we must not let her go back among the wolves again.”

“ But my father is not a wolf,” said Joyce, a feeling of anger coming into her heart.

“ I am thinking of your soul, my child. As a natural man, your father may be a kind man, although from what I have been told concerning his behaviour to your mother, I doubt it. But even if he were, you must be shielded from him. You are a child of the Church ; you have rested your little head on her great, broad bosom ; you have chosen Christ as your spouse, and I am convinced that it is not only your vocation but your duty to enter religion. The Church needs you, my child ; and it is a terrible, terrible thing to disobey the Church.”

“ How does the Church need me? ” asked Joyce almost sullenly. “ I can do nothing for her in the convent : I could do more for her out in the world. ”

“ Ah, my child, you need instruction—you need it sadly. Think of the influence of the prayers of one who enters the holy life ! Who knows but that the Holy Virgin will be so much moved by your prayers that, impossible as it may seem, she will lead not only your father into the light, but also the man who is the chief enemy of your soul ? Think of it, my child. A nun’s prayers have a thousand times more influence in heaven than the prayers of a worldling, and so you may have the joy of converting those who are now enemies to your soul. Oh, the joy of such a thought—the joy of it ! ”

Father Jetsam saw that this thought influenced the mind of the impressionable girl, and he continued talking in this way for some time. He spoke of the joys of the religious, and of the wounds caused in the heart of the Sorrowing Mother by those who sought to leave her. He told stories of nuns who by continuous fast and vigil, penance and prayers, prevailed on heaven to soften the hearts of hardened heretics ; and as he continued speaking in the same soft, persuasive voice, it seemed to be that she became powerless. She felt, also, that behind the honeyed words were veiled threats, until it seemed to her that while the smile of the Church was joy beyond all her words, yet her anger was terrible.

And yet he did not speak to her as though she came to him for confession. She was there in the Mother Superior’s room, and that lady sat listening to all that was said ; nevertheless, it seemed to her just then as though he spoke with divine authority—an authority which she could only resist at her peril.

“ The truth is, my child, ” went on Father Jetsam presently, “ so fully convinced am I, in fact, so convinced are all who know you, that you should enter the religious life, that we feel that we should be traitors to Christ if we allowed you to go back into the world. Therefore, my child, think of the privilege, the blessed privilege of safety—safety from the temptation of this life, safety against the loss of your soul. Oh, do not think that we would admit you if we were not *fully* assured that it is your vocation. Indeed, we have to refuse many because they cannot persuade us that it is their vocation. Many a lady has offered us a large dowry to be allowed to enter our fold, but we have had to refuse. They

were not called to such happiness, to such privileges, and to such a high estate ; and so, although the Church sadly needs money, we had to refuse their gold, and send them back sorrowing to the world. Oh, it grieved us to do so, but we could do no other ; the Church can only receive such as we are convinced ought to enter religion."

"But I have no money—I can bring no dowry," said Joyce eagerly.

"Is that true?" asked the priest.

"Yes, my father is a poor man," said Joyce.

"But your mother has property, perhaps, and she has become a very devout child of the Church."

"No; my mother has nothing except what father gives her."

"Ah, that is serious," said the priest; "that is very serious. Everyone who enters the religious life is supposed to give a dowry for all the advantages she receives. Else how could we exist?"

"But I have nothing," said Joyce.

The priest hesitated a second; then, like one who makes up his mind to take a bold step, he said:

"Never mind. The sacrifice must be made. Even although you are penniless, I will see if an exception cannot be made in your case—nay, an exception shall be made. I will plead with the authorities. I will tell them of the awful peril you are in—of the danger you have escaped, and of your evident vocation for the religious life. It may be that I shall have difficulty, but I will overcome them—yes, I will overcome them. I will not allow you to be exposed to the danger of losing your soul, even although you have no dowry. Oh, my child, think of the love of the Church—think of her infinite compassion."

When Joyce left the presence of the priest, she felt resigned to her fate. Father Jetsam had made her feel that her sole hope, her sole chance of salvation, lay in obeying him, and so she promised to obey his behests. During the next few days her life became much more severe, but she did not complain. When she went to Father Jetsam for confession he gave her such instructions and imposed such penances upon her that, by-and-by, she was led to look with a kind of horror upon the fate she had escaped. Certain books were given her to read, books which glorified the life of those who entered religion, and made the world look hideous. Thus, when a thought of Harrington came to her

mind she prayed with great fervour that she might be enabled to destroy all affection for him. In her desire to do this, moreover, she performed the penances which the priest prescribed with eagerness, and as when she went to confession she told of the effect these penances had upon her, the priest smiled.

"We shall have no difficulty now," he said to the Mother Superior. "The fear of the Church has got hold of her. I am inclined to think that her time as a postulant will be short. At the end of a few months she will have to enter upon her novitiate."

"Have you any idea as to what her father is doing?" asked the Mother Superior.

"Yes; both he and the man Harrington are moving heaven and earth to find her; but they have not the slightest idea where she is—no, nor will they ever. She could not have been brought to a better place than this."

"But supposing they had some suspicion that she was here, and came to seek her—should I admit them?"

"Admit them? Certainly. Take them over the institution, and talk to them as we always talk to Protestants. Be quite frank and free with them, and make them believe that we have no secrets—that we act entirely openly and frankly. Of course, they could not go into the bedrooms; naturally you could not allow that—how could you?"

"But she might hear their voices."

"My dear sister, you would know who they were before you admitted them, and there are many silent places in this building."

"Have you any idea what they are like, Father Jetsam—this man Raymond and the other man Harrington?"

"Yes; I went to London for that purpose. I made inquiries, and found that a case in which they were both interested was being tried at the law courts."

"What are they like? Tell me—describe them to me."

"I do not think they will come here," said Father Jetsam, after complying with her request. "I expect they will desire to remain in the background. They will have emissaries. But it does not matter; you know how to deal with whoever may come. As a Jesuit, I always advocate frankness. Some Mother Superiors refuse to see visitors, refuse to open their doors, even when the rules of their Orders do not demand that they should; but you know what my views are. You know what to show them and what to tell them."



“ And what are the orders concerning Sister Ursula? ”

“ Her mind must be prepared to take the white veil. She is now in a receptive mood. Treat her with all the kindness possible; nevertheless, nothing must be left undone if she shows any desire to go back to the world.”

“ You still believe that there are great issues at stake? ”

“ I am sure.”

“ And you still feel that you cannot tell me what they are? ”

“ Beyond the salvation of the soul, we mainly consider three things,” said the priest: “ political influence, social influence, and money. You can make up your mind which of the three is in question now.”

“ It is one of the three? ”

“ It is always one of those three.”

“ I cannot make up my mind,” said the Mother Superior presently. “ I cannot see how there can be either.”

“ Ah! ” said Father Jetsam, with a more pronounced smile.

“ Can you? ”

“ Yes; I can see how there can be all three.”

“ Of course, you shall be obeyed,” said the Mother Superior.

“ That is well,” said Father Jetsam. “ The truth is, the case is so important that I feel quite nervous. Ritzoom has paid me a special visit, and has urged every caution. Indeed, if we were to fail I should not like to meet him. You know what he is like.”

“ Yes, I know,” said the Mother Superior with a sigh.

And so the months passed away, and Joyce never heard a word from the outside world. Her duty, moreover, was to drive all thoughts of home and loved ones from her mind. Whenever thoughts of Harrington or her father came into her mind, she eagerly performed the offices that Father Jetsam prescribed. Indeed, most of her life was spent in what the sisters called religious exercises. No one in the convent, save the Mother Superior, knew either her name or her story. She was simply a postulant whose duty it was to destroy all natural affections, so that she might be fitted to enter what they called the “ religious life.”

In spite of everything, however, her heart often yearned for the sight of home. Sometimes she woke up in the middle of the night to find herself sobbing. It was then that existence became agony. She could not help picturing the little

house near Battersea Park, and calling to mind the rooms she had known for years. Unwittingly, too, the kind, loving deeds and words of her father came back to her. She remembered the happy hours they had spent together, and never once could she think of a harsh deed, or an unworthy act, in her father's life. When her mother had been irritable and nerve-trying, her father had found excuses for her; when poverty faced them, he was still brave and cheerful; and, do what she might, she could not help during the first few weeks longing for a sight of him.

"If only he knew where I was," she said again and again. "If only I could just speak with him for a few minutes, and explain everything!"

As for Harrington, she could not help feeling that she had been a traitor to him. She fully believed in his love, in spite of the poison her mother had tried to instil into her mind. And so, when she thought of him, a feeling of shame came into her heart. She felt sure that he must regard her as one who had broken her word, and was, therefore, unworthy of an honest man's love. And yet, try as she might, she could not confess to her priest that she still retained the ring he had given her. More than once, moreover, she had taken it from its hiding-place, and had looked upon it with fast-beating heart.

"He is a sinner; he is an enemy to Christ and to my faith," her lips had said again and again; but as often as she said it her heart cried out for him.

After a month or two, however, the influence of the convent grew stronger. She thought less and less, not only of her father, but of Harrington. She was able to let the ring lie in its hiding-place; and while the thought of entering the religious life brought her no joy, it did bring her peace. She had been led to believe that the world was entirely evil, and that her only safety lay in the cloister. Months of fasting and vigil and the atmosphere of convent life were doing their work; and thus, when she received a summons from the Mother Superior to come and see her, as she wished to speak to her about becoming a novice, she made no demur, as she hoped that by so doing the last tie which bound her to the world would be broken.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### PREPARATION.

“WELL, my child, I have good news for you.”

Joyce looked at the Mother Superior eagerly. In spite of everything, she could not help hoping that she was to hear of home and loved ones there.

“Yes, I have good news for you. I have spoken with the Bishop, and now there is nothing which stands in the way of your ‘clothing.’”

Joyce knew what the word “clothing” meant. More than once it had been mentioned among the postulants as an occasion of rejoicing. It meant that the period of their postulancy was over, and that they had passed successfully the first probation, and were to be clothed with the white veil of the novice.

A feeling of awe came into her heart, for the thought of taking the white veil had been so presented to her that she was led to look upon it very much as one is led to look on death. Of course, by taking the white veil she only entered upon another course of probation; nevertheless, she knew that this same white veil would bind her more firmly to the convent, and would also strengthen the barrier between her and the old life. Up to now, hopes had come into her heart, in spite of the supposed joys of the nuns which she had been made to believe in, that she would be regarded as one who had no vocation. But the Mother Superior’s words now drove away such hopes for ever.

“You are highly favoured, my child—highly favoured. Think of it! Although you can bring no dowry, and although up to about a year ago you were a Protestant, you are now to be clothed with the white robes of purity, symbolical of the holy life you are to lead.”

Joyce fell on her knees before the Mother Superior.

“Thank you, Reverend Mother,” she said.

The older woman looked at her almost affectionately. Perhaps she was thinking of the time when she, her heart still sore because of the love she had borne for a man,

had been clothed with the white veil. Perhaps, too, she called to mind the period of her postulancy, during which she had learnt the one great duty of a nun's life—obedience to her superiors. It had been a hard lesson, for the most degrading of tasks had been allotted to her—tasks which made her sick both in heart and body, but which she had performed because she believed they were pleasing to God. Since she had become a Mother Superior, she had been regarded as a very strict disciplinarian; nevertheless, she had been less severe with Joyce than she had been with most postulants. Indeed, Joyce had noticed that she had been saved from the degrading occupations and the sometimes cruel treatment which had fallen to other postulants.

“You long to obey our Holy Mother, don't you, my child? You love to obey?”

“I pray that I shall,” said Joyce.

“Perhaps,” went on the Reverend Mother, “you have thought the life here has been hard and cruel.”

“It has been less hard for me than for some,” said the girl.

“Has it?” said the Mother Superior, with a smile. “Ah, well, I must inquire into that. But the Church is not cruel because she loves to be cruel, my child: she is only cruel because she loves. We have to remember that we can never please God except by absolute obedience. The most dire sin of the religious is disobedience to the Superior; nothing so grieves the Holy Mother so much—nothing. Thus, your months of discipline may have seemed hard. When those hard tasks have been allotted to you, when you have been made to crucify the flesh, it is only because we have loved you. Besides, we have tried to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.”

Joyce was silent for a moment. She thought of a girl who had been rebellious, and who had been cruelly treated. This girl had been made to scourge her body with a whip of cords until the blood came; she had also knelt on cold, hard stones until her knees were bruised, and for several days only bread and water had passed her lips. Joyce had heard the poor girl's moans, and had wondered why she herself had been so kindly treated, for although she knew she had been quite as rebellious as the other, her penances had been far less severe. This poor girl, moreover, had become very ill, and although she needed a doctor sorely, none had been allowed to come. And all this had been done for the girl's

soul, and because she had been slow in manifesting the true Christian spirit!

"And now, my child," said the Mother Superior, "I want to know whether grace has done its work in your heart."

"I do not know," replied Joyce.

"Why? Do you long for the sinful life of the world?"

"Not nearly so much as I did," replied the girl. "Sometimes for days together I never wish for it, and then again I long to see——"

"Yes, yes," said the Mother Superior, as she saw her hesitate; "but you have fought against that?"

"Yes, Reverend Mother; and during this last month I have not thought nearly so much about it."

"That is well. And yet you think of that man sometimes?"

"Yes, yes, Reverend Mother. I know it is a sin, but I have fought very hard, and yet I have not altogether succeeded. Oh, Holy Mother, forgive me, but I cannot bear to think of him sorrowing for me! And then, try as I may, I cannot help thinking of my father. You see, we did love each other so much. Sometimes I picture him seeking me, and—and——"

Here the poor girl started crying, while the Mother Superior smoothed her glossy hair. For a moment a far-away look came into the older woman's eyes, and she seemed to hesitate as to whether she should tell her something.

"If I could only think they did not sorrow, I think I should rejoice to take the veil," sobbed the poor girl.

"My dear child," said the Mother Superior, "I had hoped that there would be no need to tell you what I find it necessary to tell. I had hoped that fasting, and prayer, and penance, and vigil, together with the prayers of the sisters, would have been sufficient; but it appears they are not. Know, then, my child, although no one knows where you are, steps have been taken to ascertain what those you left behind are thinking about you."

"Yes," said Joyce eagerly; "tell me, Reverend Mother."

A rebuke, because of her eagerness, rose to the Reverend Mother's lips, but she checked it, and answered:

"Your brother and sisters believe you went to the school in Germany, and that you so hated the Protestant heresies there that you ran away. They believe, also, that you are afraid to write home because you fear your father's anger."

“ And they are allowed to believe this? ” asked Joyce.

“ Yes, they are allowed to believe it, but they are not allowed to mention your name to anyone. ”

Joyce looked up at the Mother Superior's face with mute agony: she wondered what she would say next.

“ Your mother is perfectly happy about you. She is hoping that your two sisters will also go into religion, while she is doing her best to arrange that your brother Walter shall become a priest. She has sent a message to you. ”

“ Yes? ” said Joyce. “ Yes? ”

The Mother Superior took a letter from the table, from which she read parts.

“ It is written to me, ” she said. “ She does not know where you are; it is simply addressed to the Reverend Mother Superior. Father Brandon has sent it to me. ”

The girl waited in silence. It is true she loved her mother, but she felt that she knew what she would say.

“ “ Tell Joyce, ” read the Mother Superior, “ that although I do not know where she is, I am perfectly happy about her, because I know she is safe, and that she is preparing for the life which she could not live if she remained in the world. . . . Tell her it is my wish that she becomes a nun, and that it will be the gladdest day of my life when I know she is dead to the world. ” ”

“ Does she say anything about father? ” asked Joyce.

“ No, ” replied the Mother Superior, after a moment's hesitation, whereupon she placed the letter in the envelope.

“ Not a word? ” pleaded Joyce.

“ I have answered you, ” replied the other in a tone of rebuke.

Joyce sighed, while the tears welled up into her eyes.

“ With regard to your father, ” went on the older woman presently, “ I may tell you that he has become terribly angry with you. He will not have your name mentioned. At first for a few days I believe he tried to find you; but since, knowing the step you have taken, he has ceased to care. ”

“ But how do you know? ” pleaded the girl.

“ If he cared, would he not come here? ”

“ But how can he if he does not know where I am? ”

“ And could he not find out? Your father is a clever lawyer, and it would be easy for him to discover your whereabouts. But, beyond making a few inquiries, he has taken no steps. His feeling is that, as you have made your bed you must lie on it. As you know, he hates our Church, and

now that you have left him and come to us he is more than ever embittered against us. As for you, he is so angry with you that even if you went home he would shut the door in your face."

The girl's eyes were filled with a great terror.

"Perhaps, after all, it is best," she said at length.

"Of course it is best," went on the nun. "It is well, my child, that your eyes should be opened concerning the enemies of the Church, even when that enemy is your own father. Of course, you thought of him as kind and loving—now you know how much his love is worth. Naturally, he wanted you to marry that young barrister, who, he believes, will make a great reputation; and now that you have so angered him by seeking to save yourself from such a terrible sin, he has discarded you entirely. I am sure, my child, your mother is greatly to be pitied. We must pray for her, so that she remain firm amidst so much persecution."

Joyce's face became as pale as death. While she believed her father loved her and was seeking her, there was a feeling of tenderness in her grief; but now hard despair took the place of tenderness.

"As for the other man," went on the Mother Superior, "it is best that you should know the whole truth concerning him at once. He is engaged to a great heiress."

For a moment Joyce's heart ceased to beat. Her head swam, and everything became black. She had said to herself during her lonely hours that she hoped Harrington would not ruin his life by thinking of her, and that he would some day, in the distant future, marry someone more worthy; yet when the terrible words fell from the nun's lips it seemed that a dark abyss had opened at her feet.

"Yes," went on the Mother Superior quietly, "he was able to transfer his affections quite easily. Moreover, he was able to change his principles at the same time. I am told that he gained quite a reputation as a temperance advocate, and as an agitator against the rack-rent landlords of the East End of London. This in addition to his work at the Bar. Indeed, I am told that he was quite a bright light in the temperance party, and pleaded that the public-houses were England's greatest curse, while brewers were her greatest enemies. He also said that money made by drink was blood-money, while the rack-rent landlords ought to be treated as criminals. Perhaps you have heard him give expression to such sentiments, my child?"

"I know that he held very strong views about such things," replied Joyce, speaking like one in a dream.

"Yes, well, his new *fiancée* is the only daughter of a great brewer, and one who owns a large number of houses in the East End. I am told these houses are in a terrible condition, but that he has appointed a Jew agent, who mercilessly grinds out the last farthing from the poor people. But there, the young lady cannot help the sins of her father, can she? Besides, in addition to being enormously rich, she is also very pretty—at least, that is the report—quite a handsome, pleasure-loving, society woman."

For a moment a silence fell between the two women. The Mother Superior seemed to be looking at some object in the fields outside the convent, while Joyce was staring into vacancy. It seemed to her as though her heart were being crushed by cruel, coarse hands. At that moment there was nothing to live for, and she longed to die. But she did not speak, nor did she make a sound of any sort. Nothing mattered now. Her father was embittered against her, while the man to whom she had given her heart cared so little for her that after six months he had become engaged to another.

"The world is very wicked, very cruel, my child."

"Yes."

"Let us be thankful that here we are away from its temptations, its cruelties. Do you desire to go out into the world again, my child?"

"Oh! no—no—no!"

Even the Mother Superior looked at her anxiously. The tones of the girl's voice were full of a great agony. It seemed as though her heart might be breaking. For a moment the muscles in the older woman's face twitched, as though she were moved by the suffering of the poor child before her; but she went on pitilessly:

"You see, he quickly consoled himself."

"It is best. I—I hope he will be happy."

"Tear him from your heart entirely, my child. He was your enemy, and—and he never really cared for you."

"No, no, he could not."

"Ah, well, the Holy Mother has been good to you. Here you will find peace and rest. Here you will be the spouse of your Lord. Are you not glad and thankful that I have arranged for you to take the white veil?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Thank you, Reverend Mother, thank you."



“ You want to die to the world, do you not? ”

“ Yes, yes. Please, *please*, Reverend Mother, let me take the veil as soon as possible. Oh, I long for rest and peace. I hate the world—oh, I hate the world! ”

“ That is well. Everything will be done quickly; but you must be patient, my child; you must be patient. ”

Joyce went away to her cell like one in a terrible dream. It seemed to her that the very foundations of her life were broken up—that everything which held her to the world was gone. Oh, how true were the words of the nuns who spoke to her in the convent at Fulham on the day she left home! She believed she had left happiness and joy; now she knew she had left deceitfulness, and cruelty, and sin. What was the loneliness and the weariness of convent life compared with the sin of the world? Better suffer anything than go back to it. Yes, instead of being afraid of those penances which some of the postulants had undergone, she would seek them. She would ask to go into some severe Order, where life was a continual mortification of the flesh. When she reached her cell, her eyes fell upon a picture of Catherine of Siena, on whose body it was said were the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the light so fell upon it that the picture itself was dim, while her own face was reflected in the glass.

After all, in spite of her sorrow, she was still a woman. She called to mind what the Mother Superior had said about the girl Harrington was to marry. A rich, handsome society woman. She wondered what his future wife was like. Was she dark or fair? Did he ever think of her, she wondered. She called to mind what Harrington had said about her. He had told her that among all the women he had ever seen he had never seen one whose face was so pure, so perfect, so sweet, so guileless as hers. She remembered, too, the joy his words gave her. She rejoiced in her beauty, not because of herself, but because her beauty was pleasing to him, and because she hoped he would be proud of his wife. Even then she felt that he had told her the truth. The face in the glass was pale and sorrow-stricken, but it was still beautiful.

But she would destroy it. She would fast and torture herself until all her beauty had gone. Her rich, glossy hair, which she had been so proud of, should all be cut off, and she would grow thin, and wan, and haggard. Oh, yes; her only hope lay in crucifying the flesh. Her father was so angry with her that he would shut the door in her face if she went home; while Harrington was doubtless preparing for a gay

wedding. Perhaps, some day, he would amuse his rich wife by telling her of a silly girl who had flirted with him, and who went into a nunnery.

Nothing was too hard for her to bear now. The world no longer had charms for her. She would in a few days take the white veil, and thus enter upon the second step in her probation. Thus it was that when she next went to confession she pleaded her desire to go into religion, and to forget the world for ever.

The days passed by until she came to the eve of the day on which she was to be "clothed." She had read the books which had been given her, and had eagerly listened to the advice given. One book especially had she studied, a book entitled "The True Spouse of Jesus Christ," especially as she was told that this book was the most perfect guide for nuns. Here she read that the Lord once said to St. Catherine of Siena, "Religious will not be obliged to render an account to ME of what they do through obedience; for that I will demand an account from the Superiors. . . . When, then, a religious receives a precept from her prelate, confessor, or superior, she should immediately execute it, not only to please them, but principally to please God, whose will is made known to her by their command. In obeying their directions, she is more certain of doing the will of God than if an angel came down from heaven to manifest His will to her."

She also read that, "According to all the masters of the spiritual life, he that desires to walk in the way of perfection *must* fly from relatives, must abstain from taking part in their affairs, and when they are at a distance, must not even inquire about them." And that the religious who tells her parents, and her brothers, and her sisters that she knows them not, is the true spouse of Jesus Christ. "The nun that leaves her relatives in effect and in affection shall obtain eternal beatitude in heaven and a hundredfold on earth."

All this the girl read eagerly. Even then it appeared to her as hard, but her heart did not rise in revolt. She was sure that only by becoming a nun could she find peace; only by leaving the world could she obtain eternal life. Thus, not only was she willing to obey her superiors; she longed to obey. If in obeying them she was sure she was obeying God, was it not the greatest privilege of her life to sink her own will in order to do theirs? Besides, it was difficult for her to know the will of God by her own unaided reason;

but when her superiors or confessor told her, all was made plain.

For the time, therefore, Joyce was almost fanatical in her devotion to the Church. No penances were too hard, no work too degrading.

One day, before taking the veil, she saw the girl who had been treated so harshly. She noticed that the girl looked different ; she was almost gay and frivolous.

Although she had been commanded to hold no communication with the other postulants, the change in her demeanour was so great that she forgot herself, and asked her whether anything had happened.

"Yes," replied the girl ; "I am leaving the convent."

"Leaving the convent ! Why ?"

"I have no vocation," laughed the girl. "By the way," and she lowered her voice, "are you rich—are you heiress to a lot of money ?"

"I ? Oh, no."

"It is very strange," said the other. "While it was believed that my uncle would leave me a lot of money, they were sure I had a vocation ; but since they heard that he had become very poor, they say I have none."

"But they are taking me without a dowry. I have nothing."

"How do you know ?"

"I am perfectly sure. My father is a poor lawyer, and I have no rich relations. Besides, my father is terribly angry with me since I left home. He is a Protestant."

"Well, they will not have me. Tell me, what is your name ?"

"I must not tell you."

"But your Christian name—that does not matter ; no one would object to that."

"Well, it is Joyce."

"Joyce—that is a queer name. I never knew anyone who had it."

"It was my grandmother's name."

"Ah, well, it does not matter. You are Ursula now, and you will go on having it, I suppose. Thank goodness, I have my old name again. It will be splendid to be called Jessie Robinson once more ; I was awfully silly to come here. I ought to have known I was not fit for religion. But Father Brandon persuaded me."

"Father Brandon ?"

“ Yes ; do you know him ? ”

Joyce was silent.

“ He was always telling me I ought to be a nun, and at length he persuaded me. Well, I have done my best. I have done terribly hard penances, but I'll never be such a fool again.”

“ For shame ! ”

“ I never shall—never. I shall try and get a situation in a Protestant home. You won't tell me your other name, nor where you have lived, nor anything ? ”

“ No.”

“ Ah, well, you are going further into religion to-morrow, and I am going back to the world. I suppose we shall never see each other again.”

“ No, never.”

“ Oh,” said the girl with a shiver, “ I am glad I have no vocation.”

“ You must not speak like that—it is sinful.”

“ Is it ? Ah, well, you will have to confess to-morrow ; I shall not. Good-bye.” And the girl left Joyce alone.

For a moment the girl had a great longing to go away with Jessie Robinson, but she quickly remembered what she had been told about her father and her lover, and then she went away to pray alone.

When she awoke next morning, it was almost with a feeling of joy that she looked forward to the ceremony which she believed would for ever bolt the doors of the world against her.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TAKING THE WHITE VEIL.

JOYCE had not long been awake before she realised that it was to be a great day at the convent. She saw that many priests were arriving, while in the corridors there was a rustle of robes which, while exceedingly pleasant, was very strange. She quickly realised, too, that she was an object of special solicitude. The Mother Superior was more than ordinarily gracious, while large bundles of clothing were brought to her.

“My child,” said the Reverend Mother, “you should be very happy to-day, for you are to take another step towards becoming a spouse of Jesus Christ.”

“Thank you, Reverend Mother,” said Joyce.

“You have no doubts, my child—no fears? You want to leave the world with all its sins.”

“Yes,” said Joyce, with a sob in her throat.

“And you do not want to go back to your father, who would place temptation in your way, even if he were led to forgive you; nor the man who—”

“No, Reverend Mother—no!”

The nun smiled. The sensitive, broken-hearted child had become like wax in her hands. The influences of the convent had become stronger and stronger, and it seemed to her to be a sin to have a desire other than that of the Mother Superior.

“And you are ready for Holy Communion, my child?”

“Yes, Reverend Mother; I trust so.”

“Examine your heart well, my child, and see if there be a vestige of the world remaining. If there is, crush it, destroy it. Think, my child, think. Have you destroyed love for friends, relations, and the sins of the flesh? Have you subdued rebellious thoughts? Does your heart still long for sinful love? Has the world any hold upon you? Remember the vow of the religious, that wondrous threefold vow—Poverty, Chastity, Religion. You will not take it to-day; you will only prepare for it. But you know what it means.

Poverty—that means that you renounce all your worldly goods to the Church.”

“But I have none,” said Joyce. “Oh, I wish I had, so that I might show how real was my devotion, and how gladly I would give it up to God.”

“Ah, that is well,” said the nun; “that is well. As I told you, you are taken here without any dowry. All the same, when the time comes, you will have to sign a paper giving all you may possess to your Order.”

“But as I do not possess anything——”

“You will sign it, to show how completely you desire to give all to God.”

“Yes,” said Joyce; “I understand.”

