

A SIN AND ITS ATONEMENT.

(The heart-history contained in this story has already been submitted to the Catholic public in the pages of the *Ave Maria*, whose editor assures the public that the main incidents of the story are strictly true, but for obvious reasons are disguised as much as possible. The author's desire to remain unknown will also be understood by the reader.)

"You will need something more to rest upon than an earthly mother's love when you come to die," said my father, touched by the unaffected emotion of the young man's manner; "but I accept your promise with absolute confidence. You will finish the week with your friends at Kilgrachie Castle, I presume, and by that time I shall have arranged a comfortable lodging for you. But you had better spend your evenings at the farm, as it would be too lonely for you to have no companionship but that of old Mrs. Pitcairn."

"Now, girls," he said, "remember this promise is to be kept on our side also. You are not to enter into conversation with Mr. Carlyon on any religious topic whatsoever; you are not to try to persuade him to be a Catholic. He is far more clever than you, and would soon twist you round his finger in argument. You will do far more for him by being kind and genial, and showing him what Catholic life is. I think your mother would convert anybody by the sight of her."

And so Edward Carlyon came into our lives, and for two months we saw him almost every evening. Alick, Arabella and I had good voices, and we used to sing Jacobite songs together, to the great delight of our guest.

"I must have music in the colony—music of the cause. There's nothing which binds people together more than that," he remarked one evening after we had been singing.

"You must get the cause to live and die for first," said my mother, "before you can have your music. The Jacobite songs are the expression of a people's intense devotion to a royal race, consecrated by the touch of suffering."

"Do you think I have not found the cause for which I can live and die—aye, and which shall have a music of its own some day?" he asked, with an enthusiasm the more contagious because it was so entirely free from rhapsody. "Is it not a cause worthy of any sacrifice to show the world that men can keep their advantages of riches and intellectual power in their own hands, and yet by their great-heartedness dislodge selfishness from the social structure, and force men to see with their eyes and touch with their hands the reality of fraternal co-operation? Will the workmen, to whom I have opened a career in which his skill and industry can secure a happy, respectable home for himself, and a sure hope for the future of his children, grudge me advantages of leisure and wealth, which he sees I am using to secure his welfare? We who are educated know well enough what blindness it is to think we can do without one another, and how necessary each one is to perfect the common work and the common happiness. If men can live and die for a royal race, for a religion—nay, for one single being whom they love with their whole heart—why not for the victory of love in the human family, and the deathless fame of a benefactor to the human race?"

There was a silence after this apostrophe, this first declaration Edward Carlyon had ever made of his views and the hope that prompted him; but it was a silence which thrilled with sympathy. We young ones had never heard such noble thoughts clothed in such attractive form before. Even my cautious father was completely carried away by the young adventurer, whose practical good sense and powers of hard work were so different from the ravings of red-hot republicanism which "stank in his nostrils." It must be remembered that in those days there was absolutely nothing between the dearest dullest conservatism, which the reaction from the horrors of the French Revolution only made more obstinate in refusing any light, and the hot-headed, unpractical schemes of those whose only aim was to upset all existing forms of social life and government.

Carlyon's conversation opened to me a new world of thought, and responded to a secret longing of which I was intensely conscious,—a longing to make my life more heroic, more full of real romance, than that of the quiet farmer's wife in the valley of Glencairn which was the probable destiny that awaited me; for I knew (though nothing formal had passed between us) that Stuart McDougall had loved me from childhood, and that my parents liked the match well, though they would not allow him to ask for my promise until I was twenty. I revered Stuart for his goodness, for his tenderness to his widowed mother, for his unswerving rectitude in all the affairs of life; but I always

felt there were longings in my heart to which he could never respond. I learned afterward that there were depths in his noble nature of which I had not the slightest conception.

I remember well how I longed that night for some one to break the silence which followed the speech I have related, and how delighted I was when my dear mother, with the ready tact and courtesy which she inherited, I suppose, from ancient blood, replied:

"Well, Mr. Carlyon, when the national music of the Carlyon Colony is composed, you must be sure to send it to us, and we shall sing it on this side of the Atlantic with enthusiasm."

There was a general chorus of assent and approbation, and Edward Carlyon was delighted at the gracious response he had received.

"That is really a kind promise," he said, turning on my mother one of those frank, sincere looks that took everyone by storm.

"When one's heart is in a thing, I don't know which tries one the most—the rhapsodical admiration of sentimental young ladies who do not understand a word of what one is saying, or the blind opposition of men who will not so much as listen to a solution of their objections. But a bit of sincere sympathy and comprehension, such as I meet with here, is the very elixir of life to me."

And so we went blindly on for the two most beautiful autumn months that had been known in Glencairn for years. My father looked on young Carlyon as his exclusive property, and fulfilled his part of the contract in the most generous way. His pupil on the other hand, was constantly giving him new ideas and bits of knowledge he had picked up here and there, which made his society full of charm to the older man.

During the building of the mill which was to be paid for by the sum named for his agricultural tuition, Edward suggested an improvement which would add considerably to the estimate. After having thought the matter over, my father reluctantly gave up the idea. "I should have to take up capital," he said, when Edward pressed him; "and, with all my children growing up, I never will do that." That night he found a sealed packet on his rough, square desk, containing the sum necessary for the improvement, with a note from Edward Carlyon, saying the premium he had offered was *business*, but that he wanted the mill to be a memorial of *friendship* and gratitude, and therefore entreated his acceptance of this small offering.

II.

The only man in the place to keep Carlyon at arm's length was our venerable priest, Father Lindsay, who set his face against him from the first. He told my father plainly that he had brought a wolf into the fold; and when my father angrily asked him what harm Mr. Carlyon could possibly do when he never opened his lips on any religious question, Father Lindsay only repeated: "He's a wolf in sheep's clothing." He seldom came to the farm during the young man's stay.

I had remained away from confession rather longer than was my custom, because I felt, by a sort of intuition, that Father Lindsay wanted to speak to me about this stranger. At last, however, I went. As I expected, he began,—but in a tone so unexpected that I was forced to listen, and felt myself pierced to the heart.

"My bairn," he said (for when greatly moved he generally lapsed into broad Scotch), "I baptized you, prepared you for your First Communion, have watched over you all these years, and seen you grow up to womanhood safe in your faith and purity. I beseech you to give me a hearing; for I have struggled with the Lord for power to warn and save you."

I could not be wilful or impertinent after such an appeal, and I answered humbly that of course I would listen attentively to what he wished to say; but I felt hot all over, and wished myself away. He went on in a manner that arrested my attention:

"The young man whom your father has so rashly brought into the midst of you is one of the noblest and most gifted natures I have ever met. The task he has undertaken is in itself a grand one; his philosophical ideas are elevated, and have a certain element of truth running through them; but the only Beginning and the only End is absolutely banished from his mind and life. Instead of saying, 'Now, to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever,' he is seeking his own glory. He himself is the centre of all his world, and it is the very strength of his ambition which keeps him above the ordinary failings of men. Margaret! child of my hopes! hearken to me before it is too late. The happiness of your whole life is slipping from you into this man's