

CARDOME

A ROMANCE OF KENTUCKY

By ANNA C. MINOGUE CHAPTER XI

"Wooden hands could do something after all." It was Mrs. Powell who spoke those words to Judge Todd on the night of the fête given to introduce her niece, and probably heiress, to the society she herself had forsaken.

Time had changed both since their last meeting. It has dealt more harshly with the woman, and as the Judge bowed before the black-clad figure, who extended no welcoming hand to her guest, he sought in vain for a resemblance of the child who had been his playmate and the girl who had been his friend. Their eyes met in silence, until they went out to the veranda to see the effect of the decorations of the grounds. It was like fairyland. Hundreds of Chinese lanterns were suspended from the trees and arched the drive; the great house, from attic to basement, was a blaze of light. On the chairs, dotting the lawn, and lining the long verandas, were the youth and beauty of the land. The murmur of their voices and laughter mingled pleasingly with the low, dreamlike music coming from the pavilion, which had been erected on the south side of the house. No expense or labor had been spared to make the occasion a notable one, and success attended the effort. The Judge had so expressed himself as he stood with the stern-featured mistress of the Park, and after a moment's silence, she had replied:

"Wooden hands could do something, after all!"

His thoughts went back to things time had buried as it had their lost youth, and he unconsciously laid, sadly, slowly:

"Yes, they could!" And knowing he was not seeing what they had done to make beautiful the old place in honor of a stranger's coming to possess wealth to which neither had a right, she drew her thin lips into a hard line, but said nothing.

Then the Judge asked: "Will you never forgive him, Angie?"

"Mrs. Powell, if you please, Judge Todd!" she said, in her rasping tones. "I paid well for my title!"

"Pardon me," said the Judge. "But old times bear in on me so forcibly to night. Seeing all these happy-hearted young people around—"

"He stopped abruptly, and she said: "These things are of a time that is not ours. That question you asked me once before," she continued, going back to his previous words, "and my answer then is the same now, and will be the same forever." "Do not say forever," cautioned the Judge, solemnly. "Forever is God's word, not man's. This life of ours, important as it may seem in our eyes, is but an infinitesimal wave in the sea of eternity. Think of its daring to rebel against the current sweeping on to the throne of Omnipotent love and forgiveness!"

"The individual was always of too little account with you, John," she said, forgetting her decision of the moment previous that the privilege of addressing each other as friends from childhood belonged to the past it were better to forget. "The spark of the eternal that animates this mortal, giving it life and power of action, will always remain an individual force. It will never lose its identity. The love or hate that sways it here will sway it forever, and its motive will be felt, just as that discordant note dropped by one of the musicians a while ago was heard above all the harmony."

"Love is good, hate is evil; can what is evil ever become an inseparable attribute of the soul which it is, we are taught to believe, a part of God? Bent to evil in its mortal sojourn though it may be, do you not think it will, when the mortal has released its hold, bound back, like a Damascus blade, to its straight stature of goodness? No, no, say not that you will hold out your hatred against him forever. You have dominion over your soul only to the close of life. Death hurls it back to God. He may punish or He may forgive it, that is left itself to evil; but think not that evil will continue to exist in what is then purely spiritual."

"Did I ever hold a secret from you? I had no secret. I have no sister. You amply filled their never-to-be-occupied place in my childish heart. As I grew older, you were my friend. I told you how I loved him. When he proved the traitor after what I had done for him, and my love turned to hate, I told you that that hate demanded revenge. I have had it, and it almost chased my loneliness."

"I would not have left you lonely. I wanted to continue your friend, but you would not let me," said the Judge, for there was the bitterness of reproach in her voice as she uttered the last words.

"You could not have been true to one without having been false to the other," she said. "I knew you loved him. I would not accept any sacrifice from my friends in the achieving of my revengeful desire, which they must naturally condemn; least of all—from you, the playmate of my childhood and the friend of my youth. My affections and memories are dead, except what I have kept for you. All these others, these men and women who come here to night with their sons and daughters, are as strangers to me. Their faces, almost their names, are forgotten, swept away by the revolution my soul has known. You alone are as a friend, and I have given you the privilege of a friend."

