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LISHEEN

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CHAPTER XXXIX

"ONE OF US?"

When Maxwell and his wife turned the corner of the road leading to the village, the full horror burst upon them. Brandon Hall was in flames. The roof had fallen in ; and the fierce fires were leaping up amidst the vast clouds of lurid smoke, which they turned into blood-red shadows that came and went, as the wind shifted the dense black volumes that poured fiercely as from the mouth of a furnace. With aching hearts and darkest forebodings of evil they tore madly through the village street ; and when Maxwell pulled up, and threw back his pony on his haunches. the animal was covered with the white foam of its sweat. He flung the reins carelessly aside, jumped down, and tore his way through the helpless and wondering peasantry. He was afraid to ask the question that was on his lips, as he came in front of the mansion, and saw that it was gutted from roof to cellar, and that only the walls were standing. But he was swiftly answered :

"He's all right, sir ! The masther is all right ! He's up to Donegan's Cottage ! Ned Galwey saved him !"

Thus reassured he ran back to his wife, but she had already heard the news ; and when Maxwell entered his labourer's cottage, he found her there.

Hamberton was badly shaken and unnerved ; but otherwise had suffered but little. It appears that after Maxwell and Claire had left for Lisheen he had sunk into a doze in his arm-chair, from which he was rudely awakened by the cry of "Fire !" Unable to help himself or to rise, he was thinking of the dread possibility before him, when one of his servants entered his room, and said, in his calm, English way :

"The 'ouse is afire, sir ! I think we 'ad better be amoving hout !"

"Certainly. Get some help," said Hamberton.

The man vanished, and did not return.

Hamberton, now thoroughly dismayed, made an effort to save himself, but fell back helplessly. He was now face to face with the Fate he had so often wooed.

As yet, no trace of the fire was visible in his room ; but he heard that deep, distant rumbling of the terrible element, and the cries of the frightened servants, and the crash of furniture and heavy timbers, and the gathering of the crowd outside, and their awestricken exclamations. And then, a tiny brown cloud gathered in beneath his door, and soon the room was filled with the choking vapour ; but he lay helpless, as if bound with chains, awaiting the final stroke, that would come, he thought, at any moment.

Presently, a frightened maid burst in, and cried :

"Fly, sir, fly for your life ! The whole house is in flames. Nothing can save it !"

Hamberton smiled sardonically. He could only sit still and listen to the ravages made by the conflagration ; and wonder, would the floor where he sat fall in, and cast him into a furnace of fire ; or would the smoke, ever growing thicker and thicker, suffocate him. He hoped so. He had read that this was always the case in deaths by fire. The victim was always unconscious before the flames actually reached him. And then, it was only cremation of his corpse ; and surely this was only his own last instruction to his executors.

"Not thus, though," he thought, whilst the thickening fumes choked him, and made him cough. "Clearly, there is a God guiding things ; but not always in our way. And he is a mocking God, who plays with us like puppets. I wonder what he would do, if I spoke to him ?"

He bent his head, and spoke strange things, that are not to be found in any ordinary prayer-book. And then he laughed, whilst his cough grew painful ; and there was a growing constriction in his chest, that seemed to make breathing impossible, and to set his heart wildly throbbing. And ever and ever came that terrible rumbling, as of a great earth-upheaval, and crash after crash, as the heavy timbers of the house seemed to rip asunder, and to fall into the sea of fire. Then he became conscious of the carpet smoking beneath his chair, and presently little jets became visible between the boards.

"It is the end !" he said, closing his eyes, when the door was burst violently open, and a great, gaunt figure, its head wrapped in a sheet, broke into the room.

"Where are ye ? Where are ye, yer 'anner ?" it cried. "Quick, quick, for the luv of God !"

"Here !" said Hamberton, faintly, whilst he felt his eyes painfully throbbing, and he could hardly breathe.

In an instant a strong hand had wheeled his bath-chair towards the great window that faced the west. There was a crash of glass, where Ned Galwey, leaping on the sill, drove his foot again and again through the framework of the window ; and whilst the smoke broke through the aperture, Hamberton felt a delicious breath of cool night air on his forehead ; and he braced himself to make one last fight for life with his brave rescuer.

