

1907.

of art and science and literature. And Luke felt the glamour wrapping him around with an atmosphere of song and light, and he felt it a duty to fit himself to his surroundings. He was helped a good deal.

"Quick, quick, quick, Father Delmege; you're two minutes late this morning. These people won't wait, you know."

Luke felt his pastor was right; but he could not help thinking: God be with Old Ireland, where the neighbours meet leisurely for a smacchus on Sunday morning, and sit on the tombstones and talk of old times! And no one minds the priest being half an hour late; nor does he, for he salutes them all affably as he passes into the sacristy, and they say: "God bless your reverence!"

"Look here, look here, Father Delmege; now look at that corporal! There you have not observed the folds, and it must be all made up again."

"Or: "Could you manage, Father Delmege, to modulate your voice a little? This is not the Cathedral, and some of those ladies are nervous. I saw Mrs. S— last and look pained whilst you were preaching yesterday. It was like an electric shock."

"God be with Old Ireland," thought Luke, "where the people's nerves are all right, and where they measure you by the amount of the volume of sound you can emit."

But he did not down his voice, until it became a clear metallic tingling, as if of steel bolts on a frosty night.

They had long, amiable discussions on theology during the winter evenings after dinner. In the beginning, indeed, Luke would break out occasionally into a kind of mild hysteria, when the grave, polite old man would venture a contradiction on some theological question. Luke did not like to be contradicted. Had he not studied under— at college? And had he not experienced that the right way to do combat an antagonist is to laugh at him, or tell him he is quite absurd? But the gravity of this dear old man, his quiet, gentle persistence, began to have an effect on Luke's vanity, and gradually he came to understand that there are a good many ways of looking at the same thing in this queer world, and that it were well indeed to be a little humble and tolerant of others' opinions. For the truth forced itself on Luke's mind that this old man, although he never studied in the hallowed halls of his own college, was, in very deed, a profound theologian, and when Luke, later on, discovered quite accidentally that this gentle man was actually the author of certain very remarkable philosophical papers in the Dublin Review, and that his opinions were quoted in the leading Continental reviews, he was snip, indeed, and thought—who could ever believe it?

This idea of toleration Luke was slow in grasping. He had such a clear, logical faculty that he could see but on one side of a question, and was quite impatient because others could not see in the same manner. There is reason to fear that at his first conference he was positively rude. He had a good deal of contempt for English scholasticism. It was fencing with painted lists instead of mighty sword play that goes on in Ireland. One brief case about Bartha and Sylvester, who had got into some hopeless entanglement about property, etc., and that was all. Now, all the other priests calmly gave their opinions, but Luke should blurt out impatiently: "That's not what we were taught, and no theologian of eminence holds that."

Canon Drysdale rubbed his chin, and said: "I had some correspondence with Palmieri on the matter. Would my young friend do us the favor of reading his reply?"

And Luke, angry and blushing, read his own refutation.

But the beautiful lessons of toleration and mildness and self-restraint were telling insensibly on his character.

One evening at the salon he ventured even to ask questions. A grave, elderly man had been saying that he had just visited Bunsen in Germany, and that Bunsen was a grand, colossal heathen.

"Did you," said Luke, shyly, "did you ever come across Wegscheider in Germany?"

"Weg—Weg—no, I cannot remember. Let me see—Weimar, Wieland, Wein, Weib, Weg—could he be anything to old Silas?" said the traveller, gravely.

"No!" said Luke, a little nettled. "He was only a theologian; but he was heterodox, and I thought you might have met him. This was really good for Luke. He was getting gently into the ways of polite society."

"I think," he whispered to an Anglican parson, who was always extremely kind, "that Wegscheider was a Sabellian."

"What's that?" said the parson. "Oh! I thought you knew all about heretics," replied Luke.

"A pretty compliment," said the Anglican. "No, I never heard of the word, except flung occasionally at a Bishop as a nickname by one of our papers."

Later on in the evening Luke started a little circle who were gravely enlarging on the evolution of the race, and conjecturing the tremendous possibilities that lay before it.

"Considering what has been done," said Olivette Lefevril, "and how we have grown from very humble origins into what we are to-day"—she looked around and into a large mirror and arranged a stray curl—"there is no, absolutely no limit to the developments of humanity. Something higher, and something even approaching to the anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity is even realizable."

"There is not much hope for it," said a belligerent journalist, so long as the nation's are at one another's throat for a trifle; and so long as gentlemen in morning dress in their comfortable cabinets can get the unhappy proletariat to blow each other to atoms for their amusement."

