

# FATHER DE LISLE.

By Miss Taylor

(A Tale of fact in fiction's garb.)

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"Now the heavy day is done,  
Home awaits thee, wearied one,"

—Felicia Hemans.

"I am footsore and very weary,  
But I travel to meet a friend:  
The way is long and dreary,  
But I know that it soon must  
end.

"Like a dream all my toil will  
vanish,  
When I lay my head on His  
breast:  
But the journey is very weary,  
And He only can give me rest!"

—Adelaide Proctor.

Many years have passed away,  
and we may cast one glance round  
upon the different characters upon  
whose joys and sorrows we have  
taken some interest, and linger for  
a moment longer upon spots which  
have been associated with these  
events.

To an old, quaint town in Bel-  
gium we must bend our steps.  
Threading along the narrow streets  
where the houses almost meet  
overhead, we come at last to a  
curious pile of buildings—a long,  
low house on each side, and an  
old Gothic church in the middle.  
It is the Convent and Hospital of  
the Dames of St. Augustine, who  
break their cloister only to attend  
upon the sick and dying. The  
church is open to all comers; so we  
will open the door and walk in. It  
is a beautiful church, and from the  
glare of the summer's day there is  
coolness and refreshment in the  
shade of those long aisles  
and shadowy roof, and the  
sunlight falls through the stained  
glass in gorgeous hues upon the  
stone floor. In the portion set  
apart for the religious several nuns  
are kneeling in prayer. They wear  
the habit and scapular of white  
serge, the leathern belt, and  
straight black veil, which mark the  
daughters of St. Austin.

In the outer part of the chapel  
there hangs upon the wall a large  
and celebrated painting; it is of  
the "Mater Dolorosa." Before the  
picture is kneeling a lady dressed  
in black, and those who are in the  
habit of frequenting the church  
bear witness how constantly  
through the day that same slight  
figure is seen kneeling there, and  
those eyes, which are so often  
swollen with weeping, gaze long  
and lovingly on the face of her who  
cried, "Is there any sorrow like un-  
to my sorrow?" And those who  
knew Constance said afterwards  
that she told them she could think  
only of one of those seven sor-  
rows which grieved the heart of  
Mary, and it was the three days'  
loss, when His mother "sought  
Him sorrowing." But on this day  
while Constance knelt absorbed in  
prayer, a side-door opened, and a  
nun entered, and beneath the habit  
of the Religious might be re-  
cognized the sweet features of Rose  
Ford. She bent forth a few mo-  
ments in earnest prayer; then, ap-  
proaching Constance beckoned her  
from the Church. When they were  
outside she said: "There is a  
change," and without another  
word they hastened to a large  
room in the hospital, in which  
Isabel was lying. For ten years  
had she lingered in darkness of  
mind, and, until the last few weeks,  
in the same state in which she had  
left England. She had not even  
missed Rachel, who, a few months  
after their arrival died, literally of  
exhaustion and sorrow, blessing  
God that He had brought her  
to die within the shadow of His  
house, and with the strength of  
His sacraments, and praying with  
her last breath for the child of her  
love and devotion.

Beside Rachel's grave there was  
another, unmarked, save by a little  
cross, and the good nuns of the  
Convent often prayed beside it, and  
mingled tears with their prayers,  
for they said that though she who

rested there had been unable to  
speak their language, they knew  
assuredly her fervent penance had  
won favor with God, and if they  
prayed for her according to her  
last earnest message to them, she  
would plead for them before God's  
face.

Shortly before Rachel's death  
Rose entered the convent, and re-  
ceived the habit of the order, and  
in due time was professed. She  
was however, constantly sent, as  
well as others of the Religious, to  
assist Constance in the care of  
Lady Beauville. But latterly  
Isabel's strength had suddenly  
given way without any apparent  
cause, and the physician declared  
death was at hand, and, with an  
intensity of anxiety, the watchers  
waited for some sign of reason,  
and fervent were the prayers that  
went up that this boon might be  
granted.

On each side of the bed knelt a  
nun, and a physician was standing  
near, while in one corner stood  
Father Louis, the almoner of the  
hospital. There was a change on  
the sufferer's face, and she turned  
restlessly from side to side. She  
fixed her eyes on Constance as she  
entered.

"Constance, is it you?"

Constance bent over her. "Dear-  
est, I am here. I see all, I know  
all," she murmured. "Forgive me  
ere I die."

And Father Louis came near, and  
she said: "Father, bless me, for I  
have sinned deeply. Is there hope  
for me, father?"

And Father Louis answered:  
"He that cometh unto Me, I will  
in no wise cast out."

And the watchers withdrew, and  
the room was closed to all save  
the priest and the dying penitent.  
And then they were recalled, and  
the last rites of the Church took  
place, and Isabel made her last  
communion. After that she spoke  
but little, but those words were  
treasured up afterwards, for in  
them lay hid a depth of penitence,  
and of self-abasement, and of the  
child-like faith that clung to for-  
giveness in the Precious Blood.

She looked at Constance, and  
she blessed her for her long years  
of patient devotion. "Thou hast  
comforted me, my sister, and God  
will comfort thee in thy last  
hour." The night came, she fell in-  
to a gentle sleep, and awoke in her  
death-agony. It was not long, but  
sharp; and the prayers of Holy  
Church went up with might, and  
at last peace came.

"Mother!" she cried, looking up-  
wards, "do I see you at last,  
Mother and Walter—how beautiful,  
oh how glorious—"

And Constance's eyes looked up-  
ward, for she too, almost fancied  
she saw angelic forms, and for a  
moment she murmured, "Lord,  
take me home also." But only for  
a moment, and then the humble,  
patient spirit turned again to her  
task on earth, to watch, to wait,  
to pray.

