

Richard was a good man, really and practically pious; so he took it for granted he was to serve God in poverty and in a lowly station, and he submitted cheerfully and learnt great and real humility. This kind of disposition is very beautiful. It is not only the rich who are fond of the world, nor the noble who are proud, nor the indulged who are fond of pleasure. These sins belong to all classes and all conditions, and it is rare to find in any one a single and disengaged heart such as Richard Watson's. There was one thing, however, which really lay at times heavy on it, and at such times his voice would falter, the song was checked, and large tears gathered in his eyes. Richard had no relations, and no very intimate friends in the world, except the worthless brother in America. The people he knew best were as poor as himself, and Richard had a real horror of dying in the workhouse. Often and often he tried to save a few shillings for his burial, looking forward to days when he could no longer work; but some illness or want of work, which, alas! became more frequent as Preston spread and increased, and many richer competitors took the bread out of his mouth, always exhausted the little fund, and the work of providing had to begin again afresh. Preston grew and spread indeed, and many a richer Catholic came there, and many poor ones came in shoals from Ireland, and thrived and prospered, while Richard went down the hill in spite of all his exertions. His shop grew more shabby, his spirit lamp was less often lit, and the cheerful voice of the honest artisan was more often silent; for his poverty became more pressing, and his fears of a workhouse burial more real and likely to prove truth. At last, after rent had been called for in vain many times, the landlord gave Watson notice to quit, for he was going to get a new lodger; adding, in what was meant to be kindness, 'You had much better go to the workhouse at once instead of starving here.'

'Easy said,' thought Richard, 'by those that have not to try what it is.' To the workhouse however he went; and he found, true enough, plenty to eat—and good food, quiet and cleanliness, and time to himself. He thought, though his joyous song was hushed, that he might even grow reconciled to the life if it was the will of God, but he could not get reconciled to the death, and the workhouse funeral. Every time a poor pauper was carried out in that rough unpainted shell, and laid in the cheerless, heathen-looking cemetery, where all kinds of belief and no belief were mingled together in utter confusion, and with the same mockery of religious rite. Richard turned pale, and felt deeply in his heart that a poor Catholic cannot now in England claim even his last resting-place in his native soil. Long poverty and struggling with cares had made deeper inroad into his constitution than he knew of, and very soon the wearying cough and restless nights began to show that consumption was making daily ravages in his tall thin frame. One day that he was

worse than usual, and lying on his bed, after spitting blood, a friendly voice greeted him, and some one took him by the hand. He looked up gratefully, and saw a gentleman dressed in a long, dark blue, camlet gown, with a large cross hung by a red ribbon round his neck, his face was very cheerful and pleasant, and beamed with compassionate charity.

'How are you, Watson—how long have you been ill?'

'Two months, sir, about; and I don't think I shall recover now.'

'God's will be done!' answered he. 'You are not afraid to die?'

'No, sir;' answered Richard, humbly. 'I have great hopes of God's mercy, and tried to live again that day, but—'

'But what? Speak to me as to a friend.'

Richard paused a moment, and then said: 'I have great dread of dying here, sir, and that weighs on my mind: I dare say it is foolish, but I can't bear the thoughts of a workhouse burial.'

'Well, my good fellow, set your mind at ease on that point. Do you see my dress? I am one of a Confraternity lately established for visiting the sick and burying the dead. We have bought a good piece of land near the church of SS. Peter and Paul, and we give to every poor Catholic who cannot afford it, a Christian burial. I promise you, if you do not recover, to lay you myself in the grave in a Catholic manner. So now prepare either to live or die, as it pleases God, without farther concern on the matter.'

Richard's mind was indeed set at rest by the Christian charity of his friend, who came every day to see him till he died, which was about three weeks afterwards. The whole Confraternity then came to bury him. They washed and dressed the body, placed it in a suitable coffin marked with a brazen cross, and covered with a cloth also embroidered with a large cross in the middle. The members of the Confraternity (many of them gentlemen) attended the coffin, and followed it two and two, dressed in dark blue habits, with scarlet ribbons and crosses. Two priests walked before it, in front of whom were carried a processional cross and lighted candles, by three Acolytes, attended by twelve Choristers, two and two, chanting the Litany for the dead. The foremost of the Confraternity, immediately behind the coffin, carried the banner of the brethren—Our Lord rising from the tomb. The poor watchmaker was the first whom the devout and Catholic procession had borne to the grave, and when they had wound up the rising ground to the burial-place (walled round, and decorated with simple carved stone crosses), and laid the remains of the pious and humble artisan in the dust, with ancient and holy prayers, they all felt that it was indeed a solemn and charitable deed to bury the friendless and penniless dead.