TO BE CONTINUED.

AN EMPTY HOUSE.

He had not been particularly fond of the house when they lived in it, and he could not make out why he had asked for the key. It was just a fancy that came into his head when he saw it standing empty. The agent happened to live right opposite, and he acted on the impulse.

The house had been vacant for a good while, it seemed. The moss had grown over the path and there was grass in the corners of the steps. The key grated in the lock and would not move at first. It was always a troublesome door to open. He used to rush upstairs like a hurricane to unlatch it before he could turn the key. The key generally turned when she was at the far end of the passage, but, of course, he pretended that it had not. It was so good to hear her laugh at him and to see the sparkle in her eyes. She wore short dresses then, and her hair was down her back. Her hair had been put up these five years. Five? No, it must be seven. There was a big-eyed baby Vi now. Thank God! Vi's eyes still sparkled, and she still rushed at him like a whirlwind when he went to her house. Her way had never altered—never altered from the time she was a wee, toddling thing. Ah! The key had turned at last.

The hall looked smaller than he remembered it. He wondered how there had been room to move in it. Here was where the little oak table stood—the little carved table that they thought an extravagance then. He always liked that table; but, of course, it would not do for the big hall of the big house that he lived in now. He must ask what had become of the table. He had not seen it for years. He always kept his vestas in the right hand drawer. Bert and Allan used to steal them. They were only little fellows then. Such little fellows! And now they would soon be men. Bert was going to Oxford next month, and Allen was taller than his father. They had done very well at school. They were good boys, good boys! What dreadful little pickles they were then! He could almost fancy that he saw them—the empty house was empty no more as he looked around.

Two small lumps were peeping round the top of the basement stairs—a keen brown-eyed face, and a good-humored blue-eyed one. The eager voices were in his ears—"Can't we have a penny for fire-works to-night, dad, 'cause we didn't have one yesterday, and I went up four places in Latin last week?" "An' I've got to bonus, and that's very good for me." "We could get better ones if you gave us a penny better." "Mamma said perhaps you would if we didn't bother till you'd got your coat off. Well, you'll get one arm out."

He used to tell them that they were a pair of young nuisances, but he never meant it. He hoped they always understood that.

Pat, pat, pat, on the kitchen stairs. "May on'y go see dada. Yes, May must. No, no; naughty Milly! Go away, Dada! Dada!" "All right, Milly; let her come."

A round little figure pushed the boys out of the way, and ran at him with a screaming laugh. "Want penny, dada, May, too." "Have you been bad or very bad today, Miss Pig?" "None bad!" "Oh!" cried both of the boys at once. "What does mamma say, I wonder? No, no, boys, no tales. Well, I'll see. You'll send me to the workhouse soon. You won't get any pennies then. And where is Dolly?"

Dolly would be in the drawing-room reading. She ought to be practising, of course; but she preferred a book. She was too absorbed to look up till he bent down and kissed her—she had a quick smile for him then. She all cry after him before she could walk. She said "dada" when she was barely five months old, and she could say one hundred and seventy-three words when she was eighteen months. He made a list of them. He laughed slyly at himself for remembering such a trivial thing. Her baby was very like Dolly used to be—very like; only not quite so pretty, to his mind. Dolly was his first child—the first child is the wonder of wonders always; still a child to him, though she was a woman and a mother. But he was back in the old drawing-room, and Dolly was back at fifteen years—and Bert had snatched her book, and was dodging her round the ottoman. His own voice sounded in the ears of the child with the children.

"Come, come, boys!" his young voice said. "What will your mother say if she finds you've been in the drawing-room in those dirty boots? Give them another wipe, then. What is that down in the garden—a Roman soldier, eh? It looks to me like the copper lid. Eh, Milly?—dinner?" All right. You can take Miss Maisie!"

But May held to his leg, and began rubbing one fist in her eyes. "Oh, very well; she can stay if she's very good. Come on, piglet. What I carry a big girl like you? Only 'little big,' eh? Up you come, then! Now, boys, get those lessons done while I have dinner. Yes you can do them at the other end of the dining table if you're very still and quiet. Fireworks? We'll see about them when the lessons are finished. I dare say Vi will get them for you. She'll pass for thirteen. Now for that 'quiet dinner' mother said I was to have."

Somehow, he never did have a quiet dinner in those days. The children were so young—he was younger then. Ah! He shrugged his shoulders impatiently. People must grow older; and he was not really old—just old enough to have come to his full powers and armed success. His time was precious nowadays. He could only spare a few moments for a look round the house. It was an absurd fancy, a ridiculous fancy.

