

MOONDYNE JOE

THE GOLD MINE OF THE VASSE

BOOK FOURTH

THE CONVICT SHIP

IV.

CAPTAIN SAMUEL DRAPER

In the inner office of Lloyd's great shipping agency, in London, on the day following Mr. Wyville's conversation with Lord Somers, the former gentleman sat, while one of the clerks in the office brought him books and documents.

"This completes Captain Draper's record," said the clerk, handing a paper to Mr. Wyville. "It is from his last ship."

"Thanks. Now, can you give me his address in London?"

"Yes; No. 87 Horton Street, East."

Mr. Wyville left the office, and the clerk collected his papers, from which the visitor had taken notes.

Mr. Wyville hailed a cab, and said to the driver, "Horton Street." It was a long way off, and during the slow progress through the crowded streets, Mr. Wyville examined his notes, and arranged them carefully in a certain order. At last the cab stopped.

"What number?" asked the driver. "I shall get out here," said Mr. Wyville. "But you may wait for me—say half an hour."

He walked down the quiet little street, with its uniform brick houses, green blinds, and white curtains. It was a street of comfortable residences of small business men and well-to-do mechanics. Number 87 was in no way different from the neighboring houses.

Mr. Wyville rang the bell, and an old lady, with glasses pushed up to her forehead, and a piece of sewing in her hand, opened the door, and looked inquiringly at the caller.

"Does Captain Draper live here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; but he is out at present," said the intelligent old lady.

"I am sorry; I will call again," said Mr. Wyville, turning to go.

"He will be in soon," said the old lady; "he comes in to dinner always."

"Then I shall wait, if you please," said Mr. Wyville, and he entered the house, and sat down in a comfortable little parlor, while the old woman, drawing down her glasses, went on with her sewing.

"Captain Draper is my grand-nephew," said she, after a silent interval.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Wyville. "Then you will be pleased to know that I come to offer him a good command."

"Oh, I am delighted!" said the old lady; "he is so good, so conscientious. I always said as Samuel would come to something high. He has been waiting for a ship for nearly a year. I know he doesn't please his owners, because he is too conscientious."

"You will also be pleased to hear, madam, that his owners this time will be quite conscientious, too."

"I am so delighted!" said Captain Draper's grand-aunt.

At this moment, the outer door opened, and immediately after Captain Draper entered the room. It was rather a chilly day, and he had buttoned his coat close up to his throat. He was not a robust figure—rather slim, and bent forward. The past ten years had laid a strong hand on him. The charm of his younger manhood, the boisterous laugh and hearty manner of waving his hand, was much lessened; but the cold watchfulness of his prominent blue eyes was proportionately increased.

He had a long and narrow face, thin jaws, covered with faded side whiskers, worn rather long. His upper lip and chin were shaven, showing his wide mouth. His lips were dry, as of old, but now they were bluer, and more offensively cracked. On the whole, he was a decent-looking man in outward appearance; as he walked rapidly through the streets, with shoulders bent forward, one would say he was a consumptive hurrying home. But there was a compression of the mouth, accompanied with a quick watchfulness of eye, and a quick sneer in the corners of the nose, that would make his face detestable to any one who had the power of rapidly perceiving character.

Mr. Wyville read the face as easily as if it were a printed page.

"Captain Draper, I presume?"

"That is my name," said the other, with a wide and unmeaning smile of the cracked lips, in which the rest of the face took no part.

"I have come from the Treasury, to offer you command of a vessel in the service of the Government."

"Ah—that's good. In what branch of the service, may I ask?"

"Transport," said Mr. Wyville.

"Troops, I suppose?" said Draper, still smiling.

"No; convicts."

Captain Draper placed a chair so as to see Mr. Wyville's face in the light. As he took his seat he had ceased to smile.

"Ah!—convicts. Where are they going?"

"Western Australia."

Captain Draper remained silent so long that Mr. Wyville spoke again.

"You are willing to take such a vessel, are you not?"

"Well, I want a ship—but these convict ships I don't like; I don't want to—Are they male convicts?" he asked, interrupting himself.

"Yes, mainly; there will be three hundred men, and only fifty female convicts on board."