But the terrible problem now confronted them how,—could Hamberton, heavy and helpless, be removed ? Galwey had shouted down through the smoke to bring the ladders around ; and this was speedily done. But the window was fifteen or twenty feet from the ground, Hamberton was a helpless log, the fire had gained from beneath, and the floor and carpets were smouldering in some places, blazing in others. It was only a matter of a few minutes for that floor to fall in and bury them both in the furnace beneath. Hamberton saw it all ; and, revived to consciousness and a sense of sight by the nightwind that sometimes conquered the fierce volumes of smoke, and made a pleasant draught in the burning room, he shouted :

"Jump down, Galwey ! Jump down and save yourself ! You have a wife and family, remember !"

Galwey pulled by main strength the helpless form on to the broad window-sill, and there for a moment they both rested. They could see, sometimes, as the smoke lifted or cleared, the faces of the crowd, reddened by the light that shone from the burning room beneath them. There was a great cheer, when the ladders having been placed against the window-sill, the faces and forms of the two helpless men were seen ; and, as is usual in an Irish crowd, there were sundry suggestions, uttered in all keys of excitement, none of which was really practicable.

Again Hamberton ordered Galwey to leave him to his fate and save himself.

"There's no use, Galwey," he cried, with a choked voice, "we cannot both go down. Quick, while there's time, and save yourself."

"You wance did me a wrong, yer 'anner," said Ned. "I want to show you now how I can repay it."

A terrible suspicion crossed Hamberton's mind. All the old prejudices against these traculent Irish seemed to flash up in an instant. He is going to take a terrible revenge, he thought. But the next instant, he dismissed the base suspicion. And Galwey, coolly taking off the wet sheet that had already shielded his eyes and face from the flames, threw it around Hamberton's head. Then slowly creeping out, he planted one foot on the first rung of each ladder, shouting to the people beneath:

"Hould hard for yere lives there below, and throw all yere weight against the ladders." There were plenty volunteers to do the work.

Then he drew the helpless form of Hamberton head foremost through the window, and never lost nerve, although they shouted from beneath:

"Hurry, Ned, the fire is breaking through the window, and will ketch the ladders."

It was a moment of supreme anxiety, when the whole dead-weight of Hamberton's body, freed from the support of the window, fell on the devoted fellow. But, accustomed to great emergencies and trials of muscular strength in his daily avocation as labourer and fisherman, he was equal to the call. And bracing himself carefully against the two ladders, he bore the first shock with safety. Then carefully feeling downwards with his feet, he held the helpless burden safe with his strong shoulders and arms. The flames breaking from the room beneath through the shattered window caught both sometimes, and burned their hands and clothing. But at length they reached the ground, and within the help of friendly hands, and fell into the arms of an exultant and triumphant crowd.

When Maxwell, therefore, entered Donegan's cottage, after a few inquiries had been made, Hamberton ordered him to go at once and see after the condition of his brave deliverer. This was worse than was supposed. Ned had been badly burned before he had reached Hamberton's room. The left sleeve of his coat had been completely destroyed in his fight with the flames, as he tore blindly, and with covered head, through the hall and up along the stairs ; and the flesh from shoulder to arm was badly scorched. Yet he made nothing of it. Maxwell was dumb before such heroism. He could say nothing but :

"Keep it well covered ; and above all, let no water touch it, until my wife comes up !"

"Is the masther all right ?" asked Ned, heedless of himself.

"He is, my poor fellow, except for some slight bruises. This night won't be forgotten, you may be sure !"

"He done good to the people," said Ned. "He desarved a good return."

"And he has got it," said Maxwell.

"You'll have no reason to regret what you have done."

"I want nothing," said Ned. "But, maybe, yer 'anner—"

He stopped suddenly.

"Well ?" said Maxwell.

"Maybe yer 'anner would ax the masther not to say any more about the 'Ghost' or the 'praties' ?"

For this was the eternal jest of Hamberton, who, in the boat, on the road,—everywhere, never ceased nagging poor Ned about the famous adventure ; quite unconscious, we may presume, how his words galled and burned the heart of his victim.

