

THE ROMANCE OF A JESUIT.

From the French of De Bouigny d'Hagerne.

CHAPTER IV.

In a small low room on the fourth story of a tumble-down old house in the Rue Servandoni, a young man was seated before a table loaded with books and studying with feverish eagerness.

From time to time he would raise his head and his eyes would rest for a moment on a young girl who appeared to be about fifteen and who was occupied preparing a very scanty repast. He sighed and was resuming his work when she, perceiving his sad looks, came up to him smiling, and reproaching him with having worked too hard.

"How can I do otherwise dear sister? You know I have to gain our daily bread. I would soon finish with this life of poverty if I had but myself to think of, but I cannot leave you all alone! All the money I have in the house will only just pay for my approaching final examination. If I succeed I may be able to get some employment; if I fail we may have to appeal to public charity."

"Charles, Charles, why speak thus? Why will you not have faith in Providence?"

"It is useless speaking to me of that Providence which allowed us to fall from our position of ease into our present state of destitution. I am tired of suffering and of seeing you suffer. I can not cry like a woman; my heart is filled with anger and hatred and my whole soul revolts against our having to endure our present position. I am certain that Lerouttier has robbed us and that it is our money which has paid for the very equipages from within which he mocks at our misery. Has he not spurned me, too, from his door?"

"You had insulted him you must remember."

"As I had a right to do. He had several times refused me admittance, and when I chanced to meet him near the Bourse, where, probably, he was about to speculate with the proceeds of some other victim's ignorance or weakness, I reproached him to his face with his misdeeds."

"And yet you had no proofs."

"No legal proofs if you will: but I am morally convinced of his guilt, were it only through his avoidance of me and his cowardly attitude in my presence. If ever I get the chance with what joy will I tread him under foot! My patience is at an end and I am longing for a revolution or some general upheaval of society. Heart and soul I would aid it so as to gain back my position and crush all those who have made me suffer. Why do you weep Marguerite?"

"I weep at hearing you talk thus. Dear Charles, would that you could banish these bad and unchristian thoughts from your mind and heart, and become as you were formerly."

"You ask what is impossible, yet for your sake I will try to follow your teaching, for you are all I have to love in the world, you are my only tie to life. Since, then, you believe in the existence of a just and good God, pray to him for me and ask that I may succeed in that examination on which so much depends."

Just then they heard a knock at the door, and on opening it found a servant with a letter in his hand addressed to Mons. Charles Durand. As the servant said he had been desired to bring an answer, Charles tore the letter open and turned to the signature exclaiming, Meynaudier! What can he want with me? For he, too, has abandoned me and I know him no longer. His sister, in an undertone, begged him to control himself before the servant and reading the letter over his shoulder, begged him to comply with the request contained in it. Turning to the servant who was waiting she asked him to tell Mons. Meynaudier that her brother would have the honour of waiting on that gentleman at the time appointed.

No sooner had the servant left the room than Charles exclaimed. But what have I expect from Meynaudier? At the time of my father's death, whilst he believed me to be a rich man, he was lavish in his protestations of friendship and in his offers of rendering me all the service in his power; but, since he has known our real position, I have heard nothing more of him. Even Anatole, my chosen friend,

turns aside when we meet as if I were plague-stricken, although I have never asked alms of him, nor alluded to the few hundred francs he had formerly borrowed from me and forgotten to repay."

"Dear brother, this letter seems to have fallen from the clouds; let us read it again."

"Yes, let us read it again and guess at all that it does not say, but that lies beneath the surface."

"MY DEAR FRIEND, — I have just met with an opportunity of being useful to you. I was this morning asked to recommend some young man who could safely be sent on a very delicate mission, and I thought of you. I feel perfectly convinced of your ability to perform the duties required of you, and if you succeed in so doing, as I am certain you will, I have been promised that considerable benefits shall accrue to you. If you would like to know more about this affair come to me to-morrow morning between nine and ten o'clock."

"Now see Charles, you were denying there being a Providence and yet all at once you meet with a good opening accruing to you. To-morrow morning you will know what the mission is; perhaps it is some diplomatic negotiation in a foreign court. Who knows?"

"Ah! little sister, do not anticipate too much from this summons. When men in power seek out a poor fellow like me in order to send him on some mission, there is generally more danger than glory to be gained."

"Dear brother, should there be danger, promise me you will decline the mission."

"Do not trouble yourself about that; I will not forget that I have a dear, good little sister who can not spare me yet."

The next day, at the appointed hour, Mons. Meynaudier was comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair before the fire reading *le National* when Mons. Charles Durand was announced. Mons. Meynaudier received him most cordially and after chiding him in a friendly way for having been so long a stranger, enquired into his present circumstances. He then entered on the subject of the mission of which he had spoken in his letter.

"Perhaps you are aware, he said, that the Jesuit question is occupying every one's mind just now: are you acquainted with what is being said and thought on the subject?"

"Not much, sir, I see no one and have no time to read the papers."

"I can understand that, but what is your own opinion about that celebrated Company?"

"I have impressions, rather, opinions, on that subject, for I have neither had the time nor the desire to study the question seriously. I acknowledge I have a great aversion to the Jesuits; they are men whom I hate and despise because they are the enemies of reason, and fanatic adherents of a superannuated religion, which, by its principles and doctrines, is opposed to the progress of the human mind. I hold them in special horror because of their having invented a regularly organized system of spies and informers, and also because they cover their insatiable ambition with the cloak of hypocritical virtue."

"Just so! Your ideas are in entire unison with my own and with those of the Government. Only yesterday I was with my friend Mons. — the Minister, and our conversation turned on this subject. Whilst discussing how best to rid France of them we agreed that all that had been laid at the door of the Jesuits before the suppression of their Order was of no use at the present time; what we want is some word or act of a Jesuit at the present day, on which we can base an accusation. Our best plan to attain our end would be to send some clever, trustworthy young man to St. Acheul under the pretext of asking his entry to the novitiate, and to let him stay there long enough to discover their plans, or at any rate, to report what they say and do and what ideas they put into the heads of the young men who enter their houses. We could certainly thus learn facts that would enable us to bring charges against them which their warmest and most skilful defenders could not disprove. It was then, my dear Charles, that I thought of you, for I know you to be sufficiently intelligent to carry out the Minister's idea, and you certainly would not be long among those people without seeing through them and reading their very thoughts. When