

BORROWED FROM THE NIGHT

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CHAPTER XXIII—CONTINUED

If George Martins had spoken his thoughts, he would have cried out, "What are wealth and honor and position, affection of son and daughter, compared with her love and reverence, which are the price I must pay to secure the others? She will love me in poverty and dishonor, and with her love, I can endure these." Instead, he answered: "You have no claim upon me calling for recognition." The son's hand fell back upon the table. Yet that awakened affection made another weaker appeal to him. Again he leaned toward his father, his dark impelling eyes fastened almost fiercely on the pair, so like them, and cried, a quiver of pain running down his voice: "I will concede all, but one little thing! Oh! my mother must have loved you well that there is still affection for you in my heart, pleading for mercy for you after all your cruelties to me! Listen, my father! I will give up all, ask nothing in return, for your acknowledgment of my claims upon you before this one man, with his solemn promise of eternal secrecy. Give me this poor long-withheld right for your own sake and theirs—your loved ones!" Acknowledge before St. John Worthington that Constance Preston had been deceived and by him! That his proud wife filled a barbarian woman's place! That her son and this man, stained with every crime, had a common claim upon his fatherhood? "You are not my son!" The voice was cold, cruel and relentless. It struck the hearer like the flash of a whip. He straightened himself and laid his hand again upon his weapon. "Very well! You will not give me justice. I will give it to others—both living and dead. I am now going into that room and to your wife and son and Gerald Martins' daughter. I will read the story of our common crime. I shall go armed, and if you or Worthington attempt to have me taken prisoner before I shall have finished, those three persons shall be killed. I hate your son and wife so well that I can kill them with pleasure; and since I may not live with Teresa, the next joy is to die with her." "You shall not enter that room while I live!" said George Martins. "I shall guard my home with my life." "You must not attempt that!" cried Worthington, threateningly. "Those three are innocent, they demand mercy." "So was Amy Martins innocent. What mercy did she show her? Can you forget that long night, St. John Worthington, when you and that bereaved husband walked those dreary woods seeking for her whom you both loved? Remember that who brought you both that sorrow, this man here, walked that night by your side, bewailing your loss, and without a pang of regret looked next morning upon her dead face!" "It will not right dead Amy's wrong to press sorrow into another woman's soul," said he. "I came here in the cause of the living, not of the dead. The ruler of this community must be worthy of his position, but as I could not take the advantage of him which my knowledge of his crime gave me, I resigned my own prospects and ambition for the sake of my countrymen. I also came to demand full justice for Teresa Martinez. But if I had known you to be other than one disinterested like myself I should not have come. Mercy and justice for the living; the dead want nothing from our hands. So," and he moved from his place to the side of the man whom he had caused to hate, "I take my stand with George Martins to defend the innocent living." The Indian looked upon them with something like amusement. "I do not wish to harm you," he said to St. John, "but I repeat my warning: I am a desperate man. Do not push me too far, or I shall not be answerable for what follows. I am fully resolved that those three in that room shall hear the story of this man's sin. I gave him the opportunity to save himself and them by yielding to me my simple right. You heard his refusal. Now when a man has waited and worked for fully fifteen years, be assured that he will not let a thing so weak as the will of two men stand between him and victory. He says that I shall not enter that room while he lives. Sooner than shed his blood I will waive my right, if you will go there and tell them my story in my stead." "I will not do it!" replied St. John Worthington. "Then I shall call that man's wife, their son, and the girl they wronged here. They will come fast enough if I clip the handle of that vase yonder. By the God that made us, they shall hear my words to-night; or they shall hear no other man's ever! This is your choice, George Martins! Shall Worthington tell them quietly, according to the white man's way, and then bring them here to read the confirmation of his words on this paper; or shall they be brought here to hear it from my lips?" The great control he had exercised over himself was with him now; or perhaps there was something of truth in the legendary foundation of his family. Certain it is that never in his palmist days were George Martins' manners more courtly, his appearance more dignified, his voice