“Then there is Chastity. You understand that the religious must know nothing of carnal love. They are wedded to Christ alone, and to Him they must give all their thought, their devotion, their love.”

“Oh, yes,” said Joyce with a shudder. In her mind she saw Ned Harrington leading the woman of whom she had been told to the altar.

“Then there is Obedience. You understand what that means, my child? You have listened to your instructions—you have read the books which have been given to you?”

“Yes, Reverend Mother, I have read them; I will be very obedient.”

After this Joyce partook of the Holy Communion, and then prepared to go into the church, where a number of priests and faithful Romanists had congregated. During this preparation, the girl seemed like one in a dream, and her heart seemed dead within her. She had not realised the joy she expected when she had received the communion. Try as she would, she could not believe that the priest had changed the elements into the real body and blood of Christ. She felt it was a sin to doubt, and yet she did doubt. Everything was unreal to her; even the ceremony in which she was to take so important a part was unreal. In spite of herself, her heart longed for the old, pure, sweet life at home. She longed to look into her father's face, and to hear him say he had forgiven her. When she thought of Harrington it was to feel a dull pain at her heart. He had forgotten her, and had bestowed his thoughts on another.

But she did not think of rebellion, or of asking for a postponement of the ceremony. The chains which had been fastened upon her for more than a year and a half had become

too strong for that. The influences of the convent school in Bruges had prepared the way, and then those terrible interviews with Ritzoom when the Jesuit had bent her like a rod, had made it impossible for her to think of rebellion. Her sensitive nature had yielded to the seductive influences of priestcraft. From the moment she had been taught to believe that the Roman Catholic religion was the only true religion, and that the priest was the mouthpiece of God, the rest had become only a matter of time. Little by little had the chains been tightened ; little by little had her fears of disobeying the Church grown stronger.

By nature she was a strong, self-reliant girl, but the seeds which had been sown had grown in virgin soil. When she had gone to the school in Bruges, her mind was practically a blank in relation to religion. Her father had taught her to be good, and truthful, and pure ; he had taught her to love God, and regard Christ as her great example, and that was all. She knew nothing of dogma, she thought nothing of churches. All who tried to be good belonged to God ; but at Bruges she had been taught differently. She had been led to believe that religion was a kind of mechanical thing, centred in a Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and that she must enter this Church to find salvation. Thus the reign of the priest began, and thus, although her heart cried out against it, she could not but obey Father Ritzoom when he told her her duty. And now several months at the convent had made her subservient to the will of those who, she believed, had a mandate from God, and spoke with the voice of God. She was prepared to take the white veil, although the thought of it was filled with an undefinable terror.

Presently she was clothed with a rich, white silk dress. It was the dress of the world which she must presently renounce. She knew she ought to hate it, but she did not. To her it seemed like a wedding garment, and it made her think of the dreams which had come to her after she had promised to be the wife of Ned Harrington.

When she had been duly attired in the robes of the world, she was led to the outer choir, where a number of nuns and novices had gathered. They were all clad in their church cloaks, and each of them bore a lighted candle in their hands. The nuns on the right hand held the candle in the right hand ; those on the other side bore theirs in the left.

Joyce looked around her awestruck, for she remembered now the meaning of what she was doing. She was saying

good-bye to the world. Near her was the Mother Superior, who gave her a meaning nod.

Her limbs almost refused to obey her will, as she tried to take her first step forward ; nevertheless, she crept slowly to the Reverend Mother, and fell at her feet.

“ Bless me, Reverend Mother ! ” she sobbed. In the chapel near by she heard strains of music, while the sweet smell of flowers was wafted to her, and then the events of her past life seemed far away—it was to her as a tale that was told.

The Mother Superior lifted her hands, and pronounced a blessing upon the prostrate girl.

“ And what name am I to receive in religion ? ” she asked, remembering that this was a question expected of her.

“ Thou shalt be named Ursula, after the blessed Saint Ursula, ” replied the nun.

Within the chapel the Bishop and his assistants made ready for the coming of the young girl who that day was to be “ clothed, ” and when all was prepared, the chantress commenced singing the hymn, “ O Gloriosa Virginum, ” the strains of which the choir took up, and which echoed sweetly throughout the chapel and into the outer choir where Joyce was.

She had been told that on such occasions as these the father and mother and friends of the postulant often gathered, so that they might be present to behold their dear one dedicate herself to the holy life ; but she knew that none of her friends would be there. No one knew where she was ; none of them, except her mother, cared. Oh, if she could only see her father’s kind eyes, and know that he had forgiven her !

The first verse of the hymn had scarcely finished when those in the outer choir began to march into the chapel in solemn procession. First of all, one went bearing a cross, and after the cross went the postulants, two by two. These were young girls, who, like herself, had been preparing for the ceremony in which she was about to take such an important part. After the postulants marched the novices, they who had already taken the white veil ; and after the novices walked the professed nuns.

Joyce saw them march forward, bearing their lighted candles, while throughout the chapel echoed the strains of the hymn. The solemnity of her act was laying hold of her at last ; and when at length she stood between the Mother



Superior and the Mother Assistant, she felt that she was indeed bidding good-bye to the world for ever. When they arrived at the doorway which separated the choir from the chapel, and could see the casket containing the sacrament, she felt her knees tremble beneath her ; so much so that, had it not been her duty to fall on her knees, she would have done so out of pure weakness.

Presently, a sense of great loneliness possessed her. The Mother Superior and the Assistant Mother had left her kneeling alone before the sacrament, and as she knelt she felt that she had no friend on earth. She hardly noticed that the Bishop, whose mitre had been taken off by the attendant, began to sing and to pray ; and when he began to bless a wax candle and to incense it, and to sprinkle it with holy water, she wondered what her father and Ned Harrington would think if they were present. It was all very strange. She had been told all about it before, and yet when she saw the Bishop coming towards her, the lighted candle in his hand, it seemed almost like play-acting, so much was her mind unhinged by what she saw and felt. Nevertheless, she kissed the Bishop's hand, and received the candle as she had been told she should.

Her heart grew cold when the Bishop began to pray. She did not quite know the meaning of the words, but the tones of the man's voice thrilled her. Around her were priests and nuns and novices ; the altar was laden with flowers, and their perfume, mingling with the odour of incense, almost intoxicated her.

Yes, doubt had gone at last. Surely this act must be pleasing to the Holy Virgin and her Blessed Son. How could it be otherwise? Was she not laying her all before the altar?

The Bishop said some words in Latin which she scarcely understood. She believed they meant that she was to accept the light of the candle as a sign of inward light, and that this light was to expel all darkness. She prayed that it might be so, and that she might enter into the joys of the religious.

“ For ever and ever, Amen.”

The prayer had finished, and Joyce rose from her knees. When she was seated in the choir she looked around. Above her were the vaulted arches of the church, while nuns and priests filled the building.

A sermon followed, but she did not know what it was about. It did not matter ; she was leaving the world, she was renouncing its sins, she was to find rest. Her heart was

aching, but all doubt had gone. Was she not pleasing the blessed Virgin? Was she not renouncing the life which the great God gave her? The love of home, the affection of brothers and sisters, the kisses of mother and father, the gladness of friendship, and all the things which the human heart craves for, were no longer for her. She would never hear the laughter of children or feel the joys of motherhood. She was taking her first step towards death. Let the sun shine and the flowers bloom; let the west winds blow and the birds sing; let lovers rejoice, and children prattle—she renounced them all. Nay, more, she renounced her will, her personality. She had no longer to think for herself: it was for the priest, the confessor, the Mother Superior to command, and for her to obey. No matter how unreasonable, how cruel the commands might be, she must still obey, for she had been made to believe that they spoke with the voice of God.

The sermon finished, the Mother Superior and the Mother Assistant conducted her to the grate between the choir and the altar: here she knelt down.

She had learnt her part, and so, when the Bishop said to her, "My child, what do you demand?" she replied clearly, "The mercy of God and the Holy Habit of Religion."

"Is it with your own free will and consent you demand the Holy Habit of Religion?"

She lifted her eyes to the kindly face of the Bishop, but she looked beyond him. Not far distant she saw the large, strong face, and the deep, unfathomable eyes of Ritzoom. In an instant those terrible interviews flashed back to her mind. She remembered that he, when her heart was crying out for the man she loved, had told her that this love was a sin, and that if she would save her soul she must leave the world and its temptations. The man had bent and swayed her like the wind bends and sways a rush growing in a marsh. He had made her fear the future, he had mastered her by his own dominant personality. And yet she had left home and come hither of her own accord, ay, and now that she had heard of Harrington's faithlessness, she longed with a great longing to forget him.

All this flashed through her mind in a moment.

"Yes, my lord," she said clearly.

"Reverend Mother," said the Bishop, turning to the Mother Superior, "have you made the necessary inquiries, and are you satisfied?"

The Mother Superior's face was very pale, and she looked with pitiful eyes on the young girl kneeling before the Bishop. But she had received her commands; this young girl was to be saved from the world.

"Yes, my lord," she replied.

"My child," said the Bishop, turning to Joyce again, "have you a firm intention to persevere in religion to the end of your life? And do you hope to have sufficient strength to carry constantly the sweet yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, solely for the love and fear of God?"

"Relying on the mercy of God, I hope to be able to do so."

The Bishop's mitre was then taken off, and, rising to his feet, he said in Latin:

"What God has commenced in you, may He make perfect."

"Amen," sobbed Joyce.

"May the Lord banish from you the old man with his works."

"Amen," she replied.

She felt that the life of the world was receding farther and farther away, especially as, being led away, the secular dress was taken from her, and the habit of a novice, being sprinkled with holy water and incensed, was brought to her. While she was being robed with the novice's habit, she could hear them singing in the chapel. Now and then the words came to her:

*"For lo, mine enemies make a tumult:  
And they that hate Thee have lifted up the head.  
They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people,  
And consulted against Thy hidden ones."*

What did it all mean? It sounded very beautiful, but who were the enemies of God? Who were they who took crafty counsel against the people of God? Did they mean her father and Harrington? She supposed it must be so. She knew they were singing from the Psalms, but she was sure they must mean her father and the man whose lips had met hers.

*"O my God, make them like a wheel;  
As the stubble before the wind,  
As the fire burneth a wood,  
And as the flames setteth the mountains on fire:*

*So persecute them with Thy tempest,  
And make them afraid with Thy storm.  
Fill their faces with shame,  
That they may seek Thy name, O Lord.  
Let them be confounded, and troubled for ever;  
Yea, let them be put to shame and perish,  
That men may know that Thou,  
Whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over  
all the earth."*

Was this awful doom to come upon her father and Harrington? She had been told again and again that they were enemies of God and of the Church, and now the Church was praying for their destruction. Still, it was all in the far distance. She felt like one dreaming rather than as one who acted according to her own will.

She re-entered the choir, bearing a lighted candle in her hand, while on either side of her was the Reverend Mother Superior and the Mother Assistant. Her heart gave a great leap, for the choir burst forth in a glad strain of music.

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they?"

Surely that meant her. Her garments were made white in the blood of the Lamb. It was such as she that the Blessed Apostle saw in his vision. Her heart thrilled with ecstatic joy as she received a girdle from the Bishop; her body quivered with emotion as the Mother Superior girded her with it. Ah! surely here was joy untold. She did not hear the Bishop's prayer; enough for her to be girded with the cincture of her holy attire!

Again she knelt, while the Bishop placed the white veil upon her, saying in Latin:

"Receive the white veil, the emblem of inward purity, that thou mayst follow the Lamb without spot, and mayst walk with Him in white, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

After this she remembered but little. The intoxication of the ceremony possessed her. To those who might have watched the proceedings it might be either an empty ceremony on the one hand, or cruel and unnatural on the other; but to Joyce, who for weeks had been preparing for this, who had fasted and prayed till she was almost faint from exhaustion, and was only upheld by excitement, who had sought to work herself into a condition of fervour, who had

been made to believe that by this means she was saving her soul, to Joyce it was a great wonder.

Almost unconsciously, she bowed before the Mother Superior and genuflected before the sacrament, and the Bishop's voice sounded far off and unreal as he, spreading his hands over her, said aloud :

“ *Dominus Vobiscum.* ”

She was still in a state of blissful intoxication. Music and flowers, incense and holy water, lighted candles and solemn processions, suppressed sobbing among the postulants and novices, and the chanting of prayers by the priests, had done their work. It was all wonderful; and when, after being sprinkled with holy water, and the Mother Superior had embraced her, she felt that all her burdens were rolled away, that she had indeed taken her place among the holy ones of God.

Thus Joyce became a novice. So far Father Ritzoom had his way. She had taken the second step towards being a nun, and he saw by her face that she had entered into the ecstasy which he had promised her.

“ The end is not yet, ” he mused when the ceremony was over. “ Presently a reaction will set in. She will be depressed and downhearted; she will think of the old life at home—and then? Well, she is safe here. She can never get away. ”

“ That was a beautiful girl, Ritzoom, ” said a brother priest to him as they sat drinking their wine and smoking their cigars after dinner that day.

“ Yes, a beautiful girl. ”

“ I doubt, though, if she'll become a professed nun. ”

“ Why? ”

“ Oh, there's something in her eyes that betokens a strong will, a spirit of determination. ”

“ Many a will has been broken, and many a determined spirit has been subdued, in a convent, ” said Ritzoom.

“ Yes, but she strikes me as different from the general order of girls who go into religion. ”

“ Perhaps she is. ”

“ Plenty of money, I suppose? ”

“ Not a penny. ”

“ What? ”

“ Not a penny. ”

“ But expectations, eh? Oh, I know she's one of your *protégées*. It was through you she came here. ”

Ritzoom looked at the other steadily; not a muscle of his face moved; his deep, unfathomable eyes seemed to read the other's soul. Nevertheless, the man to whom he spoke seemed to understand him.

"Tell me, Ritzoom," he said.

"No, I shall not."

"Why?"

"I am afraid."

"You afraid?"

"Yes, I."

"What, afraid to trust me?"

"I am afraid to trust myself—I am afraid of everything. I wish this ceremony could have taken place in private, although I have taken every precaution against anything like general publicity. I am afraid, because, although I have the whip-hand at present, a man who is as clever as myself is seeking to outwit me."

"What is he—a brother?"

"No, a lover."

"A strong man, as well as a clever one?"

"Yes; one of those quiet, dogged Englishmen who never confesses defeat."

"And the girl—does she still love him?"

"I don't know—yet."

"Ritzoom, I see trouble."

"So do I; but I see something more."

"What? Victory, I suppose?"

"More than that."

"What do you see, then?"

"A million of money."

"You are joking."

"I never joke," said Ritzoom quietly.

## CHAPTER XXV.

RAYMOND AND HARRINGTON.

“ WELL, Ned? ”

“ Nothing, my friend—nothing.”

“ Not a word, not a sign, not a trace of any sort? ”

“ No, Walter, not a vestige of a clue.”

“ And more than a year has gone. Great God, can it be possible? We have searched for her for more than a year, and without effect. I did hope that we were on the right track this time.”

“ I thought it possible, but I was not so hopeful as you. You see, as time passes away our chances grow less, our work more difficult.”

“ I wish I could have gone with you ; but I had work to do—work that was very important, and——”

“ You have already given more time than you ought, my friend. You have made yourself an old man in a year trying to find her.”

“ Yes, God knows I have. Oh, I was so hopeful, so certain at first, but now, after a year, and every effort has proved to be vain, I feel as though there is nothing for it but to give up.”

“ I shall never give up,” said Ned Harrington, quietly.

Walter Raymond looked at his friend affectionately. He noted the lines on the young barrister's face and the weariness of his eyes. He knew, too, the journeys Harrington had taken, of the time he had devoted to his search. Much as he, her father, loved his child, the love of this man seemed stronger than his own.

“ No, I shall never give up,” he repeated.

“ That's just like you, Ned, and I daresay I am a good deal of a coward ; but I feel the terror of the thing even more than you. I see the daily effects of priestcraft in my home. As a matter of fact, I have no home. My wife and I scarcely ever speak to each other now. Ever since my boy Walter has preferred to obey me rather than the priest, she is bitterer than ever. As for the girls, they continue to avoid me.”

"I thought you said you would leave the neighbourhood of Battersea," said Harrington.

"Yes, but on thinking it all out I found that nothing would be gained by doing so. My wife is just a slave to the priests. What they command she does, and thus I should do no good by going away. You see, I must live in the neighbourhood of London—my practice demands it. Well, suppose I went to St. Albans, or Epping, or Croydon, it would make no difference. My wife is not a child, and, much as I hate her creeds, I cannot act the part of a tyrant. She must believe in what religion she will—I cannot stop her."

"But the girls?"

"Both of them declared that if I sent them to a Protestant school they would run away. Their minds are completely poisoned against me; their mother has made them believe that I am a kind of anti-Christ. You see, I can do nothing. I send them both to a high school where there is no religious bias, but I know that they go to the man Brandon for confession; I know they are regular devotees to the Church. They are taught not to obey me because I am an enemy to religion; and they obey their mother, who is bound hand and foot by the priest. But I do believe I have saved young Walter."

"That's good."

"Yes, I suppose there is something more robust, something more matter-of-fact about a boy. Anyhow, he pays no heed to the priests, and when he was at home went with me to hear a preacher who hates sacerdotalism. Oh, he is a good boy. For a time he was afraid of Brandon. Being baptised into the Roman Church, Brandon and Kelly were able to hold a kind of curse over his head; but he told me about it, and after that he quickly told Brandon that he preferred obeying his father to obeying him. But the boy suffers all sorts of persecution when he is at home.

"Yes, as soon as he was in the house they were at him. That was why I sent him away to school. He's all right now, and as happy as the day is long. His letters are my only earthly joy. I think the experiences of his home will make him a Protestant lecturer when he grows up. He sees what it all means—he sees that the priest has come between his mother and his father, between me and my children; he sees that all trust, all love, all home life is gone; that, through the priest, our home is broken up."

"And you have told them about Joyce?"



“ Yes, I told them. I could not let them go on believing in what was wrong. Of course the girls rejoice and almost envy their sister ; but young Walter—well, he is all the other way. And yet, you know, we cannot prove that she’s in one of these places.”

“ No,” said Harrington ; “ we can prove nothing—yet. But we will, my friend, we will.”

“ That’s right,” said Raymond. “ I am glad you keep hopeful, even although I cannot. Still, one thing comforts me : the world knows nothing about it—it is not talked about in the newspapers.”

“ The children say nothing, I suppose? ”

“ No, I told them to say nothing about it. You have not heard any gossip, have you? ”

“ Oh, no. The whole business is unknown, utterly unknown. Sometimes I think we have done wrong in keeping it quiet.”

“ I could not bear the affair to be made public, old man—I could not, indeed. Besides, what good would it do? You see, we cannot prove that she’s gone to a convent or a religious institution of any sort.”

“ No, that’s the worst of it. Of course, we have no doubt about it ; but to prove it is another matter. As you know, I’ve visited many of these places ; I have asked questions, but I have had no right to search. I’ve only been allowed to see the rooms to which seculars are admitted. You see, many of these convents belong to what are called ‘ enclosed orders.’ A man I know told me the other day that when he went to see his daughters he was only allowed to see them through an iron grille. He said they only stayed a minute. They asked no questions, and answered only very evasively what he asked them. He is a Catholic too.”

“ Did they tell him whether they were happy, and whether they were kindly treated? ”

“ Oh, of course. They dare not do otherwise. When a girl is once in one of these places she is bound body and soul. In the Confessional her Father Confessor can probe her conscience, and question her upon the minutest details of her life, and if she deliberately withholds anything in making her confession she would be guilty of mortal sin, and she would not be absolved by the words pronounced by the priest at her absolution. Besides this, she has a director of conscience, who may meet her in the parlour and direct her in regard to her intentions and actions, and here the priest

is not bound by the seal of the confessional. Well, under these circumstances, what chance has she? She breathes the very atmosphere of priestcraft; she is taught that it is her bounden duty to confess everything, and to obey in everything. Disobedience is the worst form of sin, and every letter is read by the Superior. How, then, could she dare to make known where she was? If she rebelled, then the girl would enter a period of persecution. Oh, the system of convent life is complete; there is no loophole anywhere."

"But they can escape?"

"How can they? The Superior holds the keys. Besides, they are made to fear the anger of the Church and the power of the priest, and they are there through the most impressionable years of their lives. They are taught to fear and obey these men and women ecclesiastics as though they were God Himself. If they even desire to escape it is their duty to confess it."

"But there are some who are sane enough to learn to laugh at the whole business."

"Yes, and what then?"

"They can escape."

"Yes, a few have escaped from the convents of active orders, and we know the revelations they have made; but from those of enclosed orders escape is next to impossible. Their wills, their desires, are subservient to those of their superiors. Besides, girls of strong wills are watched closely. When a father can only speak to his child through a grille, that child might as well be in prison for all chance there is of escape. I tell you, this is what the last twelve months have taught me. When a girl enters a convent she becomes part of a carefully-thought-out system, and it is only in rare instances she breaks through that system, unless outside influences are brought to bear."

"Yes, and there is the difficulty."

"There is the difficulty, as you say. In our case, although we've searched high and low, we are no nearer now than we were a year ago. By this time Joyce must be completely under the dominion of the conventual system, unless she asserts her Protestant nature and early education. If she does that, she will be closely safe-guarded. Our experience and my inquiries during the last year have taught us that the only means of escaping conventual life, when the authorities are determined to keep a girl in it, is by duplicity, and that, you say, Joyce is incapable of."

“ I never knew her tell a lie or act deceitfully in my life,” said Walter Raymond fervently. “ Joyce was always the very soul of truth.”

“ I believe you,” said Ned Harrington, with lover-like faith. “ Then, you know,” he went on, “ it is a rule in many convents for those who join the community to give up the name by which she was christened—gives up her surname, and adopts the name of some saint. So that, even if we were pretty sure that Joyce was at some particular convent, and we went and asked to see her, the authorities would feel justified in saying she was not there. From this standpoint they would be speaking the truth, even although they knew they were deceiving you. They would say that there was, canonically, no Joyce Raymond ; that she had ceased to be when she became Sister Maria, or Sister Theresa, or Sister Winnifred, after some saint or other.”

“ Ned, my friend, you are just confirming me in my despair. Sometimes I think I shall go mad.”

“ But I do not despair,” said Ned Harrington. “ I believe that whatever motives they had in inducing her to go to a convent, those motives will at some time necessitate their making her whereabouts known.”

The two men were sitting in Walter Raymond's office. More than a year had passed since Harrington had received the telegram which had brought him from Plymouth to London. During that year both these men had bent all their energies to finding Joyce's whereabouts. They had followed a score of clues, they had visited dozens of conventual institutions, they had assumed many disguises, and had spent time, energy, and money without stint ; but all in vain.

They had interrogated Father Brandon, who denied all knowledge of her whereabouts, and indignantly refused to be questioned concerning her departure. They had set men to keep a watch on Father Ritzoom, they had used many means to surprise him into a confession ; but all in vain. The fate of Joyce seemed a sealed book. Mrs. Raymond, on her part, declared that she was totally and entirely ignorant of her daughter's whereabouts. Walter Raymond had extracted from her the confession that she believed that she had gone into religion, and that she herself had done her best in persuading Joyce to take this step ; but where she was, she declared she was willing to swear on the Cross that she did not know. She might be in Great Britain or Ireland, or she might be at some place on the Continent ; she had no idea.

She declared, moreover, that her only reason for acting as she had acted was for the sake of Joyce's soul, and that if like circumstances occurred again, she would repeat her action. She grew hysterical when talking about this, and declared that she would a thousand times rather see her child in her coffin than the wife of a heretic like Ned Harrington.

Every road, then, had ended in a *cul-de-sac*—there was no thoroughfare anywhere. Harrington had just returned from a lonely convent in Wales, where he had reason to believe that a young girl had been taken, but after the most minute and searching inquiries he had been led to the conclusion that this girl had no connection with Joyce. Not that he was sure; he could not be. He knew every time he visited a convent that there were dozens of rooms which he had not entered. Moreover, the Mother Superiors would seem to have reason on their side if they declared that no man could with propriety enter the private cells of the religious. If the Government had refused to allow public officials to enter, what chance was there for a Protestant stranger to make anything like a satisfactory examination? He had no doubt but that the authorities had been warned against both him and Walter Raymond, and he felt that he was powerless in every direction.

And yet he did not give up hope. He felt sure that everything was a carefully worked-out scheme, and, clever as Ritzoom and his satellites might be, they could not at some time avoid disclosing Joyce's whereabouts. Even then they would be safe from the law. As a devotee to the Church she would, if need be, swear that she went into religion willingly; and even although she might be led to confess that Ritzoom had sought to influence her in this direction, no English judge would regard him as guilty of a criminal offence. All the same, the truth must come to light at some time, and then would be his opportunity.

"Let's go and get some dinner, Ned."

"Where, Walter?"

"I don't mind. I don't feel like going home. As I told you, my house is no longer home to me. My wife insists on rendering an exact account of her expenditure every week as though she were a housekeeper; she asks for a certain sum to cover the expenses of herself and the girls, and beyond that she leaves me severely alone."

"Does Brandon visit your house?"

"Oh, yes; I have given orders that I do not wish a priest

to enter, but what is the use? I have discharged two servants for conniving at the visits of these fellows; but I have given up hope now. Walter is away at school, and Joyce—oh, my poor little Joyce! Let's go to dinner somewhere, Ned. Come to my club."

"I say, Walter, listen to this."

"What is it, Ned?"

"It's about a case tried yesterday; it may interest you. Listen :

"Sir G—— B—— concluded yesterday the hearing of a probate case in which Father T—— A——, a Roman Catholic priest, of St. Mary's Church, W——, was the defendant. By a codicil in her will, the late Miss S—— F—— T—— left Mr. P——, a solicitor, and the plaintiff in this case, the income of £1,500, the capital on his death to go to Father A——, her confessor, for the benefit of his Church.

"The codicil was made when Miss T—— was in a dying condition, and Mr. P—— opposed probate on the ground that she could not have known the contents of the document.

"In cross-examination, Father A—— said *it was probable* he told Mr. P—— the codicil was *prepared by a solicitor*. As a fact, he wrote it himself at the request of Miss T——. He knew that before the codicil was made the testatrix was lying in a soporific condition. He said that if she were nudged she might arouse herself. Before he drew up the codicil for her, he confessed her. That was five minutes after he got into the house. He also administered the communion. He now realised that it would have been better to put in the codicil that the money was given in trust, but he was in a hurry when he drew it up.

"Mr. P——, K.C. : I have no doubt you were. She might have flickered off at any moment.

"In stating the case against the codicil, Mr. P—— said in 1900 Miss T—— told Mr. P—— she was going to benefit him and his family as her oldest friends. Mr. P—— said in that case he could have nothing to do with the drafting of the will, and she must get another solicitor. Another solicitor was employed, and Mr. P—— had nothing whatever of do with the preparation of the will.

"Sir G—— B——, in summing up, said, with regard to the evidence of Father A——, it was remarkable that a person of his profession and culture *should have shuffled and prevaricated as he had done*. In the box he was apparently

afraid to give a straightforward and direct answer to almost any question. That was a sight not pleasant to contemplate in a man in his position.

““ In the result, the jury found that the codicil was duly executed; but that the testatrix was not of a sound mind, and did not know and approve of its contents.

““ The president pronounced against the codicil, and in favour of the will, and ordered that costs should follow the event.” \*

“ Yes,” said Raymond, when Harrington had finished reading, “ it’s all of a piece.”

“ You see,” said Harrington, “ that the priest fellow was willing to prevaricate to any extent to get this money. The capital of £1,500 a year is a good sum. He went to her when she was in a soporific condition and prepared this codicil, telling the real heir to the money that the codicil was probably prepared by a solicitor, whereas the fellow wrote it himself.”

“ What are you driving at, Ned? ”

“ I’m wanting you to see that it was money, and not souls, that the fellow was aiming at.”

“ Of course.”

“ This is one of many similar cases. In this case, of course, the priest missed his mark, but it is not always so. I saw a case the other day where a nun who, on taking her vows, made over everything she possessed to her Order, became heiress to a large sum of money.”

“ Of course, everything went to the Order? ”

“ Everything.”

“ If Joyce had money, or were the possible heiress of money, I could understand; but she hasn’t a penny.”

“ No,” said Harrington quietly. “ Walter, I don’t feel like going to your club to dinner; it is a gloomy place. Let us go to a cheerful restaurant—say the Holborn, or the Trocadero, or the Criterion.”

