

**HER IRISH HERITAGE**

BY ANNIE M. P. SMITHSON

AUTHOR OF "BY STRANGE PATHS"

**CHAPTER XVI.**

AFTEHMATH

"To every man upon this earth death cometh soon or late, And how can man die better than facing fearful odds, For the ashes of his fathers, and the temples of his gods."

There was silence for a few moments in Mary's little sitting-room, and then Anthony straightened himself suddenly, and seemed to brace himself for what he had to say. Clare was seated in a low chair beside him, her hand in his, and Mary was seated opposite to him, her eyes never leaving his face.

"It is no good keeping you longer in suspense," he said at last. "Shamus was shot in action in the Post Office area. He was helping a wounded comrade to safety when an English bullet hit him—two indeed. One only grazed his temple the other entered the lung."

Clare was sobbing, but Mary sat stiff and upright in her chair. Every vestige of colour had left her face, and her eyes were strained and hard, but she was quite calm. "Did he die at once?" she asked. "No," replied Anthony, "he was shot in the morning, about eleven o'clock, and did not die till ten at night. We got him—"

Clare interrupted him quickly. "We?" she said. "Oh, Tony, then you were in it too?"

"Why, certainly," he said; "surely you would not have wished me to stand aside at such a time? I was not one who voted for the Rising; but when it was an accomplished fact my place was with my countrymen. I was in the G. P. O. during all the fighting, and escaped almost by a miracle."

"Go on about Shamus," said Mary, and her voice sounded hard and cold.

"Well! We got him into a friend's house for safety, and a doctor and nurse saw to him at once. Ah! Mary, I can never tell you how devotedly our Red Cross people worked. We had a priest also, and he received the Last Sacraments. I asked him, 'Tony's voice broke suddenly, but he struggled on, 'I asked him had any request to make, or was there anything that I could do for him. And he asked me to bring his sister Mary to him if possible."

"And did you?" breathed Clare. "Yes, I can never forget that journey to Rathmines—it was bad enough going, but coming back with Mary it was an awful ordeal. But she was very brave. How we escaped I don't know—I suppose it was by—"

"Thank you, Tony," she said quietly. "I know what it must have cost you to have to speak of these things. God bless you for coming. Now I want to be alone for awhile, and I will leave you with Clare."

There was silence for a few minutes when she left the room. "Clare," said Anthony then. "But there was no answer—Clare's sweet face was hidden in her hands, and her head was bent down on the arm of her chair."

"He was beside her instantly. 'Dearest!' he said softly. 'Don't fret—sure, it is the will of God!'"

"I'm not fretting—at least not for them," was the stifled answer. "Then for what?" he asked.

"Her face was still hidden, and he had to bend his head close to hers before he could hear the shamefaced murmur. "Oh! Tony, you won't care for me any more now, because I'm half English!"

The ghost of a smile dawned in Anthony's tired eyes as he slipped his arm tenderly round her. "Clare Castlemaine may be half English," he whispered; "but Mrs. Anthony O'Farrell will be Irish—every bit!"

Upstairs in her own little room, kneeling before the picture of the Sacred Heart, Mary Carmichael was pouring out her soul in prayer for those who "died for Ireland."

Her grief was very great, her heart torn with suffering and pain, and yet above and over all her sorrow was a feeling of pride and glory in the thought of those gallant young lives laid down so gladly—oh! so gladly! "for Ireland."

She thought of Easter Sunday morning when in all parts of the city, they had approached the Altar rails in their hundreds to receive the Holy Communion which was to be the viaticum for so many of them—knowing the risk they were taking and realizing that they would probably never see another Sabbath dawn over their beloved city. And yet willing—oh! and eager!—to light that spark which was to rouse their countrymen from their lethargy.

"Weep not for them with useless tears; but think of them with pride, For Ireland they have fought the fight, for her with joy they died. We'll remember, we'll remember, their blood, their wounds, their pains, Tho' we know no pang was wasted, not one drop was shed in vain! For our country has awakened, and we have heard the trumpet blast, The dream of slaves is shattered, and we shall be free at last!"

time, but on the third day he went to his father, and told him that he could not stay at home any longer—both Shamus and Pat were gone, and he must follow if only to see could he gain any tidings of them. His father had expected this. "No Blake ever hung back when his country called him—"

"your grandfather was out in '67—and only wish to God that I was young myself again! Even Mary did not try to dissuade him. He made his way citywards, and had not gone far when he fell in with some young fellows whom he knew. They gave him a rifle and he joined them—one of them was a special friend of Shamus. Coming to a place where the firing was pretty severe they had to stop and defend themselves against the British. They fought for over two hours and both sides were pretty well exhausted."