freer from emotion, than now in this bitter hour of downfall, when he turned to his ancient foe and said: "Mr. Worthington, my end necessarily forces me to request you to accept and fulfill this commission, which I know is most repulsive to a gentleman." The pity of a proud man's proud acceptance of his fate entered Worthington's soul and overmastered his natural antipathy toward George Martins. But he hesitated, for he knew that Preston Martins awaited him in that room. He recalled their walk through the streets of Lexington; the mutual friendship to which that hour had given birth and remembered that he was his successful rival. He lifted his sad dark gray eyes to the father and said, "I cannot—cannot meet your son!" "It is less hard for you to meet him there, than for us to see Mrs. Martins meet this creature here! In the name of our common manhood, go!" St. John Worthington bowed his head and like one who goes to hear his death-warrant, he crossed the room to the doorway. Reaching it, he paused and looked back at that silent figure at the foot of the table; but there was no reprieving of the doctor from those stern set lips. He opened the door and stepped into the little room where Preston Martins was sitting, reading to his mother and Teresa. Dead silence reigned in the library between the two men, but there came to them the murmur of St. John Worthington's voice. Once a muffled sob fell on their ears—a woman's sob; later, a half-strangled cry—a man's cry of pain; then silence, save for the flow of the speaker's voice. This too ceased. When next it took up the story, it was hesitating, irregular, heavy with a pining heart's emotion. It was then George Martins moved from the table toward a chair. This made him half-turn from the lynx-like eyes that never left his face. Under the shield his body thus gave, he slipped his hand into his breast-pocket. The act caught the eyes of the watcher, and he sprang toward him with a shriek. It was too late. Even as his voice rang out, George Martins' pistol was pressed against his own heart. A report—a moan—and he fell at the feet of his son. As that son dropped on his knees by the prostrate body, George Martins opened his eyes and hissed, between straggling breaths of wild pain, "Your work! Parricide!" At last he had given the long-withheld recognition of this man's claim upon his fatherhood! The four in the little room had rushed in, Preston in advance. He caught the words from his father's lips, and stopped short, his clinched hands driving the nails into the flesh. He turned quickly to his mother but the awful sight had defenestrated her ears to every sound, save the low moans of pain coming from those purple lips. She pressed her own to them and cried to those dull ears, "George! George! my husband!" He opened his eyes and looked upon her, then his glance passed slowly around the little group until it fell on the Indian son, half-crouched on the floor, his face buried in his hands. Did the sight of this son bowed in horror, perhaps grief, when the other stood with ghastly, white accusing face, appeal to him, or did the memory of the long, long dead years when he played with him, a child in the lowly wigwam, call up his first parental love? Be that as it may, he half lifted his head and gaped to St. John Worthington. "It is innocent! I shot myself!" Then his head fell back on his wife's bosom. Teresa, who had stopped appalled at the doorway, now sped to the seemingly lifeless figure and falling beside it cried, "Cousin George! Cousin George! Won't you see the priest? O don't die unreconciled with God. Preston!" he called out in anguished tones, but Preston was gone, and the carriage which had brought St. John Worthington and the Indian son was hurrying fast as the horses could draw it to Lexington for the physician. When he roused the man of science he sought the priest's house, to whom he briefly stated the sad particulars of his father's attempted suicide. He did not know that his father would accept an spiritual ministrations, but he asked the clergyman to accompany him, and in the next moment they were on their wild homeward drive. On entering the house, Preston escorted the priest to the parlor, and sent a message to his mother, informing her of the clergyman's presence; then, he turned toward the library. It lay in the soft light cast by the tall wax candles, calm and still. There was not a trace of the terrible tragedy, for which it had been the stage. It was as he always remembered it, except that the tall-backed chair by the table was vacant, and the familiar face, with its winning smile, did not greet him on his entrance. Instead, on the opposite side, his head bowed on his hands, sat St. John Worthington. He now rose and for a breathing space, the two men regarded each other silently; then Mr. Worthington passed around the table with outstretched hand. Preston took the hand and wrung it, while a sound which was more a moan than a sob, broke from between his white lips. But after that moment, his calmness returned, and he said: "The servants say that he is still alive. Is there any hope?" "It is a bad wound. The doctor has come and is with him. He may have some hope for us."

