

AUNT HILDA'S PORTFOLIO.

Written for the CARMELITE REVIEW by
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LOVE AND LOVERS.

AFTER the little skirmish between the old friends, Mrs. Bryce and Ethna came not to Mrs. Acton's cottage. The rigors of our climate told heavily on Aunt Hilda and she was advised to spend a fortnight at the sea-shore. She was unpacking her trunk the morning after her return, when "Miss Bryce" was announced.

"Ask Miss Bryce will she kindly come to my room."

The first glance at Ethna's face showed that she was in trouble. "Are you ill, child?"

"No, Aunt Hilda, but something awful has happened."

Laying her hand on her friend's shoulder, the poor young creature sobbed so violently that her slight frame was shaken like a reed in the wind.

"Cry it out, Pet. You will be the better for it."

Fondly the arms of the matron encircled the sorrow-stricken girl.

"I am ashamed to act so like a baby," said Ethna, as after a few minutes of abandon she strove to control herself, "and you have been sick too, are you better?"

"O, yes, child, but tell me what has happened. Can I help you?"

"I don't know. I have wished for you so much. I was afraid to speak to Miss Judith, she would get so angry. Mother is disgusted with me: it's all about Mr. Stuart. He's coming to see you this morning. You *will* see him, won't you?"

"Certainly child. Are you engaged?"

"No, that is, not exactly. You know he is not a Catholic, and he would not consent to be married by a priest. *He* does not mind, so much, but his father is very bigoted. You see in the town where Mr. Stuart lives there are no Catholics of

refinement. Only mill hands, and the Stuarts are people of importance in their town."

A sad smile passed over Aunt Hilda's face. "How came this condition of affairs, dear. You know that the Church disapproves of mixed marriages, and the young man knew that he must not take to himself a Catholic wife."

"Indeed, Aunt Hilda, I did not know that I cared for him except as a friend. I found it out quite suddenly."

"You left the garden gate open, dearest, and the despoiler found you an easy victim. You forgot the warning, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

"Mr. Stuart says that he was in love with me before he knew I was a Catholic. He was never more surprised than when he made the discovery."

"The children of the world recognize the charm of the daughters of the Church, but are slow to discover the cause. What does Mr. Stuart propose to do?"

"He has passed his examinations splendidly. He returned from the last just as I left the house. The poor fellow looks awful; between his studies and our own affairs he has grown haggard; his eyes are sunken. You would think he had been ill for weeks."

"You are not much to look at yourself, Ethna."

"Don't I know it? I am ashamed to go to table, everyone is watching us. O, I wish we had never come to the city. Mr. Stuart met me this morning as I left the dining-room and told me to ask you if we could talk the matter over with you."

"Has he read any book on Catholic doctrine?"

"Mother lent him 'Milner's End of Controversy,' but he could not pay any attention to it, and now he is in such a flurry with his packing. He is to sail on Saturday."

"And this is Wednesday. That is short notice."

"He has received a letter from his father, urging his immediate return. They have some American machinery in their new factory and the people over there can't manage it. There he is now, I guess," she said as the door-bell rang.