

BORROWED FROM THE NIGHT

By ANNA C. MINOGUE

CHAPTER XVII

During that short walk across the lawn to the house, with Teresa and the stranger, the emotions that surged over Preston Martins' heart were painful in their intensity.

When his father turned away with the unknown man, he sank into his vacated chair, like a person overpowered by physical weakness.

The white robes fell meaninglessly on his feet. When they left, his mother rose from her chair and took another by his side.

"Preston," she asked, "is there anything the matter? Has anything gone wrong with you?"

He turned his eyes upon her, with an expression like the appeal of a wounded dog. His mind caught and held two of her words—matter, wrong, matter? Did it matter if he had failed in a punctilious sense of honor, since he had opened for himself the door of happiness? Wrong? Was it wrong? He raised his hand and pushed back the clustering locks from his low brow, and turned his eyes from his mother, as he answered, his voice creeping over the words:

"Mother, I do not know if it is wrong with me or right with me. This has been," he finished lamely, "a day full of turmoil and worry. I fear I have not the staying power of the Prestons as I have not the calculating, resourceful nature of my father."

"You are young," she hastily interposed. "The ordeals of this day would try older nerves than yours."

Then knowing that his thoughts should be distracted from their present trend, she began to talk of the little events of the party and the pleasures expected from the evening. It was a conversation that did not call for much exertion on his part and as her voice poured its music on his ears, his mind began to shake off its lethargy and by the time his guests reappeared, he was himself again.

The hidden dramatic elements which the scene of that supper-room presented appealed to George Martins in all their strength and magnetism. Here were his wife's unconscious girl guests, white robed, smiling, blushing, and among them and queen of them the long-defrauded mistress of this house, standing upon the threshold of great and wonderful discovery.

There was Preston, wearing, with the ease and grace of the young Kentuckian, his long-accepted right to an inheritance of wealth and honor; before him, was his wife, filling her position as the lady of a great establishment, with the graciousness and dignity distinguishing those to the manner born; by her side, talking to her with the courtliness of a Spanish grandee was the Indian woman's son, whose blood-crismened hand had helped to lift her to her position. Fate stood over that scene, that hour, and her hand was ready to fall upon them—and what a future! He was the magician whose fingers held down the veil of the unknown. Why not lift it now, give to the act all its dramatic beauty and like Samson, perish with the temple he had destroyed? A smile crossed his face with the thought. He met his wife's eyes and when she smiled back upon him, a coldness crept over his heart and the damp broke on his brow. He raised his cup and half emptied its contents before replacing it on his saucer, and the hand that held it to his lips trembled like the hand of a palsied man. The dramatic was lost, swallowed up in poor, base fear.

When the stranger, after the presentation to Mrs. Martins by her husband, had found himself bowing before Gerald Martins' daughter and meeting the full, so darkly mysterious eyes, he knew that his destiny was looking out upon him. He had traversed half the American continent, had met women of every class and nationality, had felt toward them according to the degree in which they affected his stern, self-centered nature; but love he had never known until Teresa's eyes met his. Then one of those strange character miracles was wrought, and as the evening advanced, George Martins saw the self-elected delegate of Fate become the interesting if ordinary lover, and he felt a greater horror than when he had seen him with the well directed pistol in his hand.

A feeling she could not analyze, made Teresa shrink from Preston. She knew that not only would he seek her that night, but that he must do so, or offer her an insult that no woman could forgive. She knew what he would say and that she must give him one of two answers. There was no middle course for her. She must either turn to the calling of St. John Worthington or to the appeal of Preston Martins.

She was not turning from him in the madness of unhappy love or the powerlessness of destiny, the latter she did not believe in, the former she would not acknowledge. She knew that she had herself to blame for hastening the hour. She had felt his fine reserve, had understood by her woman's intuition its significance, as perhaps she was dimly conscious of his struggle against his dearest hopes. She herself had precipitated this hour, had helped him to overthrow his reserve, scatter the conquering forces of his scruples, by her admission of the truth, that his

father's touching, dramatic recital of the afternoon's event had been so dextrously worded as to leave his son the hero, the one actor of the scene; that under that recital the other man was made to appear as an automaton, a figure only as necessary for the hero's action.