There was a pause, then Preston asked, "Where is—he?" "He has gone," returned Worthington. "You said something about a paper—my cousin Gerald's will—which he had all these years: did he carry it with him?" "He did not." "It was addressed to you, I believe, as guardian of Miss Martinez—my cousin Amy, I should say. Will you permit me to see it?" asked Preston. "I cannot." "Mr. Worthington, I insist upon seeing that paper," said Preston. "That paper no longer exists," answered St. John Worthington. "Miss Martinez burned it—burned it unread and at the peril of her life." A profound silence followed the words; then Preston exclaimed: "Destroyed her father's will! The only proof of her right to this property! And you—you let her do this!" "I was powerless to prevent her," answered Worthington. "When the servants carried your father from this room, and she, and he, and I, were alone, she asked me for her father's will. I pointed toward where it was lying on the table, guarded by his pistols. As she moved toward the foot of the table, he, as if divining what would be its fate, sprang from his crouching position on the floor, and ran to the place also. She was before him. Her hands caught the paper, his, the weapons. He demanded the paper from her. His voice seemed to awaken all her woman's fury. He stood there with a pistol in each hand, one aimed at her, the other aimed at me; but as if he were a child, instead of an enraged creature more wild beast than man, she turned upon him the torrent of her righteous anger. He hesitated. I think that he was deliberating whether it were not better to kill us both and then turn the weapon upon himself. I spoke to him, told him that he had brought sorrow enough upon this lady and others of her name, in his effort to revenge himself upon one man. That revenge was his own, and I bade him not to add to his list of crimes the death of others. I begged him to go as she had told him to do, and leave us to our misery, misery of his bringing. 'I will not go,' he answered me, 'without that paper!' At his words, she laid the paper on her bosom and folding her shawl across it, said to him: 'You may take it from me when I am dead, not before!' I knew I could gain nothing by my words, but time, which I hoped would bring me interruption and assistance. I turned to her and asked her to remember that that paper belonged neither to him nor to her. It was mine and I asked her to relinquish it to its proper owner. I assured her that I would guard it with my life, if necessary. She appeared then, for the first time, to realize the danger which was threatening us, for she turned to him and commanded him to put down his pistols. Her taunts of cowardice shamed him into lowering his weapons, and when she saw them lying on the table, she asked me what the paper contained. I told her that it was her father's last testament. It appointed her guardian and informed me that I should find her at Loreto convent under an assumed name. She asked me if her Cousin George had seen the will. I told her that he had. She then wanted to know its value to her personally. I replied that beside her father's property, she was heir to her grandfather's estate in Virginia, and without this she might have difficulty in proving her identity. She asked what was its value to this man that he had kept it all these years and was so anxious to re-possess himself of it. I was not prepared to answer that question. I saw she turned upon me her beautiful eyes and said: 'Tell me this and I shall trouble you no further. Is there anything in this paper, written by my father, which would bring one pang of pain, however slight, to the heart of Mrs. Martinez, or would grieve her son?' I said, 'There is.' I was looking at her as I spoke. The words had not fully passed my lips, when her place was vacant, as by me she sped like a flash of lightning toward the sitting-room. With a yell, which brought every servant on the place to the library, he sprang to follow her. I grappled with him, but he dragged me forward. We both reached the door in time to see the white paper lying in the heart of the flames. In the next instant they had caught the brittle sheets, and the man fell back against my breast, with a piteous moan. The servants were hurrying in, as Teresa rose, and said to him, 'I have it now in my power to wreak upon you a daughter's justice against the murderer of her parents. But though you did not spare them, nor me, nor others I love, I will spare you. I forgive you freely and fully, as I hope to be forgiven. Now, in God's name go and repent!' He was clinging to my arm like a child. I think he was weeping. I turned and walked with him to the hall door. Without a word, or a sign, he went down the steps and out into the night." Preston Martins had stood throughout the recital without a movement, except that the hand resting on the back of his father's chair, trembled at times. A mist came before his eyes as Teresa's last question was repeated; but it soon cleared and the eyes again looked upon the face of the speaker with their new tragic expression.