"Fifty," Draper stood up and walked across the room to the

mantle-piece. He leant his elbow on it for a time; then he took up a little glass ornament in an absent-minded and nervous way.

Mr. Wyville sat silently watching him. As Draper raised the piece of glass, his hand trembled and his face worked. He dropped the glass to the floor, and it was shattered to pieces. This recalled him. He smiled at first, then he laughed aloud, his eyes watching Mr. Wyville.

"Well—I don't want that ship," he said; "I don't like convicts."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Wyville, rising; "you were highly recommended, Captain Draper; and as the duty is considered onerous, the voyage will be quite remunerative for the commander."

Draper's cupidity was excited, and he seemed to hesitate.

"Do you know anything about these convicts?" he asked.

"Yes; what do you wish to know?"

"How long have they been in prison?"

"On an average, about three years."

Three years; did you ever know any to be sent after nine or ten years?"

"No; not one such case has occurred for the past twenty years. It would be very unusual."

"Yes; well, you know, I don't care about them—but I have a curiosity. I suppose they're all right—all about three years, eh?"

"That will be the average, certainly."

"Well, I think I'll take the ship. Where does she lie, and when is she to sail?"

Mr. Wyville gave him all the particulars; and when his questions ceased Mr. Wyville drew out a set of articles to be signed.

"You came prepared, eh?" said Draper.

"Yes," said Mr. Wyville, gravely reading over the form. "We are anxious to secure your services, and I thought it just as well to save time. Please sign your name here—and here. Thank you. Now I shall say good-day, Captain Draper."

"The ship is ready, you say?"

Draper, following him to the door; "then I am expected to take command at once, I suppose?"

"No; not until the day of sailing. Your officers will see to the preparations for sailing. At 2 o'clock, p.m., on the 10th, you will take command and sail."

"Well," said Draper; and as he looked after the strong figure of Wyville, he muttered to himself; "Well—just as well; they only average three years. But I'd rather go on board at once, and see them before we sail."

V.

KORO AND TEPAIRU

"Now," said Mr. Wyville, communing with himself, as he walked from Draper's house, and entered his cab at the end of Horton Street, "the elements are moving. May good influences direct them."

At his own house he dismissed the cab, and, entering, with unusual gravity greeted Mr. Hamerton, who was awaiting him.

"You said in your note that you had an important business communication to make to me," said Hamerton, without appearing to notice Wyville's mental disturbance.

Mr. Wyville did not answer, but paced the room to and fro slowly, sunk in deep thought, his arms crossed on his breast.

"These results may follow," he said at length, evidently thinking aloud; "but there is need of an intelligence to make them inevitable. Mr. Hamerton," he said, stopping before his friend, and fixing his eyes upon him, "I have a trust to offer you that involves a heavy responsibility. Will you undertake it, for my sake, and, in case of what may come, carry out my desire to the letter?"

"If it lie in my power, I will. If it lie beyond me, I will do my best to the end," answered Hamerton.

"Yes, I am sure of it. I am very grateful," Mr. Wyville took his hand, and pressed it warmly, with still the same grave look. He then went to a small but massive iron safe in the room, opened it, and from a drawer took two large sealed packets.

"Here," he said, "are two envelopes that contain all my wishes and all my power. They are mine so long as I am alive, with freedom to control my actions. Please remember my death or disappearance, or—other event to impede my action for those who depend on me, these packets belong to you, to open, and read."

"Have you written full instructions therein which I am to follow?" asked Hamerton.

"No; I will not instruct you, because I trust you as I would my own soul. You will understand, when you have read; and you will act for the best. Do you promise me this?"

"I do, most solemnly; but, Mr. Wyville, suppose I should be unable—suppose I should die before your trust were carried out—is there any one else to whom I may transfer the duty?"

"Yes; to Sheridan."

Mr. Wyville locked the safe, and handed the key to Hamerton.

"I shall send the safe to the yacht before we sail," he said. "Now let us inform the children."

