

Towards break of day, before the sun had shown his glowing disk above the horizon, the Flemings were drawn up in order of battle on the Greening brook. Gny commanded the left wing in person, and he had about him all the lesser gilds of Freges. Eastachius Sporin, with the men of Farnes, occupied the centre; the second corps was commanded by John Borlaet, and numbered five thousand men of Ghent; the third, composed of the clothworkers and freemen of Bruges, was led by William van Gulck. The right wing, which extended as far as the city walls, consisted of the butchers, with their Dean Jan Breydel, and the Zealand men-at-arms; and it was commanded by Messire John van Rensse. The remaining Flemish knights had no definite post assigned them, but moved hither and thither wherever they deemed their presence and aid necessary.

The eleven hundred horsemen of Namur were stationed in the rear, behind the line of battle; they were not to be brought at once into action, lest they should throw the infantry into disorder.

At length the French army began to prepare for action. A thousand trumpets uttered their shrill voices, the horses neighed and weapons rattled on all sides, with a sound so ominous in the darkness, that the Flemings felt a cold shiver thrill through them. What a cloud of foes was about to burst upon them! But to these valiant men that was nothing—they were going to die, that they knew; but their widowed wives and their children, what would become of them? At that solemn moment their thoughts reverted to those most dear to them. There thought bitterly of their sons, doomed to iron bondage; sons bewailed in agony their gray-headed fathers, left the helpless prey of tyranny. Within them were two contending emotions—inflexible resolution and crushing anguish; and when these met in men's hearts in presence of a threatening danger, they combine and fuse into a transport of rage and fury. And this effect was now produced on the Flemings; their gaze was fixed and unflinching, their teeth were clenched in fierce resolve, a burning thirst made their mouths dry and parched, and their breath came thick and rapid from their panting breasts. An appalling silence reigned throughout the army; no one expressed his apprehensions or feelings to his comrade; all were plunged in thoughts of painful gloom. They were standing thus drawn up in a long line, when the sun rose above the horizon, and disclosed to them the camp of the French.

The horsemen were so numerous, that their spears stood thick as ears of corn at harvest time. The horses of the advanced columns pawed the ground impatiently, and resprinkled their glittering trappings of steel with flakes of snow-white foam. The trumpets sent their lively tones, like some festive rejoicing, to mingle with the sighing of the trees in the Neerland wood; and the morning breeze played wantonly with the waving folds of the standards, and with the streamers attached to the spears of the cavalry. At intervals the voice of the general was heard above this tumult of war; and the war cry, "Noel! Noel! France! France!" arose from one company; and as it caught up by each in quick succession, a deafening echo ran through the whole host. The French horsemen were eager, and full of courage; they picked the sides of their war steeds with their spurs to goad them into fiercer fury, and then crossed them and talked to them, that they might the better know their master's voice in the thick of the fight. Who shall have the honor of the first blow? was the thought that filled every mind with eager excitement. This was a great point of honor in those days, when every good fortune fell to the lot of a knight in an important battle, he boasted of it all his life long, as a proof and token of his superior valour; and hence each one held his horse in readiness, and his spear in rest, to rush forward at the first word of command, or at the slightest sign from the general.

TO BE CONTINUED.

### THE YEARS BETWEEN.

A Novel by William J. Fischer.

Author of "Songs by the Wayside," "Winnona and Other Stories," "The Toller and Other Poems," Etc.

#### CHAPTER III.

##### THE STONE IS LIFTED.

Charles was up with the birds the next morning. He felt refreshed after a good night's rest. The sun was just peeping over the hills and the dew rose upward like a young child's prayer. He could not resist the temptation of everything out of doors. He was impressed with the loveliness of it all. Nature had never shown him so much grandeur before. The birds fairly sang out their little souls in music, and the vagrant gypsy-breeces caught some of the melodies and imprisoned them in their green tents in the tree tops.

