

A VICTIM TO THE SEAL OF CONFESSION.

A TRUE STORY.

By REV. JOSEPH SPILLMAN, S. J.

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CHAPTER XX.

ONCE MORE IN THE RUE DE LA COLOMBE.

On Good Friday Mrs. Montmoulin and her daughter were released from detention, as the Prosecutor deemed it unwise, seeing how little ground there was for suspicion, to prefer a charge against them, for inquiry had in fact been advantageous rather than disadvantageous to them.

The period of detention, combined with anxiety about her children, and heart-rendering suspense concerning her brother's fate, had quite undermined Mrs. Jardiniere's health.

"How can you think of us," the mother answered, "it will be with us as God pleases. But he, a Priest, condemned to death as a murderer!"

When Mrs. Montmoulin had recovered, she still felt so weak that a cab had to be fetched to take her and her daughter to their home in the Rue de la Colombe.

When they got there all looked desolate enough. Mrs. Jardiniere had her mother lie down on the couch in the sitting-room, while she opened the windows and took down the shutters, so as to let light and air come more into the rooms.

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on earth," her daughter answered amid her sobs.

"Who knows but there may?" rejoined the mother. "And if not, think how short time is compared with eternity. What if here on earth we have to bear the cross and shame with our Lord and His saints, all will soon be over!"

"I would sooner have died with him. It would have been easier than to bear the misery and disgrace that his death brings upon us and our innocent children. It is more than I have strength to endure!" and her tears burst forth afresh.

So saying the good little woman slipped away, thinking her friends would rather be alone just then, and also because she could scarcely restrain her feelings on seeing the sad plight they were in.

"O mother," the daughter replied, "he is less to be pitied than we are. All will soon be over for him, but for all the remainder of our lives we shall be branded with the mark of his shame.—What is to become of us?"

The Governor and other prison officials who witnessed this scene were evidently touched, though they were pretty well hardened to tears and lamentations. The Governor endeavored to console the unhappy women by informing them that the prisoner bore himself with serene, almost cheerful resignation.

By this time it had become known in the neighborhood that the mother and sister of the condemned priest had been released from detention and had returned home.

Thus under one pretext or another all found their way to the modest house in the Rue de la Colombe.

One can imagine what Mrs. Jardiniere felt when questioned on this

painful subject by these heartless people. At length she could stand it no longer, and withdrew to the room where her mother was lying down to rest, leaving her little girl to serve the customers and satisfy their curiosity. But soon she found it necessary to protect herself from their ill-timed intrusion, so she put up the shutters, and fastened a paper outside with the words: "This shop will be closed for a few days," denying herself to all visitors on the plea of her mother's indisposition.

Towards evening two visitors came, against whom the door could not be shut. The first was Mrs. Lenoir. No one who looked at her could doubt that hersympathy was unfeigned, and she expressed it by deeds as well as by words.

"There is nothing for me," she said, "but to earn my bread by the labor of my hands. Mother is so broken down by grief, that she cannot carry the cross much longer. But the children—I know that I cannot support them if I have to go into service and yet I do not know how I shall bear being separated from them."

The two friends were still in consultation when the door bell rang and almost directly Charles came in to say Father Regent was there.

He then asked if he could see Mrs. Montmoulin, and on Julia being sent to ask her grandmother was well enough to receive him, the old lady came down, leaning on her granddaughter's arm, for she said she could not trouble so honored a visitor to climb the steep stairs to her little room.

Then the pious priest spoke to them of Him who for our sake was unjustly condemned and put to a cruel and ignominious death, a death of expiation which commemorated on that very day in common with the whole Church.

After this Father Regent spoke of the future, and Mrs. Jardiniere told him how dark a prospect it offered.

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lege at Marseilles. He is too young but at a word from the Archbishop an exception will be made in his favor.

What could the two women say, but that they were truly grateful to the kind priest. The children too, when they were called were delighted with the prospect. Julia said she would go anywhere, so long as she could go out of Aix, for she was ashamed to be seen out of doors.

Just as Father Regent rose to leave Mr. Meunier, the solicitor, came in. He begged the kind priest to stay a few moments longer, as he was very desirous to hear what he thought about a matter which he had to lay before the two ladies.

The matter was this: Mr. Meunier stated that after consulting Father Montmoulin, and asking the opinion of some of his colleagues, he had decided against appealing to a higher court, as it would probably be useless, and would involve great expense.

Father Regent said he should like to hear first what Mrs. Montmoulin thought about the suggestion.

"I should not wish it in his place," Father Regent said. "As I told you, I look upon his as a martyr's death. Who would refuse the crown when it is placed almost within his grasp?"

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um of Vesta, one may imagine that he sees the image of the Vestal who forsok the temple of Vesta to enter the Christian Church.

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