

"I don't care! I just wish they'd expel me too, and that we could go to some other school together."

"Don't wish that. You wouldn't be very glad when it happened."

Florence knew her friend was only saying those things to be loyal.

"Any other Sister but ours would have hushed up the matter and punished it in her own class room."

"You're very good to say those things, but there's no excuse for me. It's my fault and I must suffer the consequences."

"Do you know what? I'm going down to Mother Superior's office and beg for you myself! You're not as black as Sister Innocentia paints you."

Elizabeth sprang up, but Florence detained her.

"It's no use, Betty, I tell you, she won't listen. It's no use!"

"Let go! She doesn't know what we girls know—how you gave that poor man all your pocket money, and did without candy for a month, and giving his wife one of your coats, and—"

"For Heaven's sake, Betty, don't tell her that! I'd be mortified to death—"

The door suddenly opened, and Sister Innocentia, terror of wrong doers, stood there.

"Elizabeth, who gave you leave to come here? Anyone?"

"No Sister," blushing.

"Go down to the study-room, and have ready before supper, 300 lines of Caesar's Commentaries, translated!"

"Sister, I—," began Elizabeth.

"Not a word! At once!"

When Elizabeth was gone, the nun inspected the packed trunk, and finding it satisfactory, drew a report-card out of her sleeve, and handed it to Florence.

"You have at least one consolation," she said. "Your average for daily work and exam's is 98."

Florence received the card in silence. "That won't make Granny feel any better," was her inward comment.

"It surely is too bad," continued the Sister. Mother Superior would rather have kept you with such excellent scholarship."

"Then why doesn't she? I would try so hard!"

"It is too late. You've had your chance, and you threw it away. She cannot go back on her word. It would be bad policy in its effect on the other students."

Florence turned away. Bitter tears were again bubbling up to her eyes, from the sores of sore hearts.

Sister Innocentia was stern, but her heart was not of stone, and she yearned to make some reparation for the hurt she had given her pupil, some mortification to wipe out any possible stain to her austere soul, that might have accrued from her unbounded anger of the afternoon. She held out her hand to the girl.

"Florence," she said kindly, "you are not angry at me? Come, say good-bye. I may not have the chance again, as I will be in class tomorrow morning when you leave."

The grief-stricken girl turned, the tears streaming down her face, and unhesitatingly put her hand in that of the nun. She never harbored a grudge. Unable to repress herself, she exclaimed:

"Oh, why did you tell Mother Superior?"

"Because, my dear girl, it was my duty. Would you have me neglect my duty to gain popularity with the girls?"

"Duly! Always, Sister Innocentia had been a stickler for duty, thought Florence, and her sticking had brought her, Florence, to this pass. Yet somewhere in the nooks and crannies of her brain, a small voice was repeating: "Mea culpa! Mea culpa!" and it was unnameable.

"Good-bye," said the nun.

"Goodbye," scarcely articulated Florence and the Sister went her way.

It was night, and one by one the convent lights went out, until the entire edifice, with its cluster of additions and outbuildings, stood, a dark pile on the hill, silhouetted against the starlit sky. Only in the chapel, a tiny pulse of throbbing flame hung suspended in midair, outlining a pale circle of light on the arched ceiling of the sanctuary, and throwing, through its ruby glass a faint red glow on the white and gold tabernacle, where Love's Captive dwelt, silent and alone.

Up in the fourth division dormitory, where rows of little white beds held the sleeping forms of some 40 or 50 girls, it was very dark and very silent, except for the soft breathing of the two-score and ten sleepers. Yet, one pillow held a restless head, and two brown eyes were wet with much weeping, and sleep refused to press down, with kindly force, the red, swollen lids.

Florence tossed from side to side, while the hours passed with slow, leaden feet, forewarned by endless repetition of her bitter thoughts, which refused to be banished. But suddenly she sat bolt upright and sniffed the air. Surely there was in it a suspicious, acrid odor! Climbing softly out of bed, she crossed the length of the dormitory, gliding like a shadow in her bare feet and gown, and opened the door at the farther end. Even as she did, an overpowering wall of smoke burst upon her, and in one swift glance, she observed down at the end of the corridor where the stairs were, a dull, red, flickering glare, coming from below. Quickly she closed the door again upon the stifling fumes, and going to the Sister Guardian's bed, woke her

and explained the situation in a few words.

