

CARDOME

A ROMANCE OF KENTUCKY

By ANNA C. MINOGUE CHAPTER XXXII

After leaving Virginia, Mr. Davidson went to the jailer, to whom he showed the order that Howard Dallas had written.

"Is the lady a relative of the prisoner?" questioned the man. "Not a relative," said Mr. Davidson, confidentially, "but something dearer to him. This will be their last meeting, in all probability, on this side of the grave, for she is to become Howard Dallas's wife to-morrow. Do you see, now, why there has been so much leniency shown your prisoner?"

The man bowed his head, and Mr. Davidson, catching his muttered "Poor girl!" knew that by imparting that little confidence he had obviated any difficulty to the intended visitor. At half-past three o'clock a closed carriage stopped at the jail door. From it descended Mr. Davidson and his attendant. She seemed to walk with great difficulty, and more than once stumbled and would have fallen if it had not been for the supporting arm of her escort; and as the jailer observed those signs of weakness, all his sympathy was aroused. He went to the door of the cell, and unlocking it, said: "Visitors to see you, sir," and was turning abruptly away, when Mr. Davidson, withdrawing his arm from his companion's hand, said to him, "I would rather let them be alone for a while; so the two men walked down the corridor. Clay Powell had arisen from his chair at the unexpected announcement, and turned to see the tall, black-clad figure standing alone before him. One gloved hand closed the cell door, the other threw back the heavy veil, and as his eyes fell on the face thus revealed, he exclaimed, but in low tones:

"Hal Todd!"

Then he laughed, as they clasped hands, for Hal was saying: "For heaven's sake, embrace me! Weep over me! Call me post names, as the jailer's looking through Mr. Davidson swore on the Bible that he'd drag him out of hearing distance. By Jove! I wouldn't have such a web of romance woven around me, Clay, as we've given that gilly out there about you, not if I had to take another six months in Columbus. Yes, I was there, with Morgan, Hines, and the rest of them. We just got out two days ago. Tunneled through; Hines's plan; clever fellow is Hines. When we got to Ludlow we heard that the Federal Government has been entertaining you since July, and we thinking that you were with Beckinside shooting 'Yanks.' We don't believe in imposing too much on the hospitality of such kind friends as you seem to have here in Georgetown, so the General sent me for you post-haste. He will want you to be before him in Nashville, and as Morgan's riding to liberty, you'll have to travel pretty rapidly to be there on time. Half an hour's the limit to this visit. Peel off those stripes, for you're going back with Davidson. I'll take your place here until to-night, when I will avail myself of the next plane that has been made for your escape."

"Now, Hal, there is a meaning behind all this," interrupted Powell. "I must know what it is first. Is it that my plan to escape has been discovered, and to save me you are putting yourself in my shoes?"

A beautiful gleam came to Hal's blue eyes and handsome young face as he said: "I'd do it for you, Clay, and gladly, as you know!" and Clay Powell reached out and grasped the boy's right hand, as he answered: "And you know, Hal, that not even the command of Morgan could make me accept freedom, with you left in jeopardy?"

"I know it," he replied. "But there is no risk for me in your going to liberty a few hours sooner than you had anticipated."

"But give me the reason why I should do it?" asked Clay Powell. Hal hesitated. He could not betray his knowledge of Virginia's love for this man, which had never been admitted, because poverty had sealed Clay Powell's lips. After a moment's thought, he said:

"My friend, there is a reason—a grave, strong reason, but its nature is such that a gentleman can not reveal it; no, not even if you were to refuse to comply with my request unless I told you. I give you my word of honor that I run no more risk in taking your place here for the next few hours than you do by remaining; while your acceptance of freedom from my hands," and he paused deliberately after the words, "will save from a world of pain and sorrow one I love."

"One question," interposed Powell. "Am I the one you are trying to save?"

"No," said Hal. "I do not understand why you urge this on me, but I trust you, Hal," he said. "And remember, that if evil come to you from this, you have thrown a shadow on all my future."

"Nothing will happen to me unless between this hour and 10 o'clock to-night the jailer decides to prevent your escape. Have you any reason to think he will do this?"

