

had come home with eyes ablaze and features distorted.

The reprimand of the pastor and what he suspected about Agnes had wrought his passionate soul to fury. With effort he had until now controlled himself; but once at home, he let loose. Cursing and with clenched fists, he wished every possible evil to the priest, the teacher, the whole neighborhood; conversing with himself, nor minding the interruptions of his mother, he raved, mad with anger. She tried her best by petting to quiet her strange boy. "Just wait, Jack," she soothed, "the priest and the schoolmaster, too, will have to leave the village, we'll see to that; the people must be informed of what goes on in the rectory garden, and Agnes will get her deserts also."

Instantly quieted, he shouted: "What do you wish to do to Agnes? Don't you dare to say a word against her, or else I'll kill you and myself!"

She smiled uncomfortably and then said in a confidential tone: "Why, Jack, all I wish is to part her and the teacher," then with a wily laugh, "none but you shall marry Agnes. Just leave it to me, and it will be all right. But you can help; ingratiate yourself with the taverner, he is Agnes' guardian; do you understand?"

Shortly after she left the little room on mischief bent. It was not long before she was engaged telling the curious neighbors that her son, so good and pious as to spend half-nights in church praying, had that very afternoon surprised Agnes and the teacher together; upon informing the priest of the situation in order to open his eyes and to forestall all scandal, he was commanded to say nothing and even threatened with the loss of his position if he did not leave the two alone. What a condition of things in a priest-house! This is what old Mrs. Sparr told the neighbors. The people believed her and were astounded.

On his part, Sparr the sexton, went to see the taverner. His face was aglow, his eyes sparkled proudly and aggressively. The words of his mother had nerved him on;—the priest must leave and the teacher also. His diseased mind took hold of the plan with a fiendish malignity and made it its own. "The priest must go!"—With this challenge on his lips he entered the tavern.

Round the table in the rear were sitting the innkeeper, the treasurer and as third guest, a fellow of shady character from the city. "That is our man," the taverner whispered to the others when Sparr entered. The trio cordially invited him to join them, and before long, the four had outlined a plan which would compel the "parson" to go. The taverner's pride insisted upon this in revenge for having lost his motion at the Chapter. The stranger from the city, with a satisfied grin, did the treating; as there was no stint to the liquor, tongues were soon unloosed, and Sparr as a matter of course betrayed his intentions concerning Agnes. The landlord struck glasses with him and smiling cunningly whispered into Jack's ear: "If you do your part to incite the people against the priest, he must leave; but Agnes will not leave, so say I, her guardian. Then you shall have her; here is my hand on it."

Thereupon Sparr embraced and kissed the tapster, calling him his father-in-law and other effusive names. "We have made a sowing to-day," the stranger interspersed, "may this sowing thrive! Watch the rectory day and night and let nothing escape you. From the most trifling circumstances much oftentimes can be made; report everything. Spy above and below, to the rear and to the front and around the house, be all eyes and ears; let the priest know he is be-

ing secretly followed, play him all kinds of exasperating tricks, in this way he will sicken of the place. The rest others will attend to."

To be continued.

A Blue Cornflower

(South African Catholic Magazine)

Our field ambulance was following the main body of the Union forces somewhere in East Africa; following at a respectful distance, that you will understand, if you know what a field ambulance is. We had just halted under orders from above, and had settled down again for a few days. So it looked anyhow, because the Sergeant-Major had hung up his wife's portrait in his tent. Experience had taught me what this meant, since the Sergeant-Major was a man who generally knew.

Being then head stretcher-bearer, I went to the Matron's tent to see that the stretchers were all in their places and all in marching order. "Poor Matron!" I said to myself, halting at the flap of the large marquee, "what has happened to her?"

For she was sitting on a large canvas deck-chair, with an open letter on her lap, so full of thought that she did not look up even to greet me. This was not the Matron's way. In fact, this lady was not the Matron, simply because we had no Matron. But if she was not in that responsible position, we all felt she ought to be; as there was no more motherly nurse in all the hospitals under General Smuts. So we called her Matron. You must not imagine that she was an old woman; by no means. Conjecture put her down at thirty-five, more on account of her grave ways and quiet habits of command. If we saw her out of her professional garb and on the Pier in Adderly Street, we might have deducted ten from that figure.

"Read that, Tom!" she said, when she became aware of my presence, holding out the letter that had been in her lap.

It was a bold and business-like communication from the British War Office, telling her that her brother had been killed in France, and sending her the respectful sympathy of the Commander-in-Chief.

"He was my only brother," she said quietly, but an irrepressible tear stood in her eye.

The Matron passed us as a gentle Stoic. It had always been her function to keep our spirits up, and it was no joke to see her thus overcome. I did not feel the man to bring balm to Gilead, and there was silence in the tent for an eternal minute.

It was broken by the stentorian tones of the Sergeant-Major, whose voice was like the sound of many cartwheels. No man could plead, with any sense of decency, that he had not heard this gentleman's voice. And now he was calling upon the stretcherbearers to "fall in." There was evidently work ahead.

I returned the letter to the Matron with a heart full to the brim. One word would have made a fool of me. All that a self-respecting soldier could do, I did, that is to say, I shook her warmly by the hand. It was my business to see that the men fell in, and to await their return, with all arrangements made for putting the wounded to bed. The Sergeant marched them off with a swing. Clearly this was not parade drill but real business.

In half an hour the men were back; but this time the march was slower. Only one stretcher was occupied. There had been an affair of outposts, and the leader of the German scouting party had fallen—the rest had got away.

