

CARDOME

A ROMANCE OF KENTUCKY

BY ANNA C. MINOGUE CHAPTER XII

There are men and women whose influence on any life that comes within, or even touches, their orbits, is baneful. Their very presence brings discord, calamity, evil, though they may put forth no hand, utter no word. To the superstitious, they are the unlucky, while the believer in Fate looks upon them as her unconscious instruments.

Mrs. Powell, sitting in her brilliantly lighted parlor, striving to entertain her guests, once friends, now almost strangers, might not be held to account because Virginia Castleton, on the night of the fête, made for Clay Powell a bitter, implacable enemy in Howard Dallas; yet it is certain that, in seeking to fill her own measure of revenge, she had been instrumental in bringing about such a condition.

Equally blameless, as far as active motive of hers was involved, was she for the blind infatuation that had gained possession of the heart of Thomas Todd—she who, in honor, and in word, belonged to Bessie—for the sleepy-eyed Clarisse. It was one of the startling incongruities of life sometimes presents, that Clarisse should have obtained this mastery over a man fashioned out of such material. Had it been Hal, volatile, thoughtless, affected by each passing caprice of youth, the passion might have been attributable to the power that a woman—made older by the world in which it was necessary to use all her weapons dexterously to keep from falling in the unequal conflict—can exercise over a young man; and there would be the consolation of reflection that this first singeing of his too buoyant hopes would work for his future good. But with Thomas it was different. With him, nothing was trivial, nothing was for the day only; but all served toward the shaping of his future. Hitherto, the conditions had been favorable. His quiet disposition and strong ambition to make his mark in the world had been excellent safeguards against the recklessness and frivolities of college life: while the society into which he was thrown on his return home was that of a landed aristocracy, which, when refined and not losing its pastoral purity and simplicity, is the best product of man's relation with man. It seemed one of the assured things, one of the events resulting as a natural sequence to former conditions, that Thomas would marry Bessie, and follow in his father's footsteps, abiding, by his honored and honorable life, new glory on the house of Todd.

Clarisse encouraged the young man's attentions; for what purpose was not plain, since on his return awakened in his heart was not even reflected in her own, and to herself she admitted that Thomas Todd was a fool, whose talk was as boring as his brother's was offensive. But she was capable of using people for her own advantage; so, when that summer was over, thanks to the schooling she had made the unsuspecting Thomas give her, she was as thoroughly acquainted with the new life to which she had been lifted by her cousin as one to the man born.

As no one else had done, for only the unsuspiring she sought to reach that holy of holies we keep for ourselves, she had drawn from him his dearest thoughts and aspirations; she would listen with apparent interest while he talked of his ambition, his future work, or draw him to speak of the disappointment that wrung his heart because his youth prevented him from entering on that ardently desired career.

From the friendship Clarisse had thrust upon her, Bessie had not withdrawn. To every little excursion and pleasure party got up by the young people gathered that summer at Cardome, she insisted that her rival should be invited; for she had promised to be a friend to the girl, and the word of Dupont, as she proudly said against Virginia's warning and advice, was never given to be withdrawn. Moreover, she could not aver that Clarisse was cognizant of the fact that the homage given to her belonged to another; and until it was clearly proven to her that the girl who called herself her friend was, in truth, her cruellest foe, she was bound by that early promise. She kept hatred of her rival out of her heart and judged Thomas by the standard held by honorable women. She knew, however, her moments of wild jealousy, but she remembered that she was a lady and that to unbend from her proud silence was to degrade herself, to bring herself down to the level of the two who were ruining her happiness. Yet unmistakably she gave him and all to understand that she saw the defection, which love was not strong enough to excuse.

Her proud silence abashed Thomas Todd. There was in it no reproach, but a withdrawal as from some one unworthy; and more severely than the bitterest of words did he feel this treatment. According to his own code of honor, the strict, unyielding code by which he measured the actions of others, there was not a circumstance to be advanced in palliation of his conduct. He read this in the faces of Virginia and his brother, in the surprise of Phil McDowell and the fine, cutting smile of Howard Dallas; and though he knew they used his own scales, he resented their measurement of him with all the intensity of his deep nature.

