

FATHER DE LISLE.

By Miss Taylor

(A Tale of fact in fiction's garb.)

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

"Nay, nay, my Arthur," exclaimed Walter, as the former entered the cell with a face expressive of deep affliction, "not thus must you enter the 'bridegroom's chamber.' Bring to me no sad looks, no sighs and tears. Is it not what I have desired—was it not humbly hoping for this end that, by thy good aid I landed on the Essex coast?"

"But for so short a time," answered Arthur, "for so few months if thou hadst labored for years;—but to be cut off in thy youth, ere men knew what is in the—"

"God's time is the best, my friend," said Walter; "and surely it was not long that my dear father in Christ, Edmund Campian, was permitted to labor, and yet who left behind so bright a witness? Dear friend and father," continued Walter looking up, "shall I soon see thee again, and thy face on which heaven shed its light even on earth, radiant in the vision of Jesus? Ah, Arthur, would thou couldst have seen him!"

"Yes, he must have been wonderful, when even the queen's curiosity was raised to do so."

"Was it? I never heard that."

"Oh yes," said Arthur. "From the tower, when almost rent asunder with the racking, he was taken before her; she wanted to see the man, she said, who having Europe ring with his name, could spurn every hope of life to die; a felon's death; and she looked on him and saw one who trembled not at her frown, nor frowned for her smile. Verily it must have been a new sight for her Highness."

"May his prayers win for her light and repentance," said Walter. "Now, my Arthur, I must trust to thee to let the faithful know I am about to die, and entreat their prayers for me in my last conflict; and Arthur, dost think it is possible to find a priest who in charity could come to me, now Father Peterson, is in Brideswell? I think there must be another in London, since my imprisonment hath been known."

"I will try," answered Arthur. "If one can be found I will convey him thither."

"How much have I to thank you for my true friend," said Walter. "My poor prayers for you will be heard at last, and a reward shall fall on you for your generous devotion."

Arthur did not reply, but going towards the bed on which Walter was lying, he knelt down by the side and hid his face in his hands.

"Is it so in very truth?" said Walter, in a tone thrilling with joy. "Wilt thou then, choose Christ and His Cross for thy portion?"

"Yes, father," he answered with tears, "the almost is gone. I cast in my lot with Christ for aye. Hear my confession, father, and give me to drink of the waters of eternal life."

Towards evening in the same day, Walter lay down to sleep. During the day the cell had been thronged with visitors. The French Ambassador came to express his deep sorrow that his intercession for the life of Father de Lisle had proved unavailing, and that it was evident Walter was the object of bitter hatred to some one at court. Many other Catholics came to and receive his last counsel and blessing, and none ever forgot those words of sweetness and strength. It was remarked afterwards, that none of those who had seen Walter in his last hours ever fell away from the faith.

While Walter slept, another stranger entered the cell; he trod softly, and going up to the bed, bent over the sleeper, and as he gazed, the tears gathered in his eyes. "Is it possible?" he whispered to himself. "Is this the boy I saw last at the wrestling match at the college grounds at Rheims, when every eye was on him because of his manly beauty, and the wonderful strength he displayed, and

which had been concealed in his slight lithe form?"

Walter's lips moved, and he spoke in his dream, "Not as I, but as Thou," and in another moment he awoke, and looked up in his visitor's face. Then came a wondering look of half recognition.

"Is it you, 'Basil?'"

"Yes," answered his friend; "it is Basil Travers."

Walter was silent for a minute from deep emotion.

"I fell asleep praying that if it were His will a priest might be sent to me, and in answer 'you' come. Verily my cup runneth over with consolation."

On the morning of the following day Walter was again alone when the door opened and the jailer ushered in two ladies closely veiled.

They came forward, and kneeling entreated the priest's blessing.

"I can hardly raise my hand to give it to you my daughters," he answered, smiling, "but I will essay my best; 'the God of all might strengthen you, and give you courage to serve Him unto the end.'"

One of the visitors now threw back her veil and Walter recognized Rose Ford.

"Ah, my child, come to bid me farewell. Nay, weep not there is no cause for sorrow; rather thank God for me. Is your companion also known to me?"

"She desires to remain disguised," replied Rose; and I, father come hither with a message from my mistress. She hath made great exertions to procure your pardon, but the difficulties have been many at last, however, she has succeeded and the Queen pardons you."

A shade of deep disappointment passed over Walter's face, and he said in a low tone, as to himself, "I am not worthy, as thou wiltst in all things."

Then turning again to Rose he said:

"Thank the Duchess for me, Rose for her charity. A pardon I did not expect, nor desire. Nevertheless a longer life will be an opportunity of serving God longer, and making myself more fit to see Him hereafter. Let her not deem me ungracious, Rose; but thou as a Catholic canst understand that to snatch water from the thirsty is less painful than to bid back to life's hard battle the soul that longed to be with God."