Gradually the city streets became noisier, and soon at every corner people were passing on their various errands. Charles, however, though he was all alone—all alone, with the beautiful morning—as he wandered along the well-kept garden walk. Flowers there were in abundance, and they made his heart glad. Presently he came upon a bed where roses had lived in the warm summer. The little green leaves were turning brown and he could see nothing but empty stems. At last his eyes came upon a solitary rose, its white leaves were already turning, and no wonder! It was dying of loneliness. Eagerly he plucked it, and, when he gazed into its white soul, he noticed that a poor dead bee lay coiled there, so still and cold. The rose had given up her gorgeous leaves and woven for him her poor inanimate thing a lovely shroud. The anxious little lover would never again try to harrow out his arms and taste the honey on her scented lips. And the rose felt sad, and in her eyes the dewy tears

shone like diamonds. Truly, the price of love is Pain—and, as Charles walked out of the garden into the busy street, young as he was, a little lesson came into his heart—and he thought of his mother.

The streets were now filling up with people. Shop girls, laborers with dinner pails, men, women and children, were on their way to begin their work for the daily crust of bread. Whistles, bells, noises of all descriptions smote the air. Now and then crowded cars passed by weighed down with the humanity that must fight to win. It was a busy time—these moments of preparation in the early morning hours for the day's work. Charles was deeply impressed with it all; it was so unlike quiet Stanford, and his heart strings caught a few notes of the song of Toil, and for the moment this great restlessness, this wild uncertainty written upon every face held him spell bound.

When he reached home his mother met him. She had been in his room several times, and, not finding him, was necessarily alarmed.

"Where have you been, child?" she asked, somewhat nervously.

"Just up the street," he answered, boyishly. "I woke quite early. The birds would not let me sleep longer, so I dressed and went out for a walk. But my mother, the coffee smells fine. I'm awfully hungry."

Just then, Mrs. Atherton brushed in pleasantly, and with her there came a goodly amount of sunshine. In an instant Charles' red cheeks were brightened by her warm hands. I dare say they never got such a rubbing before.

"What a fine sprig of a boy he is, Minnie," she exclaimed. "My won't he make the people stand around Sundays when they're late for Mass. I am sure he will have no squealing babies in church, or squeaking voices in the choir either, for that matter, when he'll be Father Mathers. Ha! ha!"

And she laughed heartily as the bell in the hall announced that breakfast was ready.

An hour later the three stood at the portal of St. Jerome's. Charles eyes opened widely. He was anxious to see this little world which his mother had pictured to him so often. In a minute the door opened, and a cheerful little priest ushered them in the president's office.

Father Salvini will be in presently he said, as he bowed himself out of the room. Charles was very nervous, and his eyes sought out every corner of the room. It was nicely furnished, plain but artistic. Upon the walls hung a number of choice Italian scenes in oil, and, on the desk in the corner, stood a large marble bust of Shakespeare.

"Mother!" at last broke forth Charles, "isn't Father Salvini a fine looking man? He doesn't seem a bit cross."

"Child, where is he? Do you see his picture anywhere?"

"Why to be sure. Don't you see him? He is there on the desk—thunder-bust I mean. I can see his name on the pedestal from here."

The two women exchanged glances and laughed heartily.

"What are you laughing at, mother?" the boy asked in an injured tone of voice.

"At you, Charles. No—not that is not Father Salvini, but Shakespeare, the great English dramatist."

"But, mother, his name is there as plain as day."

The child would not be beaten.

Mrs. Mathers walked over to the bust and read the inscription. "See! Charles," she exclaimed, "it reads:— From his classmate."

"Well, if it isn't him, I'm sure it looks enough like him to fool anybody," the boy declared, stubbornly.

Again a laugh sounded through the room, and Charles did not like the ring of it.

"Look at the face closely now, Charles," Mrs. Atherton said. "Perhaps you will change your mind."

"No, I'm sure those eyes are just like Father Salvini's," he said.

