

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROKER

CHAPTER XX

CAPTAIN BERESFORD'S PHOTOGRAPH

It must not be thought that I had forgotten old friends all this time. I constantly wrote to Deb and Mrs. West, and through them sent suitable presents to Patsy, Dan, Sweetlips, and big and little Mary. These gifts were made anonymously, of course; but I think their recipients were at no loss to guess where they came from. There had been a tremendous hue-and-cry raised on my behalf, and without the smallest success. Dan admitted having driven me to the station, and there the trail failed; in spite of the united exertions of Miss Fluker, Mr. French, and the police, I had completely and mysteriously disappeared.

One morning, coming in from the garden, I found auntie and uncle in close and solemn conclave over a letter; it had evidently been under discussion for some time, and the court was preparing to rise as I entered.

"I suppose there is no help for it," muttered uncle, grumpily; "you had better write and say that the sooner she comes the better. Vane is an old friend of mine, and I could not refuse hospitality to his wife, although she is a giddy young girl by all accounts, and he made a regular fool of himself. We have an empty spare room and she is welcome to it."

"Who is coming?" I asked, eagerly, tossing off my topee, and drawing up a chair.

"A young married lady—the wife of Colonel Vane, a great friend of ours; we have never seen her, but I believe she is young and pretty," replied auntie.

"And why is she coming here?" I asked, getting to the point, as usual.

"Because Colonel Vane is obliged to go to England on business, and he does not like to leave her at Lucknow all alone; and he dreads taking her home in winter, as she has a delicate chest."

There was very little information to be had about our visitor. Aunt and uncle knew nothing about her, excepting that she was many years younger than her husband; and that, every one was amazed when Colonel Vane (a confirmed old bachelor) had taken to himself for a wife a pretty girl twenty-five years his junior.

I was on the tiptoe of expectation till the appointed day came and our guest arrived. Uncle met her at the station, and auntie and I in the porch. She stepped out of the carriage, a very elegant, neat figure—very far from the grimy object I was, when I made my first appearance at Mulkapore. How she contrived to keep herself so clean amazed me; but I afterward learned that she was much indebted to a thick veil and dust cloak. Mrs. Vane was very small and slight and dark, and had the prettiest and most impertinent little nose (not retreating) I ever saw; she had quantities of beautiful brown hair, and wore a thick curly fringe.

She looked quite young, not more than four-and-twenty, and rumor had not misled me—she was remarkably pretty. She was dressed in a dark navy blue cambric, thickly trimmed with many quillings, edged with the fashionable coffee-colored lace. Yards of the same encircled her throat, coquettishly fastened at one side by a silver crocodile brooch, and on her slender wrists were dozens and dozens of bangles. She, I think, took us all in with one rapid glance of her roving dark eyes; and she afterward imparted to me confidentially that her first impressions were decidedly in our favor.

She soon made herself quite at home, and was no restraint or trouble in the house; but, on the contrary, a great acquisition. Joking with uncle, helping auntie in her garden and assisting me in rearranging the drawing-room, and contriving striking new "effects" in the disposal of flowers, pictures, and furniture, occupied the first few days. She readily learned all our family jokes, the names of most of the servants, and established herself on a footing of friendly intimacy with the dogs, cats, and birds, and her lively, attractive manners, and pretty face, were a first-class passport to universal popularity. She was certainly an oddity in some ways. The very pink of propriety in society, and under auntie's eyes—when alone with me she "broke out," as she called it, and indulged in slang, and all sorts of expressions hitherto foreign to my ears; and, in short, she was extremely fast, and gloried in "shocking me," as she called it. My dressing-room, of an afternoon, was her favorite lounge, and she favored me with a great deal of her society; and, thanks to auntie's fort winks, every day after tiffin we enjoyed a long and uninterrupted tête-à-tête. Extended at full length on my sofa, she gave me her opinion gratis of men and manners. She was not the least reticent about herself or her affairs, and exacted equal frankness from me.

"I like the name of Nora Neville," she remarked one day; "it goes with quite a swing. Where did you pick up the name of Nora?—feminine, or Noah, of course. I think I'll call you Noah—shall I?"