Entering the library one morning late in August, he found Hal, who greeted him with a light remark. In earlier times it would have been passed with a smile, but Thomas's heart was too sore for such words, and the memory of others, which like these seemed to veil an insinuation, was ranking in his brain.

"Hal," he began, with a frown, "I have always held that among members of a family there should exist the same rules that all gentlemen recognize."

"Did I offend by asking if the weather suits your humor for a ride? If so, I beg your pardon!" and Hal bowed, with a genial smile.

"That was not what you said," replied Tom, severely.

Hal ran his fingers through his hair, chestnut hair and remarked, laughing: "Perhaps I phrased it differently, but the meaning is the same."

"I want you to know," Thomas said sharply, "that I have grown weary of your referring to Miss Sears by that name, as 'she' added quickly, 'any one would become of hearing his friend addressed by a term that should not be bestowed upon a lady.'"

Hal smiled, slightly elevated his eyebrows, folded his arms, but made no reply. A dull red mounted to his brother's face, and advancing, he said, in a voice quivering with anger: "What am I to infer from your silence? That you think Miss Sears is not a lady?"

"I do not wish to discuss Miss Sears," replied Hal. "You know that I do not like her. A man's opinion should not be insisted upon when he makes that admission."

"But I demand it!" exclaimed Thomas.

"Then take it!" cried Hal. "Miss Sears is a cunning, conscienceless person; totally devoid of all sense of honor, as her proceedings have shown; dangerous as such persons are: such a character is the opposite of a lady's."

But before the words were finished, Thomas lifted his hand and struck his brother across the face. Hal made a bound forward. He was dead white, except for the red mark across the smooth cheek. Instantly, however, he drew back.

"If you were other than the one you are," he said slowly, "you would not say, and live, that you struck Hal Todd! But you are my brother!" And he stretched out his hand, while a forgiving smile lighted his blue eyes. Thomas was beside himself, and the very generosity of the action added fuel to the fire of his anger.

"Never!" he cried, spurning the hand.

But Virginia's voice broke across his words.

"For shame, Thomas!" she cried, "for shame! A gentleman would not refuse an apology from an offender and you will not accept pardon for your insult!"

"I can not pass by what he said of my—of Miss Sears!" he protested.

"You did not pass it by," returned Virginia, with sarcasm. "Rather you avenged it as I'll warrant no one else would have done."

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"What I said," she replied. "Not every young man would lift his hand in deadly anger against his brother because that brother could not view a stranger in a light as favorable as his own."

"Stranger?" he repeated, a gleam coming over his dark face. "She is not that."

"It were better for your honor if she were," said Virginia, looking at him pityingly.

The red again ran into his face.

"Virginia," he said, "no man would dare say such words to me!"

"Any man would if asked to speak the truth," she answered calmly.

"And if I were a man I should then, as now, tell you, Thomas Todd, that the honor you once held so dear, that you should cherish as the name you bear is sullied: that your actions are those of which a gentleman could not be guilty. Were your father standing in my place, knowing all I know, what would be his word for you? Villain!" and she dropped her voice as she uttered it, while Thomas drew himself away as though the sound struck him.

She went to him and laid a hand on his arm. "It is not your father speaking, but a sister. Women do not use such harsh names to those they love; yet you know that here, here, are taught to distinguish right from wrong, and to make no compromise with the latter, just as you are taught to do. If we were to exchange places, you would speak to me as I have spoken to you."

He looked at the floor, his head bent; then he lifted his eyes, and, drawing himself up, said, with proud humility:

"But I should not have misjudged you, Virginia. I put forth no excuse in the hope of tempering your opinion," he added quickly. "I admit that I—love Miss Sears. But you know me so slightly as to think that that passion could ever make me forget that an earlier affection blinds me and my honor to another?"

