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HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES-BROWN

Author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER VI

About nine o'clock the following morning Harold Manfred opened his eyes and gazed vacantly around him. He felt as though these were but part of himself left—a heavy painful trunk which he was powerless to move. His head alone seemed real and alive; but the horrible vision conveyed from his eyes to his brain rendered him terrified lest his mind should have given way.

At the foot of his bed, distinctly defined, was the white *cornette* of a Sister of Charity; and closer to him—at each moment nearer to him—came another. He must be mad, and these were his keepers! Then they multiplied themselves into twelve—fifty—nay, he could count them no longer. Above him, beneath him, around him on all sides were those hateful *cornettes*! Was he dead? and was this to be part of his everlasting punishment, inflicted for the hatred he had harbored towards them in life? If so, what about the graver sins of his past! He closed his eyes to shut out the horrible vision, and endeavored to turn upon his side; but to move his body caused him such intense pain that he dared not stir; and with a groan of helplessness his head dropped wearily upon one side. And then a small, cool hand was placed upon his burning brow, and a delightful beverage was held to his parched lips, whilst the accents of a sweet, low voice fell upon his ear.

"Drink this," it said; "it will help you to get better. I am so sorry for you."  
"Sorry for him!—any one on earth sorry for him! Why, where was he then? What was the matter with him? He dared not open his eyes, lest the horrible vision should once more overpower him. But the voice, oh, how passing sweet and kind it was, with its tones as tender as those of an angel! Whence did it proceed? Would it speak to him again? He would obey it and drink, for a paralytic thirst possessed his body, and the draught was grateful. Then once again the small hand stroked his head, as though gratified by the effort he had made.

"Where am I?" he ventured to ask in a whisper, still keeping his eyes tightly closed. "What is the matter with me?"  
"You are quite safe at present. Through your own bravery you have been badly injured, but the good God has spared your life."  
"Then it is not all a dreadful dream. I am still alive! But I feel so strange—so ill!"

"If you are very good and quiet God may give you the strength you need; but you must not excite yourself one little bit. Is there any one whom you wish to see? Have you friends in Paris?"  
"No, none!" was the curt rejoinder. And the kind questioner, fearing to tire her patient, turned to Ma Soeur with tears of gratitude glistening in her eyes.

"I am so thankful that he has not passed away whilst in that state of unconsciousness," she whispered. "Now, if only he may have the grace of a holy, happy death, how joyful I shall be!"  
"Well, little Sister, you must pray hard and use all your influence. It is wonderful what strange cases God gives to your sacred care. What a glorious death was that of your poor stubborn old officer. Courage, dear Sister; for, if I mistake not, you will have many grateful hearts awaiting you in Heaven."

"And right sorely shall I need their aid, Ma Soeur," she replied gaily. "But it strikes me that this countryman of mine is somewhat like myself, and will require some planning and re-modelling ere he is fit to join the angels on high. I seem also to feel that he has a great aversion to me."

"He will overcome that when he has learnt to know you better Sister—never fear," replied Ma Soeur, as she crossed the cosy apartment occupied by Madame Corbette, and made for the outer door, accompanied by Sister Marguerite. "Since he seems better, and I think, likely to rally, at least for a time, I shall leave you to tend him and the old woman; but should you find the task greater than you can accomplish, send a messenger to acquaint me of the fact, and I will endeavor to send you aid at once. And, above all things, take as much rest yourself as you can; for you look dreadfully tired and worn out."

"Thanks very much, Ma Soeur; but I hope to be quite able to manage both patients; and I am very strong, you know."

Ma Soeur stepped out into the open street alone, but there was a sad, wistful look upon her face when the door had closed, shutting from view the cheerful countenance of her younger companion. "I do hope," she said to herself, "that the walk or ride here in the open air will do dear Sister Marguerite good. She is looking so dreadfully worn and over-worked, and her cough is terrible. I fear it is getting very serious, though she always makes so light of it. As soon as she can be spared, she must return to England to recruit."

The sun was shining brightly; there was a delicious freshness in the air; though all around looked

desolate and neglected, yet here, at least for the time being, a calm seemed to prevail. Some of the 'buses had resumed their running; and a little farther down, where the houses had suffered comparatively little, Ma Soeur hoped to be able to hail one.