Mr. Wyville struck a bell, and Ngarra-Jill silently entered. A word in his own language from his master sent him out as quickly. In a few minutes, Mr. Wyville and Mr. Hamerton went upstairs and entered a large and richly draped room, in which the entire furniture consisted of low and soft divans, lounges, cushions, and furs, the effect of which

was very extraordinary, but very beautiful. The room seemed to have no occupant, as the gentleman walked its length toward a deep bay-window.

"We are—here!" said a low voice, in distinctly measured syllables, as a diffident child might slowly strike three notes of an air, and then there were two laughs, as clear and joyous as the sound of silver bells, and the light sound of hand-clapping.

The gentlemen, smiling, turned to the draped recess, and there, half shaded by the curtains, peeped the dark, laughing faces of the Australian sisters, Koro and Tepairu, the grandchildren of Te-mana-roa, the King of the Vasse.

That Mr. Hamerton had become familiar to the girls was evident from their natural and unrestrained conduct.

A residence of several years in a northern climate had arrested in the sisters the immature development so common in warm countries. They had matured slowly; and while preserving all that was charming and natural of their woodland graces, the restraint of another and a gentler mode of life covered them like a delicate robe. They were so outlandish and beautiful, in their strange and beautiful room, that they might be mistaken for rare bronzes, were it not for their flashing eyes and curving lips.

As they sat in the curtained recess, greeting the gentlemen with a joyous laugh, there entered the room a very old Australian woman, followed by two young men, bearing trays with several dishes. These were set down on a low square divan. The old woman removed the covers, and with quick, short words directed the black men to place cushions around the divan.

The sisters, Koro and Tepairu, came from their seclusion, speaking in their own rapid tongue both to the old woman and to Mr. Wyville. They took each a corner of the divan, and seated themselves on the cushions here placed on the floor, Mr. Wyville and Hamerton taking the opposite corners.

The food, to which each helped himself, was a savory meal of boiled rice, yams, and rich stews, of which the Australians are very fond; and, following these dishes, a varied supply of delicious fruit, among which were mangoes, guavas, and the ambrosial mungie, or honey-stalk of Western Australia.

The conversation during the meal was wholly in the language of the sisters, so that Mr. Hamerton remained silent. Koro and Tepairu had evidently been studying English; but they could by no means converse in the strange tongue.

As if instinctively aware that something unforced was about to happen, Tepairu, the younger but braver of the sisters, had asked Mr. Wyville to speak.

"You are soon to leave this cold country," he said, in their tongue, looking from sister to sister; "and return to your own beautiful Vasse."

The girls answered, as if they were a single thing of nature, by a silent and inquiring look. It was hard to read either pleasure or pain in their faces, or anything but surprise; yet a close observer would have discerned a subtending line akin to doubt or fear.

"Are you not glad?" asked Mr. Wyville, with a smile of astonishment at their silence.

"Yes," they softly answered, in one breath, after a pause, but not joyous breath. "Yes; we shall see the good Te-mana-roa, and we shall find the emu's nests on the mountain. We are very glad."

The old woman, who had remained in the room, chuckled audibly, and when the others looked round at her, she laughed outright in uncontrollable joy at the thought of returning to the forest. More rapidly than a skilled musician could evoke notes, she ran from treble to bass in voluble gratitude and benediction. Then she slid off to carry the joyous word to the other dusky members of this extraordinary household.

"You will be happy in your old home in the yacht," continued Mr. Wyville; "and this friend, my brother and yours, will take you in his care till we see Te-mana-roa and the Vasse."

Mr. Wyville spoke, the hidden fear became plain on Tepairu's face. She looked only at Mr. Wyville, her large deer-like eyes slowly filling with tears. Her sister, too, was distressed, but in a lesser degree; and her eyes, instead of being fixed on Mr. Wyville, passed on to Mr. Hamerton, and rested.

"You are not coming with us to the Vasse?" at length said Tepairu, in a slow, monotonous voice. "You will remain here."

"No; I, too, shall go, and even before you. But we voyage on different ships."

"Why does not your brother and ours go on the other ship, and let you come with us?"

Mr. Wyville looked troubled at the reception of his news by the sisters. As Tepairu spoke, in the last question, his face became exceedingly grave, as if he could never again smile. The sisters saw the shadow, and were troubled also. Mr. Wyville, without looking at them, spoke:

"Children, you should trust that I will do what is best; and I know the word better than you. Tepairu, I am acting wisely. Koro, I am sure of your confidence, at least."