"I am glad you are not offering an excuse," replied Virginia. "What right had you, bound as you admit you are to another, to allow your fancy—for I can not believe this is other than a passing fancy—to follow any woman? But admitting that it is love, one which you have found yourself powerless to resist, would you offer to that old girl theasket filled with its jewel? Would you honor demanded it, be adequate return for her young life, crowned with love for you? Would such a fulfil-

ment make your marriage sacred in the eyes of God? When you found yourself drifting into this—this attachment, where was your honor then? No, Thomas, I have not misjudged you. My judgment is what you would give to another man, what you will give to yourself when your reason returns. I pray God when that time comes it may not be too late."

"Too late!" he cried, a despairing note in his voice. His eyes went toward the open window, where, to his horror and Virginia's lasting regret, Bessie's white face showed.

She rose quietly from her chair and crossed the portico. They heard her enter the hall, and with sickening hearts waited her coming. Then the library door opened and she stood before them. Her face, if pale, was stern; her eyes met those of her recreant lover like lanes; her lips were set in a firm line; the figure seemed to have grown taller.

Virginia made a movement to interrupt the words she felt were coming, but Bessie said, authoritatively: "I first, Virginia, for the right is mine."

She turned her eyes again on Thomas, and continued in hard, even tones: "I did not steal into that chair by the window to overhear words that were never intended for my ears. I was there when you came into the library. I heard you strike your brother because he dared to tell you what he thinks of you. When Virginia entered, I waited because I felt I should then have the truth from your own lips. Once I would have called my act the most dishonorable of which one could be guilty; but that was before I had an example set me by my cousin, Thomas Todd. By our later rules of conduct it is quite justifiable!" She looked on him for a moment in silence, then laughed bitterly.

"Ah, Tom, what lessons taught by you, you have this day untaught me!" But instantly her face grew stern again. "I have no father, no brother, to avenge the insult you have dared offer me," she continued. "I am glad I have not. I should not want to be the one to make a Dupont stain his hands with the blood of a coward and a villain!"

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grass mingled with the keen, pungent tang of burning leaves in an adjoining yard. I knocked on the front door, but there was no response, and in a few moments I took the little path around the house. I had a curious feeling as I went on that my first visit might be an intrusion, and I all but hesitated, reassuring myself then that I was only going to inquire about the vine. Surely there was no harm in doing that. And I formed the corner, to see a little old woman sitting in a rude porch outside the kitchen door peeling peaches.

She looked up at my approach, and rose to greet me with an inquiring look.

"Good evening," I said, adding hastily: "I just came in a moment to ask you about your beautiful trumpet vine. I have never seen such a beauty. It is so large—it must be very old, isn't it?"

"Come in, I'm glad to see you," and she quickly placed a wooden chair for me, whisking off an invisible bit of dust with her clean blue apron before she asked me to sit down. "The vine? Sure it's very old—years and years older than you are," and she smiled the soft, ingratiating smile of the true Celt.

"Did you plant it yourself?" I asked.

She glanced up at the vine where it drooped over the broken eaves of the small porch. Her eyes were that peculiar translucent bluish gray so common to the Irish race, and luring in their depths that same look of eternal youth (though informed now with a wisdom that went to the heart) which lends its sons and daughters safely through many a difficult path, but leaves them too often with a bruised spirit and a broken heart. She lowered her glance in a moment and spoke, with a half-sigh: "Yes, ma'am, it was myself that planted it—himself and myself, fifty years ago—before we were married—fifty years this month. Ah, it seems like only the other day, and many's the happy day I've spent since then—and many's the lonely one, too."

"The house was new then, and a mighty fine house it was for those times. We didn't have such big houses then, at least not in these parts. It was himself that built it with his own hands, and he was living in it with his mother when I came out from Ireland. He had a grand bit of ground about it, and it was himself that was well to do entirely. I was only a slip of a girl, but he took a notion to me and I to him—and so we were pledged to marry."

"And you came here a bride fifty years ago?"

"Well, no, ma'am, I didn't. You see, his mother didn't take to me somehow. I suppose I was a fly-away young thing, with ne'er a bit of sense at all, as she thought. She was a stern woman who had lost her husband and all her children but my man—Edward—and she was that wrapped up in him that she thought no one was good enough for him, much less a little harum-scarum Irish girl from beyond the seas."