I vainly begged that she would do nothing of the kind.

"Oh, yes, I really must. You might have come out of the ark, you were so preposterously antediluvian in some ways, and behind the present

age four thousand years at the very least. "Noah Neville is your name, and Ireland is your nation, Mulkapore your dwelling-place, and I'm your admiration."

Is not that the case?" she asked, looking at me complacently. Without pausing for an answer she said: "Now tell me about your Irish home," evidently preparing herself for a long session.

"There's nothing to tell," I replied briefly, not raising my eyes from my crewl-work. "I came out to India when I was seventeen."

"And were wrecked en route. How funny!"

"Anything but funny, I think you would have found it," I replied, gravely.

Well, and tell me, have you any particular friend in Mulkapore—any cher ami?" she asked, insinuatingly. "No, not one," I answered, with perfect truth.

"What, not one? Oh, come now—think again!"

"If I thought till doomsday I could not conjure up the sort of friend you mean. I hate Platonic friendships," I remarked with great emphasis, and giving my wool a jerk that broke the thread.

"Of course I know that you are strictly a friend of the intellect, and engaged in masonic. But even so, why not amuse yourself, *pro tem*?" "When I am asked to give the mice will play," I said, "I don't bring you a picture of a virtuous indignation! Only I am quite too comfortable, I would fetch you a looking-glass. Look at me, I have half a dozen dear little bow-wows—*moi qui vous parle*," patting herself complacently.

"Then more shame for you," I retorted, with more than ordinary warmth.

"Ha, ha, ha! You amuse me immensely, if one day you were the death of me," she went on, still cackling to herself. Then clasping her hands behind her head, and surveying me lazily, she said: "Why should I not have my little pack? Don't you know that flirting (harmless flirting) is the privilege of the married woman? My dear old hub has his amusements, his little game, his big shooting, and I have mine—my little game, my big shooting. I bring down a brigadier just as he does a bison, only my spoil is not mortally wounded. It never does any one any vital harm to admire me."

"I don't understand you," I said, stiffly.

Quite shocked, I declare. Well, then, she isn't shocked; such a good, prim little girl, shall look at nice, pretty, proper pictures, she shall."

"I really wish you would leave me alone, Mrs. Vane," I exclaimed, half laughing, half crying.

"No, indeed. I have a rich treat in store for you, your ridiculous pre-Adamite. I am going to show you my album, and to introduce you to all my friends," she said, unlocking, as she spoke, a very handsome bound album. "Put away your work and your book, and come a little closer to me and enlarge your ideas."

"Why do you never read yourself, Mrs. Vane? I never see you open a book," I remarked, reluctantly putting away a magazine into which I had intended to dip during the afternoon.

"Oh, I hate reading; my only book is the great book of nature, and tragedies and comedies in real life my only study. Now, attention! I am conferring an enormous favor on you, if you only know it. It is not every one that has the privilege of seeing my photographs."

"This is Horace Fuller, of the Navy Blue Dragons; such a flirt, my dear!—throwing up her eyes—but, nevertheless, a sincere admirer of yours truly. This is Sir Fortescue Brown, such an old duck; here, opposite, is Aylmer Byng—he is dead, poor fellow! This woman with the muff is a Mrs. Burton, who sets up for a professional beauty; she has a good deal of nerve, has she not? She has a face exactly like a cat's head done in coarse worsted; and so on, and so on, we passed in review the contents of the album. There was a remark to be made about every photo, and to most there hung a tale. At length we came to the last page. Taking up an envelope that lay inside the cover, Mrs. Vane said: "Oh, here it is! I could not make out where I had put it. Now, my sweet, unsophisticated little friend, prepare yourself for the *bonne bouche*. I am now," she continued oratorically, "about to introduce you to the show man of the Horse Artillery; such a handsome fellow, quite too good-looking; a splendid rider, a perfect dancer, in fact, good at everything all round—rackets, crickets, and shooting. Not much of a ladies' man as yet, it is true, but, with a little training, he will fetch and carry nicely."

