

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROKER

CHAPTER XI

GRANDFATHER'S BARGAIN

Oh, may a shaft of random sent, Finds mark the acher little mean.

Scott, "Love and the Isles."

To "shake off dull sloth and early rise" was no effort to me. I was always an early bird, and had the privilege of opening the post-bag in consequence. It rarely ever contained anything for Miss O'Neill. Deb was my only correspondent, and a very bad one too. In turning over the letters one morning, about two months after my return home, I found, to my great amazement, a thin foreign envelope, half covered with green and blue stamps, addressed to me in an old-fashioned Italian hand.

"Who in the world could it be from?" I thought, nervously tearing it open. It ran as follows: "Mulkapore, June 5th. "My Dear Niece—I have heard of the death of your grandfather, Mr. Beresford of Gallow, and am sorry to learn that he has made no provision for you, but has left you absolutely penniless, living on the bounty of his heir. I know all these particulars are facts. Your grandfather's solicitor is my informant. Perhaps you have never heard of me: I am your own aunt—your father's sister. I came out to India years before you were born. My husband, Colonel Neville, is the cantonment magistrate at Mulkapore, a very healthy station, so I have no hesitation in asking you to come out at once, and make your home with us. We have no children, and you shall be as our daughter, and take our name. Write to me by return mail, and say that you are coming, and your uncle will lodge the money for your outfit and passage at Grindlay's without delay. The sooner you can start the better we shall be pleased. "As long as your grandfather lived, we naturally held aloof from you, but now he has gone, and has left you unprovided for, it seems to me that your natural home is with us—your nearest kin, who will gladly welcome you as a daughter, and do all in their power to make you happy. "I remain, your affectionate aunt, MARGARET NEVILLE."

I read this letter over two or three times before I quite took in its meaning—plain enough although it was. After sitting before the fire for nearly half an hour, buried in profound reflection, I made up my mind to keep the news of my new found relatives to myself (for the present at any rate); to say nothing to Miss Fluker, who would retail the information to the Misses Curry, as a choice morsel of news, but who would feel no real interest whatever in the matter. I kept my secret—I had, unfortunately, an undeveloped talent for a certain kind of silence—and wrote to my aunt the following mail, thanking her for her letter, and telling her that I was provided with a home, and had no wish to leave Gallow; but that I hoped to see her some day, and begged that she would not lose sight of me again, as I was only too glad to sign myself her affectionate niece, Nora O'Neill. Since I had refused to be a Dublin I observed that Mr. French very frequently found his way up to Gallow, quite unsuspectingly, to Miss Fluker, declaring that he was becoming quite sociable, and fond of ladies' society. All the answer she vouchsafed me was a superior smile, and gradual drooping of the eyelids: from which I inferred that these parochial visits were not the extraordinary novelty that I imagined!

He professed to be anxious to know how I was getting on, and to be the bearer of various messages from Rody and Deb; but I did not flatter myself that the visits were wholly for me. I observed that whenever his thin, black-coated figure was seen coming up the avenue, Miss Fluker would rush to the swing-door, at the top of the kitchen stairs, and deliver orders for a liberal meal. Then she would fly up to her own room, and hastily don her black silk gown, and best collar, and cuffs. She was a rapid dresser; and when French would hardly have relieved himself of his hat and stick, before she would come sailing into the room, all smiles and surprise, with outstretched hands and beaming countenance. The way in which she could change her face and manner was simply marvelous! She put off her usual dictatorial, overbearing expression along with her old brown merino, and left it upstairs. "Dear Mr. French, so good of you to come! so kind of you to take pity on us, especially as your time is so valuable. Have you brought me up that pamphlet of yours you promised to let me see? I have been thinking of nothing else, ever since you told me about it!" she would say, moving her chair closer to him, and looking at him rapturously. Then from an obscure pocket, Mr. French—credulous Mr. French!—would produce a blue-backed treatise on the defect Irish tongue, and hand it over to his fair friend, who would receive it with almost religious reverence, and commence to discuss this animating subject with well-feigned enthusiasm. Within half an hour after Mr. French's arrival tea generally made its appearance—quite a little impromptu meal! Hot cakes, fried ham, buttered toast, preserves, and honey. No wonder Mr. French was fond of coming up to Gallow! To do him justice, I do not think the prospect of a "high tea" was the chief attrac-

tion. His own home was empty and lonely; at Gallow he was received with enthusiasm—a perennial welcome awaited him; he was deferred to, courted, and made much of.