"Then may I come again to see you?" he asked.

"You may not," she returned, moving away, leaving him standing by the veranda pillar, his eyes resting on the brilliantly lighted drive below.

Looking over the velvety, sloping lawn, with its great oaks and elms, there were old when they sheltered the last red-men from the hatred of the pale faced intruder, it did not seem so long since he and Angie Kertridge had played there as boy and girl, walked there as man and woman. His thoughts carried him on, until they brought him to an hour from the remembrance of which all his life he shrank; then he said: "Poor Angie!" and forgot the horror he had known as he had listened to her words.

A voice at his elbow roused him, and turning he saw Mrs. Dallas, leaning on the arm of her son.

"Ah, Judge," she said, sinking on one of the convenient chairs, and dismissing her son with a nod, "thinking of past times, were you, off here by yourself? I saw dear Mrs. Todd a minute ago. It is charming in her to assist here this evening."

"What else could you expect?" asked the Judge, the thought of his wife chasing away all his melancholy and making his tones glad.

"There was never another woman like her," said Mrs. Dallas. "I didn't want to come at all this evening, but Howard insisted. You know how like his poor father he is—will not take 'no' to a wish of his, but can say 'no' readily enough, and never waver after saying it, to anybody's else wish which does not coincide with his own pleasure."

"You must not come to me with fault-finding against Howard," said the Judge, smiling down on the face that still looked fresh and pretty in spite of its fifty years. "You know he is a favorite of mine."

for my friends and acquaintances," said the Judge. "If he prove worthy of them, I shall not have to reproach myself with the early unkind sentiments; if otherwise, he is a loser, not I. You would not have me to act less generously with a woman?"

"Ah, Judge?" she laughed, "a woman can blindfold a man's eyes although through his life, if she so desires. You do not understand a woman as well as a woman does. We are something like mirrors reflecting each other," and again she laughed, softly. "Isn't that Clay Powell walking with Virginia?" she asked, motioning her fan toward a couple passing along the walk. "Howard tells me," she went on, without waiting for a reply to her question, "that he is a remarkable young man, one who will become a distinguished figure in political affairs. How close to truth do you think are my son's surmises?" and she turned and gazed attentively at the face before her.

"In the ordinary course of events he would prove no false prophet," said the Judge. "But Clay Powell has come on the scene at no ordinary time. As great occasions sometimes make small men reach up to greatness, so they may unmake those who are already great. These latter only see in the occasion something worthy of their genius and are not impressed by the undertaking; the former, beholding a task worthy of a hero, strain every nerve to perform it heroically; and the people, mistaking judgment for the effort, and not taking from the ease of performance, award the victor's crown accordingly."

Young Powell is in the race for the Legislature, as I suppose you know. He has won his way to the front apparently without any strenuous labor. Chance or circumstance, a leap to the breach at the proper time makes half our public men, but not so with him. He has reached the head of the column simply because he belongs there, and under ordinary conditions he would remain there without difficulty, a leader of men. But the conditions that confront us are not ordinary. Each man may soon be called upon to make his choice between certain institutions of the country and abide by his choice thereafter. And Clay Powell will make the wrong choice," finished the Judge, sorrowfully.

Mrs. Dallas knew the trend of Judge Todd's political views, but as the great question had not yet developed its most alarming features, she felt slight interest in it, and found discussion of it a bore.

"The Powells may always be depended upon to make their mark, whichever side they espouse," she replied; and gave the conversation a drift more in accordance with her gossip loving nature, by asking: "Were you not surprised, Judge, on finding Walter Powell's son invited to the Park?"

A feeling of loyalty to the woman who a little time before had spoken out her heart to him made him say, evasively:

"What was there surprising in it? The young man was visiting in the neighborhood. Isn't it what one would expect from the lady who was his grandfather's wife, to ask him to spend a few days with her?"

Mrs. Dallas smiled. She knew Judge Todd's loyalty to all who were, or had ever been, his friends, was a proverb in the community.

