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CLARA LESLIE.

A TALE OF OUR OWN TIMES.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

CHAPTER XIII.—FESTINE, TARDE.

"Oh, thou dost soothe the heart; thou Church of Rome, By thy unwearied watch and varied round of service in thy Saviour's holy home! I cannot walk the city's sultry streets, But your wide porch invites to still retreats, Where passion's thirst is calmed, and care's unthankful gloom."

Father Newman.

The door was thrown open at this moment by the footman, and a pompous 'Yes, miss,' having followed Clara's question whether Mrs. Temple was at home, and extracted a smile from both the friends, she ran up stairs without being announced, and in an instant had softly opened the door of the drawing-room and put her face playfully through it. However, she seemed to have discovered something within, for she as quickly drew it back, and turned round to Elizabeth, who followed a little less quickly than herself, with such an altered expression, that she could not help exclaiming,

'What's the matter, Clara?'

'Somebody's there,' whispered Clara, coloring high between excitement and surprise; 'somebody in a long black kind of habit.'

The door was gently opened at the moment, and Mrs. Temple, half smiling at Clara's excuses, assured her she was not intruding, and led her in.

The 'somebody in the long black kind of habit' rose as they entered; a white heart was sewn on his breast, and he wore sandals instead of shoes. He was young, fair-haired, with mild blue eyes, and, notwithstanding his foreign dress, evidently English.

Mrs. Temple introduced him instantly as Father Raymond, and Clara thought there was a peculiar expression in her manner as she added, 'This is my friend, Miss Leslie.'

Father Raymond did not seem infected with stiffness; for he bowed with so sweet a smile and such graceful kindness and dignity, that Clara's heart was won almost before he opened his mouth, though she could scarcely make out whether his manner was some peculiar interest in herself, or his own indwelling Christian charity. Her heart beat high, and she scarcely knew how to answer the few words he addressed to her. How many times had she longed to see a Catholic priest!—and, for the first time in her life, there was one before her. There was a mixture of awe and curiosity and interest in her feelings; but when he rose to take his leave, which he did almost immediately, and she had caught the last glimpse of his figure down the street, nothing seemed left but a glimpse of vague *serrement de cœur*,—a sense of vacuum and longing which she could scarcely define.

'Catherine, dear Catherine,' said she earnestly as Mrs. Temple re-entered the room, 'who is that priest?'

'He is a Passionist Father,' said Mrs. Temple; 'he came to see my aunt this morning.'

'A passionist?' replied Clara. 'Is he a convert?'

'Yes, my dear Clara,' replied Mrs. Temple, 'and his name was once Mr. De Grey, I believe.'

'De Grey?' interrupted Clara, in a tone of deep feeling. 'Ah, something told me it was him. Oh, that I had but known it. He must have recognised my name. Catherine,' she added, 'shall you see him again?'

'I do not think so,' replied Mrs. Temple; 'he only came just to see my aunt, and he may be off to any part of the country, or even the world, at any moment. But why Clara? Do you know him?'

'O Catherine,' she replied, 'he was my brother Alan's Oxford friend—the one who taught him to love Catholic truth. He joined the Church of Rome three months before he did.'

'And do you think it would have done you any good to have known it?' said Mrs. Temple, smiling and looking at Charles's flushed cheeks, and sparkling eyes; 'would he have helped to have made you more than calm and recollected my dear child?'

Clara heaved a long sigh.

'No,' said she after a moment; 'it has been all arranged for the best. I don't think Mr. Wingfield would have liked me to have had any intercourse with him, and I could not have asked after Alan; it would have done no good.' She remained silent a moment, then looked around the room. 'Where is Elizabeth, Catherine?'

'I think she is gone to her room,' replied Mrs. Temple. 'Perhaps she thought we wanted to be alone.'

'She is always kind,' said Clara; and, drawing a little stool close to Mrs. Temple's chair, she sat down at her feet, and laid her head down in her lap, while the former looked tenderly at

her, and stroked down the little bit of her hair that could be seen beneath her cap.

