

The Answer

"I can't see the necessity for it all, that's the real answer for you, Mona," said Leicester, with an air of decision, very slightly touched with impatience.

Mona Carew saw the impatience and sighed slightly.

"There seems no use in going over the same ground again," she said wearily. "I can not marry a non-Catholic, and particularly not a man of such marked agnostic views as you appear to possess, Ralph. If you would only admit the possibility of enlightenment and consent to inquire into the mysteries of the faith, I should not speak so strongly. You can not, of course, be expected to renounce the theories of a lifetime for my sake at any request. But surely inquiry into such vital matters would be worth your while."

"A mere waste of time, of which I have little enough to spare," rejoined Dr. Leicester. "I have too much to learn without trying to know the unknowable; and then, as I told you, I don't see the necessity of any formulated dogma or hard and fast creed. We are creatures of progress and change and we don't need hampering. We must be free if we would advance. Your creed is a restraining one, Mona; you must admit that."

"No," she said, quietly; "in nothing does it restrain a man except in evil, for it is true and its Founder said that Truth should make us free."

"Quid est veritas?" said Leicester smilingly, yet obviously bored.

Mona looked round her. They were sitting on a fallen tree, these two, looking over one of the fairest glades in Ireland. A river rushed along at their feet, foaming over great black boulders on its way to the sea. The shadow of the mountains darkened its waters, and gave an air of majesty and aloofness to the spot.

Mona loved to come here. Next to the seashore this was her favorite haunt. The strong, resistless river could always take possession of any sad thoughts she might have, and carry them away to the immensity of that ocean where its own self was swallowed up and lost.

Not that her thoughts were wont to be sad. Till Ralph Leicester had come into her life she had known little of sighs and far more of smiles. She had lived a happy, simple country life in her Irish home, with her horses and dogs, light of heart, though by no means of nature, fervent and strong in the faith of her country and forefathers, and little given to controversy and the propounding of problems, though not at a loss when asked to give an answer for the hope that was in her. She was thoughtful at times, for all her high spirits, and as really thoughtful people are seldom narrow-minded, Ralph Leicester was agreeably surprised at her intelligence whenever she chose to answer any of his arguments against religion.

He fancied that because she was a devout Catholic she must necessarily be a narrow-minded woman, about a charming one, but he soon found out his mistake. Mona was wide of mind as of heart and sympathies, and for this very reason so unalterable in her creed, which transcends all wisdom and scales all heights.

Her dark-blue eyes were wistful as she looked on the beauty of the summer glade. How could a clever man like Ralph be so blind? Here was loveliness and perfection, the work of a master hand; and why could not the man she loved see a corresponding symmetry in the Church of God? Words are seldom much used, however, and Mona forbore them as far as she might. Prayer, she knew, would do more for Ralph than anything else at present. Not that she feared to lose her temper. The time for that was past. As well be angry with a blind puppy as with the "invincible ignorance" of Leicester. Besides, who was she to be angry while her great Creator waited in an infinite patience?

It was no question of that, or of mean little bickerings or unworthy strife. They loved each other and spoke freely, without fear of hurting or vexing. Only prayer was the very strongest of Mona's weapons, in its silence and sweet subtlety, and she said to herself, "He will soon know."

And Ralph thought, "I shall soon win her consent to at least our engagement."

Presently they rose to go, for Ralph had to catch the next Dublin train which should leave the little country station, and go back to his work.

"So I am again unsuccessful?" he asked, looking reproachfully at the girl at his side, as they climbed the beaten track which led up the mountain.

Mona said nothing for a minute. Her eyes were hidden by her white lids.

"I shall keep on till I succeed, all the same," said Leicester, and his strong chin and resolute mouth seemed to confirm his words.

Mona smiled then in quiet security.

"We must wait," she said, "till you can see further and more clearly."

She looked up trustfully and sweetly into his strong, clear-cut face. "It will all come right soon, Ralph."

Ralph Leicester had a vague sort of idea, as he went back to Dublin that evening, that Mona regarded him as he was wont to regard his patients. He was sick and must be cured as soon as possible—that seemed to be



her attitude. It was not soothing to his vanity, though it was good for his soul.

Toward the end of that summer he got an invitation from Mona's father to go down and spend a few days with them for the grouse shooting, which had just begun. It was about the time of his annual holiday, so he gladly availed himself of this opportunity of continuing his courtship of the girl he loved so well yet so ignorantly.

The first Sunday at Lough Kerry was something of a trial for him. The distance between him and Mona seemed immeasurably greater when she left him in the library and went off with her parents to Mass at the chapel in the village. Leicester was unusually sensitive for a scientifically-minded Englishman, and he felt absurdly out in the cold in his logical attitude of his Darwin. So he strolled after the Carews for the sake of diversion, and sat down unobserved at the very back of the chapel.

He got interested in time in watching the people. This devotion impressed him, and their evident absorption in the great act of worship in which they were all taking part pleased his sense of fitness.

"I should like to be made that way," I think," he said to himself. "Of all forms of religion this one is undoubtedly the highest and most ideal."

He slipped out before the Carews moved, and joined them on their way home without saying where he had been. Mona was looking very bright and happy. She carried a prayer-book and rosary, and Ralph offered to relieve her of them. He put the rosary in one pocket and the book in another, much to Mona's satisfaction.