"Do you know what I think?" she said, lowering her voice. "Like the rest of us, as we grow old and time shows us how vain and foolish are all things, our poor Angie has begun to repent. I think she would like to undo all the wrong she did, only she is too proud. She will not return by the road she came, but strikes out on a new line. She brings her penniless cousin here, gives out the impression that she intends making the young girl her heiress, and invites poor Walter's son to stay with them; she shows the young people together and trusts to the shape of Dan Cupid, youth and sweet June days, to do the rest. Miss Sears is charming, we have both agreed on that point. I am certain you will not gainsay me when I assert that Mr. Powell has all the magnetism of his father's personality, as he inherits his handsome features and noble bearing. What more natural than that her plan should succeed, and Mrs. Powell's heiress give back to the grandson of the Powell of Willow-wild the heritage of which his father was defrauded?"

Mrs. Powell much assistance in making ready for the occasion, had disapproved of placing that emblem of her loyalty, to the North in such a conspicuous place, for the flag was so arranged as to greet the eyes when the sharp curve in the drive led out from the trees into full view of the house. Fully three fourths of the expected guests were firmly opposed to the political creed the national emblem was fast coming to represent, and the questionable taste displayed in thus flaunting it before them jarred on his artistic temperament. But his suggestion was dismissed with a few sharp words by Mrs. Powell, whereat Dallas shrugged his shoulders and proceeded to give the slaves the necessary directions. The majority of the guests entirely ignored the combination of colored lanterns, or raised a significant eyebrow in answer to a companion's quick smile; others, more hot-tempered, read there a gratuitous insult, and said some things not pleasant to hear about the mistress of the Park; while one irritable old gentleman deposited his wife and daughter on the great stone door-step, and sharply ordered his coachman to drive him home.

The rare smile crossed Clay Powell's face as, with Virginia, he left the house and caught sight of the illuminated flag.

"This is surely proclaiming one's loyalty from the houseposts," was his comment.

"If we can not commend it for good taste, we must certainly admire it for its beauty," said Virginia. The effect was striking, and the gentle waving of the lanterns made a continuous ripple and break of colors.

"Is it not sad," she added, after a moment's pause, "that those colors which, for our fathers, typified all that is most sacred in national life, have come to be a party emblem to inflame opposition, hatred, and distrust?"

"When the flag ceases to mean liberty, it symbolizes nothing holy to men who would be free," answered Powell. "It was evolved from the struggle made by men who held that liberty was their birthright; that when any existing form of government threatens to destroy that sacred heritage, the enforcement of that government is tyranny. This was the spirit that made the Stars and Stripes sacred, and this is the same spirit which will make it execrable, if the present course of the party that it would deprive us of every claim to it is followed longer."

His voice was low and earnest, and as he finished his eyes left the bars of color before him and rested with an unspoken question on his companion's face. The red light from one of the lanterns fell over his slightly bent head and touched his white hair like the fiery stamp of fate; then, sliding down to Virginia, lay across the breast of her white silk bodice like a long, slender sword of blood. It reflected partly on her face with weird effect, which, catching his eyes, made him break from his thoughts to say:

"She should have hung her flag higher."

"Why?" asked Virginia, finding the remark a strange conclusion for his thoughtful speech.

"See how low its reflection falls. We can not properly appreciate the effect of an illumination the light of fate; then, sliding down to Virginia, lay across the breast of her white silk bodice like a long, slender sword of blood. It reflected partly on her face with weird effect, which, catching his eyes, made him break from his thoughts to say:

his sharpness, unconsciously forcing him into an attitude of resistance. "We had not noticed the lapse of time," he said, answering before Virginia. Then turning toward her, he asked, "Is not the honor of dancing this quadrille mine?"

Nothing would have been easier than for her to give assent to this implied engagement, and the pleasure of having him for a partner above the other she would not have denied; but Virginia Castleton could not make other than the reply she did when she said:

"Mr. Dallas asked for the dance first."

Young Powell caught and understood the expression in her eyes, and said, instantly:

"I am truly unfortunate in having forgotten, in the pleasure of your conversation, that our hostess had provided this amusement for the evening. But if you will permit me?" and he took the program and wrote down his name for half the remaining dances, Virginia making not the slightest demur.