'What is this nun like coiffure for?' said she playfully.

'Oh?' replied Clara, coloring and laughing—'I want to take my bonnet off when I go to the poor people so I wear this dress in the morning, and then in the evening I put on all my finery, and make the agreeable to Mildred's smart company.'

Here a fit of coughing stopped Clara.

'You know, Clara, you really ought not to be out this raw day with that cough,' said Mrs. Temple anxiously.

'It really does not hurt me to go out,' replied Clara, the moment she could speak; 'if I give in once, I shall never be let go to church, perhaps be shut up till summer; and then what will my poor people do?'

'Clara, Clara,' said Mrs. Temple, 'you will be ill; and then Lent will be here, and you will be allowed only once a week not to eat meat.'

'O Catherine,' said Clara, 'once a week! But, really, do not let me waste our time in talking about my cough; I came here to know when you expect Mr. Wingfield in town. I do so want to see him.'

'What, again?' said Mrs. Temple, laughing; 'why, it was but last week you saw him, and you know he does not come to town oftener than once a month.'

Clara sighed deeply.

'I am not good to-day, Catherine, I believe,' said she, after a pause; 'my head is running on that Mr. De Grey, or Father—what?—Raymond, I think, you called him? I could not be afraid of him.'

'You mean you are afraid of Mr. Wingfield,' said Mrs. Temple. 'I thought you had got over that.'

'I get over it for a little while, and then he gives me one of his dry looks, or he writes me a note a little less affectionate than usual, and then I am as frightened as ever. I do so fear to intrude upon him, he has so much to do; and as it is, Mrs. Wingfield must feel as if she had no husband, he is so taken up with others. Then I read in spiritual books that 'one must be very open with one's director,' and I fancy he thinks me a great fool for telling him all my follies. I envy those who can go to their directors at all hours, and live in the same place with them;—and Clara heaved another long sigh.

Mrs. Temple looked at her with an expression of mixed sorrow and compassion.

'He says frequent confession is not according to the spirit of the Church of England,' proceeded Clara, 'and yet he puts books into my hands as my guides which tell me that the saints, who are to be my models, confessed every day. Somehow I don't think he understands me; and then, as others, I am sure he does in a great measure, and I force myself to think it is all very good for me, and a means God is using to check my eagerness. Catherine,' she added earnestly, 'is it not usual to confess every week in the Church of Rome?'

'I believe every one who pretends to any religious strictness of life does so,' replied Catherine.

'And then Mr. Wingfield tells me,' replied Clara, 'that I could never find a Roman Catholic priest that would satisfy me. They merely see their penitents in the confessional, have no intercourse with them at all afterwards, and would never even give me as much time and individual attention as he does. Somehow I cannot believe it; for if they do so, their books are as misleading to people aspiring to perfection amongst them as amongst us.'

'I don't think Mr. Wingfield is quite correct,' said Mrs. Temple, 'in all he tells you on that score. My aunt, I believe, confesses every week;—and I know she sees a great deal of her priest. Indeed he is to her as a father and a friend, and all the Roman Catholics I ever met speak in the most grateful and trusting way of their priests, as if they were their truest friends, and sympathized in all their sorrows; but I see my aunt and others have this feeling for the priesthood generally, and though they have of course their own confessor, they don't seem so bound to one man as we do, Clara.'

'And what a beautiful character your aunt is!' exclaimed Clara, with glistening eyes; 'so calm, so recollected, so patient, so gentle. Ah, every thing comes out of Rome, and every thing good goes there.'

She had scarcely uttered these words, when she blushed even to tears, and hid her face.

'Poor Clara!' said Mrs. Temple; 'you must not talk so, my dear child.'

'But it is true, it is true,' answered Clara. 'And then they will tell me I am ungrateful; and I am; and I can't help it. I shall have to tell all these feelings at my next confession, and then Mr. Wingfield will sigh and look grave; and yet I cannot persuade myself I have committed a great sin, though I confess it as such, and I

I know Mr. Wingfield thinks it so, I cannot be contrite for it, or persuade myself to feel I have offended God by it; it is just as if I had only offended and grieved Mr. Wingfield.'

