CARDOME

A ROMANCE OF KENTUCKY

By Anna C. Minogue

CHAPTER VI

If in the house there were festivity and joy, these reigned supreme in the "quarters." For the field hands it was an entire holiday, and the excitement made the necessary additional work of the house slaves of feather weight. From the level yard, dotted with the white log cabins, the grass had been worn by the tramp of many feet. Hard, white, and bare, it lay. There played the children through the sweet summer days; there, when night fell and supper was over, the young folk gathered for the dance, while their elders sat on low benches and smoked, keeping time to the music; there on Sunday afternoons, when the long, lonesome shadows were creeping across the fields, old and young congregated to sing their sad, plaintive hymns, or listen to Aunt Charity read comforting chapters from her little Bible. It was a sacred place to them, that white yard, and it seemed appropriate that the grand dinner given them by the Judge should there be served. Each housekeeper brought out her table, her one prized white cloth, starched and ironed to board-like stiffness, and joining with her neighbors'—the master's long dining-board had a fair duplicate.

"I tell yoh, we yain't had no finah day nur dis sence de time we giv' de bahbecue foh Gen'ul Layfet," said one old man, as he sat with a friend on a log, despatching the red heart of a watermelon.

"Yoh 'membah dat time, Ben?" asked the other, with well-feigned surprise.

"Pufuc'ly Mose!" replied Ben, with emphasis. "Hit wuz de yah 'foh ole Marse died, an' me'n Judge wus nedah uv us mahyd. Guv'noh Desse, he 'vited ole Marse to Fran'foht to he'p 'im 'ceive Gen'ul Layfet, an' we'en Gen'ul Layfet see ole Marse he run up an' shake 'is han' an' say, I'se glad to meet yoh, Mistah Todd! Dah yain't no fambly in dis hyar State uv Kaintucky what's done moh 'n de Todds! An' den Marse he vited Gen'ful Layfet an' de Guv'noh an' all de res' to come to Cahdome an' he gev 'em a bahbecue. An' Gen'ul Layfet, he tell Marse he 'es ovah pow'in' glad to come, an' de Guv'noh an' all de res' dey says dey's shore to come; an' dey does, an' stop all night. An' Gen'ul Layfet, aftah de gran' suppah, he tell Marse an' de company how he an' Gen'ul Washin'ton fit de English an' mek de King clah out. Den Gen'ul Layfet he gwias to de piany an' he'n Miss 'Ginia Clay, ouh Miss 'Ginia's muthah, dey sing an' sing; an' Marse Hen'y Clay, what's dah argyfian' wif ole Marse, he shet right up, an' w'en de song ameovah he 'vances to Miss 'Ginia an' says, 'Dis am a mons'us honah foh yoh, Cous'n 'Ginia!' an' Gen'ul Layfet, he ups an' tell Marse Hen'y dat Miss 'Ginia hev honahed hem; an' dat wus so, yas, suh! Den de nex' day de 'tiah neighbahhood gyath'd in. My Lawd! we doan know w'at to do wif de hosses an' de cya'ghes an' de people; but ole Marse an' Miss, dey doan min', an' de wimmin dey meck moah bu'goh an' bile moh ham an' kill moh chick'uns, an' evabody eats an' eats till yoh t'ink dey doan 'spect dey's gwine to get no moh till Judgmen' day. An' Gen'ul Layfet an' Marse an' de Gub'noh an' de res' uv'm, dey stan' out on de lawhn, jus' a leetle 'bove de summah-house an' de Gen'ul sheck han's wif de people, an' say dey yain't nuffin' gev him moh pleasuh den to see all dese folkses; an' dah yain't nethuh!"

