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THE SISTER OF CHARITY; OR, THE CROSS AND THE CROWN. (From 'The Lamp').

Years had passed away; Father Paul had gone to receive the reward he so well merited from the hands of the great Master he had served so well. Redmond's Cross was as beautiful as ever; nothing was changed; the little brook sang its pretty melody; the linden trees told their tale to the wind, as it played with their green leaves; the ivy and moss were more luxuriant than of old. People regarded the spot with a kind of reverence, and sometimes sought it at twilight, and talked in whispers of the brave young warrior whose head laid low in foreign land, and of the pale, beautiful Sister of Charity, who had been his only friend.

But there is a strange commotion to-day in the city; crowds are hastening to the port.—There is a vessel preparing to start, and she is carrying with her the precious legacy—a band of Sisters of Charity. Apparently they are loved by the people—these holy nuns; for some of the women and children are crying aloud, and every one looks as if he were losing his best friend. There are five of these brave and devoted women leaving forever country and kindred to seek hardships and privation, nay, even death, in a distant land. There is no regret amongst them; a love the world understands not burned in their hearts, and made pain pleasure, and toils, and burden objects of envy. They were young, too, and full of energy; they had years before them to pass in labor and trouble for Him to whom they belonged, and now, as the vessel prepares to start, and friends are crowding round them to say farewell, they speak but few words, which, few as they are, sink deeply into the hearts of the people. Slowly they withdraw, one by one, to the cabin. See, one remains on deck yet half a moment longer; her eyes are fixed on a distant part of the city—there green trees are seen, waving their tall heads as though bidding her a last adieu.

Reader, do you know that sweet, thoughtful face, with its look of holy love and high resolve; those deep eyes; so full of heavenly light and thought; that beautiful figure, hidden beneath the coarse serge habit and the veil? It is Kathleen. None so devoted, none so eager for the missionary life and its hard duties; she had longed for it, prayed for it, and now it was hers.

Six months after the arrival of the Sisters in Q— they were entreated to visit and attend the military hospital; two nuns were especially charged with this duty—Sister Clare, and Sister Agatha, a lady of great experience and intelligence. How Sister Clare rejoiced in this new task; and yet it was no easy one. There were men dying there—hardened sinners, who had never said a prayer since they lisped 'Our Father' at their mother's knee; there was a life of sin, of recklessness, and impiety to be repented of and atoned for; there was contention to be excited in these world-worn hearts, the simplest doctrines of the Church to be taught; there were others who had lived well as boys and men, but had lately gone astray and were groping in darkness and misery; there others good and virtuous, but who trembled and whose faith grew weak at the approach of death. Oh, worldlings! oh, ladies who study ease and comfort! oh, ye whose path lies amongst roses! if you could once have seen that hospital ward, your ideas would be strangely startled. Those narrow beds, and their white curtains, and the haggard faces, the wandering eyes, and the maimed limbs formed a dreary picture by the light of the lamp; yet there was the Sister of Charity's work, striving to quiet the ravings of delirium, bathing the fevered brow, smoothing with gentle hand the rough pillow, tossed in the sufferer's restless anguish; tending, with words of mercy and kindness, some figure writhing with pain; stopping to say a litany or a prayer by another whose hours were counted and were nearly passed; bringing everywhere peace and comfort, and offering meanwhile in her own heart a hundred times in the night the precious blood of Jesus for each poor soul. You would not forget the picture; nor the sweet, calm face of the nun, lit with nothing of earth in it; nor the

sound of her clear, beautiful voice; nor the eloquence of her words and prayers. It would haunt you, and in the midst of your pleasures you would think of that as a glimpse of another and a better world.

'Sister Clare, Sister Clare!' cried one of the nurses; 'the doctor is looking for you;—there's a grand case just brought in; all the city is in commotion about it: they say it is an officer who has been nearly ten years a prisoner in the Indian camp; he is dying, but the doctor thinks he will live through this day and the next. He is in No. 7, and they want you directly.'

She hurried there, and was met by the doctor at the door. 'Oh, Sister Clare, I am glad you are come; I must leave this case entirely in your charge; it is a very sad one; there is nothing much to be done, but he will require constant watching he must not be left a moment. There are several wounds, but only one that will require much dressing; it is an old sword wound in the arm, which has opened again and seems very painful.'

She approached the bed; she did not look in his face, but saw on the pillow a mass of raven hair, threaded, alas! with silver.

'He is quite worn out, poor fellow,' said the doctor; 'give him some of this cordial as often as you can. You see he has not strength to speak. It appears that many years ago he was badly wounded and made prisoner by a party of Indians, and has been a prisoner in their tribe ever since; he seems young still.'

