

SEP 10, 1904

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gradually remembering her cousin. She must be tired of waiting so long. Cecelia now spoke of going, but was to wait for a little token to take home to her father. Left alone in the room, she had no more interest in the beautiful pictures, but bowed her head in her hands and tried to think which had pleased her most. She found this new relation in so highly an honored position as prince of the Church and being told that she was of Catholic ancestry, or in being assured that her proper place was in the convent. So absorbed was she that she did not hear him re-enter the room, and was unaware of his presence until he spoke to her.

"Here, my child," he said, "is a little keepsake which I have treasured from my youth. But an old man who is near the grave cannot, have as much longer, while you and your father has a better right to it than I."

He laid in her hand an old leather bound prayer book, the pages of which were yellowed with age. She opened it reverently, and found a pretty curl of golden hair tied with a faded blue ribbon.

"That," he said, "is one of your grandmother's curls which she cut and put in her own little prayer book the last time I was at home before my ordination. I never saw her but once after that, and then it was when I came to her in a strange land just in time to prepare her for death."

"What a pretty golden shade," said Cecelia.

"Yes, Agnes was always proud of her hair; but take them to your dear father with my blessing, and tell him that it was his mother's dying wish that it should be a Catholic."

Cecelia could not find words to thank him, but she looked her tenderest gratitude and knelt to receive his blessing. A tear fell upon his hand as she raised it to her lips to kiss his ring.

"God bless you again, dear child," he repeated, as he said good-bye. Then he returned to his own room, feeling that one of the great ends of his life had been accomplished. Cecelia's life had been like a ray of summer sunshine, having recalled so vividly the days of youth when Agnes and he had spent so many happy hours together.

Impatient with waiting, Agnes Cullen stood in the door of the Cathedral, and when she saw her cousin coming out of the house hastened to meet her, saying:

"Cecelia, what in the world has kept you so long? I was beginning to fear that the Archbishop had locked you up and that I should never see you again."

"No fear of that, Agnes, though I have had the most delightful visit."

"Really, Cecelia, is it true? Do tell me about it."

As they walked towards the hotel, Cecelia told the story.

"Well," said Agnes, "it sounds like a novel. How wonderful!"

"Wonderful, yes, but far better than anything that could be told in story books."

CHAPTER XIII.

"How well our Cecelia looks!" said Mrs. Daton when the girls arrived home.

"I am feeling real well, mother. My trip did me a wonderful amount of good."

"You show it in your face. How pleased Maurice will be when he sees how you have improved. He has often inquired for you during your absence."

The bright smile faded from Cecelia's face.

"Maurice," she said, "I see no reason why he should take such an interest in me."

"He does," said Mrs. Daton, "and it does not seem strange to me."

"Mother, I told you before I went away that it was all over between me and Maurice, and I wish you would never refer to that again."

"Stubborn as ever, Cecelia, but it cannot last, and when the roses in June are in bloom, I should not be surprised to see you wearing your bridal wreath."

"If I do, mother, it will be as a bride of Christ."

"Cecelia, do you mean that you still cling to the hope of entering the convent, after once leaving it?"

Cecelia did not answer. Her father came in just then, and she could not keep from him the wonderful story which her eagerness to tell him made her homeward journey so long.

With the deepest attention, he listened to every word of the story, and when she had finished it was evident that he was deeply impressed.

"Cecelia, this seems too good to be true," said her mother. "And what an honor to find a relative in the celebrated Archbishop of A—. How I would like to meet him. And how strange to learn that my husband received Catholic baptism."

Opening a small valise, Cecelia took out what she had not entrusted to her trunk, the little prayer book, and handed it to her father, telling him to whom it had once belonged and showing him the lock of hair.

Mr. Daton took the book reverently and looked at the hair, which reminded him strongly of other golden curls he had loved to caress years ago, but with the exception of one which he had carefully saved, they, like his mother's, had long ago melted in his hand, he went to the private drawer from which he had taken the serpent ring which had been the means of his learning so much, and extracted therefrom a little box, which he brought back to the parlor.

It contained a lock of the hair of each of his children, cut after their death.

"How much alike they are," he said, laying Agnes Conlin's hair beside the curl in the prayer book.

"Very much," said his wife, "only our little girl's tresses were lighter."

