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HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

Author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER XXXIII.—CONTINUED

But gently—so gently—lest by her haste she should disturb or startle the dear old man, the child first knocked at his door, then opened it. Very softly she stole across the room: but if his eyesight was dim almost to blindness, his hearing was still keen; and catching the sound of her light footfall, he raised his venerable head and smiled his welcome.

Quite naturally she slid down beside him, and putting her little face near his long white silvery hair, whispered—because it was a secret—

"They're coming, Father Egbert! They are close to now! And your little favorite, Bertie, about whom you tell me all those nice stories, she's coming too; and you and I are glad, are we not?"

"Yes, yes, yes," replied the old priest eagerly. "I knew she would come. She said she would. Will she be long, my child? And are little Marie and Madge with her?"

The child smiled sadly but kindly to herself as she answered: "Yes, dear Father; they are all three together. Shall I run and tell them not to be very long before they come to you?"

"Yes, little one: tell Bertie old Father Egbert has waited so long to see her. Ah! I hear the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel drive. Can it be they?" He chuckled to himself: "And they think here that I know nothing of this!"

The girl's eyes looked fondly yet sadly once more upon the venerable old man before her. "How pretty, how beautiful he must once have been," she thought; "since even now he looks so grand." There is, after all, a close link between old age and childhood; for how often do we not see the feeble steps and habits of old age in beautiful harmony with those of early childhood. And little Margaret O'Hagan seemed to sympathize with and understand the aged man so thoroughly, as she bent over him and endeavored to coax him, as she might have done a dear companion of her own age, by saying sweetly: "Now you will have a little doze, won't you? Then when they come you will not feel so tired."

She shook up the cushion at the back of his chair, stroke his white hair, and kissed with reverence his aged hand; then darted off to meet her mother. He smiled to himself as he heard her close the door and endeavored to coax him; it was familiar to him, "What a bright little child it is," he thought. But somehow he could not realize that she was "little Madge's" daughter.

To old Mary's astonishment she came up with her little charge, who was now sauntering slowly and thoughtfully down the long cloister leading to the guests' apartments.

"Why, my bairnie! not seen thy mother yet?"

"No, not yet, Mary"—slipping her little hand in hers—"I thought they might like to have the first meeting all to themselves; and then, looking up doubtfully, "you know mother doesn't know we are here."

"She'll not be cross; don't fear, child. She gave you her word that you might come to France and see 'Sister Marguerite,' as they call her now."

"Yes"—slightly—but, don't you see, I want to give Lady Abbess the first chance of telling her all about it. You know she made all the arrangements herself. Do you think she has had time to tell her by this?"

"Plenty, my pet. Go in now, and I'll warrant me they'll all be glad enough to see thy bonnie face."

She opened the door as she spoke, and pushed the child inside.

Seated in the centre of a happy group was that famous woman who, in her gentle wisdom, had guided and supported so many of her sex, and, by her own eminent example and wise counsel, had won such a place in their hearts that the love and esteem wherewith they regarded her seemed unbounded. There she sat with them all clinging around her, as though they were yet the veriest children. I have said she was to all appearance little altered; but to those whose office it was to be in close attendance upon her person, it was often painfully evident that at times she suffered much bodily pain; which fact, however, she strove hard to hide from the rest of the community.

Now, amidst so many of her children—for dear Mother Agatha, as also several of the other nuns, was present as well—there was not one amongst them brighter or more cheerful than herself. Had she not always loved each member of "The United Kingdom" with a special love? What pleasure, then, to see them again, each true to her vocation in life, even as she would have had them to be.

The knock at the door was so soft and low, and it was opened so gently, that all did not at first hear or observe either; but Madge, who was sitting opposite, looked up at the moment, started, then sprang to her feet on perceiving the small

apparition, exclaiming: "Margaret, my child, you here?"

But the look of surprise was almost instantly changed to one of joy, as she stepped forward and clasped the rosy culprit to her bosom, embracing her heartily. It was such an unexpected delight to see her little girl again. When her mother released her, little Margaret sprang to Sister Marguerite's side, and, sinking upon her knees beside her, hid her face upon her shoulder, weeping out the words, "Oh, I am so glad you did not die!"

"Dear little heart!" answered the gentle Sister, folding her arms around the slender form. Thank God, indeed, that we are spared to meet again! Once I had almost feared that I might never see our little Margaret more. You and I, dear child, will have many long talks now. We have not forgotten our little secret, have we?"

Then Lady Abbess explained to them how the child in her trouble had written to her, telling her of her mother's promise, viz., that should Sister Marguerite recover, she, under Mary's charge, might visit France and see her once again; and how, after thinking matters over, she had taken upon herself to arrange that she might meet together at St. Benedict's Abbey.