Ben, rambling on, had quite forgotten his melon, and when at this point he returned from the past, he felt chagrinned to see that the best part had been quietly devoured by his attentive listener, while several of the children, who had gathered around, were helping themselves to the remainder. At this juncture Aunt Charity appeared, a slenderly built middle-aged woman, whose brown-hued face wore an expression that made it almost beautiful. Over her neat blue cotton dress was a long white apron, a white kerchief crossed her shoulders, while another, as spotless, was wound about her head. Her voice, face, her entire appearance, expressed sublime patience, which seemed to spiritualize the woman. It was one of the unaccountable visitations of Providence that the only daughter of this saintly old woman should be Mandy. She went quickly to the log, and reaching out her arms drew the children from the melon, censuring the men for their negligence. Mandy, who chanced to be passing on her way to the kitchen, laughed at her mother's solicitude, and exclaimed scornfully:

"W'at's it to yoh, mammy, if de young' uns was all dead? Day 'longs to de Judge."

"But the little souls 'long to God honey," said the woman, solemnly, pressing the children against her spare form. "An' when God put 'em in these little black bodies, and guv 'em to ouh Marster, He didn't make us less responsible in carin' foh 'em."

Mandy only grinned at the words and when her mother moved away with the children, she said to the men: "Mammy's a fool! God doan keer foh us, ur He'd meck us free."

"W'at yoh want to be free foh, Mandy?" askad Ben, in a puzzled voice, again neglecting his watermelon. "Dah yain't nuffin' yoh wants yoh cyan't get. Whar yoh t'ink yoh's gwine to get food an' sheltah ef yoh's free, 'less'n yoh go up Nof? An' yoh's got to work foh strange folks 'dah, not 'n yoh own fambly; an' mebbe foh po'h white trash, wa't nevah had cullohed people. Ouh fambly's rich gal!"

"Dey wouldn't be rich ef it wahn't foh us!" exclaimed Mandy, with a toss of her head.

"Yoh's a fool now, Mandy!" said Moses with a laugh. "Whar yoh t'inks all de Judge's lan' an' his cyattle an' his money? I rec'n as how we's wo't sumfin', but de Judge doan sell us 'less'n we's willin' to go. I doan know any one on de plantashion w'at 'ud go 'way, less'n it's yoh. 'Course we work, but dah's plenty uv po'h white folkses as 'ud be mightily glad to work foh de Judge foh w'at he pays foh ouh keep. I've heern' 'im tell Mistah Rice dah's so many uv us he rec's as how he'll hev to set some uv us free. Mebbe he'll set yoh free, Mandy!"

At the word Mandy turned abruptly and continued her interrupted walk to the house, while the speaker laughed.

"Mandy doan talk no moh 'bout freedom to me," he said, "foh I know sumfin' she doan keer to 'membah."

"W'at's dat?" asked Ben.

"De Judge, 'e offahed any uv de young men freedom w'at 'ud tek Mandy an' mah'y 'er. But dey yain't none uv 'em 'ticulah 'bout 'ceptin' de offah, sence dey heerd 'bout ole Miss Powell's blue-gummed niggah a-comin' to see 'er. But 'e doan come no moh, I 'serb."

"No, suh," replied Ben. "We doan want no blue gummed Guiny niggah mixin' up in ouh fambly, an' Cha'ity, she went ovah to de Park an' seed 'is ole mammy an' tells 'er some truf's. Cha'ity's a good woman, an' she doan want no c'nexion wif dem what's not."

"W'at's de blue gummed niggah doan, Ben?" asked Mose, in awed voice.

"He yain't doan nuffin', es I know uv, 'less'n he 'herit his ole mammy's evil speerit."

"W'at's she doan?" questioned the other.

"She's doan ole Miss Powell's biddin'," replied Ben, solemnly.

"W'at's dat, Ben?"

Ben glanced around cautiously, then leaned toward his companion and whispered his answer.

"Good Lawd!" cried the hearer, dropping his knife, while the two gazed at each other in silence.

"How did yoh hyar dat, Ben?" the younger man then asked, in a low voice.

"Chloe, Miss 'Ginia's woman, she 'longed to de Clays ontell Miss 'Ginia's muthah mahyed, an' young Miss Powell, she wus a Clay, one uv de po'h Clays. Chloe tole my ole woman, an' she tole me."