"And what is the name of this remarkable, too good-looking gunner?" I asked carelessly; "Crichton the second?"

"No," she replied, taking the photo out of its envelope, gazing at it for a second, and then solemnly putting it into my hand. "His name is Captain Maurice Beresford."

"What on earth are you blushing about?" she asked, suddenly catching a view of my brilliant cheeks. "Surely you are not affected to blush by his mere photo? I know you have never seen him, as he has been in Bengal for the last five years. What are you getting so red for, eh?"

"I—I—I'm not red," I stammered. "How can you be so absurd?"

"Well, you certainly had a sudden effusion of blood to the head, whatever the cause. Is he not handsome? Can you wonder now that he has broken half the girls' hearts in Lucknow?"

"I thought you said he was not a ladies' man?" I interposed quickly. "Neither is he—at any rate, not a marrying man. Oh, dear me! I wish his battery was here. There was some talk of a move. I wish you could see him, Nora—I know you would like him."

"Oh there is not likely to be an if to that question," resumed Mrs. Vane with an air of tranquil superiority. "The little idiot never knew what she was running away from. He is not merely awfully good-looking, but so nice, and so gentlemanly, every one likes him—men and women alike."

"And is certain to be a conceited ape," I added, rudely completing her encomiums. "I suppose he never found a trace of this wild Irish cousin?" I continued boldly, and now playing the part of interested auditor to admiration.

"Oh, the faintest gleam. I dare say she is a slavey in some London lodging-house; and if that is her fate, what I can say is that she richly deserves it. What is your opinion?"

"My opinion was expressed in a sudden and utterly uncontrollable fit of laughter; laughter I could not possibly restrain. I laughed from sheer nervousness, and nothing else. The more Mrs. Vane ejaculated and exclaimed at my unaccountable fit of mirth, the more I gave way to it. At length, completely exhausted, I dried my eyes and picked up my work. Mrs. Vane gazing at me in open-mouthed amazement."

"My good old Noah!" she cried. "You are crazy; you must have a slate off! Whatever possessed you to laugh so immoderately at nothing? Are you often taken like this?" gazing at me in blank amazement, and dropping her crewl.

"I cannot tell," I answered, reddening in spite of myself. "Very little amuses me, as you know. Tell me, Mrs. Vane, what would you have done in that girl's case? Would you have stayed?"

"Certainly I would," she returned promptly. "Especially if I had had the smallest suspicion of the entire desirability of my future husband. Never quarrel with your bread and butter; it never answers. Be sure that that young person has long ago repented her foolish proceeding in sackcloth and ashes. And now tell me what you would have done, my unromantic, prudent Noah? Let us have your ideas on the subject."

"I would have done exactly what she did," I answered firmly.

"Not you!" responded my friend emphatically. "You are much too prosaic a young lady."

"Not so prosaic as you imagine," I retorted, with unusual decision. "The best thing that girl can do is to marry some one else, and so release her cousin most effectually—if he still thinks himself bound by that preposterous engagement." I added, without raising my eyes from the enormous sunflower on which my fingers were occupied.

"Undoubtedly," rejoined Mrs. Vane. "But all the same, she ought to have a glimpse of the old love before she is on with the new. If I were a girl engaged to Maurice Beresford, I would certainly think twice before giving him up. But, of course, you and I look on the matter from a different point of view. I have seen him, and you have not."

"TO BE CONTINUED"

"Samuel denies the theft—and thou knowest that he has ever been truthful," Jacob answered, puzzled, and torn between his desire to think his son innocent and the conclusiveness of the evidence against him.

"What canst thou say for thyself, little one?" the old man said coaxingly to Samuel. The child had ever been a favorite with him. "Try to remember. Wert thou alone all through the morning?"

But Samuel, completely unnerved, sobbed the louder by way of answer.

He stole money once before. That is the reason that we are so certain that he had done so this time," a big boy explained patiently, human-like, holding the child's past delinquencies against him; and, human-like, the men and boys listened to him, faltered, and the tide turned against Samuel. "No doubt he had stolen again," they thought. "It is evident that his honesty is not above suspicion."

