

THE LITTLE OLD SECRETARY

(CONTINUED.)

M. Everard made no answer. He seemed absorbed in thought. "Kathleen," he said at length, "if this youth be your brother, you may see him yet fulfill all his early promise. You must give me time to think. I am bound now to sift this matter to the bottom. You will trust me for not leaving you in suspense one moment longer than I can help. Of course, after your account, I see there is a possibility of your conviction being true; but that is all—there is not a shadow of proof. I think I shall have proof the other way. I will telegraph at once to the India Office in London. Your brother's watch and this miniature, and whatever other rare properties may have belonged to him, will in all probability have been sent home from the authorities in India, for his family. I promise you to do all I can." His eyes turned on Kathleen with a great tenderness. "Do you think," he pursued softly, "you can so far control this strong impression as to wait in patience and calmness till the doubt is cleared up?"

Kathleen's heavy eyes closed a moment, and she murmured a strain she had often heard her mother sing—"O! rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, rest, rest in the Lord." She rose from her seat and wrung Mr. Everard's hand.

"You must not be sorry you have told me this story," she said earnestly. "Mother and I would give anything to know the truth. If she were here she would thank you from her heart for saving one child's life, and bringing tidings of the other. You need not be afraid of me," she continued, "I shall be able to wait patiently now." And she gave him such an ineffably sad smile that a mist came over his own old eyes.

"You must not violently force yourself," he replied gently. "Nature will take her revenge on that. Go up to your room and keep quiet this evening. Your eyes tell of a headache which will be more than enough for an excuse. A quiet night may perhaps efface from your imagination this strong impression."

"Never," said Kathleen firmly. "The heart's strong instinct is not so deceived; I have assuredly heard a voice from my darling brother's own self, and I thank God for it."

The merry voices of the party returning from their ride were heard in the hall, and Kathleen escaped at once to her room, where she was indeed glad to rest her throbbing head upon the pillow.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And though at times impetuous with emotion, And anguish long suppressed, The swelling heart heaves, moaning like the ocean Which cannot be at rest, We will be patient; and assuage the feeling We may not wholly stay By silence sanctifying; not concealing The grief that must have way." —Longfellow.

It was well for Kathleen in the sudden deluge of grief that had burst over her, that her habits of daily thought gave her a solid place of anchorage. All she had heard, all she surmised, and the heavy fog of uncertainty which hung over everything, made her feel at first like a ship that had lost its bearings in a raging sea, on a dark night. But by degrees, the truths of Faith in which she had lived from babyhood, shone out as bright stars to guide her; and she who had been nurtured on the teaching of the Rosary, found no difficulty in understanding the mystery of sorrow.

As she lay in the dark, with dull, throbbing head and a heart exhausted with its anguish, there came distinctly to her remembrance a single word in a sermon which had greatly impressed her: "Every human life, every human heart is contained in the immense Ocean of the Sacred Heart, and the whole business of our doing and suffering here below is to have our life completed and made perfect in His."

Hitherto she had been saying the Joyful Mysteries: living in the sweetness of home, and especially in that charm and delight of a mother's love and care, which He had delighted to make the special characteristic to His own childhood. She knew this would not last always; that there is an Hour of Passion awaiting every one, and that the Sorrowful Mysteries draw hearts, most of all, close to God. Not for herself alone, but for poor Ewan, whose fate seemed to her a desolation beyond words, this thought brought peace and rest. If this tremendous discipline was to make him a saint and enable him to save his soul, how, when it came to the end, they would all rejoice! Kathleen was a true Child of Mary, and though too utterly exhausted to use brain or thought, or to form any plans for the relief of the trouble that oppressed her, she was able to quiet her spirit with the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary into which she felt she had never before so deeply entered.

In the evening Rose brought her some tea and lit a tiny lamp, which gave just a gleam in the dark room. A few minutes afterwards little feet crept quietly in, and Dora, who was a most compassionate little creature when any one was sorrowful, came gently up and Kathleen felt a little warm cheek laid softly against her own, with a sound of pity like a whisper of "poor, poor." The little one signed to her anxiously, "Where?" and when Kathleen pointed to her head Dora stroked her forehead with such a loving, gentle hand that quiet tears began again to flow from Kathleen's sore and weary heart. Dora's quick eye soon perceived them and she began wiping them away with her own little pocket handkerchief. She spelt inquiringly, "Sorry?" Kathleen replied on her fingers, "Very."

The little earnest face gazed at her pathetically, as if at a loss what to do for any one that was "sorry." She stood silent for a moment watching Kathleen with her eyes full of plaintive wonder. At last a glad flush passed over her countenance, and with a bright smile she trotted off to the corner of the room where Kathleen had made her oratory. She returned quickly, bringing in one hand the Crucifix, while with the other she spelt very energetically:

"K. must not cry now, because Jesus would see, and that would make Him sorry."

Kathleen put her arms round her innocent little comforter and drew her towards her, kissing her again and again.

"Thank you, my darling, you have done me much good."

"Tell nurse you are better?" spelt the delighted child.

"Yes; tell her that you brought me something that did me much good."

