



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIV. MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1863. No. 20.

THE DISCARDED SON.

(Written for the Philadelphia Catholic Herald) CHAPTER I.—TRIBULATIONS FOR CONSCIENCE'S SAKE.

'Father, I was told that you wished to speak to me.' The words were uttered hesitatingly, and the speaker, a boy of fifteen years, looked anxiously at the stern man he addressed, whose keen, grey eyes were bent steadfastly upon him, though he gave no other token of being aware of his presence. The boy grew embarrassed under that scrutinizing gaze, and after a time passed in silent constraint, repeated his previous words in a tone of inquiry. 'I hear you, sir,' was the harshly-spoken reply. 'I was only contrasting the ready obedience you affect in trifles, with your utter disregard of my wishes in things of greater moment.' Still that relentless gaze was fixed upon the gentle youth, whose large dark eyes were lifted to his stern parent with an expression of deep mournfulness as he replied: 'Dear father, I hope you find me always ready to obey you.'

Mr. Hudson muttered an execration against Popish meddlers. Then he spoke as imperatively as at first. 'It matters not, and I expect your ready compliance with my wishes; even the superstitious creed into which you have been entrained inculcates, I believe, obedience to parents.' 'Not when it conflicts with the obedience due to God, father,' was the mild, yet firm reply. 'Surely, sir, you do not expect me to give up my religion and—' 'No more!' interrupted the father sharply; 'I have plainly expressed my wishes; you have the alternative of complying with them, or of leaving this house for ever. You can take this morning to deliberate. If you decide to obey me, well; if not, prepare in the interim to leave a house which will no longer be your home, even for a single day. Not a word!' he added, imperiously motioning towards the door; 'after dinner I will hear your decision.'

'Alas, I cannot—I dare not,' said the agitated boy. 'Father, forgive me one act of disobedience.' 'Never. But go—go at once, ungrateful boy; you are henceforth a stranger to me—go.' With a contemptuous gesture he flung back the hand timidly extended, and the boy, with one look of sad reproach, turned away. Ere he had gained the hall, his steps were arrested by his father's voice. 'Unworthy as you are, and though I no longer consider you my son, I do not wish you to beg or steal at the beginning of your career, whatever may be its termination; and, as he spoke, he threw a few pieces of gold toward his son. A haughty look flashed from the tearful eyes—the tremulous lips curled slightly at the insulting words. 'Thanks for your kind consideration, sir: but I should prefer even the bitter means of living first suggested, to bounty thus offered,' and he turned proudly away. The next moment, repenting having given way to his angry impulse, he returned, picked up the coins, and, laying them respectfully on the table, left the room. Presently he re-appeared, following the porter, who carried his trunk. He paused as he was passing the parlor, and looked toward his father, who sat as he had left him, apparently absorbed in a book. The boy's affectionate heart swelled at the thought of going forth without one kind word, one parting embrace from his only parent. Must he depart thus, or should he make one more effort to conciliate the stern man, and plead for forgiveness of the act to which duty impelled.

How familiar seemed the neat little room. How vividly memory recalled the night he had passed there with his idolized mother; nor was it with less of childlike confidence and love than at that time, though with deeper awe, that he now knelt before the little altar, to pour forth his grateful thanks to the Father in Heaven, who had so graciously provided for him when harshly cast off by his earthly parent. Mr. Haines had been a merchant of B—, but on realising what he deemed a competency, had retired from business, finding sufficient occupation and amusement in cultivating the few acres attached to the neat cottage where he and his amiable wife dwelt in peaceful tranquillity. It was truly like a gleam of sunshine after long continued clouds—the presence of the bright, intelligent boy, with his winning ways and boyish gleefulness, in that quiet house. Every day served to endear him more to his relatives, who, though anxious to keep him ever with them, yet unselfishly desired a reconciliation between him and his parent, which they knew he had at heart. But of this there was little hope. Frederic had written to his father on first arriving at his uncle's; the following day his letter came back, unopened, in an envelope directed to Mr. Haines. The latter also had thought it proper to write, informing Mr. Hudson that Frederic now resided with him, and gently pointing out the necessity the lad was under of acting as he had done. But no notice was ever taken of this letter. This was the only loud that lingered in the bright sky of Frederic's new life. Happy in the never changing affection of his relatives, and free to improve himself in the glorious art to which he was enthusiastically devoted, two years glided happily by, the third opened for him a new era.