Aunt Marie, every one was glad to see the child and have her near; so all was well, and she took a place amongst them, which even then seemed to have been waiting for her; and from that day a sweet joy and contentment filled the little maiden's soul.

"And how about Father Egbert?" inquired his old favorite. "How is the dear old man?"

"Better, I think," responded Lady Abbess. "But I did not advise him of your coming, fearing that should your strength fail, you would be unable to accomplish the remainder of the journey today, and the disappointment to him would have been very great."

The child colored slightly as she heard this and drooped her head, but said nothing. She knew that she and the old priest had spoken together daily of the expected visit, and they had appeared to understand each other so easily. Their talking about it, she thought, had never seemed to upset him in the very least.

"I wonder how he will recognize you all again," remarked Mother Agatha, "for at times he cannot see at all. As soon as the bell sounds for Compline you must go to him, Sister Marguerite."

"Yes, dear Mother; I am longing to do so." Before they had found time to say a quarter of what was in their minds that bell did ring; but Marie and Madge had shown with pride the photographs of the little ones at home, and had told how the little girls at Baron Court were only waiting until they were old enough to go, as their mother did, to the memory of their dear, dear father, and seek for tuition and love 'neath St. Benedict's care.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Father Egbert awoke from the doze which, in accordance with the child's desire, he had been enabled to enjoy; he awoke, as we sometimes do, with a vague impression of pleasure or pain holding an undefined way over our drowsy minds. He smiled to himself as these thoughts gradually took more tangible form, and clasping his hands together, sat very still, like one buried in deep thought.

The Compline bell had ceased ringing. Sister Marguerite needed no guide along the old familiar way. She was walking very thoughtfully, and—unlike herself—very slowly, down the long passages which separated the guest-rooms from those of Father Egbert. Her mind had reverted back, as it frequently did, to the memory of that dear parent, whom she had loved so tenderly, and whom God had seemed fit to take to Himself whilst she was still a willful girl. He had gone; and now she was permitted to visit, probably for the last time, her dear old spiritual Father, this venerable, saintly old man, this link of the past, whose blessing she craved to receive ere he too should leave her for the unknown. A great feeling of pleasure suffused her mind and seized upon her whole frame, when she realized how sweet a thing it was to be unfettered save by the ties which bound her to God, free to spend herself, for Him, upon His creatures—to feed them, to clothe them, to tend and comfort and pray for them in all their wants and miseries, and to be blessed by Him in return. Dear old Father Egbert, how good he had been to her in days gone by! Her nearness beat fast; she neared his room, and the hand that was once so fearlessly trembled now and caused her knock to be almost inaudible when she reached his door. "Perhaps he sleeps," she thought; "I will look and see."

No, there he sat; his hands still clasped together, a smile upon his benevolent countenance, his sightless eyes instinctively raised towards the crucifix which stood upon a table near. He turned his head sharply, and a look of joyful expectation shone upon his features as he caught the sound of her firm little tread upon the floor. She spoke not a word until she knelt at his feet, then taking his hand, she said in a voice filled with emotion: "Dear Father Egbert, I have fulfilled my promise: I have come to aid you, and be blessed."

He started when he heard her voice; but his own was firm as solemnly he raised his hand above her bowed head and said:

"Bertie, my dear child! May God in His mercy and power bless you as I do this day, now and for ever."

Then a look of supreme joy broke over his venerable face as he pressed her hand in his, and thanked God that he had been spared, if not to see, at least to feel her presence near him ere he died.

"I knew you would come, but you have tarried long, dear child. You do not forget the promise you made to visit and minister to me in my last illness? Speak, Bertie; for though I cannot see your face, your voice is dear to me; there is a power and ring in it that floods my failing memory with happy thoughts, and recalls faces and scenes I had almost forgotten. Like the swell of a strong spring tide which carries on its breast remnants of the past and secrets of the deep, your voice has recalled to the surface of my mind images and impressions I had thought lost for ever. Why did you not visit me sooner?"

"Father, I have been ill; I could not come."

"Poor little Bertie! I knew there was something wrong. Are you stronger and better now? For, alas! I cannot see you."

"Much, much better, and as soon as I could travel I came to you."

"That is like you and you have made me feel so happy. No cloud now rests upon my mind. Did you not kneel here once before, and did I not bless and send you on your way? You were going then to devote and consecrate your life to deeds of charity for God's sake. And did you do so?"

"I did, Father."

"And you belong entirely to Him?"

"Entirely, and for ever."

"And the rich, your old companions, know you not now—perhaps despise you?"

