

A Marriage of Reason

By Maurice Francis Egan, Author of "The Land of St. Lawrence," "Tales of Sexton Maginnis," "The Fate of John Longworthy," "Songs and Sonnets," "The Ghost in Hamlet," Etc.

CHAPTER III.—A BLESSING. Katharine passed through many phases of feeling on her journey towards Kenwood. Was the world so wicked as people said? Was it so delightful as it appeared? She half-shrank from the threshold of it, and yet the thought of it fascinated her. She would not have been young if the prospect of a change was without attraction for her. She would not have been young if the heroic life did not seem very near to her. She lost herself in a dream, in which she saw herself as the benefactress of Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood. They had lost their fortune; they were abjectly poor; they depended on her. Then Katharine saw herself rise to the occasion and she did not settle in her dream by what means—make them independently rich. Her conduct—she settled in her mind that she would have many trials—would of course move their hearts, they would become Catholics, and be truly grateful to her. This building castles in Spain was not encouraged at Our Lady of the Rosary; but Katharine was out of bounds now, and might be excused for it because of her unusual exaltation of feeling. Mr. Sherwood had insisted that Katharine should travel with all possible comforts: so she and her chaperon had the drawing-room compartment of the car, and a luncheon that seemed very luxurious to them both. It was delightful to the emancipated school girl to think that she might have a "long sleep" every day in the week if she liked. No getting up at the sound of the imperious bell now! But the anticipation of this indulgence, the value of which can best be appreciated by the convent-school girl, faded as she thought of poor little Maria. Rodrigues. Between smiles and tears she passed. The Sister who accompanied her told her beads, and Katharine tried to pay attention to her dear friend, the rosary; but her attention was so constantly distracted by some new thing that she reached herself sometimes for her inattention. Finally she put the beads away, resolving to make up for it in her berth when night should come. She heartily wished that her uncle had not been so careful of her comfort. She heard voices in the narrow passage that led past the compartment, and she longed to see who the possessors of them were. It was a great thing to be in the world, and she wanted to see its people. On the next morning the Sister said good-bye to her. She was to meet another Sister, who was going westward, and to go home with her. Fortunately, before she reached this station, her mind was relieved of certain tremulous doubts—the Sister had an old-fashioned prejudice against girls travelling alone. The entrance of an old gentleman and an elderly lady. The old gentleman had a tired look. It was easy to see that he had been ill. The old lady, on the contrary, was bright and gay. She fussed about him, nearly smothered him in a way, and regulated the light carefully. The Sister watched the couple anxiously through the glass door. "I believe that is Mr. and Mrs. Percival," she said. "I wish I were sure. I could leave you with a clear conscience if they would look at Katharine." Katharine laughed. "I fancy I shall have to travel alone many times before I die, Sister. Oh, don't trouble yourself about me. Just meet Sister Teresa, and go back, leaving me in charge of your prayers." The Sister did not answer. She continued her scrutiny. "It is the Percivals." "Do ask them if I may sit with them. It is livelier out there. I really do want to see the people." After a time the old lady rose, and came towards the compartment with a glass in her hand. As she passed their door, the Sister arose and said: "Mrs. Percival!" The old lady paused, looking surprised. "Why, Helen Banford! Little Helen, I hardly knew you in your nun's habit. How glad I am to see you!" The old lady's brown eyes fairly danced with gladness. "You must come out to see Edward. He has been ill," she said, lowering her voice. "He is no nearer the Church than he was, Helen, when I married him thirty-five years ago. I hope you all pray hard for me at Our Lady of the Rosary." "Indeed we do," said the Sister. "Will you let me present Miss O'Connor, one of our pupils?" Mrs. Percival became a trifle colder. She looked at Katharine with a critical eye. Katharine rose and bowed. Mrs. Percival liked her at once, and, instead of merely shaking hands, kissed her on both cheeks. "She is going to Philadelphia and I must leave her at the next station. Would you be so kind—" "Of course," said Mrs. Percival, very heartily. "Of course we are going to Philadelphia, too. Edward and I shall be all the brighter for the presence of a pupil from the old convent. Come, Helen, I hope you will let me forget your religious name for a few minutes. It brings back old times. Sister and I," she said, turning to Katharine, "were young girls together. And yet how young she looks!" "You cannot see my hair," said the Sister smiling. "If you want to keep young," said Mrs. Percival, "I can give you a cosmetic, my dear,—enter a religious community." Katharine laughed softly, and Mrs. Percival, who was a woman of strong prejudices, liked her better than ever. The introductions to Mr. Percival were soon over. It was evident from his manner that he was a man of prejudices, too. He looked with scarcely-concealed dislike at the snowy robe of the Sister, and turned to Katharine with visible relief on his face. Katharine, with that sensitive quickness which was a part of her temperament, read his thoughts. She pitied him, and then a great dread came over her that she might do or say something that would sharpen his prejudices. She had been warned over and over again at the convent of the immense value of words. "A word is a winged seed," Mother Ursula had often said; "the seed of a flower or of a poisoned weed." Katharine touched the rosary she had twisted about her wrist, and felt stronger. Mother Ursula might have smiled—with a tear in the smile, perhaps—if she had known how heavily Katharine felt the responsibility of her words. The conversation flagged after the Sister and Katharine settled themselves in the seat opposite to that of the Percivals. Mrs. Percival was evidently somewhat nervous, and her husband uneasy. The Sister's manner was plainly an annoyance to him. At last the anxiety of the sudden silence seemed to strike Mrs. Percival. "Are you thinking of the Inquisition, Edward?" The old gentleman looked confused. He had been thinking of the Inquisition. "I wish you wouldn't say such things, Margaret," he said; "I really wish you wouldn't." Mrs. Percival laughed again, a low, trilling laugh, that brought a smile even to her husband's lips. "Come, now, Edward,—just remember that this is my old Helen Banford, and try to think that her habit is the symbol of a life that is better than ours. If she should produce a thumb-screw, remember that I am here to protect you." Mr. Percival laughed in spite of himself, and Katharine joined in it. They were friends from that moment. She laughed again. It was too funny to think of the gentle Sister Carmelita, with a thumb-screw! Mr. Percival unbent a little, and remarked that the means of traveling had improved. At the same time he looked at the serene face of Sister Carmelita, and wondered what secrets she might be concealing. Katharine's expression disarmed him. His only child, a little girl, had died when she would have grown up to be as fair and good as Katharine looked to be. In a short time Sister Carmelita was obliged to go, she had reached her station. Poor Katharine clung to her to the last, and Mr. Percival found his eyes grow somewhat hazy as he watched the parting. At last she went. For a long time Mr. Percival did not look at her. He kept his eyes fixed on a book about Mexico he was reading. He was a man of almost invincible prejudices; but when his heart was touched his prejudices flew away like swallows disturbed. He did not believe in convent education. To be sure, his wife had been convent-bred, but she was an exception. He was of the opinion that girls ought to be brought up to fight the world; he often talked of higher female education, and delighted in discussing the discoveries that might yet be made in the sciences by women. He was violently opposed to Sisters or Nuns of every description, and he became the more violently fixed in his prejudices from the constant warfare his wife carried on for them. Here was a specimen of the convent-bred girl, he said to himself, fresh from the convent; he would study, and show his wife through the results of this study, that he was right. Mrs. Percival watched Katharine, too; she felt herself drawn to the young girl. After a while, when Katharine had dropped a tear or two, she spoke: "I imagine you will find kind friends to replace the nuns," she said. "Never," said Katharine, "never! You don't know what they have been to me. I shall count the days until I can get back to the convent again." Mrs. Percival smiled. "I thought

