

HER IRISH HERITAGE

BY ANNIE M. P. SMITHSON

AUTHOR OF "BY STRANGE PATHS"

CHAPTER VI—CONTINUED

"English or not, Miss Blake, dear," he said, "she's the sweet young lady, so she is, and indeed but I'm thinking she has Irish blood in her some ways."

"There now, didn't I know it!" the old man cried in triumph; "sure I'm never mistaken in any man's character!"

"Now James," said Bride, "I want you to tell my cousin, Miss Castlemaine, something about yourself and how you manage to live. But first of all—are you feeling better these days?"

"Indeed and I am—thanks be to God, and I'm hoping soon to be up and at work again."

"And what do you work at?" inquired Clare with interest.

"I sell papers, Miss, but it's six weeks now since I was able to be out myself with them. There's a slip of a girl in the parlour below and she takes them round for me—but, God help us! Her's not much good at the job! Of course I have me old age pension as well, Miss—so I'm wadin' for nothing."

"But can you live on five shillings a week?" said Clare. "To her that seemed an impossible feat."

"Is it live on five shillings a week? Glory be, Miss, and why not?" and even the slightest eyes seemed to express surprise at such a question: "I make over and above it with the papers, but even without them I'd manage fine. Sure why wouldn't I?"

"Just tell my cousin how you manage, James," said Bride with a quiet smile.

"Well, Miss, I've one and six for rent, and sixpence a week to the woman below since I've been laid up—she comes to look after me, an' cleans the room, and in the evenings she lights a bit of a fire in the grate, and if I'm able at all I get up for awhile and sits in the chair—for some of the boys does be comin' in for a chat. Well, I'm not a great eat anyway and a penny roll or a three-half penny loaf would do me a good while—and then there's a grain of oatmeal and sugar and a h'port of milk every morning. I get a grain of oatmeal too, for I take a taste for strabout these frosty mornings, but a little will do me—and I've a herring now and then and a pig's cheek for Sundays. Miss Blake here got me coal from the Mansion House—the blessin' of God on her!—and the Nurse does let me have a tin of cocoa now and then, and when I was rale bad she got me milk too—may Heaven be her bed!"

"That's Mary Carmichael!" said Bride in a quiet aside, "this is her district."

But Clare was looking at the old man, so happy and contented with little. "I don't smoke, Miss, and I don't snuff," he was saying, "so that saves me a lot. But I do enjoy a good cup of tea—but sure it's only tea dust that they do be sellin' in the hucksters' shops around here."

"I'll send you some really good tea, James," Clare cried eagerly, "you will take it as a little present from me, won't you? even though I'm an English," she added half laughing.

"Take it, Miss? and why not? Sure I'll take it and pray for you every living night! As to being English, sure as I said before you can't help that, and after all it's only half English yez are anyway. Talkin' of tea," he went on after a moment, "do yez know how many cups of tea the great Dr. Johnson used to drink?"

"No," said Clare, smiling, "five or six perhaps?"

The old man laughed heartily. "Five or six is it?" he echoed, "no, but twenty-five and that at war sitting, mind yez! Twenty-five cups of tea at war sitting!"

And he was still chuckling to himself over this, one of his favourite yarns, when the two girls were descending the shaky stairs on their way to the street once more.

"Oh! Bride!" cried Clare, "the poor old man! And he seems so contented too! Oh! how does he manage to exist at all?"

"Well! he told you how," said Bride smiling quietly, "and he really is happy Clare, and a perfect saint—always the same happy, thankful old soul. He is a lesson in contentment for all of us—and here is another!" as she entered a doorway a little further down the street.

A little "return room" up two flights of stairs—so dark that Clare found herself stumbling and groping at every step until Bride after a gentle knock opened the room door and they entered.

Bare and clean too—as clean as old James O'Brien's, but with the difference that this was a woman's room. Poor as it was there were still to be seen the many little touches that proclaimed a woman's hand. A few geraniums—sickly enough looking but still making a brave struggle for existence—were on the window sill; a gaily coloured cushion brightened up a shabby old armchair, and in a corner of the room stood a little altar, cheaply but tastefully decorated. Religious pictures adorned the walls for the most part, but side by side with the

"Holy Family" or the cheap prints of the Madonna and Child, would be found fashion plates of ladies with impossible figures compressed into impossible gowns. A small—very small—fire burned in the tiny grate, and on a low stool before it crouched a pale, emaciated young woman whose racking cough had been heard as they were ascending the stairs.