Men are but mortal, and I am sure it was sweet—even to elderly, hatchet-faced Mr. French—to know there was an eye that marked his coming and looked brighter when he came. To have Miss Fluker, looking smiling, solicitous, and sweet, hanging on his words, and consulting him about the smallest matter connected with the place or *me*, was not a little flattering to his *amour-propre*. I was discussed as if I were not present, and Miss Fluker always alluded to me as "her special treasure," and her "dear young friend and companion."

Mr. French's visits were of a bi-weekly recurrence all winter and spring. Rody was preparing for the army; and Deb was with her grandmother at Torquay, as Mrs. West had been ordered to the South of England on account of her health. Consequently, our rector fell back on Gallow as some relief to his loneliness. Each week he and Miss Fluker became more friendly and confidential. She consulted him about the servants, about her little investments, and, in short, on every possible subject.

Gallow, with the exception of the garden, was let up to the hall-door. We had no horses, no trap of any kind; two cows, and an ancient donkey for drawing turf, were all our livestock; and yet, out of these meager materials, Miss Fluker made enormous capital for "consultation."

"One of the cows was sick—would Mr. French come and look at her?" "The cattle on the land were breaking down the young plantations—she would like to show him the damage they had done. Thus, *etc. etc.* He strolled on, for I had not the hardihood to trust my society upon them. Young as I was, I had already heard the proverb, "Two is company," etc., and, young as I was, I could see very plainly that Miss Eluker intended to marry Mr. French. She talked to him and flattered him in a manner that completely captivated my deluded guardian, while I looked on, an indignant and passive spectator, seeing only too clearly the destiny that would befall him. I had given Deb several hints of the state of affairs, and actually come so far as to set before her what even my inexperienced eyes saw looming in the distance; but it was not of the slightest use, my intelligence was laughed to scorn, and replied to by sheets of amusing nonsense.

Spring had given place to summer, and still my prophecy remained unfulfilled; but now the least intelligent looker-on could see that affairs were rapidly approaching a crisis. "Six, it will be a match," said Miss Fluker, looking over my shoulder out of the dining-room window, as I stood watching the pair walking down the avenue, *en route* to inspect the lodge chimney, accompanied by Snap, who was taking his evening run—on three legs, with the fourth occasionally tucked up. "He hasn't a chance with her, the scheming—" "Hush, Mary, don't!" I expostulated hastily.

"Well, Miss Nora, I *won't*," she answered, indignantly; "but oh, holy fly! what did Miss Deb say? She won't thank you for the step-mother she's getting." I stood in the window in silence while Mary made a great clatter among the tea-things, and mentally resolved to write to Deb the very next day and to tell her that she *must* come home. But my good intentions came too late; my meditations, which lasted long, were interrupted by the entrance of Miss Fluker, with visible triumph in her gait and aspect.

Taking her hat off, she stood leaning against the table, looking at me with a malicious smile on her face. I knew what was coming perfectly. "Well!" she said at last. "Well?" I repeated, in a tone of defiance I found it impossible to suppress. "Mr. French proposed to me this evening, and I have accepted him."

I was sitting with my back to the light, and she strove in vain to see my face—it was quite in the shadow, whatever the full glare of the setting sun illuminated her features, radiant with exultation. "Have you nothing to say?" she asked after a pause. "Nothing!" I answered pointedly. She was manifestly disappointed, I am certain. She expected expostulation, argument, anger—in short, a scene. After a moment's silence she walked over to her favorite arm-chair, into which she cast herself with a long, contented sigh, as of one whose labor is accomplished; and, indeed, it had been a tedious business. For nearly a year Mr. French had visited at Gallow before he succumbed: he had had a year's grace. Now he had spoken, it was all over with him, poor man! After a time, lights were brought in, and Miss Fluker set her desk on the table and commenced to scribble off a letter at railroad speed. I watched her intently; a smile, she did not attempt to restrain, decked her thin red lips, as she wrote rapidly.