The doctor went away, and Sister Clare knelt, first to offer her new charge to God, and then tried to rouse him to take some of the cordial. A faint groan responded to her efforts. Unwittingly she touched the wounded arm, and a convulsion as of great agony passed over his face, and he opened his eyes.

'My good friend,' said Sister Clare, 'do not be frightened; try and drink this.'

'Who are you?' said the man, in a low, weak voice.

Low as it was the tone seemed familiar to her, and stirred a memory that had long been still.

'I am a Sister of Charity and your nurse.'

'God be praised! It is long since I heard the sound of a Christian woman's voice.'

He drank the cordial, and slept; then awoke, burning with fever and racked with the pain of his wounds; but to the nun's great joy no murmur passed his lips, only the sweet names of Jesus and Mary.

'I will dress your arm, and that will cease the pain,' she said.

Even her firmness slightly gave way when she saw the fearful place, but she did it so gently and with such delicate perception of touch that it did not increase the pain. He was obliged to be raised slightly for the bandages to be fastened; a little ribbon fell from his neck; she removed it—there was a cross attached to it.—Mother of Mercy! it was hers; it was Louis who lay there—Louis, whom she thought dead and buried long years ago. She uttered no cry—spoke no word; for one moment she was perfectly still in body and mind; and then her heart poured forth a torrent of love and gratitude to God; but to him she spoke no word; but when, after she had quite finished, she knelt, at his request, to say the Litany of Our Lady; her voice though trembling, was sweeter than ever! each epithet seemed a carol of love and praise.

The night passed, and on the morrow he recovered, with a fervor that astonished all, the last sacraments. She knelt by him, and recited the prayers for the dying. There were many who desired to see him, for the story of his long imprisonment and fearful wounds, of his bravery and intrepidity, was bruited over the city, and the noblest and fairest would have thronged round him to minister to him, but he asked for solitude, and rest with God, and at his desire none were admitted. The Sisters watched by turns; and the last night he ever saw on earth Sister Clare spent in alternately praying and reading to him passages from the Passion of Our Lord. Sometimes his mind slightly wandered, and she heard her own name, with confused words of Redmond's Cross and Father Paul.—'They did not move the calm heart of the nun—all was peace there.

But when the first dawn of daylight appeared, the slight delirium ceased, and for the first time his eyes were turned full upon her.

be transmitted as I desire. Will you kindly listen to me, Sister, a few minutes, and then grant me the favor I shall ask?'

'If I can obtain the permission of my superiors, I will as far as possible comply with your wishes.'

'Thank you. I need not tell you the history of my life—I have neither time nor strength—but in a few words I will give you its outline. I am an Irishman, born near the city of C—.

I am descended from a noble and honorable family. Eleven years since I left home and friends to seek my fortune in the American war. At first I was successful, but one day I was sent with a small party of men on an errand of great importance to the quarters of the commander-in-chief. On our way we were overtaken by a large party of Indians. Few though we were, we made a vigorous resistance, but were at length obliged to yield to numbers. My men were all slain with the exception of one, who, together with myself, was made a prisoner, and carried many hundreds of miles away, and detained in the camp of the tribe. I was fearfully wounded, and for more than two years had quite lost the use of both arms. At the end of that time we began to make plans of escape, but, alas! we were too closely watched and guarded. At length my poor companion died of the hardships he was compelled to endure. After five years' imprisonment, I made my escape, but it was only to fall more hopelessly into the hands of another party of the same tribe. God gave me strength, and I endured my long captivity for His sake, and offered it with the imprisonment of the martyrs. Then, passing whole nights in those boundless forests, looking up into the clear, dark heavens, shining with innumerable stars, the nothingness, the emptiness of the world I had so loved and toiled for, struck me with a force I could not resist. It seemed as though the curtain had fallen from Time, and I saw only Eternity beyond. What I could do for God I did; I instructed the poor savages; I dwelt amongst and baptised their children; at last, voluntarily and freely, they gave me liberty. Ah! I have never doubted that it was the sweet Mother of Mercy who broke my chain.'