"Well, Mary," said Bride, "how are you today? I hope you feel a little better—no don't get up please. I have brought a cousin of mine—Miss Castlemaine—to see you."

The sick woman smiled, and held out a skeleton hand. "You are welcome Miss," she said to Clare, who was regarding her with compassionate eyes, "won't you sit down please? You will find a chair over there."

Mary Duffy was far advanced in consumption and lived with her sister in this one little room. The sister earned six shillings a week and her food by doing daily work until eight at night, at a large house in the suburbs. Mary had not been working for many a day, so that she had no state insurance to draw and all the two women had to rely upon was the sister's pittance, of which two shillings went for rent and at least a shilling or one and six for fire and light.

But, of course, the sister gets her dinner and tea where she works, Miss, and often Mrs. Browne sends me out a tasty bit now and then to tempt me, for it's not much I can eat, and Nurse Carmichael and Miss Blake here do be very good to me with milk and cocoa, and last week we got the coal from the Mansion House, and God only knows the relief it was to us, for it does be bitter cold these nights, and I'm thinkin' that I must have no blood at all left in me body—I do be shivering half the day these times!"

"And how is Maggie?" asked Bride.

Maggie was the sister, a delicate girl too, and Mary Carmichael had told Bride that she was afraid she would contract the disease from the other. Sharing not only the same room but even the same bed, underfed and overworked, and her sister in such an advanced stage that she was really dangerous to others—could poor Maggie escape? Mary Carmichael who lived so to speak in the sorrows and joys of her patients, often worried over this case.

"Well, now Miss, she's grand—thanks be to God! Although she does be set out altogether at night. And these few mornings I was wanting her to take a cup of tea and a bit of bread before she went out—but no, she wouldn't."

Bride Blake, who knew the reason, said nothing; but Clare asked, "But why wouldn't she—did she feel sick?"

"Oh, no, Miss, but you see Maggie is a real good girl and receives every morning, but she doesn't have time to come back here for a cup of tea after seven o'clock Mass, because she has to be at her work sharp to the minute of eight, and it takes her every minute of the time to walk there."

Clare listened open-eyed—all this was beyond her.

"Oh!" was all she could say in astonishment, adding, "well, I hope she gets a real good breakfast when she gets there—for she would want it."

"Oh! yes, Miss, she manages a cup of tea and a slice of bread, except on Thursdays they are very busy or the like—and it's a terrible busy house—and then it might be eleven or twelve o'clock before she could break her fast."

Clare was speechless from bewilderment, and the woman noticed with some surprise.

"But sure she doesn't mind, Miss," she said cheerfully, "Maggie wouldn't miss going to the Altar for anything—not if it was to cost her life itself!"

At this moment a quick, light footstep sounded on the stairs, followed by a business-like rap at the door, and the next instant Mary Carmichael in her nurses' uniform stood before them. Her face lit up with pleasure as she saw her two friends, but even while she was greeting them her eyes were scanning the room with professional observation.

"I think this window will open a little more," she remarked, and as she spoke she was pushing up the crazy window and deftly keeping it in place with a wooden peg.

"I have got the camp bed for you at last, Mary," she said then, "it will be sent to you this evening—bed clothes and all."

"Oh! Nurse, thank you!" and the sick woman's eyes lit up. "Oh! I am that grateful for it—and not for myself Nurse dear as you know well, but I'm fretting this long while for fear harm would come to Maggie through her sleeping with me. May God bless you, Nurse!"

Mary Carmichael's eyes were strangely tender as she smiled down on the poor creature. Her patients always saw the best side of Mary, and loved her accordingly. She turned now in a half-teasing way to Clare.

"Well! Are you suffering from the slumming craze too?" said she; "it's becoming so fashionable just now amongst 'the quality' that really we poor workers may soon take a back seat."

"Ah! Mary, you know better!" said Bride, "I only wish that I could get at the heart of my people like you do."