When supper was over and the many tables removed, Isaac, dressed in a spotless linen suit, with his fiddle under his arm, sauntered slowly across the yard, followed by the admiring glances of the children, who were sitting Turk-fashion along the sides of the cabins. He had that day received a fresh supply of strings for his instrument, and on joining the group of older men he condescendingly explained the excellence of his new possession, while the dancers politely awaited the arrival of the invited guests. They soon began to flock in, slaves from the adjoining plantations. Then Isaac took his chair off to a proper distance and began leisurely to tune his fiddle. The old negro was well aware of his importance, and ignoring the evident impatience of his waiting assembly, he scraped and twanged, tightened and untightened the strings, until his instrument was in proper order; then, drawing the resin across the bow, he cried out, pomposnly:

"S'lec' yoh pa'tnahs!" At the words there was a quick forward movement of the young men toward the women, and in the next moment the white yard, over which the rising summer moon was shedding its light, presented its frequent ball room aspect. A long, piercing wail answered the first drawing of the bow across the strings; then, "S'lute yoh pa'tnahs an' yoh cohnah's!" cried old Isaac, while a flood of light, tripping music began. Figure followed figure, dance followed dance. When one set of dancers grew weary there were others to take their places; thus with singing and light talk in the house, loud laughter and gay dancing in the "quarters," the Judge's fete day slipped away. As the evening advanced, the sleeping children were gathered up by their mothers and borne off to their little beds in the cabins; the older people soon followed the children to rest, but the dance and music went on gayly. As the last quadrille was forming, there came from the orchard below the long, peculiar cry of an owl, whereupon Mandy gave a start, and, unobserved, stole away from the laughing, heedless crowd.

Half an hour later all was silent. The yard was deserted, and lay white and hard in the moonlight; the great house and little cabins were dark. The helplessness of sleep was on the land. Then from out the shadow cast by a line of quince shrubs, two figures advanced, tiptoeing their way toward the meat-house, in the lock of which the key glittered like silver in the moonlight.

"Lawd, but doan I wisht I hed a mule!" said the man, whom Ben would have recognized as Mrs. Powell's "blue-gummed" negro.

"Shet yoh mouf!" commanded his companion, Mandy, trailing her ball-room suit over the yard, "ur yoh'll wake de dogs, an' den yoh'll wisht yoh hed a mule, sho' 'nough."

Cautiously they unfastened the door, and into the strong bag the man carried under his arm they dropped the pieces of cured meat that hung from the low rafters.

"Doan yoh tek less'n five dollahs foh dis," said Mandy. "An' yoh bring me dat money, d'ye hyar?"

The man grinned, showing palish blue gums and rows of peculiarly pointed teeth as, lifting the sack to his shoulder, he asked:

"Doan I allus bring yoh de money, gal?"

"Not all uv't!" she answered, sharply. "I'se no fool, an' ef yoh doan fetch me five dollahs to mawah night, I'll tell on yoh, sho'."

She watched him depart, then, closing the door, muttered:

"I'll jus' let de key stay hyah to fool de ole Judge a s'prise pa'ty in de mawnin'. H'll t'ink dey's speerits roun', sho' 'nuf."

She laughed lightly as she stole across the white yard and slipped into her mother's cabin; and again all was solemn, moon-lighted silence.

CHAPTER VII

Clarisse was sitting in a garden with Plato's "Immortality of the Soul" resting on her knee. The June sun was climbing toward the meridian, but the leafy arms of the catalpa tree at her back, and the morning-glory covered trellis by her side shielded her uncovered head from its intense rays. The grass, in patches, was still hung with dew; but her waiting-woman, assigned her on her arrival at the Park, had brought a rug to profect her feet from the dampness and a parasol to shield her from the sun when she was ready to leave the sheltered nook. A narrow, finely gravelled path led past her, through the wood lawn, to a wide, shallow stream, one of the Elkhorn's many tributaries, and the murmurous flow of the water came pleasantly up the long sloping hill, when a pause in the songs of the many birds left an interval of silence. Around, a thousand June roses were spilling their fragrance on the passing breezes, summer blossoms swayed as if giving greeting to their neighbor across the wide strips of sward, and belated violets bloomed unobserved at the foot of a fatherly old oak.