“ Very well,” said Raymond; “ I don’t mind where it is.”

They went out into the street and walked westward. A few minutes later they reached a fashionable restaurant, and entered. A band was playing in the orchestra, and a gaily-dressed crowd were seated at the tables.

“ Here’s an empty table,” said Harrington; “ we can have a good view of the whole place from here.”

\* The above is an extract from a London daily paper.

They took their seats and gave their order. Close by was a table seated for six. Evidently it was to be presently occupied by some party. An air of luxury pervaded the place, the perfume of exotic flowers was wafted everywhere, the music was sweet and seductive.

The waiter had only just brought them their soup when the people for whom the adjoining table had been reserved entered and took their places. Evidently it was a family party, who had met there to dine before going to some place of amusement. It consisted of a man and his wife, three children, and a young woman who evidently acted in the capacity of nurse or governess. The man was evidently a prosperous and contented man, who was bent on giving the party a pleasant evening. The table was close to them, and only partly hidden by a screen, which had been placed between the two.

"Yes, we'll take the dinner, if you please," he said to the waiter. "I'll leave the selection of the dishes to you. You know what is best. You have the reputation of giving the best dinner in London, and I'm going to see if you deserve it."

He laughed heartily as he said this, giving an affectionate look to his family.

"Now, Miss Robinson, you must make the most of this free night. You must forget your duties as governess. We are all going to have a pleasant evening. This is rather different from a convent, eh?" And he glanced around on the luxurious appointments of the restaurant.

"Yes," said the governess to whom he had spoken. "I wonder what the Mother Superior would say if she saw me here?"

The man laughed pleasantly.

"How long is it since you left?" he asked.

"Six months ago. I was ill for three months after I left."

"You had no vocation, eh?"

"No; while they believed my uncle was rich, and was leaving me all his money, they said I had. I was terribly rebellious, and so I had to mortify myself by whipping myself and starving; but when it came out that my uncle died a poor man, and that I had nothing, they came to the conclusion that I had no vocation."

"Ha—ha!" laughed the man. He evidently had but little sympathy with the conventual life.

“A poor girl took the white veil the day I left,” went on the governess; “at least, I suppose she did. She told me that she had neither money nor expectations of any. So I suppose they make a difference. I did feel sorry for her. She was such a beautiful girl—not twenty, I should think. I tried to find out who she was; but I could not. She was not allowed to hold any communication with us. I am sure that there was some mystery about her: she had such a sad look in her eyes.”

Walter Raymond heard every word; he could not help it. The man spoke loudly, and every word of the girl reached them plainly. Of course, there was nothing very special in the occurrence. Many girls had gone to a convent, and then, not having a vocation, had come back to the world and had taken a situation. Nevertheless, Raymond and Harrington were greatly interested in what they heard.

“I’ll try and get a word with them before they leave,” said Ned Harrington.

Walter Raymond shook his head. He had been disappointed too often to build much upon such a conversation. A moment later both of them gave a start, for they saw Father Ritzoom and Father Brandon walk into the restaurant.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### FATHER RITZOOM'S CLEVERNESS.

THE two priests seemed to take no notice of the people who had gathered, but walked to another part of the room. Moreover, the table at which they sat was well-nigh hidden by a huge palm that had been placed near.

"We are in good company," said Harrington; "two Jesuit priests, and a girl who has come out of a convent."

"Listen," said Walter Raymond.

"You were not a proper nun, of course?" It was the man who spoke.

"No; I was only a postulant."

"A postulant is one who is on trial?"

"Yes; it is a sort of first probation. She has to pass through this period in order to find out if she is fitted for a nun's life, and she may be made to feel that if she is not fitted she is terribly disgraced."

"I see."

"During this period it seems to be the Mother Superior's great desire to break the girl's will, and to subdue her into a condition of absolute servility. You see, obedience is the principal virtue in a convent. If the girl shows any sign of a will of her own, or of the slightest desire to assert it, she is regarded as being under the influence of the Devil. When she ceases to have any will of her own, and longs to do absolutely what the Superior wishes, she is believed to be in a state of grace."

"Good. That is splendid."

"And you did not get to this condition?" added the lady.

"No; but I was getting to be careless about everything. I got into a numbed sort of a state. You see, before I went, the priest, my confessor, was always talking to me about the joys of the religious life. At first I laughed at it; but by-and-by he got over me. I was afraid of him, and his constant exhortation got on my nerves. At last I consented to go in, and I had a terrible time. I was always getting into

trouble. I would not spy upon the other postulants, which we were taught was our duty. I would not tell tales about them. Moreover, I grew angry when I found others spying upon me. This, of course, was very wrong. Still, they insisted that I had a vocation, and I was constantly impressed with the disgrace of leaving a convent because of not having a vocation. Then, in a curious way, I heard that an uncle of mine, who is very eccentric, had willed all his money to me. I determined to get away, but I found myself as much a prisoner as a bird in a cage. At one time I was reduced to a skeleton through insufficient food. I had to kneel for hours before the image of the Virgin and pray, and the most terrible penances were inflicted upon me."

The girl shuddered as she spoke, and the two saw fear in her eyes.

"Don't say any more about it," said the man kindly. "You are out of it now, and there is no reason that you should go back again."

"Oh, they wouldn't have me back. One day I noticed a sudden change in the behaviour of the Reverend Mother. She called me to her, and asked me whether I still thought I had a vocation. I told her I did not think I had. Then she said she had doubts herself, but that she would try me a few weeks longer. Then I heard hints that my uncle had lost his money. A little while afterwards I was told I could go."

"And had he lost his money?"

"No; but he had married."

"Ha—ha! I expect if he had not you would have been a nun by this time."

"I might have been a novice, but I don't think I should, for I had determined to persist in my refusal if I could not escape. The day before I went I spoke to the young girl I spoke to you about. She seemed so sad and so woe-begone that I tried to help her. We had been told not to talk with her about anything save religion. She had not been allowed to disclose her real name, so I concluded that there must be some mystery about her. But she would tell me nothing, and yet I am sure she longed to. I found out two things about her, however."

"What?"

"One was that she knew Father Brandon, the priest who used to be my confessor. I am sure she did, for she gave a start when I mentioned his name."

“Did you hear that?” said Harrington to Raymond in a whisper.

“Hear? I should think I did. But be quiet. It may be bad manners, but I can’t help listening. Besides, they are not talking secrets, and we could not help hearing unless we closed our ears. We must speak to them presently. Of course, it may mean nothing, but we must leave no stone unturned.”

“You say she was a beautiful girl?” It was the lady who asked the question.

“She was the most beautiful girl in the convent. We were supposed to despise such things as beauty, and yet we all felt jealous of her. All the same, we liked her because she was so sweet and good.”

“Tell us what she was like.”

“I am afraid I am not good at descriptions, Mrs. Varcoe, but she was about nineteen or twenty years of age. She had a great mass of curling hair, which, although fairly dark, shone like gold. She had great dark blue eyes, and her face was a perfect oval. I never saw such a perfect complexion.”

“Was she tall or short?”

“Oh, rather tall, and before she entered the convent she had a perfect figure. But constant fasting is not good, either for the complexion or the figure. I am sure it was a case of being crossed in love. No one could doubt it as one looked into her eyes.”

“And was she anybody in particular?”

“I don’t know. I asked her if she were an heiress or anything of that sort, and she said no; she had no dowry to bring to the convent, and her father was a Protestant. I think she said he was a lawyer.”

“And that is all you know about her?”

“Yes, you see I left the next morning, while she took the white veil. I remember saying to her, ‘Well, you will be called Ursula, while I am thankful I shall have my own name again.’ Oh, I forgot—she told me her secular name, and it struck me as peculiar afterwards that it should be the name you gave to the baby. I never heard it before.”

Walter Raymond rose to his feet. He was on the point of going to them, and asking the name of the convent, but before he had taken a step the change on the girl’s face startled him. She had been speaking with girlish freedom. Evidently she was very happy with the people with whom she was living, and they treated her as a friend. Both the

man and the woman spoke to her kindly, and she seemed to feel safe with them. The children, too, regarded her with affection. Perhaps this accounted for the perfectly frank and almost careless manner in which she spoke. But in a moment the blood receded from her face, a look of terror came into her eyes. Evidently she had seen something or someone who had filled her with fear. For the ghastly expression which had suddenly flashed from her eyes could only have come from fear.

"What is the matter, Miss Robinson? Are you ill?"

The girl did not reply, but looked around the room as though anxious to escape.

But even this would not have stopped Walter Raymond from going to them if at that moment he had not felt a hand upon his shoulder, and heard a voice which filled him with anger.

He turned, and saw Father Ritzoom.

"Ah, Mr. Raymond, forgive me; but Brandon and I saw you two together, and we determined to come and speak to you."

"Excuse me," said Walter Raymond, "if I do not wish to hold any communication with you."

"Ah, that is a pity, for both Brandon and I have some news which we think will be interesting to you."

Walter Raymond turned to his friend, and noticed that the portly form of Father Brandon stood between him and the party at the table.

"Mr. Harrington," he heard Brandon say, "we really must have five minutes with you two. I am sure we can tell you news which you are longing to hear."

Both of them stood with their backs towards the girl whose speech had interested them so greatly, and as they stood side by side they hid the table from them.

For a moment Walter Raymond well-nigh lost his head.

"Do you mean to say that you have come to speak to me about my daughter Joyce?" he said.

"That's what I do mean. Ah, Mr. Raymond, it is a year ago since we met at the Cosmopolitan. Well, you know what you came about; you know, too, that we were at cross-purposes. No doubt both you and Mr. Harrington felt very bitterly towards me, and said some things about me which, to say the least of them, were not highly complimentary. Well, I do not blame you, although I can assure you that both of you were entirely mistaken. You believed that Brandon



"A LOOK OF TERROR CAME INTO HER EYES."

(p. 254.)



and I—well, what shall we call it?—aided and abetted your daughter in going to a religious institution without either your knowledge or consent. That is so, isn't it? Tell the truth—isn't that so?"

"And what then?" said Walter Raymond. He was still thinking about what he had heard that night, still tracing links of connection between the girl's story about the postulant, and his daughter. Of course, it might only be a coincidence, and might not have any real connection with his child, whose life had been unknown to him for more than a year; but he longed to speak to the girl nevertheless, and felt irritated that the two priests should have come and spoken in such tones of goodwill and familiarity. Nevertheless, the presence of the two priests interested both himself and Harrington. Nay, more, angry as they were with these men who, they were sure, were at the bottom of all their trouble, their presence—and especially that of Ritzoom—attracted them strongly. Both felt sure that the priests knew where Joyce was, while the story of the strange girl might mean nothing.

"What then?" said Ritzoom. "I should like to prove to you that you are mistaken, and that, while appearances were against us, your conclusions were not justified."

"You know where Joyce is?"

It was Harrington who spoke.

"I think I do, Mr. Harrington. Of course, it is difficult to speak for certain, but I think I do. That is why I wanted five minutes' chat with you."

He lowered his voice into a tone of confidence.

"I believe I saw her some time ago," he said.

He spoke impressively, and unconsciously both of them were led to look into the dark, deep-set, impenetrable eyes of the Jesuit. The man fascinated them both. For the moment they forgot the conversation of the girl who had been sitting so near to them; in spite of themselves, they felt that Ritzoom was about to tell them what for a year they had been trying to discover. Nay, more, they felt kindlier towards him. The man compelled their attention and their interest, whether they would or not; besides, he had said he believed he had seen Joyce.

So much were they interested that even Harrington, who heard voices at the table, which was now hidden partly by the forms of the priests and partly by the screen which had been placed near, forgot the presence of the party which had so interested him, and eagerly questioned the Jesuit.

“ You saw Miss Raymond ? ” he said.

“ I believe I did. ”

“ You believe you did. Where ? ”

“ I was in the South of France last week, ” he said, “ and I had occasion to visit a school there ; it was not far from Marseilles. You have heard of the place, of course—Avignon ; at least, the school is on the outskirts of Avignon. The place is not exactly religious, although it is under our supervision. They had several English teachers for English subjects. It is a large school. Oh, you boast in England of your education, and doubtless it is improving rapidly ; but it is poor compared with French schools. But perhaps I am prejudiced. Unlike my friend Brandon here, I am not a worshipper of everything English. ”

“ Yes, yes, ” said Walter Raymond ; “ but you say you saw Joyce ? ”

So eager was he to find his child that he forgot the fact that it was they who aided her in her escape, forgot that by Mrs. Raymond’s confession they had determined to keep any knowledge of her whereabouts from them.

“ At least, I saw someone who remarkably resembled her. ”

“ Tell me—tell me ! ”

“ I was standing at the window of the Reverend Mother’s private room, looking across the grounds, when I saw a group of girls accompanied by a teacher. I was so struck by the face of this teacher that I asked who she was.

“ ‘ Je ne parle pas Anglais, ’ she said, for in my excitement at seeing an English face I had spoken in English. This was rather funny, for, do you know, we had been speaking in French. Do you speak French, Mr. Raymond ? But of course you do. And you, too, Mr. Harrington ? ”

“ Yes, yes ; go on. ”

“ I do not speak French well myself. Cosmopolitan as I am, I do not speak French perfectly. The French say that theirs is an easy language, and yet I find it far easier to speak Spanish, German, Italian, or even Russian. Strange, isn’t it ? ”

Harrington looked at Ritzoom suspiciously. What did he mean by this evident desire to lengthen the conversation ?

“ Yes, very strange ; but go on. ”

“ ‘ J’ai pensé que vous parlez l’Anglais parfaitement, ’ I said in my bad French. ‘ Mais dites moi, Madame, qui est la belle Mademoiselle. Elle est Anglaise, n’est ce pas ? ’ ”



“ ‘Oui, Monsieur, l'Abbé,’ she said, ‘elle est Anglais ; elle est de Londres, elle enseigne la langue Anglais.’ Ah, I see you smile ; you are laughing at my trying to reproduce our conversation in French. You are doubtless French scholars. Ah, you see that my French is what you laugh at as Fleet Street French. And yet people say that we cosmopolitans are better linguists than the English. I do not believe it myself.”

Harrington sprang to his feet ; he noticed the mocking smile on the Jesuit's face.

“Excuse me a moment,” he said, and left the others together. He moved the screen which had partly hidden the party before the priests came up. The table had been vacated, the people were gone. He noticed a door close to the table by which they could escape, and which was hidden from him as he sat at dinner. He looked for the waiter ; he was nowhere to be seen.

“They must be in the vestibule,” he said to himself, and he rushed thither. Here he found a great crowd. It was the popular hour for the pleasure-going public to dine before going to the theatres. He examined every face eagerly, but those he sought were not there. He went to the door, and saw a great crowd coming and going. Up Shaftesbury Avenue and down Piccadilly Circus a great number of cabs passed to and fro, but there was no sign of the people he sought. They had left the dining hall, ay—and left the restaurant, while he had been listening to the priests.

Still he would not give up hope. He entered the restaurant again, and looked at every place where he might be likely to see them, but all to no purpose. Again he entered the dining hall, and this time caught sight of the waiter who had brought their dinner.

“You served that party sitting here?” he said, pointing to the table.

“Yes, sare.”

“Have they left the restaurant?”

“Yes, sare.”

“Do you know them?”

The man looked away from Harrington, as though he resented the question.

“Do you know them?” repeated Harrington, holding half-a-crown between his finger and thumb.

The man took the half-crown, and moved towards the table.

"No, sare, I do not know them. Is monsieur a detective?"

"No, nothing of the sort, but I want to find them."

"Have they done anything wrong? Are they wanted?"

"Perhaps—why?"

"They left in one great hurry, sare. They order the dinner, sare; they say they have plenty time for one good dinner, then *voilà!* they ask for the *compte*. They not finish their *vin*, they not finish their dinner. They pay, sare, but they pay in the vestibule; they have *une voiture* ordered while they pay, and then they go, I know not where."

"When did they leave?"

"Ah, they leave the table, sare, when the two abbés come to your table. I think they were afraid of them, sare. I think the mademoiselle not wish to be seen by them, sare. She fear much, monsieur."

"That is all you know?"

"Yes, sare."

"You have never seen them here before?"

"Never."

"Thank you. If ever they come here again, that is, if either of them ever comes, will you by some means try and find out where they live? If you do I will make it worth your while."

"Yes, sare."

They were completely hidden from the others by the screen, and both spoke in low tones.

"Here is my card," he said; "you will not fail to let me know?"

"No, sare, I will not fail."

"Your name is——"

"Pierre Dumand, sare."

Harrington went to Walter Raymond again. Ritzoom was speaking earnestly.

"Mr. Raymond thinks I am on a wrong scent, Mr. Harrington," he said blandly, as the young barrister came up.

"I think so too," said Harrington quietly.

"Why, do you know anything yourself?"

"No; I know nothing."

"And yet you have searched."

"Yes, I have searched."

"You have also used your sleuth-hound, Signore Volpe."

"Yes."

"And yet you have found out nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing. I have not discovered the faintest clue to her whereabouts."

"Ah! it is very distressing."

"Very."

"And Mr. Raymond is also in the dark. I am sorry for you. Ah, Mr. Harrington, you still think I have what you call abducted her; but, believe me, I am much grieved, much grieved for you both. I thought I might have thrown a little light when I came to you; Brandon thought so too, but I am mistaken, Mr. Raymond tells me. My description does not tally with actual facts, he says."

"I have no doubt Mr. Raymond is right."

The Jesuit looked at him with a mocking smile. He seemed to be trying to arouse him to anger, but not a muscle of Harrington's face moved.

"Ah, Brandon, my friend, I think we may return to our simple dinner. It seems we cannot help these gentlemen, after all. I am so sorry. I wanted to convince Mr. Raymond that although he regards us as enemies, we are trying to be his friends."

Walter Raymond seemed to be about to speak; but when he saw Harrington's face, he remained quiet.

"*Au revoir*, gentlemen," said Ritzoom, rising. He smiled mockingly as he spoke, as though he no longer desired to wear a mask of any sort.

"*Au revoir*," said Harrington. "By the way," he added, "I had no idea your French was so bad. You who have the reputation of being such an excellent French scholar, too."

"Yes, it is bad, but I am giving it attention. And really, after all, it served all right. You understood perfectly, did you not?"

"Oh, yes, I understood perfectly."

The two priests walked away as though they had had a pleasant conversation, while Harrington beckoned to their waiter.

"We'll have our smoke and our coffee at your office, Raymond, if you don't mind," he said.

"Yes," replied Raymond, "the housekeeper makes very good coffee."

They walked out of the restaurant and hailed a cab. Raymond gave the address to the cabby, and then neither spoke a word until they reached their destination. When they were in Raymond's office, however, the lawyer made a very ex-

pressive remark concerning the immediate ancestry of Father Ritzoom.

“ All the more fools we to be the dupe of the devil,” said Harrington ; “ but all is not lost yet, my friend.”

“ Tell me,” said Raymond, his eyes burning with a faint gleam of hope.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### HUSBAND AND WIFE.

BUT Ned Harrington did not reply immediately. He slowly loaded his pipe and lit it without speaking a word, while Walter Raymond watched him.

"Give me a piece of paper and a pencil, Raymond," he said.

Raymond asked no questions, but supplied him with what he had asked for. Harrington sharpened the pencil deliberately, and then sat for a time staring into vacancy. Presently he set to work on the paper, while Walter Raymond sat thinking.

"How is that?" said Harrington, after about five minutes, passing him the slip of paper.

"Exactly."

"You would know him from that?"

"Anywhere."

"I am glad of that. I wanted to be sure of it before it faded from my memory. If I were to colour it, I could put in the wine-mark below the left ear."

"Yes; still, searching for a man in London is like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

"But the needle has a name."

"Varcoe. Yes, I heard that."

"Not a common name."

"No; but I say, Walter, don't you feel ready to cut your throat?"

"Very nearly. But it seems as though the fates were against us."

"Against us! They put a wonderful chance in our way. That girl knows where Joyce is. Joyce was the one of whom she spoke; I am sure of it. Oh, what fools—what blind fools we were, Walter—we, who know what Ritzoom is, to allow him to take us in like that! And yet I did not feel it at the time."

“ Neither did I.”

“ At first I really believed the fellow knew where Joyce was. I believed he was going to tell us. He made me so eager that I almost forgot that Miss Robinson.”

“ So did I. He came to us so eagerly, he said so plainly that he knew where Joyce was, that I jumped at his bait like a fish jumps at a fly. I did not realise that he had a purpose in it all ; I was sure he was going to tell us what we desired to know. Somehow or other, he chained my attention ; he made me almost believe that he was a good fellow at heart ; unknown to us, he almost made us play the part of the spider and the fly.”

“ Almost.”

“ He’s a wonderfully clever fellow, Harrington, a wonderfully clever fellow.”

“ So was the gentleman who tempted Faust,” remarked Harrington drily.

“ I did not feel he was fooling us until you got up ; then I saw the whole thing. But I kept up the farce. I hoped you would be in time.”

“ But I was not.”

“ Tell me all about it, Harrington.”

Harrington gave a description of his fruitless efforts and of his talk with the waiter. When he had finished Walter Raymond could contain himself no longer.

“ Oh, what fools ! What blithering fools we were ! ” he said.

“ That’s not half strong enough,” replied Harrington.

“ Of course, we ought to have known. Ritzoom saw us— saw us sitting in close proximity to that girl. They knew her, and then, fearing lest we should get to talking with them, or of getting some clue, they joined us, and kept us talking till they were gone. They had to find some excuse for joining us, so they——”

“ Exactly,” said Walter Raymond, “ and they succeeded better than they knew, for they could not know that we had heard anything.”

“ No, they could not know. Of course, Ritzoom will look upon it as a possibility, but I gave him no hint.”

“ No ; you told him that we had discovered nothing.”

“ Neither have we. If we had hinted that we had heard anything we should have spoiled everything.”

“ You mean that he would have removed her to another convent? ”

" Exactly. But we must find out where this family lives ; we must get into communication with them. Then that girl will tell us where Joyce is. What plan would you suggest for finding out? "

" Advertising would be no good," said Walter Raymond ; " we should put Ritzoom on his guard. He would be more likely to see the advertisement than this man Varcoe."

" Even if he is called Varcoe."

" But he is. We heard her call him by that name."

" We heard her call the lady, you mean. He may be her brother, and brought his widowed sister with her children to London in order to give them a pleasant evening."

" Yes, of course. But did you see the look of fear on the girl's face? "

Harrington nodded.

" Still, I have the man's face here," he said, looking at the sketch he had made. " I must give this to Signore Volpe. I will make another copy for myself, and another for you."

" Yes. Do you know, Ned, in spite of everything, I feel happier? That girl has made me feel nearer to Joyce. I know now that she is not dead, and I should judge that she is in England."

" She is a novice," said Harrington, moodily.

" But that is not a nun."

" It is a long way towards it. She must be in greater fear of these men and women ecclesiastics than ever now. Her mind will more than ever be bent to their wills. If we find her—I say, my friend, we must be quick, or we shall lose everything."

" How—what do you mean? "

" She is over twenty now. In another year you will have no legal control over her, and by that time she will be in the power of these people, body and soul."

" No, she won't," said Walter Raymond.

" Why do you think so? "

" Because she is not a fool, and she has a sense of humour. She is my child, Ned, and although at present they have got hold of her, she will see through it in time. She will see that this kind of thing is not religion at all, but only a miserable caricature of the teachings of Christ. I know Joyce's character, and I tell you she can never spend her whole life as a nun. Besides, she loves you, Ned."

" Yes, but who knows what they have told her about me? They may have told her that I am married, or a hundred

things; then her very love for me would drive her to fall in with their wishes."

For a long time they talked together, and then Raymond made his way home. It was about ten o'clock when he arrived at the house. When he entered the room in which he and his wife used to sit of an evening, he found her alone, reading a devotional book.

"Are the children gone to bed, Lucy?"

"Yes. Do you wish any refreshments?"

"No, thank you; I dined in the city."

"Alone?"

"No; I dined with Harrington."

Mrs. Raymond was silent for a moment; then she burst into tears.

"What is the matter, Lucy?"

"What is that to you? You do not care for me."

Walter Raymond bit his lips, but did not answer.

"You dine in the city, while I am left alone night after night," she said.

"You know why, Lucy. It is by your own wish that you are left alone. You said you wished us to be strangers."

"How could it be otherwise when you are an enemy to my faith? When against my will you have turned our boy against the faith in which he was baptised?"

"I think the less said about that the better," replied Walter. "Against my will, yes, and without my knowledge, you had the children baptised by a Roman priest; you have taught them to distrust me, to avoid me; you have ruined our home with your priestcraft, and then you accuse me of trying to save our boy."

"Trying to save him? Trying to ruin him, rather!"

Raymond laughed bitterly.

"We were so happy once," sobbed Mrs. Raymond presently.

"Until the priest came between us," said Walter.

"Oh, you don't know, you don't know! You are in the dark. If I have seemed unkind, cruel to you, it was only because I want to save my soul. And now to think that Walter, who was baptised into the Church, should——"

Mrs. Raymond burst out crying again.

"Will nothing move you, Walter?" she said.

It was the first time she had called him by his Christian name for months, and Walter Raymond's heart softened for a moment, but only for a moment. He remembered the



bitter experiences of the last two years ; he called to mind the fact that for more than a year he had been searching for his eldest child. He remembered how that very evening he had been outwitted by a priest, and then his heart became hard again. He reflected that he had no home, no wife, and that only one of his children remained truly his own, because of the so-called religion in which his wife believed.

"Nothing," he replied quietly.

"Oh, Walter, if you only knew the danger in which you stood! You are closing your heart to the truth; you are heaping up agony in the time to come."

"Don't be silly, Lucy," he replied. "As you know, when you became a Romanist I raised no objections. I did not like it, but I said little or nothing. In my foolishness I thought it would not destroy our love or our home life; I had no thought that it would alienate us; I did not believe you would try and turn the children against me. But your religion has done all these things; you have become the slave of the priest. And that is not all. You took part in persuading Joyce to leave home, and then——"

"But, Walter, what was I to say to my conscience, to my duty to my Church?"

Evidently she was trying to be conciliatory, and for a moment Raymond believed she was becoming tired of her bondage.

"Your conscience? Your duty towards the Church?" he replied. "Lucy, I wish you had a sense of humour. If you had you would laugh at the whole business. Mark you, I do not say there are not good people among the Catholics—many earnest Christians, for that matter. There are bound to be, just as there are good Christians among the Peculiar People, or Seventh-day Baptists, or almost any sect holding wild and fanatical ideas, who claim to be the one true Church of Christ. But all this mummery, this priestcraft, this claim to be the one true Church, and the rest of the superstitions—I say, if you had any sense of humour, you would laugh at it all. You would see how much it was worth. But you have not; you have accepted the thing, unbelievable as it is, in its entirety; you have become a slave to it, and now you see the consequence. Our home is broken up, our family is divided, all the old loyalty and trust are gone. If a tree is known by its fruits, then this tree is devilish."

"You are thinking of Joyce," said Mrs. Raymond; "you are still trying to find her."

"I have never given up—I never shall give up," replied Walter.

"And if you find her——"

"If I find her I'll take her away, I'll expose the whole business."

"Do you know where she is?" cried Mrs. Raymond eagerly.

"Do you?" asked Walter. "You practically admit she has gone to some convent. Do you know where?"

"As God is my witness, no—I have not the faintest suspicion."

"You have never heard from her?"

"No, never; and oh, Walter, Walter, I do want my child! I do long for my little Joyce!"

It was the cry of a mother's heart. For the moment she seemed to forget everything save that she and her husband were together again, and that they were united in the love they both had for their child.

"It all lies with you," said Walter.

"With me?"

"With you. If you claim her, if together we go to the priests and tell them you'll no longer allow yourself to be dominated by them, and that you demand your child back——"

"Oh, I dare not—I dare not!"

"You shall not go alone," said Walter. "Come with me now. Let us go to Brandon, and let us tell him plainly we have done with his dominion. Let us tell him that we demand our child, and——"

"Oh, I dare not—I dare not! You don't know—you don't know!"

The woman was trembling. Was it with fear, or was some other influence strong upon her?

"Dare not? I will do all the daring. Say the word, break away from the cruel tyranny of this system, and I will go to Brandon's house this very night and——"

"Yes, but afterwards! He would—oh, Walter, you don't know!"