"Tom's attention, it seems was suddenly caught by the sight of a wounded British soldier lying in the very centre of the roadway—a perfect target for the rifles of both sides. Without an instant's hesitation he stepped out of the ranks. 'Where are you going?' said the man who fought beside him, and who happened to be his brother's friend, from whom I heard it all. 'I want to drag that Tommy out of the firing line—he's badly hit, poor chap!' Tom replied.

"You'll be a fool if you do!" said the other; "do you think that they would do as much for one of us?"

"I can't help it," replied Tom, "wretch suffering like that." "Oh! how like him!" whispered Mary, as Anthony paused for a moment.

"Well, he reached the soldier, and managed to bring him to the Irish ranks. He had just placed him in safety behind the firing line, and was returning to his place, when an English bullet was aimed straight at him, and he fell at once, and her head was bent down on the arm of her chair."

"He was buried with the Flag of the Irish Republic wrapped round him." Mary lifted her drawn face. "And Angel?" she breathed. "Oh, Tony, don't tell me that she too—"

"No, dear! no!" he reassured her quickly. "The shock has been terrible of course for her, and for days we thought that she was going to join her brothers; but God means to spare her to us for a little while yet; and Mary—I have one bit of pleasant news for you—she is coming down to stay with you for a long visit as soon as she is able for the journey."

"Thank God!" said Mary. "Then she rose and laid her hand on Anthony's arm. "Think you, Tony," she said quietly. "I know what it must have cost you to have to speak of these things. God bless you for coming. Now I want to be alone for awhile, and I will leave you with Clare."

There was silence for a few minutes when she left the room. "Clare," said Anthony then. "But there was no answer—Clare's sweet face was hidden in her hands, and her head was bent down on the arm of her chair."

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Lo! the dead arise triumphant, and the living's task is set, The cause is burning in our heart—and we shall not forget!"

TO BE CONTINUED

**THE YEARS BETWEEN**

By Adelaide Proctor

Richard Stanbrook's household consisted of himself and his daughter Ruth. So when an important business affair called him north in December he had taken her with him, as it was not a season of the year when either cared to be alone.

Ruth was very young when her mother died, but she had scarcely realized her loss, for a brother, some years older, had almost completely filled her little world. He had always had time to listen to her, to play with her, to take care of her. And then, just before Christmas one year he had suddenly gone away. She remembered that day still, although she had tried so hard to forget it—for, after all, he had been unworthy of her hero-worship. Her father had said so. He had explained it all to her after Robert had gone and he had found her sobbing in her room.

It had seemed incredible that Rob—her Rob—could have disgraced the family name, the family pride; that he should have deliberately ruined his own prospects for a brilliant future. And yet, her father must be right. And her father said that Robert had done all these things and more by becoming a Catholic!

Robert, a Catholic! She could only guess at the enormity of the offense by its effect on her father. Of course, it was not to be expected that her father could have such a person in the house. Even Robert could understand that. And after her father had made it quite plain to her, she had been displeased with her brother's conduct for a whole day and then had promptly forgiven him and longed for his return. She remembered clinging to Robert's hand that last day and crying out that she wanted to go with him, even if he were a Catholic; and that she would be one, too, if he would teach her how, for she wanted to be like him. It was then that her father had ordered her from the room. He had later told her that the word "Catholic" must not again be mentioned, and that Robert's name must never again be spoken under that roof.

She had never seen her brother again. At first, letters had come from him and her father had grimly returned them unopened. After a while they had ceased to come. That was fifteen years ago. If Richard Stanbrook regretted his decision, no one knew. Only Ruth noticed that he was becoming more tolerant of the opinions of others on religious matters, and one day she came upon him suddenly when he was looking wistfully at Robert's picture. And although nothing could have induced him to seek his son openly; although if another letter had come some adamant trait in his make-up might have urged its return; although he had come to believe that his son was no longer living; he had, of late years, acquired the habit of glancing at every passer-by—particularly if he were in a strange city—subconsciously hoping against reasonable hope to find his son.