Before the words had died, Koro, with swimming eyes, had risen and taken Mr. Wyville's hand, which she kissed, and placed upon her head. The act was full of affection and faith.

Tepairu, on whom the reproach had fallen like a blow sat just as before, only the light had faded from her eyes, and her bosom heaved visibly. Her sister went and sat beside her, throwing her arms round, as to give comfort. Tepairu allowed the embrace, but did not move a muscle of face or body.

Mr. Wyville rose and walked to the window, glanced out for a moment, then, turning, looked at the sisters. He approached and laid his hand with inexpressible gentleness on Tepairu's head, as he had done on Koro's. The proud but sensitive nature yielded at the touch, and with one quick look of sorrow and appeal, she buried her face in her sister's bosom, and sobbed unrestrainedly.

The old woman, who had re-entered, began an excited and guttural remonstrance against this unreasoning grief. Mr. Wyville chose this moment to depart. He knew that the brief season of cloud would soon pass, and let the sun shine again; that the reflection following penitence is often the purer for the previous error.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE ORDINANCE OF GOD

A TRUE STORY

A half hour's drive brought me into a roadway, arched with oaks. I spoke to the driver and alighted.

"No," I replied to his question, "I shall walk from here. My soul thrilled as I saw the words, 'S. . . A. . . Normal Novitiate.' For at last my heart's desire was fulfilled. A rustic bench near the drive attracted me, and a sudden impulse prompted me to sit quietly for a few minutes before proceeding. Through the trees I could see the house and garden—both beautiful in their simple solitude. A gentle wind rustled through the heavy foliage, and all nature bespoke a perfect September afternoon.

My thoughts were soaring high, toward the life I was about to enter upon, when a voice whispered, 'Koro, Anna, what have you to offer Me for this My crowning gift to you? Glance over your life a moment then answer. In obedience I closed my eyes, and lapsed into thought.

Scarcely four years had passed since I, a girl of sixteen years, walked up to the convent door, feeling that I was about to enter upon an adventurous high-school career. I was without mother or father, and possessed a mind which was a prey to many national ideas, concerning all topics, religious particularly. Life in N— had blinded me to the beautiful truths my mother had taught me, and I was quite worthy of the title, 'heathen,' which I was given, not infrequently. I professed to be a Christian, yet neither believed in, nor cared for, any denomination. All Protestant sects were hypocritical in my estimation, in as much as the majority of their members made little practice of what they professed to believe. Catholicity, I considered, was out of my realm entirely, and better left alone. Yet, there was a longing for the unknown which even the most resolute cannot avoid. It was with a scornful attitude that I had received the news that my next three years were to be spent at a convent, but as I drew near to the most beautiful convent school imaginable, a feeling of adventure led me on courageously. I had come alone, and at the door met a Sister for the first time in my life.

My first year at M— was filled with vexations. After a few weeks, I became accustomed to the rules and regulations; but found the girls jolly companions; and I stood in awe of the Sisters. Their kindness to me was irritating at times, for I had constantly the feeling of an 'outsider' without the desire of being within. I can distinctly recall a conversation at the refectory door; as I remember, it was on the subject of salvation, in which I rigidly placed my small intellect against a Sister's broad, elevated mind.

The close of the first year found me still entering the chapel with an indifferent air, coldly refusing Holy Water from my partner, and walking up the aisle almost defiantly. Through the thoughtfulness of the Superior, I was permitted to remain away from the daily and weekly devotions, as the Rosary, Litany and Office. These had seemed unnecessary to me, yet as I walked the veranda I could hear the voices of the girls as they recited the Rosary in unison. There was a charm to the monotone in the stillness of early evening. I liked to listen, but had not the desire to take part. However, during thoughtful moments, one observation did impress me; that although opposed to their religion, the girls' attitude toward me was one of sincere kindness and liberality. I was known to admit, also, that Benediction was a beautiful service.