"None whatever," replied Clay Powell.

"Then I shall not be far behind you on the way to Nashville. New get into my dress, and be careful when you walk. I tripped at every

step. How do women manage those petticoats, I wonder, and yet glide along so gracefully?"

Soon the change of attire was made, and as they waited for the jailer, a signal Hal said:

"Do you observe that I have turned my chestnut locks to raven? Now when you have taken your departure I, in the poignancy of my—that is, Clay Powell—grief, will throw myself face downward on the bed. There will be no light hair to give the cage watcher a hint of what we've done, so he will naturally suppose that I am sorrow-stricken at parting from you, and will leave me alone with my bitter thoughts. Even supper will not wile me from my pillow. So I'll get away, and no one but those interested in it will ever know what a deception was practiced."

"At this point, Mr. Davidson entered to say that the time would be up in five minutes."

"We are ready," said Hal, lightly; then he suddenly grew sober, and drawing Mr. Davidson aside, he said:

"I have not the slightest fear that the plan laid for Clay Powell's escape will miscarry. But if it should, and I meet the fate that was intended for him, give these messages to those dear to me: Tell Virginia that I love her, and that no knight ever lady's favor more willingly, gladly, than I will go to save her from a fate which would never be hers while I had a hand to aim a gun at that villain's black heart. As I know she loves me, I feel that she would rather that I died the stainless death of a gentleman and a soldier, than take the crime of his murder on my soul. Tell my father that my filial devotion is unchanged; that I obeyed him in life, but that death has freed me from the ban he laid upon me, and Harold Todd, dead, demands what was forbidden to Cardome. If I die to-morrow see to it that they clothe me (or what was me) in the uniform of a Confederate officer—Job brought my sword, which was Phil's, to Willow-wild, and that they give me the burial that befits a soldier and a Todd. Then, Hal's voice grew low and tender, "when it is all over, find Lucy Menefee, and say to her that I could not return as I promised, but that I will keep her kiss until she comes to where I am!"

He turned abruptly and joined Powell, just as the jailer's signal sounded down the long corridor. Mr. Davidson went out to meet him. The two friends clasped hands in a silent farewell, then Hal flung himself on the bed, while Powell, drawing down the heavy veil, stepped out of his cell, closing the door after him. The jailer, with one glance at the prostrate figure on the bed, turned the key in the bolt; then in silence accompanied the visitors to the prison door and watched them as they entered the carriage.

"Poor girl!" he thought, adding: "And poor fellow! Life's a curious angle, surely!" and with a sigh he returned to his post of duty, in the long, gloomy corridor.

CHAPTER XXXII

Howard Dallas, riding home the evening of that day, was stopped by the sight of a body of cavalry slowly filing out of the narrow street into the main thoroughfare. As the captain approached, he halted, and in response to Dallas's question, replied that word had reached General Burbridge that one of the Confederate prisoners was to be released that night, and they had been ordered here to guard the jail until the morning. His listener's face paled, but the semi-darkness screened him from the sharp eyes of the soldier, who asked:

"Will you direct me to the prison?"

"I will conduct you to it," said Dallas, instantly wheeling his horse. As he rode back his head was low on his breast. Who had betrayed him? Mandy Davidson, or had Virginia decided that the life of a lover was not worth the price that had been demanded? When he reached the prison he dismounted and called for the jailer, to whom, in a few words, he conveyed the intelligence of the soldier's coming and the reason therefor. Then he asked:

"How many Confederates have you?"

"Seven," replied the jailer. "See to it that before daylight to-morrow one of the prisoners changes places with Mr. Powell," said Howard Dallas.

"There's something the matter with him, sir," said the man. "Since the lady and gentleman were here he's acted rather queer; lies on his bed, with his face on the pillows; wouldn't come to supper, and when I brought him a cup of coffee, refused to lift his head. And, sir," the jailer was stumbling over his words, for he feared the man before him, "his figure doesn't seem like it used to, and—"

and when he mentioned me away with his hand, it—didn't look like the gentleman's hand."