"And he is my father's son—my brother!" He spoke the words half aloud, as St. John Worthington's voice ceased. Then he asked, in clearer tones, "Do you know—did he ever say, who his mother was?" "In the confession which your cousin made him write at Raisin, he stated that she was a Natchez Indian maiden," answered St. John Worthington, turning his eyes away, that he might not see Preston Martins suddenly drop his head, as he murmured, "O my mother!" But he soon lifted himself from that position and stood as he had stood throughout the recital, save that he had removed his hand from the tall back of his father's chair. He folded his arms and waited for Mr. Worthington to bring back his wandering glances. There was no desire in his attitude, neither was there bitterly nerve resistance. It was but the natural expression of a proud, strong soul, which could bear honor without humiliation, and shame without degradation. As the eyes of the two men again met, Preston Martins said: "Worthington, I can but dimly guess what occurred in this room before you came to us. Am I correct in thinking that you came at the request of my father—or the threat of—him?" "At your father's request, and his threat," returned St. John, hesitatingly. "Am I also correct in thinking that your words, telling us that the man whom we knew as Senor Martinez, had returned, the self-admitted murderer of Gerald Martinez's wife, that he bore our cousin's will, stolen at the Raisin massacre, and it showed that Miss Martinez, not the child we buried, is Amy Martins—that these words were but the introductory to a following story, which the shot prevented your relating?" "Preston, I must ask you to question me no further," said St. John Worthington, and though his voice was natural, his companion noted the working of the subtly sensitive face. "I am sorry, St. John, that I cannot comply with your request. It is necessary, vitally necessary, that you answer my question. The situation is painful to us both—may I urge you to release us from it by giving me that information, which you cannot deny, is my right to possess. A man, sir, must see how he stands, before he can begin to fight." "Preston Martins stands where his mother's sin could not but stand without blame and above reproach." "You have answered my question," he then said, with his proud calmness. "Say to me now what a no-altogether unfortunate circumstance—since it spared her—prevented your saying to us! Tell me, St. John Worthington, what you would not tell Teresa—what else did that paper contain?" "My friend's happiness is as dear to me as my own happiness. One word of what that paper contained will never pass my lips!" and as St. John Worthington spoke, he folded his arms, and the sensitive face grew hard as stone. "Worthington," cried young Martins, "you are the friend for whom my soul has ever yearned! And your friendship, like everything else, has come to me to be held but for a brief moment and then relinquished. Your refusal is more eloquent than many words. The suspicions I tried to hurl from me are by it confirmed beyond the possibility of a doubt. I know my father's sin! I know my father's shame! I know my father's crimes! And they are such that they thrust me, his son, beyond the pale of love and friendship and honor and all that the heart of man holds dear! This is God's decree as well as man's. And I accept it." "I am not going to reason with you, nor even remain with you, Preston," returned Mr. Worthington. "I only say this: I am your friend and will not be cast off!" "Will you indeed remain my friend?" cried he. "Then do this for me. Teach her to forget me. Make her, whom we so cruelly wronged, happy. Then, indeed, will you have proven your love for me, who can never more make other claims upon it."

TO BE CONTINUED

THE BLIND PIPER

In a drowsy heat of the summer day the gray old town lay half-asleep, resting itself comfortably against the soft bosom of the green hills that lay behind it. A traveler climbing those hills by the rugged pathways and narrow lanes, closely beset by rows of straw-thatched cottages, shining tier after tier, golden, and gray, and white in the sun, had surely a glorious prospect to look back upon. Out on the blue waters of the harbor, reflecting the stainless skies, lay many a white-winged yacht sailing fast before the light summer wind, whilst on the other side of the bay the wooded hills of Waterford shone smiling and peaceful, dotted here and there by a comfortable farmhouse or a tiny white-washed cottage, with faces turned ever patiently towards the sea. Far out on the horizon the black smoke of a great American liner left a thin trail behind it. Away from the other end of the town the sands stretched themselves interminably like a broad yellow ribbon between the green fields and the blue waters, rippling silver edged along the strand. Great old hookers and fishing smacks lay idle against the quay walls, whilst the sailors mended their nets or gossiped quietly over their pipes in this veritable "Sleepy Hollow."