He started at the sound of his footsteps in the empty house as he began to climb the stairs. The boys used to slide down the banisters; and the girl! This was the boys' room. How pleased they were to have a room to themselves when they moved here! He

let them choose their own pictures out of those degraded from the former dining room. He had expected that they would select the gaudy ones, for which he had no other use; but their taste was, unfortunately, good. They persuaded their mother to buy plaster figures for the mantel shelf from a man who called—Queen Victoria and an Italian flower girl. The flower girl lost an eye when Alan first had a cataplasm, and Bert lent the Queen to May for a doll when she had measles. It never went back. What young scamps they were! But they had grown up fine fellows—fine, manly fellows!

The green shell that he put up for their boys was still there, but it had been repainted. He had meant it to be pale blue, not green; but it is easy to confuse colors by gaslight, especially when you have two little boys to help you. The stain was still in the boards where Alan upset the paint pot. He stood a long time looking down where their bed had been. Most mornings he came in to stop a pillow fight, or settle whose clothes were whose—they were so much of a size. Most evenings he came down from the study to adjust a difference concerning the sharing of the bed or the clothes, or to give them drinks of water, or fetch them biscuits, or tell them that they really must be quiet. They made a great deal of noise. But they were only little fellows. He always tried to allow for that.

He used to come in the last thing at night to see that the gas was safely turned off and that the windows would not rattle. The boys were inclined to doubt whether the lions were really safe in the Zoo if they heard a noise in the night, and then, of course, they shouted for their father. It was always with the long dusting broom. They were frightened. He felt very cross sometimes, he remembered, but he didn't give him self away by showing it. No one has any right to lose his temper with a child. Besides, they were frightened. And they were only little chaps—such little chaps!

This was the nursery. He always had to go in twice to bid May good night—sometimes three or four times. "I shan't have any peace till you are grown up, monkey!" he used to tell her. Now his baby was quite a big girl. How the years had flown!

The elder girls' room was next to the nursery. What bonny girls they were, and how they loved romping and fun! They used to make faces at him round the door, and he would lie in wait with the long dusting broom. Once Violet was in ambush up the stairs with a pillow. She missed him and hit the gas globe. He told his wife that he had broken it. It was his fault, of course, for encouraging them to romp.

Sometimes he would put a booby trap on the bathroom door to catch them in the mornings. He rose early and worked very hard in those times. There was need of hard work with so many mouths to fill. Thank heaven, he was still a busy man; but the need had passed. Work does not often bring its full reward, but it brings something. He was no longer a poor man, thank heaven! He did not care very much for money himself, but he had always wished to have a little for the children when his time came. But his time was not yet up. No, no—not yet.

This was his room, and his wife's. She had a busy life then, but it had been an easy one these last few years. The reward of a man's labors comes first to his wife and children. He could not wish it otherwise. He did not wish for an easy life, ever, he thought. There was always work for a man.

In this room he used to lie awake and wonder how to make both ends meet. One—two—three. The hours struck so quickly one after another. He seemed scarcely asleep before the morning came, and May's tap, tap, tap, at the door. When he let her in she would scramble into his place before he was back in bed. He would pretend to be very cross, and she would laugh. The baby laugh was mingled from the house now. Many years. How she should laugh when the crocodile taut was eating her—the crocodile that was made of legs and bedclothes! They were equally useful for making a camel, with a hump that vanished just as she was slitting down.

There was no sleep for him after May arrived. Her restless feet made a wonderful draft in longe never ceased practising. He had to get up at home now. Many years. He would beg for a story. "In a minute," he would protest sleepily, but she used to put her chubby arms round his neck, and kiss him with a soft, wet mouth. "You're a dear dada. Now tell May 'tory.'" She was a big girl now—a big girl. He went and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

Only Alan and May would be left at home now. Bert was going to the 'varsity. Alan would be going in a year or two. She would not stop long after him. Her impudent beauty caught men's eyes already. And when his baby went—The street lamp that was just lit flickered unsteadily. There must be a mist on the windows. No, it was on his spectacles. Well, well! He would go up to the old study and congratulate himself on the improvement that he had made in that respect.

