

THE REVOLT OF MARY HENNESSEY.

TERESA BEATRICE O'HARE, in the ROSARY MAGAZINE.

"Mary," said Mrs. Bolton as she came into the kitchen where Mary Hennessey was ironing, "have you heard of the new book that every one is talking about, 'In His Steps'?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied Mary smiling, "I've read it."

"You have?" said Mrs. Bolton surprised. "Well, it's not surprising that the ladies of the club were shocked this afternoon when I confessed my ignorance of it. What do you think of it, Mary? They discussed it pro and con and they are quite excited over it, saying it is going to revolutionize thought and work wonders in the world."

"Well, ma'am," said Mary quietly, "when you go upstairs just slip into my room and get it. It's on the table at the foot of the bed. Excuse my asking you to get it yourself, but this has never been ironed right away while it was damp."

"Oh, don't mention it, Mary," replied her mistress, turning to go up stairs, "I'll go for it gladly and thank you. But, Mary," she called back, "you did not tell me what you thought of it, ma'am," answered Mary, "and then I'll tell you."

"So it is going to stir up the world, is it?" added Mary to herself. "Oh, we hear enough! Sure, there isn't a week that she doesn't come home from the club with some new fad or other, and what with that and her whist and Christian Association and her Settlement work she's just worn to a skeleton. Indeed I'm glad the summer is coming so they'll give up some of it for a while, for she'd never stop if they all didn't, if it killed her. Afraid of losing ground, she says. Oh, God help her, sure its nearer to the six-foot of it she is getting, and long before her time, too!"

Mary Hennessey was one of a class of Irish girls who honor any position in life, however high, and who dignify the most menial toil of the most humble station. Reserved, modest, yet confident of her power and capable of holding her own; innately refined, her very manner bespeaking courtesy from others. She gave no evidence in her behavior of the Irish girl's love for an occasional "sure" and that wheedling intonation of speech so peculiar to the race. She was of Irish birth, however, the daughter of a village schoolmaster, who on the death of his wife, ten years before, had been left with a change of fortune in the great west. The change and subsequent struggle proved too much for him, however, and two years later, Mary, aged seventeen, and a sister two years younger found themselves orphaned and almost penniless in the wilderness of New York. Their few Irish neighbors were kind and sympathetic, but their own daily cares crowded their lives and while from their hearts came the words, "I'm sorry for your trouble!" and "Now if there's anything in the wide world we can do for you, let us know!" Mary knew the struggle of each while she was grateful for the warm handclasp and kind words. Their parish priest, who had been unfailingly kind during her father's illness and to whom the younger sister had spoken of her earnest desire to enter a convent, now called to say that he had spoken to a friend of his, a reverend mother in the Order of St. Joseph, who wished to see both sisters as soon as possible. "As she leaves in a few days for her annual visit through her schools," he added, "you had better go at once."

Sarah thanked him. "But how can I go now, father," she said, "Mary and I are all alone in the world now and we must stay together."

"Indeed no," said Mary determinedly. "If God has put that calling into your heart, you must go, and I'll be happy and contented knowing where to find you when I want you, and thankful for the peace that will be yours, morning, noon and night."

"God bless you, my girl!" said the priest. "I know Mother Catherine will be a good friend and help you to some employment. And now goodbye. Be sure to come and tell me how you get along."

The good Mother Catherine did prove a good friend, and one week from that day Sarah entered the convent on probation and Mary had a position in the basement of one of the large department stores selling household goods at a salary of two dollars a week and a small percentage on her sales. It was fortunate for her that she had enough money left from the sale of their few pieces of furniture to pay her board for a while, for although she worked hard and was active and naturally pleasing, after ten weeks she found that four dollars and seventy-five cents was the largest sum that she had received in any week. As far as she could see there was little chance of doing better. She compared notes with the other girls and found that those with the experience of years sometimes received from six to seven dollars. That was the highest.

"And how did you live," asked Mary, "when you first started in?"

"One lived at home, another had joined with three or four girls in taking one room and living on little more than bread and coffee. 'But surely,' she questioned again, 'surely the girls upstairs do better than that?'"

"Well, if they do make a little more sometimes," was the answer, "they have to dress better than we do, and they dare not sit down."