'But you resolve not to do it again,' said Mrs. Temple.

'Oh, yes,' replied Clara; 'but I always do. It is too strong for me. There is a spirit at work within me, and I know not what it wants. It does not want to go over to Rome, for I think that would be wrong; but it wants a—it wants—I don't know what it wants.'

'I do not think you do know what you want,' said Mrs. Temple. 'O Clara, dearest, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'—'Our one aim must be self-control in those sad days.'

'Yes, I do know one thing I want,' proceeded Clara; 'I want to get rid of this load of infirmity that presses me down. I struggle, struggle on, and I make no progress. Every confession is more terrible than the last one, for I have just the same faults to tell over and over again. How can Mr. Wingfield be otherwise than disappointed with me? Sometimes there seems no efficacy in Sacraments, I break all my resolutions.'

Mrs. Temple gently laid her hand on the head of the agitated girl, for she spoke in such an accent of sorrow, almost despair, she would have touched any one's heart.

'Dear child, do not speak so. Others may see improvement where you do not.'

Clara shook her head and remained silent, while Mrs. Temple mused painfully on thoughts she could not impart to Clara.

'What makes me unable to persuade myself I am wrong in these kind of discontented thoughts, Catherine? I know, as a fact, it is wrong to be discontented with the situation God has placed me in; I believe my place is to obey those whom He has set over me. I know I remain in the Anglican Church on their authority, because they tell me, and I therefore believe it, that the Anglican Church has the Sacraments. I know all this as a matter of fact; but yet, though I ask pardon with my lips of God whenever I have indulged in an outburst of my discontented feelings, I always feel within me as if I were doing an unnecessary thing, and He was not displeased with me all the while. It is quite different when I ask pardon for any other fault. I am then, as it were, humiliated, and abased to the very earth with shame and sorrow, and I feel as if God had turned away from me, and could only be reconciled by tears and penance. Why is this, Catherine?'

An expression Clara did not understand passed over Catherine's face. She did not answer for some time, but kept on playing with the soft hair she was stroking down. At last she said,

'Ask Mr. Wingfield, Clara.'

Clara looked puzzled, but said nothing, and a long silence succeeded.

'People say Mr. Morris is going to leave London,' said Mrs. Temple, at last.

Clara almost started.

'Surely not?' said she. 'What shall we do without him?'

'He will be a great loss to his parish,' said Mrs. Temple; 'but I do not think he is very comfortable with his rector. They say he is rather afraid of going too far.'

'I daresay,' said Clara; 'he is too good for most people. What will poor Fanny Hickey do without him?'

'It will be a sad trial for her to lose him,' replied Mrs. Temple. 'He seems to be a most devoted person.'

'Fanny says he is out among the poor till ten every night,' replied Clara, 'and then he is never in bed till two or three in the morning—he spends the night in prayer, and then he is up very early again. I do not know how he lives through all this fatigue.'

'Does he come often to see Mrs. Clark?'

'I met him there this morning,' said Clara. 'I always ask Mrs. Clark all he has said to her, and then I take my hints how far I may venture thereupon. I think he is preparing Mrs. Clark gradually for confession. But where can he be going?'

'People say various things,' said Mrs. Temple. 'Clara soon rose to go, but luncheon was ready, and Miss Dalton came in to say so, and then led the way to the dining-room, though we must not stay with them here. There was much talk about 'outward things,' such as frontals, and super-frontals, and super-altars, and candlesticks, and Pugia's work, and medieval work, and Miss Lambert, and what was catholic and uncatholic, and stoles, and surplices, and reredos, and the different gentlemen who acted the part of confessors to the Puseyite portion of the Anglican Church, and Mr. Morris. And then Elizabeth told her how kind he was to Fanny Hickey, and how he had sat up a night there; and she, poor thing, in a fit of delirium, had not recognized