"All right, Ned !" said Maxwell. "I promise you you'll never hear of them again !"

"God bless yer 'anner," said Ned.

They talked over the matter, Claire and Hamberton and Maxwell, during these days, when the destruction of Brandon Hall, and all its treasures, gave them plenty of leisure to think. They came to the conclusion that just as in the Army the Irish soldiers may break the hearts of their officers in barracks, and the heads of their enemies in the field, so in civil life, if their little ways are tantalizing, and quite opposed to English ways and methods, they can always be depended on in a great crisis, where their loyalty and fidelity are in question.

"I'll never have an English servant in my house again !" said Hamberton. "Damn them. You saw how they ran that night !"

And when Father Cosgrove, proud of his people, called to offer his condolence to his friend, he at once shut up.

"I don't want to make you too conceited," said Hamberton, "but I must make another admission. You remember, I said there was a God !"

"Yes," said the priest.

"I wish to add something else."

The priest waited.

"Men are not all bad !"

Slowly but majestically a beautiful chateau in the Louis Quatorze style, faced with red and white brick, arose from the ruins of the burned house, and fronted the ever-heaving and tossing and restless sea. Slowly but surely new works were erected, and cottages built, and larger enterprises opened. Slowly but surely a happy and thriving and industrious population grew up around the "Great House" : a population knitted in the firmest bonds of loyalty to those who were protecting and helping them.

And any one of these fine days you may see a bathchair, in which is an invalid gentleman, rolled slowly along the beach by a one-armed man. A soldier ? Well, yes ! Had been under fire ? Yes, again. And wounded ? Yes, once more ! It is our friend Ned. The arm had to be amputated in Cork. But no matter. He need work no more. And the old man is very gentle and patient ; and has never again even whispered to Ned about the "Ghosht" or the "praties."

But Darby Leary ? Have we forgotten Darby ? By no manner of means. Darby is all right. Down there in the lodge, built also in Louis Quatorze style, I suppose, to suit Darby's tastes, is the neatest little snuggery of a home within the four seas of Ireland. Red and white brick facing, diamond window-panes, riotous and voluptuous creepers without; and within, such neatness and comfort and snugness that sometimes Noney says it is all a "dhrame," an Arabian Nights' Entertainment, from which some day she will wake up to see the old thatched roof over her head, and the pit of green and yellow slime before her door.

But this cannot be. Because that lovely brick fireplace is a reality ; and that tiled floor is a reality ; and those white beds there in the little recess are realities ; and—here is a young Noney, her father's treasure and delight, a reality in yellow curls, and blue eyes, and pink cheeks ; and greatest reality of all, here in the cradle are the Immortal Twins. They are the torment of Darby's life; Noney is all right ; and when hoisted in Darby's arms, she plucks with her little pink fingers Darby's moustache, (for Darby has now a red, bristling moustache, fierce as that of a French sabreur), he shrieks out, but tolerates it, because Noney is the light of his eyes. But those twins ! "Dang them !" Darby says, but always beyond his wife's hearing. They were duly christened Jeremiah and Daniel. Here comes in another question. Why have the Irish selected these two of the four major prophets as patronymics so popular that every second boy in Ireland is Jerry or Dan. But Isaiah and Ezekiel are nowhere. And if any unhappy boy sported these names, his life would be evermore a torment. But to return, Jeremiah and Daniel emerged from the baptismal waters good Christians with respectable names ; but alas ! they rapidly descended into the more prosaic and humble forms of Jerry and Dan. Now, here is Darby's great trial. He cannot distinguish the twins. He can no more tell which is Jerry and which is Dan than he can distinguish Castor and Pollux in the heavens.

Noney has not the slightest trouble about the matter. With absolute unerringness, she can distinguish her boys, although she admits that "they are as alike as two pays ;" and she waxes indignant when Darby comes home to his dinner, and Noney happens to have Jerry in her arms, and Darby affectionately, but foolishly, strokes the boy's head, and asks how is his Danny to-day?

"This isn't Danny you, fool ! This is Jerry. Anywan can see that !"

"Oh, of coorse," Darby would say. "Of coorse, it is Jerry. Shure anywan can see that !"

