

HER IRISH HERITAGE

BY ANNIE M. P. SMITHSON

AUTHOR OF "BY STRANGE PATHS"

CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED

"Oh, Clare! you innocent baby," she said, "is that all you know about your father's country? To believe that the English would act towards Ireland with justice and mercy! Oh! it's too much!" and she laughed again.

Clare felt offended and hurt. "Well! how would they act then?" she asked stiffly.

"They would doubtless act as they have always acted since they first set foot on our shores over seven hundred years ago," answered the other, her laughter gone and her face suddenly pale with anger; "they would act with treachery and deceit, with brutality and cruelty, and would justify it all on the stupid plea of doing good to Ireland."

"Well, really, if that's what you think about England," began Clare—but Mary, with one of those swift changes of manner which was one of her greatest charms, slipped her arm within Clare's and laughed away her resentment.

"Come! we mustn't quarrel!" she said, "and after all you are hardly half English! Oh! how thankful you should be for that! Come and see the Redemptorist Church—if that won't convert you nothing will!"

And so together they wended their way to Mount St. Alphonsus—surely one of the most beautiful churches in this land where Faith has built so many lovely dwelling places for the "Prisoner of Love." On Clare it had a most extraordinary effect—it impressed her as no other of the Catholic Churches which she had visited had ever done. A sense of peace and rest fell upon her, and as she knelt with Mary before the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, she found herself almost involuntarily breathing her first prayer. It was more a thought—a wish—than a prayer.

"Oh! Mother!" she said—"if you are indeed our Mother—and if you have any power in Heaven—show it to me now—and help me!" Such as it was, surely it went straight to our dear Mother's heart. Mary was praying too—but very differently. Hers was the prayer of the Catholic who *knows* and *believes*, but who had wandered from the straight path which was set before her feet. And her prayer over and over again was only the old familiar "Oh! Mother of Perpetual Succour, pray for me; pray for me! Oh, Mary conceived without sin, pray for me—a sinner!"

Later that same evening the two friends sat at supper in a little four-roomed ivy-covered cottage. There was a wood opposite and a field with great grey boulders scattered over it, behind them. Not a sound was to be heard but the birds singing their evening song in the trees and the persistent coo-coo of innumerable wood pigeons. It seemed very strange and lonely that first evening to those two—so accustomed to their lives to the stir and bustle of city life. But although Clare was lonely she was not unhappy—rather the opposite indeed—for she felt the most intense interest in all her surroundings. The drive of four miles from the station on the shaky old sidecar, the handsome, dark-eyed driver, who had such a twinkle in his eye, and seemed to find life such a good joke—the fat, little servant girl who had shaken hands so cordially with them on their arrival! All had amused and interested Clare—all were picturesque and new to her. But with Mary it was otherwise. She had never liked the country—its beauty had never appealed to her in any shape or form, and to her the people were stupid and uninteresting—the scenery lonely and weird. The first night she hardly slept at all, and often looked enviously at Clare, sleeping so peacefully in the other bed—her tranquil breathing barely heard even in the stillness of the night. Poor Mary turned her face to the wall and great tears forced their way from her tired eyes as she thought again and again, "Oh! how can I bear it! How can I bear it!"

The days passed, and both became more used to their new life. Mary gradually found her work more and more absorbing, and it took up so much of her time that she had but little left for repining, or "grousing" as she herself would have said in the old days.

Clare should have been the lonelier of the two for she had not much to do except to train the little maid-servant and to see that the house was kept neat and clean, and the meals made as tasty and appetizing as possible for Mary, who sometimes would come in after cycling many miles in wind and wet—for it seemed to be always wet in Co. Clare, summer and winter—too tired almost to eat at all. But Clare did not feel the loneliness, she busied herself in a hundred ways and sewed and read, and undertook nearly all their correspondence, for somehow Mary did not care to write to any of her friends—with the exception of Angel who got her regular weekly letter no matter how pressed for time Mary might be. And Clare, too, was not forgetful of the treasure for which she was searching.