"That does me good, not harm."

"Aye, but the poor, the lowly and the suffering bless you, child?"

"Always, Father."

"And you are happy, Bertie?"

"Very, very happy; so happy, Father, that oftentimes I marvel how so much of peace and joy should fall to my lot."

He raised his sightless orbs upwards, and laying his hands upon her head exclaimed—

"Did I not say—did I not prophesy years ago, that this child should bless and be blest? Aye, God will reward her a hundredfold for all she has done for Him. I have grown old, dear child, and have become a heavy trial to all around me. I would fain lay down the burden of this life, were it Heaven's will, and begin the new one above. Never, kind Bertie, will these aged eyes look upon your bright innocent face again. But we shall meet at His feet. I shall see you there—yes, meet you never to part from you again."

She took his hand and pressed it to her lips with respectful fervour, whilst he continued: "You must not weep when you close my eyes in their last long sleep. No, do not mourn for me; but pray much for me: pray that my soul may find favour before God. And I—I will watch over you, and ask that my old mind may remain faithful till death. We shall not be long separated—life is very short."

"Do not speak like this, dear Father! I cannot bear to hear it!"

"But I must say what is in my mind; and you must be kind and patient, and listen to me, for you will not have me with you long—then you will be sorry that you did not hear all that the old man had to tell you—and I have waited so patiently to say it! Until I heard your steps cross the room, I was filled with doubtful fear, lest the good souls here, through mistaken kindness, would prevent your visiting me tonight."

"Then you knew that we had arrived? You were expecting me! Who told you of it?"

"Ah!" and he smiled archly; "they thought here to deceive the old blind man; but Heaven sent one of its own to advise him of your approach."

"Who was the angelic messenger, Father?"

"A little child! One so guileless of heart, so full of gentle thought, that she must indeed be fair to look upon. We have sat together and talked of you, and she loves you dearly. Do you not call her 'Margaret the Third'?"

"O, the darling little nymph!" laughed Sister Marguerite, "to steal a march upon us thus."

"Nay, dear child, forbear to scold her; for she has been a comfort and a joy to me. I have loved to listen to her wise though childish prattle. Tell me, if you can, from whom she has derived that voice; 'tis pleasantly familiar; I have heard it, so it seems to me, years ago."

"Does it not sound like dear old Madge's—or rather, does it not bear in its sweet tones a vibration, a ring, as of the two Margaret's voices even as she bears their features blended in her little face!—for truly she is Madge's child."

"Madge's child!" he repeated slowly, covering his sightless eyes with his aged hand as though in puzzled thought. "This little one—the child of our own Scotch kinsfolk? Yes, yes—it must be so; for 'tis her voice that has so stirred me in the child. I begin to see it now. That is why I have felt so drawn

towards her. I knew she belonged to us by some mysterious bond, but could not fathom where the links were."

"Alas, this but proves to me how very old I am—how I have outlived the allotted time. Where is our little Madge? and the gentle little Marie also? Where are your old companions, child?—that I may bless them ere I die."

"Awaiting the summons to visit you, Father."

"Go, call them; bid them come at once! No, no; stay!" he cried hastily, as she rose to her feet. "Do not leave me; I cannot bear that you should go. See, I will touch the bell and convey my message to them thus; and do you draw chairs closer up, that I may have some of the dear old children around me once again. I like to hear their voices near me. It may be for the last time on earth that this pleasure is permitted me."

"Nay, say not so, dear Father, I do entreat you not."

"But wherefore not, dear child, when I feel and know it to be true. And now that I have met you once again, and heard from your own lips that you too belong so entirely to God, that for and in Him alone you live, why I feel at ease and without a shadow of misgiving."

"It is well to be thus resigned; and should Heaven will it so, how could I have it otherwise. But to me you have ever been the truest of guides and the gentlest of teachers. Think you not but that I shall miss you. What were you not to me when my poor father died? Ah, Father Egbert, I shall indeed miss you sorely!" Her voice trembled but he could not see the tears that welled up and gathered in her eyes.

"No, you will not miss me much; for here I am almost useless now. But there—there—in the presence of our God, dear child, there, at least, I can intercede for you, and await with joy until the short span of your little life be over; when you will join me once again and take up, and complete in all its perfection, that life for God which under such difficulties you have begun here below. But hark! if I mistake not, here come our welcome guests."

As he spoke the door flew open and Sister Marguerite, flushed and eager, bounded to his side, exclaiming: "Dear Father, they are all here now. What a nice long talk you have had with Sister Marguerite."