"They do get a little air," said Mary, as she looked at the bleached faces of her companions. "There's al-

ways a damp odor down here and artificial light all the time is hard on the eyes."

"Well, what can we do?" said another sighing. "My name was on the application book seven months before I got on here and I went around to the other stores every day. Why, sometimes there's hundreds standing in line just to sign the application book."

This conversation set Mary thinking and on further inquiry she found that while a few in the millinery and cloak departments earned as much as twenty dollars a week, it was only after they were wrinkled and gray with experience and had made their own custom by humoring the wealthy patrons. They had to dress extravagantly too, and Mary wondered if after all they could save anything for the lonely old age that was hurrying on so fast.

Mary tried to be hopeful and she was always cheerful, but she found herself wondering wearily if her life was to go on forever in the same way, no conclusion, no peace, no comfort. All day the stuffy basement and the chattering of the pale-faced girls at night, a little closet of a room shared by an odorous girl who worked in a cigar factory and who talked far into the night about her "fellah." Sunday after Sunday Mary had tried to find something a little more home-like, but her search was fruitless. Invariably the landlady would first ask her, "How much do you pay?" "Three and a half," Mary would answer meekly. "How many in a room?" "Two," "Well," was the sharp retort, "if you can get board at that price and only two in a room, you've got a snap and you want to hang on to it."

So poor Mary would go reluctantly to the "cheap" and look forward to the evening when her room-mate would go down to the little parlor to entertain her "fellah." Then she would read a little and revel in the brief privacy.

"How nice your kitchen must be!" she said one day to a kind-faced lady customer. She had grown to be quite friendly with some of her patrons, and her manner was always so quiet and lady-like that they enjoyed a few minutes chat with her over their purchases.

"Yes, I try to get all the new appliances," answered the landlady. "I keep only one girl and although we are only two in family, I like to get her anything that will save labor."

"Pardon me," interrupted Mary quickly, "but may I ask how much you pay your girl?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "I pay her four dollars a week and a third woman one day to wash and clean the kitchen. But, oh dear," she sighed, "she is to be married in six weeks and I dread the hunt for another, and breaking her in is still worse."

A sudden thought flashed through Mary's mind and she felt her cheeks burn as she said eagerly, "Oh, Mrs. Bolton, would you take me? Let me stay a month without salary to learn the work from your girl."

"And do you really think you'd like housework?" asked Mrs. Bolton, taken back by the suddenness of Mary's request. "It is quite different from this, you know."

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I know it's different from this, but I've been thinking of it for some time. Of course I've had no experience, except a little home work before my father died. I know it is not hard to get into a family where they keep two or three girls, because one helps the other, but I want a room to myself so I can think in the evening, when my work is done, of course," said Mary, "you do not know me, but Father Bradley of St. Ignace will tell you something of us. He was so kind during my father's illness and death, and, smiling, 'he got me in here, but, of course, I wouldn't think of bothering him with complaints about it now when he was so good in finding me the place—and ninety-four girls ahead of me on the application list. Yes," she added, as she noticed Mrs. Bolton's look of amazement, "it is that way all the time."

Mrs. Bolton had been watching Mary's face keenly. "Well," she said, "I'm sure you are honest and earnest and I'll take your word. Let me see,—this is Saturday. Well, two weeks from next Monday you come, then you go up to training with Julia for four weeks without salary. That's what you mean, is it not? Yes? Well, then at the end of that time—that is, if we are mutually satisfied—you take up Julia's work and salary. Now that's settled," as Mary looked at her, "He is my card and I shall expect you as agreed. Good-bye, and try to get a little more color in your face, because," she said smiling, "Julia is a Christian scientist and she'll be insisting on your going to a healer."

This thought of housework was not a sudden one inspired in Mary's mind but had decided weeks before that nothing could be much harder than her present life. She saw herself growing shabbier every day, as except for an occasional pair of shoes she found it impossible with all her efforts to earn more than her board and care. So it was with a light heart that night that she left her week's notice in the office of the cashier and as she made her usual visit to the church on the way to her boarding place she thanked God earnestly that her prayers had been answered and begged His guidance and help in the new field His care had found for her.