Down at the ferry beyond the deserted market-place there seemed alone some little life and stir. The river-boatmen carried their three times weekly carried tourists on the board bosom of the Avonduff to the great Cistercian monastery, past many a scene of sylvan splendor and old-time history, lay to-day idly at anchor. It seemed as if the ferryman were in consequence to reap full benefit from their industry, for close to the landing-stage the long red ferry-boat, full to overflowing, was making ready to start amidst a buzz of lively talk and merry laughter. It carried a motley crew of passengers—youth, gaily-dressed people of both sexes down from the city on a seaside holiday; anxious, tired-looking mothers in charge of noisy troops of children; the ubiquitous American tourist, criticising everything and making odious comparisons as he went; grey-headed grandfathers taking well earned rest after their long life's work, and scanning benevolently the faces of the other passengers with a view to finding an agreeable conversational companion. In one end of the boat sat an old man with the patient hopeless air of the typical Irish peasant, grim with years of hard work and disillusionment; at his feet, beside the collie dog, who looked up in his face, yelping excitedly now and then, lay huddled a frightened sheep, and beyond the sheep again was a great bundle of hay, presumably fodder for the animal he scarcely together with a stout straw rope. The mother of the noisy children looked anxiously from one to the other, and fixed a disapproving glance on the old man with his sheep and dog and truss of hay each time that the boat rocked to and fro at the water's edge. In a place of honor in the centre of the little craft, Seagan Buide (Yellow Jack), the Blind Piper, fingered his chanter tenderly and crooned to himself a sorrowful song, his sightless eyes staring out over the shining waters. At last they were ready to pluck off. But whilst Seamus Dwyer pushed one ear into the water, Phelim Farrell, his companion, sat unaccountably still. "Ye'll have another passenger," he said, laconically, in answer to Seamus' look of inquiry. "Wait a while." The fussy mother threw an appealing glance towards Seamus, and muttered something about the boat having already as many passengers as was stipulated by the Board of Trade notice on the landing stage. But her protest fell on deaf ears. Seamus Dwyer paid little heed to foolish women's talk—sure if one minded the like there'd be no living at all, and why wouldn't he wait for the lady when it would be a full hour before he could come back for her again? The new-comer, flushed and breathless, at last reached the water's edge, and was helped by willing hands into the ferry. She was a tall, still handsome woman of about thirty six, with a certain elegance in her bearing and apparel, and the soft rustle of her skirts as she arranged them about her filled some of the poorer passengers with a respectful and silenced awe. In another moment the boat was off, and the wish-wish of one ear after another through the fast-flowing water was alone audible for some time. But by and by the young people began to find their tongues once more. The new-comer, sitting silently amongst them, listened with an interested expression to the lively chatter and fun, interspersed here and there with a sentence from the soft mother tongue of the speakers. The owner of the live-stock was giving his next door neighbor a lively account in the Gaelic of his doings at the last fair of Milken, whilst a grey-headed old gentleman was describing to the mother of the children, much to her discomfort, a shocking accident by which fourteen people lost their lives at this very ferry when he was a young man. But, on a sudden, a long wailing sound pierced the air and all the voices ceased. The Blind Piper had begun to play. There he sat, a pathetic, lonely figure, his head bent in a listening attitude, his sightless eyes turned towards the people, all his mind and soul absorbed in the music of his pipes. He was still a young man, for all the grey streaks that silvered his flaxen hair, the flaxen, almost colorless, hair that so often goes with defective sight. He might be forty, perhaps a little less, but there was a sorrowful look of premature old age about his bent, shrunken figure, his thin, stony fingers, and in the lines of his still handsome face, browned and weather-beaten now by the sea winds and the sun. As he hugged his pipes lovingly, caressingly, the wild strains of an old Irish ballad-song floated out across the waters, and awakened the echoes amongst the rocks on the other side. The tide was flowing strongly out to sea, and, despite the efforts of the sinewy oarsmen, the boat carried along by the river current, drifted stubbornly out of the straight course. But the passengers did not seem to notice it; even the most nervous of them forgot to be afraid, listening to the music of the pipes. Then, all at once, the defiant, triumphant song of battle was changed into the plaintive, soft drone of a love melody. The Blind Piper was once again young and happy! He had forgotten the boat, the people, the rushing waters, his blindness, his threadbare clothes and poverty. He was back at home in his own beautiful valley of Desmond, his sweetheart by his side. The sight of his eyes