But to-morrow the same mistake occurs ; and Danny is taken for Jerry, and Jerry for Danny promiscuously.

It is in the cradle, however, the great trouble arises. It is an understood thing that Jerry occupies the place of honor on the right and Danny is relegated to the left. One would suppose there could be no mistake here. But Darby, though he knows his right hand from his left, and boasts of the knowledge, is sorely tried to know which is the right-hand side of the cradle, and which the left-hand side. And the trouble is aggravated because the cradle happens to be but a flat soap-box, with no canopy, or other distinguishing characteristic ; and, as Noney slews it around to every point of the compass, poor Darby is in an ecstasy of anxiety every time he comes home and is called upon to distinguish them.

"Av coorse," he says, "Jerry is to the right. That's there !" pointing to his own right hand. "An' Danny is there !" pointing to the left.

"Well, you're the biggest *omadhaun* the Lord ever made !" his wife remarks. "Didn't I tell you twinty times that that's Jerry, and that that's Danny ?"

"Av coorse, av coorse," says Darby. "Shure anywan would know that. Shure 'tis Darby me own namesake, that have such purty curls an his forehead."

"'Tisn't then," his wife replies, "that's Danny that have the curls. But Darby is growing them too !"

"Av course, av course !" Darby replies. "But I wouldn't give the two av 'em together for Noney. Come, Noney, come ! There, acushla !" as the child nestles in his arms, and mingles her silken curls in her father's carrotty locks ; *acushla machree* ! us two agin the world ! What do we care for thim ould twins? Aren't me own little *Cailin Ban ?* Aren't you the pulse of me heart, *m'ainim no shtig ! m'ainim machree !* Phew ! There, look, you're hurtin' me. Phew ! There ! We'll throw out thim ould twins, an' keep thegither always, won't we, alanna ?"

And the original Noney takes up the dialogue, and talks back to the twins ; and the atmosphere waxes warm, and Darby is glad to get out into the cool sunlit air, and talk all his love nonsense to Noney undisturbed.

And sometimes Claire comes down, wheeling gaily her own perambulator up to Noney's cottage, and compares her own brown baby with the twins ; and they talk in the motherly dialects that are as old, I suppose, as Eve ; and almost invariably, after these little interchanges of compliments, certain little baskets come down from the "Great House ;" and Darby has the pleasure of seeing on his kitchen table the "two kinds of mate" that were ever and always to his mind the outward and visible sign of the mighty gift of the gods —prosperity.

Robert Maxwell has one misgiving. He knows his happiness, and, like a sensible man, enjoys it. He knows, too, that he has chosen the better part, when he compares his present position with that of the club frequenting, fox-hunting, rack-renting, mindless, and godless class, whose days must be filled with ever-increasing, ever-changing excitement, to save them from suicidal mania. Life to him is Duty. But, sometimes, he thinks he has earned his honors too cheaply. True, the remembrance of those awful nights which he spent staring into the darkness, until the faint pencils of the dawn drew beneath the hideous thatch the white canvases of the cities of the spiders ; of the days that went by, in fog and mist, so slowly that he thought they would never again darken into night ; of the aches and pains that racked his feeble muscles under the unaccustomed exercise of work ; of the loneliness that filled his soul, cut away from all familiar associations with his own class ; of the loathing of rough food, and coarse raiment ; of that awful sickness with its delirium, when he cried ; *Eloi, Eloi, lama, sabacthani !* Of his mistakes, his humiliation, his anguish under misconception, his separation from those he respected and loved ; of their contempt; of public hatred and dislike ; of imputed crimes of which he was never guilty ; finally, of the gaol, the white-washed walls, the shame of arrest, the desecration of a policeman's hands on his shoulder—all this, of course, made him feel that he had passed well through his novitiate of sorrow, and had borne well the "Test of the Spirits."

