

Published by permission of Burns, Oates & Washburn, London, England. THREE DAUGHTERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

BY MRS. INNES-BROWNE

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED

The pillows of three little beds were moist that night; for, no matter how much they tried, our little friends could not rest well. It might have been the storm which raged with such fury against the old walls of St. Benedict's that caused them to be so restless; or it might have been that their hearts were heavy. Be that as it may, they all three rose with swollen eyelids and aching heads. The train by which they were to travel from Paris to Dover, left at an early hour; so, in consequence, they were called much sooner than the rest of the children. The maid Louise regarded the young ladies now as her own property, and quickly assisted them to dress, deftly twisting the hair of Beatrice and Madge into a somewhat more fashionable and becoming style. She would have done the same for Marie, but that young lady absolutely refused to have her hair interfered with. "No, no!" she answered, "it will do very well as it is. I do not care to appear fashionable." The alteration in Madge's appearance was most striking. When once that refractory hair of hers was placed within bounds—and it was now in a simple Grecian knot—she looked quite pretty, so that Louise was well satisfied with her labor, and eyed Madge with many marks of approval. It was pouring with rain, the remains of last night's thunderstorm, as our young friends descended the next morning to the refectory, where some steaming cups of hot coffee with bread and biscuits awaited them. Mother Agatha was there, that thoughtful, gentle soul, about whom so much might have been written, and yet so little has been said. She was one of those good souls whom we never know the full value of until we lose them. This morning her eyes, like those of her children, looked a little heavy; perhaps the storm had kept her awake also. However, she spoke cheerfully as she tried to encourage the girls to take some breakfast, but found it a difficult task to persuade them to eat. This she had anticipated, so a nice basket of dainty provisions was packed and already in the charge of the maid, the luggage having all left the night before. The carriage would be there in half an hour; when Beatrice started suddenly, rose from the table, and rushed out of the room. Away ran the girl in her impetuous manner down the silent cloisters, towards that wing of the Abbey where were situated the apartments of Father Egbert. It had occasionally happened, for example, when any sudden death had occurred among the young ladies' parents or friends, that one of the children would be sent with a message to inform the priest before he said Mass of the sad event, and several times had Beatrice been that messenger; so now she sped along the long cloisters, pausing once only, uncertain which turn to take. Suddenly she turned the handle of a door which led into a courtyard, separating a little the priest's house from the rest of the convent. Headless of the rain, she ran swiftly across the wet flags to the small porch-door on the opposite side, which, fortunately for her, stood partly open. She crossed the passage, a little to the right of which was another door, and the girl knew it to be Father Egbert's study. Knocking gently, she fancied she heard him bid her enter; so turning the handle as quietly as possible, she walked timidly into the room. On a prie-dieu beneath a large crucifix at the farther end of the apartment knelt the figure of the old priest, his white head bowed in prayer, his face resting upon his hands. Beatrice's first impulse was to return and not disturb him; but the temptation to say only one farewell to the kind old man was too much for her, and she ventured timidly across the room on tiptoe; nor was she aware of her presence as she stood beside him, a pretty expression of guilty shyness on her fair face. A heavy sigh from the girl made the old man start, and rising suddenly, he confronted the little culprit. He knew full well that no one save the willful girl before him dare have come as she had done, yet for the life of him he could not scold her.

"Bertie, Bertie!" he said, trying to speak sternly, "what are you doing here?" With a pleading look she answered "Father, forgive me, but I could not leave without bidding you a last farewell, and—without your blessing." "You have it, child!" he answered, as she knelt, whilst he signed her forehead with the sign of the cross; "and my prayers to that Heaven may shield and protect you; and though you are so self-willed and daring, yet do I seem to feel and hope that in the future life of our little Bertie great things will be accomplished for God!" "Only through the prayers of others, never through any exertions on my part, shall I be able to do anything great or praiseworthy, Father; of that fact rest assured."

"Well, well," answered the old priest hastily, "we shall see. But where are the other two?" "Crying their hearts out, I fear, for our time is very short now."