"It would have grown darker in time, and from mother's picture I could see that our Agnes promised to be just what my mother was."

During the remainder of the day Mr. Daton was sad and thoughtful, while his wife, in her pride at having found so distinguished a relative, was very happy. In the evening he asked Cecelia to tell him the story again, often interrupting to ask questions. At last he said:

"I am going to see this new-found relation."

"Yes, do father," said Cecelia.

"And I shall go with you, Edward," said his wife.

He would have preferred to go alone, or to have taken only Cecelia, but when this proposition was made he could not object.

"Yes, you may go if you wish, Cecelia; and does our daughter feel strong enough to take the long journey again?"

"Indeed I do, father. I am perfectly well now and will be most happy to accompany mother and you."

"If I were going alone I should start to-morrow, but I shall give my Cecelia a week to rest, and I suppose my wife will want a little time to get ready?"

"I am ready to go any time," Cecelia said.

But her mother thought that a week would be short enough time in which to prepare. And while Mrs. Daton was worrying about fashions, Cecelia was spending her time in earnest prayer for two intentions—for the conversion of her father and for Divine assistance to break the family ties and return to the convent. She would mention neither of them now, but leave it all to the Archbishop to use his persuasive powers to bring it all about.

The aged ecclesiastic was overjoyed to receive a letter from his cousin's child announcing his intended visit, and quickly sent back a kind invitation for the family to come to his own home, where he would be most happy to entertain them. They were received in a manner with which Mrs. Daton could find no fault, and she was proud to tell her friends on her return home of the noted clergy and other people of high standing whom she had met and dined with. But one shadow had been cast over her visit, and that was the warning that she must give up her only child.

Cecelia had been admired, as she always was, by strangers as well as friends, and on Sunday at High Mass in the Cathedral she had touched many a heart by her singing, while her parents proudly occupied one of the front seats in the middle aisle. It was the first Mass Mr. Daton had ever attended, and his heart was deeply touched, especially when he heard his daughter's voice and saw the venerable man who baptized him seated on the episcopal throne. He resolved to make amends for the past by becoming a true and sincere Catholic. He deeply regretted that he had not listened to and acted upon Cecelia's pleadings long ago. This he told as he sat that afternoon with his family and the Archbishop, and finding him in the best disposition the prelate took this opportunity to plead for Cecelia.

The father felt deeply the prospect of losing her whom he looked upon as the joy and consolation of his declining years, and during the Mass he had thought how happy he and his Cecelia would be in practicing their religion together, but now he must give her up.

"I cannot do it," he said, sadly.

"If one of my others had been spared me it would not be so hard. Cecelia is all I have."

"God might have taken her too," was the reply, "but He spared her to you for many happy years, and now when He wants her, why refuse?"

It was very hard for Mr. Daton to make the sacrifice, but he finally gave

in out of pure love for God and never again by word or deed tried to prevent his darling from entering on the life to which she had so long aspired. With his wife it was different. In the presence of the Archbishop she scarcely spoke, whilst her husband pleaded to have their daughter left with them, but when at home she made Cecelia very unhappy by her lamentations and by continually reminding her of her duty to remain at home and after their death to inherit her father's wealth, to which she was sole heir.

"But you have Agnes," said Cecelia. "She has ever been to you all that you could wish a daughter to be. Why can you not be content with her?"

"Agnes has always been a good girl, Cecelia, but she is not our own and has no right to inherit your father's property."

"But, mother, father always loved her as a daughter and she has a right to be a heir to his wealth as well as myself."

"Not on an equal standing by any means, but it has always been our intention to give her a good start in life."

"No use of delaying longer," Cecelia thought, for she saw that her home difficulties were in danger of increasing rather than lessening. If she remained during the winter her mother would force her into a series of social gaities which she must avoid and she was resolved to go at once. By so doing she must sacrifice the pleasure of seeing her father receive his first Communion, but she had the happy assurance that she was leaving him a sincere Catholic in both heart and practice.

When the autumn leaves were falling, at the time when he had hoped to claim his bride, Maurice Carroll was greatly surprised to be informed by Mr. Daton that Cecelia had gone that morning to join the Sisters of Charity. Everything had been kept so quiet that not even the most intimate friends of the family suspected that Cecelia was going until she was gone.