Nevertheless, and most of all in these sweet summer evenings when all were gathered down there on the beach, and the spent seas came fawning in, and skies were daffodil in the west ; and when he looked around and saw his people made happy by his benevolence, and sharing with a noble and reverend equality, the society of their benefactors ; when his eyes fell on laborers resting from their toils, and happy mothers crooning over their children, and the young people dancing in fairy rings to the sound of flute and fiddle ; and above all when his thoughts came back, and he remembered the sad fate of Outram, and the banishment of his cousin, and saw in the place she should have occupied the companion of his cares and of his triumphs, he thought, with that strange depression that comes in the hour of success, that, after all, there might have been something even better—the farewell to a world he would have served, not under the glitter and glamour of triumph, but in the very agony of crucifixion. For then, he thought, he might have had a claim to the red robe and palm of martyrdom, which after all, are more glorious than the laurels and regalia of one who has fought, and suffered, and triumphed. There is some hidden nobility in failure, when the cause itself is great."

THE END.

THE MAJOR'S PROMISE

By Rev. Richard W. Alexander

It was Decoration Day. In a beautiful cemetery—amid flowers that were heaped upon the graves of brave soldiers who had died for their country surrounded by waving banners and flags, and men in their uniform of the United States Army, within view of a vast crowd of men and women who stood in silent sympathy, a Catholic priest raised his voice and told his listeners what patriotism meant, and what heroism stood for in this great land of ours. In glowing words he lauded love of country, and the men who died to save it; and as the audience listened many a tear was dashed aside, and all heads were uncovered as he spoke the words of Benediction, and the prayers of the Church for the eternal rest and glory of those who died to save their homes and fatherland.

On the outskirts of the crowd stood an Army officer, with uncovered head. He was a middle-aged man, and the stripes on his uniform and a cane in his hand showed he had seen service on the field. He was handsome and erect, and when the crowd dispersed and the priest came near him, he raised his hand in military salute and smiled gravely.

The priest smiled also, and stopped to speak to him. After a few words the officer said:

"I believe you are a Catholic priest ?"

"I am, major," was the reply.

"Well, I am not a Catholic, and have no desire to be one, but—I love my country. I have shed my blood for her and would do it again. I knew there would be service in the cemetery, because it is Decoration Day; and because this one is near my home, I came to assist at the service for the sake of the brave men who are lying under the sod."

The priest raised his hat and extended his hand.

"I honor you, Major, and I salute you with respect ! You are too young for the Civil War. Was it in the Cuban war you served ?"

"Yes, sir ! I was in three fights and almost lost this leg at Santiago. It is crippled pretty badly ever since !"

"You are very erect for a cripple !" said the priest pleasantly.

"So I am told," said the officer, "but I owe my life, as well as my leg, cripple though it be, to the good nursing and devoted attention of the Sisters who had charge of the hospital in Cuba where I was carried !

"I tell you, sir !" said the Major, and his fine face lighted with enthusiasm, "those Sisters were like the angels of God to us, as we were rushed in bleeding, and helpless and dying from the field ! The one who took charge of me, never seemed to rest, never sat down, never was off duty. Day and night she was there—I have wondered since if she ever ate or slept ! She pulled me through, however, and I'll never forget her as long as the breath is in this body —When I was discharged, and able to get about with a crutch, I wanted naturally to get home. But before I started I went to that lady, and I said to her: 'Sister, I am leaving the hospital and returning to the United States; I want to thank you for all your kindness to a stranger and I want to tell you that I am an officer in the United States Army, and possess some influence with our government. Now if I can do any favor for you or for your convent, I wish you would mention it right here, for I would like to serve you.'

"'Thank you, Major,' she said with a smile; 'I do not think you can do any favor for us. We serve the sick and wounded, anywhere, everywhere—whenever our nursing and poor services are needed. We do not expect any reward, although it is good of you, and noble, to offer it to us.'

"'But, Sister,' I persisted, 'won't you let me do something personally, even to please you by some little thing !"

"'Would you wish to please me," said the sister earnestly.

"'I would do anything for you, Sister,' I cried eagerly,—'only name it !"

"'Then," she said, "promise me, that when you get home, at some time or other, you will go into a Catholic church, and stay there for a few minutes. And do this three different times. Choose your own time, simply pay three short visits to a Catholic church in memory of what I have asked you."

"'Why ! that's too easy !" I said. 'But I assure you there will be no religion in it I will simply keep my promise in order to please you.'

"'That's all I ask,' said the Sister, and as she extended her hand, I reverently took it, and said goodbye."