"Would you like to finish the morning with me?" said Mary. "I

have a few places to go to yet that I think will open Miss Castlemaine's eyes. After all when she is slumming she may as well do the thing properly, and I observe," she added, as after saying good-bye to Mary Duffy they were again on their way, "that you are only showing her your pet cases, Bride. Now I will bring Miss Castlemaine to a few 'real hard cases' for a change. But I think that you had better go on with your own visits and meet us at half past twelve in St. Patrick's Park and we will then go and have a cup of tea somewhere—Miss Castlemaine will need it by then I expect."

"Well! Yes, I think she will if you are going to take her round! But that will be the best Mary, because you will be able to show her far more of the real slums than I can, although I know them fairly well—but your footings amongst them is so altogether different—they have always a good word for the nurse, somehow!"

So they separated—Bride going her own way—and Clare presently found herself walking by Mary Carmichael's side along one of the worst alleys in that locality.

Slovenly women and dirty ragged children sprawled on the pavements, starved dogs and mangy cats prowled around in the gutter in search of food, while evil smells seemed to arise from everywhere and choke her.

But she noticed that the looks directed towards her present escort were very different from those to which she and Bride had been subjected. Evidently "the nurse" was well known, and both liked and respected by these denizens of the slums.

"They look very bad," said Mary quietly, as they passed swiftly along, "but they really are not half as bad as they appear—although some of them are bad enough. Heaven knows! as you will see before long. Just come in here now!"

They entered a low doorway, and passing through an indescribably dirty entrance—her it could hardly be dignified—went down two flights of filthy stairs, Mary calling back to Clare to hold her skirts well off the ground, and found themselves looking in through the open door of an under-ground kitchen.

To Clare the place seemed full of unwashed humanity—the nauseating smell of which met her on the threshold with such force that it seemed a solid wall of bad gases, and she had to brace herself to go forward and advance by Mary's side further into the room—if room it could be called.

It was one of the usual damp underground kitchens of the slums, with one tiny window opening on to a back yard, the smell from which—when Mary, as in duty bound had opened it, was little if any better than that of the fetid kitchen itself.

A young woman, down at heel, ragged and drink-sodden, was sitting nursing a tiny unwashed morsel of a baby; three other small children were sitting on the dirty damp floor; a boy of about sixteen—an embryo criminal in appearance—lounge against the one rickety table smoking a fag; a girl a year or so older, her hair in "curlers," and nearly as dirty and down at heel as the woman—but still with a certain attempt at tawdry finery—was sitting reading a novelette, a man lay on a filthy "bed" in the corner, snoring loudly, and evidently sleeping off the previous night's debauch; and an old hag sat in the chimney corner smoking a short clay pipe.

This last was the patient, and Mary Carmichael rapidly turned up her sleeves, and opening her bag took from it some clean paper which she spread on the table and then arranged her dressing. The woman, still holding the baby on one arm produced a none too clean basin which Mary rinsed several times from the kettle before proceeding to use it for cleaning the old woman's ulcerated leg. She spoke little but deftly and swiftly finished the dressing, washed her hands, repacked her bag, and was ready for the next case.

But short as the time was it seemed infinitely too long as nurse Clare, standing in embarrassed silence near the door—holding Mary's cloak which the latter had handed to her in thankfulness that she could do so, and not have to deposit it anywhere in the room.

Clare had never seen such a scene of dirt and squalor before—but she was almost afraid to look around, for she felt the bold, insolent gaze of the girl, the keen scrutiny of the young hoodlum, and the furtive looks which the woman threw her now and then from her heavy eyes. Simply as Clare was dressed, there was a look of distinction and style about her, which was not lost upon those beings of the underworld who were used to living by their wits, and who possessed that quick perception and keenness of observation which is so noticeable amongst the Dublin poor.

But now Mary had finished, and taking her cloak from Clare she slipped it on.

"Now mind what I'm telling you, Granny," she remarked, as she prepared to depart, "if you don't give up the porter that leg of yours will never heal!"

TO BE CONTINUED

To suffer one hour with and for one we love brings us nearer in spirit to them than many years of joyous companionship, for only in sorrow does the heart reveal itself.

FIRST FRUITS

Charming, picturesque Glenville is situated about fifteen miles from seaboard stretches of meadows, its fertile fields and luxuriant gardens delight the eye; its spacious old-fashioned houses, under the great trees, give one a feeling of home; while the wide, silvery expanse of river sends a refreshing message on every breeze.