"Well?" asked Dallas. "I may be mistaken, sir, but I think a different woman went out from the one that came in."

His listener repressed an exclamation of rage, then said calmly: "Let us assure ourselves. Lead the way to his cell."

Hal, who had expected no other intrusion, had risen and was pacing his narrow room, when the door was suddenly unlocked and the light from the jailer's lantern flooded the place. The game was up. So he folded his arms, turned, and he saw Howard Dallas; a soft laugh broke from his lips, as he said:

"Checkmate, Howard!"

For the moment, the sudden realization of what had been done silenced the other; but in the next, he was saying, with his smile:

"Not at all. I've still another move to make. Enough of Burbridge's soldiers are outside to stand three deep around this jail; and since you so loved danger, you must take Clay Powell's place to-morrow."

"A Kentuckian would face a worse fate to save a countryman and a friend," said Hal, proudly.

"And your brother commands the soldiers. His voice will order your death."

"A Todd would be the last to know regret because a man performs his duty," replied Hal.

"And," finished Howard Dallas, "Miss Castleton will marry me to-night instead of to-morrow morning."

"Checkmate, Howard," said Hal, laughing softly. "And so I win the game." Then he added: "And it is well for you that I released Virginia from her promise, for I had an old score to first settle with you, and you know in such a reckoning a Todd was never yet vanquished. Now we part. I go to the death you brought me; you, to take this knowledge with you: Hal Todd, who will be shot before another day for a negro's murder, would not change places with Howard Dallas for the longest life ever allowed to man, not for all the wealth and glory this world could give."

"Do you understand your order?" asked the jailer, in trembling tones, as he followed Howard Dallas down the corridor. But he received no reply until they reached the door, when the young man paused and, half turning, said:

"Dead men tell no tales."

He mounted his horse, rode for half an hour into the country, his head bent deep in thought; then he rode back again and drew rein at the house Virginia now called her home. When the surprised servant admitted him, he took a card from his pocket and, scribbling on it a few words, bade her take it to her mistress. Then he went into the parlor, whose light was that thrown out from the log burning in the fireplace. A chair and low stool stood before the wide hearstone, and the never-sated craving of the man's heart made him gasp out:

"Ah, if she, or some woman, only loved me!" Then a footfall sounded in the hall, and turning toward the door, he saw Virginia. She came to the fireplace, and the faint light showed her something on the face and in the attitude of her visitor that appeared to her very unusual; but before she could analyze it, he asked:

"Are we alone, or are there listening ears again behind the curtain?"

"Do not know," said Virginia, with a drawing back of her figure that was more eloquent than many words, and he felt his face grow warmer and all his wild hatred against this woman rekindling in his breast.

"Your card said you wished to see me on a matter of vital importance?" she questioned.

"I am not forgetting that not your words of the morning," he replied.

"Have you seen Mr. Davidson?"

"No."

"Or had any message from him or Mr. Powell?"

"None."

"Do you know why he failed to call for you this afternoon to keep his engagement?"

"I do not."

"Mandy informed on me. Mrs. Powell ordered Burbridge to send soldiers to guard the jail and prevent the escape of the prisoners, and the order was instantly obeyed. The Unionists are now lined around the prison, and a mouse could not pass unmolested through their lines." He looked at her keenly to catch any sign of emotion, but none was visible, and he felt this calmness was the calmness of unbelief.

"I perceive you do not believe me," he said coldly. "With your permission I will send a servant for Mandy, and give him orders to pass the jail on his way back?"

"Do," she said, for Mr. Davidson's parting words were ringing in her ears. He despatched the servant and then went to the library; and each, alone, waited the return of the messenger. When Mandy came into the presence of Virginia and saw Howard Dallas entering the parlor from the library, all her boldness disappeared. She threw herself on her knees and cried:

"Oh, Marse, I nevah tole ole Miss Powell! I swab foh God I didn't! When I went home I tole my blue-gum' an'—an' he runned off an' tele his mammy, epte ut me, an' she tell Miss Powell, an' she sen's him off foh de sojer men." "Oh foh God's sake, Miss G'nia, save me! Marse Dallas yain't got no pity," and she crept like a snake toward Virginia.