"Poor children! Here, take these three crosses, they are very precious, being so solemnly blessed; give one each to Marie and Madge, and keep the other for yourself. And now, child, adieu! they will be searching for you everywhere, and I must go and say Mass. One word, Bertie—try and fulfil my hopes concerning you, and never do anything to displease the friends of your girlhood."

"With God's help I will not, Father," said Beatrice earnestly. "But do promise to come and see me some time?" "Should you be ill or in trouble, I will endeavor to do so; but I am getting old. As regards once more, child, and God bless you!" Then the old man turned abruptly round, and went the way to wait the carriage which was to take them to the refectory. Arriving there, she found them all in a state of curiosity about her, wondering what could have detained her.

"Father Egbert sent you these," said Beatrice, handing a cross to each of her companions, and then she told them of her stolen visit. The convent clocks being forward, there was still a little time to wait before the carriage arrived, so the maid wrapped cloaks about her young charges, for the rain continued to pour unceasingly. Many hurried messages were given to Mother Agatha, to be faithfully delivered to favorite nuns and companions, and then the sound of wheels was heard coming slowly up the avenue. One long last embrace of the dear Mother they all loved so well, and Louise quietly assisted her young ladies into the carriage, gave her orders to the coachman, and stepping in herself, the door was closed quickly, and the carriage moved slowly away with its load of sad little maidens.

The drive through the grounds was circuitous and hilly, and as they passed the outskirts of the church— that church before whose altar the purest and best feeling and wishes of their young hearts had been poured forth—each girl bowed her head in mute sorrow and spoke not a word. Would they ever be able to pray quite as well in any other church?

It afforded them some little consolation to know that the sound of their carriage-wheels would be borne in to the ears of those within, and that many a fervent would be the prayers offered up for the little travellers, when, just as they passed through the gates of the Lodge, with its handsome stone archway and the Benedictine coat of arms engraved thereon, there came, carried by the gusty wind, the solemn sound of the elevation bell. Lower bent the young heads as they endeavored for the last time to unite in prayer and adoration with those within the dear old church. When would they ever hear the tones of that sweet bell again!

A very little was spoken until the carriage drew up close to the booking-office of the usually busy station, the hour being so early, things were comparatively quiet, excepting at the farther side of the platform, where stood a train in waiting, its large engine puffing and steaming as if impatient of delay. Louise made some hurried inquiries of the porters and then speedily conducted her charges to the side of this train, already half filled with noisy passengers, many of whom were English, and who hesitated not to pass remarks of curiosity upon the three girls.

Travelling then was not so comfortable nor luxurious as it is at present, and the maid had some difficulty in finding a carriage to her mind. At last an obliging porter, who knew well, by the young ladies' uniform, from whence they came, secured them one at the farther end of the train, and they had barely time in which to settle themselves comfortably, when the impatient engine gave a loud whistle, and in a few minutes our little friends were really launched out into the world, and ere a few hours had passed were many miles from old "St. Benedict's." The thought of their homes, their dear parents and friends—the hidden wonders to be contained in the new lives opening before them—such thoughts as these soon chased away their fears, and, much to the delight of Louise, before they had travelled one hour and a half her young charges were bright and cheerful; the ready wit of Beatrice making droll remarks upon everything worthy of note that they passed.