Into the cabins and homes around her she went, welcomed everywhere with the natural politeness of a people who numbered princes and kings for their ancestors. In nearly every house was the old grandmother telling her beads by the fireside, and many a story Clare heard from them of "the bad times," and many a lesson in resignation and patience she learnt by their armchairs. "Himself" was dead, the sons and daughters perhaps in "Amerikay," all save this one daughter or son under whose roof the old woman was spending the evening of her days. Ah! yes, she was lonely sometimes, but sure welcome be the Will of God!

"Welcome be the Will of God!" How often and how often Clare heard that sentence amongst the poor peasantry around her. And again "God is good! Yes, the winter had been hard sure enough, and the cows had died on them, and the young calf too, and herself was ailing this long time, and the children young and troublesome, but sure God is good, and maybe she would soon be well again. And so on—always the same expressions of love and trust in God's mercy, and the same perfect faith that never doubted or wavered for a moment, that never—no matter how heavy the cross, how staggering the blow—wavered in allegiance, or even questioned His right to do as He pleased with His Own.

"Oh! what faith! What faith!" Clare would say, as she walked home from some house of sorrow or trouble. "Oh! what would I not give to be able to say with these poor people—'Welcome be the Will of God!'"

Another thing that struck Clare very forcibly was the utter contrast spiritually, mentally and morally between the Irish peasant and the corresponding class of English laborer. She remembered a short time she had spent on a farm in England, and had very vivid recollections of some of the farm hands whom she had met. Stupid, heavy and dull, with apparently no ideals or aims, no aspirations beyond meat and beer. Sunday meant a day in bed till dinner time, and then a heavy dinner, and more sleeping, to be followed by more drink. Clare, at that time had regarded them as very little above the farm animals around them, and indeed if truth were told she infinitely preferred the animals.

She contrasted these now with the clean souled, spiritual people of her present home. She thought of the many miles they walked winter and summer to the little village chapel for early Mass, of the family Rosary at night, of the intellectual, bright-eyed young men who would answer all her remarks or questions, so civilly, and yet so intelligently, with often a spark of humor showing, too. And she thought of the young girls—those modest, low-toned Catholic girls of Ireland, with the lovely grey eyes and the soft dusky hair—and then she remembered suddenly some of the Cockney "Arriets, flaunting, loud-voiced, loudly dressed beings, disgracing the sacred name of woman. "Shamus is right," she murmured with a sigh, "they are a different people—a different race."

And then she turned her thought to Mary Carmichael, and watched how the Catholic Faith slowly but surely was laying a healing hand on her wounded heart. She noticed Mary at her prayers, at her daily work—so painstaking, so conscientious, so kind—above all at Mass and Holy Communion. And she saw daily the hardness die out of her face and eyes, and a gentler look take its place, a more tender tone in her voice. And thus she knew that Mary Carmichael also was saying in her own way, "Welcome be the Will of God."

And so the summer months of June and July passed quietly by, and then came August and the War—and Clare was immediately all excitement and full of patriotic fervor, and talked about the Empire, and how "We"—in capital letters of course—would be in Berlin by Xmas. And Mary Carmichael was silent, but she smiled in a queer fashion now and then at Clare's remarks.

After another few months Mary even felt a little sorry for her friend when day after day the news from the British standpoint became worse and worse, and alas! the marching on Berlin became but a dream—and the shadow of a dream!

"How can you take things so easily, Mary?" said Clare, almost angrily one evening, throwing aside the newspaper in which she had been engrossed. They did not get the newspaper until mid-day and Clare was always in a state of anxiety until she had mastered its contents.

"Why what do you want me to do?" asked Mary.

"Well! I know what I should do if I were a trained nurse," replied Clare, "I should volunteer for the front without a moment's delay."

"Very likely," said Mary, quietly, "but you see, Clare, I am not you, and you are not me! I have no English blood in my veins—some Scotch is mixed with the Irish certainly, but that," with a little laugh—"is a very decent mixture!"

But Clare wouldn't smile.

"I don't know how you can joke about serious things, Mary," she said, rather stiffly, "and at a time like this when the life of every one of our gallant soldiers is so val-

able, and when the very Empire itself is at stake—"

"Oh! spare me!—please!" implored Mary, half vexed, half laughing, "if there are three words at the present moment of which I am heartily sick and tired—those three words are—the British Empire!"