She read over the first two pages, and then jumped up. "After all," she exclaimed, "I will go myself." "Go where?" I asked brusquely. "Just down to Kileoal to tell the Currys. It's a fine night, and will be pleased," she added emphatically, as she fussed about, seeking her hat and gloves. I watched her hurrying down the avenue, and then I went out and sat on the steps with my elbows on my

knees, and wondered at Mr. French, and at what Rody and Deb would say, and what was to become of *me*. As the evening became cool and chill I took my candle and went to bed, still wondering.

As far as Mrs. West and Deb were concerned, my mind was soon set at rest. Mrs. West's indignation was unbounded. She refused to allow Deb to return to Kileoal, a refusal that sat very lightly on Miss Fluker—if Mrs. West liked to take her step-daughter off her hands, so much the better—and wholly declined to have anything to say to her son-in-law's second choice, having imbibed a rooted aversion to her during a short visit she had paid to the Rectory two years previously.

It was settled that I was to step into Deb's shoes and take her place at home, and Gallow was to be completely shut up. Thus much was imparted to me by Mr. French himself. The engagement was publicly announced (the Misses Curry having preferred themselves better than any advertisement,) and the fact was immediately known all over the country far and wide.

Mr. French, of course, now spent more time than ever at Gallow, and I had my mornings as well as my afternoons entirely to myself. I wandered aimlessly about the gardens, the fields and the bog. A seat on a stile leading to the latter was a favorite resort of mine, with a book in my lap, and a long vista of short grass, clumps of golden furze-bushes, and a wide sea of purple heather stretching far away to the very edge of the horizon. Here I would spend whole happy, solitary afternoons, undisturbed by aught save the grouse and the curlew. One evening I was interrupted by Sweetlips, who, with ass and car, was bringing up a load of bogstuffed for the garden.

"Is it there you are, Miss Nora?" he growled, "perched like a crow on a gate." "It is, Sweetlips," I answered cheerfully. "It's not much lessons you have to do now, by all accounts," he remarked sarcastically.

"I'm getting too old for lessons, am I not, Sweetlips?" I said, jumping lightly down and escorting the ass and car, for lack of something else to do. "Begorra, I'm not misdoubting 'tis but little you know for your years," returned Sweetlips rudely. "'Twas your mother, Miss Beresford, that was the elegant scholar, the learned young lady!"

"How do you know that I'm not a learned young lady too?" I asked, smilingly. "Faith, and it would be hard for you; sure you were always gallivanting and tearing mad about the place till just the other day! 'Tis little schooling you know, 'm thinking," he concluded emphatically, spitting on the palms of his hands, and commencing to load the donkey car with immense energy.

After working away for some minutes he paused, and surveying me with a meditative frown, wheezed out: "See now, what's to be done with you, Miss Nora, bates me entirely!"

Whereupon, in a few terse sentences, I told him it had been settled that I was to live in Kileoal, and that Gallow was to be shut up. When he heard of this latter arrangement his rage was unbounded; his irritability developed from incredulous crossness into outspoken passion; he could hardly find words to express himself; he favored me with his opinion, gnats of "schamers," and, as he denounced Mr. French and his folly, he became absolutely eloquent. He hated Miss Fluker with a cordial dislike; he held her in profound contempt. His sentiments were nobly based on monetary transactions, with regard to fruit and vegetables. Any way, for once he relieved his mind; he told me what he thought of her and her "goings on." Seeing that he was in an exceedingly bad humor, and not caring to stay and hear him abusing my governess (little as I liked her), I made some kind of remonstrance, and strove away; but, as I walked off with my book under my arm, I could still hear Sweetlips raging away to himself, and, as he butted, "no lady," and "old fool," were carried to my ears by the evening breeze.

I soon discovered a comfortable seat, and my book was so interesting that I quite forgot the flight of time; and it was long past 6 o'clock when I entered the dining-room—late for tea. I found Miss Fluker graciously dispensing hospitality to the two Misses Curry, presiding over a dainty little meal such as her soul loved. They had evidently been talking of *me*, I could see, for the conversation suddenly subsided from an animated buzz to a dead silence as I entered; and various highly intelligent glances were mutually interchanged. Politely greeting the two lady guests, I took my seat at the table, and looked expectantly for a cup of tea.