him, and kept calling out wildly for 'Mr. Morris.' She did not want her mother, she wanted Mr. Morris; and then she had found out all of a sudden that his arm was under her pillow, and he was by her side, helping to support her; and then Elizabeth laughed heartily, and Clara and Mrs. Temple joined, for such scenes seemed new and strange to Anglicans (common as they are in Catholic countries) however much they may admire those who perform them. We will not trouble our readers with a long account how afterwards there was an adjournment to Mrs. Temple's private room, where, in a recess, a red curtain was drawn across a bow window, and on its being thrown aside appeared the oratory, beautifully fitted up with a crucifix and two silver candlesticks. The frontal of the little altar had already assumed its Septuagesima hue, a deep violet, trimmed with silver lace. Nor shall we linger long to say how Elizabeth remembered that St. Perpetua was in the Calendar for the next day, and that therefore they must say 'the first Vespers of St. Perpetua' and Clara, who had instantly hunted out the little 'Hora Diurna' which lived in her pocket, almost stamped in her fume at finding out that her beloved St. Thomas Aquinas had been turned out of the Anglican Calendar, when St. Perpetua and Felicitas had only a commemoration in the Roman Breviary on that day.

'To turn out St. Thomas Aquinas the angelical doctor!' exclaimed she. 'What bigotry and prejudice!'

'Gently, Clara,' said Mrs. Temple; 'let us give even the Reformers their due. Do you know when St. Thomas Aquinas lived?'

'No,' said Clara, a little confused.

'Nor do I,' replied Mrs. Temple; 'but we shall soon see.' And Clara followed her to the bookcase. 'You are right,' she added, smiling, when she had discovered in Alban Butler what she wished. 'He was born in the thirteenth century.'

But Clara was now utterly absorbed in a new discovery.

'What have you got there, you curious child?' said she, looking over her shoulder. 'O Clara, indeed this is not for you; and, with a long sigh, Clara let her take Newman's *Development* out of her reluctant hands.

'O Catherine,' she exclaimed, 'are you allowed to read such books?'

'Some are obliged to read them,' said Catherine gravely; 'only thank God that you are not, dear Clara. And now let us say Vespers.'

'Fabricate them?' said Clara with a shrug. 'Let us see,—Common of many Martyrs,—no; it must be "Commuue Virginum." But stay, they were neither of them virgins. Here it is; the collect, "Da nobis, quesumus Domine, &c. And now what are we to do about the hymn?—We can't say it in Latin, unfortunately, and there is no translation, I believe.'

'Won't this do?' asked Elizabeth, producing a translation of some hymns from the Parisian Breviary. 'This is so beautiful and very appropriate, and there are two copies of the book; and she read aloud:

'Fear no more for the torturer's hand, Nor the dungeon dark that bound thee; The choir of heaven about thee stand, Bright-shining names surround thee,' &c.

'I think that will do,' said Mrs. Temple. But Clara had another demand still.

'Let me look over the collect, or I shall get into a mess, and find out there is something about the intercession of the saint. I think it will do however; and now,' added she coloring, 'am I really to be reader?'

No one else knew Latin enough to venture upon it: and at last, Nones being said for the Feria, they got through the first Vespers of St. Perpetua, with the help of the English Psalter and Clara's translation of the Latin antiphons, &c., which she did very fluently.

'Mr. Morris declares the Breviary is inspired,' said Elizabeth, when they had finished.

'O Elizabeth, what a mine of almost unfathomable beauty it is!' said Clara, who had meanwhile sobered down into a quiet and gentle Christian maiden, instead of the wild kitten she had just been. 'It is really very like inspiration.'

'I scarcely know it enough to say any thing about it,' replied Elizabeth. 'How long have you been in the habit of using it? Alan Leslie, continued she, looking at the title-page of Clara's pet *Hours*; 'Oxford. Circumcision; 1845; and then here is the name,—Clara; Patronage of our Blessed Lady; 1845.' I did not know you had another brother. But what is this Latin below? I beg your pardon, dear Clara,' she added, looking up at her sorrowful face.—'I have been indiscreet; for the tears stood in her eyes.'