"I want you to come and see a sick child in the village; will you, Ralph?" she asked.

He followed her to a low-roofed cabin at the far end of the few scattered dwellings which made up "the village." A low sound of weeping fell on their ears as they neared this cabin, and Mona turned pale and hastened her steps. "He is worse, I'm afraid," she said. The child, a boy of eleven or twelve, had died the night before, however.

Mona, tears on her cheeks, knelt on the mud floor by the side of the little body, the heartbroken mother crouching near. Together they murmured soft Gaelic prayers for the child's soul. The priest had been there, and the end, though unexpected, sudden, had been peaceful.

Leicester stood behind Mona, carrying his rough tweed cap and feeling awkward. The poor, half-distracted mother only seeing that he was with one of the Carews, and must therefore be of their faith, begged him to say a Hail Mary for her child.

A gleam came into Mona's eyes. "Say it after me to prevent hurting her feelings," she whispered.

Leicester knelt down, very hot and indignant, and repeated the Angelical Salutation in a strong, embarrassed voice.

"That prayer," he remarked after they had left the cabin, "that prayer, said by your side on a muddy floor in an Irish cabin is the first I ever said in my life."

Mona said nothing, but her eyes smiled.

When they said good-night he asked her for something belonging to her to keep—a ribbon or some such trifle. She gave him a tiny silver medal—one of the Miraculous Medals—and he

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wore it for her sake day and night.

Squire Carew was shooting in his moors one afternoon with Leicester, when the doctor's gun exploded, wounding him in the arm. They thought it a light matter at first, a mere flesh wound, and Mona proved a first-rate nurse, but inflammation set in, and the local doctor looked grave.

Poor Mona! Her heart grew sick with fear in those days. She knelt by Leicester's side while he slept for a few brief minutes once, her rosary twined round her trembling fingers, every breath she drew a prayer. Recovery for soul and body—how she prayed for this none ever knew. Leicester's handsome face looked as though chiseled out of marble as he lay there. Suddenly, when she least expected it, his eyes opened and he looked full at her.

"Who has been praying for me?" he asked, with startling abruptness.

"All of us, dear," said Mona. "Yes, here on earth; but out there in the great space of Eternity who has been specially pleading for my soul?" he asked in a strangely dreamy tone.

Amazed, overjoyed, and puzzled, the girl made no reply. Then suddenly light broke upon her.

"The soul of that child for whom you prayed once is now praying for you," she said exultantly; "joining its voice with the voice of our blessed Mother, and the saints and angels, its brothers and sisters in eternity."

Leicester lay looking at her silently, but with a curious intentness in his gaze.

He did not die, though he came very near to death, and his gratitude and joy over his wonderful recovery were great, and led him by rapid steps to a logical conclusion. He came at length to "see," and he saw very clearly; and because he was a strong man he was not content to see and understand and know.

So he went further still, and consecrated his newly restored life to the God who had given it to him.

And the great and wonderful day when the anointed hands of Ralph Leicester first offered the Spotless Victim to the Eternal Father was the proudest and happiest of Mona's life.—Francis Charles Clare.

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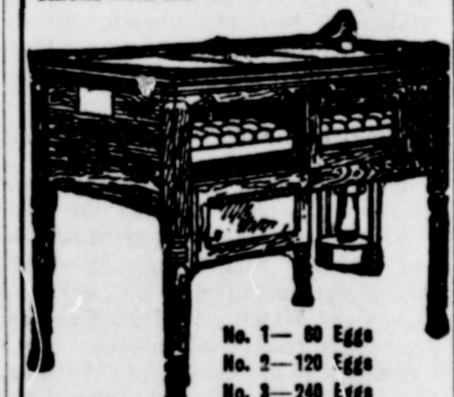
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SYNOPSIS OF CANADIAN NORTH-WEST Homestead Regulations

A NY even numbered section of Dominion lands in Manitoba or the Northwest Provinces, excepting 8 and 26, not reserved, may be homesteaded upon by any person who is the sole head of a family, or any male over 18 years of age, to the extent of one-quarter section, of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry may be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land to be taken is situated, or if the homesteader desires, he may, on application to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, or the local agent for the district in which the land is situated, receive authority for some one to make entry for him.

HOMESTEAD DUTIES: A settler who has been granted an entry for a homestead is required to perform the conditions connected therewith under one of the following plans:

(1) At least six months' residence upon and cultivation of the land in each year during the term of three years.

(2) If the father (or mother, if the father is deceased) of any person who is eligible to make a homestead entry under the provisions of this act resides upon a farm in the vicinity of the land entered for by such person as a homestead, the requirements of this act as to residence prior to obtaining patent may be satisfied by such person residing with the father or mother.

(3) If the settler has his permanent residence upon farming land owned by him in the vicinity of his homestead, the requirements of this act as to residence may be satisfied by residence upon the said land.

APPLICATION FOR PATENT should be made at the end of three years, before the Local Agent, Sub-Agent or the Homestead Inspector.

Before making application for patent the settler must give six months' notice in writing to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands at Ottawa of his intention to do so.

SYNOPSIS OF CANADIAN NORTH-WEST MINING REGULATIONS.
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