Within a year of their arrival in  
Belgium, Lord Beauville procured a  
divorce, and immediately after-  
wards married again. The next  
news that came to Constance was  
that her darling boy, the little  
Marquis of Moreton, was dead. In  
the midst of his childish glee, while  
riding on a pony in the park of  
Bertram Castle, the pony stumbled  
threw the child, his head struck  
against the root of a tree, and he  
was taken up dead. Poor Con-  
stance! when the first burst of the  
mother's agony was over, while  
she pictured to herself those golden  
curls lying stiff in the coldness of  
death, and those merry blue eyes  
closed forever, became comforted,  
and thanked God for thus taking  
and thanked God for thus taking  
one of her darlings safe in his inno-  
cence to the country where there  
are no more partings; but her  
anxiety for her remaining child  
was keener; and increased when she  
received the news of her own  
divorce, which the Duke, after the  
death of his heir, was induced to

seek, and afterwards of his mar-  
riage to Mistress Elizabeth Fortes-  
cue, a woman of the same nature  
as her mother—stern, implacable,  
and bigoted. But there was no  
help on earth, and Constance pray-  
ed on. Years passed from the time  
of Isabel's death, and Constance  
spent her time between prayer and  
good deeds. From the feet of the  
Mother of Sorrows, where she  
poured out her aching heart, she  
went to comfort the afflicted, to  
bind up the broken-hearted. All in  
sorrow, all in sickness, all in suf-  
fering, knew her well. "The pale  
English lady" the name the  
Belgians gave her. She was kind to  
all; but when as it sometimes  
happens, refugees from England  
came for shelter, her sympathy  
poured itself upon them with in-  
finite tenderness. The sick valued  
the touch of her cool hand, and  
the sound of her soft voice. The  
sorrowful raised their heads as  
they looked at her, bearing her bit-  
ter trials so meekly; priests, who  
were venturing on the English mis-  
sion, came to see her to beseech  
her prayers; for in their might be-  
fore God's throne, they had great  
faith. The Religious also of the  
Convent, when in trouble or dis-  
tress, were wont to ask their  
Superioress's leave to beg the En-  
glish lady to pray for them; but of  
all who loved her, and she loved,  
the dearest were the little chil-  
dren.

They flocked round her when she  
went forth; and she could enter in-  
to their gambols, and soothe their  
childish sorrows with a mother's  
care. She was not wont to say  
much, but her words of counsel  
sank into their hearts and checked  
many a hasty word or foolish  
action. In such deeds her calm life  
passed away; and gradually her  
step grew feebler, and a hollow  
cough shook her frame, and sister  
Mary of the Cross (which was  
Rose Ford's name in religion) saw  
plainly that for her, too, rest was  
coming.

At last she could not go beyond  
the convent walls and then she  
grew weaker still, and could no  
longer leave her chamber. It was  
a peaceful room, that of Constance  
the windows looked into the con-  
vent garden, with its bright flowers  
and shady trees, and one trans-  
parent of the church was in view;  
and Constance lay on her couch,  
and gazed on the fair things His  
hand had made, and thought of the  
time when she, too, had played  
among the flowers, blithe as the  
birds that flew past the window;  
and she remembered what she was,  
stricken and suffering, with death  
near.

It was on such a day that two  
persons might be seen passing  
through the streets, and inquiring  
anxiously for the Augustine Con-  
vent; one was a tall and handsome  
Frenchman, and he bent with ten-  
der care over a young lady who  
clung to his arm, and whose fair  
complexion and sunny hair marked  
her at once as having English  
blood. They paused before the  
door of the Convent, and the lady  
cast an eager glance on the grey  
walls.

"Does an English lady reside  
here?" said the gentleman to the  
portress.

The woman answered him burst-  
ing into tears.

"Oh, is she dead?" cried the lady  
in a tone of agony.

"No, no, madame, but near to  
death. You had better see Mother  
Prioress."

They were shown into the parlor  
and an aged nun the Prioress of  
the Convent entered.

"You asked for the Duchess of  
Bertram," she said; "she is very  
ill, and few indeed, are they whom  
we can allow to see her;" but she  
glanced at the lady: "you are En-  
glish, and that has ever a claim  
upon her." And then the nun start-  
ed. "Madame is a kinswoman of  
our dear and noble lady?"

"Reverend Mother," said the  
lady, going forward, "I am her  
child."

Sister Mary of the Cross went  
gently into Constance's room; she  
sat, as we have said, gazing on the  
fair scene, and then on a crucifix  
she held in her hand. The nun knelt  
down by her side.

"Has she come, my sister?"  
said Constance gently. "Yes, I  
know all: that Mother's Heart has  
heard my prayer, and I shall see  
my child ere I die."

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hood to throw the gay colors into relief. They will please and charm  
upon any wall where they may hang, bringing to one an inner smile  
of the soul even on the darkest day. For what can shed more happi-  
ness abroad than the happiness of children?

One of the pictures is called

## "Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened,  
but one of the merry little companions of the woeeful little maid who  
has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows  
what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a  
bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is  
something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures,  
suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities  
of childhood. It is called

## "Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by  
the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again  
there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of  
pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids  
still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been play-  
ing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an  
arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

The two pictures together will people any room with six happy  
little girls, so glad to be alive, so care-free, so content through the  
sunny hours amidst their flowers and butterflies, that they must  
brighten the house like the throwing open of shutters on a sunny  
morning.

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