It was about three o'clock that same afternoon when Manfred awoke once more, with a sudden start, to consciousness.

"Where am I?" he demanded suddenly; but this time his voice was stronger.

Sister Marguerite had stationed herself near the window, at the head of the sick man's bed, where by an old curtain she was hidden from his view. Her patient was too ill to be worried by the sight of her at present. She must endeavor to ascertain whether he had a wife, a mother, or friends of any kind, who ought to be informed of his critical condition, ere it was too late. So she answered kindly:

"You are ill in bed, but safe from further danger of the war, and shall be well cared for."

"What is the matter with me? Am I very ill? Why can I not raise my legs? And why do I feel as though I had been severed in half?"  
"You have been severely wounded, poor man; but do not distress yourself, you may recover and get quite well again."

"Surely I am in no danger of death?" he cried, raising his head. "Oh, not death just yet! I must not die now! I want time—time!"  
"Hush, hush!" came the sweet voice; and a strong little hand pushed him back upon the pillow.

Do not distress yourself, or you will certainly die. Be calm—be quiet—and you may yet live. Why should a brave and noble man fear death? You have been both, and God loves the brave!"

"Oh, Edmund, Edmund!" he cried, in tones of agony, "forgive me! I cannot—must not—die and leave you thus! I dare not face your God and mine."

Sister Marguerite stepped from her hiding place. This was no time in which to indulge a sick man's whim; her duty was before her, and she must be at her post. Strange was the tone of power and solemnity that that gentle voice could assume in moments of difficulty or danger.

"Hush!" she repeated, laying her hand firmly upon his. "You must not speak like that. You will not die until time has been given you in which to repent. If you have in any way injured another there is still time to repair the wrong; and I know you will act nobly, generously; and God will reward infinitely for the difficult act of self-abandonment."

"I repair the foul deed! I cannot!"—and he laughed a bitter laugh. "It is too late now; things have gone too far for me to face them. And who are you?" he cried, in angry excitement, "that dare to bid me do it?"

"I? I am but a servant of the good God; I am ready for the love of Him, to stand by you and aid you to the uttermost; and I bid you be quiet. Have confidence! Trust Him, and all will be well." As she said this she stood revealed before him—a simple Sister of Charity.

He turned and looked at her for an instant, aversion and helpless misery depicted in his eyes; then, covering his face with both hands, he groaned heavily and murmured: "Go away—go away! Cease to torment me! You do not know of what you are talking."

She drew a chair to the bedside, and seating herself upon it, waited patiently until the paroxysm should be over. She had been bidden to tend and nurse this man, and to the best of her ability she would do so. Fearing lest his excited feelings might overcome him, she rose and prepared a soothing draught and uncovering his face administered it to him. Then resuming herself, she took one of his hands in hers, and said: "Close your eyes, and tell me quietly, if you can, where your home is, that I may send for your friends."

He did not heed her question, nor yet did he seek to withdraw his hand from hers. He merely murmured pottishly, "O, that such a voice should emanate from such a form."

There was a pause, during which Sister Marguerite continued to stroke soothingly the hand that still lingered within her grasp. Still what we will, and endeavor to explain it as we may, there is a strange magnetism, a strong power to control and comfort in the mere touch of some favored few. The hard, horny palm, as well as the soft, delicate one, can convey alike that unspoken sympathy, often so grateful to the weary patient, that by its power alone actual pain is oftentimes eased, and new hopes inspired to the sinking heart. Manfred's mind was becoming calmer each moment—until the Sister, in endeavoring to still her cough, relaxed her hold of his hand. Then the excitement seemed to return to him and he inquired hurriedly:

"Tell me, if you can, what ails my limbs? Why can I not raise them?"  
She did not immediately respond, hoping that the draught would presently take effect, and that after a thorough rest he would be better able to endure the shock. Endeavoring, therefore, to evade the question, she spoke in a soft, dreamy tone, so as not to fret him, upon a subject which she thought would help to obliterate the present from his mind.

"Perhaps," she said, "your dear mother is thinking fondly of you now."  
"My mother? Alas! no. I have no parent living now."