"It must be very lonely without her," said Maurice.

"It is, but Agnes is still left to us, and she has promised to do all she can to fill Cecelia's place. It seems that Cecelia never was intended for us. She never was like the rest of us and I feel that she was too good for such worldly people as we." So he had to let her go.

"I agree with you, Mr. Daton," said Maurice sadly. "She was too good for me, too, and I should never have tried to win what belonged to God."

"No one could blame you, young man, and I know how to sympathize with you; but as Cecelia herself used to say, God knows what is best and we must bear patiently the crosses He sends us. How I laughed at her then and thought her foolish, but she has taught me many a good lesson which I shall remember until death."

"And I, too," said Maurice.

The two men separated, each feeling that the bright sun which had long illuminated their paths had suddenly been obscured by a dark cloud.

CHAPTER XIX.

"It is over," said Agnes to Maurice Carroll, "and our Cecelia has at last received the habit and great white bonnet of the Sisters of Charity."

"How does she appear in her new uniform?"

"Odd enough, and I cannot say that I like it, but she seems so happy that to look at her face is enough to make you forget all else."

"Does she really seem happy?"

"Well, you would not ask me if you could see her. Her face fairly glowed when she received the habit, and she has never looked so well since she was a girl in school. It seemed too bad to see all of that lovely dark hair cut off, and I could scarcely keep from crying at the thought of it, but she cast it aside as if it were a burden she was glad to be rid of. I believe she would have burned it had not her mother asked for it."

This was told on a June day about a week after Cecelia's reception, which had been attended not only by the family, but by Archbishop Conlin, who had gladly accepted an invitation sent him by her whom he called his dear grandniece, and in honor of the dignity of his position he had been privileged to confer the habit on the young ladies and receive the vows of those who were to make their profession. During the years since his consecration he had officiated at many a like ceremony, and had raised hundreds of noble men to the dignity of the priesthood, but this ceremony touched his heart more than any of the others. Despite his age and increasing feebleness he would gladly have travelled hundreds of miles farther in order to

have conferred such a favor on the grandchild of his favorite cousin. Agnes Conlin seemed very near him during the ceremony and he hoped that she was looking down from heaven upon this fair young bride of Christ who over half a century after her death had embraced the life he had once hoped she would choose.

Maurice Carroll had found it very hard to give up his bride, but gradually he had come to understand the mistake he had made in trying to win what belonged to God. And now when he learned from the lips of Agnes that Cecelia had taken the final step, he was fully reconciled to it. True, she had five years of probation before making her profession, but there was little danger of her leaving in the meantime, and if she did, she would never be his. As a friend of the Daton family he continued his visits to Innisfallen, and remembering the hint Cecelia had given him in regard to Agnes, he soon began to see in her many charms he had failed to notice when he had entertained hopes of winning the other.

"Agnes," said Maurice, after she had talked of Cecelia for nearly an hour, "your cousin is now settled in life and is very happy. What do you intend to do?"

"I," said Agnes, "intend to remain here and try to fill Cecelia's place."

"For how long, Agnes?"

"Always, that is as long as I am needed, which may be for several years, as uncle and aunt and mother too, not forgetting Grandma Daton, I hope, will long be spared."

"Agnes," he said, "could you not try to fill the place Cecelia once occupied in the heart of another who loved her no less than they?"

"Whom do you mean?" she asked, dropping her eyes.

"Myself," he said. "Will you be my wife, Agnes?"

Her heart beat high with joy born of the promise of what she had hoped for for years; but with an attempt to show indifference, she said:

"Have you thus soon forgotten the love you had for my cousin?"

"Forgotten it, Agnes? No, I can never forget that infatuation, which was all on my side, while she, holy soul that she was, could not bring herself down to the level of earthly love and tried to care for me when she could not. It nearly cost her her life, but with herself I now thank God that our marriage was prevented. I now want some one whom I can love and who can return my affections without making a great sacrifice. Am I not right in thinking you can do that?"

"Yes," murmured Agnes softly, "I can."

He reached for her hand and his eyes fell upon a ring he knew well. It was Cecelia's engagement ring, given to her cousin when she left home and worn by Agnes ever since.

"I see," he said, with a smile, "you are already wearing the engagement ring I bought for her who was to be my wife, and no one is more welcome to it; but I shall get you another to-morrow."