"Oh, yes," the boy replied later, as he examined the bust again, "the mustache and beard! I wonder if—"

Just then footsteps sounded in the hall. There was a slight cough and the rattling of beads, and in walked Father Salvini in his neat, black cassock, with a smile that was pleasing. He greeted the three warmly. He was an old friend of the Atherton's and Mrs. Atherton always felt at home in his company.

Father Salvini was a man of thirty, dark, tall and handsome. He had the face we always associate with a Cardinal, clear-cut, distinguished, and his outward bearing was that of a ruler—a king amongst men. Born and educated in Italy, his English had that delightful accent so musical to one's ears. He was very talkative and recalled his early college days. Then he spoke of his young life out amongst the Italian hills, as he toyed carelessly with the little silver snuff box in his lap. He was in his element, and his audience was delighted. He was the son of a Duke. His father's castle stood on one of the historic hills just outside of Rome—the grand city of the Caesars.

"So you have come to stay with us, Charles," he spoke kindly. "We'll well! Classes open to-day, and I will have the master of studies see you and arrange your work for to-morrow. I am sure you will work hard and be a credit to your mother."

Father Salvini turned in his chair and faced the desk. For a few minutes he was busy registering the new student. Then he rose and said: "But come, and I will show you the grounds. They are particularly beautiful at this time of the year. I will introduce Charles to some of the boys."

"Just a minute, Father," interrupted Mrs. Mathers. "I would like to pay this year's tuition."

Father Salvini again turned his back to the women and sat down at his desk. He then Mrs. Atherton tried to press a roll of bills into her friend's hand. Mrs. Mathers, however, motioned the willing hand away and whispered under her breath: "Not yet! Mae, I beg

of you—not yet!" And from her own purse she paid the first year's tuition for her son.

Charles was soon out amongst the boys. It was the half hour recess, and the college campus was fairly alive with excitement.

Father Salvini showed the two women the college park. It was a beautiful spot, with its well kept flower-beds, massive trees, and the singing river running through it.

Away in the distance a mountain raised its glorious head to the clouds. Presently they entered the woods, which the students were so loath to leave whenever the college gong sounded the call to work. The sunbeams danced gaily through the heavy branches overhead, and the sound of the merry student voices stealing from the college campus, disturbed the brooding peace around.

When they left the woods Father Salvini again turned to take a last look at the scene so dear to his heart. He loved the forest and all its associations. It was such a quiet place, such a cloister for meditation and prayer, and many a silent hour had he spent there in sweet converse with his God. He was a poet as well, and nature always appeals to the singer of songs. The woods were full of oak trees, and on their way home he told them how old some of the trees could possibly be.

"You know something of them," he continued, "whenever I look at those gnarled oaks, tall and majestic, they remind me of the giant intellects that tower above the world's mediocre crowd. Their feet are on the ground, but their heads—ah! they are sun-kissed and star-crowned."

But that my boy would only become an oak amongst the trees!" exclaimed Mrs. Mathers. Father Salvini, I leave him to you. Do with him what you can. He is all I have in this life."

"I will do all I can for him, Mrs. Mathers," the priest answered, gently. "I will try to make a man of him. The world is badly in need of men—men, who have the strength of justice in their hands and the gold of virtue in their hearts; men, whom the lust of office have not ruined, whose warning voices sound clear and distinct above the tumult and misery in the street. We want strong men, good men, pure men—men of conviction, with bones in their bodies. Charles is yet a mere boy, but he will develop with the years. Let me hope that the young sapling may thrive and grow into a stalwart oak, and provide shelter and comfort for you, Mrs. Mathers, in your old days."

Father Salvini spoke entertainingly on the way. He was full of the wisdom of the sages and the poets.

The college campus was still lively with tumultuous boyhood, when the three returned from their walk. Charles, who had been playing ball with a group of boys, espied his mother and ran up to meet her. He could hardly contain himself; he was so delighted with his new surroundings.