The next week she had to bear a great deal of scoffing and many covert sneers from the girls in the store. "Kitchen mechanic," "pot walloper," and a score of like epithets greeted her and with raised eyebrows

and shrugged shoulders they did not hesitate to express their opinion of Mary's "lowering herself." The poor girl who shared a room with three others and lived on bread and coffee was the worst of all. "Before I'd work in anybody's kitchen," she said scornfully, "I'd throw myself in the river."

"Poor soul!" said Mary to herself. "It will hardly be necessary. You are going fast enough as it is." She had seen for some time that the poor girl was failing and had often walked down in the morning that she might buy a banana or an orange for Saddy, who now said to her contemptuously but dramatically, "Mary Hennessey, my friendship is no longer yours!"

All this had occurred eight years before, however on the day of Mary's conversation with her mistress concerning "In His Steps." It had not taken Mrs. Bolton long to discover that she was not the average average working girl. She could discuss intelligently most subjects of current interest, and with such naive originality that Mrs. Bolton liked to talk with her and draw her out. In this matter Mary showed the intimate refinement of her race, the kindness and equality of her mistress's manner never causing her to forget her position or become in the slightest degree familiar. "Oh, the comfort of her!" Mrs. Bolton would exclaim to her friends. "Really I'm ashamed to say that in the last year or two, since I've gotten so deep in club work and advancement theories, I just have to leave everything to Mary."

She felt tired and dispirited this afternoon as she climbed the stairs to Mary's bedroom. Her life seemed to be growing far above the average club-dinner while so little was really accomplished with all their meetings and discussions. "How sweet and restful!" she sighed as she paused in the doorway. "Mary keeps every place so spotless and yet never seems driven."

Mrs. Bolton crossed to the table and found the book she sought under the "Imitation of Christ," which she opened carelessly to see where Mary had placed the marker, and read: "The heart is the door of the soul, and against that door must be most meticulously guarded, what would it hurt thee, if thou sufferedst it to pass and madest no more reckoning of it than a mote? Could all these words pluck as much as a hair from thy head?"

"Be he that hath no heart in him nor hath God before his eyes, is easily moved by a word of dispraise." Mrs. Bolton sighed as she laid down the book. "Good gracious," she exclaimed to herself as she went down the stairs, "I must have neither heart in me nor God before my eyes or I surely wouldn't have been so squelched this afternoon when I had to confess my ignorance of Sheldon and his books." Going into her own room wearily, she threw herself on a couch and read until Mary knocked at the door. Before Mary Bolton would be home for dinner.

"No, Mary," she answered, "I forgot to tell you. His brother is still ill and he will remain in Philadelphia a day or two longer. And Mary," she called as Mary was going away, "I'm charmed with this book. Don't you think it is most interesting?"

"Why, it's really amusing," answered Mary, turning back.

"Oh, you don't mean that," said Mrs. Bolton surprised. "So far I have found it original and sad, very sad, but perhaps," she added, as Mary stood smiling in the doorway, "perhaps it ends differently. I'll read it anyway before I judge it further."

"Mary," she asked the next afternoon as she stood buttoning her gloves and ready to go out, "how in the world can you call 'In His Steps' amusing? To me it seems like the best sound of a trumpet awakening the world from its long sleep of selfishness and indifference. You know, Mary," she went on, "I have never discussed religion with you nor ever objected to your obeying your creed in all things, but your calling this book amusing, with your intelligence, inclines me to the general belief that Catholics in following their worship of the saints and other superstitions, really lose sight of the real Christ, the Saviour of the world."

"Indeed," Mary replied quietly, "and is that the general belief, ma'am?"

"It is, Mary," said her mistress gently. "The intent look on Mary's face made her think that her words were making an impression, and she went on pityingly, "and really, Mary, there is scarcely a meeting of culture, representative women at which this question does not come

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up for discussion. You see," she continued, not noticing the two bright red spots on Mary's cheeks, "we have quite decided that nothing can be done towards reforming the world until this gigantic barrier of ignorance and superstition is removed."

Mrs. Bolton was warming to her subject and enjoying her own eloquence, but marking the pained look in Mary's face she said kindly, "Oh, Mary, I hope I have not offended you! Really, I always forget that you are such a devout Catholic."

"Mrs. Bolton," said Mary sternly, "may I ask you if you have always felt like this?"