As her father was still busy with the interests that had brought him to the northern city, Ruth was spending these last days in visiting the shops and Christmas markets. She had even looked into several churches to see the decorations, a thing she would never have dreamed of doing at home, and in one of them she had gone very close to a crib that was being arranged at a side altar. It was strangely peaceful in there, yet she had not stayed. It would have seemed disloyal to her father. And yet—all this had been, maybe was still, a part of her brother's life. She tried to see it through his eyes, and went slowly out with a backward glance at the crude manger and at the swinging ruby light that seemed to drop in from the main altar. Somehow Robert seemed nearer in places like this. She would visit Catholic churches again, she decided; but for the present, perhaps, she had better go alone. Her father might resent an invitation to accompany her. He might even be displeased if he knew that she had gone. When, therefore, she met her father at dinner and, as was her custom, related the incidents of the day, she did not mention the visit to the churches.

They had both looked forward with pleasure to this hour when they exchanged bits of interesting news and when Ruth invariably gave an account of her sight-seeing trips. Her father seemed unusually depressed that evening, so she chatted more volubly than ever in an effort to distract his thoughts.

"Oh, yes! I almost forgot another adventure," she added, after she had declared her account complete. "I was about to enter a department store—one of those that advertise itself as the headquarters of Santa Claus, but forbids an admission of children who are unaccompanied by adults. A little group of forlorn children stood just outside. Their adult relatives were probably hard at work somewhere, and the children had been turned back at the door."

"No, we can't go in," explained one of the older ones in an eager, insistent, smaller boy, presumably his brother.

"But I want to see him. I do want to," sobbed the child. "Aw see the nice things in the window, Jimmie, and never mind about Santa Claus. They won't let us in. You got to have old people with you. And if we tried it by ourselves maybe Santa'd know it and he wouldn't like it, Jimmie. So let's just look at these things here—they're awful nice."

And poor little Jimmie, turned towards the window. I felt so sorry for them all! And I know you will think it quite ridiculous of me, but I just invited the whole ragged lot of them to come in with me. I wish you could have seen their happy faces, father. And then, in case Santa should not reach their houses with toys, I bought a couple of little things for each of them. They were so happy. It seems to me as if the poor must feel their poverty more during the Christmas season than at any other time. How I wish—"

"That reminds me, Ruth, of something I did today. I know you will approve of it. I noticed in this morning's paper an appeal from the charity clerk of this city. He stated that there had been so many appeals for help filed that the funds for this purpose will not permit the usual amount of provisions going to each applicant and he asked charitably inclined persons to relieve conditions by assuming some of the burden. I phoned that I would take care of half a dozen families and he gave me the names and addresses of some."

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"We'll buy the things tomorrow, father. And as I want to see these people myself, and as this is a strange city to me, you will come with me to see them, too, won't you?" It will do you good to get something to think of that?"

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three children and a sick husband. Mr. O'Toole's door was opposite to that of the Cassidy's. Ruth rapped at the open door. "Come in," said Mrs. Cassidy, taking her hands from the wash tub and drying them on her apron. One of the children was crying and a fretful voice was heard in a bedroom beyond.

Ruth explained her errand. "Well, it's glad I am and grateful to you, Miss. It's for something to eat that Bennie's crying now. There's a bit of bread and milk here for the children, but they must wait until I get this washing done. I would have been through before now, but there is a man sick across the hallway—"

"Oh, yes," interposed Ruth. "And after I have brought him his breakfast and basket of things, will you let me help to get the children's supper and to make a cup of tea? I can make a little broth for Mr. Cassidy."

"Well—I—I don't like you to be doing all that with the pretty clothes on you, but I'll be a great help to me, to be sure, and the children are hungry—but as for Martin O'Toole, he'll need nothing more here. It's dying he is and the priest is with him now. I left the washing to stay with him until a short man ago. I sent Maggie for the priest, but he wasn't out for another sick call and 'twas one of the missionaries that come—there's a mission at St. Paul's, you know—and my husband says to me, 'When the priest comes let him come to me, too.' 'Tis nearing Christmas and I must be receiving.' And although I was a kind of afraid when I saw it was a strange priest, still I knew by the look of his face that he wouldn't mind, nor he didn't. He will come in to see Tom before he goes back, and so I wanted to get the tubs out of the way—"

"Well, I am sorry about Mr. O'Toole," said Ruth, "but I am sure it will be all right to leave his portion here. You can make use of it. And now let me get the children's supper."