Again Jacob raised his strap, but again he was interrupted.

"Oh, see, Jesus is coming!" one of the boys exclaimed delightedly. Jacob's hand fell, and he turned in the direction in which the boy pointed. Samuel ceased weeping and peeped hopefully between his fingers.

"Who is Jesus?" asked Levi, the young son of Alpheus, a merchant in a nearby Galilean town. He was spending only one day in Nazareth and knew nothing of the Son of the carpenter.

"He is—" began a boy, then stopped, at a loss to explain. "See, He is coming toward us!" he added, pointing to a youth who was advancing. It was as if he had said, "I have no words beautiful enough to describe Him. Look, and judge for yourself!"

Glancing curiously at Him, Levi saw that the boy whose approach was arousing so much interest, was little older than himself—perhaps fifteen years of age—tall, slender and graceful. When He drew nearer and Levi could see His face, he riveted his eyes upon it as if spellbound, so marvelously sweet and loving was it.

Samuel broke through the crowd, ran towards Jesus, and grasped His arm confidingly. "Oh, tell my father that I did not do it!" he begged. He doth wish to believe me, but he cannot," and again he began to sob convulsively.

Jesus took the boy's dirty little hand into His. Together they went back to Jacob, the rest crowding very near, eager to see the end. "Poor Jacob!" Jesus exclaimed, seeing the father's distress. "But why dost thou accuse Samuel of having stolen the missing shekels? Several months ago he promised thee never again to take what is not his, and he hath ever been a boy of his word."

Gratefully Samuel smiled up into his father's face and clasped his hand more tightly. Jacob was relieved to find that Jesus believed in his son's innocence.

"But he did steal once before—from Aaron. It was last autumn. Hast thou forgotten?" said the boy who had before insisted on this point.

While this conversation was being carried on Levi had not for an instant taken his eyes from Jesus' face; and, unobserved by the others, Jesus now turned and looked straight into those bright black eyes. Levi blushed and looked miserable. He started forward, checked himself, and then, after a moment's hesitation, stopped up toward Jacob and said distinctly and loud enough to be heard by all: "Jacob, it was I who stole thy neighbor's money! Here it is. Take it, and return it unto him. I crept into the shop whilst Samuel was laughing and talking with an old man—Joseph. If thou wilt, give the stripes to me instead of thy son."

Intense silence followed this confession. For a full minute no one spoke or moved. Jacob broke into the spell by taking Samuel's hand into his and saying tenderly, "Come, my son. He led him homeward. It would be hard to tell which of those two were the happier; the father, any parent would say—the son, any boy. One by one the men dispersed after having cast contemptuous glances at Levi. The children shrank away awed, they knew not why, and perhaps a little disappointed that no one had been beaten. Unflinching, Levi watched them, his head raised high, his eyes blazing.

As the last boy scampered down the street, Levi turned to find Jesus standing near him. Instantly the haughty look faded from his sun-browned face. After having proudly defied the crowd, he stood ashamed before a boy of his own age. He hung his head and nervously dug the soft sandy soil with the toe of his sandal, watching the process intently, pretending to be much interested in the hole he was making. Before he had found courage to speak, or even to glance up, Jesus laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Thou didst tell the truth bravely," He said. "It is easy to do wrong. It is hard to make atonement."

With a surprised and grateful smile, Levi looked into the face bent close to his. A moment later Jesus was gone. Levi watched Him as He walked slowly down the street and disappeared at length into one of the smallest of the square, flat-roofed houses of the village.

Fifteen years glided by, and Levi neither saw nor heard more of Jesus. He never again went to Nazareth; his old friends there visited him no more. Many and many a time he had wished that they had given him a number of stripes on that never-forgotten day; that they had whipped him, and then been willing to forget.

As it was he had gone unpunished only to be punished during long years. But never since that day had Levi forgotten Jesus. He had cherished the remembrance of His beautiful, peaceful face, and of His kindness. He had kept before his mind the lesson, too deep and sweet for words, which the Boy of Nazareth had taught him by one look, a lesson which had given him courage to tell the shameful truth at the moment, and to so live afterward that he had become known in Capernaum as "honest Levi" and "good Levi."