Is it old fashioned? Yes, in the sense that it is not an up-to-date summer resort. It is a cluster of homes rather than of houses. Each proprietor lives on his own land, and is more occupied in beautifying his home than in increasing his wealth.

The restless, pleasure-seeking world can obtain no footing here. That it is not up-to-date, I admit, yet, there is not a gayer, brighter, more sociable place in the world than Glenville. The young people get up concerts, picnics, and charades, and invite the elders, and the married folks are constantly springing surprises on the young people; and every pleasure is enhanced because safeguarded under a home roof.

How has all this come about? Ask Father Hilton, the dear white-haired old priest; he will tell you it is all due to the people's love for the Sacred Heart; but the good folk will attribute it all to Father Hilton, who labored amongst them for many years. And it is owing to his untiring zeal, his devoted care of his flock, his prayer and example, that he is now enjoying the hundred-fold promised on earth to those who do the work of the Master.

It is the sunset hour and a boat is approaching the shore. It is heading for Mr. Edward's landing; ripples of laughter and fresh young voices are heard.

While they row in, let me introduce you to the occupants. Agnes Murray is teasing Jack Conlon, a sixteen year old boy, and brother of her dearest friend and classmate, Vera, who is demurely conversing with Frank Austin, a new acquaintance. Agnes and Vera were graduated from the Sacred Heart convent in June last, and are now enjoying their first weeks of vacation.

Agnes returned home determined to prove herself worthy of the training she received, and to live up to the high ideals that had been placed before her. She did not expect to fulfil Ruskin's idea that "Every noble life leaves its fiber interwoven in the work of the world," but she prayed, and prayed earnestly, that every life that touched hers might be better for that contact.

As the party left the boat, a voice cried out; "Come to the house; mother has a surprise for you."

Mrs. Edwards appeared at the door, a refined, graceful woman. She began at once: "Mr. Edwards has secured a box at the Imperial, for the opera tomorrow evening. Betini sings, and it will be our only chance of hearing him. You must all come."

"Oh, Mrs. Edwards!" said Agnes, "I am sorry, I cannot avail myself of your kind invitation. Tomorrow will be the eve of the First Friday and we always have Holy Hour in the church."

There were cries of "Do come, Agnes," "Don't disappoint us," from the young scions of the house of Edwards, who had gathered around their mother. Agnes gently but firmly refused, and Mrs. Edwards knowing it was Mr. Murray's custom to make the Holy Hour with all his family, urged the girl no further.

Agnes said a prayer that her friend Vera might be firm; she knew her love for music and what a temptation this would be for her.

"Of course you will come, Vera," said Mrs. Edwards. And some one called out, "Jack, accept the invitation for yourself and your sister."

"No," said Jack, "I leave the decision to Vera. Where she goes I go."

"Then," responded Vera, with a smile, "you will go to the church."

There was a laugh at Jack's expense; the boys made a wry face, but in heart he was proud of his sister.

Frank Austin was a stranger; he had induced his aunt Mrs. Phillips to invite him to make his home with her for the summer. The good lady did not need coaxing; she dearly loved the lad, and having him in her home would be an excuse for gathering the young people around her more frequently, for she had no children of her own. This young man had been practicing law for a year in Seaford, but only came in Glenville in May. He was a fine specimen of young manhood, wavy brown hair clustered above a well-shaved forehead; he had clear, thoughtful gray eyes, was tall, broad-shouldered, graceful, active, with a wholesome, contagious laugh. He was formed to make friends and was already popular in Glenville.

Mrs. Edwards now turned to him, saying, "We may count on you, Mr. Austin."

"No," he responded, "I had better be a good boy and go to church with Jack."

As the party passed on, Vera was sweet in her regrets over Mrs. Edwards' disappointment, and Agnes assured her that Mr. Edwards must have forgotten the First Friday when he engaged the box—and such really was the case.

Jack accused Agnes of cheating him out of an opera, and Frank loudly guffawed. "I accept in instruction written in sand; the tide

flows over it and the record is gone; example is engraven on the rock."

"And that is what you have had tonight, boy," he said, giving Jack a slap on the back.