Clare said no more, but she felt both hurt and offended. It was quite impossible for her to understand Mary's feelings at the time. Entirely ignorant of even the main facts relating to English rule in Ireland—with the exception of a few outlines which she had picked up from her cousin Shamus and Anthony Farrell, and which she had honestly regarded as being certainly exaggerated—she could not view the war from an Irish standpoint, and although Mary never expressed any pro-German sympathies, or even made a single anti-British remark, still Clare felt—her instinct told her—that Mary's feelings were more anti-British than merely neutral.

But Mary was really more or less indifferent to the trend of events. The war had come at a time when she was only beginning to regain her normal state once more and to take a healthy interest in her work and surroundings. And so important to ourselves is that strange ego of ours that it takes precedence in our eyes before all the principalities and kingdoms of the world. So Mary, half numbened yet, her feelings still dulled, really took but little interest in the Great War, and like most people, as the weeks went on into months, and the months, became a year, she got so used to it that she almost ceased to think of it.

Not so Clare—her interest and anxiety only became greater as time went on, and especially did she dilate on the terrible atrocities of the "Huns."

Mary generally let her run on without contradiction, but one evening when she was holding forth more than usual about the poor Belgian babies left to go through life without hands, etc., she saw Mary smiling broadly, and gazed at her in disgust and horror.

"Mary!" she cried "you are laughing!—at such atrocities!"

Mary continued to smile, as she replied, "I am smiling at you Clare—not at the English version of German horrors. You are not a trained nurse, I know, but surely even you know that when a hand or an arm is severed from the body, and no surgical treatment applied, that the person will bleed to death in a very short time."

Clare said nothing, but sat quite silent, looking at Mary in half stupid surprise—it was evident that she had not thought of this fact before.

So time went on, and another spring and summer passed by and Xmas 1915 arrived. That Xmas they spent in the old "City of the Broken Treaty," and from a spiritual point of view it was a very memorable one for both.

They attended first Mass in the darkness of Christmas morning at the Redemptorist Church, and when Clare rose from her knees she knew that for her all doubts and strivings were over—and what that doubting time had been only God and herself could tell. But all was over now—her path showed clear before her and Clare was not one to turn her back on the light when it had been given to her—she would never take her hand from the plough once her work was shown to her. She had hesitated for long—too long, she thought now—but God in His wonderful mercy had flashed His light upon her in the darkness of this Christmas dawn—and like a child running to its mother—she turned at last straight to the arms of her Mother the Church.

She told Mary of her resolution as they sat together that evening, and Mary's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Oh! Clare, dear," she said, "I am so glad!—so thankful!" Her own time of "storm and stress," followed by the peace which passeth understanding, came back to Mary as she spoke, and she broke off with a little sob—but, as Clare was quick to see, there was no bitterness or sorrow in her tears.

"You seemed so happy to me this morning, Mary," she said. "I could not help noticing your face as you returned from the Altar, and you looked happy as well as peaceful."

"And you know, Mary, it is not often lately that you have looked really happy."

"I know dear," said the other, "I have not felt either very happy or very unhappy, or very anything for a long time! I haven't been feeling at all. But this morning—Oh! Clare, the dear little infant Jesus, when He came to my heart brought me some real joy and happiness for my Christmas gift; and I so unworthy—oh, so unworthy!"

"Unworthy! You!" interposed Clare. "Oh, Mary, don't! If you only knew what your example, your silent endurance, your cheerful patience—"

"Oh, stop! stop!" cried the other, clapping her hands over her ears, half laughing and half crying—"don't make me vain for goodness' sake!"

Then putting her arms round Clare she said softly—

"There is someone else, too, who will be glad of your news, poor Anthony! Don't you think he has been very patient Clare?"

"Yes—I think so!" said Clare, with a tender little smile. "But

Mary, he always knew that I would some day come into my Irish Heritage."

TO BE CONTINUED

FATHER PAT

"I wish yer rivenence 'ud spake to my little boy. Me heart's broke with him, so it is, an' I can't get any good of him at all."

"What has he been doing?"

"Och, I declare I'm ashamed to tell ye, sir, but he's at it, an' he doesn't mind me a bit, though I do be tellin' him the earth 'll open some day an' swallow him up for his impudence."