But Clarisse was not thinking of her surroundings, neither was her mind absorbed in the sublime contemplation suggested by the book on her knee: it was wholly occupied with the remembrance of yesterday. She was not aware of the presence of another until she heard her cousin's sharp, rasping voice. Clarisse had no great affection for her relative, and her first and rather clumsy feigning of such had been coolly rejected by Mrs. Powell, who assured her that living at the Park did not imply love for its mistress.

She moved from her garden chair to the rustic bench, and the elderly lady took the seat thus vacated. Her useless hands, neatly gloved, lay on her lap, and the deep furrows and parchment-like complexion made the face look older and uglier in the fresh, white morning. Gazing on her, Clarisse wondered if her cousin had ever been young and beautiful. Mrs. Powell seemed to read the thought, for she smiled grimly, making the other experience an uncomfortable sensation, and she nervously lifted her hand and broke off a morning-glory from its delicate stem.

"How did you enjoy your first visit to Cardome?" asked Mrs. Powell.

"It was perfectly delightful!" cried the girl. "I had no idea there were such charming people in Kentucky."

"I should say in this locality, if I were you," corrected Mrs. Powell. "Kentucky is a rather large place, and such a remark smacks of narrowness and bigotry. Nor must you mind my correcting you, at times. You have come to live among us—I hope, to become one of us—and you understand our happiness when we are young depends in a great measure on our social popularity. You need not expect kindness and attention for gratuitous affronts."

Clarisse sat under the sharp words with her eyes on the morning glory, which she was now tearing slowly to pieces. Mrs. Powell's many years of secluded life had been spent in reading. Her course embraced a wide range, but what held for her the greatest attraction was character study in its various branches. She had followed some subjects to their utmost point, and as she now looked on Clarisse—her lids shielding her eyes under the reproof, her fingers cruelly tearing, bit by bit, the delicately tinted, rarely beautiful flower—she knew she saw a person wholly devoid of the sensibilities of a fine soul; one whose conscience could be gradually deadened, until wrong would be done as unwittingly as the flower was mutilated.

"Tell me something about your day," continued Mrs. Powell, and her tones were gentler than Clarisse had ever heard.

"The Governor was there."

"So I should suppose, since he and the Judge are close friends."

"I met him," continued the girl, "and he inquired most kindly for you."

Mrs. Powell made no comment on the solicitude thus expressed for her by the chief magistrate of the common-wealth, and the girl continued:

"And Cousin Angie, there was a Mr. Powell there. Is he a relative of yours?"

There was a swift, sudden drawing toward her of the neatly gloved hands; after a second's pause, she replied: "There are many families of the name. Was he an elderly man?"

The words were spoken hesitatingly, but as she was not a close observer these outward signs of emotion were lost on Clarisse, who hastened to answer:

"Oh, no. He was quite young, and so handsome! He has black hair, deep, dark eyes, and is very tall."

"You are describing the majority of Kentucky gentlemen," remarked Mrs. Powell, who had now regained her composure; "when you call him tall and handsome; while many of the Powells are dark. You met him, of course?"

"Yes, and when I told him a bearer of his name was my cousin he looked bewildered until I mentioned the Park."

"And then?" The voice was sharp and insistent.

"He said, 'Indeed!' and asked for your health. He did not appear to know you very well."

At this moment the white-haired porter came toward them with a card which he held before his mistress's eyes.

"Ask Mr. Dallas to join us here," said Mrs. Powell, as she read the name. She greeted her caller cordially, and after the exchange of customary light talk, led the conversation to the event of yesterday.