She had a hint of unhappy reminiscence in it. She hesitated suddenly. "But it was the vine you wanted to know about, and here I'm gossiping away like the foolish old woman that I am—"

"Oh, please go on!" I begged.

"I am very much interested. Tell me how it came out; that is, if you don't mind," I added hastily.

"Well, then I don't," she answered, with an apologetic glance. "I do be thinking of the old times as I sit here by myself, and I do get a load on my heart with the loneliness and, and it's a relief to talk to some one, for it isn't many in these days who care to hear the old people talk. Our day is past, ma'am," with a resigned sigh.

I was about to ask if she lived there alone, when she went on with her reminiscence:

"It's queer, ma'am, isn't it, how things work out in the life? I took my man away from his mother in her old age, and here I am, alone and lonely, with neither chick nor child to comfort or care for me. Ah, well, sure it's good that we can't see what's before us. I mind as it was but yesterday the day he brought me over here to plant this vine. It was but a wee bit of a slip that the lady I worked for gave me. It was within a week of our marriage, and we walked out from the town—this was quite a way in the country then, and people walked more, too—planting the bit of vine together that we might become better acquainted. She would ask me to stay to supper, and he would walk back with me in the evening. It turned out that he hadn't told his mother yet that we were to be married so soon, intending, to break the news to her in my presence. But some one else had told her, and she was angry and cross when we got there, sore hearted, as I can see now; and she wouldn't have minded, who was very fond of me, if I had had words. It ended in the two of us planting the bit of vine—himself and myself, right there at the corner of the house—and going off mightily discouraged, back to town together. She came out and glowered at us as she saw her son digging. 'What are you doing?' she asked, suspiciously. 'Planting a little vine,' he answered surely enough. 'A vine,' she answered, 'you needn't think it will ever shade you or yours! I'll dig it up!' And he answered her in quick anger, not meaning it at all; and you do, I'll never speak to you as long as I live." I saw her face turn white, even to her lips, and she went in the house without a word and closed the door. That day a week

we were married, but he didn't take me home to his mother, as he had intended, but to a cosy-enough log cabin, a mile away. He still farmed the ground here and supported his mother, but they were both black in their tempers, and they never made up. As mothers do, she blamed me, and said hard things about me, and hearing them from meddling neighbors didn't make my heart any softer toward her. Sure, as I look back now I see how sad and foolish it all was, and I might have had more sense and understanding; but it's life that brings us that, isn't it dear?"

"Yes," I assented, soberly; "and sometimes brings it too late."

"True for you, ma'am. I was young and thoughtless, and I miss my good to me and the children, and it never came to me how much his mother was missing him until my oldest child—a fine boy of nine—died. Edward went after her then, but found her sick in bed, down with a fever that took her off in a week. She told him how bitter the sorrow was on her for quarreling with her only child: how lonely she had been and how she had often longed to see him and his children, and even me. But she was that proud not to see us when we look a little one by the way for a purpose. It broke Edward's heart—the poor man! It was himself that approached himself many a time for all the lonesome hours that we never could make up to her. It's a terrible thing, isn't it, that we never can make up for some things? But I tell you, ma'am, I often think, as I sit here by myself in the long summer days, and inside, in the long, lonesome winter evenings, that I am makin' up for it some way. I do be that lonesome sometimes I think my heart would break within me—here in the same house where she spent her bitter, lonesome days."

"Are you all alone in the world?"

A faint look of pain then passed quickly over the patient old face, but her lips smiled bravely, as she said with a show of cheerfulness:

"Oh, no, ma'am; I have two daughters living, but they are far away from home. They are married and live in Colorado. They have growing sons and daughters, but I have never seen any of my grandchildren. They never came back since they left, though they often talk about it. Oh, they're good to me, she hastened to add. They're always sending me presents. You know I have this little house and enough to keep me—himself saw to that—but I do get the lonesome feeling over me to have none of my own about me. I had eight children, and now all are gone but my two youngest girls, and they are far and far away enough. Ah, well sure it's the way of the world."

"Wouldn't you—" I put the question diffidently—"wouldn't you go to them?"