"Are there any soldiers around the jail?" asked Dallas, of the other negro.

"Yes, sah; hundreds 'uv 'em," replied the man. Then Dallas dismissed Mandy.

"Are you convinced that I am telling you the truth?" he asked of Virginia, "or shall I send for the jailer and let you hear from his own lips that all escape for the prisoner has been shut off?"

"Yes, send for him," she said.

He ordered the negro to go for the jailer. In a very short time the messenger was back, saying as Dallas knew he would, that the soldiers would not permit him to enter the grounds; and then Dallas saw that Virginia's face grew ghastly in the freelight.

"Miss Castleton," he said, "as I told you in my letter, so I tell you

now; I bear Clay Powell no ill-will, for if he has crossed my path, it was unconsciously; but I would not turn a step out of my way to save him, if I had not a purpose in doing so. I had one; now I have two; and my second is to prove to Mrs. Powell that the person who enters on a game of wits with me must be shrewder than even she is, to come out the victor. She thinks there are only two Confederate soldiers in the Georgetown jail, whereas there are seven; and I have ordered that one of them change cells with Clay Powell. The soldiers' orders are to take the inmate of cell number eight is executed. When he is marched off to his fate they return to Lexington, and before his substitute is dead Clay Powell has gained freedom."

He thought he heard a deep breath as of relief, still she made no reply. A silence followed, in which Dallas's mind ran over the plans he had made during that half-hour's ride into the country.

"Burbridge has sent for me," he began. "I surmise for what—my trying to effect Clay Powell's escape. When that is accomplished, I doubt not but Mrs. Powell will pursue me with all the diabolical hatred she entertains for her other enemies; but I can please Burbridge, I am sure. To do that I must leave this very night. I have fulfilled my part of the contract. Clay Powell is a free man. I have run a great risk to do this, with the soldiers of the government around me; but that has not deterred me. Now I ask you to waive one of your rights—the receipt of Clay Powell's written acknowledgment of his freedom—and marry me to-night."

"I will not," she said, calmly. "I have promised to marry you when I know from his note that, through your efforts, Colonel Powell is free. I will fulfill my part of the contract then; not a minute before—no, not if a thousand tongues were to tell me he is safe."

He had expected that answer, and with the smile which the freelight was not strong enough to reveal, he looked upon her, then said, slowly:

"I can come back to-morrow morning, and—his words flashing out like the forked tongue of the fire—"and you will have need to fear that you made me come."

"A Castleton, man or woman, never felt fear," she cried. "And remember my words to you this morning. Do not make me repeat them to-night."

"Mad woman!" he cried, and springing to her he caught her hands; crushing them between his, he forced her into a seat. "There, sit there, and listen to me! You thought that night at the park I wanted to offer you marriage. Instead, I wanted to tell you that, as my attentions—which I assure you were not the outcome of my heart's devotion—were distasteful to you, and as I knew that the man you at last could love had come into your world, I was willing to withdraw, leave you undisturbed and happy, on one condition. Yes, Miss Castleton, I felt it in me for once to be magnanimous, but you—well you, with the great vanity of your sex, thought when a man asked to see you alone he had an offer of marriage to make. Now, set me down for all time as a brute, if you wish, but believe me you are the last woman to inspire in me one feeling of love or passion. I could hate you, do hate you, well enough. But what we hate we do not delight in. I knew that Davidson would be along in time to save Clay Powell. That accomplished, and with your fortune going so rapidly, his pride would permit him to declare his love, and—well, I determined that as you had not scrupled to destroy my happiness, neither should I permit you to enter a proposition to make you. It will be dangerous for me to come back here to-morrow, for if Mrs. Powell brings out a case against me, I may taste the punishment of our paternal government. Marry me to-night, and I will give you a written promise never to enter your presence unbidden, never to divulge this marriage, never to make a claim on you. We will go our different ways. I do not look for the peace and joy of home and love. I am determined that you, who thrust yourself between me and these, shall not taste them. That is my revenge. You can save yourself from the wretched life of an unloved wife. Will you do it?"