"I know that we were happy before the priests darkened our home; I know that if you will break away from them I will take a house in some other district, and then we shall be free of them, we shall be happy again. Joyce would never have gone to them had you not encouraged her, and if we make a claim for her restoration—that is, together—they

would be obliged to return her to us. Say the word, Lucy, and then we can be happy again—we can have our little Joyce back again.”

“Have you found out anything, Walter? Have you any idea, any suspicion, where she is? Tell me if you know.” She spoke eagerly, almost feverishly. There was a look of excitement in her eyes, a tone of earnest pleading in her voice.

“Nothing definite,” replied Walter, without thinking of the purport of his words. He was carried away by the change in his wife’s behaviour.

“But you have found out something, Walter? You have some clue? You are on the track? Tell me, Walter, tell me! Oh, I do so long to see my child!”

Walter Raymond hesitated a moment. What was the cause of this sudden change of behaviour? A terrible suspicion flashed into his mind.

“And if I had found a clue?” he said.

“Tell me—tell me if you know!”

“And then you would tell Brandon to-morrow morning when you went to confession. Would you?”

The words came from him suddenly, and he watched her while he spoke. Her face became pale, and her eyes fell before his.

“Tell me,” he continued. “Would you?”

But she did not reply. She could not look into the eyes of her husband and tell him that she would not.

Walter Raymond laughed bitterly.

“I see—I see,” he said. “You want to know if I have succeeded in order to tell Brandon. I see the track of the cloven hoof; the trail of the serpent is plain.”

This man, who was not generally hard to move, was much angered. He had not realised in its entirety what the system meant until then.

“This has all been a bit of play-acting,” he said. “All these tears and protestations have been manufactured for the occasion. You wanted your husband to confide in you, and then you would go and tell him whatever I have told you. I suppose all this conversation will be confessed to-morrow.”

Still the woman did not speak. Not being clever, she did not think he would thus turn the tables upon her.

He reflected a moment, and then he saw more than had suggested itself to him at first.

“Brandon has been here to-night?”

He spoke quietly, but the tones of his voice showed that he was in no mood to be trifled with. The woman remained silent, and kept her eyes on the ground.

"Tell me, has that man Brandon been here to-night?"

Still she remained silent; but Walter Raymond meant to have his way.

"Look at me."

The woman struggled, but the man's stronger nature conquered. She lifted her head, and their eyes met.

"Brandon has been here to-night, has he not?"

"Yes."

The word seemed dragged from her, but she kept looking at her husband as though he practised some mesmeric arts upon her.

"He has been here within an hour from my coming home?"

"Yes."

"He told you to—to act as you have acted?"

"Yes." She was trembling either with fear or passion, but she spoke the word nevertheless.

"I see. You say you have no idea where Joyce is?"

"Yes; I swear before God that I do not know, that I have no suspicion."

She seemed to be glad to say this; perhaps it was because there was no penalty attached to it.

"And if you did know, you dare not tell me?"

"No. Oh, you coward, to bully a woman! Dare not tell you? I would rather die than tell you! I would rather see Joyce dead than under your influence!"

"And that was why, after I gave orders that that man was not to come here again, you admitted him, and you promised to become his catspaw. It was not because you wanted to see Joyce; it was not because you wanted her back. It was because you wanted to find out if I had any clue, so that you might go and tell this fellow, who would use the knowledge against me. That is your sense of honour."

"It is not true," said the woman. "Whatever is told in confession is sacred. He could not divulge it."

"But even if I admitted that, he could act upon it. As for that man regarding anything as sacred, I could as soon believe that Judas Iscariot would regard anything sacred. The man who is capable of setting a wife against her husband, setting her to spy upon her husband, causing her to make traps for her husband, is capable of anything. But

as it happened, there was no danger. Tell him that all these pretty schemes of his were useless, not simply because I saw through them, but because I have nothing to tell. I have no suspicion wheré Joyce is; but if I had, you may be assured that I should tell neither him nor you."

The woman cowered in her chair; she was at this time not only afraid of the priest, she was afraid of her husband.

"You asked me where I had been dining to-night, and with whom," he went on. "There was no need, for Brandon has told you. What has he told you besides?"

"I shall not tell you; bully me as much as you like, but I will not tell you."

"Ritzoom has been here also."

"No, he has not. Now, then, I will not answer another question."

She arose and left the room, while Walter Raymond thought over all that had taken place. For a long time he sat alone reviewing the past years.

"God forgive me for speaking to a woman as I have spoken to her," he said; "but it seems as though this ghastly business has made it necessary."

The next morning, after Walter Raymond had gone to business, his wife made her way to Father Brandon's church. There were very few who came to confession, and Mrs. Raymond spent a long time with him.

"It is a pity you were not more guarded," the priest said when they separated. "If you could have regained his confidence, you might help us greatly. Still, you were sorely tried, and you have acted as a faithful child of the Church. You will have your reward for your faithfulness."

"I find it very hard," said Mrs. Raymond.

"What do you find hard?"

"Hard to oppose his will. He was so kind and good for many years, and he sacrificed everything for me—everything. He might be one of the richest men in the country but for me, and he gave up all. Besides—oh, I do long to see my child!"

"This is a temptation of the Devil, my daughter. 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me'—that is, the Church, which represents Him—'is not worthy of Me.' Go in peace, my daughter."

A few days later Harrington came to Walter Raymond's office.

"We are on the right track," he said.

“ How? ”

“ Signore Volpe says he has discovered who the man is who employs Miss Robinson. He says he will let us have all particulars as to where he lives, and our chances of seeing him, by to-morrow.”

“ Thank God! ” said Walter Raymond.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE LAW IN RELATION TO CONVENTS.

WHILE Signore Volpe had made no vain boast in saying that he had discovered the identity of the man whose face Ned Harrington had so faithfully sketched, it seemed as though the fates had willed that his discovery should end in nothing. It turned out that Mr. Varcoe was an Australian, that he had taken a furnished house on the river for three months, and that on the expiration of that time had left the neighbourhood of Henley, and had gone no one knew whither. He had seen no society during his stay at Henley, and no one had any intimate knowledge of him. He received but few letters, and had given no instructions concerning the forwarding of any which might come for him, save to leave word at the Post Office that if anyone should come asking for letters, and bearing his authority, they were to be handed up. It was believed that he had gone on the Continent, but no one had any certain knowledge.

In answer to the inquiry whether the governess and children had gone with Mr. and Mrs. Varcoe, they received no satisfactory answer. All the servants, save one, were strangers to the neighbourhood, and they had left the neighbourhood when Mr. Varcoe left the house. This one was a charing woman, who lived at a village close by, and believed that the governess and the children had gone to some seaside place, while Mr. and Mrs. Varcoe had gone abroad; but her answers were anything but satisfactory. All inquiries ended in failure, and thus it came about that a month after Walter Raymond and Harrington met the Jesuit priests at the fashionable restaurant in London, they were no nearer discovery than they had been on the day that Joyce left home.

All that human ingenuity, spurred on by a great love, could do was done. Ned Harrington even went to Avignon, on the off-chance that there might be a shadow of truth in Father Ritzoom's story; but, as may be imagined, nothing resulted from his visit. All along the line the priests were victorious. Neither father nor lover could find the slightest

vestige of a clue to Joyce's whereabouts. She had disappeared from them as completely as if the earth had opened and had swallowed her up.

Sometimes Walter Raymond felt that he was going mad. As the months passed by, his heart longed more than ever for his child, and as no news concerning her reached him, it seemed as though there was no ray of hope anywhere.

"Did you read the debate in the House of Commons last night?" asked Ned Harrington one day.

"What debate?"

"On the conventual system."

"I tried to; but I grew so angry that I had to give it up. Why, we are more under priestly dominion here than if we were in Spain."

"We are a free country, you see."

"Free country, but free to whom? These Papists are free to do what they will; but we have no freedom at all."

"The Bill was shelved."

"Yes, and why? It's the old story. The Government were afraid of the Irish, backed up as they are by the priests; and English members of Parliament tamely submitted. We are supposed to live in a Protestant country, where only about one in thirteen or one in fourteen of the population are Papists, and yet they dictate our policy. They decide what shall and what shall not be done. Let conventual institutions of every sort be open to inspection, let them be carried on in the broad light of day, is the demand; but no! The priest says it must not be. Let there be examination of other institutions, but not conventual, and yet these same places have the blackest history on record. If they were under proper supervision we could go and demand to see every inmate, we could investigate fully; but as it is we can do nothing. And Parliament tamely submits. It would be committing sacrilege, they say, and yet, perhaps, my little Joyce is kept in one of them against her will. It may be she is cruelly treated, subjected to all sorts of sufferings, her mind biassed, her life destroyed; and yet we can do nothing, nothing."

"Did you notice that Irish member's plea? 'If they are to be open to examination,' he says, 'let the examiners be men, but don't let them be women.' Don't you see the meaning of this? Women could demand to go into every room, every place, but with men this would be impossible. If the Mother Superior desired to keep anything secret from



a man, if there was a certain cell she desired to remain closed, she would tell him that a nun was there, that she was engaged in occupations which would make it impossible for a man to investigate. But there it is. The Bill is indefinitely shelved, and the priest can stand at the door of these institutions and say, 'No admission!' Thus, although we are morally certain that Joyce is in one of them, we have no means of discovering which."

"Do you know that she is twenty-one next month?" asked Raymond.

"Know? The fact has haunted me. Just think, my friend, in a month from now you will have no legal control over her. Even if you find out where she is, you will have no right to see her, no right to demand her freedom. Besides," and Harrington's face became pale as he uttered the words, "she might die in one of those places, and no one be the wiser. These conventual authorities are in such a position that they can defy the burial laws. Of course, they are supposed to have a doctor's certificate in case of death; but in many cases, as it has been fairly well proved, they have dispensed with them, and their victims have been buried, unknown to the world. I tell you my heart sinks as I think of it all."

"I say, Ned, don't mention such a thing."

"It haunts me, my friend—literally haunts me. She may be dying now, dying of starvation or cruelty, as other nuns have died. She may be buried in secret, and we may never know anything about it. The doors of these places are closed. We have no right of admission. If they were open to inspection we could have obtained the name and history of every inmate of every one of them long since, and what we are suffering now would be impossible. But as it is, we are helpless. She may be within a mile of us now; she may be longing to come to us, and yet she is as much in prison as if she were in Wandsworth Gaol. Of course, these Mother Superiors talk pleasantly with us when we visit them; they seem the most obliging and charming people under heaven; and yet all the time those under their control may be suffering slow torture. My God, Raymond, I can't sleep at nights for thinking of it! For the first year I was hopeful; but these last few months I begin to be afraid. But one thing I mean to do. I will go into Parliament—I have just received an invitation to stand for a division in Devonshire—and when I get in, I will not rest until this wrong is righted."

“ But in the meantime, Ned—in the meantime? ”

“ I have two or three clues. They are very slight, and perhaps mean nothing, but I must investigate them ; we cannot leave any stone unturned.”

The case was indeed black, and both Harrington and Raymond were at their wits' end. In less than a month Joyce would be twenty-one years of age, and then she would no longer be under legal control, even if they found her. Besides, both of them knew that the life of a nunnery would make her more and more afraid of doing anything which should even suggest independence of will.

Some days after the conversation we have recorded, Mrs. Raymond received a visit from Father Brandon. He stayed in the house only a few minutes, but when he left Mrs. Raymond looked very troubled. Nay, more, it was evident that the purport of the priest's visit was of a momentous nature, for a look amounting to terror was in the woman's eyes.

“ If I had known,” she said to herself, “ I would have prevented her going, instead of encouraging her to go. I am never allowed to receive a message from her, I am not given the slightest hint as to where she is, and yet I am ordered to send her messages through Father Brandon, telling her it is my desire that she should never think of home. Besides, what is the meaning of Father Brandon's visit to-day? No ; I have never sunk so low as that before, and I never thought it would come to this.”

After that, she sat for a long time thinking deeply, and yet so strong was the priest's spell upon her, that she knew she would have to obey his commands.

For the next few mornings Mrs. Raymond got up early. She was the first to go to the door on hearing the postman's knock, and she examined all letters and their postmarks with feverish haste. Each morning, moreover, after examining the letters she gave a sigh of relief as though what she dreaded to come was still delayed. She never went out of the house, save for an hour at a time, and was always at home when the postman arrived.

One afternoon she was sitting alone, when she heard the familiar double-knock.

“ Don't trouble, Jane,” she said to the servant, who was on her way to the door, “ I will go.” Jane, whose sweetheart was gone to live in another part of London, and from whom she expected a letter, was rather annoyed at this, because she felt rather sensitive about anyone seeing her

lover's handwriting, but she said, "Very well, ma'am," and then wondered why the "missis was so terribly partikler-like about the postman."

There was only one letter, and Mrs. Raymond examined the postmark eagerly.

"Rothertown," she said in a hoarse whisper, and then she hurried back to the dining-room.

She examined the postmark again, then she eagerly scanned the handwriting.

"Rothertown," she whispered again, and then looked fearfully around.

It was a familiar name to her, for it was the name of the little town wherein she was born and reared. It was the town where Walter's father lived, the town where her own parents lived. But the handwriting was strange, and she wondered who had written. The letter was not addressed to her, but to her husband. She remembered what Father Brandon had told her, and then she examined the letter again. It was a business letter, she felt sure it was. The envelope was not shaped like those ordinarily used for friendly correspondence. It was long and narrow, and the bluish paper suggested the professional man.

Again she looked anxiously around, and then she went noiselessly towards the door and locked it. But she was evidently dissatisfied with her action, for she immediately unlocked the door, and then went upstairs.

"She can't think it strange if I lock my bedroom door," she said as she turned the key, and then she examined the letter again. For a moment she seemed in doubt as to what she should do next, but presently a look of determination came into her eyes. Going to a cupboard, she took out a little spirit-lamp and a small kettle. A minute later a steady stream of flame came from the lamp, and after she had poured some water in the kettle, she placed it on the lamp.

Furtively, she walked to the door and listened. She could hear the servant at work in the kitchen, and she knew there was no one else in the house. She looked at her watch. It was three o'clock, and Madaline and Rachel would not be home from school for more than an hour.

Presently the kettle boiled.

Lifting the cover, she placed the letter over the steam and watched while the paper softened. She felt like a culprit as she did this; she felt degraded in her own eyes. It was a trick often resorted to by dishonest and unscrupulous

persons, but she did not hesitate. Her hand trembled as she unfastened the letter, and she looked fearfully around the room ; but she took the letter from the envelope.

There was a time when she opened her husband's letters without hesitation. So great was the trust and the confidence between them she read all the letters addressed to him which came to their private address and not to Walter's office, just as she read her own. Walter quite understood this, and never resented it ; but everything had changed since then. The old trust had gone, and to read one of his letters now was forbidden.

When she saw the heading of the letter, her heart almost stood still. It came from the most respected firm of solicitors in Rothertown, the partners of which refused to have any communication with her father.

DEAR SIR (she read),—

It is our painful duty to inform you that your father died at two o'clock this morning. Arrangements are being made for his funeral to take place on Monday morning at eleven o'clock. Naturally, as you are his only surviving child, we assume that you will desire to be present. Moreover, as your eldest daughter Joyce will very considerably benefit by the will of the late deceased gentleman, and as we understand that she is at school on the Continent, we would suggest that you communicate with her immediately. In any case, we should be glad if you would send us her address, so that we shall be in a position to write to her should necessity occur.—We are, dear sir,

Your obedient servants,

WILLIAMS AND JORDAN,  
*Solicitors.*

She read the letter many times, as if she wished to impress it on her memory ; but there was no need. She knew every word of its contents after the first reading. Every letter seemed to have burned itself upon the tablets of her memory.

For half an hour she remained in her room, making neither sound nor motion ; then she put on her bonnet and cloak, and went out, taking the letter with her. A few minutes later she was in the house of Father Brandon. The priest's face was eager and watchful, the woman's pale as death.

“ You have something to tell me ? ” he said.

"A letter has come from Rothertown," she replied almost sullenly.

"Ah, yes. You have some news from there?"

"My husband's father is dead."

The priest did not seem at all surprised. It might have been news for which he was waiting. Perhaps he knew of it before. He did not speak, but he looked steadily into the woman's face.

"Here is the letter," she said; "it is addressed to my husband, but——"

"I would rather not read it, Mrs. Raymond," he said. "Of course, if you have anything to tell me, I will listen, but I would rather not see the letter."

"It is very short," she said; "it comes from Williams and Jordan, the lawyers who do all the best work in Rothertown."

Again she was silent, while a look of impatience came into the priest's eyes, but he did not speak. The woman, on the other hand, seemed to take a sort of sullen pleasure in keeping silent. He realised that she resented the power he had over her. For a time there seemed a battle of wills between them, and the woman yielded.

"The letter says that old Mr. Raymond died at two o'clock this morning; thus it must have been despatched by the first post to-day."

"Postal arrangements are very good," said the priest.

"It also says that the funeral is to take place on Monday morning next, and suggests that Walter should come down."

The priest kept on looking at her, but he asked no questions.

"It also asks for Joyce's address, and says that she will considerably benefit by the provisions of the will."

"Ah!"

A pleased look came into his eyes, and the way he uttered the word seemed to suggest a sigh of relief. But the woman remained silent.

"You read the letter very carefully?" said the priest presently.

"Yes."

"More than once, I expect?"

"Yes."

"You have a good memory, I think. Perhaps you would like to recite it to me, word for word."

"Do you wish me to do so?"

“ I think it might relieve your mind, and naturally I ought to know everything that affects your daughter.”

She recited the letter word for word.

“ And that is all? ”

“ That is all.”

“ No postscript, no ‘ N.B.’ of any sort? ”

“ Had you not better read it? Here it is.”

“ Oh, no, no. I would rather not. Besides, I am sure you have told me everything.”

“ What will become of Joyce now? ” She asked the question almost angrily, but the priest never moved a muscle of his face.

“ I can assure you, my child, that your daughter has removed all doubts as to her having a vocation for the holy life.”

“ But this money? ”

“ She will not need it. As a nun, she will want nothing. Her Order provides for everything, everything, my child.”

“ Then the money will come to her father? ”

“ Oh, no, I think not. Nothing is certain, of course ; but if she has anything she will naturally bestow her dowry upon the Church, which in return gives her a home—a home for the body, a home for the soul. Besides, it may only be a trifle. As you know, she was taken without dowry, so great was our desire to save her. Now, if a trifle comes to her, she will naturally rejoice, as you will naturally rejoice, my daughter, to know that that trifle will be used for the propagation of the faith. As you know, it has been your one great sorrow that you had nothing but yourself and your children to give to the Church ; now, if there is any truth in this, you will rejoice to know that this little heritage will go towards the help of your most cherished cause.”

“ He said ‘ considerably benefit,’ ” said Mrs. Raymond.

“ A lawyer’s expression, my child. Of course, it may mean very little. But how wondrous are the workings of Providence! Your husband’s father has hated us all his life ; hated everything that has had to do with the Church, and now it seems that, in spite of himself, he will be forwarding our cause.”

“ And now I can fasten this up and place it on the mantel-piece so that Mr. Raymond can get it when he returns,” she said.

“ Let me think a minute,” said the priest. He looked at his watch, and then reflected.

“ The letter bears to-day’s date, doesn’t it? ” he asked, after a few seconds’ hesitation.

“ Yes. ”

“ Ah, then, there is no reason for him to have it to-day. If he receives it to-morrow all will be well. Of course, no one has seen this letter but you? ”

“ No. ”

“ Then the letter, being dated for to-day, he would think it quite natural if he received it to-morrow. In any case you will be at the church to-night? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ I would like to see you about nine o’clock. In the meanwhile, it is not urgent that he receives the letter. You will excuse me now, I am sure, as I have an important engagement. ”

Mrs. Raymond left the house. There was still the same look of fear in her eyes ; but a keen observer might have noticed an expression of avarice as well.

As for Father Brandon, he walked to the nearest cabstand, and having given the cabman instructions, he sat back comfortably in the vehicle and closed his eyes.

“ I wonder what Ritzoom will say? ” he said to himself as the cab rolled swiftly along.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### FATHER RITZOOM'S CONFIDENCE.

" You've told me all? "

" Everything."

" You say you did not read the letter? "

" No ; I refused."

" I think you were wise. One never knows what may happen. Of course, you cannot help what she might feel disposed to tell you."

" Exactly."

" It was a near squeak. Do you know, I've been walking on tenterhooks for weeks."

" Why? "

" For several reasons. I can speak plainly now, seeing the old man cannot alter his will. But the case has simply bristled with difficulties—simply bristled. First, there was a danger lest he should know what had become of the girl. Of course I saw to it that from time to time he should receive copies of that Protestant rag with a high-sounding title but no circulation, which stated that, in spite of home influence, she had remained firm to her Protestant convictions. That shows the benefit of being represented on every kind of periodical. It helps in ways unknown to the world. The old fool who edits the *Protestant on the Beacon* has not the slightest idea that one of his contributors is a faithful servant of the Church, and so he proudly announced that the grand-daughter of Walter Raymond, Esq., who had for so many years supported the Protestant cause, refused to follow the example of the rest of the family and become a Catholic. Of course, I saw to it that marked copies of this thing were sent to the old man. It pleased his vanity, and made him more and more kindly disposed towards the girl. I saw to it, too, that at Protestant meetings, and on other occasions, he was approached by faithful members of his creed, and that these guided him in the way he should go. Nevertheless, as I said, I was on tenterhooks the whole time for fear he should hear of what really happened. Then, of course,



great care had to be taken in bringing influence to bear upon him when he was making his will. As you know, in spite of all I've done, I have no idea as to the exact conditions of the will."

"Yes, of course, it needed very careful work and much wise guidance."

"Exactly. Then, again, there was the other difficulty. Suppose he had died six months ago. The girl then wanted six months of being legally of age. With men like Harrington and Raymond against us, we should have been walking on eggs."

"I see. I see."

"As it happens, before the will can be made known she will be twenty-one. Nothing could have happened better, you see."

"That is to say, she will sign a document directly she attains her majority, giving everything to the Church."

Ritzoom laughed contentedly.

"What strange coincidences there are in the world," he said. "Old Walter Raymond will be buried on the fifteenth of July, and his grand-daughter, Joyce Raymond, comes of age that very day."

"Providence, Providence," laughed Brandon.

"On the day following she will sign a paper, giving all her possessions to the Church. This paper shall be duly attested. There shall not be a loophole anywhere."

Brandon looked at Ritzoom admiringly. And this in spite of his envy. Why had he, who had set the whole movement on foot, handed it over to Ritzoom? Why should Ritzoom have all the praise, and he none? Yes; he admired the far-seeing gifts of the other, but he envied him.

"I will see to it that you shall not be forgotten, Brandon," said Ritzoom, his black, piercing eyes resting on the other. "On the whole, I think you have behaved well in this matter, and I will engage that you shall be 'highly commended,' as they say in cattle shows."

Brandon reddened in spite of himself. It seemed as though nothing could be hidden from this man. He said nothing, however, although he felt relieved when Ritzoom turned towards the table and took a fresh cigar from the box which lay there.

"I must confess I had fears," went on the Jesuit presently. "I had my doubts about Harrington, but the fellow had an impossible game to play. Clever as he is, he had no

chance of showing his cleverness. Thanks to the English laws, when once we get a girl inside a convent she is safe for ever. I know of no more important Parliamentary work than to fight against the possibility of allowing public inspections in Catholic institutions. If that were allowed we might as well be in France. The Church would have been robbed of thousands of pounds if there were a right of free entrance into convents. Oh, what fools the English are ! ”

“ They are a great people ! ”

“ They are as easily gulled as children. ‘ Religious liberty ’ is their cry. And we echo it by saying that this must apply to Catholics as well as Protestants. And they, glorying in their logic, agree. But blind fools that they are, they see no difference between liberty and licence. Still, we must not grumble ; it answers our purposes. ”

“ After all, although the letter says the girl will ‘ very considerably benefit ’ by the will, it may mean only a few thousand pounds, ” said Brandon.

Ritzoom smiled.

“ You have no doubts ? ”

The Jesuit smoked quietly, without speaking.

“ Of course, the Protestant papers will make a great fuss. ”

“ Let them. ”

“ Her whereabouts will be sure to come out now. ”

“ Possibly. ”

“ It must. ”

“ Must it ? ”

“ I say, suppose she becomes possessor of a large sum of money—— ”

“ Say half a million—yes ? ”

“ Is that the sum ? ”

“ How do I know ? But go on. ”

“ Well, suppose she becomes possessed of a large sum like that. Then suppose next Tuesday she gives all she possesses to the Church. ”

“ Which she will. ”

“ Then suppose the Church puts in its claim—— ”

“ Which it will, through proper channels. ”

“ Well, suppose the father or lover opposes us on the ground that the girl in making the gift thought she had nothing to give : would not any judge and jury say that, seeing she made the gift under a misapprehension, the deed of gift was illegal, and therefore nullify it ? ”

“ Possibly.”

“ Well, then, all would be lost.”

“ Would it? ”

“ Don’t you think so? ”

“ Nothing is ever lost when a man is wise, nothing is lost when all contingencies are taken into consideration. But, Brandon, I must compliment you. You are not such a fool as I gave you credit for.”

He spoke good-humouredly, but Brandon felt the sting of his words.

“ You see your way out of such a situation? ” he said.

“ Or I should not be sitting comfortably here.”

“ Tell me how.”

“ The obvious way out of such a situation is for the girl to make such another deed of gift—that is, after she knew of her wealth.”

“ She might refuse to do it. You see, when the matter becomes public, she will have to be allowed a certain semblance of liberty. The law courts are the scenes of awkward questions, and British juries are very pig-headed.”

“ Yes; and as blind as bats.”

“ Still, I say she might refuse to make such another deed of gift.”

“ A nun, properly trained, dares not refuse anything which her Mother Superior or her confessor demands. She will have taken the vow of Holy Obedience, my friend. That answers everything. She does not go through her novitiate uninfluenced. When the Mother Superior speaks, or when the confessor speaks, God speaks. That is an article of a nun’s faith. And if she is properly trained she will not dare to disobey God.”

“ And she has been properly trained? ”

“ I knew Gertrude Winthrop before she became a nun. I knew her as a nun, as Mistress of the Novices, and I’ve watched her career as Mother Superior. We did well in sending the girl to her.”

“ Still, we have to face the possibility. If such a state of things were to come to pass, she would probably be brought into contact with her father and her lover; and, mind you, a woman is always a woman. Well, once let those two be together again—I mean Harrington and that girl—and——”

“ My dear fellow, do you think I have not gone into this question a score of times? Do you think I have not seen the

end from the beginning? Why, any boy of eleven could see such a contingency."

"And have you prepared for it?"

"I've prepared for everything."

"You've prepared for the contingency of the girl being brought into contact with her sweetheart?"

"No."

"No?"

"No. The girl will never see her sweetheart again. If she did—well, then, I could not answer for what might happen. But she never will."

Brandon looked at Ritzoom like one afraid. He sought to read the meaning of the mocking smile, and the language of his dark, unfathomable eyes, but in vain. The face was like the face of the sphinx.

"You have no fears?"

"No."

"But there is bound to be a scandal. With two men like Harrington and Raymond, there is bound to be a scandal."

"Scandals are forgotten when nothing can be proved."

"It may do the Church more harm than good."

"It will do the Church only good."

"Well, you may not be afraid. I am."

"My friend, all is plain. A young Protestant girl becomes converted to the faith. She is so ardent in her faith that she desires to live the holy life of a nun. She loves the Church and the Order she has joined, and therefore is eager to give all she has for the benefit of the Church. She does so; moreover, she does so after she comes of age. Presently, it comes to pass that she finds herself heiress to great wealth; but she still adheres to her desire to benefit the Church. Her father and her lover may protest, but the gift is valid, and the Church is enriched by the enrichment of our Order, and a liberal donation made by us to the community of which she is a member is fully appreciated by the Superior. Of course, these militant, shouting Protestants will make a great noise, but what of that? They have shouted in the past, they will shout again; but what do we care?"

"Still, I say she might turn obstinate. She might get into communication with her father and her——"

"But she will not."

"Why?"

"Because she is in a convent."

"Is that a sufficient safeguard?"

"My friend, you ought to know by this time that it is more than sufficient. You ought to know that while present laws exist in relation to Catholic institutions, anything may happen behind the walls of a convent, and no one be the wiser."