During the summer vacation I returned to my former associates, and the following two weeks were one of social life and water sports. Care-free and a guest, the subject of my thoughts was entirely of the pleasures each day would bring. An occasional letter from school renewed for the moment girlish pleasures experienced there, but the charm of the vacation surroundings was strong and my reflections were soon dispelled.

The time came when my trunk was packed and I started again for M—. With a feeling of disquietude I found myself smiling when saying good-bye to summer, and to my friends at O—.

With a rather different emotion I approached the convent at the opening of my second year. I found myself hastening up the walk, and a few minutes later I was saying:

"Oh, Sister, I am so glad to be back!"

It seemed so good to renew the old friendships and to settle down to another year of study and good times. Early in the term I told the directress that, although I had previously been excused from all special devotions, I thought I should like to attend them this year. Sister smiled and said she would be pleased to have me, and so the year began.

And withal, I was unspeakably happy, with a kind of inexhaustible happiness, the source of which I could not determine. I had a feeling which, since my mother's death, I had never felt—that of a true home where there was peace and welcome.

"Why?" I asked myself. The answer was given a few weeks later.

It was the first Friday in October, and, as was the custom, in the early evening, the whole school was assembled in the chapel for Holy Hour—that is to say, an hour of Adoration. We had sung a hymn of praise, and were kneeling in silent prayer. There was not a sound to break the peaceful quiet except the occasional rustle of the little ones in the rear of the chapel.

Then all at once the chapel, yea my very being, seemed illumined with an awful and beautiful Presence. "I want to believe!" was all I could say; and violent sobs overwhelmed me. At the close of that evening I had become a different girl. All that hitherto had been obscure was explained in the words, "the Gift of Faith," a "Divine Gift," indeed, as Cardinal Newman says, was generously given to an unworthy subject.

Why had I been so joyful? Because I had been in the presence of the all-beautiful and omnipotent God Whose presence and greatness I now realized. My only desire was to be a member of the great body who worshipped Him, the Catholic Church.

The step, however, could not be taken at present, for my promise to my guardian, and reason itself, I was bound to wait for one long year, during which I was to take no decisive step. On my guardian's part, time was to thwart my purpose; on mine, it was necessary to learn about and love God.

The year was an unusually bright one at school, and with new zeal I studied, spending much time in reading, conversing and thinking on the subject which had been so suddenly opened to me. With all this, doubts and many little perplexities arose, but from a kind friend and an explanatory director I found an answer to where to turn for help and consolation. The time passed, and with it all grew clear, so that at the close of retreat, in the spring, there was not an uncertainty left to me. The school year was drawing to an end, and the summer vacation following would bring an entire change of environment—that is, a return to my old friends; it would be a final test of my faith.

How bad I felt at leaving school! I had spent both the Christmas and Easter vacations there and had learned to love it so well. Yet, the thought of what the fall would bring was inspiring. I accepted the summer amusements, but they were without savor, due this year probably to the burden of a restless mind. Acquaintances who heard of my prospective change, or, I should say, acceptance of religion, treated the matter either with indifference or contempt, so that I rejoiced greatly when I met a person whom I knew to be a Catholic, for I felt that there was a common sympathy between us.

It lacked but a week before I should return for my senior year. And I anticipated beginning my life as a Catholic, but, during a visit with my guardian, I was informed that my present behavior would not be tolerated. My fondness for him and my respect for his wishes controlled me. He said: "If you join the Catholic Church it will be against my will."

This sent me back to resume my waiting indefinitely. To pray to God for his consent was all I could do. I plunged into financial trouble, which, on account of business subjects, consisted mostly of financial trouble. However, I could continue enough academic studies to fill the requirements of my diploma. That was a great consolation; for the thought of seeing my class-mates graduate without me hurt deeply, indeed.

The subject of religion was dropped for some time between my guardian and me, but it was ever in my mind, preying on it more than I realized. To be so near and yet so far was trying me not only mentally but my physical strength was beginning to feel the strain.