He endeavored to rise and greet his dear old children, but was unable to do so; and for the first time they perceived how infirm and feeble he had become. Little Margaret, kneeling quietly upon a low stool at his feet, alternately stroking his aged hair, and with childish awe into his kind old face, was so impressed by all he said that it seemed to her she had listened to and been blessed by one of God's own saints. They all felt that during the time they talked together—telling him, as they did, of all their various joys, and the many changes that had occurred in the lives of each—that his intellect was clear and unclouded, that he understood distinctly, and sympathized keenly in all that interested them. Their joy at meeting and seeing him thus was great indeed.

Marie told him how happy she was with her kind husband and little ones, in the beautiful home he remembered so well; and he smiled as he listened to and blessed her, and prayed that her little ones might resemble the good little Marie whom long ago he had crowned with such joy and pride to himself with the school wreath, once so deservedly worn.

"You were right, my dear old child," he continued solemnly; "you who endured the early trials of your young life so staunchly, so bravely—take care of this little treasure"—laying his hand upon the child's head—"take care of our little Margaret the Third, for in her Heaven has entrusted to you a precious charge. And if in the near future she should ask you aught for God's sake—should she prefer Him before all else, refuse not her request; for remember, He chooses when and whom He will, and often—almost always—He takes our fairest and our best. Promise me, Madge, that you will present no obstacle to the designs of Heaven in her regard."

"I will promise, Father, to frustrate no design for God's honor and glory, whether with regard to my children or any one over whom I have control."

"There speaks the brave spirit of your mother, little one; hers was always a nature capable of the greatest self-sacrifice. Madge, God will bless you in your children!"

Little Margaret's face was crimson. She had crept to Sister Marguerite's side and hidden it in her lap. Both knew that the dear old priest had guessed their secret. Yes, from the House of O'Hagan St. Benedict claimed a daughter at last.

Under the good Saint's fostering care the sweet child grew up and flourished, and Heaven looking down upon the little maiden this night, accepted and blessed the offering which she made of her whole self to His service for ever. In His own mysterious way He had drawn the child to Himself. The world has so many devotees! We must not murmur if some few turn aside and devote themselves with equal energy to the service of the King of Kings.

Young as she was, when she pleaded now to begin her school days, Madge—with her promise to Father Egbert and his words still

ringing in her ears—had neither to the heart nor will to refuse her child's request.

Scarcely an hour had elapsed since the child had left the old priest's presence when Sister Marguerite was summoned speedily back to his side. The assistant chaplain was already there, and was administering to him the last rites, whilst the invalid, whose mind was apparently quite lucid, strove to join in the responses himself. The poor old man was lying upon the sofa, but Sister Marguerite shed no tears—

she forced her voice to betray neither tremor nor emotion—lest it might distress the dear departing spirit. Falling upon her knees beside her friend, she slid her arms beneath his shoulders, and uniting her voice with his answered most fervently the prayers recited by the officiating priest.

Many a soldier, many a weary sufferer, had breathed forth his or her last sigh in those arms. It was in situations like the present that England's Daughter was at her best. There was a power of support, comfort, and solace in her very touch.

Father Egbert passed away as he had lived, peacefully and calmly. He evinced by many a feeble but affectionate sigh his satisfaction at her presence there; then, when all the consoling rites were concluded, and the blessing had been pronounced, with a last gentle pressure of the hand he smiled and was gone.

It looked as if the dear, saintly old man but slept; and his old child wept not, but thanked God that she had been permitted to see and be blessed by him once again ere he died. No; his children prayed for him, but they could not weep, knowing how he had yearned to go. And thus we leave "The United Kingdom," where first we found them, happy and cheerful in each other's love 'neath the peaceful, shady glades of dear St. Benedict's.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE BISHOP'S MEDAL

Romeo Rossetti marched home from school in a sulky and incensed mood. In his heart he wished that every school in the world would burn down and all their schoolbooks with them. As for the teachers—especially the Christian Brothers—Romeo could not exactly wish to burn them, but he conceived of various ways in which they might be properly punished for scores of misdeeds which Romeo could count against them.

Arriving home he threw his books violently on the table and gave vent to his outraged feelings. "Francis Finlay won the Bishop's medal," he exclaimed. "It's a cheat. He's been stokeyin' around Brother Thomas all year and, of course, they gave it to him."

Everybody in the Rossetti household—and that includes Romeo's mother and father, and his sister, Agnes, who went to the Presentation convent—knew what that announcement meant to Romeo. The Bishop's medal for Christian Doctrine and American History was the coveted prize of the first year high at the Christian Brothers. Romeo had set his heart on it. In this he was urged on by his mother, who was proud of her son's ability as a student, and by his sister, Agnes, who shared her mother's pride in her, and prayed that her little ones might resemble the good little Marie whom long ago he had crowned with such joy and pride to himself with the school wreath, once so deservedly worn.

