
OLD LETTERS

crutches—rheumatism had almost made her a cripple—and whispered to Sister Benita: "The Cardinal is waiting in the drawing-room, dear."

"Pardon me, Matt. His Eminence is waiting."

The Cardinal greeted Sister Benita warmly.

"Have you brought the little box containing the letter?" he asked of her, kindly.

"Yes, your Eminence. Here it is," she said, "just as my brother gave it to me; and here is the key."

"I suppose it will fit the lock."

"I hope so. I have never tried it."

"Then this letter has never left the casket since your brother placed it there."

"No, your Eminence."

In a moment the key turned in the lock and the lid flew open.

"Ah, here is the precious envelope!" exclaimed the Cardinal. "It does seem strange, Sister, that Arthur should have addressed it to Gracia and commanded you to read it to her on her twentieth birthday. When had I best read the letter?"

"After a little while, your Eminence. I think dinner will be ready shortly. Ah, yes, there is the bell."

The two left the room, Sister Benita leading the way. In the hall the Cardinal met Gracia and Jerome.