"Yes," thought Kathleen when the child was gone, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, He teaches us. It would make Him sorry if I failed at the very first real touch of the Cross. I will have faith in this most precious gift. Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

With the Crucifix upon her pillow Kathleen sank into a deep refreshing sleep, from which even Rose's visit to put

her comfortable for the night did not rouse her. The next morning she woke very early, in ample time to get to the little chapel for Mass before breakfast. Calling Rosie to accompany her, they went forth into the fresh loneliness of the early Spring morning which might well recall the mornings of Paradise. The waves were dancing in the joyous light of sunrise; the freshness of the morning air seemed as though it would bear away all care upon its wings, and the newly awakened birds were pouring out carols of joy as though their little hearts would burst.

Poor Kathleen! Yesterday she would have wanted nothing more to send her heart dancing and sparkling like the waters! To-day—ah! how much more she needed.

If a Mass heard with devotion at any time is of such untold value, who can estimate what it is to a heart which has resigned itself to suffer. There, within arm's length of the Great Victim of Calvary, in hearing of those swiftly speeding words which accomplish the Awful Sacrifice, a work is often effected in an hour in souls which have abandoned themselves to God, which years of effort in easy paths could not have attained.

Kathleen was too young and too little accustomed to self-inspection to understand the work that was being done for her by her Heavenly Father. She only felt so in the dark about all she loved, that of her own free will she gave up all desires.

How uncertain it seemed now whether it would not be better or her father to depart in peace before any breath of this new trouble could reach him. How little it mattered about losing Dermot's Hill, if its last height would never lift up his head again or bear his own name before the world. How little her own high hope and energy could avail now to bring back the lost wanderer, whose sense of honor would oblige him to efface himself from the memory and knowledge of all men. Only one knew what was best. One Heart when breaking in the Army of Death prayed for each and all of those she loved and for herself. The full accomplishment of that prayer, whatever it was, was all she desired now.

She returned home from Mass serene and strong, and as she met Mr. Everard crossing the hall she greeted him with a grave, sweet smile, which reassured him.

All this time, however, not a single doubt crossed her mind of the truth of her own conviction; and as she sat at breakfast with her cousins, it flashed fully over her how painful and perplexing it would be if the identity of Macdonald and her brother were always to be left in uncertainty. It required all the self-restraint in which she had been trained not to allow herself to become again excited and restless, as she thought of the number of ways in which the truth might be betrayed. But she had promised Mr. Everard to trust him and to keep herself calm. She would not disappoint him. He evidently avoided speaking to her; she remembered the grave responsibility he had towards the memory of the man who had confided this secret to him, and those whose safety might be endangered by its revelation.

So, through all that long morning she occupied herself with doing kind actions towards those around her—she arranged nogsays for Eleanor; amused Dora for an hour when nurse's services were required in another direction; mended a fishing-net for Jack, and patiently endured a long talk with Miss Plumtree, who poured out in flowery language a discon-

solate complaint of being slighted and neglected; insinuating that she had been purposely kept from any chance of winning Lord Melton's good graces. Kathleen smiled to herself as she felt how utterly all these feelings had vanished out of her mind under the pressure of a real and terrible anxiety. But though she found it difficult to sympathize with her companion's insignificant troubles, she yet spoke to her with such genuine kindness that she drew Miss Plumtree out to be genuine, too, and to bear plainer speaking that she had ever listened to before.

It was quite true that as the game drew near its close the excitement and absorption of the young people daily increased. Eleanor and Honor were the undoubted favorites. They had quite made up their minds that there was an inheritance to bestow, and that one or other would be the happy recipient; so, though Eleanor's really kind heart had noticed a certain change in Kathleen, yet her eager *empressment* concerning Lord Melton prevented her from giving either time or attention to her. She accepted without any comment Kathleen's headache as a sufficient reason why she should not accompany them in the boating expedition arranged for that afternoon, and only left word with nurse to look after Miss McDermot, as she was evidently not well.

It was an immense relief to Kathleen when the noisy, merry party betook themselves to the boats, and she was free to sit quiet in the bow-window which overlooked the sea, and loosen the long restraints she had laid upon herself.

Thoughts, dark like the shadows of the clouds across the bay, floated over her mind. Suddenly the remembrance of the first evening, and Lord Melton's book with the autograph letter of the Queen came before her, and following it, as though suggested by some one at her side, came the idea of a royal pardon granted to the escaped criminal, and to all those who had aided or abetted his escape. She knew it no longer rested entirely with royalty to grant pardons for criminal offences, but the Queen's royal pleasure expressed in such a case as this would surely have full weight. Lord Melton could ask it; no one would be compromised. Surely a case which had touched the hearts of veteran soldiers accustomed to scenes of blood, would not fail to move the mother and the Queen. Then they could take measures to trace Ewan without danger to himself or any one else.

The idea took great hold upon her, and she determined, if she could get speech of Mr. Everard that evening, to suggest it. She went down to dinner full of hope, but Mr. Everard had evidently nothing to tell her, and avoided talking with her. She saw an anxious, compassionate glance sent in her direction once or twice, as though to see how she was getting on, but not the smallest opening for any communication was vouchsafed. There was no music either; the conversation was general, and the time seemed wearing away without her being able to say a word.

At last, in despair, Kathleen took Dora on her knee and, sitting down by a table on which Mr. Everard was leaning, apparently deep in a newspaper, she began telling the child the names of some exquisitely carved ivory chessmen which stood among the knickknacks that ornamented the table. Kathleen pronounced each word clearly, the little mute eagerly watching her lips and then writing on her slate the words as she caught them.

"This is the King," began

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