"I was telling Cousin Angie about that Mr. Powell," said Clarisse, "for I wanted to know if he were a relative of hers. Can you tell us his Christian name?"

"Clay," replied Dr. Dallas, "if you can call that a Christian name!

The wooden hands were drawn a little closer together, but, save that convulsive movement, Mrs. Powell gave no sign of all that name implied. The gesture did not escape the eyes of Howard Dallas, although they appeared to be resting admiringly on the rose-bush that stood across the path. Clarisse laughed at his answer, then said:

"Do you know him Cousin Angie?"

"Is he Walter Powell's son?" asked Mrs. Powell, fixing her eyes steadily on Mr. Dallas, her self-possession striving to make amends for the former involuntary movement of the hands.

"I believe he is," replied he, with well-feigned unconsciousness.

"In that case," said Mrs. Powell, turning toward Clarisse, "he is a very close connection — my step-grandson."

"Why, Cousin Angie!" exclaimed Clarisse, and then went on, blunderingly: "How strange he has not come to see you!"

Not a muscle of the old face quivered under Howard Dallas's eyes as she said, quietly:

"When we are old, Clarisse, the young forget our existence." But the man smiled under his long, silky mustache.

"Where is he staying?" she asked, presently.

"At Willow wild," replied Mr. Dallas, and as he knew he was on uncertain ground he devoutly wished she would evince less curiosity.

"Indeed!" she remarked. "Willow-wild," she continued, turning toward Clarisse, "was the Powell homestead. I lived there from the day of my marriage until my husband's death. Who has the old place now, Howard?" she asked.

"I forget the occupant's name," answered Mr. Dallas, carelessly. "He is a stranger here. I suppose you know," he continued, "that young Powell is running for the Legislature?"

"On what principle?" she asked, her eyes wandering across the flower-decked lawn.

"State's rights," he returned, and a silence fell. "We must admit it is honest conviction with him," Mr. Dallas began again, "since all his property is one black horse. He has no fields to be cultivated and no slaves to be considered."

"It is always honest conviction with a Powell," she remarked.

"And with a Clay, too," put in Clarisse, who had a dim recollection of having once been drawn from the sublime contemplations of Plato and Socrates to read of the great Clay, and was glad of an opportunity to show her knowledge of the Kentucky statesman. Mr. Dallas bit his lip under his mustache and looked keenly at the girl, wondering if she were totally devoid of feeling or entirely ignorant of her cousin's past.

"And with a Clay, too," repeated Mrs. Powell, calmly, although it was the first time in years that name had crossed her lips.

When their visitor was gone Mrs. Powell sought her room and called her waiting-woman. The slave soon appeared — a lithe, quick-footed woman, whose face was one of the most hideous that ever made claim to the human. The deep, dead, ebony blackness of the skin showed pure African blood, but the unusually low, receding forehead, the hooked nose, and protruding lips, making the face resemble more the head of a parrot than the features of the ape, told of a different species of the race; while the shifting, cunning, bead-like eyes wore always the vindictiveness of a serpent ready for its spring. When a baby she had been picked up by traders in Guinea. At an early age she came into the possession of Mrs. Powell's father and on the death of his young wife she was made nurse to his infant child. This setting of the stranger above them was resented by the old family slaves, and their dislike found vent in many strange stories about the Guinea negress, until in time she came to be looked upon as something evil, masquerading in that distorted garb of flesh. But she filled her important office well and gave to the white child a care and affection greater even than that of a natural mother. What ties later drew mistress and slave inseparably together may not be here related; but when the negress entered the room that summer morning, the white woman turned toward her her agonized face and stretched out her wooden hands, crying:

"The pain, mammy, the pain!"

With lithe, swift, serpent-like glide, the slave crossed to her mistress. By the nimble black fingers those wooden hands were soon unfastened and dropped to the richly carpeted floor, while she laid the poor, scarred stumps against her breast and the mistress wept like a child. After a long, long time, during which the slave stood calm and still as a statue, Mrs. Powell said:

"The boy has come."