"Yes," she cried, rising to her feet; for was not this God's answer to long days and nights of prayer?"

"When will you be ready?" he asked, not surprised.

"In half an hour," she said. "But remember, the lawyer must come with the clergyman."

"I assure you I have as much desire to secure my own freedom as you have your safety," he said, with his cruel smile, and bowing, he withdrew. As he was mounting a horse, a man came riding madly down the street, and drawing up, cried:

"For God's sake, tell me where is the jail?"

"I am going that way," replied Dallas, keenly noting the man's face and dress. As then passed a street lamp, he recognized one of Burbridge's orderlies.

"Why, this is Fred Osterday!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter now?"

"It is you, Mr. Dallas. I thought your voice sounded familiar. Why, you see we got a wild story to-day of an attempt to rescue some Confederate prisoners in this jail, and the General sent a force to guard it. Bless my soul, they weren't off when I came a message that Morgan—you heard, of course, that

he escaped from Columbus?—had reached the South and was coming back at the head of twenty thousand men. He's striking straight for Lexington, and says that he will not leave a Union soldier or citizen alive in it. Morgan's at large, so we don't dare trust the telegraph. The General sent three of us by different routes down with orders for those soldiers to return immediately."

"What about the prisoners here?"

"The question embarrassed the man, but he finally said:

"The General's orders are that the two sentenced to be shot are to die at moonrise to-night."

"And that is military?" asked Howard Dallas.

"It is not the death for a soldier to give or receive," said he, with dignity, as he drew himself up.

"It is 'o'clock," said Dallas, "and the moon rises in half an hour. You made good time. There is the jail. Good night, Fred!"

As the fingers of the old hall clock pointed to the half hour, Virginia Castleton descended the stairs, accompanied by the weeping Chloe. The mistress's face showed little abatement above the black of her dress, but her step was firm and no trace of the emotion that was sweeping over the heart of her faithful companion disturbed her dead, cold calm. The minister, who had married her mother and father and baptized herself, was standing by a little stand, on which rested his book and spectacles and two candles in their silver holders. By the library table sat an old lawyer, his troubled eyes bent over the paper on which he had written a few lines. On the hearthstone, his face turned toward the door, stood Howard Dallas. Virginia went to the clergyman and laid a steady hand in the trembling one.

"Virginia, my child," he began, tremulously, "what is the meaning of this? Where are your friends on such an occasion? Why do I see you coming to the bridal altar dressed in black and attended by a negro woman? My child, my child, and his emotion smothered the words that the faithful heart prompted.

"My good friend," said Virginia, "it is strange. You can not understand it and never may; only trust me. I need not ask you to keep inviolate this secret."

The lawyer had now risen and was crossing the room, the paper in his hand. His face wore a troubled expression, and as he reached Virginia's side, he said:

"My dear Miss Castleton, the paper I was to take it was your wish for me to prepare in ready for the signature of the gentleman you are to marry. There is something plainly wrong in this union, and forgive an old man if I ask you to pause a while, or, at least, give to me or your dear friend here an explanation. There are some things young minds do not understand that are plain and simple to those of wider experience."

"I thank you for the friendship which prompts those words," said Virginia, "but there are also some things which no human power can help. This act of mine is wise. The old man bowed his head and read for her the words he had written. Then returned to the table and motioned to Howard Dallas. He crossed the floor slowly, and taking the paper from the lawyer's hand, studied it for a few minutes. While his eyes travelled over the lines, many thoughts—some good, some bad—flitted through his mind. Suppose he should grow to love this woman whom he here solemnly promised never again to see contrary to her wishes? Suppose he should find somewhere in the world a woman who could love him as he would love her, and be legally the husband of another? Suppose he should love again, and he with his own hand had placed a barrier between himself and happiness? Then he remembered his thwarted first love, this woman's scorn and hatred, her knowledge of all his base deeds and deceits and bad actions; her love for that other man, because of his stainless honor and proud, lofty soul; the joy that would be theirs were she free to accept his love—and he laid the paper on the table, and taking up the pen, signed his name to the document. The lawyer added his name as witness. They turned and looked toward the woman standing by the white-haired minister, and nothing broke the silence except a smothered sob from the faithful negress.