She had the consciousness that the Preston Martins whom she had recognized fully and truly and for the first time as they had stood for that brief moment in the breakfast room, was knowing poignant regret because of the situation, which was now past human remedying. So she experienced no sentiment of anger, nor ill-will. If there came to her at times a whisper that there is, after all, a destiny which brings us, willingly or unwillingly, to joy or sorrow, she banished it, and turned instead to the old, sweet faith, which teaches the eye that marks the sparrow's fall and considers the lilies of the field, held her life in full, tender fatherly view. Yet the heart would push its moment of supreme trial away, and she permitted, as if they were pleasing to her, the marked attentions of the stranger. Nor was she entirely displeased. She perceived at the first glance that she was in the presence of a man of character and unusual intellectuality. This was written on his face. When he began to speak those impressions became fixed, while the unconscious hints his words threw out that a poet or an artist had been lost by Fortune's making a more man of the world of Senor Martins, made an unerring appeal to her impressive nature. He spoke of Canada and she saw link after link of hills, white, clear, cold, dazzling; heard the long, lone cry of the gaunt wren, looking from pitiless earth to pitiless sky, or the last, death-agonized yell of his victim, that left a red mark upon the white land. He referred to New York and there passed before her eyes a picture of a session of humanity. Little children lifted up their bony hands to her and woman looked upon her from hollow eyes. All nations were there represented from ice-bound Russia to vine-covered Italy, but strangers in a strange land, the motley crew was soul-wrenching instead of pleasingly picturesque. He spoke of Cuba, the land of the sun, the pearl of the western main, and her eyes grew softer and her heart was filled with longing. His voice took on its lowest, tenderest tones, and more frequently fell from the trenchant tongue of the north into the vowel-spilling language of the south; and though their meaning missed her ears, her mind grasped their significance, and she passed with him through a never-ending scene of tropical beauty, luxury and bewilderment. When the others moved away to the dance, and the stranger found himself again alone with Teresa, met her glorious eyes, her entranced beautiful face, the dormant, strange irresponsible nature which he had received from a rash white father and a too-fond Indian mother, leaped with mad force into its original life, and the cosmopolitan, the citizen of the world, whose motives of interest could not bind long to one place, nor pleasures or pursuits assimilate with any one people, had become the veriest slave to his newly-wedded chain.

"But I shall see my sun-bright land no more," he exclaimed, with a tremor in his voice.

"Ah! that must grieve you," said Teresa. "I can understand how you love your island home."

"You do! you do!" he half-cried, rapturously. "Never have I met a woman who understood me so perfectly. I could speak to you as to my own soul. Is it not strange that because I have met you, I can say, and know no great sorrow, 'I shall see you no more, my sun-kissed Cuba?'"

Teresa had grown accustomed to the extravagant compliments of young men; but this man was no longer youthful she could see, and there was too much warmth in his tones, too much expression in his face for her to permit further expressions of admiration. But his words were not to be stopped by her maiden reserve. She knew there was no escaping from him now, for a new dance was beginning, which she feely, could speak to you as to my own soul. Is it not strange that because I have met you, I can say, and know no great sorrow, 'I shall see you no more, my sun-kissed Cuba?'"

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the hour, Preston Martins never lost the consciousness that those everlasting worlds were there and his immortal soul was here. But presently his companion's step slackened, stopped.

"I am afraid, Preston," she said. His arm was around her to support her, for she was trembling. He bent over her face on which the beautiful steadfast was falling.

"Afraid with me!" he said, and the quiver that ran over his ivory-like fairness, sent a thrill to his soul.

"Yes, even with you," she answered. He bent lower over her.

"Teresa! Teresa!" he cried, softly "is it that you are afraid of me?"

She looked on the face above her, the strong, good, noble face, illumined by his mother's eyes.

"No! no! Not afraid of you, but myself. I want to be good and strong, and I am not."

"In what are you not good and strong?" he was gazing down into her eyes as if to read below them the truth of the soul. Pergance he did, for he lifted his glance to the stars; when next his eyes met hers, they were clear and steady and wondrously tender.

"Let us go on," he said, in his old sad voice. "It is stifling in the house. I wanted to have a talk with you all the evening. That fellow was monopolizing you like a bear—"

"A Spaniard?" His hand had slipped away from her shoulder and was lightly clasping her fingers.

"Yes, that is the name of the man who went to the little graveyard and she sat on the steps, while he stood, leaning against the low wall.

"What do you consider good and brave?" he asked, after a pause.

"Give me an illustration of your thought on these qualities which all men boast that they possess, and yet so few do." His tones were usual, save for a certain tenderness which betrayed a desire to lead the mind away from a subject, or a fierce determination to hear all that may be said upon it.