The soft old eyes regarded me gently. "Ah, ma'am, sure there's no place like your own small corner. My life's happy day I spent in this little house after we came back here. Four of my children were born here, and here I raised them all. Himself went to his long rest twenty-one years ago, and it's out of the same door I want to go when my time comes. Here under the vine we planted fifty years ago I do sit many an hour thinking of the old days when I had my children about my feet—the happiest days of a woman's life, ma'am—and it would be like tearin' my heart to leave it. Sure I know it's not much to look at—barren the vine maybe—but it's home, and it's my own. Sometimes, maybe—wistfully—the girls would be coming back to see me. But sure they don't know how lonesome I get for I never tell them. It's no use givin' them the bother when maybe they couldn't come, for they aren't rich, just comfortable, and it takes a deal to keep a family these days."

"I'm sure they'll surprise you one of these days," I put in with a certainty I did not by any means feel. "Now I'll be off, it will be to see your grandchildren."

"Yes," with a far away look in her eyes. "But she never saw her grandchildren—to talk to—I mean—and sometimes I do be thinkin' that maybe I—" she hesitated, and a slow tear fell on the withered cheek.

"Nonsense," I interrupted, briskly. "It wasn't your fault; and if it was, surely you have atoned for it in all these years of loneliness!" O wonderful heart, I was thinking, that had kept the memory of that early mistake so fresh in mind, and was willing to suffer now as she had, innocently enough, made another suffer so many years ago. Husband and mother stubborn both—their hearts had crumbled into dust this many a year; yet this reproach and wrong of those old days still found a resting place in this tender, sad old heart.

At this instant a brilliant idea popped into my head, and before I could conjure up a plan to carry it out, my little woman unconsciously placed the means right in my hand. She said:

"Here's a letter I got from one of my daughters to-day. And she drew a thick misive from her apron pocket. 'Would you mind reading it to me again? My eyesight is poor any more, and the girls write out so I can't always make it out.'"

To my surprise it was a most delightful letter, full of affection and tender inquiry. There was solicitude in every line and many a fond desire expressed to see the mother soon. The letter confirmed me in my intention, which was carried out that very night. I bade the old lady

farewell soon after I finished the letter, assuring her that I would be glad to stop in soon again.

The next day I was called away for a week, and it was two weeks before I passed the little dun house again. It was with an eagerness that increased to anxiety that I scanned it as I approached. Sure enough, there were various signs of unusual life about the house and grounds. Two boys of about fifteen and sixteen were playing ball in the yard; noise of chatting and laughter came from the rear of the house; fresh curtains were up at the front windows and the front door was hospitably open.

Inside, I glimpsed a tall handsome woman, and a keener glance discovered the little mother sitting near by. Just then one of the lads, tall and good to look at, ran toward the front of the house, calling lustily: "Grandma! Grandma! Don't you want us to cut the grass for you?"

It tears stung my eyes as I hurried past, they helped me to sense some thing of the happy life which was now filling that tender, kind old heart.—Helen Moriarty in the Ave Maria.

THE PROBLEM

OF EDUCATING OUR BOYS

By Rev. J. A. McAniff, C. M., in Extension (Magazine)

There is not a problem in the world to-day more vital or far-reaching in its effects than that of the education of our boys. The boy of to-day is the man of to-morrow, and as the boy is, so shall the man be.

Bend the sapling to the right, it will grow to the right; bend it to the left, it will grow to the left. The man whose early education has been neglected, or directed along wrong lines, is a worthless and dangerous member of society. According to God's designs, he was to accomplish a purpose in life. Such a life must be pronounced a failure, entailing, as it does, ruin and misfortune in this world, and exposing him, unless saved by a miracle of grace, to the gravest of all misfortunes—the loss of his immortal soul.

To-day there is noticeable a healthy awakening to the seriousness of the problem of educating our boys, and promoters of social reform are eagerly seeking for means of safeguarding the youth from the baneful influences that surround him, and which interfere with the molding of his character along lines of uprightness and truth. They have discovered that the wrongly educated boy constitutes one of the most prolific sources of the evils that threaten society. We commend them for the wisdom manifested in many of the means now used, or at least suggested, for remedying these evils. Yet we fear that their ultimate success can be but partial. For they have looked against themselves the one door that leads to the sanctuary of the boy; and they have thrown away its key. This secret spot is the heart of the youth, and it is by adopting a malformed, imperfect system of education, which neglects the soul, neglects religious and moral training, that they have thrown away the key to ultimate success.