"Dear, dear, this is a sad case. Where is the little rogue?" And Father Shehan swung himself off his big bony horse, and passing the bride over a neighboring post, stood looking at Widow Brophy in affected perplexity.

"I'd be loth to trouble yer rivenence, but if ye'd step as far as the lane beyant," jerking her thumb over her shoulder, "ye'd see him at it."

She led the way, an odd and little squat figure of a woman, the frill of her white cap flopping in the breeze, and her bare feet padding sturdily along the muddy road. Father Shehan followed her, smiling to himself, and presently they came in sight of the delinquent. A brown-faced, white-headed, bare-legged boy, standing perfectly still opposite the green bank to the right of the lane. A little cross made of two peeled sticks tied together was stuck upright in the moss, in front of which stood a broken jam pot, while a tattered prayer book lay open before him. A large newspaper with a hole in the middle, through which he had passed his curly head, supplemented his ordinary attire; a rope was tied round his waist, and a ragged ribbon hung from his arm. Behind him, with little brown paws demurely folded, and lips rapidly moving, were some half dozen smaller urchins, while one, with newspaper decorations somewhat similar to young Brophy's, knelt in front.

They were all as orderly and quiet as possible, and Father Shehan was at first somewhat at a loss to discern the cause of Mrs. Brophy's indignation. But presently Pat turned gravely round, extended his arms, and broke the silence with a vigorous "Dominus vobiscum!"

"Et cum spir' tu tuo," went the urchin at his side in life-like imitation of his elders at the hill-side chapel.

The mystery was explained now; Pat was saying Mass!

"Did ye ever see the like o' that, Father?" went Mrs. Brophy in deeply scandalized tones; then making a sudden dart at her luckless offspring, she tore off her vestments and flung them to the winds, and with her bony hand well twisted into his ragged collar—the better to administer an occasional shake—she hauled him up for judgment.

"Gently, Mrs. Brophy, gently," said the priest. "Don't be frightened, my poor lad. I'm not going to scold you. That is a very curious game of yours—are you pretending to be a priest?"

"Aye, yer rivenence."

"Ah, ye young villain," began his mother, but Father Shehan checked her.

"Hush, now, hush, my good woman. Tell me, Pat, do you think it is right to make fun of holy things?"

"I wasn't makin' fun, sir," whimpered Pat, touched to the quick, "I was just thinkin' I raly was a priest, an' sayin' Mass as well as I could."

"Well, well, don't cry, that's a good boy. Maybe you really will be saying Mass some day. Who knows? But you must be a very good boy—and you must not think you are a priest yet. You will have to be ordained, you know, before you can say Mass. Now, run off and find some other game."

Pat grinned gratefully through his tears, wrenched himself from his mother's grasp, and surrounded by his ragged followers disappeared over the hedge.

"I wish we could make a priest of him," said Father Shehan as he retraced his steps, "he is a good lad."

"Why thin he is, yer rivenence, he is," agreed the mother with the delightful inconsistency of her kinder. "He is, indeed, very good. An' why wouldn't he be good? Sure I bait him well. Troth ye'd hear him bawlin' at the cross roads many a time. But is it him a priest? Ah now, that's the way ye do be goin' on; ye like to be makin' fun of us all, yer rivenence, so ye do. The likes of him a priest. Well now."

She burst out laughing very good-humoredly, for in spite of her assumption of severity, there was not, as she would have said herself, "a better-natured crathur" anywhere than Mrs. Brophy.

"Stranger things have come to pass," said Father Shehan. "But I fear there is not much hope in this case. To make him a priest you must give him an education, and to give him an education, you must find money. And as neither you nor I know where to look for that, it's a poor look out."

"Troth, it is, yer rivenence. God bless ye, ye always say somethin' pleasant to us anyway. Good evenin' yer rivenence, safe home."