"Have you ever heard of the monks of La Trappe?" asked Teresa. "They have a house in this State. It lies over from Loretto, in a hilly, lonely country. I doubt if there is a harder life than the one lived by the Trappist monks. They eat only one meal a day, and no meat at that one. They give but a few hours to sleep and their bed is the bare floor. They labor in the fields, summer and winter, and beside the vows observed by all Religions, they are bound to keep perpetual silence. They came from France and among them are several noblemen. I heard this story of one of those monks: There were two brothers, the sons of different mothers. The elder, who inherited his father's title and estate, hated the other, who had been his father's favorite. The younger fell in love with an estimable lady, and his brother was his rival. The Count, who was powerful, had his brother sent off to the war and then circulated the report that he had been killed in battle. He had now the field to himself, and wither by fair means or foul, he secured the lady's promise to marry him. The younger man was not dead, however. On his way home he discovered that his father, who had been wild in his youth, had not been legally married to the first woman; hence, he, the son of the second wife, was rightful heir to the title and estate. He had it in his power amply to revenge himself upon his brother. But he had loved his father, and knowing that as his father had not made atonement for his sinful life, he must be suffering for it in the other world, this son offered up the sacrifice of his life, gave up his title to wealth and honor, laid aside his power to avenge himself on his cruel brother and faithless lover, and entered the Trappist Order, sedulously observing its rigorous rules and perpetual silence. That illustrates my idea of what is meant by the words brave and strong."

Preston Martins mused, with his face lifted to the stars.

"It was an heroic sacrifice," he said, "but an unjust act."

"Unjust?" she questioned, looking up at him. "To whom? Himself? This is because you do not believe with us in the efficacy of sacrifice for the living and the dead."

"Perhaps," he said, but without returning her gaze, "if the sacrifice thus was consummated upon Mount Calvary, offered by Him Whom Christians hold was the Son of God, is it not all-sufficing—if it cannot purchase complete forgiveness, I do not see how the sacrifice of one pitiful, human life, full of faults and imperfections, can be in aught efficacious in turning aside the judgment of the unchanging and unchangeable God. The young man believed in the efficacy of his sacrifice and that was made right for him. But it was, nevertheless, unjust. Wrongdoing calls for punishment. The elder brother had done wrong, first by his cruel usage of his brother, then by sending him to war against his will, circulating the report of his death and deceiving the lady, who may not have desired the marriage. She may have been forced to wed that man, who, by the very circumstance of his birth, if he were guiltless of the other sins, should have been debarred from union with her. She was to be considered and posterity was to be considered. The fact that the unlawful birth of the father was not known, does not alter the injustice toward those helpless, unborn children."

"But," she said, with her woman's logic, "the act of the young man was good and brave in him."

Preston brought down his eyes from the stars to the face upturned to him. How fair she was! How he

loved her! Was it true what his mother hinted, what her words seemed to confirm, that she loved him? Then had he made no compromise with his honor; not to tell her of his love would be as unjust as he deemed the action of the young monk. What was the meaning of that story for her? What her constituted the beauty of the action, if not sacrifice, the sacrifice of self? Then the thought that she was fain to follow the example of the young nobleman, hoping by her sacrifice to win faith for him, flashed across his mind. It blinded him to the reality of things. It seemed to explain fully the meaning of the look he had met from her eyes as they crossed the lawn, a look which was denied by the clinging of the little hands to him, the words she had spoken. Its influence was over-powering. It was as a cry from his soul for justice to him, to her. And was this her fear? that she had not strength and courage to set her feet in that higher pathway, because of the human desire of the heart. He drew closer to the girl.

"Sacrifice is hard, Teresa," he said, his sore heart giving the words the fervor of truth. "I know it." "Yet don't we ask God daily to show us the way to holiness? The way which He chose for His only begotten Son must be the best way, mustn't it? And what way was that?"

"The way of the cross," he answered sadly.

"Even so," she responded. "He entered it without murmuring and without rebellion. He needed not holiness, who is the All-Holy, but He took that hard way, that painful way, that way of complete, perfect sacrifice, for human souls. He wanted to save souls, bring back souls—"

His hand fell gently on her shoulder, for her words seemed to confirm the thought of the moment before.

"Teresa," he said, "you believe, with the monk, that the sacrifice of human hearts is powerful with God, even to the working of miracles, do you not?"

She rose, her face paling. She knew that the moment had come, and she felt stronger standing. Then she said,

"And you love souls with such a fervor that you would rush with St. Francis Xavier to the farthest India to rescue them, tempt a thousand dangers for them and suffer a fearful martyrdom for them? O my little saint! Think you there were no souls for St. Francis Xavier to help in Europe—in Spain—nay, in his own fair Pampana? His hand had left her shoulder and was clasping her hand, his eyes were meeting her eyes, and all the new sadness was gone and in its place was the clear boy's light which he had lost for a while, but which she so well remembered.

"Have I read aright the meaning of your words? that you would find do as the monk did to save a soul—perhaps two souls—which you thought in danger? that you would sacrifice your life to God to buy from Him their salvation?"

"Yes, God helping me," she replied, and though her tones were unsteady she lifted her eyes from his face to the star lit sky.

"Teresa," he said, "that would be unjust."

"Unjust?" her eyes were again on his face and a wonderful radiance had sprung into them at his words, while a joy thrilled her voice.

"Yes, unjust to that other soul, unjust to your own. O my beloved! can we not help each other more by love than by sacrifice? more by companionship than by irrevocable separation? Can you not teach me the way to God and Truth more certainly, more truly, by the precious daily example of our presence, than the saintly daily prayers of your absence?"