"Yes, honey, he's come," she answered, and her voice had a peculiar glide that would set its hearer thinking of waving marsh grasses stirred by a snake creeping through them. "He's stayin' in his gran'pap's ole place. They can tuhn him out ef they git tiah'd uv him. An' he hasn't any lan', en he hasn't any slaves; jus' one black hoss. We'll have him come ovah hyah some time, honey, an' see how he beahs hisself, an' see how he looks. We'll have him come to see us."

The mistress looked earnestly into the slave's face, then she said;

"Very well. Now, put on my wooden hands."

TO BE CONTINUED

GOD'S ONE MAN

Conor Gilligan had taken home a new wife to Carrig-a durrish, a town-bred girl, who opened wide her eyes at the customs of the country, but whose simplicity won all hearts to her.

The farm lay on the highway, and at first the coming and going of the beggars had broken the monotony of the long days when Conor was out at work, but when the spring-time came and the workhouse wards sent out their winter inmates to "travel" for the summer, Mrs. Gilligan began to tire of the frequent calls on her time and her charity.

"There's nothing for you."

The applicant was the fifth since morning and midday had not yet come.

"For God's sake."

Mrs. Gilligan hesitated.

"I'm sorry," she said, more gently, "but there are so many coming—"

"Amn't I in Carrig-a durrish?" asked the beggar in surprise.

"Can't you see that for yourself," replied Mrs. Gilligan, and she glanced proudly over the fields that fell away beyond the road to the little bog lake in the distance.

There are no other fields in the parish to be compared with these.

"I'm dark," said the woman sadly, "but God's will be done;" and she tapped the flag-stone before the door with her knotted thorn-stick.

"It's sorry, I am," cried Mrs. Gilligan quickly, this time really meaning it, "May God help you." She drew open the half door and led the woman to the fireside, putting her on the low seat that Conor had made for herself, and bidding her rest until the dinner was served.

"Thanks be to God for this," said the beggar. "I was afeard when you spoke that the luck was going from Carrig-a-durrish."

"The luck? What's that at all?"

Everything was prepared for the midday meal, and waiting for the potatoes and the bacon and cabbage to boil, Mrs. Gilligan drew forward a stool and sat facing the beggar, her fingers busied with a gray wool sock.

"Hasn't Conor told you of the Luck of Carrig-a-durrish?" asked the woman incredulously.

"Never a word," said Conor's wife. "Tell on yourself."

And this is the story Mayneen Gilligan heard from the blind beggar on the hearth.

Years and years ago, long before the Great Famine was sent to Ireland, there used to be times of poverty and hardship that, not knowing what was going to come, the people thought of very badly. There was hunger in the farmers' houses and in the poor man's cottage, want and fever and starvation and death; and many an honest family that had struggled along for generations in the little home were forced to travel the roads, begging their bread for God's sake from those more fortunate, if little less poor, than themselves.

The Gilligan who was in Carrig a-durrish in those days, was an honest poor man, but times were bad, the family at home was big and weak and there was blight upon the corn and the potatoes.

Morning and all day long they came here to the door, asking food for God's sake, and when night fell still they came, but now begging for the shelter of the barn roof over themselves and the helpless children in their arms.

And the Gilligans gave what they could, at first with all their hearts, then the man began to grudge the giving of what they had so little themselves, and he'd grumble time and again, so that it was mostly when he was out that the woman gave for God's sake.

One night himself and the eldest boy had been out all day, trying to save the little crop of hay that lay late and rotting in the fields, and his heart was heavy seeing the poor promise of the charity man before them at the door.

"Where can I sleep?" asked the harvest, and coming in there was a charity man, and his beard was white upon his breast. But Conor Gilligan for it was Conor that was in it then, as now, Conor Gilligan, after thinking all day of the want that was waiting for his own, turned on the stranger.