"Then you have arranged for every contingency?"

"Soyez tranquille, et dormez bien, mon ami," said Rit-zoom.

"But about the letter?"

"Of course, it is natural and right that the son should know of his father's death at once. It is right that he should make preparations to go to the funeral."

"I am glad to hear you say that; but I say he will have to tell the lawyer that he does not know where his daughter is. When her whereabouts is discovered, will not nasty questions be asked? Will it not appear strange that her whereabouts should be kept a secret from her father, who has been searching so long for her?"

"And what more natural than that a Catholic girl should beseech her Mother Superior to protect her from a cruel father who had determined to send her to a Protestant school?"

"You trust a good deal to the disposition of the girl, it seems to me."

"And wisely."

"Why?"

"Because a girl becomes like wax in our hands. As you ought to know, a nun has no will of her own. If she had, the power of convents would be gone. It is the great business of a convent to destroy the will. How could a woman otherwise be as clay in the hands of a potter? Now, Brandon, I am afraid I must ask you to excuse me. You have done wisely in bringing this news to me, and I thank you for it. In return, I hope I have set your mind at rest. I have answered a great many foolish questions, and I have dealt with a great many trumped-up difficulties. Now I must work. Things have turned out exactly as I planned. Who would have thought that old Walter Raymond, rabid Protestant and strong Nonconformist, would have been persuaded to make his will in favour of a girl who is a nun? Yet he has done it. By wise management I have made him do it. It has taken us three years and more to bring about this state of affairs, but the work has been done. Now we have entered upon the reaping time."

“ You think that the result of this will be good? ”

“ Think, my friend? With money we can do anything. Slowly, slowly we have been fighting our battle. Some have been fighting it in one way, some in another. As you know, I do not regard our success as great. The fact that we have established convents and built churches in England does not appeal to me. From that standpoint the success of the Salvation Army simply mocks us. They begun with nothing, except the pluck and determination of a Methodist minister and his wife. Yet see what they have done! They have practically belted the globe. But in another way I have done more. I have been working a change in the British Parliament; I am gaining power whereby the tone of society is being altered. I have been amassing the sinews of war whereby——” and Ritzoom shrugged his shoulders.

“ But although this money is left to the Order, it becomes the property of the General.”

“ Yes! ” And Ritzoom’s eyes flashed with a significance which Brandon understood.

Brandon almost shuddered as he looked at the other’s face, which seemed to say, “ And who moves the General? Who holds the reins? Who touches the springs? ”

“ I understand,” said Brandon.

“ And yet very few people know of Anthony Ritzoom. Does he speak at public meetings? Does his name appear in print? Oh, yes, the work of others is very important—very; but——” and again he shrugged his shoulders.

It was not often Ritzoom spoke so freely, not often that he gave any idea of his plans. Perhaps it was the news Brandon brought him that caused him to be communicative.

“ We have a great work, Brandon,” he went on, “ a great work. This country must be converted. The Church, and the Church only, must rule England. To-day we have made another important move in the great game we are playing. This British race laughs at us. Again and again have I thought out great schemes, but they have never been carried into effect. Do you know why? ”

“ Money,” said Brandon.

“ Yes, money; or, rather, the want of it. But this time I shall not be thwarted. With that old Protestant’s thousands I will change the face of things.”

Brandon rose to go, and as he did so Ritzoom’s attitude changed. He no longer looked triumphant and joyful. Rather, the old look of caution and calculation came back.

"Now, then, Brandon," he continued, "I want to say this to you. Be surprised at nothing. Do not take a single step, do not offer an opinion, give no advice, and do not go away without consulting me. Above all, be surprised at nothing."

"Very well," said Brandon.

"And another thing. Do not think on your own account. It's dangerous."

"Why?"

"Thinking leads to acting. I will do the thinking. When my thinking leads to action, I will let you know. Good-bye, and remember."

Ritzoom, when left alone, sank into an armchair and closed his eyes. As he did so, he seemed to age and to become very weary. He no longer looked a strong, vigorous, middle-aged man of from forty to forty-five, but rather an elderly, jaded man of sixty-five.

"It was just as well to leave him in the dark," he said presently; "but even I am almost afraid. It is a bold stroke—a very bold stroke—even although it has been played before with success."

His skin was yellow, and his face was almost ghostly as these thoughts passed through his mind.

When Walter Raymond came home late from business that night, his wife met him in a more friendly way than usual.

"There is a letter for you on the mantelpiece, and it bears the Rothertown postmark," she said.

Walter opened it eagerly. In his heart of hearts he hoped that it contained some line of reconciliation from his father; but when he saw its contents, his heart sank like lead.

"My father is dead, Lucy," he said.

"What!" she cried, in well-feigned astonishment.

"My father is dead," he repeated almost mechanically.

She looked at him, not knowing what to say; then she spoke like one who had learnt a lesson.

"When is the funeral to be?" she asked.

"Next Monday morning, at eleven o'clock," he replied.

"I suppose we shall all have to go into black," was her remark.

Walter read the letter again. It was only a formal note, informing him of a sad event. He longed for some message telling him that his father had forgiven him, for, even

although he had not seen him for more than twenty years, he could not help feeling kindly towards him. Especially had this been true since his alienation from his wife. After all, his father had been right. Better for him to have married Miss Blight, with her plain face and unengaging ways. She was, at any rate, a lady, and an honourable woman. He could never conceive of her becoming the tool of a priest. She would never have tried to turn his own children against him.

After he had somewhat recovered from the news of his father's death, the purport of the remarks concerning Joyce became real to him. What should he say to Williams and Jordan? He looked towards his wife, and he saw that she was watching him. What was the meaning of that strange look in her eyes? A flood of thoughts came into his mind, but he kept quiet.

"Will you go to the funeral?" she asked presently.

"Yes."

"When will you go?"

"I don't know."

"Who has he left his money to?"

The strange tone in her voice attracted him. Should he tell her what the lawyers had said? No; he would say nothing to her.

"Where are you going?" she said presently.

"I'm going out."

"Where?"

"Several places, possibly."

"Will you be late back?"

"I don't know."

She would have liked to ask further questions, but she dared not. In her heart was a great fear lest her husband should know what she had done.

"Of course, you will not wait up," he said as he went out. "I am taking the latchkey."

Half an hour later he was in Ned Harrington's rooms.

"Read that," he said as he handed him the letter.

"We shall know where Joyce is now," said Harrington, when he had read it.

"You mean that——"

"Yes, I do," said the young barrister.



## CHAPTER XXX.

### RAYMOND GOES TO THE OLD HOME.

THE two men looked at each other steadily for a minute ; then Harrington started to walk to and fro in the room, a sure sign that he was thinking deeply. Whenever a stout, phlegmatic man wants to think, he generally sits still, with closed eyes. On the other hand, however, a nervous, highly strung man starts to his feet, and every part of his body becomes alert, when his mental powers are more than ordinarily aroused. The placid man requires no pen to record his thoughts ; the nervous man, on the other hand, has either to think aloud, or at the end of his pen. When Harrington was alone, and wanted to think of matters of more than ordinary importance, he always had a piece of paper before him, on which he jotted down his thoughts ; when anyone was with him, he started to walk, and to talk.

“ Raymond,” he said, “ you know that again and again, when we have been discussing this business, I have told you that I have been looking for a motive ; I have said that Ritzoom would not take so much trouble with your family simply and solely for the sake of your souls.”

“ Yes ; and you would never tell me what you believed the motive was.”

“ Yes ; I was afraid. I bore it in mind, but I could not see how what haunted me could be true. Now it’s all plain.”

Walter Raymond thought a minute. “ You mean that clause about Joyce ? ” he said.

“ Exactly.”

“ You believe they’ve been planning for that ? ”

“ I’m sure. While it seemed as though Joyce could not be the possessor of one penny, it seemed foolishness to talk about it. Yet, knowing what I did about Ritzoom, I could not help believe it.”

“ Still, they must have acted on a bare possibility.”

“ Ritzoom has a way of making bare possibilities become facts,” said Harrington. “ Wait a minute.”

He went to a safe in the room, and unlocked it. Then he took from it a bulky diary.

“ Look here,” he said. “ I have kept a diary of every detail of this business since that night when I received your telegram at Plymouth. I have also chronicled my fears and fancies. There are several jottings here also, which I did not think wise to tell you about, because there seemed no sufficient reason for believing there was anything in them. Listen ; I want to read you a few extracts.” This was what he read :

“ ‘ What are Ritzoom’s motives? He is not a man noted for his spirituality. Whenever he takes anything in hand, there is nearly always something besides immediate religious considerations. Especially has this been true during the last few years. Joyce is poor. Why then should he take so much trouble about her? The only source from which she can receive money is from her grandfather. This source is very unlikely, and yet it might be made possible by a man like Ritzoom. Better not say anything to Raymond about it, but I must always remember it as a possible contingency.’

“ Here is another extract : ‘ Saw Belsher with Ritzoom to-day. What does that mean? I thought Belsher was a strong Protestant. He has certainly written to Protestant papers, and has strongly deprecated the influx of monastic institutions into this country. Must tell Volpe to make inquiries about him.

“ ‘ Volpe tells me that Belsher is a curious character. He is a hack journalist, and professes to be a very strong Protestant, but has been seen in council with Romanists. Of course, this may mean nothing.’

“ Here is another extract of a later date : ‘ Went to Protestant meeting at P——. Saw old Walter Raymond there. He was somewhat cool towards me. Also saw Belsher there. He said he was reporting the meeting for several Protestant papers. He seemed very friendly with old Major-General Gray, who is so much interested in the *Protestant on the Beacon*. This is rather strange, for the old general, although such a militant and evangelical Protestant, is an aristocrat, and does not talk freely with such as Belsher.’

“ Three weeks later : ‘ What does this paragraph mean? Of course, it is of no significance, for the *Protestant on the Beacon* has only a few hundreds of circulation. It is run by old General Gray, and sent out to people he happens to know. Yet the paragraph is significant. Who could have told the general that the granddaughter of old Walter Raymond refused to go to a convent school, and in spite of

home influences, which are strongly Roman Catholic, remains a strong Protestant, and is gone to a Moravian school in Germany? Of course, it is just like the general to put it in, but who could have told him? I am not sure that Walter is right in persisting in silence about the matter. I am not sure but that it would be better to let the whole truth become public, no matter how painful it might be. But there, if it became public, it would lead to a knowledge of Walter's strained relations with his wife and children, and as a sensitive man he naturally shrinks from that.'

"Still later: 'Heard that old General Gray was on a visit to Walter's father at Rothertown. I thought old Mr. Raymond looked very feeble when I saw him last. Must say nothing to Walter about it. He seems very sensitive about anything which concerns his father, even with me.'"

Ned Harrington ceased reading, and looked at his friend.

"Well?" said Raymond.

"Well?" repeated the other. "What do you make of it?"

"What do you make of it?"

"What I had believed impossible. Ritzoom had his eyes upon your father's money. He could only influence him indirectly. If Joyce became a nun, and then heiress to his estates, the Jesuits would have the control of all his possessions. Very well; suppose two or three things. First, suppose that Belsher and such as Belsher are the tools of Ritzoom. He gets a paragraph inserted in General Gray's pet venture, to the effect that Joyce remained a Protestant. Your father sees it. That means that he will think kindly of her. Very well; he still loves you, but you know the kind of man he is. He has made a vow never to leave you a penny, but that does not hinder him from thinking kindly of your eldest child, who bears the name of your mother, of whom your father was passionately fond. Then old General Gray goes down to see your father. Gray has been talking with Belsher, and such as Belsher, who pose as Protestants, and still are tools of Ritzoom; then——"

"Yes, yes," broke in Walter Raymond; "it may be as you say."

"Mark my words," said Harrington. "When that will is made known, you will find that a large sum of money will be left to Joyce, absolutely under her own control. You see the wording of the lawyers' letter. She will 'considerably benefit.' She is understood to be on the Continent. How

would they think of her as on the Continent, except your father had told them? And how would he think of it, but for this paragraph in the *Protestant on the Beacon*? We have said nothing, while——”

“Yes, yes; it’s as clear as daylight. Why did I not think of these things before?”

“As I told you, I thought of them; but as I had not the slightest reason to believe that your father would leave Joyce any money, my suspicions seemed groundless. In the light of this letter, however, all becomes changed.”

Both men were quiet for a few minutes. Walter Raymond sat quietly, while Ned Harrington sometimes sat by his side, and again walked around the room.

“Yes; we shall know where she is very soon now,” said Walter Raymond; “but I say, Ned, next Monday is Joyce’s birthday. She will be twenty-one then.”

Harrington nodded.

“That means——”

“Yes, I know what it means,” interrupted Harrington impatiently. “Walter, we are not at the end of this business yet.”

“They must let us see her,” said Raymond eagerly. “The money cannot become hers without the formalities of the law being complied with. That will mean that I shall be able to see her. So will you, Ned; and if together we can’t be a match for the priests, I’m mistaken.”

Harrington did not speak, but he seemed to be thinking deeply.

“I will, of course, go down to Rothertown at once,” Raymond went on. “I will make a complete statement of all the facts to Williams and Jordan. By the way, I knew Mr. Williams as a boy, and he was always friendly with my father. Perhaps some message has been left for me.”

Still Harrington was silent.

“Of course, after the funeral the terms of the will must become public; then, of course, Joyce’s whereabouts will become known. If you are correct in your reasonings, Ritzoom will quickly put in his claim for the money.”

“No; not Ritzoom.”

The words seemed to be spoken almost unwittingly. They did not express the main current of Harrington’s thoughts, but only something which his mind fastened on as a side issue.

“Not Ritzoom?”

“No; his name will not appear. Some harmless old man, well known for deeds of charity, will put in the claim.”

“Anyhow, I shall see Joyce. Her identity must be proved, and in order to do that——”

“Anything can happen—anything,” said Harrington, like one speaking to himself. “Ritzoom is as cunning as the devil. If I am right in my reasoning, Walter, if I am right, things will not be as plain and easy as you suggest. No, no; there is something behind all this.”

“But they can’t hinder us from seeing her,” cried Walter; “they cannot hinder us from pleading with her. Thank God! the British public is still Protestant in spite of all the endeavours of the priests, both Romanist and Ritualist, to make it otherwise. When the thing gets into the law courts, whatever else may happen the truth will come out.”

“Will it?”

“Yes. I say, Ned, what is the matter with you?”

“I fear, I fear.”

“What?”

“Do not ask me. I dare not tell you. Yes, as you say, if things are as we believe, a claim will be made for her money, and then we must fight. Yes, yes; we must not hesitate to face the public; we must let everything come out. Perhaps we were wrong in keeping quiet. Still, it can’t be helped now. You must go to Rothertown at once, and, yes, you will do well to take Mr. Williams into your confidence. Go at once, Walter; take the first train in the morning.”

He seemed to be talking in order to hide his real thoughts. Evidently some great fear haunted him—a fear which he did not dare to reveal to his friend.

Walter Raymond rose to go; his mind seemed to be so full of what he had to do, that he paid but little attention to the thoughts at the back of Harrington’s mind. When they reached the door, however, he could not help noticing the haunted expression in his friend’s eyes.

“It must be all right, Ned,” he said. “Things must come to the light now.”

“Let us hope so.”

“But come, I say; what are you thinking about?”

“Oh, nothing. Let us hope for the best; but, Walter, just bear this in mind. Ritzoom is a very clever man. He prepares for every contingency, and—and—well, English laws in relation to convents make everything possible.”

“ But the truth must come to light. Even if Joyce is a nun, she must put in an appearance in order to establish her claim. If she does, everything becomes possible for us.”

“ Yes, I know. But do you think Ritzoom has not thought of that? ”

“ What do you mean? ”

“ Just that. Good-night. I shall not be idle, and—well, we must hope for the best.”

“ You make me afraid, Ned.”

“ No ; don't give way to fear. Only, it's well to have our eyes opened. Here is the fact : More than two years ago, Joyce left us. During that time you and I have used our utmost endeavours to find out her whereabouts. She is in England—that we know. The conversation which we overheard at the — Restaurant proves that. But we have never been able to discover any definite trace of her. That proves how complete the convent system is. That proves how fully the convent powers can defy intelligent men. For we are intelligent men, Walter. It may seem like boasting, but I know that I have as many brains as the ordinary intelligent man. I have been congratulated again and again by the cleverest judge in England on having a mind capable of penetrating dark places and of unravelling tangled skeins. Judge — told me the other day in private that he knew of no man at the Bar who saw farther into the heart of a thing than I. Well, that may be true or not, and I am not mentioning it without a purpose. For you must remember this : for more than two years I have been giving all my powers to the discovery of where Joyce is. I have had the strongest motives for doing this. My life's happiness depends on it. It is no wonder, therefore, that I have done all in my power. Well, then, there's you, Walter. You have obtained the reputation of being a level-headed, safe lawyer. More and more you are gaining the confidence of the public by your ability and your integrity. You also have devoted all your powers to finding the whereabouts of your child. We have worked separately, and we have worked together. With what results? I need not say. Well, now comes this news of the death of your father. You say, and say naturally, that if we have not gone on a false assumption for two years, certain things will happen. But will they? If the convent laws have enabled a man like Ritzoom to baffle us in the past, will they not enable him to baffle us in the future? ”

“ But even they cannot stop us from seeing her. And I

tell you, Ned, let me see my child and I am not afraid. Let her see you, and I am not afraid. She loves us both, my friend, and even two years of convent life cannot crush the life out of my Joyce. I know my child, Ned. By this time she will have seen through the hollowness of the whole business, and a word from us will bring her home. I am sure of it. She would never have left home if you had not gone away to Plymouth. It was only when she was away from us that they were able to work upon her fears. Let her see us, and all the priests in the world will not hold her."

"I believe you are right," said Harrington with a strange look in his eyes. "Nay, I know you are right."

"Then why do you fear?"

"Because Ritzoom knows it, too; and Ritzoom is a man who stops at nothing."

"But, but——"

"He is a Jesuit."

"Even then——"

"The Jesuits often deny the doctrine which is so often attributed to them; but even although they deny it, the fact remains. Anyhow, I am sure of this: Ritzoom is capable of strange things, if thereby he thinks he can extend the Roman Catholic Church, which he believes identical with the Kingdom of God. Good-night, my friend. I have said too much already, and I hope I am wrong, and you are right."

The next day Walter Raymond went to his old home for the first time in twenty-two years. No one recognised him at the station; no one gave him special attention as he walked through the streets of the town in which he was born and reared. It was no wonder. There was but little resemblance between the happy, bright-faced youth of twenty-two and the sad-eyed, anxious-looking man of forty-four. That day he looked quite fifty. His face was sallow, his eyes were weary, his features were lined with care. The trouble of the last three years had done more to age him than all the care and poverty of the previous nineteen. Since the priests had entered his home, happiness had ebbed little by little out of his life.

He did not take a cab. He felt that he wanted to walk through the streets once so familiar to him, and to note the places which he knew so well as a boy. On his way he passed by the Independent Chapel where he was married, and as he did so he felt his head swim. It was there that the ceremony was performed which had sealed his fate.

“It is said that marriage makes or ruins a man,” he said to himself. “What has it done for me?”

He had no home in the true sense of the word; his wife and two of his daughters were alienated from him, his other daughter was—he dared not think what. Only Walter, his boy, had defied the priests. And yet, as he recalled the first nineteen years of his wedded life, he felt that but for the shadow of what was called the Church he had done nothing of which he repented. His father was dead; and yet, although the old man’s life had been embittered by his son’s marriage, the marriage would have been blessed of God but for the unhealthy superstition which had been allowed to dominate his home.

A few minutes later he was closeted with Messrs. Williams and Jordan. Mr. Williams was a man of over sixty years of age—a man cautious, keen, and dignified; a lawyer of the old school. Mr. Jordan, on the other hand, was evidently of a more modern spirit. He spoke more freely than his partner, and was not such a stickler on points of etiquette.

“Did my father mention me in any way?” Walter asked presently. “You know that we have been estranged all these years. I wrote to him, but he returned my letters. Did he think more kindly of me towards the end?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Jordan; “so kindly that more than once I was on the point of writing to you, suggesting that you should come down, but Mr. Williams would not hear of it.”

“There is a reference to you in the will itself,” remarked the older partner. “Indeed, it was to show his forgiveness to you that he left the bulk of his large fortune to your daughter Joyce.”

“Was he very rich?” asked Walter.

“Of course, gossip has exaggerated his wealth,” said the lawyer; “but he was doubtless a rich man, a *very* rich man. General Gray and others pleaded with him, and thus the will of two years ago—a will which bestowed everything on charities—was cancelled. The new will says that while his word was given that you should never benefit by his possessions, he wished to show you that he felt kindly towards you at the last by enriching your eldest daughter Joyce. He was much influenced by the fact that she had refused to yield to her mother’s wish and join the Roman Communion. The fact, moreover, that you insisted on sending her to a Protestant school made him feel kindly towards you.”



"Gentlemen," said Walter, "I wish I had known of this before."

"Why?" asked Mr. Jordan; while Mr. Williams only looked at him questioningly, playing with his golden-rimmed eyeglass as he did so.

"I have to tell you a long story," said Walter Raymond. "Perhaps when I have told it you will be able to throw some light on the situation."

Thereupon he told the lawyers in outline much of what I have related here. For a time they both sat and listened coldly, but presently Mr. Williams forgot his dignity in his eager interest, while Mr. Jordan ejaculated freely. When he had finished a silence fell between them for a few seconds.

"How long is it since you say she left you?" asked Mr. Williams.

"More than two years."

"And you have been searching the whole of that time?"

"The whole of it—both Harrington and I."

"What, *the* Harrington?" said Mr. Jordan, who was himself privately reading for the Bar, while practising as a solicitor.

"Yes, *the* Harrington."

"And you have discovered nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Why did you not make the matter public?"

"Can't you think, Mr. Jordan? I hated the idea of the matter being talked about. Besides, I had no positive proof that she had gone to a convent. I have none now—that is, proof that would stand in a court of law. Nevertheless, I am morally sure. My wife has practically admitted the fact."

Again silence fell between them.

"I quite understand your desire to keep the affair quiet," said Mr. Williams. "I should have done the same had I been in your place."

"I don't think I should," said Mr. Jordan. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to fight with these black-coated gentry."

"It strikes me that you will have that pleasure," said Mr. Williams grimly.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE NEWSPAPER PARAGRAPH.

“ You think Harrington and I have been right in our conjectures, then? ” asked Walter.

“ Think ! ” cried Mr. Jordan. “ It is not a matter of thinking ; it is a dead certainty. It is one of the cleverest things I have heard of for years. That Ritzoom must be a man among a thousand. It shows, moreover, in what a state the laws concerning these convents are, when a man like Harrington has been searching for her for more than two years without result. ”

“ You see, we were blocked on every hand. The law gave us no power whereby we could enter these places and make full investigation. Up to a certain point nothing could seem more open and above board than were these convents ; but the moment we tried to get beneath the surface we were met with a *non possumus*. Of course, they urged that any close investigation would be sacrilege. ”

“ Exactly. ” It was Mr. Williams who spoke. “ Now, Mr. Raymond, we speak to you as a brother lawyer. What do you suppose will be their course of procedure? ”

“ Well, after the funeral the terms of the will will become known. If anyone wishes to know it in exact detail, a shilling paid at Somerset House will make it possible. Then, of course, there will be the probate of the will, and naturally the amount of my father’s possessions will be published in the newspapers. ”

“ Exactly. And then? ”

“ Well, I presume that the head of the Order to which Joyce belongs will put in his claim for the money. ”

“ Then we step in, ” said Mr. Jordan. “ Then we can fight them. ”

“ How? ”

It was Mr. Williams who put in the interrogative word.

“ How? ” repeated Mr. Jordan. “ Why, in many ways. ”

“ Name one, ” said the older man.

“ Of course, there is the identity of the heiress. ”

"Exactly, but what then?"

"What then?"

"Yes, what then? Because according to my information, a nun makes over all her property, whether actual or prospective, to the Order which she joins. Very well, these people, who have undoubtedly been working for this, step in and make the claim. We urge that the money has been given to Miss Joyce Raymond; they retort by showing a deed of gift whereby all her possessions are made over to the Order. What can we do?"

"Deeds of gift are very shaky during the lifetime of the donor; besides, we could urge that this deed of gift was made as a minor, or that it was made in ignorance of the amount of her possessions."

"What is your daughter's age, Mr. Raymond?"

"Twenty-one next Monday."

Mr. Williams looked grave.

"What is Mr. Harrington's opinion, Mr. Raymond?" he asked.

"He takes a very pessimistic view," replied Raymond. "He urges that if Ritzoom, who knows all the ins and outs of the English law, was able to hide her successfully from us for two years, he will see to it that the thing for which he has been scheming shall come to pass."

"I agree with Mr. Harrington," said the older lawyer. "Of course, it is said that the Jesuits have no communities of women in their Order. This may be strictly true, but I know there are communities of women which not only adopt the Jesuit rule, but which are more or less under their direction or control. And this Ritzoom is evidently a clever, daring man. I must confess that I have wondered why your father was led to alter his will; but I discovered that General Gray and old Sir Charles Traunce strongly advised him."

"Yes, and they will have been influenced in their turn by Ritzoom's creatures, who posed as Protestants. Of course, we can prove nothing; but to me it is plain enough."

"Exactly."

This was Mr. Williams' favourite term, and it was said by some that he used it so well and so wisely that he thereby intimidated some, while he made others believe that his knowledge was far deeper than it really was.

"My own feeling is this," continued Walter. "When once Joyce sees us, when once she gets into conversation

with us, we shall be able to break whatever power these people have obtained over her."

"Let us hope so, Mr. Raymond," said the older lawyer; but, from all I have heard, a woman, after she has been under the influence of these ecclesiastics for a year or two, is bound absolutely, body and soul: that she dares do nothing contrary to their wills."

"There have been cases which have proved the opposite."

"Of course, there may be exceptions."

"I have faith that this will be. I know my Joyce. She is a clever, far-seeing girl. They have doubtless played upon her ignorance and her fears when she was eighteen or nineteen; but I believe her strong nature and her early training will assert itself when she sees us, and then——"

"But if after next Monday she bestows all her property on her Order, nothing can be done."

"But we can still save her from the life of a convent."

"I am simply thinking of the property," remarked the lawyer.

For a long time they discussed the *pros* and *cons* of the business; but to a large extent they were arguing in the dark. They were simply dealing with conjectures and possibilities, and whichever way they turned they were met with the fact that Ritzoom's course of action was to them an unknown quantity.

"We have a difficult work, Mr. Raymond," said the older lawyer, after a conversation that lasted more than two hours, "and all we can say is this: we will do our best to save not only your daughter, but your daughter's money; but, speaking as an older man than you—yes, speaking from the experience of forty years as a lawyer, I do not hold out much hope."

"You believe they will get my father's fortune?"

"I do."

"And yet my father hated the Papacy."

"Doubtless. Still, that does not count. A large sum is given to your daughter, unconditionally; and if she feels disposed to give it to the Romanist Church no one can stop her."

"We might dispute the will," said Mr. Jordan, who was eager to be mixed up in a big lawsuit.

"On what grounds?"

"That the money was given to Miss Raymond on the understanding that she was a strong Protestant, and that

for it to go to the Roman Catholics would be a violation of Mr. Raymond's most cherished opinions."

"It would not stand in a court of law."

"Why?"

"Because no mention is made of it in the will itself. Here is the fact as it appears to me. We are considering the whole question on the assumption that Ritzoom and his creatures are a set of unscrupulous, clever people who mean to get this money, and if our assumption is right, I am afraid they will beat us. Of course, we will do all that lies in our power, but I personally doubt the result."

When Walter Raymond saw his father lying in his coffin, he felt that, after all, the old man was right in opposing his marriage; and yet, but for the blight of the priests, that marriage would have been happy. Money for its own sake he did not love. He had now lifted himself into a position whereby he made a good income. He was able to educate his children and still have enough and to spare. Nevertheless, the thought that his father's savings should be diverted into a channel which the old man detested made him angry beyond measure.

"Thank God he loved me at the last," he reflected. "He gave all this money to Joyce because of that, and even if all my fears are realised, I shall still know that it was because he really forgave me that he did this."