On reaching maturity he had secured a position under Herod Antipas as collector of customs at the Sea of Tiberias. In consequence he was hated by the Jews who despised all publicans. His life was very lonely. His father was dead; he was not married; friends he had few, almost none. The brightest spot in his life was the recollection of his greatest shame, for to have seen and spoken with Jesus of Nazareth, to have even been commended by Him, was lasting joy.

And so the years had passed, and though he wondered daily as to the fate of Jesus, Levi heard of Him no more, began to despair of ever hearing Him. One day, when he was busy over his accounts in the custom house, he overheard some words of a conversation between two men who had just paid their tax, so wondrous strange that he stopped in his work to listen. And as he listened his interest grew, his lips smiled, his heart sang.

"And thou sayest that the leper was cured! But, Seth, it is not possible!" were the first words that reached Levi's ears.

"I saw the cure with my own eyes, James! I stood not more than 10 feet from the man. He was hideous to look upon, covered with livid blotches, and his nose and several of his fingers had already fallen away. Made curious by the conflicting reports I had heard relative to this newly arisen Prophet, I mixed with the crowd to see and hear for myself. I found Him—oh, it is impossible to explain what He is! He is somehow very wonderful, very awe-inspiring, and with it all most—most lovable!"

As I said, I joined the people who were following Him that day. As we drew near one of the wells which are set aside for the use of lepers, we came upon this poor man waiting by the wayside for the Prophet to pass. When the leper begged the Nazarene to cure him He answered as simply as if He had been asked the most commonplace favor, 'I will. Be thou made clean.' That was all; and instantly James, the man 'became as sound as thou art!'"

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" James explained thoughtfully. "What thinkest thou, Seth? Can this Man be the Messiah?"

"Nay, I know not. Some say that He is a poor people's Moses. He is very good to them. Others think Him a great prophet like Elias or Isaiah. As for the scribes and pharisees, they have already ranged themselves against Him."

For a moment James was lost in thought. He aroused himself to say feverishly, "I must see this Man. Knowest thou where He is to be found?"

"To-day He is here in Capernaum." "In Capernaum to-day? And His name? Thou hast not mentioned His name?"

"Ah, Levi! I had already guessed it! He is called Jesus of Nazareth, replied Seth. "But come, let us go." Arm in arm they passed out of the custom house, leaving behind them Levi sitting with his head bowed in his hands. His heart was full of conflicting feelings, awe and long and fear and love, and above all, joy. His first impulse was to go in search of Jesus and he sprang from his seat only to sink back in it, shamed by his more deliberate thought. True, Jesus had been all tending to him on that day in Nazareth fifteen years before, but as a man He might be less forgiving of such meanness—so Levi feared. One moment he felt that the Prophet who was working wonders throughout Palestine would receive him as kindly as the unknown Son of the carpenter had done; the next, in dread of a rebuke he resolved to avoid Him. "And besides," he thought, "who am I, weak and sinful as I am, to see and speak with the Messiah?" For that Jesus was the Promised One he did not doubt.

At the sixth hour as he was going home to partake of his midday meal, which served as his midday meal, Levi was astonished to find one of the streets through which he was accustomed to pass, blocked by an eager, excited throng of people. A man, hurrying to join the crowd, called to him as he ran past him: "The Prophet of Nazareth is here! Come! Only yesterday He worked great wonders! Come and see!"

But Levi, fearful, timid and ashamed, turned the other way, and fled back to his desk in the little custom house. That afternoon he accomplished little though he had never tried harder to concentrate his mind upon his work. With each hour, each minute, his longing to see Jesus of Nazareth became more intense; and still he dared not go to Him. The day grew old, and he struggled on, only making innumerable blunders. At last his stylus fell from his hand and he sat gazing absently across the tranquil waters of the Sea of Tiberias.