Dallas bit his lips, and when he found himself alone with her he asked: "Was that quite fair, Miss Castleton?"

"Was that fair?" she questioned. "Giving all your dances to Mr. Clay Powell?" and he dragged out the name with something like scorn in his voice.

"I think you will admit it is my privilege to give my dances to whom I wish," she replied, coolly. "But I did not give them all to Mr. Powell."

"May I claim those he left?" he asked, suddenly.

"You are not the only gentleman of my acquaintance here to night," she replied, in light tones, turning to greet a group of young men approaching.

"Miss Castleton," he said, as they left the pavilion at the conclusion of the dance, "there is a subject upon which I wish especially to speak to you to-night. Will you come with me, for a little while, to Miss Sears's nook by the morning-glory trellis?"

as she sat looking up through the gathering twilight at the twinkling red light was something far beyond her understanding.

Religion had had a little place in her life, but lately she had learned that it was religion which had borne the hardships of her neighbors at Slieveboy, and this new knowledge set her wondering.

As the darkness deepened the rays of the red lamp seemed to give more light, and as the soft thud of bare feet on the boards beside her made Madeline aware that she was no longer alone, the glimmer showed her the face of the newcomer.

Only that afternoon Madeline had had a talk with Mrs. Fyvie. They were a most dissimilar couple, one young, one old, one rich—or, at least comparatively so—the other so poor that only a Connemara peasant could have kept body and soul together on the infinitesimal pittance that was hers. Yet the bond between them was a strong one, for each had a sailor belonging to her away in the North Sea. Fourteen children of her own, seven step sons, and a wife, adopted for the love of God, these had been Mrs. Fyvie's family. "An ever whilst himself and mine had the work in us did one of them all go to bed without their supper." Yet now she was alone. Fever and the sea, so she told Madeline, had taken a good few. Some had died in infancy. There were daughters married in America, but the sailor lad, the youngest, wildest of the lot, was all she had remaining.

All this, learned in her afternoon's talk, Madeline O'Leary turned over in her mind, as now she watched Mrs. Fyvie at her prayers. A straight, white figure, shadowy in the gloom, was visible on a little altar where the woman knelt. Madeline was too ignorant to give the statue her title of Our Lady of Lourdes, but she knew it to be a representation of the Virgin and for a moment she thought how sad it was to see such heartfelt prayers being wasted upon a plaster image. Then, with a start of surprise, she heard her companion's muttered words and noted how tender and motherly were the graven features.

"Mother of God," Mrs. Fyvie prayed, "your own Son was taken from you and you couldn't get for to save Him. Maybe you couldn't get to save mine for me, but you can ask God Almighty what He wouldn't heed from the likes of me, and that is never let me poor boy pass from this world without the assistance of His clergy."

Then came repeated over and over again, "Hail Mary," and the petition to the Mother of God to pray for us "now and at the hour of our death."

Before Mrs. Fyvie's rosary was said Madeline O'Leary knew by heart her first Catholic prayer—the Hail Mary. Outside the church she spoke again to the old woman whose life-story she had heard that afternoon.

"When you're praying for your son to come home safe, Mrs. Fyvie," she said, timid at making such a request, "you'll—you'll pray, won't you for Master Denis?" For thus she knew did the people still designate her husband.

"Mornin' an' night, an' every minute do I pray for the two of them, daughter," came the reply. "I pray that God may guide them, an' bring them home safe at that man's side. But for my Johnnie, I have another prayer, that Master Denis doesn't need, thanks be to God! Didn't see himself the morning, an' he goin' with the priest at the altar-rails—Slieveboy church boasted of no confessional beyond a chair for the priest in the sanctuary, while the penitents took their turn beside him at the altar rails—" an' after," concluded Mrs. Fyvie, "I seen him receive his God."

Madeline had seen the chair, and some half-understood words of her husband's came back to her, as with a quick question she turned to her informant: "Do you mean—that stammered—" do you mean—that that he confessed?"

the philanthropy that filled the days and weeks of Madeline O'Leary's life in London after her departure from Ireland put the thoughts of Catholicity and of spirituality that had begun to dawn upon her into the background. So far she had had nothing but good news of her husband and neither had the name of John Fyvie appeared in any casualty list; the need for prayer, which at Slieveboy had begun to make itself apparent to her, became less insistent though she did not forget the old woman who had begun her awakening.