With the first Friday of December there came a visit from my guardian. He had worried much over the matter and was in a perturbed state of mind. I was threatened with the loss of the remainder of my school year; but his solicitude was too great, and he could not bring himself to that step. He urged and pleaded; but again I had to hurt him by telling him that come what might, I must follow the dictates of conscience—I was determined. Kind friends urged him in my favor, and it seemed as though he must relent. The conclusion of the evening's talk was, that during the next two weeks he would do all within his power to convince himself that I was right, and that the Catholic religion was what it claimed to be. How fair and reasonable he was, and how unfair I seemed to insist upon doing what he

believed to be radically wrong! There followed two weeks during which there were no communications between us. I prayed, we all prayed, and it seemed as though the Jesuit whom he visited with the books he was reading would in the end persuade him.

The time eventually came to an end, and when I held the letter bearing his hand-writing I trembled. Well I might, for it contained the words, "I am sorry, but I cannot conscientiously give you my consent."

I was not disappointed, but simply heart-broken. I went into the chapel, where for a few minutes all my courage was gone. Was it possible that I had to face an indefinite period of waiting with this terrible yearning ever in my heart? I could not; it was useless to say I would, although the advice came again, "wait and pray."

I prayed, but did not wait, nor did my advisor know, until the letter was written, that I was going to take the step regardless of consequences. By the time the letter reached its destination, I would be a Catholic—and—*Deus providebit.*

The following day, Christmas Eve, I was to be baptized. What could be more beautiful than beginning life anew, with the birth of the Divine Infant? The hours passed quickly, and never were words more sincerely spoken than those of my baptismal vows, which I uttered as I knelt at the foot of the altar. What joy I experienced after I left the confessional no one knew.

I returned to my school and companions a Catholic. Nor was that all, for there was yet my Communion on Christmas morning. No more would I in lonely spirit be left while my school-mates received our Divine Lord each morning, for now He would come to me, too. In true love and humility I said, "Jesus, Jesus, come to me," and retired to await the morning.

At the close of the beautiful "Christus Natus Est," on Christmas morning, I left the choir and knelt in the front of our little school chapel. It seemed as though heaven itself were before me. When, a little later, I knelt at the altar rail my joy was complete, and as Christ came into the world an Infant, so I came into the Church, a child, as it were, to follow her unified teachings, to enjoy her peace and infallible beliefs, and then to serve and love her command er, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the spring I was confirmed, and graduation from the seminary followed. There came a time of life as a Catholic in the world, and then—a Catholic as from a dream, and saw the twilight shadows were gathering. This has been, indeed, a renewal of past years. The words, "Leave All and Thou Shalt Find All," fluttered through my mind for an instant. I raised my eyes and whispered, "I may answer you now, Sweet Lord—I give you myself, all that I am, all that I ever shall be."

HELEN WITMORE.

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF THE GREAT WAR

THRILLING EXPERIENCE OF PRIEST UNDER TORRENT OF SHELL FIRE

GUARD OF HONOR FOR BLESSED SACRAMENT

For us field soldiers—it might be more apt to say mountain soldiers—not only the beautiful scenery of autumnal splendor was a source of joy on a recent Sunday—we were also blessed with far higher spiritual happiness, the presence in our midst of the Most Blessed Sacrament. It was a veritable peace Sunday. The army chaplain came in the afternoon again, after an absence of two weeks. As was the case last time, the soldiers made their confession and went to Communion early this morning. In the forenoon the priest was with the regiment stationed next to us.

The Blessed Sacrament was exposed for adoration from 3 o'clock on. The space about it was filled up with kneeling soldiers, who alternatively prayed and sang, while others were patiently waiting their turn for confession. In the evening from 6 to 7 we had the closing exercises of our devotions. Everything most primitive and poor, but it was in truth a guard of honor surrounding the heavenly Lord and Saviour in the Holy Eucharist. The soldiers, mostly middle-aged and gray-bearded, when saying the Rosary, added a sixth decade for the fallen comrades. The "Tantum ergo," in its simple Gregorian melody, never yet moved us to a like depth of feeling and devotion. And the heavenly hush when the holy Host was lifted by the priest over the vast assembly:

"Jesus, for Thee I live, for Thee I die; Thine in life and death!" Only a man who has stood in the din of battles, amid the cruel shower of bullets and bursting shrapnel, can feel a like emotion of the soul at such a moment.—From diary of an Austrian soldier.

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