Vera and Jack turned into their garden and Frank went on to the Murray mansion with Agnes. The front door was wide open and a beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart could be seen, with the red light burning before it. They stopped a moment at sight of it, and the young man said: "Remember me sometimes when you kneel there. I thank you for what you have done for me tonight." He raised his hat and was gone.

That evening, as Agnes knelt before the statue, she remembered her new acquaintance and besought the Sacred Heart to give his soul the light and grace it needed. What did he mean? How had she done him good? Was he to be the "First Fruits"?

Frank walked home, recalling each incident of the evening, and concluded that he did not agree that "An honest man is the noblest work of God," he would give the palm to woman. He sat at the window till far into the night, analyzing his conduct during the past year. Unsparringly condemning himself, he recalled his resolution; the life he had led; helping the weak, steady, the wavering, showing the way by his example. What had it all come to?

It was the heart of the priest within him—of which he was not yet conscious—aspiring to sacred heights, that caused his dissatisfaction. He told himself that if he had been asked first, he would have accepted the invitation, and remembered the First Friday afterwards. Even a weak girl could give him good example.

Frank had a theory that a layman can reach souls with whom a priest rarely comes in contact. He held that there were men who would not listen to a priest, but would take advice and be led by a fellowman. And he determined to work in this part of the Lord's vineyard. He thought himself unworthy of the priesthood, and had not yet awakened to the fact that Our Lord was calling him. Many a man would have found food for self-congratulation with a record clear as his, but petty accomplishments could not satisfy a youth in pursuit of the noblest aims.

It was a very contrary young man who made the Holy Hour the following evening, but he was too clear-headed to be discouraged.

During the long summer he and Agnes had many talks, and she, with a woman's quick intuition, saw before he realized it, that he was not in the right place. She drew from him reasons for refusing the priesthood. It was always "Non sum dignus."

One evening they were watching the gardeners watering the flowers. One was using a most disreputable-looking old can.

Agnes said, "He should not use the old can."

Frank answered quickly, "Why not? It carries the water as well as the other and that is all that is necessary."

"If the can said, 'I am too dingy and rusty' and refused to carry the water, what would the gardener do?" asked Agnes.

Frank saw the point and laughed as he replied, "It is not the same." Agnes was serious. "It is the same," she responded, "only in your case, souls are thirsting after the fountains of life and you refuse to give them water. The poorer the instrument, the more glory for the Master."

The first week in September Jack Conlon returned to Loyola, and Agnes was not surprised when Frank told her he was going to Montreal to see his old professors.

The first words of Father Halligan were, "I have been expecting you, my boy!"

"Expecting me? Why, Father?" he asked in surprise.

"I knew that theory of yours would not work," said the Father, "and I was sure you would come back to us."

Jack Conlon's first letter brought the news to Glenville that Frank Austin had entered the novitiate. Did anyone in Glenville remember an opera sacrificed for a Holy Hour?—Bride Clare in Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

DEFEND THE FAITH

Independence of character is more required in religion than in political discussions, because religion, when admitted at all, must be considered the transcendent duty of life. Atheism and agnosticism are now so fashionable among non-Catholic young men that it requires much moral courage to defend revealed truth against them.

It is necessary, also, to have the grounds of one's religious convictions clearly established in one's own mind, in order to be able to present them with due force in reply to modern objections. Our adversaries will sneer at our faith as antiquated and behind the age, and they will cite the apostles of their new religion, as if the weight of their names should be sufficient to overwhelm us. Luther and Calvin were similarly cited in their day, and Voltaire and Rousseau in theirs, as if each spoke the last word, and gave the death-blow to the old faith. Yet the old faith has survived them, while they themselves have been long since shelved for later apostles. The truth never changes.

No man or woman of strong religious convictions should neglect to read the latest works in defense of Christian faith. But, besides reading those works, they should be thoroughly grounded in the reasons of their beliefs, and be able to express them in clear, forcible language when occasion requires it. It is not, indeed, the duty of a layman to initiate those religious controversies; but when they are introduced by others, or when their Church is attacked, or when an outsider honestly seeks information or instruction from him—in either of these cases he should be prepared to give an account of the faith that is in him, and to show that his convictions are sincere, reasonable and well-grounded.—The Monitor.

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