was with him, and all the world lay before him, smiling and alluring, full of love and joy and sunshine. Something of his thoughts perhaps showed itself in his face, awakening half forgotten memories in the mind of the well-dressed woman who watched him with such strange interest. Her thoughts, too, flew backwards nearly twenty years, to the days when she was still a girl, an innocent, shy-eyed colleen, living in a little thatched farmhouse high up amongst the hills—the days before she sold herself at her mother's bidding to the wealthy owner of the ginnaloe in Boston, who had come home to his native land to seek a holiday and a wife at the same time. The strains of the "Cullionn," played now by the blind piper, brought back to her mind the blue eyes and yellow locks of handsome Jack O'Riordan, the village schoolmaster, who had wooed and won her youthful heart. What a fool she had been, she told herself, thinking with a shudder of those lost wretched years, during which she had silently endured every torture of shame and degradation, whilst her ignorant, purse-proud besotted husband drank himself slowly to death. Could any wealth, any luxury, make up for it? If but her mother could have foreseen the end of all her plotting and planning for her child's welfare and happiness. But she was dead long since, dead and buried beside her husband in the little churchyard of St. Bride; and many a time had her daughter thanked God in her heart that the old woman had never learnt the truth. The boat had now passed through the river current, and was fast nearing the further shore. The lonely woman felt half-reluctant to leave her place. Dreaming the long forgotten dreams of her girlhood once more, and listening to the droning of the pipes, she felt as though she could be happy sitting there for ever. What had she come home for, widowed, childless, fatherless, motherless, with hardly a friend in this sorrowful, lonely motherland that she might call her own? Surely it was but a foolish sentiment which had brought her back, lonely and empty-hearted, despite her wealth, after her absence of eighteen years. But she could not resist it, and would not, even if she could, this cry of her motherland insensibly calling her home. She would go back to the little village of her girlhood, even though she be unknown and forgotten there. She could at least visit the graves of her father and mother, and put up to their memory there some fitting monument of their simple lives. Perhaps, too, when her heartache had grown less, she might do something with her wealth to help the poor children and old people of her native village. The harsh grating of the boat on the pebbles of the rocky landing-place at last awakened her from her reverie. She gathered her flowing black skirts about her and prepared to leave the boat. Many of the passengers had already stepped ashore, and were hurrying off to secure seats on the "long car" which waited to bring them to the pretty seafaring village on the other side of the hill. The blind piper stood on the steps of the landing stage, bare-headed and hat in hand helping with his free hand, as was his wont, each passenger to alight. She noticed that many of these dropped a coin into his hat as they passed him by. Now it came to her turn, and as she stepped out on the slippery steps, wet with the receding tide, she gladly took the proffered hand of the poor piper out-stretched to help her. The hot sun poured down on his bare head, on his sightless eyes, and weather-beaten face, now grown suddenly cold and gray since the music of the beloved pipes had ceased. But as she placed her soft, warm hand in his, the face of Seagan Buide was suddenly transfigured with a shining glory. It was as if all the love and beauty, the joy, the pride, and glory of the world, of which his pipes had just been telling, were suddenly vouchsafed a moment to him; as if the light of the sun itself shone out from behind her face. He held her hand closely, tenderly in his own, and as he did so a quick tremor ran through his frame. "That," he said at last, in the soft, moving tones she had known so well in that far-off happy long ago, and his whole soul seemed to be turned towards her; "that is the hand of Nora Bawn O'Driscoll!" It was her own name, and as she stooped with a tender reverence and touched her fingers with his lips, she all at once seemed to realize what it was that had called her back. The hearts of Seagan Buide and of Nora Bawn were still young, and if they at length did not live happy that way may!

NORA TYNAN O'MAHONY.

THE LEANING TOWERS

The leaning tower of Pisa is world famous, but there are two leaning towers that are seldom heard of though they are certainly marvels of architecture and worthy of much attention. They are to be seen at Bolton, as a spot where five streets join. The taller of the two is 320 feet high and is four feet out of the perpendicular. The shorter of the two is unfinished, and, though only 15 feet high, is no less than 8 feet out of the perpendicular. There is no doubt that if it had been completed it would have been the most marvelous leaning tower in the world. There is nothing beautiful about the towers, for they are built

of ordinary bricks. Both, however, are 800 hundred years old, which speaks wonders for the workmanship. For what purpose they were erected is a matter of doubt, but as watch towers they cannot be beaten, for the view from the summit of the tallest is magnificent and extensive. —Hippon (England) Observer.