The study was right at the top of the house—one of the attics. It was too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter; but his work had prospered

there. He remembered how he made the carpet for it, by cutting the best pieces out of an old one. Nothing was left of the oddments that had furnished the room, except the tall nest of drawers that his wife had given him. They were too good for the other things, they said then. Now she wanted to turn them out of his study, because they were not good enough for the rest of the furniture; but he held to them. He was not given, as some are, to friendship with inanimate things; but he could not look upon these just as furniture. Shelves of his writings had passed through them—the writings that were part of himself, that had changed as he had changed. Or was it as the children changed? There was always so much of the children in his stories. When there were no longer any children they would be an old man's writing—an old man's writings. No, no! His heart would never be quickened while he had the memories. He would never lose these. They were with him now.

He turned to sit in the old chair, and found that the room was empty. The dusk was creeping over it, and the corners were full of shadows. It was a room of shadows and corners, a room to think in. He had sat there so often in the twilight thinking: "Thinking of the stories that he made, thinking of his own; facing the things that a man has to face. No one can help him with some of them—no one."

It was here that he sat and faced his darkest hour. He had not liked to think of it ever since. He wiped his forehead as he thought of it now. The daylight grew into twilight; the shadow creeping through the window frame came creeping toward him along the floor. The twilight deepened into darkness. There were whispering thoughts—dark thoughts—in the room. He could not escape them. He got up and lit the gas, to take refuge in light, and they whispered to him still. His thoughts went back to the depths. God forbid that we should follow them and pry into his memories. We all have our dark hours—all.

Suddenly, the door burst open, and the girls pushed one another into the room. They could hardly speak for laughing. He could hardly speak. He passed it off for laughter, too. Dolly had done her hair up, and put on a last season's dress of her mother's. Violet had borrowed her overcoat and hat, and a clear to stick in her mouth. They spoiled the cigar, he remembered, and he had to have the hat ironed. He thought that they saved him. People see what children owe to their fathers. They do not see what their fathers owe to them. Oh, God, if you hear any prayer of mine—if I have struggled in a man's blind way, and that is a prayer—bless my children!

The children! It was they who furnished the house when the furniture was shabby and spare. It was they who gave relish to the food when the larder was scanty. It was they who filled the mind and left no room for the lumber and cobwebs; and they who filled the heart and left no room for the empty heart ache; they who made the labor easy and the reward worth having; they who hardened to the sacrificial that were nearest to a prayer!

The children! It was they who had brightened his goings and comings. They clustered round him and clamored upon him as he went down the stairs. They smiled at him and rushed after him from the doorways. They waved at him from the windows as he passed through the gate. They followed him into the road for another kiss as he left the empty house. He was not a man who prayed often, but his lips moved silently in a prayer.

"You'll find the house much as you left it, Sir Albert!" said the agent deferentially, when he handed back the key. "Times have changed for the better with you since then, but to him that he was smiling at his babies. He looked back to them once more before he turned the corner, and he was smiling still.

God, to whom all things are possible, would know the reward, he thought, for his years of strenuous life—the life that had been his prayer. When time had gone with its fleeting and houses were levelled with the dust, the memories not to be fully satisfied shall not be granted thee. Take courage, therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature. —Thomas a Kempis.

The world has need of every man and woman in it. Age counts for little so long as the spirit is young. The tasks vary of course, but in the final harvest the efforts of each, how ever small and ineffective they may have seemed at the time, count for something.—Leigh Mitchell Hodges.

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It is a good thing to feel grateful and it is a better thing to show it, hence the good old Catholic practice of grace before and after meals. This is a formal way of beginning and ending one of the serious and most important duties of life; for what is more important and of more vital consequence than the nourishing of our bodies and the re- newing of their strength? We pray to God to give us our daily bread, and through His bounty we receive it. He makes the earth yield up its fruits and gives us strength to reap them and to garner them and will to adapt them to our use and benefit; and for this we should be thankful—and thank- ful every time we sit down to partake of our daily repast. "Whatever you eat, whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, do to the Lord," says Holy Writ, or, in other words, we are to make all our actions a means to honor and glorify Him and to show our love and gratitude to Him. The prayers assigned to be said before and after meals are for the faithful, short and to the point—and no Catholic saying them. At one's own table they should be said by the head of the family or the senior member present and all the rest responding Amen—while if one be at another's board they should be said privately when not publicly recited. There is a disposition on the part of some to neglect grace before and after meals, a kind of self-estab- lishment, but this is cowardly and unworthy a member of the great Catholic Church. It is a good breeding and good form require to be observed; so Catholic teaching and a principle require the observance of those brief words which comprise grace before and after meals. They make a good be- ginning and ending of those necessary acts in our daily life and prepare us all the better for fulfilling the rest of our duties. Let us all be faithful in being grateful.—Seedlings.

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Thou shalt not labor long here, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows. Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of all thy evils.

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