"In the back of the ditch and bad—to you," he cried in sudden passion. "Is it a lodging-house you think I'm keeping for every idle vagabond in Ireland to sleep in?" But the mistress had come out and now she spoke softly.

"There's two in the barn already, Conor," she said. "What harm will it do us to give shelter to another?"

"Two in there! then there's two too many." But the wife checked him.

"You're hungry and tired, avick," she said as she pulled him by the sleeve. "Go in to your supper and I'll see to this man."

Conor grumbling still, did her bidding, and the stranger too obeyed her when she signed to him to follow.

"Where do you come from?" she asked, looking down at his rags of boots.

"From the world at large," he said.

"And are the people good to you?"

"Not so good as they used to be," was his reply.

"What do they call you?" she asked, but he seemed not to hear her question right, for the answer he gave as he threw himself down and drew the clean straw over him sounded to have no sense in it at all.

"Charity," he said. "And that's the love of God."

In the morning, before going out to the fields, Conor Gilligan went to fetch in for his wife a measure of meal from the store in the barn that was to last them till the harvest ripened, and God only knew whether the poor crop that year would ever show gold at all.

The sack was gone. Worse than that, another unopened sack and the few potatoes that were all their dependence were gone as well.

He had been angry the night before when the charity man came in, but now— Oh! Now the children ran away and hid their faces in their mother's skirts to see the passion of him and the words he flung upon her in his wrath. Even the woman herself was cowed, but at last she ventured to put in a word.

"Perhaps it wasn't the charity men," she said timidly.

"And who else would it be?" cried Conor, picking up a great stick that lay at hand. Then he strode across the yard and she and the children after him. The barn door was set to, and inside at first they thought it empty, but looking again they saw that the last man to come in was still sleeping.

"Get up out of that!" cried Conor, and he made as though to strike him with the stick, only his wife held him back.

"Get up out of that!" repeated Conor, but now that the old man's eyes were on him, he spoke more quietly. "Get up and tell me where they've gone who robbed me."

"How do I know," replied the charity man, sitting up. "I slept early and when I woke they were gone. What is it they've stolen. Your happiness?"

"No—no." Conor was surprised to hear such a one speak.

"One of your children?"

"No—o."

"Your character?"

"No, no, they've stolen all the meal and potatoes we have, all we're likely to have the winter through."

"Then," said the charity man, they've taken nothing but what you can get again. What will you give me if I give you back as much as what you've lost?"

"What will I give you?" asked Conor, and he was more and more surprised. "What do you want me to give you?"

"The key of your barn," replied the charity man quickly.

"So that you can come again, I suppose?"

"Yes, I, or others. You would lose more than joy would gain by keeping out those who ask shelter in God's name."

Conor went over to the door, and pulled out the rusty key.

"Well," he said, holding it in his hand, "How are you going to give me back my meal?"

The charity man stood up and walked out into the yard. He went up to the fence and looked out over the fields that run down to the lake below.

"In a month's time," he said, and he stretched out his hands, "there will be more grain in those fields than the work of one man can save in a harvest time."

Conor looked down with gloomy, doubting eyes over the poor heads of corn, sprouting weakly through the soil.

"If there is," he said scoffingly, "you can come back for the key." And with that he turned to the empty barn.

When he came out into the yard again the charity man was gone.

"And did he ever come back again?" asked Mrs. Gilligan leaning forward. Her hands had long been idle because of her interest in the story.

"Never again," said the blind beggar. "But when the harvest came hadn't Conor to call the neighbors in, one and all, to help him with the corn? And the potatoes that he thought were black and done for were the finest crop that ever was seen."

"What then?" asked Mrs. Gilligan.

"Then," went on the story teller, "they put their heads together about what to do with the key. Says Conor we don't know his name nor his home, so how can we keep our promise. But his wife spoke different.

"He came from the world at large," she said, "and he told me his name was Charity, 'and that's the love of God,' he said."

"Then they knew it was no right charity man they had had in it, and Conor, going to the lough side, he threw in the key to where no man has ever measured the deepness of the water, and the bog stuff underneath. But that was only one part of their promise and the other part they kept as well, God helping them, them and their children after them.