The branch of work she had undertaken was naturally for the fleet, and it was as sailor's friend to a district which had supplied a dozen at least of Fyvies to the navy that the second process in her awakening came to her through her first conversation with a Catholic priest. He was an elderly man, very businesslike and to the point, and what he sought from the Soldiers' and Sailors' association was help to locate the home of one John Fyvie—help that no one was better able to give than Madeline O'Leary, for it was apparent to her almost at once that it was the son of her old friend at Slieveboy who was wanted.

"The widow Fyvie, Slieveboy, Ballydivnagh Connemara. Yes, yes, that will be it, and many thanks to you and your excellent association." The priest was turning to go, when a question from Madeline, timidly put—for she was fearful still of a "Roman" priest—detained him.

"I hope you have no bad news for her?" she asked. "He is the only son who is left to her."

"You know her then?" said the priest. "You are not going back to Ireland soon, I suppose? No? Ah, that's a pity. You could have told her better than a letter will."

"Then it is bad news," questioned Madeline anxiously.

"On the contrary, it is good news," replied the priest, "the best of news. You are not a Catholic, I presume?" he added abruptly.

"No," replied Madeline, "but—I understand a little—and Mrs. Fyvie told me what her prayers for Johnnie were."

"And they were?" asked the priest.

"The color rose in Madeline's cheeks. She was not used to mentioning such things as prayers and souls. "She prays for his safety, of course," she said, "if it is God's will—and—for him to go to his confession—" she broke off, and something in her face made the priest decide to tell the story he yet had to write to Johnnie's mother.

"Then I was right," he said in a tone of voice that Madeline thought to herself was "understanding." "It is the best of good news I have for her," and a smile came over his face. "He has been to confession." He glanced around the room, temporarily in use as an office. "I should like to tell you about it," he said, "if you can spare the time, for a letter may not mean so much to the old lady as what you could tell her, next time you are in Ireland."

THE AWAKENING OF MADELINE O'LEARY

The people about Slieveboy were both shocked and amazed when they heard of Denis O'Leary's marriage to a Protestant Master Denis, such a good Catholic himself with never one of the family but was that same—and then to choose a wife of an alien faith!

When with the outbreak of war Madeline O'Leary came for the first time to her husband's Irish home the amazement to a great extent died away, though the shockiness still remained. For no one who saw the girl—she was only twenty—could deny her winning charm, and in many a cottage by the western sea prayers rose to heaven for her conversion. Perhaps in taking her to Slieveboy for those last days before his sailing orders came, and in asking her to stay at least for a time in his old home, Denis O'Leary had had some thought of gaining these prayers, whilst at the same time placing his wife in an atmosphere of faith and Catholicity.

Like so many others, he had not the slightest idea, before he married, of the void their difference in religion would leave in his life. Had he cared less deeply for his faith he would likewise have felt the want less deeply, but now that war was declared, and his ship was one of the first to go, his wishes for his wife were more for her sake than for his own. If it were not for him to come back, where could she, ignorant of all religion, look for comfort? The few months of their married life—except for this one cloud on his horizon—had been a time of unmitigated happiness, and though she had friends galore across the water, Madeline O'Leary was glad to spend some quiet weeks of early autumn in the peace and glorious loveliness of her husband's Connemara home, hearing of his boyhood visiting the places he had known and the father folk who had loved him.

With the breaking of the weather she was to return to England; but meanwhile came bad news from the North Sea, and though as yet her husband's ship was safe Madeline was unhappy and afraid.

It was upon the eve of her departure that, passing the little Celtic church upon the shore and seeing its doors standing invitingly open, she had crossed the threshold, seeking she knew not what. The building, it seemed to her, was empty, yet to her surprise a red lamp burned before the altar lighting the gloom. Only once before had she been in a Catholic Church, and that was on her wedding day, now nearly a year ago. The feeling of peace that came over her