It was a tense moment. In it there came to Howard Dallas a thought to flee, and not to add dishonesty to his other sins; but he thrust it from him and made a step forward and the minister with trembling hands put on his spectacles and took up his small book. In ready for the signature of the lawyer would come to Howard Dallas like a dream, or some experience of another life, vaguely remembered. He crossed the floor, with the lawyer a pace behind him, and stood before the pale-faced minister, whose violent trembling made the little table, on which his hand rested, shake, thus causing the tall candles to send out their light in flickering rays. The moon was rising, and as it poured its splendor over him, a vision flashed across the brain of Hal Todd, with his brother's gun pointed toward his heart—and he wished that he had not countermanded his order to the jailer. The black-robed woman passed, one breathless moment, looking full on him with eyes that seemed to see through all life's mysteries, as the dead had pierced them. Then, with a step that appeared to carry her into his soul forever, she came to his side, and as a word from the minister laid in his cold, lifeless hand.

The agitation of the old priest made the first sentences of the solemn adjuration inarticulate, or tears tears blotted the page before him; but his tones grew steady and rose clear and strong, as lifting his eyes, and glancing from the lawyer to the sobbing negress, he concluded: "If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

For a moment an awful silence followed. Suddenly came a mad rush of feet up the piazza steps. The great hall door was violently flung open. A loud voice shouted:

"Stop that marriage!"

The woman sprang from his side, and in the next instant Mr. Davidson, white, travel stained, beads of perspiration hanging on his brow, stood in her place. He caught Howard Dallas's throat with the grip of a madman, while "Coward! Liar! Thief! Murderer!" filled the room like the repeated roar of a cannon. When those fingers were unclasped, Howard Dallas staggered back into the arms of the minister. Then, after all had been told, he went from that room, they standing aside to let him pass, he seeing nothing but that woman's transfixed face.

TO BE CONTINUED

A DAUGHTER'S SACRIFICE

A TRUE STORY By Rev. Richard W. Alexander

There was a pitiful gloom over the little home. In the living room a woman sat by a table, her head buried in her hands; on a stool at her feet was a young girl of eighteen, sweet and fair, the stamp of purity and goodness on her face; she was trying to console her mother whose bowed head bespoke despair rather than sorrow.

"Poor child!" said the mother, at last raising her head, "he has shamed you as well as me! How can God allow such things!"

"There must be some good intended to come from it, mother dear. God only permits such things for that purpose," said the girl gently.

"How you talk, child!" was the bitter reply. "Do you think God intended your father to become infatuated with that woman, to disgrace you both and make us the talk of the town; to divorce me his lawful wife—and desert us both without a pang! I thought his love for you, Miriam, would check him even if he forgot me. He is a scoundrel!"

"Dearest mother, I cannot believe father has his full senses—it is just a momentary insanity."

"True for you, Miriam—that's just what it is—insanity, but a methodical insanity. It has been coming on for a year. It is that woman's fault. I saw her intentions from the beginning—she wanted your father. She had no religion, she didn't care whether she wrecked our home or not; she turned him against me, even against you, Miriam. How can God look down on such wickedness! I would curse her if I dared!"

"No, no, mother, not that. Some day it will be all right. We are Catholics; and we must believe that even such wickedness will bring good. Father will come around some day, and we will pray for that, and we must pray, too, for that poor sinful woman who led him astray."

"What are you saying, Miriam? Pray for that she-devil? Never! Never! You were always too good, my child—much better than your poor mother. I wonder at you often. But there is a limit to every one's endurance. I shall never forgive her, and I trust to see the day when he will cast her off even as he has cast off you and me!"

"Mother! Mother! This is wild and terrible talk; I wanted to profess something to you this evening, but it must wait; your heart is too sore and heavy. Thank God you have grandfather and grandmother. Their devoted affection is very consoling. Come, mother dear, don't let us fret any more; let us leave him to God."