"Well, not exactly," was the reply. "Of course, I always pitied their foolishness and idolatry, but it is only since I have taken an active part in affairs that I have learned how they are opposed in every way to the progress of the world."

"And do all your reform women feel like that?"

"Oh, yes, Mary," replied Mrs. Bolton quickly, "and most of them much more strongly than I."

"And do they have Catholic servants?" asked Mary again.

"In most cases they do, because they are generally honest and pure in their morals and altogether dependable."

"And so the reform women leave their Catholic servants in charge of their homes while they wear them- selves out howling against the Church that has made these girls what they are?" remarked Mary dryly.

Mrs. Bolton tried to explain but Mary went on, "You were shocked yesterday when I said I thought Mr. Sheldon's book amusing. Good heavens, haven't the Catholic Church taught its children to follow in Christ's steps from time immemorial? You say Catholic girls are pure and honest—was not Christ so? You know they are poor and lowly—was not Christ so? How many thousands of our noblest men and women have given up all that life held dear to go into banishment and poverty, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and yet you talk of Sheldon's book as if walking in the footsteps of Christ were an idea of his invention! Oh, ma'am," she went on with quiet voice, "it's a pity that you will have faced women who shout for reform and emancipation can't see that it is the cry of their conscience that makes them restless. Childless and heartless beguile to others the baby prattle and tender lullabies their own ears have been deafened to!"

"Mary!" almost shouted Mrs. Bolton, "how dare you?"

"I dare, ma'am," answered Mary quietly, "because you dare to speak lightly of my faith, and because until you take back the words you have said, no other night will I sleep under your roof, although," and there were tears in her voice, "I've spent here some of the happiest days of my life."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Bolton sharply, as she opened the door to go out. "Not a word of that sort, and I regret your foolish words when I return," and slamming the door behind her, she hurried off to attend a very important meeting relative to closing the Catholic Indian schools.

Mary finished her work, and hurrying to her room burst into tears. "Isn't it too bad," she sobbed, "to have to go with hard feelings after all these years? She has always been so kind, too, and maybe I said too much, but good heavens, how could I stand it? Oh, the hypocrisy of them, smiling and saying pleasant things to us while we suit them and having the bitterness always in their hearts!" But the thought of all the happy hours she had spent in her cosy room would obliterate itself with fresh force. "Never," she murmured, "has an unkind word passed her lips to me until to-day. These clubs are killing her, poor thing!"

"I hate to leave her, she needs care so badly—but after all, it will do her good to have to stay home for a while," and she drew her trunk out of the closet and hastily began her packing. "I must be gone before she gets back," she thought, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "or I might say something I'd be sorry for. I know I would if she mentioned my faith again."

She packed everything but her books and pictures and left a hurried note on the hall table saying she would send for them. "I'm sorry indeed," she added, "for what has taken place to-day, but happy and contented as I have been here I would have left long ago had I known of the bitterness in your heart towards all I held in sacred reverence and will keep, with God's help, until my dying day."

Mrs. Bolton was late for the meeting. "And now, ladies," the president was saying as she entered, "you have discussed the salient points of this very important ques-

tion. You have given it intelligent thought and serious consideration, and to ensure the prompt action of our representatives in Congress the signatures must be sent in at once. Thousands of women all over the country have already forwarded their signatures, and in all matters of importance, delays are dangerous. Now will the ladies please pass up the left aisle to the secretary's desk and then pass back the right aisle to their places. This will avoid confusion and save time."

Mrs. Bolton had slipped quietly into a seat at the back of the room. She scarcely heard what the president said, but as she watched the ladies file up to the desk, every word of Mary's came back to her with new force. "Childless and heartless through their own selfish sins they beguile to others the baby prattle and tender lullabies their own ears have been deafened to."

"Well, they certainly don't look as if they were overflowing with the milk of human kindness," she thought, and then there flashed across her mind the meeting of the Moccas Club on the day before, when "What would Jesus do?" was the sole topic of discussion and when a great number of the women before her now had pledged themselves to follow in His steps. She wondered if it had occurred to any of them to ask themselves if Jesus would send a petition to the ruling powers urging them to withdraw all support from the Catholic schools on the Indian reservation. Again came Mary's words: "And so the reform women leave their Catholic servants in charge of their homes while they wear them- selves out howling against the Church that has made these girls what they are."