"Nora," said Miss Fluker, authoritatively, "the next time you are so unpunctual I shall send you straight to bed." To this pleasant remark I made no answer, but, reaching for the loaf, began to cut myself some bread and butter. I was too late for the hot cakes and ham. "Did you hear me, miss?" she exclaimed, raising her voice. "Yes, Miss Fluker, I heard you," I replied. "I felt all three were exchanging looks; I felt the hot Beresford blood mounting to my face; I felt that I was seventeen, and no longer a child, and no longer disposed to be treated as one.

"Keep your temper," she said, glaring at me angrily; "your face is at this moment scarlet with passion." I raised my eyes and glanced at her incredulously.

"Don't dare to look at me like that, you insolent girl!" she cried, with unusual animus in her aspect. "I knew that I was being baited for the amusement of the Misses Curry, and I was resolved to afford no sport; so with an extraordinary effort I restrained myself from uttering a word. But I was not to escape. After a little desultory conversation about the price of black silks and saskin jackets, with the Misses Curry, Miss Fluker again addressed me: "I have been now engaged nearly two months," she began, in a high, acrid tone, "and it is a curious thing that of all my many friends and acquaintances the only one who has not wished me joy is you, Nora! The Misses Curry, with a comprehensive wave of her hand, said, 'But I was just saying how extraordinary it was'—and a great deal more besides—when you came in. It does not meet with your approval, perhaps?"

"I made no answer—silence is golden." "Why may I ask? How is it that we have unfortunately failed to secure your approbation? With another sneer.

"I prefer not telling you, Miss Fluker; at any rate not at present," I replied, quietly; "my opinion is of no consequence." "I insist on an answer to my question," she returned, drumming rapidly on the tray with her teaspoon. "Do you hear?" she proceeded; "either answer me this instant or leave the room. I will be obeyed, and not defied by you, you great, gawky, impertinent girl!"

"This was the last straw on the camel's back. I could restrain myself no longer. "I shall certainly not leave the room," I boldly replied, "and I will answer your question, since that is the only other alternative, and you evidently think so much of my opinion."

"Do you hear her, Selina?" said Miss Fluker, appealing to her friend impressively. "My heart was beating fast, and I held my trembling hands tightly clasped in my lap. I knew that I stood one against three, but I was determined to strike a blow for truth, if possible, for freedom.

"I think," I said, in a low but perfectly distinct tone, "that it is a wretched marriage for Mr. French." "Oh, really; dear me, you don't mean to say so!" retorted Miss Fluker, struggling to smile superior, but in reality almost hysterical with passion. "Well, upon my word!" chorus of Currys in a key of consternation.

"Yes," I proceeded, warming with subject; "and every one, far and near, thinks the same." "Hoarsely," cried Miss Fluker, hoarsely; "utterly false, you mean, spiteful, untruthful girl," glaring at me in a manner fearful to witness, as she piled these choice epithets on my unprotected head. "At any rate," she went on, "Mr. French proposed for *me* of his own accord, and of his own free will; and no one will deny the fact," with great emphasis, and standing up to make the assertion.

"It struck me that I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, and, retiring, I stood once for all, "I am not so sure of that," I retorted foolishly.

"What?" she screamed, springing toward me and seizing me by the shoulder, and shaking me backward and forward like a rat, "say that again!" "My courage had now risen to rashness. I said it again.

"Impertinent minx!" still shaking me, and wholly beside herself with passion. "You to dare to say such a thing to me, when the world knows how Maurice Beresford poor boy was forced to promise to marry you?" "Explain yourself! What do you mean?" I cried, suddenly wrenching myself from her grasp.

"When you were left a beggar," she continued, excitedly, shaking a furious finger in my face, "your grandfather told Maurice that he must stop his mother's allowance, all she had in the world, in order to save something for you, unless Maurice agreed to marry you. He had no choice; he could not let his mother starve, and he agreed. But let me tell you that he *hates* you! detests you!" with venomous emphasis. "He did all in his power to get out of it. He even offered half of Gallow; but it was no use. He was forced to make a solemn promise to marry his beggar cousin; and you dare to hint to me that I have angled for Mr. French—Mr. French, who has been at my feet for the last five years!"