"Thank you, Maurice; but this is all-sufficient, and much as I have prized it heretofore, it will be dearer to me now as a gift from both Cecelia and yourself."

When he was gone, Agnes hastened to her mother's room, and throwing her arms around her neck, kissed her and told her the good news. For a long time mother and daughter talked confidentially, and as the now happy Agnes was about to retire to her own room, her mother said:

"God bless my Agnes, and Maurice too, and give them many long years of true happiness together."

"Why should I complain?" thought Mrs. Cullen, after Agnes had fallen into a sweet slumber. "If God had wanted my child He would have called her instead of Cecelia, and it is my duty to help her prepare for a marriage which I trust will be the beginning of a long life of happiness."

The following autumn a shadow fell at Innisfallen which caused the house to be closed from social gatherings during the winter. Grandmother Daton had bravely kept up after Cecelia's departure and nobody knew how much she missed the dear child, for she never uttered a word of complaint. Since her conversion she had been a true Catholic, but the effects of her early education could not be wholly effaced. She did not believe in young girls like Cecelia shutting themselves up in the convent, and in silence she mourned for the one who was gone. She had firmly refused at first to attend her reception of the habit, but at the last hour had gone with the others and had in part been reconciled when she saw how happy Cecelia was.

After that she seldom left the house and during the summer it was noticed that she was falling rapidly. But no one suspected that the end was so near. After only a few days' confinement she passed peacefully away.

fortified with all the consolations of the Church. Her last words had been a loving message to Cecelia, by whom she wished to be remembered in her daily prayers and many communications after she was gone.

A year from that month was the time set for Agnes' wedding. Mrs. Daton wished to have it as grand as the one prepared for Cecelia, but Mrs. Cullen overruled her plans by saying that she claimed the privilege of making arrangements for her own daughter's marriage. So early in October Maurice and Agnes were quietly married at an early Mass, at which only a few friends were present. A wedding breakfast was served at Innisfallen, to which only the Carroll family were invited, after which the happy pair took their departure for an extended trip to the West. On their return they went to the home which had been prepared for Cecelia, but which had been closed for two years and a half. Mrs. Cullen went with them, so Mr. and Mrs. Daton were now alone at Innisfallen.

In the winter they were called to attend the funeral of Archbishop Conlin, who had been beloved by all, both rich and poor, and mourned by the Church in which he had spent a long life of usefulness. The Church was thronged with true mourners, but Mr. Daton and his wife were the only relatives who followed him to his resting place beneath the altar.

When the winter was over Mr. Daton expressed a desire to visit the old home of his mother and see if any of his relatives could be found. They found the little country village much the same as it had been sixty years ago; the same old church was there, as were many of the other buildings. But the people were not the same, for the older ones and those who had been in their bloom of manhood and womanhood now slept in their graves. The fair children of those days had all gone the same way, with the exception of a very few who were now old men and women waiting for their time to come.

Entering a store, Mr. Daton asked a young man:

"Is there any one by the name of Conlin living in this vicinity?"

"No one that I know of, and I know nearly every one for miles around."

"But they lived here once."

"Yes, I've heard my father tell of a family by that name who lived here years ago, but as far as I know they're all over yonder in the churchyard."

"Do you know of anyone who could tell me anything about them?"

A man who had been curiously eyeing the strangers and wishing for an opportunity to speak now stepped forward and said:

"There's Teddy O'Toole, that lives in that log house down the lane. He's nigh on to a hundred years old, and can tell you all about everybody that lived here since he was a boy."

Mr. Daton thanked the strangers, and presenting a shining silver piece to each of them, went out to find Teddy O'Toole. The old man sat in a rickety chair at the door of his cabin, contentedly smoking an old "dhudeen." His face was wrinkled, his hair long and thin, and he looked fully his age. He smiled grimly as they approached, for he was very fond of meeting strangers and telling them of the varied experiences of his long life. In a voice wonderfully strong for one of his age, he gave them a kindly greeting, holed into the cabin to bring out his best chairs and when they were seated he commenced telling them how old he was and relating parts of his own history. Several times Mr. Daton tried to interrupt him, but it was useless, for he was very deaf. At last Mr. Daton went to his side and yelled in his ear:

"Did you know the Conlins who lived here years ago?"