Long after the priest was out of sight Mrs. Brophy stood at the door

with a pleasant smile on her face. Only for the education, which would cost money, on'y for that her Pat was fit to be a priest. Didn't his reverence say so? It was a great thought. Her little white-headed Pat, in spite of the tricks and "mischievousness" in which he indulged to the full as much as any other lad of his age, even he might one day stand before the altar, his hands have clasped the chalice, his voice called down the Redeemer from on high. Tears of rapture filled her eyes at the mere thought of a priest: A priest of God! To the simple faith of this good poor woman there was no greater height of blessedness and grandeur.

"Oh, mother, if I could on'y be a rale priest! Pat had sighed many a time. And she had bidden him "g'long out o' that an' not dar' say such a thing." But now it was a different matter. Only for the money Father Shehan had said the thing was possible. Only for the money! Just what she had not got. Ah, if a mother's heart's blood would have done as well!

But one never knows what strange things come to pass in this queer world! Father Shehan had distinctly said that he could not find the funds needful for Pat's education for the priesthood, the boy was enabled to follow his vocation.

Lo and behold! Father Shehan had a friend who lived in Liverpool, a very rich man, who was also very pious and charitable. Of this good gentleman the worthy priest suddenly bethought himself one day when Mrs. Brophy spoke of the intense wish which her boy still had, and the manner in which he was accustomed to "moither" her respecting it. To the rich Liverpool friend the poor Irish priest accordingly wrote, with the result that the former agreed to undertake the cost of Pat's education, merely stipulating that the lad was to be brought up at St. Edward's College, and to devote his services when ordained to the Liverpool diocese.

The rapture, the gratitude of both son and mother, cannot be described. The long separation which must ensue, the life of self-denial which lay before the one, of perpetual poverty to which the other was now doomed—for Pat was her only son, and she had formerly looked forward to the days when he would be able to help and work for her—all was accepted not only with resignation, but with joy. Was not Pat to be a priest?

The day after his departure Mrs. Brophy, donning her cloak and big bonnet, with its violet ribbons and neat border, forcing her feet, moreover, into the knitted stockings and stout boots, which regard for her bairns caused her to reserve chiefly for Sundays, Mrs. Brophy, I say went to call on Father Shehan and to make a request.

She wanted "a bades," a rosary which was to be kept till such time as Pat, endowed with full authority, would be able to bless it for her.

Father Shehan laughingly produced a large, brown, serviceable one, which the widow reverently kissed and then tucked away in her bosom.

"Now, whenever I feel a bit lonesome, I'll be havin' a look at this," she said, nodding confidentially to her pastor, "I'll take out me holy bades, an' I'll rattle them an' kiss them, and say to meself 'cheer up, Biddy Brophy, yer own little boy'll be blessin' them for ye some day, with the help o' God.'"

"Well done, Biddy! I hope you won't be often lonesome," said the priest with a smile, in which there was a good deal of compassion, for there were tears on her tanned cheeks though she spoke gaily. It was to God that this good, brave little woman had given her all—but it was her *all* nevertheless.

"Isn't it well for me?" said Biddy. "Bedad I do be thinkin' I'm dhramin' sometimes!"

And with her old-fashioned curtsy-bob the widow withdrew, but as she walked down the road the priest remarked that she held her apron to her face.

One day, a month or two afterwards, Father Shehan met Biddy on the road, and stopped to speak to her.

"Yer rivenence, you're the very man I wanted to see," she said. "D'ye know what I do be thinkin'?"

"Will I have to be callin' Pat Father, or yer rivenence, when he's a priest? Troth, that'll be a queer thing!"

"I think, Biddy, in this instance it won't be necessary to be so respectful. You may venture safely to call him by his name."

"Ah, but he'll be a rale priest, ye know, yer rivenence, as good a man as y'are yerself," cried the mother, a little jealous of her boy's dignity, which the last remark appeared to set at naught.

"Musha, it wouldn't sound right for me to be callin' him 'Pat! Pat, an' him a priest! I'll tell ye what—struck by a sudden thought—'yer rivenence. I'll call him Father Pat. That'll be it—Father Pat!"

"Yes, that will do very nicely, indeed," said the priest, composing his features to a becoming gravity, though there was something a bit comical as touching in the widow's sudden respect for the imp whose person but a short time before she had been wont to treat with scant ceremony. "At this moment, Mrs. Brophy—consulting his watch—it is probably recreation time at St. Edward's, and Father Pat is

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