"Mrs. Bolton," called out the president, "the secretary informs me that your name is not on the list, so I must ask you to sign the petition, but I did not question myself or any one else as to what effect it would have on anything or anybody. I simply gathered that it was to abolish something Catholic, and you know, Madame President," she went on more firmly, "that always ensures a full meeting and a unanimous vote."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Bolton absently, as she looked around and noted that all the ladies were seated again. "Yes, I remember I did sign the matter, but I did not question myself or any one else as to what effect it would have on anything or anybody. I simply gathered that it was to abolish something Catholic, and you know, Madame President," she went on more firmly, "that always ensures a full meeting and a unanimous vote."

"Then are we to understand," asked the president sharply, "that you refuse to sign this petition?"

"Yes, I refuse to sign anything until I know what good it is going to do," and then catching sight of some of the politely contemptuous faces that were turned toward her, she added, "It seems to me that instead of improving and broadening ourselves, we are growing more intolerant and more inconsistent every day."

This remark acted like a bombshell, and it took fully five minutes to quiet the eager clamor for the floor. At last it was given to a thin little red-haired woman, who said as she looked at Mrs. Bolton witheringly, "I move that inasmuch as an insult has been offered to this honorable body of ladies, the member offending the same be either requested to apologize or be suspended until further action, according to rule four, section B, of our by-laws."

The motion was eagerly seconded and then came loud calls for the question.

"Pray do not excite yourselves, ladies," said Mrs. Bolton quietly, as she fastened her sealskin coat. "I shall not trouble you further. It happens that this afternoon I was given an opportunity of seeing ourselves as others see us, and the sight was not pleasant. There is surely something radically wrong with our lives. Only yesterday we pledged ourselves to do as Christ would do if He were on earth, and to-day we all come here to do our utmost toward the enactment of a measure anything but Christ-like. And then we pounce upon a sister member because she pauses in the midst of the madam to ask herself why I really believe now," she continued, "that it was a sentence I found yesterday in a book belonging to my Catholic servant that set me thinking. It has kept me awake all night," and Mrs. Bolton quoted earnestly, "But he that hath no heart in him nor God before his eyes, is easily moved by a word of dispraise." Good-bye, ladies," and without waiting for any answer she swept out of the hall. Feeling faint and dizzy after the unusual excitement, she asked the elevator boy to call a cab. When she reached home, weak and exhausted, she found Mr. Bolton awaiting her, hungry for his dinner, and Mary gone.

"Here's a note," said Mr. Bolton. "What did you say to the girl any-

way? She's not the kind to go off in a huff for nothing." Then Mrs. Bolton told him tearfully all that had occurred.

"See if she left any address in that note," he said when she had finished. "Yes, here it is,—49 Hooper street, Brooklyn. Now if you'll make some tea while I hunt up some cold meat, or whatever there is, I'll have Mary back in two hours!"

"But John, what if she will not come?"

"Oh, she'll come all right," he answered cheerfully. "You just write her a note and tell her you're sorry for all that religion tomfoolery. You know what to say," he laughed as he opened a can of peas. "I'll get her!"

"Mary," said Mrs. Bolton two weeks later as she was slowly recovering from a sharp attack of what the doctor called "over-worked nerves," "that other little book which was on your table is worth a dozen of Sheldon's!"

"You mean the 'Imitation of Christ,'" replied Mary. "Oh, yes, there's nothing grander than that, nothing!"

"I wish you'd set it Mary: I want to see if I had that quotation right that I repeated at the club meeting that afternoon. Oh, Mary," she laughed, as Mary returned with the book, "I shall never forget how the ladies looked at me as I left the book. What must they think of me?"

"Never mind, ma'am," said Mary gently. "God gave you courage to do as you did,—and just listen to this, ma'am," as she placed another pillow behind Mrs. Bolton's head. "Behold if all should be spoken against thee that could be invented, what would it hurt thee, if thou sufferedst it to pass and madest no more reckoning of it than of a mote? Could all these words pluck as much as one hair from thy head?"

"Oh, yes, I remember reading that, Mary," said Mrs. Bolton as she sank back upon her pillows and smiled peacefully. "It is beautiful."

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