"Dress quickly, and then whisper to each girl to do the same. Don't alarm them," said the nun.

When all the girls were roused, they were marched in orderly file to the window, which Sister Guardian threw up, and without the least panic, they climbed out and down the fire escape.

But Florence was thinking of the others. Slipping out unnoticed, she crossed the corridor, and pounded on every door and gave their occupants warning, but seeing that the glare was every moment growing brighter, a quicker method must be used.

Flying down the stairs, which were still safe, she pressed each hall bell as she passed, and then ran to the porter's room, grasped the bell rope, and pulled with all her might.

Soon the whole place was buzzing with voices and the noise of running feet, and the roar and crackle of the flames could be heard above all. For full ten minutes Florence rang the convent bell, and then, feeling sure everyone was awake by that time, she fled outside to safety herself.

It was a beautiful spring night, and not cold in the least. Already someone had phoned to the fire department in the nearby city, for on the still night air could be heard the distant sound of sirens and firebells. But the convent stood some distance out from the city limits, and it would take them fifteen or twenty minutes, at top most speed, to reach there.

The girls and nuns stood huddled in small groups, watching their beloved home being consumed before their very eyes. In the least. Already someone had phoned to the fire department in the nearby city, for on the still night air could be heard the distant sound of sirens and firebells. But the convent stood some distance out from the city limits, and it would take them fifteen or twenty minutes, at top most speed, to reach there.

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Florence stood watching in one of these groups, her arm closely linked in that of her chum, Elizabeth, who held on to her as if she feared some danger to her beloved friend. Suddenly Elizabeth's finger pointed upward.

"Look! The chapel!" she cried.

Florence looked, and indeed, the beautiful stained glass windows were being lighted up by the dreadful flames within.

"Oh, Betty, the Blessed Sacrament!" she said excitedly. "Our Lord mustn't burn up! Where's Father Hayes?"

Saying which, she broke away from her friend, and sped between the buildings, across the moonlit campus, to the little cottage where dwelt the blessed chaplain. To her intense disappointment, she was told that he was out on a sick call, so she ran back, with but one purpose.

"Our Lord must not be left alone!"

Avoiding the side where the huddled groups stood, she darted into a dark door-way, which led into the basement of the chapel. Feeling along the wall, she grasped the switch and turned it. Luckily the lights burned, and it was a matter of but a moment to reach the small stone room beneath the sanctuary, where the Mass wine was kept. From thence, a flight of rock steps led up to the sacristy. These she mounted, and entering the sacristy, looked hastily about. There on the wall hung an emergency tank of chemicals. This she took down, and turning on the valve, sprayed the sanctuary floor, the altar steps, even the altar itself, which were all of wood.

However, this was soon exhausted, and already the flames were devouring the pews, and creeping steadily toward the railing.

She did not know that in case of such dire extremity she might have taken the Blessed Sacrament in her own hands and carried it to a place of safety. She had always been the taught extreme veneration for the Eucharist, and dared not touch it with her own unworthy hands. So there remained only one other thing to do, and that was, to keep the flames away until help came.

Abandoning the empty tank, she hunted about for something in which to put water. Rummaging in the sacristy lockers, where the vestments, altar vases, and flowers were kept, she discovered a glass pitcher. This she filled at the hydrant in the little room beyond, and drenched everything in the vicinity of the altar. Back and forth she sped, while the heat grew fiercer every moment. At last she was obliged to drench herself, to keep from being blistered. The smoke was becoming so dense, she breathed with difficulty. Wiping her handkerchief, she tied it beneath her eyes, with the aid of her hair ribbon, and this gave her some relief.

Every time the flames sought to encroach upon the sanctuary's holy ground, she dashed them back, momentarily only, for the fierce heat soon dried everything in sight, and the hungry tongues were soon lapping at their prey again. She was fast becoming exhausted by her strenuous task, and the steam and heat and smoke were making her deathly sick. Yet she stumbled on and on, back and forth, although she was waging a losing battle.

Suddenly, on one of her trips back for more water, she found the flames had burst out in the little room, cutting her off from the hydrant and her only means of escape, and were fast approaching the sacristy from both sides. Then there was nothing more to do. She might make a dash for it, and yet reach the stone steps, but as she stepped forward, and measured her chances, something seemed to draw her back. Wistfully she looked back at the tabernacle with its imprisoned Captive.