"How was that?" asked the young wife, not fully understanding.

"From that day to this," said the blind beggar, "the barn door has stood open, and never one, man, woman or child, who came to Carrig-a-durrish has ever been sent away with empty hands. Out of every three that come in it two may be idle, good-for-nothing pilferers, but if God sends the third, by giving to all, there's no danger that God's one man should be refused. And the luck has been in it since. Is there a farm in the country better now than Carrig-a-durrish?"

"Not a one," replied Mrs. Gilligan.

"Is there a happier home?"

"No, indeed, nor as happy."

"The reason for that," said the blind beggar, "is because there's charity in it, and that, as God's own messenger said, that is the love of God."—A. Dease in the English Messenger.

OUR CONVERTS

DO WE BOAST TOO MUCH OF THEM?

Something in a paper never read by the present writer was quoted to him the other day, and as it was only a quotation it would be worse than temperarious to attempt a re-quotation, writes John Ayscough in the Catholic Universe of London. But the point urged appears to have been that Catholics, if not the Catholic Church, make undue parade of accessions to our religion from other bodies, as, for instance, from the Church of England — that those who join us make some sort of boast of it, and so do we on their account; whereas, recessions occur from our Church to other bodies, as to the Church of England, and the recéders make no boast of it, nor is any made on their behalf by the religion which satisfies, better than ours, their ideals of unity, sanctity, Catholicity and apostolicity. It is not meant that the above phrasing represents that of the paragraphs in the newspaper; it is merely what I understood to represent the subject matter of the complaint or twit. probably there was no allusion to the unity, sanctity, Catholicity and apostolicity of the religion, or religions, whither lapsed Catholics may betake themselves.

Is there any truth in the assertion conveyed? Are we concerned to deny it altogether? I do not see that we are.

If those who become Catholics boast of what they have done self-righteously, they are in fault, as all self-righteousness is faulty. If they held themselves as though their conversion were so great a thing for the Church that the Church ought to feel herself slightly overpowered by the honor done to her, they would show themselves singularly lacking in a sense of proportion. But they may glory in finding themselves where they are without any personal boast in the matter. The woman in the Scriptures who found the groat she had been seeking and called her friends and neighbors together to rejoice with her, and He who tells us of it does not blame her; and the true faith is a greater find than a groat. The rejoicing is a sign of appreciation of the thing found, and need not imply vanity or self consequence. I think it is true that our converts do so rejoice, and their joy does not quickly evaporate. It does not wear away when the novelty of their position, as co-heirs of all the Church's treasures has been worn away, but deepens through life, and is deepest when life ends.

It may be true that those who leave the Catholic Church for some other make no boast, personal or otherwise. It is very likely. They may betray no pride and no elation. And one does not wonder. It is a humble movement, and if they are aware of it, it may mean some remnant of grace. At all events, their silence cannot surprise us. If they abstain from calling friends and neighbors to rejoice with them, they doubtless have their own reasons, and one who is no wizard may divine them. To rejoice, even rather loudly, over treasure trove is as natural as it is human and harmless; to make much cry over the acquisition of a mare's nest only proclaims an imbecility it were better to hide. To find your mare's nest and hold your tongue about it is a natural result of some suspicion as to the importance of your discovery. It would not appear that we are much concerned to deny that converts to Catholicity arrive with a sense of elation and delight they are unable to repress, and that receders from Catholicity withdraw with all reasonable meekness, in perfect silence, and without the least tendency to betray elation or even belief.

But does the Catholic Church, or do Catholics, make a great to-do over the arrival of converts? These are two separate questions, though one in principle. The Catholic Church at large is not commonly aware of the accession of converts unless they arrive in masses, so to speak, or their importance is peculiarly significant in some special way. If it could be aware of each individual conversion, it would rejoice over each, as the Good Shepherd in the parable rejoiced over the finding of