He paused, trembling and faint. She gave him a cordial, and wiped the death-damp from his brow; when he spoke again it was in a whisper—

'I left in my home two friends, a kind old priest and a fair gentle girl, who was to have been my wife. When I left her she gave me this cross; and he placed it in her hands. She lives in C—; her name is Kathleen Dunroven; every one knows her. Will you either find her or get some one else to do it, and tell her that you were with Louis Redmond when he died; tell her—the large tears fell from his eyes—tell her I have been faithful to God, our Lady, and to her; that I lived to bless God for my long captivity and the ruin of my hopes, because they broke a spirit that would not bend, and destroyed a pride and ambition that would have led me to ruin. Tell her that I left her young, ardent, and hopeful, and that you have seen me old before my time, wounded and maimed, my hair white with sorrow, and my spirit broken; but that I died blessing and thanking God, and acknowledging His ways are just and proper;—that I would not exchange my life of captivity and hardship now to be an emperor; and tell her also, Sister Clare, that I sent this cross; that it has never left me. I have kept every promise I made to her upon it; that for ten long years I have prayed night and day to see her before I died, but I die content without this blessing, since God will it. Will you promise me this shall be done?'

It was an effort to answer, but she said, 'I promise,' and he was contented. He gave her the cross. Once again she held it in her hands; there was one moment's recollection of the time she had given it; of Redmond's Cross, the golden sunlight, the little brook and the green trees, of Louis, his eloquent words and bright, hopeful face. Then there was a look at the dying man, so feeble, so worn-out, though yet in the prime of life, and then Sister Clare knelt and blessed God for His wonderful ways.

Louis slept and she watched; the golden dawn appeared. There was a far brighter dawn coming for that brave soul. He awoke with a cry, and she placed a crucifix in his hands; but he seemed troubled and said to her—

'Oh, if my mother Mary had granted my prayer, I could have died happier.'

'Would it, then, make you more contented, if your prayer were granted?'

'Yes; I have such faith in my mother; but it cannot be.'

Then there was a struggle in the heart of Sister Clare. She sadly wished to tell him who she was. And yet it might not be for the best. She implored God's help and Mary's aid. Then she knelt by his side.

'Faith is ever rewarded; confidence in Mary

is ever repaid; you have prayed to see Kathleen before you died. There is no Kathleen now; she lives in Sister Clare. Louis, let us thank God together.'

He looked once lingeringly, doubtfully, and then clasped his hands and laid them on her bowed head, as though to bless her.

'Kathleen, Sister Clare thank our Lady for me, I die happy. I cannot speak, but—' but there was not strength for another word. He kissed with the greatest love the crucifix she laid upon his lips, and when she raised it his soul had winged its flight to the everlasting haven.

Sister Clare told the history to the priest who had attended Louis, and to the Superior of the Convent, and many years afterwards she told it to me.

Redmond's Cross still stands, but in the place of the old chapel there is a magnificent church built by the merchant with whom Louis had lived. Had Louis survived, he would have inherited that vast fortune, but now it was all expended in the erection of the church, and a convent for the Sisters of Charity. Sister Clare was removed there, and in a few years became the Superioress of the convent. She died during the fearful misery caused by cholera which appeared in C—, in its most violent form.—Devoted entirely to the poor, she died in their service, and is buried in the nun's cemetery, which was once the old court-yard.

I have seen her grave, and the stately tomb where the last of the Redmonds sleep. Their memory has never died. There were those living not long since who had a distinct recollection of Sister Clare, and her sweet face and holy words, of her numerous acts of devotion and charity.—She had that most glorious of all crowns, the prayers and blessings of the poor.

Reader, if you seek true self-denial, true devotion to God and to charity, that devotion which forgets earth and remembers only Heaven, you must seek it in that church whose Great Founder first taught the virtues of humility and lowliness.

THE END.

A MAY FLOWER.

CHAPTER I.

It was a night of December, with a keen easterly wind blowing, many stars shining brilliantly in the black sky, and a moon intensely white throwing a cold glare upon everything.

A pleasant night for some as could be seen by the lights in the houses, the merry laughter that escaped from some open doorway, or the music that floated out from drawing-rooms and died away in the cold street. The watchman was announcing in stentorian tones that it was past twelve and a fine night, and crowds of both sexes were coming out of the Theatre Royal after seeing a dramatic performance.

For, though of late the inhabitants of the city of Cork have become great admirers of operas, concerts, and everything musical, yet there was a time, and not long ago either, when they had an especial taste for 'plays.' Besides the Theatre Royal they had several amateur dramatic societies, the members of which were in the habit of delighting their friends with representations of Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard the Third, Othello, &c., once or twice in the week. Now, though the theatres were usually superannuated stables or stores, the dresses and decorations of a most fantastic character, the scenes and drop, the attempt of a juvenile sign-painter in his first year of apprenticeship, yet people went there, and were delighted; and old men and women often lamented their youth, seeing that rheumatism and other ailments were utter bars to their becoming 'amateurs.' It was a hobby with the good old Cork people, and I never heard that it brought them to any harm their love for the drama, and I only hope that the operative entertainments of which they are becoming so very fond, will not destroy their former predilection, at least, totally and for ever. Well, as I have said before, it was past twelve, and crowds were hurrying from the play to their several homes.