"You won't mind waiting a few moments, will you, father?" inquired Ruth anxiously. She hoped that they could get out before the priest would leave Mr. O'Toole, for she did not want their afternoon spoiled by an encounter with a Catholic priest. It would upset her father and embitter him again.

"No, no. I won't mind waiting," and he turned to watch the older boy who was trying to make a sled from the boards of an old box. "But his mind was not on what the boy was doing. It was busy with other thoughts—thoughts of the close relationship that seemed to exist between a priest and his people; of the spirit that prompted this man, a stranger in the city, to respond to a call meant for an absent pastor. He was under no obligation to do it. What could he gain by it? And the Catholics, with all reverence, yet with all assurance, seemed to expect this service. It was strange. There must be something more to it than he, Richard Stanbrook, could understand. Robert had apparently understood."

"I wonder," reflected Stanbrook. "If Robert remained a Catholic. But I'll never know. I—I think I would be disappointed in him now to hear that he gave it up. I don't know just why, but I hope he didn't give it up. I wonder what these years have meant for him!"

And yet the old feeling was still so strong within him that he sat very rigid, refusing to turn in his chair when he heard a light step at the door and heard Mrs. Cassidy say: "Excuse me, Father, for not meeting you at the door, I didn't hear you coming. Tom's room is right there beside you and I'll see you after you're through with him."

No word was spoken by the priest, who bowed in response to the direction and went into the bedroom. There was a low murmur of voices from the room and Ruth felt relieved that neither she nor her father had been obliged to meet him.

They would go now before he left the bedroom. But the priest returned sooner than she had expected. Ruth had scarcely finished her self-imposed task when she heard him coming towards the door. She did not turn. Mrs. Cassidy would draw her into the conversation.

"Good-by, Mrs. Cassidy. One of the priests will be over tomorrow." At the first word Richard Stanbrook leaped to his feet and faced the priest. Ruth clutched the edge of the table and stared at the tall figure with her brother's voice. The priest looked from one to the other of the startled faces in the room. Ruth was the first to recover.

"Robert! Robert!" she cried, reaching out her arms to him. "Oh, Robert, I'm so glad! I can hardly believe it is true!"

"My boy!" he whispered brokenly. "At last! I was afraid that you had died—!" And he brushed back the hair from his forehead with a swift, energetic movement as if he were trying to banish the nightmare of remorse that had haunted him through the years.

And then he remembered what had brought his son there. His son was a Catholic priest—a missionary priest! His frames suddenly stiffened but only for a moment. It was force of habit making a last protest

against the changed order of things. The old antipathy towards Catholic and the Catholic religion had disappeared.

The son realized what anguish his father must have endured before his tenacious grip on the old convictions had been loosened, and the priest knew that only the grace of God had given this soul the strength to surrender.

With his hands on the priest's shoulders, Richard Stanbrook said with simple dignity: "I was wrong, Robert. You are right. I see it now. I think I have known it for a long while, but I would not admit it—not even to myself. And I have missed you, my boy."

"That's all right, father. Don't think that I didn't miss you and Ruth, too. But I decided upon prayer—instead of letters. They only widened the breach. I was discouraged at times, but I kept right on. In fact, I finished a novena today that I made for that intention. I asked the Christ-Child to bring a true reconciliation. That means but one thing."

"I—I want to tell you something," said Ruth, hesitatingly, and she looked apologetically at her father. "I went into a Catholic church yesterday and again today—and I—"

"So did I, Ruth," said her father, quietly. "We won't be afraid to tell each other when we go again."

Much of the conversation had been in low tones, so that Mrs. Cassidy only half understood the scene; and the Cassidy children were too busy eating to care that a family was being reunited back of them.

"God be with them and give them a happy Christmas!" fervently exclaimed Mrs. Cassidy as she closed the door after them.

And the three who had come on errands of mercy went down the rickety stairs together, with the joy of Christmas singing in their hearts.

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