"On, mother," he cried out joyfully. "I love this place. The boys are so nice and I know I won't be a bit lonely here. I just met a boy who knows poor Thady, the cripple, at home. Won't Thady be pleased when I write him? Then I met another boy whose father served Mass for poor Father Flynn years ago, among the hills of Donegal, and he told me a lot of the fairy stories of old Ireland. Be sure to tell him when you go back to Stanford, mother."

Mother and son kissed each other good-bye at the old college gate. Tears were shed, but then they were such tears as come with every parting. Father Salvini and the boy entered the college together. That evening in the chapel the priest offered up a special prayer for the widow's son. "Father of Heaven!" he prayed, "take Thy protection and care this fatherless child."

When the two women reached home Mrs. Mathers was in good spirits. "Mae," she said, "I will never shed a tear over that boy again; for some time in the future my boy will be in the hands of a saint. I will worry no more. Mae, I feel like a new woman. My heart is easy now. The heavy stone is lifted."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### LIGHT ON THE HORIZON.

From the day on which Charles entered St. Jerome's to the end of his college career, Father Salvini took a deep interest in his welfare. To be sure, there were many boys to keep the watchful eyes of a president busy, but somehow or other he always had a feeling of pity in his heart for the widow's son. For eight years the two had been together, and eight happy years they were for Charles. The kind priest had verily been a father to him. Whenever anything haunted the heart of the boy he sought Father Salvini, and in his wise counsels always found peace.

The last school term of Charles' college career was drawing to a close. The boy had developed into a fine young man, and more than ever before was he the delight of that motherly heart at Stanford. Until now, Mrs. Mathers had not been obliged to call upon the charity of her friend. She had seen her son through college safely, and now her whole thoughts were wrapped up in the forthcoming commencement exercises. The classical and philosophical courses would then be over. Another three or four years at the seminary, and then—then all would be ended—all this ceaseless striving and waiting. Her boy would be a priest, and her cup of happiness would be filled to overflowing.

In the mind of the student however other thoughts were stirring, but he threw a cloak over them and few suspected that so cheerful a face could cover so troubled a heart. But one did suspect. It was his friend, Father Salvini.

One morning the two met in the park. Father Salvini had noticed a great change in the boy for some months past, and this chance meeting afforded him a good opportunity for saying something.

"Charles, my boy," he said sympathetically. "I have always thought kindly of you. You have worked faithfully, and I can safely say that you will carry off quite a number of the medals this year. Your teachers are proud of you. They see for you a bright future. In a short time commencement will be here and then you will leave us. I would like to see you happy and hopeful, my boy. Instead you appear to be worried. The last few months have shown me that something is weighing you down. Charles, you have always trusted me. Trust me again! Tell me just what is the matter and I know you will feel better."

The priest's searching glance was fixed upon the student. Charles' eyes were upon the ground. A warm flush crept into his heated face. Yes, he would tell it now—tell all, and then he would feel relieved. He made an effort, but the words fairly paralyzed his tongue. Then his eyes sought the open, honest countenance of the big-hearted man before him; they had a pitiful look in them, but again the words failed him.

"For a few moments both walked on in silence—a silence that seemed to Charles to have suddenly lengthened into a year. At last the words came to him. His voice trembled with emotion.

"Father," he began, "I know I should tell you, but I cannot just now. My feelings won't let me. It will not be long—just a little while—and then I will tell you all—yes, everything."

The priest laid his arm upon the boy's shoulder and together they walked back to the college. Neither spoke, but in the mind of Father Salvini a fresh thought had taken life.

For hours afterwards Charles could not forget Father Salvini's words. The afternoon passed quietly, but the boy was restless. Then evening came—a clear blue sky overhead, hundreds of flowers sending their perfumes through the air and birds singing out their very hearts in gladness. Glorious was the music that rushed impetuously through the woods. Even the little river, that wound in and out of the college park, caught up the melodies and gurgled on joyfully. It was the last evening in May, and its closing hours stole very near to the hearts of the boys of St. Jerome's, for they marked the ending of a short but sweet holiday.