"Can I bear to leave Him?" she asked herself. The fire-bells and sirens were very close now. Surely they would arrive in another moment.

Dragging forward a high stool, which the Sisters used in trimming

the altars, she placed it before the tabernacle, first shutting the heavy oak door of the sacristy to keep the flames away a little longer. That fifteen-minute battle seemed like years to her. Mounting the stool, she knelt, moving her lips in frantic prayer that help might come. Meanwhile the flames crept nearer and nearer, until they were licking the lower altar step, albeit the taste of the chemicals was not much to their liking. A great weakness suddenly overcame her, and she laid her head on the altar, and stretched one arm on either side of the tabernacle.

"Dear Jesus," she whispered, "I'm not very good, but before the flames devour Thee, they will have to take me!"

Black circles and little white lights began to dance bewilderingly before her eyes, and a great sound as of rushing waters was in her ears. Thinking her end at hand, she made an act of contrition aloud and then the black waves closed over her head, and she lay silent and motionless.

The sound of rushing waters that Florence thought she heard was not a myth, for in reality the firemen had arrived, and were pouring streams of water through the broken and blackened windows.

The nuns were marshalling their charges into line, preparatory to marching to a place of safety. But suddenly a voice cried out:

"Florence! Where's Florence Murray?"

It was Elizabeth, who had waited in vain for her friend's return. Search was made, but she was nowhere to be found. Headless of the nun's protests, she ran back and sought among the crowd of curious on-lookers for the missing girl, but she was not there. Accosting the fire-chief, she begged him to search within the burning building for her friend.

"I'm sure you will find her there!" she said.

"Whereabouts?" he questioned.

"Look in the chapel."

Without hesitation the chief ordered a ladder raised to one of the charred, gaping windows, now bereft of its beautiful legend in stained glass, and himself ascended. At the same time, Father Hayes was seen hastening to the scene, having just arrived. To him Elizabeth ran, and cried:

"Oh, Father, Florence Murray is missing! She was afraid the Blessed Sacrament would burn up, and ran to call you. But she hasn't returned, and we cannot find her."

Without a word, the priest followed the chief up the ladder, and climbed through the window. Already the flames were under control, and the chapel was a mass of steam and smoke and dying embers.

By the fatal light of the last flames in their death struggle, they found her. All about her was a black, smoking ruin, but the high altar was intact. Tenderly the chief lifted her in his arms, and picking his way carefully amid the charred ruins, climbed out, and descended the ladder.

Meanwhile, Father Hayes was taking out the Blessed Sacrament, with tears in his eyes, and his lips moving in prayer—of thanksgiving for her rescue, and anxiety for her well being.

Two weeks she lay in the infirmary, suffering from the effects of her experience, while nuns and girls alike stormed Heaven for her recovery. Her name was on every tongue, and the girls emptied their purses, and vied with each other in sending their offerings—small though they were—of flowers and candy and fruit and books.

Mother Francis stood over her when she regained consciousness, wept, and stroked her bandaged hand.

"Mother, have I atoned for my blasphemy?" she asked weakly.

"Surely, surely Our Lord accepted it as such, my brave girl!"

Sister Innocentia was one of her most devoted visitors, and her tender anxiety for her late refractory pupil's welfare completely won Florence's heart. But the real story did not come out until, in exploring the ruins, they found the empty chemical tank on the sanctuary floor and the cracked glass pitcher on the altar steps. Being questioned, Florence said but little: "I did what I could to save Him,"—but the mute evidence spoke volumes.

At last, one balmy afternoon in early May, Sister Innocentia was seen in close conference with the Sister Infirmary. Soon she approached the girl, who had been watching her a little anxiously.

"Sister thinks you are pretty well mended," she said smiling, "so you may come down and unpack your trunk."

"Sister! Am I to remain?"

"Such are Mother Superior's orders."

Florence leaped up with some of her old impetuosity, grabbed Sister Innocentia about the waist and gave her a resounding kiss.

"Sister, I'm so happy, I could fly!"

Together they proceeded down to their class-room, where upon entering, the girls rose literally "as one man" and cheered.

But from that day, Florence was a changed girl. Never again did she require the smallest word of correction from her superiors.