destined to possess a more sacred, yet mournful estimation. Not long after it was sent home, the darling original was attacked with the croup, and in a few brief hours the fond recollections of parental love, and the pictured semblance on the wall, alone remained to them of the little one who had been the beauty, and light and joy of that darkened home. Grateful to the gifted one by whose genius the countenance of their lost darling still seemed so smile in almost living beauty before them, they conceived for him a warm attachment. Especially did Mr. Walker, when the first poignancy of bereavement had yielded to a calmer sorrow, love to spend hours with the youth, who had regarded the little Ada with all an artist's pure, enthusiastic love of the beautiful, and whose kindly nature prompted him to listen with gratifying sympathy to the trifling but precious reminiscences of the departed, upon which the bereaved grandfather loved to dwell. Naturally, too, the old gentleman began to take a deeper interest in his success; and as he was a person of high standing and influence, Frederic soon experienced the results of his friendly notice and commendations. One day he brought to the studio a wealthy gentleman, who was about becoming a resident of B—. Struck with admiration of the youth's genius, he purchased several paintings, and ordered a large summer landscape, the design of which he left entirely to Frederic, not even wishing to see the painting until completed.—The latter, who perceived that the stranger's taste was similar to his own, joyfully set about the welcome task. Patiently wrought he on, day by day, never wearying of adding 'a few finishing strokes,' while his admiring relatives good humouredly bantered him on his fastidiousness. But it was done at last, and the most rigid censor might have pardoned the glow of conscious pride that lit up the young artist's face as he gazed on his work. It was a simple design, yet its very simplicity gave it a peculiar charm. In the background the dense foliage of dark forest trees rose up proudly to the dark, fleecy clouds, a silvery thread winding between the huge trunks, widened into a streamlet in front, with a band of joyous little children casting pebbles into its crystal waters, their little bare feet bathed by the pure liquid, as the pebbles broke its glassy surface into glistening wavelets. A few water lilies bent their graceful heads above the stream, and further on a thick growth of blackberry bushes, with the ripe, shining fruit hanging in tempting clusters, completed the picture. It was one to call up in the beholders' mind sweet thoughts of forest haunts, and memories of childhood's happy days; and Frederic anticipated the pleasure it would give his generous patron, whose arrival he now eagerly longed for. His pleasant reverie was broken by the entrance of Mr. Haines, who uttered an exclamation of delight as he saw the painting gleaming out in rich colors from the favorable position it now occupied, and the heart of the gifted boy throbbled with purer rapture as he saw the mild eyes that ever beamed fondly on him now radiant with admiration of his work. With the childlike artlessness of his nature he threw himself into his uncle's arms, and laid his head upon his shoulder. 'Why, Freddy, what is this?—vanity, eh?' said the kind old man, with a smile, as he raised up the beaming face, now suffused with an ingenuous blush. 'Well, I do not wonder,' he added, again turning to the painting with fresh delight. 'But uncle is this letter for me?' exclaimed the youth, suddenly noticing a letter in his uncle's hand. Mr. Haines looked down on the letter till they forgotten, but made no answer. 'Does it concern me?' whispered Frederic with indefinable forebodings. 'It does, indeed, my boy; but I grieve to cloud the well earned joy of this hour with the tidings it brings. 'Tis from a friend of mine is your native place.' Frederic hurriedly read the letter. It told of the total failure of Mr. Hudson, and expressed a fear that the sale of his effects would not cover his liabilities, in which case, under the barbarous law then in force, he would be imprisoned for the remainder. 'And what is to be done now, my dear Frederic?' asked Mr. Haines, as he sat down beside him, deeply commiserating the sorrow which was depicted on the countenance so joyous a few minutes previously. 'I cannot tell, dear uncle. Perhaps the sum which your kindness has enabled me to lay by will be sufficient. Shall I go to ascertain the real state of affairs, or would it not be better to write some friend—the writer of this letter, for instance?' 'Why not go yourself, Frederic?' The youth hesitated.

CHAPTER II.—OUT OF TRIBULATION INTO JOY.

The fame of Daguerre's discovery had reached B—, and produced quite an excitement—the desire to possess one of those wonderful sun pictures being almost universal. Mr. Haines advised his nephew to take a short trip to his native city, and procure instruction in the art from a superior Daguerreotypist, who had established himself there. The plan seemed to Frederic to present an opportunity of increasing the little store he was laying by with the view to spending a few years in Italy; and he quickly decided to avail himself of it. With a mind agitated by conflicting emotions, he traversed the street's once so familiar, debating with himself whether he should venture on visiting his father, when he suddenly encountered that gentleman in conversation with two or three acquaintances. One of them recognised Frederic as he involuntarily paused, and greeted him warmly. His response was but carelessly given, his attention being fixed on his father, who, having glanced toward him, turned carelessly away, and, with unaltered voice, continued to converse with his companions. Frederic passed on. He could not now go to see his step-mother; neither would he seek any of his former friends, save Professor Alden; but achieved the object of his journey as speedily as possible, and with a feeling of relief that he would soon be far from the place, started for the railroad depot. It was early in the morning, and a very few had met him as he hurried on, when, on turning a corner, he found himself face to face with his father.—With an irresistible impulse, the boy extended his hand, exclaiming eagerly, 'O, father, won't you speak to me?' But with Indian stoicism, the stern man slowly pursued his way. The son looked after him as he walked so composedly along, then subduing his bitter feelings, and murmuring a prayer for his father's conversion, hastened toward again. The fame of Frederic's Daguerreotypes soon spread; they were admired and valued as well for their softness of finish as for their accuracy; and his time was now fully occupied at the camera, more profitably, if less pleasantly, than at the easel. With the rest came an old lady and gentleman, leading by the hand a tiny girl, a perfect fairy for beauty, grace, and sprightliness.—They had long desired to have a portrait of the little sprite, who was the orphan child of their only daughter; but vain had been all their efforts to restrain her restlessness during the tedious sittings, and they had been forced reluctantly to give up the attempt. But, on seeing some of Frederic's sun-paintings, Mr. Walker's cherished wish was again revived by the idea of having her likeness thus taken and transferred to canvass. The young artist readily concurred in the plan, and having excited the little one's curiosity about the camera, soon produced a perfect likeness, in the most bewitching phase of her striking loveliness. To produce this on canvass was a pleasant task for his future hours, and Mr. Walker soon hailed with delight the completion of the portrait which in its truthfulness and exquisite coloring, was worthy of the beauty it portrayed. Proud as the grand-parents were, of the portrait, it was