

this before. But now the evil is past remedy. I am dishonored—I am a scoundrel."

The muscular action of rowing relieved the tension of his mind, and before he reached home, he was able to think more calmly. His mother had retired, but he immediately sought his father, whom he found examining some deeds.

The look of pain on his son's face at once arrested Mr. Byrne's attention.

"Is there anything wrong, Frank, my boy?"

"Yes, father," replied his son, sinking heavily into a chair, "everything is wrong, and I can't begin to tell you how wretched I am."

"Come, my son," said Mr. Byrne, "you must tell me more of this."

"I will tell you everything, father. I have been a blind fool, and I have just found it out. I have made poor Mary Miller love me," and he sobbed aloud.

"Well, well, I don't see anything very dreadful in that. Of course you are both too young to think of marriage yet. But when you have entered upon the practice of your profession——"

"My profession, father! Great Heavens! what have I done?"

He rose and paced the floor hastily for a moment. Then stopping, he said bitterly. "Do you think, father, that winning and breaking a girl's heart is a worthy preparation for the priesthood?"

An expression of grieved and pained surprise came over the father's face as he listened to his son's words.

"The priesthood Frank!" he said slowly, as thought unable to realize the meaning of the words. "You never even hinted this to me or to your mother."

"Would to heaven I had! For then your foresight at least might have saved this innocent girl from my blind folly."

"And you do not love her?"

"I swear to you father the thought of love never entered my mind until to-night."

Frank then told in broken words of his interview with Mary.

When he had finished, Mr. Byrne said:

"This is indeed a grave matter, my boy. I will not reproach you, as you seem

to be already sufficiently punished, but you certainly did wrong in not giving me your confidence. You are still certain that you have not mistaken your vocation?"

"No other thought than that of being a priest has found place in my mind for the last two years. My very last day in college Dr Malone told me he knew me better than I knew myself and that the priesthood was my vocation."

"Then, my son, the call of God cannot be neglected for any earthly consideration."

"I have no desire to neglect it father. but how can I —— that poor girl ——?"

"Frank," said his father firmly, "you have made one grand mistake. Do not let it lead you into another. Your marriage would not be blessed by God. The poor girl will probably recover from the blow, but there is no recovery for a broken hearted wife. You would ruin her life as well as your own."

"Then my best course is to get away from here as soon as possible."

"Yes, it will not do for you to meet those Millers again. Confound the match-making old woman!" he broke out angrily, "I believe she's the cause of all this mischief."

"No, father, I am solely to blame. I should have known better. But don't you think I ought to write some sort of explanation?"

"Yes, perhaps you had better do that,"

"And will you explain to my mother?"

"I think it will be easier for you to do it yourself."

Frank did not shrink so much from opening his heart to his mother, and although she, too, was grieved, her endeavor was to soothe the self-reproach which was making him so miserable.

He did not close his eyes that night, the greater part of which he spent in writing to Mary Miller.

"Mary," his letter ran, "you must now think me a cruel, heartless wretch, and I deserve that you should think so. That we should meet again is impossible. I dare not ask your forgiveness. I should never have allowed myself the pleasure of your society; but how could I know that the outcome of this would be so painful to us both? As I write, some words of a