"What?"

"Did you know the Conlins?"

"The Conlins! Faith an' I knew them well; but they're gone this thirty years."

"Do you remember Agnes Conlin?"

The old man smiled, for Agnes Conlin, though several years younger than himself, had been one of the brightest figures in his memory.

"Faith, I do remember her well an' she was as pretty a colleen as you'd find in all Ireland; but a devil of a stranger came an' tuk her away to America. A sorry life she had with him, methinks, for he was a Protestant and wouldn't let her go to church. But she soon died, God rest her soul."

"Did you know she left a child?"

"I did, but I hope the poor little gossoon died with its mother."

"I am Agnes Conlin's son," said Mr. Daton.

"You!" said the old man, looking at him closely. "You ain't no Conlin."

"I am Edward Daton, Agnes Con-

lin's son, but I look more like my father."

"You do look like him, but it's so long since I seen him I'd forgotten how he looked."

After a little difficulty Mr. Daton succeeded in learning much of the family history. The old man proudly showed him the graves where his ancestors slept and then took him to the parish priest, who exhibited the records of the family as kept in the church. Among them was that of the baptism and confirmation of Thomas Conlin. Of the pious youth of the latter he learned from Teddy, who proudly told him that he had been raised to the archbishopric, but Teddy did not know of his death until informed by Mr. Daton.

Mrs. Conlin, Teddy said, had died of a broken heart soon after her daughter, and the sons as well as their wives and many of their children were also dead, but he knew of one surviving grandson who was now married and living about fifty miles distant. He was the last of the Conlins and could easily be found. The travellers found the place so pleasant that they lingered for nearly two weeks. Mr. Daton attending Mass daily where his mother had worshipped in her youth and visiting the old scenes dear to her memory. Before he left he made provisions for the building of a new church in memory of Agnes Conlin, and would have provided a more comfortable home for old Teddy O'Toole, but the old man would not leave the place where he had spent his whole life until he was to be carried to the churchyard. All that could be done was to leave money for his more comfortable maintenance, for which Mr. Daton received many a heartfelt expression of gratitude from the old man, who said it was "just like Agnes Conlin's boy."

They next went to look for the last survivor of the family. The place was easily found, but two years before he had died, leaving a wife and two little girls. The widow was now in poverty and lingering in the last stages of consumption. Her only care was for the children, who were now ten and twelve years respectively, and for their sake she clung to life, weeping bitterly with fear that they might be taken to the poorhouse after her death.

"Fear not for that," said Mr. Daton; "I have money and could not see strangers suffer, much less my own blood relations."

A grateful smile was the only answer the poor woman could give.

The Datons soon departed on a tour of the Continent, promising to return before sailing for home. When they did return they found the two little girls alone with a stranger, who had cared for them since the death of their mother, four weeks before.

"They are beautiful children," said Mr. Daton to his wife.

"Yes, very pretty, but vulgar and uneducated."

"Like diamonds in the rough," said her husband, "but bright enough to be easily polished, and I intend to take them home and educate them. Nothing would please Cecelia better."

"Not to Innisfallen, I hope, Edward."

"Yes, Cecelia, unless you have serious objections. I am far richer than I dreamed three years ago that I ever should be again, so I have plenty with which to give a home to two poor little orphans, and Innisfallen is far too lonely now."

"Perhaps you are right, Edward, and I am willing to try them."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Daton were fully rewarded for their charity. Under the instructions of a private teacher the girls learned rapidly, and both husband and wife became so attached to them that it was hard to part with them when the time came for their departure to boarding school.

CHAPTER XV.

Ten years have rapidly flown by, and it would be unjust not to say a few words about how our friends have spent their time. We last saw Mr. and Mrs. Daton at Innisfallen on their return from Europe, and here we find them still. No longer young, but enjoying perfect health and happiness, the still handsome mistress of the house would never admit that she has passed her sixtieth birthday, and no one would suspect it, for her face is still remarkably fresh and only a few threads of silver are discernible in her dark hair.

She still retains her love of society and entertains no less than when she was young. The two little orphans she had taken to her home have grown to be beautiful young ladies, who fully appreciate her efforts to make them happy and have many friends among the best people of the city. They had graduated with high honors, the younger having finished

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