The rain had ceased; the sun was shining brightly; cloaks and wraps were discarded; even the large Gainsborough hat and drooping feather worn by Beatrice, hung in one of the racks above; whilst the girls chattered gaily about the future and the friends whom they expected to meet in London. "Your maid will meet you; is it not so?" said Beatrice to Madge. "Mother is unable to travel herself, so is sending an old servant of hers," replied the girl, whilst an amused expression passed over her face as a picture of Mary Medcalf, as she remembered her, rose before her mind. "I shall not see my mother until my arrival in Scotland," continued Madge, and a sigh escaped her. "Poor Madge!" said Marie kindly. "Let us write often to each other." "Forget not your solemn promise to come and stay with me," said Beatrice; "and above all preserve your copies of that all important document, which will bring us all together five years hence. Remember it is binding upon us." All three laughed, and renewed their intention of fulfilling that delightful engagement. "I mean to have such fun in the world," continued Beatrice, "and you dear girls shall share it!" Thus the long and weary railway journey came to an end at last, and the girls found themselves on the boat which was to convey them to dear old England. A strong fresh breeze was blowing. The roses were back in their cheeks, their eyes dancing with delight as they laughed and tried to steady themselves on the uneven deck. Utterly regardless of the notice they attracted, the girls stood a little apart from the rest of the passengers, their neatly fitting dresses blowing in the fresh breeze, their large hats threatening each moment to be blown away. Their simple costume and different types of beauty caused a great deal of admiration totally unobserved by the girls, so wrapped up were they in each other and in all that was before them. One thing in their behaviour was noticeable to those who knew them. At the dear old Abbey, Marie had always been the centre figure, but now Beatrice had instinctively taken the lead, whilst Marie and Madge stood on either side of her. She was telling them in an animated manner of the joy she was anticipating so soon seeing her father again, and how certain she was he would be in London to meet her, when her quick eye detected at some little distance from them the habit worn by the Sisters of Charity. She looked steadily in their direction, and a frown of indignation gathered on her brow.

Two Sisters of Charity stood alone and unprotected; one was very young and delicate-looking, the other bore the appearance of great fatigue and ill health. Vainly the young Sister tried to support her elder companion, who every moment seemed as if she would swoon away, the motion of the ship being too much for her, whilst the eyes of the younger Sister sought timidly amongst the bystanders for help. The only seats near were occupied by some ill bred young men, who, much to the discomfort of the poor Sisters, amused themselves by passing rude jokes and remarks upon their habits and calling.

Without a moment's hesitation, Beatrice left her companions and walked straight to the little group. She spoke kindly and respectfully to the more than, drawing her figure to its full height, she turned to the young man and asked in a distinct and dignified tone, whilst a scornful look flashed from her eyes, "If in the name of common courtesy they could be prevailed upon to allow sick and delicate ladies to have their seats?" Instantly the seats were vacant, the late occupants of them withdrawing themselves rather shamefacedly into the background.

Then Beatrice kindly bade the Sisters be seated, and turning to Louise who had followed her young mistress, she said, "Please bring some wine and refreshment for these poor Sisters!" "Yes, my lady," answered the maid respectfully, and she disappeared on her errand, soon returning with a tray upon which were both wine, tea, and biscuits. Poursing out a wine glass of the former, Beatrice handed it with a bright smile to the elder Sister. She thankfully sipped a little, whilst the girl and her maid endeavored to shield her from the public gaze.

"How shall I ever thank you?" said the poor sick Sister, in a weak and trembling voice; "out it is like a child of St. Benedict's to come to the aid of the weak and helpless!" "How know you that I am from St. Benedict's?" said Beatrice gently. "Some thirty years ago I was a child there myself, and dressed in the same uniform that you are wearing now. Call your little companions, and tell me of the dear old place; the very thought of it will ease my bodily pain."

Louise called Marie and Madge, and soon by their cheerful conversation they had the satisfaction of seeing the sick Sister's face light up with joy and interest as they recounted to her many incidents of their late school life. Sister Angela, the younger, looked on and smiled. Well pleased and grateful was she to the noble young girl who had rendered her such timely aid, and she made a mental resolve never to forget in her daily prayers this kindly girl. It was years ere they met again.

"Well," said one of the crest-fallen young men to his companion, "I hope you feel ashamed of yourself, for I do." "By Jove!" said the other, "what a beauty she is! I would go through it again just to see once more the scorn with which she turned upon us. It was all so earnest and so genuine. I never saw anything like it before. Who can she be?" "I'll warrant you she is highly born—a princess in disguise, perhaps," rejoined his companion. "It may be so, but some one will be proud to call her friend some day," was the answer.

