

FATHER DE LISLE.

By Miss Taylor

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

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

"Most dear and loving children in Our Lord,

"Be of good courage; hereafter, at the pleasure of God, we shall meet in heaven; do not then weep, do not lament, do not take heavily my honorable death. Know you not that we are born once to die, and that always in this life we may not live?—do you not consider my calling, my estate, my profession?—do you not remember that I am going to a place of all felicity and pleasure? Why then should you weep, or mourn, or cry out? But, perhaps, you will say, 'We weep not so much for your death as we do for that you are hanged, drawn and quartered.' Dear children, it is the favorablest, honorablest, and happiest death that ever could have happened unto me. I die not for knavery, but for verity; I die not for treason but for religion; I die not for any ill-deed or offence committed, but only for my faith, for my conscience, for my priesthood, for my Blessed Savior Jesus Christ. We are not made to eat, drink, sleep, to go bravely, to feed daintily, to live in this wretched vale continually; but to serve God, to please God, to fear God, and to keep His commandments, which, when we cannot be suffered to do, then rather must we choose to lose our lives than to desire our lives. Be of good cheer, then, my most loving children, and cease from weeping; for would you not be glad to see me a bishop, a king, or an emperor? How glad you may be then to see me a martyr, a saint, a most glorious and bright star in heaven! My sins are great, I confess, but I flee to God's mercy, my negligences are without number, I am unworthy of His blood, His bitter passion is my only consolation. It is comfortable that the prophet has recorded that 'He hath written us in his hands.' Oh that He would vouchsafe to write Himself in our hearts. All that dulls me has been delay of my death; it was not without cause that Our Master said Himself 'Quod facis fac cito.' for I had hoped ere this, casting off the body of this death, to have kissed the precious glorified wounds of my sweet Savior, sitting on the throne of His Father's own glory. Commend me to all my spiritual children, wheresoever they are now sorrowing; remind them that the joy of this life is nothing, and the joy of the after-life is everlasting. It is said, on Friday next I shall be passable; God grant me humility, that, following His footsteps, I may obtain the victory. God save your souls, my children; Jesus save your souls, and send you to His glory.

"Farewell, farewell, ten thousand times!
"Your loving Father in the Lord
Walter de Lisle,
Priest."

There was, indeed, a fourth letter written altogether by Walter himself, at many intervals, and at the cost of much agony. No eye save his own saw its contents; he sealed it and addressed it to the Countess of Beauville. But Isabel was unable to read the letter of her dead brother. Her life had for weeks hung on a thread, but on the day of Walter's condemnation the fever abated; then followed a fearful exhaustion, and at length, gradually, strength seemed to return. For weeks she had never spoken, save in ravings, and her state had alternated between delirium and stupor. Now Rachael and Rose and Constance, who watched by her, waited anxiously for a moment when strength should bring consciousness and consciousness memory, and the hideous past should gleam before her eyes. But Isabel woke again to life, but not to reason. When she spoke, it was to talk of the days of her childhood, and she became amused by each passing trifle as an infant. The past was one great oblivion—the physician gave

it as his opinion that reason would return, if ever, only shortly before death, and that she would probably recover much of her strength and might live for years. This latter point decided, Constance hesitated no longer to take a step, which was truly a taking up of her cross and confessing Christ. In the chapel of the French embassy, with no witness save her loving Rose, Constance was received into the one Church. On her return home she told her husband. For a long time simple and unfeigned astonishment so filled the Duke's mind that he could not entertain any other idea. That Constance, his young and lovely wife, surrounded by all that could make life pleasant, should deliberately throw away all for religion's sake, was to him simply incomprehensible. If she had been brought up a Catholic and kept to her faith, though that for his part he could not understand, still it would be more understandable; but to adopt it, save only when it was the Sovereign's creed, and so a way to advancement, was incredible. He tried all his arguments, and Constance answered them in the same strain as St. Philip's Neri's "what then!" and each answer puzzled the Duke more and more; and at last, weeping like a child, he reminded his wife that he had no power to shield her from the Queen's sentence, whatever it might be. Constance knew it well, and she knew too, as every Englishwoman did, that her beauty, and fidelity to her husband, and her freedom from the least taint of scandal, were not likely to advantage her in Elizabeth's eyes. The royal sentence on the Duchess was banishment from her husband's house, to retire on a small allowance (the amount of which Elizabeth herself would fix), and never on any account again to see her children. They should run no chance of being taught their mother's religion. And the Queen appointed the Lady Fortescue, an elderly kinswoman of the Bertram family, and a bigoted Protestant, to bring up the children. In three days Constance must part with them. Alas! how the hours fled counted by the mother's aching heart; how fondly she watched over them and how she strove to prepare them for a separation from her.

