

his doctor that his days were numbered, he endeavoured to put his affairs in order. To his horrified dismay he found them in a state of dire confusion—a hopeless condition for one enfeebled by suffering to deal with—and for a time he gave way to despondency. He needed much—comforts, and an expensive diet were essential—good wines, luxuries of many sorts. Enough money was left to afford him these things, which had become necessities to him, for a little longer. Génie bravely took possession of the purse. She reassured him whenever painful misgivings assailed him, and though as day after day passed the little capital dwindled away, her bright spirits and tender concealment lulled the mind, more and more enfeebled by illness, into calm.

Two or three days before his death, to his daughter's astonishment and dismay, he suddenly asked to see a Roman priest. In vain Génie remonstrated and implored him to see the *pasteur* of the temple to which she belonged; his demand became more and more urgent, and Dr. André Féraudy, the young doctor in whose charge he was, told her that she must yield.

The next two days were torture to the poor child. The priest who had obeyed her summons welcomed Rotraud Lacour as a stray sheep returned to the fold. He was very kind, and it was her own feeling, not his wish, which banished her from her father's bedside when the last solemn rites of the Church were administered to the dying man, reconciled with religion on his death-bed.

In an outer room Génie knelt, weeping with all the passion and fury of her seventeen years; and here Dr. André found her, and understood the bitterness of her trouble. He was very kind, very gentle. He himself belonged to her faith; he had devoted his life, his fine talents, his prospects of fortune to his Huguenot quarter, but the experience of life, familiarity with suffering, all had taught him to be larger-minded and more charitable than the poor trembling girl. He told her that when the instinct of religion is lost in long years of godless indifference, when the moment of its reawakening comes, the mind reverts to the earliest days of its innocence, when all that is pure and holy centres round the first faith learnt at a mother's knee.

Génie ceased her passionate weeping as he told her very gently that death was near, and that instead of this strong rebellion against the means, she should thank God for the mercy which had called the sinner to repentance.

Then the door opened, and a kind Sister called her: "Come, my poor child!" and led her in holding her hand tenderly in hers.

Dr. André followed, and his strong arm raised and supported the dying man.

Rotraud Lacour was nearly gone. The last touch of his cold hand, the last look from his darkening eyes sought the golden head bowed in absorbing grief by his pillow.

And now—three days had passed since they had borne him away, and

Génie stood beside the writing-table with clasped hands and strained eyes burning and tearless after hours of weeping. She was wondering what to do next.

Génie was a wonderfully pretty girl, tall and slender, with a delicate little face and large shining grey eyes. Her abundant fair hair was wavy and soft, the light turning it to pale gold.

In her severe black gown, unrelieved by a touch of white, in the stern French fashion of mourning, she looked pathetically young and childish. That very morning Génie had counted her money. There was enough to pay for the rooms up to the end of the week, the wages, and her food, and after that two hundred francs would be left. Eight pounds between her and beggary! It was not strange that Génie's heart should sink. All through her father's illness she had been so brave, so bright; but now there was no longer any reason for bearing up bravely—that was all over—and it seemed to the desolate girl that there was nothing left to live for.

Génie had already had two visitors. On the day after her father's death came the old priest who had visited him. He had come in and spoken very kindly to her, inquiring into her plans and means, and leaving her with kind but vague promises of help. The help was offered the very next day. A lady called whom she had never seen before, who introduced herself as a friend of the good priest. She brought substantial offers—a home in the Convent of the Naivité, a free, happy home, where her duty would be to teach little children, orphans like herself. There was but one condition attached. Génie must at once submit to a course of instruction before joining the Church of Rome. Her kind patroness sat with her a long time, and with earnest words endeavoured to persuade her to accept. For a moment Génie felt an intolerable pain in refusing. It seemed such a haven of rest that was offered to her—the sheltered home, the little children, the gentle, cheery nuns! But she did not hesitate, though the tears streamed down her face as her new friend turned away in sorrowful disappointment.

The dreary room with its garish yellow velvet chairs and bare floor looked uglier and more homeless than ever; but she braced herself up and thought bravely that she, even little Génie Lacour, might claim now to have suffered for her faith.

Génie wrote to the *pasteur* for help and advice. He was a remarkable and well-known man, so much beloved in his ministry that in the Huguenot quarter he went by the name of Father Nicholas. Unfortunately at the moment he was away from home. He had left Paris for a hard-earned holiday, and had gone down to his own family in the Midi. When he received her letter a week later in his far-off mountain village, she had left Paris.

As Génie stood thinking, her door opened and the mistress of the house came in. She was a good-natured stout woman, and her first movement was to

take the lonely girl in her arms and embrace her warmly on both cheeks. Then she began to speak very volubly. Some ladies had been to see the rooms; they would take them at once if mademoiselle would have the goodness to say when it would suit her to leave them. If she would not mind the change, there was a little room she could have on the ground-floor. She would not incommode mademoiselle for the world, but it was such a chance letting one's rooms like this in the beginning of the fine season when everyone was going to the sea-side!

Génie said imploringly, "Give me until Saturday, madame, and then let the ladies come."

"Yes, Saturday would do quite well," said the good lady, and meanwhile, if there was anything in the world she could do for mademoiselle, it would be a favour to let her know.

She was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door which made Génie start, while her landlady opened it with a flourish and showed in Dr. André Féraudy.

The expressive face of the young doctor showed some dissatisfaction when he saw that Madame Manche was present, but she would not see it. It was all very well for Monsieur le Docteur to call when Monsieur Lacour was under his care, but there was no longer any occasion for his visits; and with all the instincts of a chaperon aroused, Madame Manche seated herself by the window and took her knitting from her pocket.

Génie went forward timidly.

"It is good of you to come, monsieur. I—I have already written to you to thank you for all your goodness to my father, but," she faltered, "I cannot express what I feel."

"I have done nothing to deserve thanks," said the young doctor hastily. "I should have called to ask after you before, but I have been much occupied."

"Ah, poor Madame Lepel!" said Madame Manche. "How is she? I heard that there was no hope?"

"She is better—she will live," he said eagerly. "These are the things which brace one to do anything."

Génie's eyes filled with tears.

"I am very glad," she said brokenly.

"A doctor's work is hard," said Madame Manche, bending over a refractory stitch in her knitting. "I will be bound to say that you were not in bed last night, nor the night before!" she added, looking at his face, which was haggard from watching and anxiety.

"Ah, bah! I shall sleep to-night," he cried gaily.

"Who is this Madame Lepel?" said Génie.

"She is the wife of a stone-mason, and has six little children," said Doctor André.

"Ah, they may well call you *le petit médecin des pauvres*," cried Madame Manche. "But after all, my friend, that is not the road on which one picks up gold and silver."

André turned away.

"And now, mademoiselle," he said