"It is not pleasant to feel you deserve her scorn, so let us saunter to the other side, for many eyes are upon us here." The clock of St. Paul's had just chimed the hour of six as the train conveying our little friends steamed into one of our busy London stations; not so busy or confusing then as now, but quite enough so to bewilder

young girls fresh from a quiet home like St. Benedict's. They strained their rather weary but eager eyes for a glimpse amongst the crowd of the dearly loved face of parent or friend, when the maid exclaimed—"There! I saw the Countess and the Honourable Percival. They recognized us, and waved their hands. Keep your seat, please, my lady; they will join us the instant the train stops."

"Louis, Louis, I am here!" called Marie, springing up, and at the same instant a tall bright-faced boy of about nineteen years of age sprang on to the step of their carriage, and holding on by the door, raised his hat joyfully. The train stopped, the boy flung the door open, and Marie jumping off, he caught her in his arms, fairly lifting her off her feet in his joy at seeing her. "So glad you have arrived safely," he cried. "Why, you have not grown one inch!"

By this time Beatrice was in the arms of her mother; then perceiving her brother Percy, she flung her arms around his neck, and whispered in a choking voice—"My father! Percy? My father—where is he?" "At home, darling. He was not quite well, and mother advised him not to come." Poor Bertie! a sharp dart of disappointment shot through her heart. She had wrought herself up to such a pitch of excitement at the prospect of so soon meeting the one being she most loved on earth, and she felt the disappointment keenly.

Madge stood on the platform unnoticed by all save Louise, who had, during the short time passed in her company, learned to admire the girl's unselfish nature, and felt a strange interest in her. No thought of sorrow or regret for herself at the loss of her friends, but she felt the disappointment keenly. Madge stood on the platform unnoticed by all save Louise, who had, during the short time passed in her company, learned to admire the girl's unselfish nature, and felt a strange interest in her. No thought of sorrow or regret for herself at the loss of her friends, but she felt the disappointment keenly.

It was not long ere Marie turned, and noticing that Madge was alone, the thought flashed through her mind—"How selfish of me to forget the dear girl in my own joy, and her own dear brother dead." She drew Louise's head down to hers and whispered, "For my sake, Louise, be good and kind to my friend there; she has lost her only brother." With this request she tripped across to where Madge stood, followed closely by the tall, handsome boy, for he had nothing less than his big colour, curly brown hair, and laughing eyes. No formal introduction was necessary; he walked straight up to Madge and shook her warmly by the hand, for he liked the clear steady look of the blue-grey eyes, and felt sorry that she had no brother to meet or protect her.

At this moment Beatrice joined them, followed by her mother and brother Percy. She merrily introduced her two companions whilst a mischievous expression played about the corners of her mouth as she watched her brother's courteous manner when he shook hands with the "demure Convent girls."

TO BE CONTINUED FOOTSTEPS BY THE DOOR

Laura always woke very early in the morning, unrefreshed, disheartened, weary of the bed and of herself. Her sleep seemed to be of such short duration, and the time from that early awakening to daylight so long and wearisome. Usually her mother came in about 6 o'clock and brought her a cup of hot milk, plumped up her pillow, smoothed the bedclothes and told her to go back to sleep again. "Yes, mother," Laura would say, closing her eyes obediently, though she knew she could not sleep any more; and lying there quietly she listened to the growing noises of the young day—the bread-wagon that stopped across the street and the driver's raucous whistle; the milk carts rattling by, and the heavy motor-trucks from the ice-cream factory, two blocks above; the quick footsteps of men hurrying to catch an early car. Snatches of cheerful conversation mingled with the bird songs in the trees outside her window, for even as the birds every passing pedestrian seemed to be happy—happy . . . and well! Then about 6 o'clock, passing lightly by, were footsteps that the sick girl had come to know very well—those of Miss Marion Dutoit on her way to Mass at St. Edward's Church. She had come to wait for those footsteps as one does for a familiar sound, and to speculate idly and somewhat wistfully about Miss Dutoit, whom she knew slightly. Would she be sorry for her—Laura Breen—if she knew she was so sick? Would she come to see her? Would she—this a little fearfully—would she pray for her perhaps? What did she pray for when she went to church like that every morning? Laura couldn't imagine. But, of course, only Catholics did that. If she herself had kept on being a Catholic, like she was when she was a little girl, would she maybe be going to church every day like Miss Dutoit? She sighed and even smiled a little over the impossible picture. Why, she hardly ever went to church, even on Sundays! Occasionally she had gone to Sunday-school because some of her girl friends were going, but that