The funeral took place, attended by no important event. Naturally, the old man's body was followed to the grave by a large number of people. It was first of all taken to the chapel where Walter was married, and as the minister came to the Communion table to read the service he recognised him as the young man who married him more than twenty years before. It seemed almost like a dream. The minister was no longer the raw stripling just from college, but a man over forty, who was himself burdened with the cares of life. The middle-aged men and women who sat in the pews near he had known as boys and girls. Everything seemed unreal, but all was grey, prosy fact. His father was dead, and although by his own action he had been cut off from all communication with him for more than twenty years, his heart ached sorely.

When the service was ended at the graveside, he felt a touch on his arm.

"Walter," said a voice, "don't you know me?"

He turned and saw old Mr. Bennett, his wife's father.

The man looked mean and shabby. There was the same furtive look in his eyes; he still had the same insinuating manner as of old.

"You have never come down to see me, Walter."

"You know why."

"Yes, perhaps you were right, although I think Lucy might have come. She never has, you know."

"She did not think you wanted her to come. Besides, you have met several times in London."

"Yes. Is she well?"

"Yes."

"I hear you are doing well?"

"Indeed."

"Yes. I wish I could say the same. I have no practice at all now. None at all worth speaking about, and yet I know more law than any man in Rothertown."

"I've sent you money these last two years," said Walter; "and so have your other children."

"Yes, I suppose I ought to be thankful. By the way, Walter, has your father remembered you in his will?"

There was a sinister, greedy look in his eyes as he spoke, and he eagerly awaited his son-in-law's answer.

"No."

"No? Not a penny?"

"Not a penny."

"Ah, that is a shame. Oh, yes, he was your father, but it is a shame. By the way, Walter, if you can help me to a bit of work, or if I can assist you in any way, I shall be very glad. Of course, I don't need much, but——"

The man's appearance and the tone of his voice sickened Walter.

"Here," he said, interrupting him, "here is a five-pound note. I am busy now."

"Oh, thank you, Walter. Lucy is a Catholic, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry for that; and yet, what does it matter? I'm broad in my views, I am. As long as she's a good wife, what does——"

But Walter did not wait to hear the end of the sentence; he got into the carriage with the minister, and was driven back to his old home.

The day after the funeral Walter went back to London. His wife asked him for the news at Rothertown, but although

he told her of his meeting with her father she did not seem to listen. Her mind was evidently elsewhere. The fact that her father was poor and needy did not seem to trouble her. She had become very haggard and pale during the last few days. Sometimes there was a strange haunted look in her eyes.

"Walter," she said presently, "did your father remember you in his will?"

"No."

"Has he not left you anything?" It might have been her father who was speaking again.

"No, nothing."

"What will become of his money?"

"Time will show," he replied.

There was no pretension of affection between them now. The past, in that respect, seemed to be completely wiped out.

"Don't you hate me?" she asked after a few minutes' silence.

"Why?"

"But for me you would have been a rich man."

"Yes."

"Then you must hate me."

"The question of money does not trouble me—at least, in that way."

"What troubles you, then?"

"The fact that the woman whom I married is alienated from me; that my home is destroyed; that all the old trust, the old comradeship, are gone. That my children, Rachel and Madaline, do not regard me as their father; while Joyce—God knows what has become of her, I don't. The question of money has had nothing to do with all this."

"What has, then?"

"What has? You know that as well as I. It has been the influence of—but there, why should I sully my tongue with the mention of their names?"

"It has been because of your cruelty, because you interfered with my religion, because you sought to bully both me and the children into being mere worldlings," she said sullenly. "You have succeeded with Walter, and if you had your way you would send the souls of your other children into perdition."

Walter got up and left the room. He could not bear to argue the question. They had gone over the same ground a hundred times, and always with the same result.

"I will go and see Harrington," he said, as he left the house.

But Harrington was not in his rooms, and then Walter made his way to his office, where, although it was past office hours, he remained working.

The usual formalities were gone through with regard to the probate of his father's will. This occupied some little time. Meanwhile, nothing had been heard about Joyce. No claim had been put forward by the head of any conventual institution, neither did Messrs. Williams and Jordan receive any communication from them.

"It might seem as though both Harrington and I were mistaken, after all," said Raymond to himself. "And yet, if Joyce did not go into a convent, what became of her? No, we were not mistaken; but what is the meaning of this silence? Ritzoom will know everything—everything."

He was in his office at the time. The clerks had gone, and he was left alone. There was no work of a more than usually pressing nature; but there was nothing to go home for. Harrington, so he had been informed, was out of town, and he did not feel like going to any place of amusement.

"You never know where you have a man like that," he said again; "and while things are as they are one can do nothing—nothing."

He heard footsteps on the stairs outside his office. "I wonder who that can be," he said. "No client would call at this hour."

This thought had scarcely passed through his mind when the office door opened and Harrington walked in. Raymond held out his hand and was about to speak, but the words seemed to freeze on his lips. The ghastly look on the young barrister's face frightened him.

Harrington dropped into the nearest chair without uttering a word. In his eyes was a look of agony, his face was drawn with anguish, his body trembled.

"Ned, Ned," said Raymond presently, "what is the matter?"

But Harrington did not speak. He sat looking at the window with a kind of stony stare.

"Speak, old man, speak, tell me!" cried Raymond. "Has something awful happened? Is it about Joyce?"

At the mention of her name Harrington turned and looked at him.

"It's all over, Walter; it's all over," he said huskily.



“ What, old man? ”

“ Joyce! Oh, my God, my God! ”

“ What? What? ”

“ Don't you know? ” he said like a man in a dream. “ Oh, I forgot! ”

“ Forgot what? Know what? ”

“ I've got it here somewhere, Walter. I was on my way to see you. I took a cab at Paddington, and was just leaving the station when I bought an evening paper. Here it is. Look! Oh, God, can it be true? ”

He handed the paper to Walter, and then, with the same expression of agony in his eyes, looked towards the window.

Walter Raymond eagerly glanced up and down the columns of the paper which Harrington had given to him, and then suddenly his eyes became riveted. A moment later he gave a cry as though he had been wounded.

“ My little Joyce! ” he cried. “ No, Ned, no! My God, it cannot be! ”

This is what he read :

“ A sad, yet curious, event has taken place at the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows, near St. Winnifred's, Loamshire. A young nun, who bore the religious name of Sister Ursula, and whose secular name was Joyce Raymond, died on Monday last from heart disease. She left her home more than two years ago, in defiance of her father's will, in order to enter the religious life, and left no trace of her whereabouts behind her. We understand, on inquiry, that she is the heiress of the vast wealth left by the late Mr. Walter Raymond, of Rother-town, and the irony of the situation is that although the late Mr. Raymond was a Protestant of the most pronounced order, her fortune, according to her will, made only a few days before her death, goes to the Roman Catholic Church. The interment took place yesterday.”

At first Walter Raymond could not believe his own eyes. Amongst all his fears, he had never thought of this. His little Joyce dead! The news was so terrible, so sudden, that everything else seemed blotted out. He forgot that Harrington sat in an armchair close by; forgot the rumble of the traffic in the street. Joyce, the baby he had cared for as if he had been her mother, the child he had seen grow up into womanhood; Joyce, the eldest of his children, upon whom he had bestowed so much thought, was dead! Everything

else became as nothing. If she had died at home after an illness, if he had been able to be with her and to nurse her, if he could have heard her last words, he could have borne it better ; but that she should die in a distant convent, die without a word or a look of affection for him ; it was too hard.

The paper dropped from his hands ; he lay back in his chair, nerveless, stunned, almost incapable of connected thought.

“Walter, we must go to that convent to-night.”

Harrington’s voice aroused him.

“What?”

“We must go to that convent to-night.”

“What is the good? She is dead—buried.”

“But we must go.”

“Very well—as you will.”

He got up and locked his desk mechanically, and having put his keys in his pocket, he turned to a peg where his hat hung.

“Yes,” he said ; “we will go to this convent, as you say ; but what then? What shall we do?”

“Do?”

“Yes, do!”

The thought of action aroused Harrington. Life came back into his eyes, strength to his voice, purpose to his being.

“Do? Make inquiries, investigate, get at the truth!”

He started to his feet and walked across the room in his old nervous way. The innate vigour of the man had overcome the blow he had received.

“Inquiries about what?”

“About everything. I—did I not tell you, Walter? Did I not tell you that Ritzoom would beat us?”

“Man, you do not believe that she died an unnatural death? You cannot entertain the idea that——”

“I believe nothing. I disbelieve nothing. All I know is that anything is possible within the walls of a convent—anything!”

“But——”

“Let’s go, Walter. If you will not come with me I must go alone. I cannot remain inactive. They cannot refuse to answer questions, and there are questions to be asked. Yes, and by the great God Who made me, I will ask them!”

His pale face became flushed, his eyes flashed fire.

“There is something behind all this, Walter. Just think for yourself. Why have we not known of this

before? Why have you not been informed? Why has she not sent you word as to her whereabouts for more than two years? Why did she go there? We have grounds for investigation now! We have something to go upon!"

"Yes," said Walter Raymond, influenced in spite of himself; "I will go with you; but first of all, I must go home and tell my wife. She is her mother, you know. And—and—yes, let us go, Ned. You must go with me; you must help me to tell her."

They left the office and hailed a cab. During the drive to Battersea Park neither spoke a word except when Harrington asked his friend to tell the cabman to stop at a telegraph office.

When Walter stood at his own door, he stood still like one afraid to enter; but by a strong effort he placed the key in the door and entered, followed by Harrington.

When he opened the dining-room door, he saw his wife in tears, and by her side, as if trying to comfort her, were Father Ritzoom and Father Brandon.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

HARRINGTON AND RITZOOM.

MRS. RAYMOND rose to her feet as her husband and Harrington entered. At first she did not seem to know what to do. She looked fearfully at the priests, and then towards her husband. When she saw the look of agony on the face of the latter, however, she flung herself into his arms.

"Oh, Walter, do you know?" she cried.

"Yes, I know."

"The letter came to-day. Here it is. Oh, Walter, Walter, forgive me!"

"For what?"

He was perfectly calm now—perfectly cool and self-collected. The blow had fallen, and it staggered him; but he had recovered. Besides, he felt that even yet there was something for him to do.

"I did not know," she cried. "I had no thought——"

"My child," said Ritzoom, "do not give way to this grief. It is natural, nevertheless it is wrong. We must submit to the will of God."

Ritzoom's voice made Mrs. Raymond remember that for more than two years she had never shown any act of affection towards her husband and that she had refused to regard him as her husband. Moreover, it brought a feeling of resentment into Walter's heart. Why should these men come into his house in this way? Ritzoom's pious sentiments grated upon him. They sounded like sacrilege. How could it be otherwise?

She drew herself away from her husband.

"The letter came this afternoon," she said. "I sent Madaline to tell Father Brandon. He was not at home; but presently, when he heard the news, he not only came himself, but brought Father Ritzoom with him."

Even at this time she felt she must explain the presence of these two men.

"What letter?" asked Walter.

"Here it is," she said, handing a letter to him.



"SHE FLUNG HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS."

(p. 308.)



He read it mechanically. It was addressed to Mrs. Raymond, and signed by the Mother Superior. It informed her that her daughter had died of heart disease on the previous Monday. It also stated that Dr. Jessop, the leading doctor in the town of St. Winnifred's, had been in constant attendance upon her, and that all that could be done for her comfort had been done. The letter also went on to say that the deceased was a saintly nun, that she was strict in the observance of the rule, that she was beloved by all the sisters, and that before her death she received the sacraments of the Church. She was devoutly solicitous for her father's welfare, and daily offered up prayers that he might be led to enter the fold of the Church. She was also fervent in her prayers that her mother and sisters might be kept firm in their most holy faith. The letter concluded with the assurance that the prayers of the community would be offered continuously on behalf of the relations of the departed sister.

Walter read the letter through twice, and then passed it to Harrington, to whom no one had spoken. Harrington, before passing it back to Walter, made several notes in his pocket-book. Strange to say, the look of stony despair in the young barrister's eyes had somewhat passed away. Perhaps the thought that he would be able to visit her grave, and that he would be able to investigate matters which remained in mystery, somewhat lessened his grief.

"May I," said Ritzoom presently, "offer to you, Mr. Raymond, the expression of my deepest sympathy?"

"No," said Raymond, "I do not wish your sympathy."

"You have it, nevertheless," said the priest.

"As you know," said Raymond quietly, his voice being hoarse with anguish, nevertheless, "I regard your expression of sympathy as so much mockery. But for you, my child would not have died."

Ritzoom did not speak; nevertheless, a strange look came into his eyes—a look which Harrington did not fail to notice.

"You have done your work," went on the angry father; "doubtless you are satisfied with it. That man," pointing to Brandon, "came into my home, and I, believing that he came as a friend, received him kindly. Through him, and you, my home, in the true sense of the word, has ceased to exist—through you, my wife and children are alienated from me; through you my Joyce has been murdered."

"Be careful what you are saying," said Ritzoom.

"You can make what use of my words you desire," said

Walter. "There are other ways of killing than by poisoning and stabbing. You can kill by poisoning the mind, by starving the soul, by destroying hope, by crushing out of a child's life all that makes her desire to live. You could kill her by making her believe that I had ceased to love her, and that Harrington here had proved unfaithful to her. Oh, I know the methods you would use. I know, too, that they are a part of your religion, and that no law can touch you. But it is murder all the same. I know, too, that you had a purpose in all this. You know as well as I that under my father's will Joyce becomes one of the richest women in the country. Through your influence she has been coerced into making a will whereby all her wealth goes to your Church. This was your aim, and you have succeeded."

"Pardon me, but by what right do you say that?" said Ritzoom.

"There," said Walter, passing him the paper in which he had seen the news. "What the newspaper men know, you will know."

"Why should I know?"

"Because you make it your business to know everything—especially when money comes into question."

It was Harrington who spoke, and a look almost amounting to fear came into the Jesuit's eyes.

"Walter," went on Harrington, "I want to ask this man some questions. May I?"

"Yes," replied Raymond.

"Yes; but that man may refuse to answer," said Ritzoom.

The atmosphere of the room had changed. When Raymond and Harrington had entered, it seemed as though everything were charged with sorrow, but now a new element had entered. Somehow, the contact between the priests and the lawyers had hardened each heart. In a way, there was something dramatic in the scene. The little dining-room had become a sort of battle-ground for strong men. Even Mrs. Raymond had ceased to sob, and a look of eager expectancy had come into her eyes. Father Brandon, who had scarcely spoken, sat a little apart from the others, his fleshy, clean-shaven face looking flabby and unhealthy. Evidently this man was far from happy. Time after time he took his handkerchief from his pocket, sometimes to mop his hands, and again to wipe away the beads of sweat that gathered on his forehead. Ritzoom, on the other hand, was cool and im-



penetrable. It is true there was an uneasy, shifting look in his deeply set eyes, but not a muscle of his face moved, his hands were steady and firm, his voice retained its mellowness. Nevertheless, it was easy to see that the man had gathered all his forces for battle, and that he did not despise the two men who sat before him. And, in truth, neither Raymond nor Harrington were men to be despised. The former, though crushed with grief, was, nevertheless, strong in his determination to learn more than he had yet been able to discover, and to deal with the Jesuit as he felt the occasion demanded; while the strange light in Harrington's eyes suggested that he suspected more than appeared on the surface. Truth to tell, even Raymond could not understand the look on his friend's face. Whatever thoughts were in his mind, they had changed him. He no longer gave way to the strong grief which mastered him when he had first come to him. Instead, there was life, passion, determination, energy. Even then he could not help noticing the difference between the two men. Ritzoom was mysterious and strong. He seemed to hide a hundred secrets in his heart, and to be assured that no one could penetrate into the depths of his heart. The dark, powerful face of the Jesuit aroused suspicions, but at the same time defied anyone to find reasons for them. Harrington, on the other hand, gave one the impression that he lived to find the light. There was no suggestion of anything but straightforward manliness in the clean-cut and almost classic features; but every movement of his body, every glance of the eye suggested a man of strength and penetration. There was no skeleton in his cupboard, no secret which he desired to hide. Here was a man who longed for the truth, one who determined to bring the truth to light. Looking at the two, one would doubt which, if all things were equal, would be the stronger combatant; but no one would hesitate as to which he hoped would conquer.

"I think the man will give an answer," said Harrington.

"Why?"

"Because he will desire to hide the truth."

The answer seemed to sting the Jesuit, for his eyes emitted a strange light. But only for a moment. He sat back in his chair with apparent ease.

"I would suggest," said Harrington, "that it seems strange that Mrs. Raymond should not have received this letter until several days after her daughter's death. She died on Monday; to-day is Friday."

"Possibly," said the Jesuit; "but bear in mind that the Mother Superior of the convent was in ignorance of the past life of the child. It is evident she did not tell her where her home was. It would take them some little time to discover this."

"That, to say the least of it, is strange," said Harrington. "From my knowledge of convents—and I have found out a great deal during the last two years—I have no hesitation in saying that the authorities of these places have a most intimate knowledge of the past life of every inmate. In any case, the Mother Superior had means whereby she could, and did, make the discovery. May I remind you that there are such things as telegrams, and that such a proceeding as this is an outrage of parental affection."

Ritzoom looked at Harrington keenly. He seemed to be trying to discover his motive in asking the question.

"I would remind you," he replied quietly, "that when a woman becomes a nun, she ceases, from your standpoint, to have parents."

"Yet she remembers them in her prayers," said Harrington, "and the Mother Superior thinks it of sufficient importance to mention it."

"My dear sir," said Ritzoom, somewhat changing his demeanour, "surely you know what women are: full of contradictions, full of contradictions. And, after all, a Mother Superior is only a woman."

"If she were a woman," said Harrington, "she would know that the father and mother would long to see the remains of their child, and to be present at the funeral. Yet no news is to hand until after the interment takes place."

"You must question the Mother Superior," said Ritzoom. "I know nothing about it. I have been in London for several days."

"You know nothing about it?"

"Nothing."

"And yet you knew she was in this convent."

"Why should I know?"

"First of all, because it was to your interest to keep us in ignorance."

"There, I must correct you. It was in *her* interest that you were kept in ignorance. Pardon me if I say a painful thing. The child feared her father; she feared you. Her father would have sent her to a heretic school, where her soul might have been destroyed. You would have persuaded her

to marry you—you, an enemy to the Church. She realised this ; realised, too, the frailties of our poor human nature. She pleaded that she might go to a place of refuge where she would be saved from temptation. She prayed that all knowledge of her whereabouts might be kept from you, so that no attempts might be made to drag her from her place of refuge. Because of that, even I was kept in ignorance."

The man told the lie without hesitation. Not by look or tone did he suggest that he had departed from the truth.

"But you could have found out."

Ritzoom was silent.

"You could have known."

"Yes," he replied ; "I could have known. But I would not. And even if I had, do you think I should have told you? No ; the cry of that young child was too painful. 'Save me from my father, save me from Mr. Harrington!' was her plea. Is it likely that I should refuse?"

"That is a lie," said Walter.

Ritzoom looked at Raymond steadily ; but he did not speak.

"No," said Harrington, "you would not refuse to save her from us, because you had made your plans whereby you might obtain her grandfather's wealth."

"Prove it!"

"Many things come out in a court of law," suggested Harrington.

"Quite true," said the Jesuit airily. He seemed like a man who had got out of a tight corner, and now could move at his ease again. "Many things do come out in a court of law. But I would suggest to you, as a man who has had experience in the law courts, that no judge or jury in the land would pay the slightest attention to such an accusation. Why, think. Do you imagine any judge or jury would believe that we received Miss Joyce Raymond into a convent in the hope that her grandfather, who had disowned her father, would leave her his money?"

"The records of convents reveal curious things."

"My dear sir, forgive me ; but I have heard of you as a clever, level-headed barrister. I am afraid that sorrow has unhinged your mind."

Even Brandon's face lost some of its fear. Doubtless the man felt that Ritzoom was having the best of the encounter. At first, he might have imagined that Harrington would prove too strong even for Ritzoom ; but his confidence in his chief had revived.

"It is my purpose to go to this convent," said Harrington. "I presume I shall be free to ask questions?"

"Certainly."

"The letter said that a Dr. Jessop attended her. He would, of course, sign the death certificate."

"Certainly. That certificate can, of course, be examined. The doctor will be there to answer questions. By the way, Dr. Jessop is a non-Catholic, so you will be able to have absolute confidence in any information you may elicit from him."

"Exactly. Moreover, according to this paragraph, the deceased has left all her property to the Roman Catholic Church. I presume you will put in your claim for it?"

"My dear sir, what have I to do with it? If in return for the benefits the child has received from the Church she sought to enrich the Church, those who deal with such matters will take the necessary steps to claim for the Church its rights."

The atmosphere had cleared again. Harrington had asked his questions, but apparently Ritzoom had had the best of the encounter; but the young barrister showed no signs of defeat. To judge from his appearance, he might have expected the answers he received.

"Raymond," he said quietly, as he rose to his feet, "there is time for us to catch the midnight train from St. Pancras. Will you pack what is necessary, while I get a cab. We will call at my rooms on the way."

Ritzoom looked at him keenly. He did not feel satisfied.

"Might I suggest that the Great Northern is the better line for your purpose?" he said.

"Thank you," he replied quietly.

During the interview Mrs. Raymond had sat looking from one to the other. In spite of herself, she felt a great bitterness in her heart towards the priests. In a way, she felt that but for them her child would have been alive, and yet such was their power over her, that she could not but yield to their will, and profess that all was for the best. The death of their child had brought husband and wife no nearer together. The shadow of the priest still rested upon them.

"Where are the girls?" said Walter, turning to his wife.

"They are gone to their room. I am afraid the sorrow will kill them."

Walter went up to the bedroom where they slept. Both of them were kneeling before a crucifix in prayer. When they saw their father, they burst out sobbing, and then, forgetting the past three years, they rushed towards him.

"Dad," cried Rachel, "it can't be true, can it? Say it isn't true."

But Walter could do nothing but kiss them. This expression of affection seemed to help him to bear his burden.

"Are you going away, dad?" asked Madaline presently.

"Yes; I'm going to see the grave," he said. "I shall be back in a day or two."

Still the girls clung to him. After all, he was their father, and for a moment the loved one's death brought them together.

"If we could have seen her, spoken to her!" said one.

The girl echoed his own feelings so strongly that the anger which had somewhat subsided was aroused again. But he said nothing. He would not, at such a time, say anything which would justify his antagonism to the faith they had embraced.

"We must love each other the more for this," he said presently. "You must try and comfort your mother, and when I come back—well, don't let anyone keep you from loving your old dad, will you?"

His voice broke as he spoke, and they clung to him all the more closely.

"God bless you, my darlings; I must go now," he said. "Perhaps I shall be able to find out something of what Joyce said. Perhaps she mentioned each of us by name, and sent us messages."

The girls continued sobbing, and as if by one consent they both continued to hold him tightly.

"We both believe that God is good, although we don't understand Him, do we?"

"Oh, there *must* be some mistake. She *can't* be dead," said Rachel.

"I am afraid there is no doubt," said Walter, his heart growing hard again. "Good-night, my darlings, and may God bless you."

He longed to stay with them. He felt that he ought to keep by their side, and yet it seemed to him as though an influence were at work within him which compelled him to go to St. Winnifred's, even although no good could possibly accrue by going. Had death visited their home in the ordinary way all would have been different. Still, the fact that the two girls had turned to him so eagerly lightened his burden. After all, Brandon had not been able to completely poison their minds against him.

He packed a small portmanteau, and then went downstairs. As he entered the hall, he saw the two priests departing.

"I would like to know what is in Ritzoom's mind just now," thought Walter.

Strange to say, the same desire was in Brandon's heart, but although they were brothers of the same Order he was afraid to ask him.

"You had the best of the encounter with Harrington," he said presently.

"Did I?"

"Don't you think so?"

"I don't know."

"Why, you made mincemeat of him."

"That's what makes me doubt."

"What do you mean?"

"When you can make mincemeat of a man like Harrington there's something wrong."

"What can there be wrong?"

"I don't know, but I do know that I don't like the look of things."

"Why, you answered every question that he asked."

"But what about the questions he didn't ask?"

"What are they?"

"Even I don't know that, my friend. All I know is that if he had asked more difficult questions I should go to bed with a lighter heart. It did not need a man of Harrington's brains to remark on the obvious as he did to-night."

"But what else could he say?"

Ritzoom did not reply, and all the way to the priest's house he uttered no word. Arrived there, he mixed for himself a whisky and soda, and then opening a box of cigars he began to smoke. He smoked one cigar, then another, and was just cutting the end of the third when a thought seemed to strike him.

"Good-night, Brandon," he said, and left the house without a word.

Meanwhile, Harrington and Raymond drove first to the former's rooms, and afterwards to St. Pancras. Both of them were silent until they sat in an empty first-class carriage, and then, when the train moved out of the station, Walter Raymond said:

"There is something at the back of your mind, Ned—something which you have not told me."

“ Why do you think so? ”

“ Because you cross-examined Ritzoom so weakly.”

“ Did I cross-examine him weakly? ”

“ You know you did. They were questions such as anyone might ask.”

“ I have been stunned, bewildered, to-night, Walter.”

“ Besides, it was not like you to tell him where we were going.”

“ Wasn't it? ”

“ You know it wasn't. Haven't you anything to tell me? ”

Harrington looked at Raymond for a few seconds as though in doubt.

“ No,” he said, “ nothing.”

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### HARRINGTON'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR.

“WALTER!”

“Yes, Ned?”

Daylight shone through the carriage windows. The summer morning's sun shone upon the two men as the young barrister spoke. The train was passing through a beautiful stretch of country. The corn in the fields was beginning to ripen; all Nature was in the fulness of its summer glory. The morning air was fresh and sweet. Walter Raymond looked haggard and exhausted; but Ned Harrington, although pale and worn, seemed far less tired.

“Did Joyce ever complain of heart trouble?”

“Never.”

“You are sure?”

“Certain. Why, don't you remember that day just before you went to Plymouth, when we were all out in the woods beyond Esher, that we ran races, and Joyce outran us all? Don't you remember, too, that you remarked to me how strong she was, and how sound every organ of her body must be?”

“Oh, yes, I remember. Has heart disease ever been known in either your family or her mother's?” he continued presently.

“No; never to my knowledge. Certainly not in mine. As for her mother's side—well, both her parents are still alive.”

“Has your wife ever complained of heart trouble?”

“Never; why do you ask?”

“Oh, nothing. Only a passing thought.”

The two men lapsed into silence again—Walter to brood over his terrible loss and to wonder what they should do when they got to St. Winnifred's; Ned Harrington to look out on the countryside, which seemed to laugh beneath the light of the morning sun.

When the train arrived at their destination, both of them



looked curiously around them. Nothing seemed real. The thought that Joyce lay buried not far from them was like some ghastly nightmare.

"There is a good-looking hotel here, I see," said Harrington.

"Yes. What do you suggest that we do first?"

"I suggest, my friend, that we each of us have a cold bath. After that, we must have a good breakfast."

"I can't eat, Ned; I simply can't."

"Yes, you can, and you must. We must keep our bodies in good order, my friend, else our minds will not be clear. Some men profess to be able to think best fasting. I can't; neither can you."

Walter Raymond submitted to the stronger personality of his friend. Although he was older than Harrington, and although he had hoped to call him his son, he knew that Harrington was his superior. He was greater in brain power, stronger in will. He did not resent the fact. Rather, he was thankful for it, and rejoiced in it.

While Raymond was dressing after his bath, he looked out into the hotel garden and saw Harrington wandering among the flower-beds. When he thought to join him in the garden, however, he could not find him. Thinking he was in the hotel for breakfast, he sought him there; but in vain.

"I daresay he does not want me," said Walter. "Poor Ned! Perhaps in my selfishness I do not realise that it is harder for him than for me."

He opened an early morning paper and tried to read, but he could fix his mind on nothing. The horror of his grief got hold of him again, a burning desire for revenge filled his heart. He sat for some time, how long he did not know.

"Hulloa, my friend!" Raymond looked up and saw Harrington.

"Where have you been?" he asked wearily.

"Oh, looking around the town. I have been studying the geography of St. Winnifred's. I have discovered where Dr. Jessop lives. We must go and see him presently; and I was at the post office doors just in time to see them opened."

"It must be splendid to have so much energy."

"Must it? Sometimes I wish I had less. Then perhaps I could lie down and sleep."

"Poor Ned!" thought Raymond. "I wish I could comfort him." But he said nothing.