Already dusk the crimson shadows were creeping over the city, but the campus was still a thrill with life and excitement. In his troubled state of mind Charles wandered through the park, along the banks of the river. Every thing around him was bright, and his heart was heavy. Sinking down on a bench he caught his head in his hands and stared for a long time into the busy waters at his feet.

The old bell in the chapel sent a sweet, clear peal through the air. A few minutes later the campus was deserted and the boys entered the chapel for the closing of the May devotions. The sound of the bell had interrupted Charles in his thoughts; he rose and retraced his steps to the college chapel—a chast little building, nestling in the shade of the maples.

Out upon the air came the soft notes of the organ, now rising and falling in thrilling accompaniment to a sweet, boyish tenor voice. Charles halted for an instant and listened eagerly. Toni Longo, a rescued, little street Arab, whom one of the Fathers had found in a city concert hall several weeks previous, was in the choir loft. His voice sounded like that of an angel, singing through the open windows of heaven.

When Charles reached the chapel door the song was ended. He bowed his head reverently and attempted to enter, but something pulled him back. Father Salvini was to deliver a discourse on "Vocation." Charles felt he could not sit it out with a heart so restless as his then was. Again the organ played softly, and the Father Salvini's strong voice in prayer stole through the open door. To Charles' ears it was the voice of a friend speaking, and, as he gazed through the open door at the inspiring picture before him—the altar ablaze with lights, the kneeling worshippers—and listened to the prayers, his feelings overpowered him. He slipped into the cozy chapel and sat down quietly and unnoticed into a dark corner where human eye could not discover him.

Presently Father Salvini rose, and, turning, faced the boys and began his little heart-sermon. It was always customary with him to give the students a quiet talk on vocation once a year, shortly before the close of the school term. The most interested listener in his audience on this particular evening was Charles Mathers.

The time was near at hand in which he was to give his decision as to what path in life he was going to follow. Now he stood at the very cross roads. No wonder that his young, untried heart quivered with fear. The future lay before him, bright if it is true, but the distant fields were undiscovered and lay afar off, shrouded in purple mist.

When the discourse was over the boys fled out reverently. Then followed Father Salvini wrapped in deep thought. Charles had passed unnoticed. A few minutes later all was quiet in the little chapel. Presently the trusty old sexton ascended the altar steps to extinguish the burning candles. The next moment he took a severe coughing spell—he was subject to them often—and it almost prostrated him. Charles ran forward from his hiding place and caught the old man in his strong arm. Just as he was about to fall before the altar.

"I am all right now, Charles, thank you!" he said feebly, few minutes later. "You need not accompany me. I can walk. I shall find my room without assistance, thank you! But please put out the other lights, won't you like a good boy?"

Thereupon the humble, hump-backed sexton stumbled out of the house of prayer.

When all was dark again Charles wandered over to the Sacred Memorial in the side altar, fragrant with rich lily and rose perfume. Unconsciously

almost he sank upon his knees and pleadingly extended his arms to the Mother of his dark hour. All the evening his eyes had rested upon the gentle Mother. Did not the smile on her saintly face remind him of his own mother, back there in Stanford? Die he not clinging tenderly to that anxious mother-heart at home?

Presently loud sobs filled the quiet chapel. Charles Mathers was shedding bitter tears—the first in all the eight long years at St. Jerome's.

Ten minutes later there was a gentle rap at the president's door. Father Salvini turned good naturedly from his desk and cried out carelessly:

"Come in!"

The door opened slowly, and there stood Charles. On his way to his room from the chapel he had not the heart to pass his friend's door—little dream what the next half hour might bring forth.

"Sit down, Charles, my boy, and don't waste your strength standing! Why, I thought you would be in bed by this time. It is 10 by the clock, and the verger has already been on his rounds. He reported only a few minutes ago that you had not yet put in an appearance. Where have you been? Why, Charles, you are sick? Your eyes look red and—" A look of surprise stole into the priest's face.

"No, Father. There is nothing the matter with me except that I am heart sick. I just came from the chapel a few moments ago."

