

didn't know anything about my mother, and she said she would kill me if I told them. And then when I was sixteen or seventeen I ran away and went to live with a man who had been kind to me. It was the first kindness I'd ever known. He was the prosperous proprietor of a wine shop in Alexandria, and he loved me with all the passion of his dear French heart. He was a good man and always treated me well, so that, in spite of the restlessness of my nature, I lived with him for nearly three years."

"Were you married?" asked Father Gregory.

"Oh no: we didn't think it necessary, as we had no children. I should have liked to have borne him a son, but fortune decreed otherwise. Then he died of cholera one summer in Alexandria, and I found that he had left me his business and all his money. I sold the business, heaved a great sigh of relief, and sailed for England, with altogether some twenty-five thousand pounds to my credit."

She paused, and Father Gregory noticed that her eyes were full of a strange radiance, as though the last rays of the sun, still thrown on to the eastern sky, had been reflected in them.

"What did you do then?" he asked.

"Why, that was my chance, my opportunity!" she exclaimed. "I had risen from the gutter, and now I was the captain of my own destiny. I went to London, became chums with the more or less respectable young widow of an army doctor, took a flat with her, and soon collected a circle of friends. I have a quick sort of brain, and very soon I had educated myself into an imitation, at any rate, of what you in England call a lady. Amongst my friends was Saloman, the great pageant-master; and one day he invited me to play a small part in a pageant he had organized. I made a success in it; and then he produced 'The Galileans.' Did you ever see it?"