

"Mr. Stuart to see Mrs. Acton," announced the maid.

"Say I will be down directly. Shall I go alone, Ethna?"

"I told him I would introduce him to you."

"Freshen yourself up a little, dear."

Mechanically, Ethna made some little improvement in her appearance. Her head had rubbed itself into considerable disorder as she nestled in Aunt Hilda's arms.

"Drink this glass of milk, child."

"You are so kind. Do you know I am famished. I have been eating very little this week."

When they descended to the parlor Aunt Hilda found that the lover's appearance corroborated Ethna's statement. They were a wretchedly unhappy looking pair.

Young Stuart began in manly fashion as soon as Ethna presented him to Aunt Hilda.

"It is a shame to come bothering you with our affairs, Mrs. Acton, but I thought that as you have lived in England you would understand better how different life is from America. I am very much in love with Ethna. She is dear to me as my life. I wish to make her my wife and take her with me. I know my family would welcome her with open arms, and do all in their power to make her happy, but she will not consent to be married by anyone but a priest. That I cannot consent to. My father would disinherit me. He is the presiding elder in our kirk and would think it a great disgrace that his child should be married by a priest."

"Does not Protestantism inculcate the principle of private judgment, Mr. Stuart?"

"Yes, but the Catholic Church is so arbitrary. It claims to be infallible."

"We certainly hold that Christ founded a Church, not many conflicting churches. Truth is one. We claim also that every humane creature is bound to find out which church is the one which our Divine Lord commanded his people to hear, and that when found, he is in duty bound to accept her teachings and conform his life to her commandments. Since we Catholics hold that our Church has been founded by Christ and maintained by Him unto the present day, will you not give some attention to the proofs on which our claims are founded?"

"It could make no difference to me, Mrs. Acton. You know how the Catholics are looked down on in the manufacturing towns of the Old Country."

"Yes, Mr. Stuart, Catholics are despised as our Lord Jesus Christ, and His followers, were despised by the proud Romans, but Christianity flourishes gloriously in this, the nineteenth century of its existence, while the Romans came to grief long since in spite of all their boasted power. In your present agitation your mind is incapable of giving attention to a statement of the doctrines of our Church, so I will give an answer only to the worldly side of the question. You have reminded me of the contempt with which Catholics are regarded in Great Britain. Do you forget that the noblest citizen in England to-day is the Catholic Cardinal Manning, the peace-maker of the nation? When the base injustice of the worldly drove the poor man to deeds of violence, such as intimidated men of all conditions, and they shrank in terror from the thousands of starving men and women who took possession of London highways, the mediation of the Father of the poor was the only influence recognized by those desperate creatures. They knew that he recognized in each one of them a brother or a sister in Jesus Christ, and that he realized the desperate straits to which they were driven by cold and hunger and oppression. Like his Divine Master, the Cardinal loved the poor and made his cause their own. If you will look into the doctrines of the Catholic Church you will learn the principles upon which such characters are founded. They are the same as those laid down by Christ on the mountain and by which he revolutionized the world. The meek receive no more recognition from the world of to-day than they did when our Saviour walked the earth that He came to redeem. Nevertheless, our Lord proclaimed 'Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land.' 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' Have these thoughts ever occurred to you, Mr. Stuart?"

"I cannot say that they have, Mrs. Acton. Pardon my bluntness when I confess that I can think only of this matter between Ethna and me. Why can she not agree to be married by a magistrate?"

TO BE CONTINUED.