"You were right, my dear old child," he continued solemnly; "you who endured the early trials of your young life so staunchly, so bravely—take care of this little treasure"—laying his hand upon the child's head—"take care of our little Margaret the Third, for in her Heaven has entrusted to you a precious charge. And if in the near future she should ask you aught for God's sake—should she prefer Him before all else, refuse not her request; for remember, He chooses when and whom He will, and often—almost always—He takes our fairest and our best. Promise me, Madge, that you will present no obstacle to the designs of Heaven in her regard."

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Young as she was, when she pleaded now to begin her school days, Madge—with her promise to Father Egbert and his words still

said. "I'm sure Francis Finlay got that wrong, too."

"What were the history questions?" asked Agnes.

"They were all easy," said Romeo. "One of them was, who was the Father of the American navy?"

"And how did you answer it?"

"John Paul Jones."

"That is not correct," said Agnes. "John Barry is usually given the title of the Father of the American navy. It is true that John Paul Jones was a brave man and a remarkable sea captain. The United States Navy was permanently organized by Act of Congress, March 27, 1794. Six captains were appointed by President Washington, and Barry's name headed the list. The commission was dated February 27, 1797, and appointed Barry, captain in the navy to 'take rank from the fourth day of June, 1794.' He was 'Registered No. 1,' and was thus officially the first ranking officer of the United States Navy."

The discussion was interrupted by the arrival of Romeo's father. Manuel Rossetti was a pattern maker, and for three months the pattern makers in Newark had been on a strike. Each morning Manuel left his home and made his way to the union headquarters, where hundreds of men, idle like himself, congregated and discussed their wrongs. Usually he arrived home a short time after the children had returned from school.

Manuel Rossetti was a good man, the son of immigrant parents. He had not had much opportunity for education, but he was devoted to his family and to his Church. Of late, however, especially since the strike, he had been in a moody frame of mind. He was not usually a talkative man, but since the strike he talked less and less, especially at home. So his entrance naturally broke up the conversation between Romeo and Agnes.

The evening meal was soon over, and afterwards Manuel Rossetti took his hat and prepared to leave for the union hall, where, since the strike started, he had been in the habit of spending his evenings. Mrs. Rossetti, who had noticed that her husband had been later and later in returning from these evening sessions, looked up at him as he took his hat.

"Are you going Manuel?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the husband. "I guess I will go down and see what's doing tonight. I'll be back early."

"You might take Romeo with you," said Mrs. Rossetti, who was quick to realize what effect the company of the son might have in bringing the father home before midnight. He is through with his examination now and he need not stay home to study tonight."

Manuel Rossetti's son was the apple of his eye, and while he was not eager to bring Romeo with him, he did not protest against the suggestion.

"All right, Romeo," he said. "Come along."

Romeo's eyes lit up with joy. In a minute he had forgotten the humiliation that had brooded on his mind for the past several hours. The atmosphere of the downtown city streets at night with their groups of men eagerly discussing events of the day and hour, and especially the union headquarters—where he had gone on two occasions where the strike leaders had announced general meetings to which the men were to bring their families had a great fascination for him.

Along the well lighted street the stolid man he had forgotten the wended their way. The sights and sounds were commonplace and drab enough to Manuel Rossetti but in them Romeo always saw something new and interesting.

On the corner of the street where the union headquarters was located Manuel Rossetti stopped. He had often stopped there before, in fact, almost every night now he made it a practice of spending considerable time listening to different men who mounted soap boxes and talked to the crowd of idlers. There was one man in particular, a small, smooth-shaven man with a red necktie and a piping voice who seemed to command most attention, and to whose words Manuel Rossetti had listened more than to those of any other.

Just when Manuel and Romeo walked up he was engaged upon a violent discussion of the wrongs of the working men.

"I tell you, men," he said, "we will never get our rights as long as the capitalists have the Government, with its soldiers to shoot us down, and as long as they have churches and priests to lie to us and to deceive us. We must overthrow them and until we overthrow them we are slaves."

These words came to Romeo's ears as a shock. He had naturally been brought up with a devotion, and reverence, for the Church and its priests, and his study of American history had taught him to be loyal to the Government of the greatest free country on the earth.

"That man isn't saying what's right," he exclaimed to his father in an undertone.

Manuel Rossetti had thought the same thing when he first heard the speaker with the red necktie. But as he had listened night after night he became more and more convinced that the things he said were true. In fact, he had reached the stage where he was disposed to discuss the statement of this man with his fellow-workers and to defend them

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