JANE ALDEN'S LETTERS

WRITTEN BY A CONVERT TO PROSPECTIVE CONVERTS

Have you ever seen that picture of the "Good Shepherd" bending down and draw up to Him the little stray sheep? I have seen it many, many times, and each time it has had a new significance. At first I was that lost sheep, and my heart throbbled with anxiety over my own peril. I used to look up, wondering whether I would ever see the rescuing hand held out to me, or whether I would be doomed to hang on to the vague support upon which my feet rested till it gave way, carrying me with it into oblivion. Then one day my anguished eyes beheld what seemed to be a shadow of hope. I gazed at it, and to my astonishment found something strong to hold on to—something firm, yet tender, which drew me—drew me up, up, up, till I, too, stood upon the heights safe and secure. Now from the summit I can look down upon the struggling ones, and perhaps reach out my hand to help others who are climbing even as I once did. We are all sheep, and Christ is the Great Shepherd, but we human sheep are in many ways far more silly than the animals whose names we are called by. They are gentle, submissive, and follow wherever they are led, trusting implicitly to the one who has charge over them. But we hang back rebelliously, constantly questioning, tossed about by every wind that blows. Perhaps we are not entirely to blame; that is, not we ourselves. For long ago, our forefathers left the Fold seeking freedom, as they said, but instead of freedom they plunged themselves and all succeeding generations into a maelstrom of heresy and doubt. You think I speak as one who knows? Perhaps I do now, but it was not always so, and because of this,—because I have asked and have been answered, have sought and have found the true Faith—I am going to try to explain it to you. We will go step by step through each difficulty, and break down the barriers which seem to exist unaccountably. I say "seem," because they are not really there. Our eyes are blinded. We are afraid to believe, afraid of what "they" say. That mysterious "they" whom everyone fears, and who cast dust into our faces just when they are shining brightest. Looking back now, it seems as if through all my life, even in its earliest years there ran a vague, unarticulated longing. At first I did not know what it was,—could find no explanation,—but as I grew older I realized that my whole heart and soul was crying aloud for a firm faith in God. All around me I heard conflicting ideas. Each church contradicting the teachings of others, and turning the different chapters of the Bible this way and that way till it seemed one vast contradiction to which no explanation could be given. Wearily I turned from the door of one church after another, finding no peace in any one faith. It was just when my eyes had grown unaccountably tired with straining upward to an unseen goal that I saw the shadow of hope in the Catholic Church. I could scarcely believe it possible that any benefit should be found for me amongst the teachings which most of my friends reviled, but desperately I clung to them. For months I toiled over the questions which perplexed me, always doubting, half afraid to trust myself in its unknown paths. But little by little the light shone through till at last I stood in the dazzling brightness of the true Faith. "Now," thought I, "all my trouble is at an end"—at least it would have been if I had not let the things which "they say" worry me. And because I have gone through all this and have come out with a stronger, deeper reverence for my chosen Church I am going back over the whole ground step by step with you. Unless you have done as I did, you will scarcely be able to realize what it costs to turn your back upon the teachings of all your family and friends, and adopt as your own a Faith which seems the direct contradiction of all that you have ever learned. But if you have been through this mill you will soon find how instinctively dear this religion, for which you have sacrificed so much, soon becomes. Yes, can not hope to love or understand it perfectly at the very beginning. Nothing is of much value till you have fought for it, and earned the right to it. So, too, I had my moments of doubt, even after I had entered and had "burned my bridges" behind me. First of all "they said" that I was doing wrong to pray to the departed saints, or even think of them, and my narrow-mindedness found it hard to grasp. But the Good Shepherd was very kind and patient with his stubborn sheep, and answered each question so logically and clearly to permit the slightest doubt. I have some friends, exceptionally dear ones, and many times when in trouble I have asked them to pray for me, that I might be guided aright. Now, if we have the faith in a life after death which we are presumed to have, are not our dear ones living somewhere in God's great universe?