"But there are conditions to this pardon," said Rose.

"Ha! of what nature, I pray you?"

"You must give up exercising all priestly functions, and reside as a simple gentleman either here or abroad: if here, concealing your faith as far as possible."

Walter's face was radiant again.

"Most happy conditions," he said, "since they permit me lawfully to refuse this pardon. And my child, when you thank the Duchess, as you must do for me, most gratefully, for her zeal in procuring that for me which I cannot accept, and try, and make her understand how low, how utterly worthless would be the life that is offered on such terms. Forswear my priesthood! forswear God's greatest, noblest gift to man! Does not the soldier die for his glory? Does not the king die for his crown? Does not even the merchant die for his gold? And why should we be backward, the soldiers of the Cross, the co-heirs of the Kingdom, the stewards of the treasure house? Tell her, Rose, that the only wisdom is to love Christ and the only folly to despise Him. Tell her that the longest life without a care, the fairest vision of youth perfectly fulfilled, is not to be compared for one moment to the joy of the prison and the rack, and the looking forward to Tyburne. I choose this last of my own free will a thousand times; and she, when she comes to die, will feel, too, the truth of my words. Oh, that ere the day comes upon her she may have learnt to know the nothingness of

earth, the greatness of eternity; and may have learnt to dare all things to win Christ."

There was a short pause and both his auditors were weeping.

"I have a favor to ask of the Duchess, Rose; it is that she will do what she can to comfort and help, after my death, the Lady Beauville. I hear her life has been spared, thanks to God; she is yet unconscious; but when she recovers she will need comfort. Ask your mistress to do what she can for her; and now I bid you farewell my children. Yet stay," and he took from his vest a small and well-worn rosary. "Carry this to the Duchess as my last gift; it is the rosary of the Seven Dolours of Mary. It has its value, for it belonged to my dear mother, who often bathed it in her tears; it hath been a consolation likewise to me. It may seem a strange present to the noble and prosperous lady; nevertheless, when dolor comes on her, as it does one day to all the children of earth, the thought of what the heart of Mary, pierced with that sharp sword, endured, may comfort her. God bless you, my children and fill you with His benedictions. I beseech your charitable prayers for me."

Rose dropped her veil, and drawing the arm of her companion within her own, they passed from the cell into the long passages into the open air. The lady clung to Rose's arm, and her frame trembled with convulsive sobs. When they reached home, Constance (for it is easy to penetrate her disguise) went to her own room and remained alone for many hours.

But Walter had yet one visitor to see; once again the door opened and a woman entered; she was not veiled, but a large cloak and hood enveloped her tall, gaunt figure. Walter started as he beheld her; the face was so wan and haggard, and the large eyes glared wildly upon him. She stood still without speaking.

"What can I do for you, my daughter," said the priest.

She came nearer. "I have come to see my victim, and to let you see your murderess."

Her eyes, fixed on Walter's face, beheld that not a muscle moved. He looked at her with the same compassionate glance.

"I am ignorant how thou hast wronged me, will you tell me, and are you a Catholic?"

"Once, once," she said wildly. "Oh! talk not of that—of those days gone by, to the lost, the perishing."

"Nay," said Walter, "tell me of them; it will ease my aching heart which is breaking 'neath the burden of memory."

"Thou didst dwell once secure in innocence and peace; then sin entered the paradise, and with it misery. See; have I not guessed rightly?"

She was crouching on the ground and weeping—those agonizing tears which they only shed whose eyes have been dry for many years; and at last in broken accents, the story came.

Young, lovely, but lowly-born, Maud Felton had become one of the numerous victims of Lord Leicester's vice. Cast off for a newer toy, the favorite gave her over to the care of Elliot. She would have escaped from him and soon ended her wretched existence, had not her child been born, Elliot, who desired to keep her as a slave saw his advantage, used Lord Leicester's name, and told her that in the event of disobedience, the child should be taken from her, and so she dragged on a life of misery. A ray of light had been shed on it by the visits and consolation of Rose Ford, who had accidentally found her out. We know the information that Elliot compelled her to procure from Rose, and the discovery of what she had done, and of the falsity of Elliot's words, had driven her almost frantic.

All this was related to Walter, and she added, "You are already avenged, father. From the hour of your condemnation my child sickened, and this morning she died."

(To be continued.)

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One of the pictures is called

"Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened, but one of the merry little companions of the woeful little maid who has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures, suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities of childhood. It is called

"Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been playing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

The two pictures together will people any room with six happy little girls, so glad to be alive, so care-free, so content through the sunny hours amidst their flowers and butterflies, that they must brighten the house like the throwing open of shutters on a sunny morning.

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