But she gave a sob that was half a cry as he drew her to him and held her there in the closeness of strong, young love.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE IRISHMAN AND LITTLE JEWESS

By Rev. Richard W. Alexander in the Missionary

Is there anything more attractive than a beautiful, innocent child? You would say "No," if you saw little Esther, sitting through the flower-beds of her father's garden, her dark eyes shining with the joy of living, her long black curls flowing in the breeze, her cheeks like roses, and her little red mouth parted in ecstasy as she warbled her childish songs like the broken notes of a bird.

She was only five years old, the idolized daughter of a Jewish father and mother, who seemed to live but to make their only child happy. Her Hebrew lineage was on the pretty features, and youth and perfect health made them lovely with a dark beauty that attracted every eye.

Patrick, her father's gardener, was a fervent Catholic. The faith of the old sod lighted his rugged face, and as he bent over his spade or his rake, many a muttered prayer for "the sweet baby" rose to heaven for the little soul. And the child loved him; yes, loved him! Every day she pat-tered down the well-kept walks, and chattered to him about the flowers, and about the birds. She would coax him to let her hold his rosary, which one day had slipped out of his pocket quite unknown to Patrick, and much to his embarrassment, for he knew it was as much as his place was

worth if he ever breathed the Faith of Christ to his employer's only daughter, child though she was.

"I'll let ye hold it this once, an'—"

"But ye must never speak of it to the father or mother!"

"But why, Patrick?" said the child in her broken talk.

"Well, it's because they don't like it."

"But I likes it, Patrick."

"God love ye, it's yer innocence that likes it, and the great Mother of God knows it, an'na. But yer would not want me sent away, now, would ye?"

"Oh no, I would cry if you were sent away, Patrick. Just let me hold it and kiss the silver Lady, and I'll give it back, Patrick."

The poor man was constrained to take out the old, worn beads, and let the child, all radiant with joy, hold them and kiss the large and really beautiful medal of our Lady, which he had brought from his home in old Roscommon, and which he prized as much as his life.

While she fondled the old-fashioned rosary and kissed the medal, Patrick un-pleasantly watched the dozes and winces of the child, and the child would be summoned away, leaving him for a later punishment. Esther gave back the beads reluctantly, and Patrick restored them to his pocket with a sense of relief.

"Here's a rose for ye, an'na. Sure, it isn't sweeter than yerself." And he broke off a rare, rich rose, with a deep crimson tinge, carefully stripping the stem of its thorns. Little Esther, laughing merrily, took the long stem in her hands, and lifted back to the house singing all the way.

"Bye-bye, Patrick, bye-bye!"

"God bless her!" murmured the old gardener. "May the Blessed Virgin Mary (who they tell me was a Jewess, but I don't believe it)—may she watch over this blessed child, and bring her to the only true Faith! But that will never happen, save by a miracle." He would add, as he picked up his spade and fell to work.

Day after day little Esther ran into the garden for a chat with Patrick, and to ask questions that puzzled the old man to answer. But he did her bidding—gave her flowers, carried her about the angels and heaven and about the beautiful Lady and her Son, until the child would fall asleep in his arms. Then he would carry her gently to the house, and give her to her mother's care. The parents of Esther were touched at the reverent devotion of the old man to their little girl, and often gave her little gifts for him; they felt she was safe when Patrick was near. In fact, he constituted himself her knight wherever she went, and many a troublesome journey she coast him. She still loved the beads, and nothing pleased her more than to have them, although Patrick was stern, and obliged her to give them back when he demanded them.

One day when she was unreasonable, as a child often is, he said:

"Ye don't understand them, an'na. Wait till ye are baptized."

"What's baptized, Patrick?"

"Och, it's being made clean, and holy, and pure in the sight of God and His Blessed Mother."

"But ain't I clean, Patrick! My dress is just put on!"

"Deed you are like a little princess, an'na. I don't mean that—a-way; I mean your little soul. There's a little spot on it of original sin—not your fault, an'na—and until that's off you can't go to heaven."

Just then Esther's mother came along, and there was no more conversation between the child and the gardener. But Esther kept his words in her little heart.

Some months after this the whole house was in confusion. Little Esther was taken with scarlet fever, and the parents were summoned, and the nurses were summoned, and the parents listened to every suggestion, stopping at no expense that might save the life of their only child.

Pale and terrified, they gazed at the flushed, little face, and their hearts were torn with anguish lest she might be taken from them.

The child repeatedly called for Patrick. The good man came and held her little hand, and silently prayed to the Mother of God to save the little one.

"Oh, Patrick!" she cried, "what does it mean to baptize? I want to be clean!"

Patrick trembled. The parents were listening. He dare not speak.