How long he had dreamed thus he did not know, ere he was startled by a light sound at his door, and looking up, he saw Jesus standing on the threshold! No need to tell Levi who He was! It was the face of which he had dreamed so long, grown if possi-

ble, more sweet, more strong, more loving. Jesus looked long at Levi; but Levi said no word of welcome, could say none, for his heart was bursting with love.

It was Jesus who spoke first, breaking a silence more sweet than angel's song. "Follow me," He commanded. Behind his master he passed down the street until Jesus called him to His side and talked with him; and Levi, emboldened by His kindness begged Him to dine at his home that night. When Jesus readily accepted his timidly proffered invitation, Levi's happiness was intense. At the earliest opportunity he slipped away to make the preparations necessary for the entertainment of so honored a guest.

Soon an unforeseen difficulty presented itself; whom could he invite to dine with the Master? His disciples, and the poor, wayward and despised ones who followed Him? Levi knew but too well how cordially the better class of Jews hated him and his fellow publicans. It was only tax collectors like himself and a few sinners, notorious in Capernaum and all the country round about, who would accept an invitation to his table. Greatly troubled he invited whom he could; but even after Jesus had come and had greeted the other guests with all His own tender grace, Levi felt ill at ease.

Whilst they were at tables some scribes and pharisees, attracted by curiosity, came by and scoffingly, tauntingly, they called to Levi and those of Jesus' followers who sat near Him, saying, "Why doth your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"

The question embarrassed the disciples, and Levi, in particular, it cut to the quick. He himself was a publican and many of those of his class and of the sinners present he had invited. He feared that he was drawing contempt on Him Whom he loved and who deigned to accept him as a friend.

But before he or any of the other disciples could devise an excuse Jesus answered for them: "They that are well have no need of a physician, but only they that are sick. For I came not to call the just, but sinners."

A look of joy overspread the sin-hardened faces of many who listened and Levi, whom Jesus renamed Matthew, heard, and his heart was set at rest forever.—Florence D. Gilmore, in *The Magnificat*.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Sermon delivered by the Rev. J. P. Fallon, O. M. I., Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, and brother of the Right Rev. M. F. Fallon, Bishop of London, on the occasion of the ordination of the Rev. J. E. McNeill, St. Patrick's Church, Napanee, Ont., Saturday, July 26, 1913.

My dear Brethren,—It is well that, on an occasion such as the present, when one from your midst is raised to the high dignity of God's priesthood, it is well that your attention be arrested for a few minutes upon the sublimity of the office to which he has been called, and that you contemplate with the eyes of faith the grandeur of the noblest of all vocations. Between a true concept of the nature of Christ's priesthood and a firm adherence to the Church that he has established, between the reverence for the sacred ministers of religion and respect for religion itself, there exists so intimate a relationship that love and veneration for the one necessarily imply love and veneration for the other, and that we may form a just estimate of the genuineness of a people's faith and of the depth of their virtue by the degree of honor in which they hold their priests. One of the most glorious tributes that can be paid to the faith of that people from whom many of us are sprung is that, in the midst of the direst poverty and the lack of all education, during those centuries of heartless persecution and immeasurable suffering through which they passed, whilst every other form of preeminence underwent destruction, whilst kings were cast down and subjects were reduced to slavery, whilst everything was done to crush even the natural pride of personal dignity, there ever remained among that people, in all its original nobility, that profound reverence for God's anointed which caused them to overlook human frailties, and to clothe the priestly character with a splendor in comparison to which that of the greatest earthly monarchs faded into insignificance.

Such conduct on the part of the devoted children of the Church is nothing more or less than a natural consequence of the faith which they profess. It is with good reason that the Inspired Writer whom I have quoted—speaking even of the priests of the Old Law—linked so closely together as two great marks of a holy life, fear of the Lord and reverence for His priests. But the dignity of the priests of the Christian dispensation as far exceeds that of the Jewish priests as does the Sacrifice of Calvary surpass in sublimity and efficacy the sacrifices that were offered up to the Almighty in the Old Law.

The priest of the Catholic Church, in the language in which the saints and ecclesiastical writers repeatedly style him, is another Christ. It is by him that, down through the centuries, the Redeemer of mankind has continued the work of salvation, and it is by Him that that same work will