He was a fine specimen of the Saxon that lay upon the stretcher

—six foot at least; and bearded like the pard. But in spite of his bushy beard he was little more than a boy.

His first words were a surprise. Though he evidently suffered, as we took him from the stretcher to a camp bed, he murmured anxiously:

"Is there a Catholic priest here?"

We looked at one another—the Matron and I. This was not quite what we expected from a German officer; though, to tell the truth, this was the first one that had come our way. The Catholic chaplain of our contingent was busy with the main body, and no one in the ambulance knew just where he was just then. We had that morning passed a small native mission station, where a Belgian priest was in charge. It was ten miles away. Besides, not being Catholics we thought that he would hardly do.

"There's only a Belgian priest," I answered, "but he would—"

"Please," answered the young fellow very earnestly, "send for him—he must come."

We did not know at the time that a Belgian priest had any special obligations to attend a dying German, especially after the newspaper reports published about the war. But we were anxious to soothe our patient, for he had a dangerous wound in the thorax, which any excitement would aggravate. And it was wonderful how soon his condition improved, when I promised that the priest should be called. He lay back tranquilly, like a humoured child, with closed eyes, perfectly tractable, and only the occasional movement of his lips showed that he was fully conscious.

A Swahili runner, who had been added to our establishment since we left Nauch, sped to the mission station with the note that was to summon the priest. And how they managed it I do not know; but just before sunset the little spectacled missionary arrived, and was ushered into the presence of his friend, the enemy.

It is not for me to say what happened between those "enemies," when they met on the common ground of the spiritual comforts of their Church. But it was very touching and very marvelous in its effects. The priest had hardly left him when the matron found the young officer a new man. A new life came to him and brightened his whole being, and he became talkative.

Then she noticed the quality of his English, which he spoke with ease, but with the unmistakable accent of Connemara. The mystery was cleared up by himself. The son of a country squire (junker is the more common way of expressing it) he had learned English from an Irish governess.

"I know I'm booked," he said to the Matron, "but heaven is nearer to Germany than this African swamp."

Her patient had no delusions about getting better; that the Matron rejoiced to see. His satisfaction had nothing to do with such false hopes.

"Nurse," he said, after a pause. "Yes!" answered the Matron, "here I am."

"Will you write me a short letter?" he begged.

The Matron knew that there was not much time to be lost, if any letter was to be written. So she quietly arranged the writing materials on a small table, and sat down, pen in hand, near the pillow.

"To whom shall I write?" she asked.

"To my sister near Dresden," he replied.

Then, in broken accents, as the weakness grew upon him, he explained that she was the only one of his family left. His mother had died in his early youth. His father and his five brothers had fallen one

by one, either in the Eastern or

Western fronts of the fight in Europe. The young woman of twenty was now alone in their large country mansion, the last of a race of warriors.

"Tell her," he said, "that I had the priest; it will give her a glimpse of Paradise. And say that her blue cornflower is on my grave."

"But where is it?" asked the Matron, fearing that he was beginning to rave.

"Here! in this crucifix," and he pointed to the mother-of-pearl crucifix, which he wore about his neck.

With his failing strength, he was just about able to press a spring at the foot of the cross, which opened a small cavity, where, dry and faded, were the remains of a small, blue cornflower, many years old. Only its safe position could have preserved it so long.

"You will put that on my grave, nurse?"

The Matron could only nod assent.

Then the floodgates of memory were opened for the last time, and the fine aristocratic features of the dying officer were animated as he recalled the memories of the past. How his sister had gone with him to the station when he was appointed to East Africa; how they had walked through the cornfields, and she had given him this little flower as a souvenir.

"And she shall walk to the station again to get this letter," he murmured. "But we shall never walk there together again."

They were the last intelligible words he uttered. Afterwards there were only starts of reason, with phrases that entangled the distant days of his boyhood at home with the bitter memories of recent days and nights in the African field. Pen in hand, the Matron watched the flickering of the splendid life that was soon to be ended.

She watched and waited in silence until the very end. Her brother, too, had died a prisoner in the hands of the Germans on French soil. And she knew instinctively that some sisterly woman must have heard his last whispers, and she blessed that sisterly heart.

Next day we buried the young soldier, because the heats of equatorial Africa do not permit a long wake. We fashioned a gentle sloping mound over his grave. The cross with the faded cornflower in it, we placed upon his breast. Overground there was a bunch of blue wild-flowers, from the sister of the other soldier who died among the Saxons in France.

And when the ritual prayers were ended, the little Belgian missionary placed a plain wooden cross upon the mound. It had no inscription except the name of the buried officer; but any one who knew could read the invisible inscription: "Lest we remember."

Religious Census.—The Assessment Department of the city of Hamilton, Ont. has just published figures showing the religious census of the city: The Anglicans lead with a total of 27,640. The others in order are: Presbyterians, 21,234; Methodists, 20,009; Roman Catholics, 19,576; Baptists, 5,623; Jews, 2,804; Congregationalists, 1,120; Lutherans, 950; Salvation Army, 551; Christian Scientists, 225; Disciples of Christ, 67.

Feast to be Observed.—On October 17th the feast of the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque will be observed, as it is the anniversary of the day of her death at Paray-le-Monial in 1690. It is understood that the ceremonies for her canonization will be commenced six months after the declaration of peace, and no doubt there will be countless communions of reparation throughout the world that these ceremonies may not be long deferred.

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