was only incidental. Religion had really little place in the girl's life. Perhaps it may be accounted something more than strange therefore that of all the early morning footsteps penetrating to the sick room, the footsteps of Miss Dutoit on her way to early Mass should be the ones most to impress Laura Breen, the light tap, tap, for which she listened eagerly and followed wistfully down the street until its echo died on her ear, and even went with her to those mysterious devotions which had the curious power of drawing her from her bed so early in the morning.

"For she is well," thought the sick girl sadly, "and couldn't probably sleep late, but she chooses to get up and go to church." "It's queer, isn't it mother?" she said one morning. "What's queer, dear?" "About Miss Dutoit—you know, going to Mass every morning." "Oh, yes," vaguely, "I believe she does. She passes here, doesn't she?"

Laura nodded. "At 6 o'clock. She never misses, even when it rains or storms. She must be awfully good, don't you think so?" "I suppose so," still vaguely, though it is not to be supposed that Mrs. Breen's long dragged conscience did not suffer a stray twinge here. "I didn't know you were awake at 6 o'clock," she added. "Don't you go to sleep after I give you your milk?"

"No, mother," with a sigh. "That's the reason I like to watch for Miss Dutoit—I know it's getting on toward breakfast time." "But, Laura dear, I can get you your breakfast earlier if you want it." "Oh, no!" impatiently. "I don't want it early—that would make the day so long, and it's long enough already!" "My poor child!" tenderly. "I know the time hangs heavy, but you will soon be better and able to sit up, and then the day won't seem so long."

"I wonder!" Laura thought; but she said nothing only closed her eyes wearily. "Do you think," she said after a moment, opening her eyes suddenly, "that Miss Dutoit would come to see me if she knew I was sick?" "I'm sure she would," answered the mother, rather doubtfully, however. "I don't know her very well, but some day when she's passing by I might tell her that my little sick girl would like to see her. Shall I?" as Laura made no comment.

"Oh, I don't know," fretfully. "Don't bother mother." Secretly she had a wish that Miss Dutoit would come without being asked, why, she could not have explained, and Mrs. Breen was glad enough to let the matter rest thus. Though eager to please her daughter, she did not view with any great delight the prospect of having Miss Dutoit visit the sick girl—or, for that matter, any other Catholic. That part of their lives was over long ago—she was asking to be open old sores or to bring back the memory of troubled, unhappy days.

"Very well, dear," she said softly. "Will you have your egg now?" Laura frowned as her mother left the room. Yes, egg and milk, fruit and custard. Now, mysteriously she was laid low, suffering from a painful malady that, whilst it loosened her hold on the solid realities which she had called life, strangely enough set floating other tentacles of whose possession she had never dreamed, shaking tentacles seeking—seeking for something tangible on which to set their grip against the grisly time when this frail little barque might float out into a dreadful, unknown sea. It was all very bitter, very hard, very puzzling to the poor suffering girl, and out of the grayness of her days and nights there was only one thing upon which her weary mind seized as yielding some slight measure of stability—the soft tap, tap of Miss Dutoit's footsteps on her way to and from Mass. Miss Dutoit, at least, had hold of something real. If only she—Laura—had something in case—in case . . . She shuddered away from the empty days and nights, the dark, abysmal gulf that she feared to see.

Then one day she wished for thing came to pass: Miss Dutoit dropped in to see the sick girl. "I just heard the other day that you were ill," she said gently, laying a bunch of mignonette on the stand by the bed, "and I can never resist going to see sick people in the neighborhood, for I was once sick for a long time and I know how glad I used to be to have people come and see me. Do you like to see people?"