"Your sister, then," she urged more softly—"how sweetly and tenderly would she nurse you now."  
"She is where I shall never be," he cried with more energy. "She died in all her youth and innocence."  
"But your brother—how his heart will beat with pride and joy when he hears of the gallant deed you have done! Is he near, that I may call him?"

Had a bomb fallen and exploded in the room it could scarcely have had a more startling effect upon her patient than had that last sentence of poor Sister Marguerite's.

"My brother!" he cried, raising his head and rolling his eyes around, as though in terror lest some one unseen should be crouching near; and the veins on his neck and forehead stood out swollen and distended—"who dares to mock me? Who says that my brother would grieve for me—would be proud of me! Don't you know that he could not come if he would—that his weary eyes have wept till they are dry and can weep no more? Oh, in mercy cease, and spare me! Breathe not his name or I die."

With a vigorous push he threw the bed clothes from him, and in another moment would have rolled upon the floor, had not Sister Marguerite caught him. With the aid of Dr. Arno, for whose opportune arrival she was more than grateful, she lifted the helpless man to his couch.

"His case is almost hopeless," Sister, remarked the physician, shaking his head, despondingly. "I am sorry to say that fever has set in, leaving small hopes that we may be able to pull him through."  
"But God is good," interrupted the Sister, still breathless. "Merciful Heaven! she ejaculated to herself, "do not permit this poor man to die with this heavy load upon his mind."

To many tales of sin and hidden heroism she had lent her patient ear and the willing aid of counsel and advice; but here before her lay, she feared, not a hero but a culprit.

And yet she argued within herself, "delicious man as must not be taken at their word. My poor countryman shall have the benefit of the doubt. I will neither judge nor condemn him."

"Have you made any important discoveries regarding our patient, Sister? His name, his home, or his relatives? It is incumbent upon us to try and learn all we can about him. Has he told you anything?"  
"No, nothing of consequence," said the Sister. "But I gather that his parents and sister are dead. He is very reticent, and appears to resent any particular inquiries. It was owing to a careless question on my part that he became so excited."

"Well, more's the pity, Sister; we shall, I fear, be compelled to bury you, delicious man as must not be taken at their word. My poor countryman shall have the benefit of the doubt. I will neither judge nor condemn him."

"I am not a hero but a culprit," she argued within herself, "delicious man as must not be taken at their word. My poor countryman shall have the benefit of the doubt. I will neither judge nor condemn him."

Three weeks later Harold Manfred lay an emaciated wreck upon the bed. Death had fought hard for the mastery, but day and night the Sisters had toiled indefatigably, and with the aid of prayer, their devotion and skill had wrenched the victim from its grasp.

Scarce Marie Francis, the clever night nurse, had caught the zeal and earnestness of her fellow-worker, and together they had striven with all the energy possible to save the sick Englishman's life.

During the past few weeks Sister Marguerite had often sat and watched her patient; she had caught words and phrases which to a casual listener would have conveyed nothing but which her active mind pieced together into one of the saddest stories which it had ever been her lot to hear. She had studied Manfred's features too, and the thought that she had met him before often perplexed her, until one day, when the fever rendered him more un-governable than usual, he cried out in delicious awe, glaring at her: "Ah, there she is again, the beautiful English girl who snubbed me so publicly because I jeered at some nuns."

In an instant the little scene in which she had played a part flashed before her mind; and though altered and aged, she recognized in her helpless invalid one of the young men whose conduct she had once so boldly upbraided. But soon Manfred was raving again; now it was of a great house raised upon and from scattered ruins of what once had been an abbey. Perplexed indeed became his nurse as she wondered who he could be.

As the days succeeded each other she collected from his ravings the names of places of people which tallied vaguely with the story poured into her ears by one who had sought her aid and sympathy, binding her at the same time to secrecy. Little wonder, then, that Sister Marguerite had struggled hard to save his life. His death might mean a continuation of sorrow to those who had already suffered long and patiently; should he live—well, it would go hardly with her if she could not succeed in mitigating their suffering, if she might not altogether deprive it.