so myself once, but I found other interests." "Ah, no interests will ever fill my life as the interests of the convent did!" Mr. Percival, with his eyes fixed on his book, made a mental note of this for the confusion of his wife at some future time; the girl evidently cared nothing for home; the Sisters had alienated her affections from her parents. "Bad! bad!" he felt uncomfortably. "Never mind, my dear," she said, "enjoy the present, you are young and the day is pleasant; when you see your mother or father you will forget the nuns." "I have no mother or father," said Katharine; "perhaps if I had it would be different; but I have never known any home but the convent." Mr. Percival looked up from his book. And this girl, who seemed so gentle and graceful, whose every tone was modulated, who attracted him by her well-bred air and sensible face, had "known no home but the convent." He would await developments, however. After all, he was probably deceived by appearances. Mrs. Percival felt that she might possibly add to Katharine's sadness by speaking; she was silent. The newsboy came through the car with a package of books. Mr. Percival raised his eyes again; he would wish that this girl would read,—some trash, no doubt. The newsboy poised his package on the arm of Katharine's seat, it was made up of the usual vile and vulgar stuff which the law should prohibit. Katharine cast her eyes over the names of the books; she shrank back from them. "No, thank you," she said, and then she stepped him as he was going away. "I wish you would bring me 'The Angel of the House,' by Coventry Patmore. Sister Carmelita recommended it to us," she said, turning to Mrs. Percival. Mr. Percival almost laughed. The veridancy of expecting such a book on a railway train. The newsboy stared. "Never heard of it," he said. "Have Ouida, Daudet, Zola's last—" "Stop!" said Mr. Percival; "that's enough." The boy passed on. "I have a long list of books which I must read. I am trying to study the social question a little, and I am anxious to get half a dozen books on the subject. Mother Ursula encouraged me; she said that one might imitate St. Elizabeth of Hungary by finding out how to help poor people, by discovering the causes of their poverty, and how to alleviate it intelligently." Mr. Percival smiled. "These were strange words from a convent-school girl!" "A-ah," he said, "you have taken up the idea that women have missions, too. I didn't think they taught such things in convents." Katharine looked at him very seriously. "I don't remember that Mother Ursula ever used the word 'mission.' She taught us that the great thing in life is to help other people, and she read to us much that the Count de Mun has written on the social question. She said that each girl ought to choose some special study and work, and I took—" There was a sudden jar. The train came to a standstill. Mr. Percival turned white; there was always in his mind the fear of death. "Had it come?" he asked himself. His wife screamed. Katharine made the sign of the cross. She looked out the window and saw a broken buggy by the roadside, and a little child lying