'No,' replied Clara. 'I thought you knew that I found this in my room the night my darling brother left us to be received into the Church of Rome. I found this written below my name in his hand; and she read aloud:—'O Oriens!

splendor lucis eternæ, veni ad liberandum nos jam noli tardare.—(O Orient Splendour of eternal light, come and deliver us; do not now delay). 'Oh,' she took the book and kissed it, then, clasping it between her hands, went on in more earnest tones: 'O Emmanuel, Rex et Legifer auster, expectatio Gentium,—too long hast Thou tarried,—veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiam!'

CHAPTER XIII.—ATTEMPTS.

'Faith of our fathers! Mary's prayers Shall win our country back to thee.... Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death!'

Father Faber.

Lent was fast approaching, with its long forty days of retirement and fasting. There are many perhaps who will remember their Anglican Lent. Holy times they were, though mingled, as all things out of the Catholic Church must always be, with much self-will. They will perhaps remember the care with which they hid from parents and friends any symptom of the self-discipline they were exercising; they will not have forgotten the fighting over every ounce of bread ordered, or every pound of meat, and the murmurings wherewith they found out that some one else had been allowed to do more than they. Then the increasing difficulty of getting through each week in succession; the feebleness of their voices, the coughs, almost suffocating them in their attempts to conceal them in church; the daily increasing and decreasing flesh,—till, the last great week being arrived, all reserve was thrown off, 'One week would never hurt any one!'

Doctors were disregarded; friends were laughingly told never to mind, for it was almost over; hours were spent in church; homes were quite deserted. 'Easter was coming, and then it would not matter.' The doctors avoided in the street like a pestilence, for fear of discovering the lengths their patients were going; and then when the great day did come at last, just getting through the long morning service, scarcely attending to the joyous Easter sermons from fatigue, sickness, and exhaustion, and when Easter Monday arrived, being found in bed instead of at the early Communion at Margaret Chapel—utterly unable to eat the Easter food placed before them. And then came the grave looks of friends, the graver visits of doctors, the disgust with which friends viewed a system which they considered as mere self-will, and the reproaches cast upon the spiritual guides who had advised and sanctioned practices in which they had no experience, and concerning which the Church of England had no definite rules. In those days, even 'sound protestants' were fain to admire the superior wisdom of the Church of Rome, who, not content with bidding her children 'fast and abstain,' gave authority to each Bishop to lay down rules for his diocese, in which the difference of climate and habits of the people were carefully considered, and all were taught how to use fasting and abstinence without incapacitating themselves for their appointed work in life.

Many, perhaps, especially in these still later times, will remember all this, and more, and not think it exaggeration when they find such ardent young people as our heroine persevering in making herself very ill by the time Easter came.

Just before Lent began, Clara had written to Mr. Wingfield, inquiring her rule for Lent.—The letter had been neglected in the press of business, which at that moment overwhelmed him. About the end of the second week in Lent, she received the following note, when she had begun to act upon her own fancy about fasting, thinking that he did not intend to answer her:

'MY DEAREST CHILD,—It was only this morning I recollected that I had not answered your inquiries as to your Lenten diet. I have had so much to occupy my thoughts and harass me lately that you must forgive my seeming negligence. I think, as you have been suffering from a cough during the winter, you had better go and call on Dr. Carter, in Portman Square, and put yourself under his directions for the ensuing Lent. I have no doubt Mrs. Temple will kindly take you there some day very soon. I do not wish you to read the *Life of St. Philip Neri*. There is much in it that would harm a mind like yours. I send you a little book on the Penitential Psalms, which I hope will be of use to you during the present season. I hope to be in London some time in Holy Week; most likely on Easter-even. I will answer your other questions when I see you. God bless this holy season to your soul's good!

'In Him ever your very affectionate— C. R. WINGFIELD.

'Greatest haste.'

Mrs. Temple put this note into Clara's hand one morning as she came out of church; and that afternoon the two friends were on their way to Portman Square.

'Now, Catherine,' said Clara, 'you know you may as well go up, and see Mrs. Carter, for I am going to talk to Dr. Carter alone.'