"Breakfast is ready, my friend; come on," said Harrington. "I've ordered the most tempting things I could think of. Think of it! A dish of trout, caught only this morning. After the trout, ham and eggs. The sweetest ham you ever tasted, old man, and eggs laid to-day."

"Good old Ned," thought Walter. "He is doing his best to cheer me. It is something to thank God for, to have such a friend. Ay, and I trust I do thank God for him."

They sat down before the tempting dishes which had been mentioned, and as they ate Harrington seemed quite cheerful. It is true that often it was by sheer effort of will that he crushed his sad thoughts, but, on the whole, he was able to help Walter, who without him would have sunk under his grief.

"By the way," said Harrington presently, "you must not be surprised if I ask Dr. Jessop some foolish questions this morning."

"I shall be surprised at nothing," replied Walter wearily. "Nothing is worth being surprised about. In fact, I've been thinking since I have sat here that it is pure foolishness for us to be here at all."

"Why?"

"Because we shall only make everything harder. To hear about her, to know what she has had to pass through, and—and, well, to realise the mockery of it all is only to make the wounds deeper and to cause them to fester more."

"I should say that Ritzoom would be pleased if we acted on that thought."

"What has he to fear? What do the Catholics care about unfriendly criticism? They know it will be quickly forgotten—and then——"

"Yes, then?"

"They will build churches, advance their plans, and ruin more lives with my father's money."

"We shall see. Anyhow, I simply can't keep quiet. I must get to the bottom of everything."

"I daresay you are right," said Walter wearily.

"I've made an appointment with Dr. Jessop."

"Indeed? You've been busy."

"We are to be at his house in ten minutes. He says he will give us from nine to ten. After that, he has to see his patients. Our visit to the doctor over, we will interview the Mother Superior of the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows.

You'll remember what I said, won't you? Be surprised at no question which I may ask, however foolish."

"But why ask foolish questions?"

"It has a tendency to hide from the person questioned the importance of the questions which are not foolish. We had better be going now."

The two walked together to the house of Dr. Jessop. Raymond was not long in seeing that Dr. Jessop was a man of importance in the town. His house and grounds were large, while a look of prosperity obtained everywhere. It was impossible, moreover, to see the doctor himself, and not know that St. Winnifred's paid him a great deal of respect. His every movement, every tone of his voice suggested the fact. He had married the daughter of a rich magnate. He was a county magistrate. His practice was of the most respectable nature. Everything about him seemed to say, "I am orthodox, gentlemen. I hate quacks of every sort. I am orthodox in medicine, orthodox in religion, orthodox on all social matters. I am a Liberal Unionist in politics. I am a moderate evangelical churchman in faith, and I have a proper scorn for all innovations, whether in the medical or religious world." Indeed, all these things came out during their conversation with him.

"Yes, gentlemen, I attended a nun who died at the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows," he said. "Mark you, I have no faith in, and no sympathy with, these convents; still, I was called there, and I went. To an evangelical churchman, it was all very painful to me. But there, I had to do my duty."

"The nun was my daughter," said Walter Raymond.

The doctor was duly impressed. He had heard that the deceased was heiress to a million, and he was prepared to be very gracious.

"How long did you attend her?" asked Harrington.

"Only about a week. I was given to understand that she had only been lately brought to St. Winnifred's. The convent authorities thought the place might be beneficial for her health. Personally, however, I do not think she was in a condition to be moved. She was very weak, and the disease had so got hold of her that recovery was impossible."

"Heart disease, I think you said?"

"Yes."

"How long should you say she had been troubled by this disease?"

"Very difficult to say. Probably the disease had been incipient from her childhood. Such cases often develop rapidly."

"Should you think that, had not the disease been constitutional, it would have brought about such an early death?"

"Not unless she had had an attack of rheumatic fever. Personally, I should say it was constitutional."

"Did she seem cheerful?"

"Yes. I should say she was of a cheerful, contented disposition. She was not one who was given to fretting, and she had a calm, placid way with her."

"Was she anxious to recover?"

"Oh, yes. On the other hand, she had a way of taking bad news very calmly."

"Excuse me for asking these questions," said Harrington, "but naturally her mother will like to know everything that we can learn about her. Moreover, her father here has not seen her for more than two years, and everything is of interest to him. Therefore, I hope you will not think it strange if I ask you to tell me how she looked. That is, I should like your impressions on her personal appearance. Did she look very ill and attenuated? Did she give you the impression that she had been happy during her convent life? I hope you understand me."

"Oh, certainly. Is Mr. Raymond a Catholic?"

"No."

"Ah! It is very sad. Yes, I see. He will naturally desire to know how his child looked. Ah, yes."

"Exactly."

"Of course, I took no particular notice; moreover, now I come to think about it, her room was rather dark. I should have ordered a brighter one for her had she been able to bear it. But there, now, let me see."

Dr. Jessop laid his chubby hands upon his knees; then he took off his gold-rimmed eye-glasses, and wiped them carefully.

"I should like you," said Harrington, "to be perfectly frank about the matter, and to speak as though her father were not here. To begin with, would you regard her as a good-looking girl?"

"Really, Mr. Harrington, one is supposed not to think of such a thing when one is in a convent; but, yes, I should say that in health she would have been rather pretty."

“ Rather round faced, and inclined to stoutness, as though the austerities of convent life did not hurt her? ”

“ She was certainly inclined to stoutness, and, now I come to think of it, she had a round face. ”

“ Of course, her hair was cut short. I was wondering if two years of convent life had darkened it, and had taken away its curling propensities? ”

“ Her hair was not very dark, and it was certainly not given to curl. ”

“ Her hands were still plump, I suppose? ”

“ Yes; I noticed that she had pretty hands, very small and dimpled. ”

“ You were always accompanied by one of the sisters, I suppose? ”

“ Always. ”

“ Did they call her by her own name, Joyce, or by her religious name? ”

“ They called her Sister Ursula. ”

“ Did she seem to have any sorrows or cares? ”

“ Oh, no. I must say that for the effect of convent life. The girl seemed perfectly content, perfectly happy. I remember remarking on that to my wife. I said to her, ‘ These nuns seem to have buried the past, if they have had a past; they are without a care, without a worry. ’ Especially was this true of my patient. You can tell her mother that. ”

“ Did she say anything about her mother, her father, her relations? ”

“ Not to me. You see, I was there simply as a professional man, and, if I must speak the truth, I felt rather strange. Still, I had nothing to complain of. My patient had everything she needed. I never mentioned a delicacy but it was forthcoming. ”

“ Her mind, I suppose, was perfectly sound? ”

“ Oh, perfectly. ”

“ Would you regard her as bright, intelligent? You see, I knew her before she went to a convent, and I was wondering what effect these places had upon her intelligence. ”

“ Oh, she seemed intelligent enough; but, as I say, I had no thought of testing that. What struck me was her placid cheerfulness and her contentment. ”

“ And when the end came, did it come suddenly? ”

“ Yes, suddenly. It generally does, you know. ”

“ And you signed the certificate without any hesitation as to the cause of her death? ”

“ Oh, absolutely. I told them when I was first called in that the case was hopeless.”

“ And you filled in the certificate to the effect that her name was Joyce Raymond, and that she died of heart disease? ”

“ Exactly.”

“ I suppose the Mother Superior gave you her name? That is, she told you she was called Joyce Raymond before she entered the convent. You did not ask her, your patient, to tell you her name? ”

“ No.”

“ Did you ask the Mother Superior any questions about the relatives of the deceased—or did you suggest that they be immediately informed of her death? ”

“ No ; I naturally assumed that they would attend to all such matters.”

“ Did the Mother Superior seem very fond of your patient? ”

“ Oh, yes ; very fond.”

“ Was she much overwhelmed by grief when she died? ”

“ No, I should say not. Of course, it is difficult to tell with these people. There were a lot of religious performances which I do not pretend to understand, and with which, being, as I think I told you, the vicar’s warden in an evangelical church, I have no sympathy.”

“ Still, the Mother Superior seemed perfectly calm and collected? ”

“ Oh, perfectly.”

“ Did you go to the funeral? ”

“ No, I did not. I was asked to go, and I would have gone had I been able, for I was curious to be present at the burial of a nun ; but I had an important engagement on Thursday afternoon.”

“ There is nothing you would like to tell Mr. Raymond, I suppose? I am afraid he is too much overwhelmed by sorrow to ask any questions, but I am sure his heart is aching to hear any scrap of news about his child.”

“ No, there is nothing that I can think of besides what your questions have covered ; but I would like to say this to you, Mr. Raymond—and I can quite understand your feelings as a Protestant—everything was open and above board. I know that convents are said to be the homes of mystery, and that secrets lurk at every corner. Well, I do not believe in their system, but I speak as I find ; everything at the Convent

of the Mother of Sorrows will bear investigation. Your daughter was treated with every kindness. I was told to come as often as I thought the case demanded attention, and that I was not to hesitate ordering anything in the way of luxury. Moreover, your child was happy. I hear you opposed her entering on that kind of life, and I agree with you. All the same, everything I saw compels me to say that these stories about convents have been greatly exaggerated. As far as I could see, everyone was contented, and everyone was happy. Every kindness was shown to my patient, and she died in peace."

"When did you say she died?" asked Harrington.

"About half-past ten last Monday forenoon."

"Thank you very much, doctor," said Harrington. "It has been quite a pleasure to meet you. At least, it would have been but for the distressing circumstances."

"I am glad to have been of any service, gentlemen. By the way, you gave your name as Harrington. Any relation to Edward Harrington the barrister, by the way?"

"Pretty closely related, I fancy."

"What! Not he himself? Well, I *am* delighted. It's too early to offer you a whisky and soda, I suppose? Yes? A cigar, then? I insist on that. I hope we shall meet again. Good-morning."

Whatever might be their thoughts as they found their way to the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows, neither Harrington nor Raymond spoke on their way thither. Whatever their thoughts, they kept them to themselves. All the same, a keen observer would have noticed a look of wonder in Walter Raymond's eyes, as though some curious thought were struggling for expression.

Presently they came to a large building surrounded by several acres of ground. The lodge gates were wide open, and the two men entered. Neither of them could withhold their admiration of the beauty of the place. The convent stood on an eminence, and overlooked a fine stretch of country. The air was pure and sweet; the whole atmosphere of the place suggested restfulness and contentment. No jarring noises were heard; neither sight nor sound was out of harmony with the purpose for which the great building was set apart.

Even Raymond, embittered as he was, felt this. After all, his child had died in peace and sanctity. She had been saved from the temptations and hardships of life; she had been comforted at the last by the sacraments of the church

she had elected to join. What more could he desire for her? But this was only for a moment. When he thought of Joyce as he saw her last, a bright young girl full of the hope and gladness of life; when he thought of her as a pure child of nature, a bright, happy, wilful, headstrong, yet loving girl, just as a girl of nineteen ought to be, and then, when he remembered what had taken place since, he felt like cursing those who, under the name of religion, had promised her life, and dragged her to her grave.

They had not long to wait after they had sent in their cards. Their visit might have been expected. The Mother Superior came to them with tears in her eyes, and a sob in her voice.

"Ah, we loved her so much!" she said. "She was so good, so gentle, so pious. It is such a grief—such a loss. I know I ought not to grieve so. Such as she cannot be long before she enters Paradise. How can she? Besides, masses have been and will be said for her. Oh, we thought nothing too good for her."

And so she went on, talking at times almost incoherently, scarcely ever giving Harrington the chance of asking the questions that burned on his tongue. And even when presently he was able to put them, her replies meant nothing. Still, Harrington persisted.

"You say you tried to interpret her desires in everything?" he urged.

"Oh, in everything. She was so good—so gentle—so obedient. Such a true religious."

"Do you think, then," he asked, "that you interpreted her feelings by never letting her parents know of her death until the funeral had taken place?"

"Ah, yes—ah, yes—you feel that. But I was so overwhelmed, distracted, that I could attend to nothing. Besides, there was a mistake. I had it in my mind to tell Father Murdoch to do it, and really I thought I had done so. Then, when it was too late, I found out that I had not told him. After that we wasted no time. I know it was wrong, but please forgive me. I was so overwhelmed that I did not know what I was doing."

This statement was repeated again and again at different times until even Walter Raymond began to feel that the woman's sorrow was sincere.

"Where are we going now?" asked Raymond, when their visit at length came to an end.



"To the post office," said Harrington.

"Are you expecting anything?"

"Yes."

"Anything particular?" asked Raymond, noting the peculiar intonation of his friend's voice.

"Yes; I am expecting news about Joyce," said Harrington.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE WOMAN AND THE NUN.

SOME weeks before the events we have recorded had taken place, an important event had taken place in Joyce Raymond's life. She had taken her vows as a nun. From a postulant she had become a novice, and then in course of time she had taken those vows for which more than two years in a convent had been intended to prepare her.

After she had entered upon her novitiate, she felt for a long time utterly dissatisfied. The joy and the peace which she had expected did not come to her. More and more, in spite of penances and prayers and sacraments, she found herself thinking of Harrington and of her father. Questions which for a long time had not come into her mind now obtruded themselves. Had she done right in believing that Harrington had forgotten her, and become engaged to a rich brewer's daughter? When she had been told of this, all her love of life went. Up to that time, almost from the first day of her coming to the convent, she had wanted to leave it, but after that the world became hateful to her. She had eagerly looked forward to becoming a novice, so that she might in due time become a nun and die to the world. But for that dread news she would have persisted in her desire to get away.

Still, she had taken the white veil, and had hoped by so doing she would realise the ecstasy of joy she had heard about. To become the spouse of Christ! What more could the heart desire? And yet, as we have said, after she had entered upon the period of her novitiate she had been far from satisfied. Often she found herself thinking of Harrington and her father, especially Harrington. She had carefully hidden the ring he had given her, and as she had hidden it she had said that she should never see it again. Nevertheless within a month of her taking the white veil, she found herself looking at it with eager eyes. Moreover, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary, snatches of the songs they had sung together came back to her mind, and with the songs,

memories of the words he had said and the looks he had given.

Could he, she asked herself again and again, forget her so quickly? Could he who, up to the time of his meeting her, had kept himself free from all matrimonial engagements, so suddenly forget her and become affianced to another? Why should he? He was not poor, and he had never suggested the fickle, unstable man. Had she done right in doubting him? Nay more, had she done right in becoming a novice at all? She knew that her Confessor would tell her that such thoughts were suggestions of the devil; but had she? None of the ecstasy which she had expected had come to her, and the days and nights at the convents became long and wearisome to her. Perhaps it was her Protestant upbringing and her strong commonsense which began to assert themselves, but so it was. She began to question the use of all the daily routine and of the foolish, childish penances. What did it all amount to, after all? What good did such nuns as those in the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows do? They prayed according to rule, but why could they not pray as well in the world? Why were the prayers of a nun better than those of a good woman who was a good wife and a good mother? Holy life! Her thoughts were no more holy now than they were when she thought of becoming Harrington's wife. Why were these nuns more pleasing to God than good women who did the work of the world? The distrust, the espionage, the petty jealousies which prevailed in the convent, they were so repulsive! Besides, was there any real virtue in being shut away from the world, away from temptation?

These and a hundred more questions haunted her. Her heart ached for home, ached for her father, and ached more for the man to whom she had plighted her troth. Her soul rebelled against the life she was leading, and she determined that she would take steps to leave the convent.

She imagined it would be quite easy to do this. If she went to the Mother Superior, and told of her doubts and fears, she would be allowed to leave. She had been told that all those stories about imprisonment in convents were so many wild inventions. Besides, did not that girl who left the very day she had taken the white veil find it easy to get away? If it was easy for this girl, why not for her?

She thought it all out very carefully. Calling her strong commonsense to her aid, she faced the question of the future.

Of what did a nun's life consist? As far as she could see, it was made up of little items, paltry details, whereby little by little all individuality, all desire was to be killed. And this was pleasing to God! It was pleasing to God to crush all thoughts of love for home, for parents, for brother, for sisters, for lover! It was pleasing to God to crush all thoughts which might be called worldly! It was pleasing to God if she was not sorry that her hair was cut off! It was pleasing to God if she caught cold while staying very long at prayers! It was pleasing to God, this being hemmed in a gloomy building, year in year out, until the end of life! And then the end of it all! After ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, if she lived so long, she would die, and when she went to God she would be able to offer him not life, but death; not an ennobled personality, but a life out of which all great positive elements were crushed. A nun's life was a continuous negation, and this was delighting to God!

Her nature revolted against it. She longed for life, for activity, for service, for love! She wrote a letter to her father, and told him that she wanted to leave the convent. As she handed the letter to the Superior, unsealed, according to the rule which prevails in all convents, she reflected that probably it would never reach her father.

She afterwards went to the Reverend Mother, who spent an hour in proving to her how sinful she was. She must not think of leaving the convent. She had taken solemn vows, from which no bishop had the power to grant dispensation. None but his Holiness the Pope could do this. This was followed by another and a severer lecture after confession. The priest laboured to prove to her that all earthly happiness was of the devil, that all thoughts of rebellion were sinful, that doubt was born in hell. God had spoken to her. If she disobeyed Mother Superior or her Confessor, she disobeyed God, and God's vengeance would be terrible. For her own soul's sake, the thought of leaving the convent must not be entertained.

Penances, prayers, fastings, midnight vigils followed, and little by little her will was worn down. She became very ill, too, and during that illness all thoughts of rebellion seemed madness. She had put her hand to the plough; she must not turn back.

Thus presently Joyce fell, from the standpoint of volition and intellectuality, into a state of torpor. What mattered? It was for her to obey, for by no other means

could she obey God. Little by little the chains of the conventual system were strengthened. She felt as though her nature were contracted, narrowed. She was no longer the old Joyce Raymond, gay, wilful, happy; she was only the echo of her old self, a shadowy, bloodless creature, dreading to think for fear she should think wrongly, dreading to act alone for fear she should displease God.

By-and-by she began to grow indifferent to everything. Love was dead, hope was dead. There was nothing in life for her but the life of the convent. A feeling akin to death entered her heart. She would have prayed that she might die, only such a prayer would be wrong. Perhaps God in His goodness would take her to Himself.

And so it came about that Joyce ceased to crave permission to leave. Instead, she became more and more submissive to the will of her superiors, and when at length she was told that it was her vocation to become a nun she meekly acquiesced. There was nothing else she could do. She had no will to resist; the convent had done its work. She became lost to time; day succeeded day, and week succeeded week with so little change that it did not matter, and when at length she was told that the time of her probation was completed, and that it was time for her to take a nun's vows, it almost startled her.

The day on which she became a nun was marked by the customary ceremony of taking the veil. To all intents and purposes it was a burial service. If she were true to her vows, she was dead. She looked around the church, but no friendly face was near—she saw neither father nor mother, brothers nor sisters. Why were they not there? Could it be as the Reverend Mother had said? Was it by her mother's wish that she should hear no news from home? Had her father forbidden every member of the household ever to mention her name again? Was Harrington married to the rich brewer's daughter? Well, it did not matter now. She was bidding her final good-bye to the world. All enthusiasm was gone; the ceremonial no longer moved her. She bowed her mind, her body, her will to her superiors. She had taken the vow of Holy Obedience, and the chief virtue of her life lay in keeping that vow.

Some time after the final ceremony she was commanded to come to the Reverend Mother's room, and, to her surprise, she found on entering that not only were three priests

present, but three laymen whom she had never seen before. For a moment a blush came to her cheek; she seemed to feel a breath of life. On the table were several pieces of parchment, and, as she entered, one of the laymen scrutinised her closely.

"Your name is Joyce Raymond?" he said.

It was the first time she had heard her name spoken for many long months. Her heart beat violently. She wondered what was in his mind.

"That was my name," she said; "but in religion it is Ursula."

"You wish to bestow all your property on the Church?" he said abruptly.

She was about to say, "I have no property," when she caught the Mother Superior's eye.

"Yes," she said.

The man was about to speak again, when one of the priests interposed.

"My child," he said, "when you took your vows as a nun, you renounced all your worldly goods, little or much. You bestowed them on the Church in response for benefits received. Is not that so?"

He looked towards Joyce, who replied in the affirmative to his question.

"This gentleman is a lawyer," said the priest, "and he has put into proper form your wishes in the matter. Do you understand?"

"Yes, father," she replied.

"Then will you be pleased to listen while the lawyer reads the will you have made, and then you can sign it."

She listened like one in a dream while the lawyer read the document. After all, what did it matter? She had no property to leave, and she could not understand why all this fuss was made. Of course, she would sign it. She did not understand the terms that were used; her brain was well-nigh made dizzy by the wording of the document, but she had no doubt it was all right. She was quite ready to sign.

"Of course, the young lady is of age?" said the lawyer.

"She was of age yesterday," said one of the priests.

"See, here is the certificate of her birth."

The lawyer looked at it carefully, and then returned it.

"Yes," he said; "of course her signature makes the deed valid. Everything she has goes to the objects mentioned."

He placed the pen in her hand, and pointed to the place

where she must write her name. She could not tell why, her knees trembled as she wrote. Perhaps it was because it was the first time she had written the words "Joyce Raymond" for more than two years.

"That is all, my child," said the priest; "and you will be just in time for Benediction."

Joyce left the room wondering. The few moments she had been in the room had aroused something of the old life again. The request for her signature had made her feel that she still possessed a personality. For months her nature had been dormant, but now old memories had been revived; she lived again. It is true her act had been simply to sign away all claim she had to earthly possessions, of which she had none, and yet the very act aroused her to the sense of her own individuality.

Presently she returned to her cell, and began to think. She wondered why, seeing she had no property, they should get a lawyer to draw up a document disposing of property. She remembered some terms referring to lands, houses, shares, debentures, and a lot of other things, which she bestowed on the Church in return for benefits received. But she was penniless. The lawyer would have to be paid. Why, then, should the convent authorities go to such expense? Her mind was not very clear; but still the question haunted her. It did more: it gave her a new interest in life. Little by little it aroused her to a condition of mental activity. For months her mind had been in a kind of torpor. There had been no need to think; nay, more, thought had been discouraged, save thought which bore directly on religious subjects. And she had yielded. Little by little the atmosphere of the convent had dulled her mental activities, and taken away her interest in the world. But now she was alive. The document she had signed caused her to remember terms she had heard her father and Harrington use, and this opened the floodgates of memory.

When she went to sleep that night the question still haunted her: why had she to sign a formal document, bestowing all her possessions on the Church, when she had no possessions?

For the next few days, in spite of the fact that nothing disturbed the monotonous routine of the convent, she took a new interest in life. She felt more like the Joyce of olden time. Why it was she did not know, but it was the truth. The priest had told her that her signature was only a matter

of form, but it awoke many questions in her mind. With those questions life continued to assert itself. She had taken the vow of death, but she was not dead.

A week after the signing of the document referred to something else happened. She was walking along one of the corridors which led from the chapel to her cell, when she heard a voice which startled her. It was the voice of the man but for whom she would never have entered the convent. Involuntarily she stopped. Ritzoom's presence seemed to deprive her of power of action.

"Does she know anything?"

"Nothing."

"She has no suspicion that she is a great heiress?"

"Not the slightest."

"She signed without asking questions?"

"Of course."

The voices died away as the footsteps retreated. No names were mentioned. The conversation which took place between Ritzoom and the Reverend Mother might refer to a thousand people, but her brain whirled. Somehow she felt that they were talking about her. "She signed without question?" were the words which made every nerve in her body tingle.

She felt thankful that she had a cell where she could be alone to think. She moved towards it with almost feverish haste, and when she had entered and shut the door, she recalled every word she had heard.

For a time her thoughts were confused, but gradually her old strength and individuality asserted themselves.

"She has no suspicion that she is a great heiress?"

Did that mean her? How could it? To whom could she be heiress? Her father was a struggling lawyer, who had been so poor that he had not been able to send her to a good school. It is true he had been making a better income while she had been at Bruges, so much better, indeed, that he had arranged to send her to a good school in Germany. But still, he was only a poor man. How could Ritzoom's words refer to her, then?

Her mind went back to the conversation she had heard between her father and her mother in the old days of their poverty and their happiness. She remembered hearing her father speaking of his father as a rich man. Had—had——?

Her young, vivid imagination began to take flight. A thousand possibilities presented themselves. Everything was



unreal, nothing existed but pure conjecture, but everything made a difference to Joyce. If there were any truth in her conjecture, she had been made to sign a document not knowing the purport thereof. Even the bare possibility made her almost angry. What might it mean if she *were* an heiress? Would she give everything unreservedly to the Church? She thought of her father and of his long years of devoted love: It is true he was not Catholic, and she had been told that he had been very cruel to her mother, but she could not forget his tender love for her.

Presently, however, the associations of the past three years grew stronger again. After all, nothing mattered now. Suppose she were rich, she could possess nothing. A nun could not have property; it was inimical to her soul's salvation. Besides, she had taken the vow of obedience. It was for her to obey in all things, to live the life of a nun, and not think of the world. No, no; all was past and over. Even if she knew she were very rich, and she were told to sign away all her riches, she would obey: there was nothing else she could do. Had she not taken the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience? And, after all, were not all her thoughts wild and groundless? How could what she had happened to hear refer to her? No, no; she must not be foolish; she must resign herself to the living death of the convent.

Nevertheless, when she awoke the next morning, she knew that she was not the Joyce Raymond of a month before. Poor food, want of proper exercise, the narrow artificial life which she had led, fasting, vigils, flagellations, and the morally enervating atmosphere of the place had reduced her body to a nerveless, bloodless condition, and her mind to torpor; but a resurrection had taken place. She felt that some new influences were around her. The spirit of expectancy possessed her. Two years of living death, in which she had been trained to believe that petty trivialities were pleasing to God, would have utterly overwhelmed some lives; but Joyce on her father's side came of a strong, vigorous stock, and until she had entered religion she never knew what ill-health meant.

Something was about to happen—what, she did not know; why she believed it she did not know, but she did believe it, and thus, when she received another summons to go into the room of the Reverend Mother she was not startled. She had no other thought than to obey—she felt sure that she should do whatever they might command her; nevertheless

there was decision in her step as she walked, and her eyes were steady as she looked.

When she entered the Reverend Mother's room, she saw, beside the Reverend Mother herself, three priests, one of whom was Father Ritzoom. A number of papers lay on the table, suggestive of the papers she had once seen in her father's office when she had visited it.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A REBELLIOUS NUN.

SHE stood before the priests quietly, and looked from one to the other. What did this mean?

"My child," said Ritzoom, "it is my joy to hear such good reports of you from the Reverend Mother. She tells me that you have consecrated yourself wholly to your Divine Spouse, that you are making great progress in the religious life, and that your piety is most edifying to the community."

Ritzoom let his deep, mysterious eyes rest upon her as she spoke, and yet she did not feel his power as she had felt it when he had told her it was a sin to think of Harrington, and that in order to kill her love she must go into a convent. Still, she could not help being sensible to the masterfulness of his presence. Was he not a priest, and was he not deep in the councils of the Church?

"Thank you, father," she said meekly.

"It rejoices me to say this," went on Ritzoom. "When I think of the condition of mind in which I found you, two years ago, when I reflect on the terrible danger you were in, and then when I remember what the Reverend Mother tells me about you, my thankfulness is unspeakable. It always gives me joy to think of a young nun who shall become worthy of being a Mother Superior."

Again he fixed his eyes upon her. He had suggested to her the great ambition of a nun's life. To become a Reverend Mother! Such an honour generally fell to nuns who had been rich, or who were well connected, and for a moment Joyce's heart was thrilled by his words.

"A few days ago you signed a document whereby you legally enacted what really took place when you took your vows. Of course, it was a mere matter of form. A nun can have no property, and you, as a dutiful child, signed away all possibility of worldly temptation."

Again the priest hesitated, while Joyce's heart beat violently. Again the old doubts were aroused. She did not speak, but she listened eagerly.

“ It is very unfortunate,” continued Ritzoom, “ but the English law is very peculiar. Even amidst your holy avocations I shall be obliged to disturb your thoughts by asking you to sign papers ; but I will make it as easy as possible. All you have to do is to write your secular name as I shall direct, and then I need not trouble you further.”

He held out the pen as he spoke, and with his left hand pointed to a legal-looking document.

“ Why should I sign, seeing I have no property? ”

The words came out suddenly. She had not meant to say anything, but she seemed to speak in spite of herself.