Writing home to her grandmother of the disastrous fire, she told of the almost total destruction of the chapel, in consequence of which, several days later, Mother Frances found in her mail a check for \$2,000 toward the rebuilding of the chapel. The news of this donation spread,

with the result that numbers of others wrote home, and checks soon began coming in, helping materially toward the re-building of the destroyed parts.

Two years later, Florence graduated with the highest honors, and after the summer vacation was occupied Belgium, of which you are the honored and trusted pastor. For this reason it is to you the Governor-General and my Government also commissioned me to come and to announce that when we evacuate your soil we wish to hand over to you unasked and of our own free will the political prisoners serving their time either in Belgium or in Germany, as well as those who have been deported.—Catholic Transcript.

A TRIBUTE FROM THE GERMANS

We imagine that, if he sees fit to preserve them all for future reference, the Cardinal Primate of Belgium will be obliged to set apart rather generous archives for the written tributes of esteem and appreciation of which, during the past few years, he has been the recipient. Those of German origin, would not it be safe to say, need any great space, yet it is interesting to note that they would not be altogether among the missing. In "Cardinal Mercier's Own Story," in which the author sets down his "experiences in their most tense and vivid reality," we find one document which gives evidence of the respect which the Belgian churchman commanded even from his political enemies. It is a note handed to the Cardinal on October 17, 1918, by Baron von der Lancken, in the name of the Governor-General and the Berlin Government, and contains the following assurance: "You are in our estimation the incarnation of the best of Belgium, of which you are the honored and trusted pastor. For this reason it is to you the Governor-General and my Government also commissioned me to come and to announce that when we evacuate your soil we wish to hand over to you unasked and of our own free will the political prisoners serving their time either in Belgium or in Germany, as well as those who have been deported.—Catholic Transcript.

On the subject of devotion to the Sacred Heart Cardinal Manning wrote:

"If you love the Blessed Sacrament the Blessed Sacrament by its own light will teach you to know and love the Sacred Heart; and the Sacred Heart will open itself, and will teach us to know its own character. We shall know all its love—the love which is from eternity to eternity; the love ineffable, Divine fervour, of unrepeatable human tenderness; the Love that died for us. We shall know, too, the commandment of that Love when He was about to die for us. And we shall learn not only His love, but also His patience; for He abides in the midst of us. Sinners as we are—He still dwells in the midst of us in His humility, veiled, out of sight, elated, and disbelieved, passed without a sign of recognition by the multitudes that go by Him. There He is, in His generosity, giving away grace after grace. We become bankrupt through our own fault and sin; we go back to Him; He restores to us the grace that we have lost; more than this, He pours down upon us even more grace than we have wasted; for His generosity is inexhaustible. He does not 'break the bruised reed' nor 'quench the smoking flax.' He has waited for you from childhood and in your youth and in your manhood; in all your wanderings He has been waiting for you still, trying to draw you toward Him, that some day, at last, you may come to true repentance, and that some day before you die you may be His disciple. And in all this I see what I may call His unobtrusiveness. Friends suspect one another, they form rash judgments of one another, they are always harboring hard thoughts of each other; they draw to themselves pictures and characters of other men, and seldom in their favor. How does the Sacred Heart deal with us? He knows everything that is in us, and yet

He speaks to us with the same unchangeable love and the same unalterable patience as if we were within altogether what we show ourselves without. What a perfect love, then, is this Divine and human love of our Master!

"But if we love Him, we must bear fruits that are like Him. 'The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace.' (Gal. v. 22) These are the fruits of the Sacred Heart. The Heart He bears to us we must bear to our neighbors. Our whole mind must be to our neighbor what His mind is to us. And to this we must add a love of the cross, for that was the crowning perfection of the Sacred Heart. It is not easy to love contradictions, slights, sorrows, anxieties, failures, vexations. We who murmur and repine and strive and fret all the day long, if anything goes wrong, call ourselves disciples of the Sacred Heart, and yet we have not as much as the will to bear the cross, much less to love it. We must learn to be forgiving, to be patient, to be severe against the least sin, not in others—we must bear with them in charity, hoping for their salvation—but in ourselves. Be as sharp as you will with yourselves, and do not bear with the least in your own temper; give no impunity to yourselves or to your own faults. These are the tokens of the true disciples of the Sacred Heart."—Catholic Bulletin.

TAUGHT BY THE SACRED HEART

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