

THE MASTER OF THE MILL

What a picture that church spire with its uplifted cross makes against the sky!

George Bryson smiled as, leaning forward in his armchair, he looked out upon the scene framed by the window of his little study.

The lofty tower and gray walls of the church within a stone's throw of the mills were, however, a novel feature of the panorama.

As I sit here sometimes, when the white wind-clouds drift past the cross, it seems floating in the air, and again at a touch of the sunlight it becomes a cross of flame that sends my memory back to the legend of Constantine and his sign of triumph.

As the elderly gentleman spoke, pleasantly, yet with the languor of one of ill-health, he turned toward his sister, who, flourishing the faintest of feather dusters, stood at the reading-table, flecking imaginary dust from the magazines and newspapers and restoring order out of the chaos in which they were heaped together.



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the travelled connoisseur. The charitable institutions of the Continent were, moreover, a revelation to me. My own schemes of benevolence seemed petty enough when I saw men and women who had given up every natural tie and joy of life to devote themselves to the service of the unfortunate.

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Advertisement for 'Koenig's Free' medicine, featuring a bottle illustration and text describing its benefits for various ailments.

"Faith an' I do," she answered, fervently.

"Does Father Glenn really believe it?"

"Deed if he didn't he might as well be out at St. Patrick's," was her energetic reply.

"But more nor the likes of me and him, the great doctors of the Church, them that spins their lives in the study of the Scriptures an' all knowledge—

they believe like the little children you see going to the altar for the first time. You have seen the children yourself, sir, maybe; the boys wearing a white badge over their hearts, and the girls all in white like the fluttering doves?"

"Thank you, Margaret. You may go," said Mr. Bryson, closing his eyes.

And Margaret, after straightening the counterpane and giving one or two orderly touches to the room, stole away with disappointment in her heart.

"Sure talking so to the likes of this is worse nor casting pearls before swine," she muttered to herself as she hurried back to the kitchen.

"Well, we are all in God's hands; and as the master has not been hard on others, may He be good to him!"

"Frank," remarked Mr. Bryson during the following night (for his son watched with him during the hours when the world sleeps)—"Frank, what Margaret said was very consoling; don't you think so?"

All the prejudices of the younger man were aroused by the question. Bitter words of unbelief rose to his lips, but he suddenly checked them. His father was too ill to discuss this matter; therefore he answered evasively:

"It seemed to me quite medieval, sir."

"Yet, if it is not true, then these Catholics think of God as being more merciful, more compassionate, more perfect than He is, and that would be impossible; whereas, if it is true, how different life, death, everything becomes when viewed from this standpoint! It is true! Frank, at daylight I want to send for Father Glenn."

"But, sir—"

George Bryson raised himself in his bed with an effort.

"My son, I shall presently yield up to you, absolutely, the mills, my fortune, this house even," he said, in a clear voice, "but to my last breath I shall cling to that possession to retain which our ancestors crossed the seas—liberty of conscience. If you interfere with my freedom to do as I will, may the Bryson wealth and the honor of the Bryson name shrink in your hands until they amount to nothing!"

He threw himself back exhausted; and the startled son, falling upon his knees beside the bed, sobbed as he strove to soothe the excitement he had unwittingly caused.

"Father, father, forgive me. Your every wish shall be obeyed."

A few days later the Bryson Mills shut down for thirty-six hours, though the operatives were informed they would be paid as usual; the bells of the meeting-house tolled at frequent intervals; the flag on the library floated at half-mast; and, unknown to the village, early that morning Father Glenn had offered the Holy Sacrifice for a soul newly summoned to give an account of its stewardship.

For George Bryson, the wealthy manufacturer, the public benefactor, was no more. The light of the sanctuary, shining amid the darkness of midnight, had guided the wanderer home.

All the township wished to turn out to do honor to the memory of the philanthropist, but like a rebuff came the announcement from the great house that the founder of the mills would be attended to his last resting place only by his household—it was the desire of the family, and so on.

The Brysons had not the moral courage to bid their large connection to a public requiem service, nor were the relatives invited at all.

But Margaret and the other servants, thinking that no act of the master's life "so well became him as his leaving of it," saw no need for reticence.

Thus the rumor soon spread that he had died a Catholic; and Father Glenn, when interrogated, briefly stated what had happened.

The rich man's will had been made months before, so the parish of St. Patrick was no better off for its eleventh-hour convert.

After several years, however, Mr. Frank unexpectedly paid off the debt of its buildings, adding something more over and above to his donation—"in performance of a duty," he curtly said—or was it "a promise?"

Neither the new master of the mills nor Miss Sarah had ever entered the church of the cross-crowned spire; but before its altar, as a perpetual prayer for the soul of George Bryson, hangs a lamp which is one of the most exquisite specimens of the olden-time art that the pastor could obtain in Europe.—Mary Catherine Crowley, in The Ave Maria.

France and the Vatican

With reference to M. Combes' speech at Auxerre, the "Osservatore Romano" says it is authorized to state that the Holy See never sent to the French Government any declaration regarding the separation of Church and State in France, nor any threat directed at the French Protectorate of Christians in the Far East.

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