Here she paused, completely breathless. It was now my turn to speak. "I suppose Mr. French told you all this?" I asked, staidly myself by the back of a chair, and bringing out each word with difficulty. My question had the effect of an electric shock. In her passion she had evidently forgotten that Mr. French had confided a family secret to her keeping. Oh, weak Mr. French, who had confided in her! and now she told *me* of all people the last to whose ears it should have come! However, the deed was done; she had burned her boats! No glossing over, no explanation, could recall the words that, in a moment of unbridled passion, she had suffered to escape from her lips. I could see a certain amount of consternation depicted in her countenance as she answered with biting emphasis:

"Never mind *who* told me, it is the truth." "No, it is not much matter," I returned, in a low and trembling voice that I vainly endeavored to steady, as I almost unconsciously resumed my seat, and rested my head on my hand.

The blow to my pride and to my feelings had been so heavy and so sudden that for some moments I felt completely stunned. I sat motionless before my untasted tea and bread—and butter, morally over-whelmed. I dared not even raise my eyes, so shattered was my self-respect. At length Miss Selina Curry ventured to bridge over the awful silence with some bald, commonplace remark, made in a lofty, company tone of voice, and the entrance of big Mary with a fresh consignment of hot cakes created what seemed to me a unexpected diversion. I made one grand, supreme effort, and pushing back my chair, rushed precipitately out of the room, leaving Miss Fluker completely mistress of the field—sitting behind the tea-urn, her face actually twisted with passion—and the two Misses Curry looking benevolently concerned and sympathetically indignant! I am quite certain that they enjoyed the whole scene with the gusto of professional gossips. A real trace of an unexpected treat, and to see two combatants descend to the arena before their very eyes was a rarely prized mental refreshment.

TO BE CONTINUED

THROUGH THE SACRED HEART

By Rev. Richard W. Alexander

She was an old lady of seventy, and a convert for many years. I had known her for a long time, and held her in high esteem for her virtue, piety and intellectual gifts. She was an unusual personality and had hosts of friends. She carried her years like a queen, and her stately figure, with its shapely head crowned with abundant snow-white hair, giving gracious evidence of her age, would attract attention anywhere.

One day I said to her rather unexpectedly: "Madame Thirza, you have never told me the circumstances of your conversion. You know I am always on the lookout for marvels of grace that might instruct and edify others; I know the world is full of them if we only looked about us. God's hand is not shortened, nor is His heart less loving as time rolls on. Do tell me what made you a Catholic."

His heart never grows less loving. God was very good to me, and I will tell you all about it. "Fifty years ago I was a bride, a happy girl of twenty. My husband was a nominal Catholic, and I was a strict Baptist. I don't know how we ever grew to be so fond of each other, but we were a most devoted couple until his death. My husband never spoke of religion, and at that time took such matters very easy. I was distressed at this, and after a while I ventured to take him to task for it, as he never went to church; I even tried to bring him over to my way of worshiping God. I wanted him to become a Baptist, a church member. He did not seem to understand me for a while, but when it broke on him, he gave a hearty laugh in the most disconcerting manner, and taking both my hands in his, he looked me straight in the face and said:

"Why, little girl, don't you know it is as impossible for a Catholic to change his faith and be sincere as it is for him to change his color? There is only one true faith, little wife, as there is only one sun, and although I am a bad Catholic (God forgive me!), I never could be of any other religion."

"These words made a deep impression on me. If there were only one true faith, was I quite sure it was my faith? My husband, careless and easy as he was, had the most profound conviction that the Catholic religion was the only real religion. If he were right (and I never knew him to make a mistake in matters of thought or intelligence), why should I not try at least to find out something about that religion, and if there were flaws in it, which would be very apparent to my ignorance, I could argue a little about it. I was really in earnest, and being of a religious turn of mind, and very anxious to convert my husband, I determined to go into the enemy's camp and look around for myself. I was trembling at the thought of meeting the 'Scarlet Woman of Popery,' but I loved my husband dearly and hoped I was striving for his soul.

"My husband was a traveling agent, and often was absent for two or three months at a time. This was hard for us both, but we consoled ourselves with the hope of better things ere long, and as he wrote me every few days without fail, and told me where to address my letters, looking for the mail became my most engrossing occupation until one night I had a strange dream.