"I came home and being a retired officer, and quite comfortable, life went on smoothly for some years and I forgot all about my promise.

One day, however, as I sat on my porch in the evening I saw a number of people passing by, all in one direction. I asked where they were going. I was told the Catholics had a mission in their church in the next block. That's a Catholic church I thought—and suddenly my promise to that good Sister came up before me, and seizing my cane and hat I said, I will go, too, and redeem the first third of my promise.

"I went, and heard a splendid sermon that set me to thinking very seriously about the destiny of man. I was very much impressed, and the next night I went again, and thus fulfilled the second third of my promise. I learned a good deal about the Catholic church, and, although I have no desire to be a Catholic, I am much more enlightened about her claims than I ever expected to be." He paused here and said:

"And that was your last visit, Major ?"

"Yes, it was; for I couldn't attempt to get into the church the next night, which was the last of the mission, so although I started to fulfill the last part of my promise to that good Sister, I did not succeed through no fault of mine. Then, Decoration Day came—the memorial day of every true soldier—and I came in here, heard you speak, Father, and find myself talking to you, and telling my history."

They were walking slowly towards the the cemetery gate, when the priest said:

"It is early still, Major, our rectory is quite near; come and sit on our porch and rest a while before you return home. You may have fatigued your lame foot by all this standing, and you need some rest before you start homewards."

The Major went willingly. He was a little tired, and was glad to sit down somewhere, besides he liked this young priest, and was nothing loth to talk to him. On the porch, seated and comfortable, he began to speak of religion. The priest was astonished to find he had a child-like, earnest nature to deal with; want of information, and some bigotry had given to the Major the hard ideas of the Catholic church that are so often met with in men, but, gradually, he had come to see that he was mistaken in some things, and, perhaps, other matters he doubted, might be also satisfactorily explained.

After an hour's conversation he arose. The priest said pleasantly:

"Our church is just at hand, suppose you go and make the last instalment of your promise to that good Sister ! There were three visits to a Catholic church promised, were there not, Major ?"

"There were three visits," said the Major seriously, "and there is no reason why I shouldn't finish off this memorable day by the burning of the mortgage, so to speak, by the entire cancellation of my debt of promise. Where is the church ? I will go !"

The priest led him to a side door, opened a pew in front of the sanctuary, and left him.

The silence of the holy place; the little ruby lamp swinging from the ceiling; the altar with its white linens; the vases of lilies on each side of the Sacred Door shedding a fragrance that even reached the Major. All these things effected him strangely. He had never been so close to the Holy of Holies before.

Soon a strange peace filled his heart: the vivid sense of a Presence ! The hour for which the nun in distant Cuba prayed had come. God's grace came forth from the Tabernacle and struck the upright heart of the soldier as the lightning struck Saul on his way to Tarsus.

He believed ! An hour passed. The priest returned. The Major was still there. But he rose and followed his friend.

When they were outside the sacred precints, the priest looked at the Major. His fine face was full of reverent joy.

"Father," he said, "I am a Catholic ! Will you instruct me ? That good Sister knew what she was doing when she asked me to visit Christ in His Temple."

Need it be said that the priest accepted his task joyfully. The days passed by. The Major was instructed was baptized, made his First Communion, and is now a fervent convert.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.—The Missionary.

For the Catholic Record.

ROSES AT TWILIGHT

The girl sat alone on the veranda. It was the hour of twilight, and the beautiful "twilight roses" as the girl called them, were swaying softly around the veranda. A wealth of them lay in the girl's lap and she caressed them lovingly, laying her pale cheeks against the crimson petals as if she longed to steal from them some of their color. She loved these roses, the girl did, and she called them her "twilight roses" because they always bloomed more beautiful at twilight than at any other time. The girl was only fifteen, but she looked much younger, owing to her frail form, and thin, pale face, with the great blue eyes; and the long black curls that fell loosely around her. She had been ill, so ill, for such a long while, and it was good to get back to the old veranda after her long confinement. She had missed her twilight roses so much.

This was the first time for months that the girl has left the house, and as she sat there alone on the veranda with her lap full of the fragrant blossoms, she enjoyed to the full the beautiful summer evening, and she bowed her dark head low over the rose in her arms.