"But if we go away, you will soon come, mother!" said Lady Mary; and Constance said "she hoped so."

Alas! what death-like hopes. "I will teach thee one prayer, my little Mary," said Constance, fondly, "which thou shalt say each night; and when Harry grows older, thou shalt teach him too, but not till he is old enough to know that it is a secret—mother's secret, which you must tell no one."

And Mary with great importance promised; and she repeated after her mother the words of the "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

A shadow of awe gathered on her childish face.

"I will never forget it, mother, and say it every night when I think of you, before I go to sleep."

The day of parting came at last, and Lady Fortescue, stern, cold and harsh, arrived to receive the children; and when Constance, with bursting heart would have given her some of the counsels respecting them, which a mother's heart alone can give, she was repulsed by—

"Pardon me, your grace, the mother who can forsake her child is one who can meet with no sympathy from me."

And Constance turned away to hold her children for the last time in her arms. Her little lovely Mary, just six years old, and her noble boy of three, with his large, star-like eyes, and his playful ways, and a wisdom beyond his years—

they cling to her neck and cover her with kisses, and cry and sob, with all their childish misery at parting; but she knew well this will pass, and they will be taught to forget and despise the mother who loves them so wildly. She knew it, and she bears it all, and her heart is rent and broken within her. It is 'her' torture-chamber, and 'her' racking. And now the desolate future lay before Constance, and in the midst of her agony, as before in her joys, she was thoughtful for others. She saw that Rachel's strength was rapidly giving away from the great strain on both body and mind, attendant on Isabel's long illness, and her present state; and Constance knew that Rachel's one prayer was that she might live to see Isabel recover even an hour's consciousness, and be reconciled to her God. Constance thought also of Rose and her future; for Rose's parents were dead and her brothers scattered.

The Duchess proposed to her brother that he should commit to her the care of his afflicted wife, and that they should together seek a refuge in France or Belgium. They would there be free from molestation, and the entire change of air and scene might possibly tend to restore Isabel's mind. The Earl gladly consented. His wish now was to obtain a divorce, and by a second marriage perpetuate his family, and, in his burning indignation against his sister, he desired to persuade the Duke of Bertram to follow his example. But this the Duke, sorely afflicted, refused to do. Nothing could, however suit the Earl's plans better than the exile of Constance and Isabel, and he facilitated their speedy departure. They left London in the direction of Apswell, but turning sharply away when within a few miles of that place, they travelled the same road over which eleven years before Walter de Lisle had passed in his hasty flight. A small vessel was in waiting, and the party embarked. Isabel was laid on cushions on the deck, and she laughed with childish glee at the foaming waves and sails, while Rachel sat beside her, with the tears rolling down her face. The proud Isabel with her haughty intellect and her indomitable will, and this was the end! Rose too, sat still and wept, and by her side sat a tall, thin woman, on whose pale cheeks there burned one spot of red, and whose sunken eyes were glassy and bright, and who looked on the receding shore with no glance of sorrow or regret. The tears rolled, indeed, down her cheeks, but they came from a sorrow within—it was easy to see they were the constant tears of a penitent. There were no tears on Constance's face. She stood gazing at the white cliffs of England, as they grew dim in the distance. From the land where her children dwelt she raised her eyes to the clear sky above, and as she thought of the love to which even a mother's is a vain shadow, her bruised heart was still.

To be Continued.

There was a young girl in the choir
Whose voice rose high and hoir,
Till it reached such a height
It was clear out of sight,
And they found it next day, in the
spoir.—Tit-Bits.



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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 woeful 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 playing. 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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