"How novel, and yet how altogether marvellous, are the chances and changes of life," pondered the Sister; and the old mischievous smile twined her lips as she recalled the discomfiture of the two young men. "Yes, they were astonished enough

at my conduct then; but who could have foreseen that he, whose delight it was to jeer at and make public sport of nuns, should, in a few years later, owe his life, under God, to their care and zeal. Nay," she laughed, "you cannot even yet cry quits, my friend; for when your reason returns, should it ever do so, you assuredly will never recognize me!"

For the last two days the sick man's fever had materially abated, and for the first time during his illness Dr. Arno had spoken almost hopefully of the case, jokingly informing Sister Marguerite that he had come to the conclusion that there was no killing an Englishman.

He is dreadfully weak, doctor, and will need no end of care if he is to rally, even when the fever has entirely passed away."  
"True, Sister; but what can you expect after all he has endured? Do you know," he said seriously, seating himself by the sick man's bed and looking earnestly at his poor thin face, "I have often marvelled why you have been so indefatigable in this case, as though you were determined that, in spite of himself, the poor man should live. Do you think he will altogether thank us for his life when he realizes what a pitiable wreck he is? I am almost afraid that it will be necessary to amputate his remaining foot; it is not healing as it should. Indeed, speaking most seriously, I have often thought that it would have been a charity to let him die. Don't you agree with me, Sister?"

"No, no!" she cried; "he must not die if we can save him."  
"But why? You don't seem to realize how henceforth life can be but a burden to him."  
"Life is always sweet; there is never a greater burden than we can endure."

"I fear you do not understand what a terrible shock it must be to any man to feel that he can never again move as of old in society—to be unable, as this man will be, to move at all, save by the aid of another."  
"Ah, doctor, there are higher aims in life than are recognized by society. They are often hollow and worthless."

"You speak severely, Sister. One might be tempted to think that you had tested them and found disappointment."  
The quick color dyed her face; she made no reply, but turned with dignity to resume her duties.

Dr. Arno watched her as he had frequently done before. Accustomed as he was to all classes and descriptions of nurses, never yet had he met with one who had displayed such unselfish devotion as the nun before him. He knew, he could see, that she was far from strong physically; yet never once had she spared herself or complained of the least ailment or fatigue. So great was his respect for her that a pang of remorse shot through him when he noted the blush on her face—the effect of his careless words. Poor long suffering little Sister! He hoped he had not wounded her feelings.

"Au revoir, Sister," said the Doctor, rising and moving towards her; and pardon the thoughtless speech of an old man. We are clumsy creatures, even the best of us; and I am no better than the rest of my sex."  
"Oh, it is nothing; we are used to all kinds of things," she answered brightly. "You are always very kind. It is my patient whom I fear; for you must know, he cannot endure the sight of a nun near him."

"Then he had better hide his feelings from me, the ungrateful wretch! and I shall tell him so when he rallies sufficiently to understand my words. But for nuns, what would have become of him I certainly like to know? He would certainly have been permitted, as a charity to himself, to die; so if he values his life and what there is left of him, let him thank your unwarlike care and exertion."

"Under God, doctor!"  
"Oh, yes, yes, of course, if you will have it so. But I must not linger here, neither shall I be able to call so frequently as formerly. The terrors outside are increasing hourly, and I am needed in many places at once. So, au revoir, Sister, our patient is safe in your hands; but should you urgently need my aid, send for me at once. And may I ask that you will take a little care of yourself sometime."  
"Can you doubt it?" she answered laughing; and bowing her adieu, she closed the door gently after him.

We are not relating the history of old Madame Corbette, therefore we will assure the reader that her presence, though most unpleasantly evident to the Sisters, shall not trouble us much. Every moment that could be spared from her patient was spent by Sister Marguerite in attending to the wants of this ungrateful woman. It was well the poor Sister did not look for gratitude in return for all her kindness, and most certainly she received none; and in spite of the fact that Ma Soeur presented the old creature with two of the gold pieces found in the Englishman's pocket, she grew more and more exacting and jealous in proportion as she observed the attention and care lavished upon the unwelcome stranger.