"Some little affair of conscience again, I presume?" the good priest questioned with a smile.

"Not altogether, Father. But I must come to my story. My college year is nigh at an end, and I must decide what future course I will take in life. I am afraid poor mother will be disappointed." He continued, displaying deep emotion. "For years she has looked forward to my coming home to her as one of God's anointed. It has been her highest ambition in life to see me a priest some day, but Father, I must tell you—I cannot. The thought of it nearly drives me mad and I am afraid it will kill poor mother."

"Father—Father—I cannot—become a priest. I feel that it is not my vocation. I have prayed, I have done everything, and yet that strange something within me whispers: 'Child! that is not thy vocation. There is other work for thee to do!' For months and months this has been ringing in my ears. I tried to fight the thoughts that rose up within me, but louder and stronger grew the strange voice within me. I often felt like telling mother, but I could not summon up courage to do so. Poor mother!"

Charles could go no farther. His feelings overpowered him.

Father Salvini looked pityingly into the young man's face.

"Do not worry, my boy!" he said sympathetically. "The present trial seems crushing to you, but God will give you the strength you need for the necessary strength. If you think and feel that you should not become a priest, then give up the idea at once and be happy. Better this than to enter the priesthood for your mother's sake and be miserable all your days. Your mother will be disappointed, of course, but God will give her the necessary grace to overcome the bitterness of it all."

"Yes, she will be disappointed, but then I intend to return to Stanford to live with her and make her comfortable for the remainder of her days. I am strong, and I feel these arms of mine should help to earn the means to keep her in comfort."

"Don't think of such a thing at present, Charles," Father Salvini interrupted quickly. "It would be the bitterest disappointment for her to know that you had given up your studies. Charles, my boy, your mother told me long ago that she would like to see you among men, as an oak among the trees. Do not go back to her a weeping."

"But, Father," said Charles, sorrowfully, "my ambitions soar higher than you think, but I dare not entertain such thoughts. In the end I should find them impossible anyway."

"What would be impossible?" asked the priest kindly.

"I would like to become a doctor," exclaimed Charles. "Medicine holds for me many attractions, and I would be happy to espouse her cause, now

that I feel I am not worthy to labor in the Lord's vineyard, as mediator between God and man. But I dare not think of it. The university course, would entail a great expense and I have no funds. Perhaps mother is in straitened circumstances now. Father, I feel I should work—"

"Never mind, Charles," the priest interrupted. "Do not worry. In the times comes all the little difficulties will be straightened out. The world is badly in need of men—honest, conscientious souls—and I rejoice with you to know that you are thinking of taking your place out there—somewhere—in the lonely by-ways to soothe the cries of agony in the Valleys of Pain."

To leave the boy to his own thoughts for a few minutes, Father Salvini rose and approached the window and looked out into the empty grounds. The passing moon threw pleasant shadows over the grass, and in the distance the little river sparkled like a sheet of molten glass. When he turned and faced Charles again, he noticed that his eyes had a different look in them.

"By the way, Charles," he began, "it just occurred to me that perhaps a friend might become interested in your future and help you along over the rocky road."

"But where might such a one be found?"

"Right in this city, but a few blocks away, we have a woman of means who devotes much money annually to works of charity. She is wealthy and very generous."

"Who is she?" asked Charles, excitedly.

"A Mrs. Atherton," was the reply. "We are good friends, and I see her frequently. By the way, she's the great friend of your mother. To be sure, you know her, Charles. You go there quite often."

"Mrs. Atherton? Ah, yes. We are so near together, and yet she was farthest away in my mind when you spoke, Father."

"What do you say about going to see her to-morrow, Charles?" asked the priest. "If necessary, I will bring all my influence to bear upon the matter."

"Oh, I would so like to call and see her!" said the young man, in those precious moments of newly found happiness.

"You may go then?"

"Thank you, Father. You have made me feel very happy," Charles added gratefully as he rose to leave the room. And over his darkened horizon a new light suddenly dawned.

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