I do not think that any 'star' was down at the time, nothing but an ordinary company for the Christmas holiday. Yet there was one actress who was liked very well from the first, for she showed evidences of much talent, and besides possessed what is not thrown away upon Cork people, beauty, though with all she was very timid, and by her diffidence often spoiled the finest parts of her role. She was horse with for some nights, the idea being that as she got to know the audience her timidity would vanish; but such was not the fact, for upon this night she had been guilty of some faux pas, and the consequence was, that the people losing patience hissed her off the stage.

No wonder, then, as she came out at the stage doorway, that she felt her head hot and feverish, notwithstanding the cold east wind which was blowing sharply in her face. Walking rapidly along she soon came to a house in Duncan-

street, at which she knocked loudly with her knuckles.

The said habitation was most unprepossessing in appearance, having an old overcoat of weather slating with ever so many holes in it; the windows patched up with boards and brown paper, and a water-shoot hanging on at the side, with all the tenacity of a death-gripe, green with mould and moss, and looking as if it had been purchased from Noah second-hand, when he was giving up the Ark.

After four or five knocks, Mary O'Donnell, in play-bills as Kate Morton, was admitted into this very ugly edifice by even a more ugly dame half dressed, and holding a candle in her hand, who did not utter a word, but growled in a most ferocious manner. But Mary, dot minding the growl, ran up the old stairs until she came to the third story, and then slightly pushing a door on the landing, it opened before her. The room was in almost total darkness, except a small bit round the fire-place, which received a little light from the dull red fire that glared out of the grate, like some sleepy monster in its iron cage.

A man, with very white hair, sat at one side in an arm-chair, seemingly asleep, and a cat was lying stretched fronting the fire. When Mary O'Donnell entered the room, the man half rose from his seat and said—

'Is it late, child? I remained up to-night waiting for you, and though I tried to keep awake, still sleep overpowered me.'

'Nothing later than usual, father,' answered the girl.

'Have you acted well to-night?' he asked.

'Not better than last night,' she replied, and added, quickly, 'put down the kettle, father, for I am thirsty, and I would like a cup of tea.'

When she had taken off her shawl and bonnet, she lighted a candle and stared at the fire vigorously, and, drawing the table from the centre of the room close to the hearth, began to collect the necessary articles for a tea-table, and arrange them symmetrically. You may talk of the charms of fairies and sprites, and everything of that kind, but I defy any fairy, past, present, or to come, to make such a transformation as did that young girl who had been lissed off the Cork board, and had come home rather sad, because of it, to her lodgings. The room that such a short time before was gloomy and melancholy in its aspect, now looked quite charming. And when Hugh O'Donnell and his daughter sat down to eat at one o'clock in the morning, I am sure the dearest mortal being would have been glad to be permitted to join them. Everything looked so bright, even the lazy cat rose up and got at the back of her mistress, and commenced to purr indolently.

As the man sat in his chair, you would at first sight suppose he was seventy years old, for he was stooped, and his hair was as white as snow; yet age was not stamped upon his face, and a ringing cough soon told that disease was working its own sad havoc on his frame. It was evident, too, that he was making an effort to eat the morsel of bread before him.

But there was a brilliancy in his eye that lit up the old man's face, and made his daughter glad to look at him, though to one accustomed to see persons in consumption it would have been a very bad omen indeed.

Few words passed between the pair during tea. She had had enough of talking, and it was a relief to her to be silent; while he occupied himself in making efforts to eat his bit of toast, and gazing fondly on his daughter. Hugh O'Donnell had been a man holding a respectable position in the world, but times changed with him; and, from being a well-to-do merchant in the city of Dublin, he had all at once become a penniless outcast, and would probably have died of starvation quietly had not his daughter, then but eighteen years old, gone on the stage to make a livelihood for him and herself.

She had lost her mother at an early age, but she never forgot her good counsels; and always preserved a little image of the Blessed Virgin, before which, every night and morning, she poured forth all the aspirations of her soul in fervent prayer.

It was no easy task for Mary O'Donnell to pass unscathed through all the temptations which beset her path on the stage; for though she was but three months an actress, yet in these three months she had undergone more than any one beyond herself could know or even think of.

What battles she fought, what victories she gained, what struggles she had to maintain, no one knew but herself. Ay, even she did not know the whole extent of her conquests. But she had one standing at her right hand, ever ready to be a friend to the poor, to the weak, to the orphan one, whose love for human kind is as great as her power in her Son's kingdom; one whose life here upon earth entitled her to the highest place reserved for mortal in the kingdom of Heaven: one who never forgets the lowly