"My husband had been away two weeks, and I had received his letters regularly. In the last he wrote some closing phrase which told me that his faith, though crushed over by the distractions of the world, was

still there, undying and strong. All day I thought of his words. I forgot that they were exactly, but that night I had a strange dream.

"I seemed to be wandering alone in a dark cavern. I touched the rocks on either side; they were cold and rough. The passage was narrow and the path was uneven. I was continually stumbling. I walked on blindly, getting more and more weary at every step, wondering when I would reach the end. I had some vague idea it was my soul's destiny, and that I was going through earth's pilgrimage to God, but the cavern seemed interminable; my hands were sore and bleeding from the rough walls of rock I was obliged to feel on each side in the darkness, and my feet were aching and burning. Suddenly the thought flashed through my tired brain: 'Am I on the right road?' I seemed to have set out bravely fully convinced I would reach my destination, but now I was almost exhausted. In my dream I fell on my knees with my arms outstretched and prayed aloud: 'Oh Lord, give me light to know the right path!' Suddenly a great brilliancy suffused the far distance, I saw a cross in the midst of it, and beneath it, as it were, on some high mountain, a noble edifice. Standing in front of it was a glorious and beautiful figure, with eyes that pierced my very soul. One hand pointed to His breast, which seemed to be a quivering mass of living light; the other hand pointed to the crossway crowned edifice. I tried to spring forward, but fell on my face and awoke.

"I need not tell you the impression that dream had on me. I was not in the least superstitious, nor, as a usual thing, bothered by the foolish pictures that were revealed to me as I knelt with outstretched arms in that dark cave and cried to the Saviour for light. I did not dare to tell what dream to gossip about. I would not tell my minister, and I could not write it to my husband. One day he was shopping, and passed the door of a Catholic church. It was in the heart of the busy city—the only Catholic church of prominence in the district. It is now torn down, but even when I pass the site I bow my head. I glanced at the open doorway, and with a guilty feeling I entered. It was a vast aisle of gloom. The Gothic arches loomed themselves in vagueness, the altar looked far, far away, and the church seemed deserted save for a few bowed figures that did not pay the slightest attention to anything around them. I advanced half-way up the aisle and stood doubting and trembling. I had never been in such a place before. I was drawn onward by an invisible force. I saw a crimson star flickering, trembling in space. I followed it, and stood beneath it. I found it was a richly decorated lamp suspended from the roof. I looked around, half frightened at my solemnity. I was standing before a long, low railing that extended across the church. Suddenly a figure robed in black, with a peculiar square cap, came from a door within the railed space. He raised his cap, as he knelt before what I now know is the altar. I stood terrified lest he should recognize me as an intruder and order me out of the place. I felt I deserved it. But he rose, and, coming to the railing, courteously asked me in a low voice if he could serve me in any way. I think my embarrassment told him I was an outsider, for when I answered hesitatingly, he asked me if I would not come to the house. I dared not refuse, but followed him bewildered, and only recovered breath when I was ushered into a neatly-furnished little parlor, where I was courteously handed a chair. The priest had asked no questions, and now looked at me benevolently, waiting for me to speak. I hardly know how it happened, but I raised my eyes and saw on the wall a picture of the Saviour with one hand on His breast, the other extended, and my dream rose up before me, and I cried out to the priest, pointing to the picture: 'Oh, sir, what does that mean?' In a few words he explained the meaning of the Sacred Heart, and I told him my dream, and then my heart was unlocked and I told him all my doubts, all about my desire to explain away my husband's faith, and, in fact, made an entire confession of everything that was on my heart and mind, ending with my unaccountable impulse to enter the church door as I passed that day. He listened patiently and gravely, and then smilingly said: 'I knew you were not a Catholic when first I saw you, my child, and I cannot but believe that God has special designs for you. We won't discuss that to-day; but, since you are so anxious to convert your husband, I will give you a book to read—a book that will tell you everything Catholics believe, and in fact, their whole religion. It won't take you long to read it, and if you desire any explanations I am nearly always at home in the afternoons, and I place myself at your service. Saying this, he rose and took a small paper-back book from a bookcase and handed it to me. It was a 'Little Catechism.' I thanked him as I rose to depart. I gave him my address and left his house with such a feeling of peace and serenity in my heart that I felt like singing aloud for joy. I had no wish to become a Catholic; I was only delighted to think I had actually spoken to a minister of my husband's religion and he did not denounce my desire to convert him.