Through the open windows that led to the veranda there came the sweet, low sound of music, and the girl listened eagerly as the soft sounds floated out into the fragrant night. It was all so calm, this wonderful evening, and tears of gladness shone in the girl's great eyes. The scent of the twilight roses was so strong that she lay back in her low chair and listened to the music, drinking in the perfume from the blossoms she held.

"Oh, but it's good to be alive ; to be able to enjoy it all," she whispered to herself, while her pale cheeks glowed with the thought. And still the music floated out into the night, and suddenly a rich full voice took up the strain, and the strain floated clear and sweet out to where the girl sat alone. The song was "Roses at Twilight," and the beautiful music sung in that rich, youthful voice, caused the tears to swell up into the listener's eyes, and fall softly into the heart of the rose that she pressed to her lips.

"How beautiful it is," she whispered, "Roses at Twilight." "How I love it. It seems so appropriate, too," and she kissed the scented blossom in her hands. "Oh ! if you would never fade," she breathed to the rose, while the grand chords of the song throbbed on the perfumed air. "It would be so lovely to have you always like this, full and sweet and fadeless. But it cannot be. Like everything else, you, too, must die," and with a weary sigh the girl lay back in her chair and drew her hand slowly across her forehead, while the clear voice inside rang out in wonderful purity and sweetness the closing notes of the first part of the magnificent song.

Eagerly the girl drank in every note, while the tears still shone in her eyes. Sweetly the music stole out into the night, low, clear and soft, and the twilight rose that the girl held fell unheeded to the floor and she lay back with closed eyes, and in the dusky light one could see the dark circles that long illness had traced beneath them. It was growing darker, and over the tops of the tall trees in the garden, the stars were just beginning to shine. The girl watched them through half-closed eyes as she listened to the sweet music.

"It is very very beautiful to-night," she said softly, "I wonder—I wonder if I will see many more such beautiful nights. Oh ? I hope to, but I don't think. Of course I will," she raised herself in the chair, angry at herself for suppositions. "Oh of course I will, why not ?" and she stooped down and picked the fallen rose from the floor with a half-laugh of mockery at her foolishness. But as she softly brushed the rose against her face caressingly, her eyes grew grave and she looked long and earnestly at the flower she held. The beautiful voice inside had ceased for a moment, but the piano still softly played the chords of "Roses at Twilight." When the voice began again, the girl whispered to the rose in her hand, "dear twilight rose, you are nearly faded now. Isn't it strange how soon you loose your beauty. But that's like everything else on this earth. No," she continued, as if in answer to her own thought, "no, I wouldn't be afraid to die. Not a bit. In fact I think I would like to die soon—on such a night as this just as my roses fade."

And so she talked to the rose, swayed unconsciously by the soft dreamy music.

Suddenly, with a quick sigh that was almost a moan, she leaned her head back on the cushions, and lay there for a moment still as death. Then her head drooped forward on her chest, and so she sat, while the roses shed their sweet fragrance around her, and the dreamy music stole out to her irresponsive ears.

Lower and lower drooped the dark head until the long curls swept the roses in her lap. Sweeter, softer then before stole out from within the tender minor notes of "Roses at Twilight." The roses in the girl's lap was fading, but still the clear voice sang on.

Whiter and whiter grew the pale face bending low over the twilight roses. Softly the sweet strains stole out to that silent listener, and the last chord trambled for a moment on the twilight air, and then the sweet voice was hushed but the girl did not move—her hands still clasped the fading roses. One more "twilight rose" had faded with the closing of the song and gone to the land where flowers never fade, and "Roses at Twilight" bloom forever.

Agnes Foley.

MARRIAGE LAWS

There are many laws of the Catholic Church bearing on marriage, says the Inter-Mountain Catholic. The most recent are those regulating the form of marriage, and of these the most important are the following :

1. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the parish priest or the Bishop of the diocese or a priest delegated by one or the other, and before at least two witnesses ; but in places where there is no priest for at least a month, and none expected in the near future, marriage may be lawfully and validly contracted before two lay witnesses by expressing formal mutual consent.