WHEN YOU ASK FOR SURPRISE A PURE HARD SOAP. INSIST ON RECEIVING IT.

in the hands of those who hate the religion of Christ. False news is flaunted brazenly and fearlessly from sea to sea, and from pole to pole. No one who is in position to give direct contradiction to such reports, cares much to send a denial. The Lord, the Lord, He will vindicate His own. But will not the Lord be rather moved to disown those who sit down in ease, inglorious and faith-traduced. Rome seems to be making a late beginning. Is it not time for the rest of Catholic Christendom to awake from sleep?—Catholic Transcript.

Qui Vive? (By Loretaw.) THE NORTH POLE. I shouldn't be at all surprised when the explorers have once passed through the regions of ice and snow that they discovered a beautiful country, warm and fair, another Italy.

THE ETERNAL CITY. The people who have never been to Rome, should go there before the Italians destroy it. They are the least Roman now of all civilized peoples.

GOD'S MOTHER. The pure Mother of a pure Son. The Woman who cherished all the duties of a mother, and discharged them faithfully, the Mother whose patient steps led her to the stable over which the Star of Bethlehem shone; over which the multitudes of the heavenly host hung poised on outstretched wings, praising God, and saying "Peace on earth to men of good will." The Mother who fled with the Salvation of the world at her breast, daring the desert; the Mother who watched her Son through His stainless life, and who had the courage to stand and see Him die; that the world might have life. "Blessed among women, blessed among men."

A CATHEDRAL. There is always something solemn and sad in the aspect of a great cathedral standing in the midst of a busy city. Apart and silent though hemmed in by life, it dwells like an unheeded prophet. Now and then it shakes off its proud silence and approaches us for our neglect. Then the deep organ-breath stirs the air, and the voices of the chorists rise louder and clearer, and its melancholy bell like a vibrating heart, knells upon the ears of the careless crowds that hurry past, reminding them of penance and the judgment to come, and crying aloud the forgotten name of God. Such were my reflections standing outside St. James' Cathedral last Tuesday morning waiting the arrival of the C. M.B.A. procession.

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA. The exercises of St. Ignatius (perhaps because he was a saint) produce a great effect upon me; they

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