"Some people," said Laura truthfully. "I'm glad to see you. I've been wanting you to come." "You have? I would have come sooner if I had known that." And Miss Dutoit smiled at this girl's eager eyes, touched by what she saw there. "I hear you go by every morning," Laura told her, "and I see you, too. Mother has the curtains pulled back so I can see out. Sometimes I like to watch the people go by."

"That makes it pleasant for you. Not a bad pastime, is it?" "Depends upon how you're feeling," with a wry smile. "Sometimes—I it makes my heart ache—to see so many—and I—"

"I know, dear," and Miss Dutoit laid her hand softly over that of the sick girl. "But when we are sick it is necessary to have patience, isn't it? For often it takes a long, long time to get well." "Yes," Laura responded absently, "a long time . . . with nothing to do but think." "God is very good to us when He gives us time to think," Miss Dutoit said very softly. Laura looked up at her, her eyes suddenly very keen. "Do you think so?" she asked. "I never thought about it that way. You see it makes me awfully blue to—think—about things."

"Oh, but we mustn't let ourselves get blue, you know," with a cheery smile. "Think about getting well, and all the happy days you will have—"

"I do think of all that," said Laura, as Miss Dutoit paused, "but then, too, I can't help thinking . . . if I don't get well, what? And that's what I wanted to talk to you about," she added unexpectedly. "How do you mean, dear?" "About church, you know, and all that. I was a Catholic when I was a little girl—oh, just a little bit of a girl and I don't remember much about it—and I've been wondering, hearing you go by every morning, what it is that makes you go, and if . . . and if . . ."

"And if it gives me strength? Is that what you are wondering?" Miss Dutoit asked. Laura moved restlessly. "I guess so. . . Yes. . . if it gives you, you know, something that I haven't got. You—look so happy. But then of course you're well," sighing wearily. "But that's when I found the strength I needed—when I was sick like you," the older woman told her with a quiet smile. "Shall I tell you about it?" "Oh, yes! Do tell me—about it!" And the sick girl's eyes brightened eagerly.

"There isn't a great deal to tell at that. I was young and headless and enjoying life to the utmost, as you did, perhaps—"

"—With no thought of God, or religion, or the future, or anything but just having a good time, and then I was taken sick. I was sick a long time, and that gave me a chance to think of many things. For all my good times and happy days had not given me anything to hold to when the dark days came—"

"That's it!" tensely interrupted Laura. "Nothing to hold to! And I get afraid—so afraid!" Tears welled into her eyes and rolled down her pale, pathetic cheeks. "Hush, dear child!" Marion Dutoit leaned over the bed, her heart swelling. "I think God is leading you, as He led me, and over the same path."

"Do you think so?" wistfully. "Then I have to be a real Catholic, don't I?" "You don't have to be—"

"Oh, but I want to be! I think that's what I've been wanting every morning when I heard you pass." Marion Dutoit drew a quick, amazed breath. This was the most astonishing thing she had ever encountered, and it left her awed, thrilled, humbled. Here, indeed, was the hand of God! Her own experience, wonderful as it had been, had never impressed her as this evident interposition of a loving Father—had never touched her to such a keen realization of the watchful providence of God. "But—are you sure?" she felt impelled to murmur doubtfully. "You know, it's a serious step; and your people—will they—"

"Laura gave a weary gesture. "Why should they care? They can't help me—that way. And if some one else can—"

BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS MURPHY & GUNN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

FOY, KNOX & MONAHAN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

DAY, FERGUSON & CO. BARRISTERS

LUNNEY & LANNAN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

JOHN H. McLEDDERY BARRISTER, SOLICITOR

WATT & BLACKWELL ARCHITECTS

DENTISTS DR. BRUCE E. EAD

FUNERAL DIRECTORS John Ferguson & Sons

E. C. Killingsworth FUNERAL DIRECTOR

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J. ALAMAC HOTEL

ALAMAC HOTEL

HENNESSEY

LOUIS SANDY

Habit Materials and Vellings

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

LOUIS SANDY

In the Country of Jesus

Catholic Record

FITS