Once again Harold Manfred awoke to consciousness, and though this time his mind was easily fatigued, it was much clearer and steadier than formerly. The window was open, the cool spring air danced through the apartment; whilst the clear notes of a singing bird, which

had alighted near, seemed to fill the room with joyous song. After listening some little time, and endeavoring to collect his thoughts, Harold opened his eyes and looked around. How very small the room appeared! How low the ceiling! But how bright and cleanly the aspect; and whiter and purer than aught else in view was the white *cornette* of a Sister of Charity! Wearily his eyes rested upon the face beneath it. Sister Marguerite was standing in a rapt attitude of attention, listening with obvious joy to the thrilling notes of the little songster. The violet eyes were raised and fixed; flushed with pleasure were the fair cheeks; and the merry lips were parted as though her own soul could well have burst forth into song and joined the happy choir. For the first time in his life the sick man's eyes dwelt with pleasure upon the features of a nun. The face looked so young, so pure, so innocent, so full of human sympathy and kindness, that so long as she continued to listen his gaze was riveted upon her. At last, with a sudden spring into the air, the bird ceased; away it flew, perhaps to brighten with its cheerful song the heart of some other sufferer.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE TRUEST TONGUE IN ALL ERIN

By William C. O'Brien in The Missionary

Irene Dineen dropped into the cash drawer the half penny she had just received for a clay pipe; then, leaning her elbows on the counter of her mother's little store, she resumed her dreaming. An unusually loud boom of the surf as it broke over Travilahawk claimed her vague attention for a moment, but her father was, she well knew, far out on the open sea and unthreatened by the inshore blow and the heavy ground swell. Irene was not interested or impressed. It was monotonously bad weather, the drab gray of sea and sky welved off by here and there a foaming white-capped breaker rushing with futile fury on the rocky Irish coast. It was just the kind of a day the one previous had been. For Irene it meant but a round of small soles and household routine. It typified exactly many days to come. And so her life would drag along until the budding beauty of spring, with its longing for the mate that came with it; and through the flowered grandeur of summer, with its suggestion of love blossoming into marital content. And then would come the mellow ripeness of autumn when one should pick the golden fruit for one's children. She blushed and instinctively dropped her face between her palms though there was none to see; it was unmanly to long for such happiness.

Outside in the village street someone was tuning up a violin. Irene strolled out from behind the counter and stood at the half door, listening indifferently to the preliminary twanging and twisting of the little, wizened, old fiddler. The ragged musician swung into an Irish air, a favorite of bygone days still very popular with the country folk. He played with surprising technique and feeling, so that Irene was thrilled in spite of her indifference. Her eyes brightened a trifle at the lilt of "O'Donnell Abu," and the jig and reel sent the blood coursing a wee bit faster to her heart that was weary; oh, so weary with longing, with hope deferred.

Soon the cheeriness died out of the violin's voice. It took up a melancholy waltz as of lonely spirit on a desert shore. The soul-saddening moan of the "Coolin," that lone sonnet of the ancient Gael, resounded gently in the ears and thrillingly in the heart of the listening listener. It was the absent one's favorite, that tune so pregnant with anguish bringing memories of the wonderful days long gone. A choking sob rose in Irene's throat; her eyes filled with sparkling tears. Well-nigh hopeless love awaited her on a lonely shore, and black despair threatened. No longer could she bear to stand at the door and simulate indifference to that sweet—and awful—melody. She stumbled blindly behind the counter and to the curtained off recess near the window where she once more leaned on the little desk and sobbed generously and unreservedly.

After a short space the wail died away and the shuffling steps of the old musician sounded on the crisp earth. He was coming in to seek his meager reward. Hastily trying her eyes Irene drew open the cash drawer and picked up a half penny—usual dole for a wandering musician—then changed her mind and added a few more small copper coins. She was such a good musician, such a truth teller; had not the wail of his violin re-echoed the cry of her heart?

"That ye, mie." The old man raised his caubren deferentially. Then, placing the coins in his tattered pocket, he continued, peering as does one whose sight is failing him: "Is ye gene genuerel heart ye have mie, the like of which 'tis seldom I meet."

Irene frowned slightly, unwilling to encourage a wayfarer who, more than likely, was planning to take advantage of the generosity he so highly praised. "Thank you kindly," she said briefly.