2. The foregoing law applies to all those baptized in the Catholic Church and to converts ; but it does not apply to non-Catholics who were never baptized or were baptized in some other religious body.

Protestants object to these laws in the case of mixed marriages contracted before one of their ministers. They do apply in that case. Such a marriage is invalid. But there is a remedy. The parties to the marriage may afterwards comply with the law of the Catholic Church ; or, if that cannot be done, because the Protestant party refuses, the case may be reported to the Bishop of the diocese, who may have power, and certainly can obtain power from Rome to validate the marriage. All the agitation in Ireland about the breaking up of families is factitious. Such marriages are valid in civil law, and no priest would advise separation. If the Catholic party is not repentant for having attempted marriage outside the Church, he or she would not listen to advice. If the Catholic party is repentant, the remedy mentioned above becomes applicable. In neither case is any right of the Protestant party infringed. Ministers should try to obtain a little authentic information before venturing to speak in public on such matters.

LIFE OF BLESSED MADELEINE SOPHIE

FOUNDRESS OF THE SACRED HEART ORDER

We present to our readers this week the first installment of the Life of Blessed Madeleine Sophie, Foundress of the Sacred Heart Order. It will be continued for three or four weeks. We doubt not it will be found of absorbing interest. This order was established for training the daughters of the nobility of France. There are four branches of this great educational institution in Canada, Halifax, Sault au Recollect, Montreal and London.

Madeleine Sophie Barat was born at Joigny in Burgundy on December 12, 1779. Her birth, hastened as it was by an alarm of fire, nearly cost her mother her life, and for some time the child was delicate and fragile. She gained strength by degrees, however, and soon her bright wit and merry ways showed that an exuberance of life was there, while the unusual depth of her affections revealed a heart capable of intense and ardent love. Her earliest years were spent amongst the vine-clad hills and richly-watered valleys that lie around Joigny, and in the simple occupations of a daughter of the soil, and the happy and loving surroundings of the home of her good parents, whose youngest child she was.

Her earliest lessons were learnt at her mother's knee, and a great horror of sin was soon implanted in her heart. Before she was thought old enough to make her first confession, she, with other children of the same age, attended instructions given by the priest of the parish, who taught them how to make an act of contrition, and then gave them a solemn blessing. Sophie thought that to ensure the pardon of her sins, she must confess them alond, and began to do so then and there, until she was stopped by the priest, amid the laughter of the little group. At ten years of age she made her first Communion in the old parish church of St. Thibault. No one could see much of Sophie as a child without remarking her unusual powers of mind, good sense, clear judgment, and great love of truth.

Her brother Louis, who was also her godfather, after receiving minor orders, was sent as professor to the college of his native place whilst awaiting the priesthood ; he undertook the task of Sophie's education as a mission entrusted to him by God. At first the books and lessons were a weary exchange for Sophie from the out-of-door occupations she loved so much, but there was no help for it, and we are told that even at seven years old she spent many hours a day at study. A loft at the top of the house was given up to her use, and there she toiled over her history, her Latin and her sums. Once Louis was to go away for three whole weeks, and endless vistas of enjoyment opened before Sophie's eyes. It was vintage time, which made it doubly delightful, and she carefully put by her books, promising herself long hours of happiness. However, after three days' absence Louis suddenly returned, and the lessons were sorrowfully resumed. By degrees, however, as her mind developed, love of study grew upon her ; she delighted in Virgil and, later on, in Homer. *Don Quixote* consoled her for the trouble of learning Spanish, and she learnt Italian with great ease.

The clouds which lowered over France at this sad time, and at length burst with such fearful violence, were comparatively little felt at Joigny. We read neither of the devastation of armies nor of the excesses of the Revolution in the account of Sophie's early life, but when she was fourteen a cruel blow fell in the midst of the hitherto unbroken happiness of their home life. In May, 1793, Louis Barat was arrested in Paris and thrown into prison, where he remained, in imminent danger of his life, until the fall of Robespierre nearly two years later. The grief of his mother well-nigh cost her her reason, if not her life, but the tenderness and tact of Sophie saved her. In her sorrow the poor mother persisted in refusing to

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