And the broken-hearted woman allowed herself to be soothed by this child of God, feeling that in her she had an angel of mercy who would shed light and peace on her troubled soul even in her great and terrible heart sorrow.

The details of this tragedy of life are not for our story, but the noble act of self-sacrifice it brought about, and the result. Three months later Miriam left her tearful mother at the home of her grandparents, who had grieved over the sorrows of their daughter and had welcomed her home with loving arms. This rare young soul, her only child, this child of Heaven had made a holocaust of her young life and its prospects, and had begged admission among the Magdalens in a House of the Good Shepherd in a distant city, offering her purity and innocence to God among these penitent sinners in expiation for her father's sin and for his conversion.

Years rolled by. One day I was visiting a friend, a non-Catholic, in a Presbyterian Hospital. The visit was not a friendly but purely a friendly one; but I noticed a rather handsome man in the ward as I passed on my way out, who looked at me in a wistful manner, at least I thought so. I nodded at him pleasantly and he returned the salutation. I felt like stopping; but I remembered that this was a Presbyterian Hospital, and it was not likely the man was a Catholic. I descended the

stairs and had almost reached the front door, when I was terrified to find myself standing stock still! I could not move! The perspiration stood on my forehead—I exerted my will power, my strength—but I could not move. What was the matter?

"That man!" I said to myself, "God must want me to speak to him and I will!" Instantly I felt the power of motion in my limbs and turned back towards the ward. I went at once to the bed of the man mentioned.

"My friend," I said, "when I left you a moment ago I felt sure you were not a Catholic; now I am convinced you are one, am I wrong?"

"You certainly are," replied he. "I am not a Catholic!"

I was dumbfounded, and I looked at him, but as my silent gaze rested on him for a steady moment, I felt the man had lied. He grew restless.

"Why are you asking me such questions?" he said impatiently.

"Because," I said solemnly, "I believe you are not telling me the truth. I am a Catholic priest. And something prevented me from leaving this hospital a moment ago. I was simply deprived of the power of motion. I thought of you and determined I would return to your bedside, and help you to make your peace with God. You must have some one praying for you, some one is wrestling for your soul this very day!"

I had been surprised before—I was now amazed. The man's whole face changed, tears welled up in his eyes, he stretched out his hands and grasped one of mine and spoke in broken words:

"A Catholic priest! Oh, Father, and yet you can do nothing for me! I was a Catholic, but I divorced my wife, married another and I will not leave her. What can you do for me? Nothing! No wonder I said I was not a Catholic!"

We were alone. The ward was small and the other beds were empty that night.

"My son," I said, "I dare not leave you until you have made your peace with God! You may not leave this bed alive; you must give up this woman, and make a good confession. See the grace God has given you. He almost forces you to be saved. Think of a merciful God, thinking you to do what is right. God will give you strength. Come, now, I will hear your confession; you will never have peace until you do."

"Father," he said, "I want to die a Catholic, for I was reared by a good mother and my only daughter is an angel of goodness. I am told she became a nun, no doubt offering her pure soul for my wicked one; but how can I face the woman who helped my destruction?"

"Leave that to God," I said, "turn to Him with your whole heart, and with sincere contrition. Resolve to do what is right. God will give you strength. Come, now, I will hear your confession," and I took out my stole.

He hesitated no longer, and before the hour was over he had made a fervent confession, and received absolution after his many years of wandering. He gave me his solemn promise to see that woman no more, to send for his wife and, if God spared him, to begin a new life.

If ever a man was sincere, he was, and I left that hospital full of gratitude to a merciful God for His goodness to His prodigal. I promised to return next day and prepare him for Holy Communion.

Next morning, I went to the sacristy at 7:30, as usual, to say Mass. My thoughts were full of the penitent I had helped back to God the preceding day. I wondered how he was. Suddenly a woman in mourning appeared at the door.

"Father," she said, "won't you say Mass for the repose of the soul of my husband who died last night at the Presbyterian Hospital? His death was unexpected; and he sent for me and told me of your visit. I am his divorced wife and I cannot thank God enough for you for His goodness to His prodig