"When I went home I took the first opportunity to read the little book. I was amazed at its simplicity and reasonableness, and then at its tone of conviction, at its clear decision, at its self-evident statements—facts that only needed thought and unprejudiced judgment to affirm their certainty. I finished the little book at one sitting. Again I read it, and it was not long before I had to yield to its truth. The days passed on; my husband's letters came regularly. Everything went on as usual, but within my soul it was as if a new world had burst upon my vision. When my husband returned for a two-week's rest, he noticed a change, an unaccountable something, but I was determined to hold my peace until I could tell him all.

"Six months passed away; my husband had gone again, and in the meantime I had visited my friend, the good priest, and was being instructed in the faith. I will not tire you, Father Alexander, by going into further details, but the next time my husband came home I asked him to take a walk one evening. We went to his amazement, to the rectory, where my good father and instructor was waiting, and while my husband stood dumb in surprise he announced that I was to be baptized conditionally next day; that I was to make my first Holy Communion the following Sunday, and then I said to my husband:

"Will you not come with me?" "He was overcome, but before we left the house he had promised. He kept his promise. We received Holy Communion together, and until his death he never failed in the practice of his religion. He died like a saint, after a long weary illness. A nun, the teacher of my children, knelt at his bedside saying the prayers for the departing soul, and when he passed away she closed his eyes and said to us as we wept there: "Do not sorrow; he is with God and the saints." "That was many years ago, Father, but my faith has never faltered; my dream has been realized. I found the light through the love of the Sacred Heart."

It was a beautiful story, this conversion of your venerable friend, and it is worthy of note in this month of June, when the heart of Our Lord is specially honored all over the Catholic world.—The Missionary.

THE ADVOCATE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Who is there to-day without knowledge of St. Rita, Advocate of the Impossible? The devotion to this saint has spread rapidly during the short time that has elapsed since her canonization, and to-day St. Rita is almost as favorite a saint as St. Anthony of Padua.

The miracles attributed to her are numerous and wonderful, and the cultus of St. Rita has found a place in the heart of nearly every devout Catholic. Her feast May 22nd is celebrated with a novena and now the big novena in her honor is being conducted at the Church of St. Rita, 63rd Street and Oakley avenue.

The Augustinian Manual of St. Rita published by the Augustinian Fathers, Chicago, gives a rather complete sketch of her life.

She was born in Rocca Porrena, a hamlet not more than a mile from castle in the latter part of the fourteenth century. So she is not a modern saint notwithstanding the fact that she has been canonized but thirteen years. Her parents Antonio Mancini and Amata Ferri were poor in the goods of this world but rich in the graces of God. The mission of peace-makers among the inhabitants of Rocca Porrena seemed the special calling of this aged couple. Far and wide they were known as "The Lord's Peacemakers." The only blessing that God had not given this holy old couple was the gift of a child, and finally even this blessing came to them. It is related that it was made known to Amata that the little one was to be called Rita (signifying right) which name she was given.

At her baptism, her biographers say, a number of perfectly white bees clustered about the face of the child and between her parted lips, deposited their honey, as a symbol of that sweetness of spirit which would possess her.

Her childhood gave promise of great virtue. Obedience and reverence for her aged parents reflected themselves in all her actions, and it is no surprise to learn that at the age of twelve, Rita sought to ratify her mystic epousals with Jesus. Her desire was to consecrate herself to the Lord by the vows of religion, but here she was destined to experience bitter disappointment. For some unexplainable reason her parents withheld their consent to their daughter's fulfillment of her vocation. Instead, they were intent on seeing her settled in marriage and favored the suit of a young man of wealthy family. His name was Ferdinand and he was of morose disposition and sullen habits.

Some biographers of the Saint declare that in foregoing her original purpose of embracing the religious life to enter the bonds of wedlock, she was a victim sacrificed to the greed of her parents. But in justice to all concerned it would seem that Rita, as seen comparatively a child under the influence of her parents, and in response to the ardent pleadings of a devoted suitor, was diverted from her original intent of embracing the religious state and yielded consent to enter marriage with Ferdinand.