"I saw the beautiful eyes of ye when I struck up the 'Coolin' a while ago," he went on. "Believe ye have a fancy for the tune. Maybe ye'd like me to play it over for ye?"  
"No, thank you." She did not wish to be so moved again. Mother

might discover and chide as she always did when Irene cried for no apparent reason. Mother knew and sympathized, but mistrusted the wisdom of soothing words.

The old man turned away and shuffled to the door. Uncertainly he stopped, turned and shuffled back again, his head on one side, an ingratiating smile gleaming through his heavy beard.

"Maybe then, mie, ye'd like to have yer fortune told? 'Tis often the way's blue eyes surveyed him doubtfully; his ragged brown suit, faded and impregnated with the dust of many a weary mile of road; his shapless caubren jammed carelessly on his unkempt locks, his wrinkled, leary countenance; his pleading gray eyes, brilliant despite their age; his eyebrows, remarkably fine for one of his years.

Should this wayfarer tell her fortune? She was not particularly anxious, nor was she altogether unwilling. Fortune telling has its own fascination. And he was undeniably interesting—his picturesque, his charm of manner, and his evident appreciation of her own beauty. Suddenly but without confusion she realized that she had been staring at him long and inquisitively, that he was shifting uneasily under her gaze.

"'Tis unlucky with cards," she said. "How do you tell it?"  
"Me ould fiddle," he said earnestly, "has the truest tongue in all creation. 'Tis not me but me fiddle will tell ye."

The girl looked incredulously at this hunch-backed old roamer of roads, whose voice was so entrancing, so moving in its reminiscent melodiousness. Should she refuse one so anxious to render her a service? Seeing her hesitation, the fiddler added hastily: "Sure I'm not trying to work ye for more money, avourneen. 'Twill be the delight of me heart to let me ould fiddle answer the riddle that's a'chill' yer heart and standing right in yer eyes this minute."

The riddle in her heart! Irene was startled by the shrewdness of the old man's guess, for guessing he surely must be. "Then how will you tell it?" she asked.

With impressive seriousness the old hunchback fixed his gaze on the beautiful face framed by dark, luxuriant hair and lighted by deep blue laughter-loving eyes, clouded a little now by doubt. He held out the violin with both hands. "Pluck whatever string ye like," he commanded, "and if the heart of ye is the home of true love itself, 'twill recount through the heart of me fiddle—the like of which for telling the truth there is not in all the four corners of Erin. Aye, and 'twill tell me true the answer to yer riddle."

Diffidently she plucked a string as bidden and the booming note of the old instrument filled the little store.

"Aha, so 'tis that, is it? There's a longing in yer heart, mie, for some one that's far away. Isn't it true what I'm telling ye?" The hunchback's frame heaved convulsively. He was piteously eager for a confirmation of his statement. Infirmly he laid an over-shoulder entrancing hand on the girl's arm. She withdrew quickly and leaned against the shelves back of the counter, somewhat surprised and offended. Surely he had not read her soul through the violin! No, but through her eyes! Did she then go amongst the people with her yearning proclaiming itself in her every glance? She was really annoyed. She would send the old rascal away.

The fiddler's mistook her silence for wonder. "Aye, 'tis wonderful to ye, no doubt. But 'tis more wonderful what I'm going to tell ye. Yer sweetheart is beyond the sea and—"  
"You've been asking the neighbors questions about me," Irene was very indignant.

"Upon me soul and honor, the devil a word." His manner was so earnest, his voice so entrancing and reminiscent, she believed in spite of herself.

"Can you tell me any more?"  
"I can tell ye more than any other living man." He asserted his power impressively, proudly.

"What?" Irene was eager now, though only half convinced.

"The goosoon of yer heart loves ye as truly as mortal man can love. Believe me, 'tis himself is longing for the sight of ye, and cursing the day he ever left ye. Aye, and 'tis sad and sore he is now to be away from the sweetness of yer lips and the lovelight in yer eyes. Me fiddle tells me his heart is full of his colleen, and the devil a threanen he cares for any other living woman."

The old man stopped as though exhausted. There had been a world of sincerity in his voice, a world of entreaty for belief in his manner. It was plain he was anxious, feverishly anxious, that she should believe as completely in his soothing as he himself evidently did.

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