“ Because it is my will that you do so.”

She knew not why, but a rebellious spirit came into her heart. Something awoke in her being which had been lying dormant.

“ But I should like to read what I have to sign,” she said.

“ My child ! ” exclaimed Ritzoom.

“ I remember, years ago, that my father said it was criminal for anyone to sign a document without having carefully read it.”

“ You have no father,” said Ritzoom.

The girl felt a great pain in her heart.

“ Is he dead? ” she gasped.

“ He is dead to you,” said the priest. “ Those who enter the religious life die to father and mother. Besides, the man you called your father was an enemy to your soul.”

Ritzoom felt he had struck a wrong note. He saw the girl's face harden, saw her lips compress. He would have recalled his words if he could, but it was impossible. As for Joyce, she felt angry. The picture of her father arose in her mind—the kindest and most loving father ever a girl had : a good man, too, whatever the priest might say.

“ But enough of that,” went on Ritzoom ; “ it is necessary that you should sign these documents, and when you have signed them you can return to your duties.”

“ I should like to read what I have to sign,” she said stubbornly.

“ Why? ”

Ritzoom had not meant to have asked the question, but the word escaped him unawares.

“ Because it means that I have property.”

She was not afraid now. The feeling of determination grew. She was surprised at herself.

“ How can you have property? ” asked Ritzoom. “ Were

you not received here without a dowry? Is not the man you called your father a poor struggling lawyer? How, then, can you have property?"

"Why should I sign those papers then?" she persisted.

"Because—but it is not for me to explain. It is for you to obey unquestioningly, unhesitatingly. Was not this your vow? Sign, I say."

Stubbornly she placed her hands behind her back.

"Let me read what I have to sign," she said. All her old independence of spirit characterised her again. She felt angry at the way the man was treating her; the suspicions which had been aroused became convictions.

"Why should you wish to read?" asked Ritzoom. "Is not our word and our will sufficient?"

"I wish to read because I am an heiress," said Joyce.

"An heiress! Of whom?" asked Ritzoom scornfully.

"My grandfather."

It was only a guess, but it struck home. In spite of himself Ritzoom was staggered. The girl knew more than he expected. How did she obtain her knowledge?

"How did you know?" he asked.

Joyce Raymond was quick-witted enough now. The excitement of the moment had made her brain abnormally clear. The man's behaviour had aroused her innate independence of will. Besides, she saw that he had inadvertently given away everything in the question he had asked.

"My grandfather is dead, and he has left me money," said Joyce, with a woman's quick intuition.

"And what then?" said the priest. "You have taken the vow of poverty, and by that vow you have bestowed everything on the Church. You have taken the vow of holy obedience, and by that vow I command you to sign these papers."

"I want to know what I am to sign," she persisted.

"You were received without dowry," said the priest. "Suppose, instead of being penniless, as you were when you entered, you have some little property, should you not bestow it on the Church which has bestowed such inestimable blessings on you?"

Joyce was surprised at her own courage.

"My father gave me a home for nineteen years," she said, "and if I have property I would not forget him."

The girl's stubbornness angered the priest. If she persisted in her refusal, the Church could not have the right to

administer her property during her life. Numberless complications would arise. Joyce would learn that Harrington, instead of being married to another woman, had sought her diligently for more than two years, and then all the plans which he had so carefully prepared would end in nothing. He hated defeat, he had vowed that he would not be defeated, and her continued refusal made him forget himself.

"In the name of the Almighty! In the name of the Holy Virgin!" he cried; then, pointing to the crucifix, he continued, "By His holy cross and passion, and by virtue of your vow of holy obedience, I command you to sign these papers. Whatever you have, whatever you are, you have made a holocaust to the Church—body, mind, soul, you owe all to the Church. If you refuse, you refuse to obey God—you who have taken the holy vows. Remember the Church's power; remember the doom of the disobedient, the unfaithful, and sign!"

She was but a young girl who stood there before these priests and the Mother Superior; for years her mind had been warped according to their wills; for years she had been taught to attach a mystic meaning to their offices, and to regard obedience to their will as her holiest duty. But she was not afraid. In spite of herself, in spite of the atmosphere she had breathed so long, Ritzoom had less power over her now than when he had urged her to enter the convent. She knew its life. She had realised all that the Church could give her, and she had not been satisfied. Besides, the fact that these people had tried to deceive her angered her. Her suspicions multiplied. Had they been honest with her all the way through, and had they not thought of this money from the beginning? Besides, with a woman's curiosity, she wanted to know what these papers contained.

"I want to read before I sign."

"But you could not understand."

"Then let my father come and explain."

She wondered at her own strength and daring.

"You who have vowed holy obedience to God, dare to disobey God! Think of it! Think of the awful doom which will follow! Sign, for your soul's sake!"

"Let me read what I have to sign, then. Why am I kept in ignorance? Why have I not been told of my grandfather's death? Why has not my father been brought to me?"

She asked the questions quietly, but with a kind of dogged persistence. The depths of her nature, which even the convent life had never been able to reach, kept on asserting itself; the old Protestant training was bearing its fruit.

She was sent back to her cell. When she had entered and shut the door all her strength departed. Her senses left her. First came a great confusion—then darkness and oblivion.

When she awoke to consciousness she was lying on the floor. At first, she knew not why she was there; she could not realise what had taken place; but presently her memory asserted itself. For hours she sat alone, then presently a priest entered. He was very suave, very insinuating. He scarcely referred to what had taken place, but for the good of her soul he inflicted certain penances. Fasting, bodily flagellations, prayers. By this means her mind was to be brought into submission to the will of God.

The next day she was brought into the Mother Superior's room again, and again Ritzoom commanded her to sign. He pleaded with her, he argued with her, he threatened her. Her head became dizzy, her strength ebbed from her, but still she persisted in her refusal.

"I desire, if I have property, to fully repay the convent for all it has done for me," she said; "but I will know what I sign, I will read every word, and I will understand."

What sustained her in her refusal she did not know. Perhaps her very suspicion of Father Ritzoom was responsible for a great deal. He had tried to deceive her in this matter, and if she had been deceived in this matter, why not in others? Perhaps, after all, Harrington still loved her. It is true she had been led to take vows, but her heart still cried out for him. She had entered the convent through fear, and since she had been there, although it seemed that she had acted from her own free will, she felt that she had been forced from one stage to another.

It has been said that anyone reared a Protestant, even if they become converted to Roman Catholicism, can never forget Protestant training, and therefore never become amenable to Roman Catholic usage, like others who are reared as Romanists. Probably this is true, for although Joyce stood alone against the cleverest and most powerful man in the Jesuit order, she persisted in her refusal. In spite of her "vows of holy obedience," she refused to obey.

At the close of the second interview, however, a new

look came into Ritzoom's eyes, and he adopted a different attitude.

"You are not well, my child," he said. "You are not strong enough to bear even this slight contact with the world. You need not wait longer. Besides, I think your mind is unhinged. You have all sorts of wild fancies which have no foundation in fact."

"No," she said, "my mind is not unhinged. I know perfectly well what I am talking about."

"Nevertheless, we do not need you longer," said Ritzoom. "Moreover, my child, you may be perfectly at rest now. Nothing will happen to disturb your mind again."

A strange smile played around his lips as he spoke—a smile which made the girl shudder. She had not partaken of food for many hours, and she felt as though she could not resist his will much longer.

For hours she remained alone in her cell. How long she did not know, for her mind was dazed by all she had passed through. All she knew was that it was after dark when someone brought her a bowl of some kind of gruel. She ate it mechanically, and then, after she had eaten, a feeling of drowsiness came over her, and she fell asleep.

Meanwhile, Ritzoom sat alone with the Mother Superior. They talked together for more than two hours, quietly, earnestly. The woman's eyes were large with terror; oft-times she started to her feet, and looked around the apartment as though she dreaded that their conversation was heard. As for Ritzoom, his face was not blanched, neither did a nerve quiver. In his eyes was the same mysterious look, around his lips played the smile which had so frightened Joyce Raymond.

"You understand, Reverend Mother?" he said at length.

"Yes, I understand," she replied. Her voice was husky; her face, even her lips, were ashy pale.

"I think I have explained everything."

"Yes, everything."

"The child is suffering here; she must be removed to another convent, to a place which is more healthy."

"Yes."

"Disease is marked upon her face. Anyone can see that her heart is not strong."

"Yes."

"I should say she had better be removed speedily—very speedily, and directly she arrives at her destination a doctor



be called in. A doctor of high respectability—a Protestant preferred.”

“ Yes.”

The woman spoke in monosyllables, seemingly without volition. During the early part of the interview she had spoken freely, at times passionately, but now she was quiet, subdued, taciturn.

“ I think that is all—as far as you are concerned,” went on Ritzoom. “ I will arrange for everything—elsewhere.”

“ Very well.”

Ritzoom left the room. A little later he left the convent. Although it was the height of summer, the night was dark. Had it been daylight, and had anyone seen him walking, that one would have said that he walked like an old man.

Hours later a conveyance came to the convent doors, and presently a woman, who appeared to be weak and ill, was carefully lifted out and placed in the carriage.

“ Who has left to-night? ” asked one nun of another.

“ Sister Ursula.”

“ Do you know why she has gone? ”

“ I have heard that her health is very bad, and she is to be taken to a healthier place.”

“ Where? Do you know? ”

“ No.”

“ Ah, well, the poor thing has looked very ill lately. When I saw her yesterday she seemed like a ghost.”

“ Yes; I saw her too.”

When Ned Harrington and Walter Raymond had left the Convent of the Mother of Sorrows, near the town of St. Winnifred's, in Loamshire, Harrington had offered a very significant remark.

“ I am expecting news about Joyce,” he had said, and then he rapidly led the way to the post office, which was also the telegraph office for the town.

“ Do you know,” said Walter Raymond, after they had walked some distance, “ do you know that we have forgotten one thing? ”

“ What is that? ”

“ We have not visited her grave.”

“ No, we have not done that.”

Both men were evidently much moved. There was a look in their eyes which was difficult to interpret, and each seemed to be afraid to ask the other of what he was thinking.

“ You do not wish to go? ”

“ No, I do not wish to go,” said Ned Harrington.

The two men exchanged glances, and then neither spoke again until they had reached the post office.

“ Is there a telegram for me? ” said Harrington.

The girl looked at him keenly, and then handed him a brown envelope. Harrington caught the look on her face. “ You have something to tell me,” he said.

“ No; that is, nothing particular,” said the girl nervously. “ Only it is a good thing you were so particular in your directions this morning.”

“ Why? ”

“ Because if you hadn't been I should very likely have given it to a man who said you had sent him.”

“ Ah! someone said I had sent him, eh? ”

“ Yes; but I didn't give it to him. I didn't like the look of him, and I didn't let on that one had come. You see, you were so very particular that I couldn't make a mistake.”

“ Exactly how long is that ago? ”

“ Oh, less than half an hour. You didn't send anyone, did you? ”

“ You did quite right not to give it to him. What kind of a man was he? ”

“ Oh, he looked all right except for his eyes—a tall, thin man, with a black beard.”

“ Just so. Good afternoon.”

He had barely left the post office when he saw standing at the street corner, but almost hidden by a conveyance, a tall man, but he wore no beard.

Harrington made no remark. He did not look to see what the envelope contained. Instead, the two walked side by side towards the hotel, Harrington pointing out objects of interest on the way.

Once inside the door of the hotel, he tore open the telegram.

“ Come on, my friend,” he said, as soon as he had read it. He led the way into the room they had engaged for the day, and then he took a time-table from his bag.

“ Tell me, Ned, what is it? ”

“ I tell you nothing, except to hope.”

“ Hope what? ”

“ Hope everything.”

“ It's Ritzoom? ”

“ Of course.”

"You do not believe she's dead?"

"I feel sure she is not. But we must be careful. Do not ask me more now. You heard what the girl said about the man who asked for my telegram?"

"Yes, we must avoid him. I see that."

"Yes; in spite of what the girl says, he may believe that a message has come for me. Walter, are you good for a ten-mile walk?"

"For twenty."

"Ten is enough."

They were both quiet. In spite of the tremendous issues which they believed depended on prompt and wise action, there were no ejaculations, no foolish waste of words. Walter Raymond had been thinking quietly, and he believed he had seen into his friend's mind.

Harrington spoke a few words to the hotel proprietor, and, having paid their bill, they left the hotel. They walked quietly and slowly; they might have been tourists who had decided to quietly investigate the beauties of the neighbourhood.

When they had left the town well behind them, and seeing no one in the road, they increased their speed.

"You wish to catch a train without going to the St. Winnifred's station," said Walter.

"Yes; if we go to Migby Junction, we shall catch an express which will pass through St. Winnifred's."

"I see."

After that they spoke in low tones. They seemed to be afraid that even the hedges might have ears.

The afternoon was warm, but they did not heed the heat. Mile after mile they walked. Every movement of their bodies, every stride they made forward told that they were grim, determined men; but the look of despair had gone from both their eyes.

When they neared Migby Junction Harrington looked at his watch.

"We must run for it, Walter," he said.

"Very well."

Walter Raymond seemed made of iron. The two men ran hard for ten minutes; they had barely reached the station when the train entered.

"It is well there is no heart disease in your family, my friend," said the young barrister, as they sat in the carriage and wiped the perspiration from their faces.

“ Yes,” said Raymond. He laughed as he spoke, but there was a look of terrible anxiety on his face, nevertheless.

Three hours later these men came to a farmhouse among the fields a good many miles from St. Winnifred's. When they came up to the front door, they were met by a young woman. It was the young woman these men had seen in the restaurant in London long months before.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### GREEK MEETS GREEK.

THE trio entered a little parlour which opened from the right-hand side of the passage into which they first came. Ned Harrington looked at the girl inquiringly.

"You have followed my instructions?" he said.

She nodded. "As far as I have been able," she said.

"And——?"

The girl's eyes were full of apprehension.

"Listen," she said.

They listened intently. There was a faint rustle of skirts outside.

"It is very warm in here, Miss Robinson," said Harrington. "I notice that you have a fine garden. Let us walk out there and look at the fruit. The apples are ripening finely this warm weather."

"Yes," replied the girl; "this is quite a noted garden in the neighbourhood. I should like to show you."

They went into the garden, and thence into the orchard.

"You have no suspicion of these people?" asked the young barrister.

"I suspect everything and everybody," she replied in a whisper. "I don't think I should have dared to have come if I had known what I should feel. I thought all the influence of the place had gone, and yet no sooner did I see it again than everything came back to me. As far as I know these people have no suspicions, and I believe they are Protestants; but one never knows. Have you done what you said?"

"Yes; there will be several men whom I can trust watching."

Walter Raymond listened quietly. He had no knowledge that Harrington had discovered the girl for whom they had been searching so long, but her presence explained many things which were dark before. He felt more than ever thankful for the cleverness of his friend. He did not ask any questions; the time for those would come later. Meanwhile, it was for him to pay heed to everything he might

hear. Neither did he make any remark on the fact that both he and Harrington had visited the neighbourhood before. He knew of the convent close by, the convent where they had been so impressed by the Mother Superior. None of the many conventual institutions they had visited had more favourably impressed them than this. No Mother Superior had been so frank, so willing to give information and to show them over the building. When they had left both had been assured that wherever Joyce might be, she was certainly not within those walls. As far as they could judge, almost every room was open for inspection, every question was apparently answered freely and without a shadow of reserve. Even now he could not believe that his child had been behind those walls all the time ; but he said nothing.

“ Is she there ? ” asked Harrington.

He spoke quietly, and with apparent calmness, but anyone could see how much depended on the answer to his question.

“ I think so ; but I am not sure. There is something I cannot understand. ”

“ Tell me—quickly. ”

“ When I saw you the day before yesterday I told you that the girl whom I described to you, and who had told me she was called Joyce before she entered religion, was there. Then you told me to go there and find out if she was still living there. You thought I could do this without suspicion. Having been a postulant there, it seemed natural that I should go back and visit the convent. ”

“ Especially if you were in a position to enrich the funds, ” remarked Harrington.

“ Yes. Well, I went, although I did not think your plan was wise. If I had aroused the slightest suspicion they would have had her removed. ”

“ Not without my knowledge, ” said Harrington. “ I took care of that. ”

For a long time they remained talking together, asking and answering questions. Then presently the two men were alone together again.

“ Walter, ” said Harrington, “ we will see her to-night. ”

“ Yes, please God, we will. We will take her from there ; we will take her home—that is, to London. ”

“ Before I came to your office yesterday evening, ” said Harrington, “ I was full of hope. I had discovered this Miss Robinson, and had long conversations with her. I had

convinced myself that the girl of whom she spoke in the restaurant was Joyce. The question was, whether she was still in the convent ; and I was at length able to induce her to pay the visit she mentions. As one who had been a postulant there, she could find out. Then, when on my way from Paddington to your office, I read the paragraph in the newspaper, I was stunned, bewildered, paralysed."

"Yes, yes ; I remember."

"Presently, however, I began to think. I did not tell you my thoughts for fear they might not be true. First there was the nature of the girl's death—heart disease. I felt sure that Joyce was not likely to die of that. Then there was the fact that although she had died on the Monday, we heard no news until Friday—after she was buried, in fact. You know what the law is about opening graves."

"Yes, yes."

"I had a feeling that she was not dead. I telegraphed to Volpe and Miss Robinson, giving instructions. Then came our meeting with Ritzoom. You know the questions I asked. After asking them I was more than ever confirmed in my suspicions. When we got to St. Winnifred's, there were our interviews with Dr. Jessop and the Mother Superior."

"Yes, yes ; but this is criminal, Walter."

"Of course it is ; but Ritzoom would wriggle out of it. Remember, no claim has been made for Joyce's property. They would urge that a very natural mistake had been made."

"Are you not afraid that Ritzoom will forestall you? "

"Volpe and two or three others would be on the way to the convent before our interview with Ritzoom came to an end," said Harrington.

"What is your plan, Ned? "

"I must see Volpe before I can tell you that. I have two or three plans in my mind."

"We could now go to the Mother Superior and demand her? "

"No ; the convent laws would not allow of that, even now. Suppose we threatened to avail ourselves of the *Habeas Corpus* Act ; its operation would take time, and God knows what they might do to Joyce meanwhile."

"But Ritzoom will not be idle."

"I think he will," said Harrington grimly.

"Why? "

"Because Volpe, in his own way, is as cunning as Rit-zoom," and beyond that Ned Harrington would say nothing.

That night Harrington and Walter Raymond entered the convent grounds by a small postern door. How they were able to do this Raymond did not know, but the last two years had revealed to him something of the resourcefulness and determination of his friend. When they had entered the grounds, however, Harrington gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Anything the matter?" asked Raymond.

"They have forestalled us," replied Harrington.

"What do you mean?"

He pointed to a window where shadows were reflected. "That is Joyce's room," he said quietly.

"But, but——"

"It's all right. I have prepared for this contingency; but it may make our work harder. Listen!"

Both men listened intently. They heard the sound of wheels.

"Our carriage?" asked Raymond. He spoke quietly, but he was trembling like an aspen leaf. He felt that his brain would give way if, after his hopes had been raised so high, they were again dashed to the ground.

"No; it's coming from the other direction. Don't be afraid, my friend."

Walter Raymond thanked God not only for the faithfulness and loyalty of his friend, but for the quickness of his mind—for his foresight.

"Come," said Harrington; "we shall do no good here. Don't you see, the light has gone out?"

He led the way swiftly towards the main entrance of the building, and looked carefully. The drive, and the open space around the door, were empty.

For a moment a look of anxiety came into his eyes. What if his plans had miscarried, if Volpe or the others should have turned traitor!

"Walter," he said, "you remain here, and watch that door. If a carriage comes, or if anyone comes out, you know what to do. If I need you, I will whistle. You cannot mistake the whistle—the one we decided on a few hours ago."

He moved silently away, leaving Walter Raymond alone. If ever a man knew what suspense meant, Walter Raymond knew it then. For years he had been working against un-



seen forces, fighting a battle with enemies who kept themselves in the dark. There, in the silence of the night, it seemed impossible for him to obtain what for years he had been struggling for—the rightful possession of his eldest daughter. But he did not give up hope. The last two years had meant much to him. They had deepened his life; they had thrown him back on God. In his sorrow and difficulty he had become a man of faith. In fighting against a religion which had become filled with error and riddled with paganism, he had been led to realise the heart of religious truth, and to live the life which is by faith in the Son of God. Probably Ned Harrington had helped in this, for the young barrister's Protestantism was not a mere protest against error, but a living faith in positive truth.

And so, in spite of his suspense, he waited quietly and watched. But no sound could he hear; no one appeared in sight. The convent appeared to him like a place of the dead—as, indeed, in many senses it was.

Presently he started eagerly, for he heard a low whistle, and he went rapidly in the direction from which the sound came. He was quickly met by a high hedge of laurel, but this did not hinder him long. A little later he saw a carriage standing by a small door, almost hidden by foliage.

“Quick, Walter!”

He saw Harrington standing in the shade of a tree, not far from the carriage, and in a few seconds he was by his side.

The door opened, and the body of a woman was lifted to the carriage door. Scarcely a sound was heard; not even a whispered word was spoken. Before their work was accomplished, Harrington stepped forward, and threw the light of a dark lantern on the face of the woman who was evidently the object of so much care.

“Father Jetsam,” he said quietly, “I will relieve you of your responsibility.”

“How dare you, sir! Do you know you are trespassers here?”

“Very well; and I am perfectly willing to be prosecuted for my trespass. No, my man, your services will not be needed as a driver to-night.”

The latter words he spoke to a man who prepared to climb to the driver's seat.

“Who are you? And by what authority do you come here?” said the priest.

"By my authority," said Walter Raymond. "This young lady is my daughter, and she goes with me."

"She is of age," cried the priest, "and—and——"

"Don't protest, my man," said Harrington. "If you wish to take proceedings against us, you are at liberty to do so."

He took a card from his pocket, and gave it to the priest.

"My name and address are there," he said. "As for my friend's identity, I am sure you have no need of information. But this young lady goes to her home to-night. No, you needn't call for help. I have prepared for all that."

"What is the matter?"

It was Joyce's voice. She scarcely realised what had taken place. She only knew that a man had stepped to her side, and placed his arm around her.

"Don't you know me, Joyce?" said Walter Raymond. "It's your old dad—dad and Ned Harrington, come to take you home."

"Ned! Dad!" she cried, scarcely realising what she had heard.

Harrington stepped to her side.

"Do not fear, Joyce," he said. "We have been seeking you for years, and now that we have found you, you need not fear again."

"Ned! Dad!" she cried again. "Oh, take me home—take me home! Don't let them have me again. Oh, Dad! Ned, forgive me, and take me home."

A sob rose in Walter Raymond's throat as he heard the plaintive plea of his child, while Ned Harrington's face became grim and determined.

Raymond held his child in his arms while the two men and the priest who stood by looked on as though they were stunned.

"Come, Ned," he continued; "let us get away from the place."

Father Jetsam took a step forward as if to stop them, but Harrington stopped him.

"No," he said, "you dare not lay your hands on her. If you pollute her by as much as a touch of your finger, I will not be answerable for the consequences. It is no use your calling for help. That will not avail you. I did not come here without having taken every precaution, and I can assure you it will be best for you to raise no opposition. It will not look well in the papers, you know."

"I forbid you to leave, Sister Ursula," said the priest. "By your vow of holy obedience I command you to stay."

But Joyce's hand was in Ned Harrington's, and she had no fear. At that moment she felt the weight of her vows to be as light as thistle-down, for she knew they were wrong and could not be pleasing to God. During the last few days her eyes had been opened as they had never been open before, and she realised what religion meant. Thus priestly authority was gone for ever, and Father Jetsam's commands were no more to her than an empty cry.

"I am going home," she said.

"I forbid you, I say," repeated the priest. "As for you, sir, how dare you imperil an immortal soul?"

Both Harrington and Raymond laughed at this, but their laugh changed into a cry of dismay as Joyce, who for the moment had been sustained by excitement, felt her strength leave her, and she would have fallen had she not been sustained by her father.

"Walter," said Harrington, "I will carry her to the carriage. You will call to our men if these people offer any opposition."

He took Joyce Raymond in his arms as though she were a child, and Father Jetsam spoke not another word of protest. Reflecting on the past, and on the disclosures which could be made, he dared not. A few minutes later they came to a lane where a carriage stood. Near by were several men, silently watching. When Harrington had placed Joyce in the carriage, and Walter Raymond had taken his seat by her, the former went to a spot where he had seen a man pinioned by two others.

"Ah, Father Ritzoom!" said Harrington, "I thought it would be you; but we have forestalled you, you see. The carefully-worded notice in the newspapers, and the death certificate were—a mistake, eh? Will you be the first to take proceedings, or shall we?"

But Ritzoom did not answer; he knew it would avail him nothing. He was perfectly silent while Harrington took his place in the carriage and drove away into the night.

After they had been gone some time the men who had evidently come there with Signore Volpe told Ritzoom he was at liberty to go where he pleased. But he seemed in no haste to depart. He walked slowly towards the convent. He had no need to be told what had happened. He was not a man who required explanations.

“ I wonder what they will do? ” he said at length. He spoke aloud, and the words came from him as though he were weary. “ I wonder what they will do? ” he repeated. “ I was wise to wait before putting forth any claims—otherwise — But as it is, have they any case, I wonder? ”

Still scheming, still planning, he made his way to the convent.

“ Will you make it known to the Reverend Mother that I desire to see her? ” he said to the lay sister who let him in.

When presently the Mother Superior and Father Jetsam came to him, they saw that he was a beaten man. They talked for a long time together ; they formulated many plans. But they were not plans of aggression ; they were plans of defence.

Meanwhile, Harrington and Raymond sat in the carriage close to their charge. She was very quiet, and Harrington would have believed her to be asleep did he not feel how tightly she held his hand.

“ It’s your hand, Ned, isn’t it? ” he heard her whisper.

“ Yes, mine.”

“ And you are there too, dad? ”

“ Yes, my dear little maid.”

Then she nestled among the cushions while the carriage rumbled on.

“ We shall soon be at the station, Joyce. We can catch a train to London. It will get there about four o’clock. Are you strong enough to bear the journey? ”

“ Yes, yes ; let me get home.”

When the train came in, she lay at full length on the seat which they prepared for her couch. She looked at them eagerly, as if to assure herself that they were both there ; then she fell asleep.

I will not try to describe at length Joyce’s home-coming, or the consternation it created. Walter Raymond carried her up to her room, while Harrington went to a doctor he knew. Two hours later, a nurse was installed in her bedroom.

There is no need to report the orders the doctors gave.

September had gone before Joyce’s health came back. During her illness Father Brandon tried to see her, but not only had Walter Raymond forbidden his presence, but Joyce pleaded that no priest should come near her.

When Joyce’s story became known in the home the power which Father Brandon had had over Rachel and Madaline

was destroyed ; but Mrs. Raymond remained faithful to the priest's teaching. She declared that the confusion of the names of the two nuns had caused the mistake, and even urged that Joyce should go back to the convent again. Especially was she angry when Ned Harrington came to the house. She declared that she would a thousand times rather see her child dead than, after having taken a nun's vows, she should ever dream of marrying. Indeed, Joyce received several letters from priests, beseeching her not to cast her soul into everlasting perdition by committing so great a sin. But Joyce's eyes were opened, and their threats had no more weight with her than if they were never uttered.

For a time Walter Raymond thought of bringing the whole case before the law courts, but when Joyce, who dreaded publicity, and dreaded still more the thought of being brought into contact with anything that should remind her of her convent life, pleaded that the past might be buried, he yielded to the child who had been so strangely brought back to his life again.

Before Christmas came Harrington and Joyce were married, and the only sad element in their rejoicing was the fact that Mrs. Raymond continued to pour out reproaches, and to refuse to countenance the wedding in any way. Perhaps her sorrow was made more bitter by the fact that all her other three children had broken away from the yoke of the priest.

After Joyce and Harrington had departed to spend their honeymoon beneath the sunny skies of Egypt, Mrs. Raymond came to her husband and asked for an allowance whereby she could live alone.

"I have no children, no husband," she said. "You can at least do this for me. Let me go away into quietness. There I can live my own life, and pray for your conversion."

And Walter consented, hoping that it would only be for a time ; but although many months have passed since then, they have been brought no nearer together.

This is the one cloud in the otherwise unclouded sky of Walter Raymond's life.



20.107