We can not readjust or reform the present system of education in our Public Schools, and only by the influence of good example can we hope to help save those whose moral training has been neglected. But, thanks be to God, we are not helpless with regard to our own, our Catholic boys; and if the enemies of our religion can triumphantly present statistics of crime and mockingly declare that a vast proportion of criminals belong to the Catholic Church; if, basing their conclusions on these figures, they will accuse the Public Schools, system of education is as thorough and efficient as ours, it is to be feared that this comparison, apparently so favorable to the educational system which excludes religious training, is due to the criminal neglect of Catholic parents. For, unfortunately, there are some indifferent, half-hearted Catholics, who fail to rightly appreciate the value of those priceless treasures that God has confided to them, who fail to realize their duty toward their children and the exacting account they must one day render. There are some Catholics, who allow themselves to be falsely persuaded that the education received in a parochial school or Catholic High School is inferior to that received in public institutions of learning, and who, through selfish motives, send their boys to Public Schools, where their souls are starved, their hearts and wills neglected. The indifference of the parent will almost of necessity be reflected in the child; and if the lives of those boys who have gone astray were carefully looked into, it would be found that in the majority of cases they were Catholics in name only, and not in reality, and that the selfishness of parents, who deprived them of moral and religious training by refusing to send them to Catholic schools, is to blame. Having gone forth into the world to struggle unarmed against the temptations that abound on every side, it is not surprising that they fell an easy prey, and brought disgrace on themselves, their family, and the religion whose name they bore.

This important problem of the education of our boys demands, then, the attention of every conscientious Catholic, of every loyal citizen. And to avoid the danger of inflicting irreparable injury on the child, parents—under whose authority the child is, and on whom he principally depends as to where and in what manner he shall be educated—should entertain

a true notion of education. Education demands moral as well as intellectual development, and both are indispensable to individual or national prosperity. No system which violates the sacredness of either parental rights or religious liberty can be logically advocated or hope to succeed.

Were it not for the education imparted in our Christian institutions, this country would be flooded with unbelievers, infidels; and what would be the result? Neither God nor laws recognized nor obeyed; no fixed code of action followed; as a result, disorder, lawlessness, anarchy. It is to this that the present system of state education would logically drive our young men, and from this abyss society has been and will continue to be preserved only through the influence of men of moral training and deep religious conviction.

Wonderful opportunities for physical and intellectual development are afforded the boy of to-day, and we are proud of our Public School system as far as it goes. Our objection is that it does not go far enough. For, development by physical and intellectual means, but neglect his will, and the product will be a despicable, but refined, degenerate and profligate; develop his will without the proper training of his understanding, and the result will be a revolutionist, an anarchist, a creature of impulse and passion; but develop his body, mind and will, and you will have a being who reflects the beauty of God, is an honor to his race, obedient to authority and respectful of his own dignity and of the rights of his fellow man.

A foolish world, flooded with false and pernicious maxims, claims that she alone can satisfy every craving of the heart of man, without religious training, without moral training, without holding out to him anything beyond the grave. To do our own sweet will, to pursue our favorite amusements, to accumulate wealth, to strive after honor and power—this, she teaches, is the sole reason of our existence; and only too many parents are her blind votaries, hearkening to her seductive advice, and exposing their sons to her destructive influence.

The world to-day needs men of moral training, men trained in honesty and virtue. Thinking men, realizing how few of these noble characters are to be found, tremble for the future of society. In this glorious country of ours, equipped with a system of widespread education, there is something wrong somewhere, as is evidenced by a deduced sense of duty and responsibility, by contempt for religious obligation, by lack of respect for the enactments of civil law, by immorality as displayed in act, by moral degeneracy as portrayed in daily conduct, by the trifling records of the divorce court, and by innumerable other crimes with which this world is teeming. Yes, there is a mistake, and