

THE CANON'S STORY

(By Clara Mulholland.)

"Truth," they say, "is stranger than fiction," and so I verily believe that, had I been writing a purely imaginary tale, I should have hesitated to make the liberal use of coincidence that you will find in the story I am about to relate to you.

It all happened many years ago, when, as a young priest, I went one summer to Canterbury to take the place of the good rector of St. Thomas' church, who had gone abroad for a well-earned holiday. I went as a complete stranger to the town. But, being a man of quiet tastes, and also a lover of books, this did not trouble me; and I settled down happily in the cheery little presbytery, well pleased to be so near the beautiful old cathedral, so close to the spot where centuries ago the blessed St. Thomas-a-Becket had suffered martyrdom for the faith.

After a while, however, the Catholics of the neighborhood began to call, and I was drawn gradually into the social life of the place. I began to make friends, and to frequent in my leisure hours two or three pleasant houses, becoming intimate with their owners and interested in their affairs.

Among the people I visited most constantly were Mr. and Mrs. Remington, of Andover Hall. Miles Remington was a man of fifty or so, very shy and retiring, and caring little for society. He appeared, however, content with his life, without any ambition beyond a desire for peace, and leave to spend his days in his quiet library among his books. His wife, restless and dissatisfied, was of a different order of being, and seemed as eager for the society of her fellow-creatures as he was to avoid it.

When I was in the humor for grave and learned discussions I made my way to Miles in the seclusion of his big, airy study; and here it was I first discovered that, despite their air of well-doing and freedom from trouble, my poor friends had a great sorrow. They had one son, and this son, dearly as they loved him, was a disappointment and a grief to them. They seldom mentioned his name even to each other, and no one in Canterbury had heard of his existence. The Remingtons had, some six years before, taken up their abode in Andover Hall, and were believed by all who knew them to be a childless couple. It was not till I had known Miles intimately for some weeks that he told me he had a son.

"Poor Essie!" he remarked one day, as from the library window we watched his wife drive off in her carriage. "She lacks occupation and goes restlessly to and fro trying to forget."

"To forget?" I looked up with a start. "What can Mrs. Remington have to forget?"

His face grew black as night, and he drew in his lips.

"A had, ungrateful son," he said, fiercely. "Surely that is something to forget?"

"Yes. But why, Remington, old fellow, I never guessed, never suspected."

"That we had a son? No. We do not speak of him. He treated us badly. But" (dashing his hand across his eyes) "it is a painful subject."

And, turning suddenly, he walked out of the room.

I sat alone by the window, saddened and distressed, wondering what I should say to comfort him on his return. But when he entered the room again he was smiling as pleasantly as ever. It was evident that he wished nothing more to be said upon the subject of his son; and, considerably relieved, I felt obliged to hold my tongue.

"Poor Remington!" I reflected, as I walked through the cathedral close. "He's the last person in the world—but, alas! in this vale of tears who is without some sorrow."

The next time I found Mrs. Remington alone; she looked at me with tearful eyes, saying:

"So Miles has told you about Hubert, Father?"

"Mr. Remington mentioned that you had a son, who is a trouble to you."

"The poor lad!" She went up and down the room, her color coming and going, trembling with emotion. "Miles is, I often think, too hard on him. He was disappointed, and so was I. We wanted our son, Father" (sinking into an arm-chair, and motioning me to take one by her side). "to go to the bar. Miles felt sure he would shine and do us honor as a barrister. But Hubert was stage-struck, and to our horror took an engagement as a super in an East End theatre. His father was enraged and ordered him to give it up; no son of his should be an actor. Hubert refused firmly. He had a right to choose his own life, he said; and, white and resolute, he left his home. He changed his name, and where he is, or how he is getting on, we know not. Oh, it breaks my heart! And Miles is often miserable, too. But he will not give in. Hubert must come and crave forgiveness, he says; and that, I know, he will never do. Our boy is lost to us; and our home that must one day be his, is desolate."

My eyes wandered round the bright drawing-room, full of exquisite furniture, fine pictures and gay with many flowers.

"I mean our home in Dorset," she said, noticing my glance; "this dear old Manor House—not this small place, ours only on a lease of a few years. It became hateful to us when our son went forth to such a life, and we left it."

"I think," I answered, speaking as gently as possible, "that you have been somewhat unfair to your son and his profession."

"But, surely, you do not approve of the stage, Father?"

"The stage is a distinct power for good," I replied. "And I have known people to be deeply moved and drawn nearer to God by a good play. There are excellent men—men bright and honorable—among our actors."

"Among the great actors, yes; but among the supers—the poor—"

"Poverty is not a vice, and everything must have a beginning."

"But a Remington—our only son—to mix with such people, to be subjected to the temptations and degradations of such a struggle for life is" (shuddering) "horrible."

"There must certainly be temptations and difficulties; but all the more

reason why you should have kept in touch with your son. A word of loving encouragement, his home to come to, would have helped, perhaps saved him, from the dangers you dread. By turning your backs upon him and treating him as an outcast and a pariah you left him open to the temptations you deplore so much. And, who knows, you may even now be preventing the thing you most earnestly desire—namely, that he should give up the stage and go to the bar? Supposing he did wish to do so, how could he manage it without money or friends? The lad may have been foolish, headstrong, wrong if you please; but I trust you will forgive me, for I must say it—you, his parents, have acted, to put it as mildly as possible, most unwisely."

Mrs. Remington grew pale as death. Her eyes were full of woe.

"Tell Miles that" (wringing her hands). "I'll listen to you, perhaps. And oh, I long for my boy—I long for my boy!"

"I will speak strongly to your husband when an opportunity occurs," I said, deeply moved by the mother's anguish; "and please God, he will soon agree to look for his son and bring him home. Meanwhile we must pray. To-morrow morning I'll offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you all; and we will begin—you and I—a novena in honor of our Blessed Lady, begging her, the Mother of Sorrows, to watch over your son and bring him back safe and good to his home."

"Oh, Father, your words fill me with hope! I will begin the novena without fail to-morrow after Mass."

I did not see Miles Remington that day, and next morning I was told that he had been called into Dorsetshire and would not return to Andover Hall for some time.

"Never mind," I said, encouragingly to Mrs. Remington. "We'll wait till he comes home. Our Blessed Lady will bring things right very soon. So keep up your heart."

One morning, a fortnight later, a note was brought to me. It was from a very old friend, the widow of the Hon. Charles Dimsdale, a schoolfellow, long since dead, to whom I had been much attached. It had been left by a messenger, and as Mrs. Dimsdale lived in London, I was astonished to see her writing on an envelope brought to me from Sturry, a pretty village barely two miles from Canterbury. I opened her letter, therefore with a feeling of wonder and surprise.

"Ivy Cottage, Sturry."

"Dear Father Cresham: Molly and I are here. It is a charming, secluded nook, and suits us well for the moment. Do please come and see me. I have much to tell you, and am anxious for a few words of advice. Yours very sincerely, "Elvira Dimsdale."

Hastily laying aside my book, I got out my bicycle and set off for Sturry. Without any difficulty I found Ivy Cottage; and, pushing open the gate, entered the garden. Upon the lawn, under a wide-spreading cherry tree, sat Mrs. Dimsdale and her daughter, between them a little table laden with magazines, books and needlework. The cottage was covered with roses; the beds round the windows and down each side of the velvety sward were gay with Shirley poppies and sweet-smelling flowers of every hue. The whole place looked bright and pleasant in the sunshine—a perfect little paradise—a delightful retreat after the fatigues of a London season. Truly Mrs. Dimsdale had chosen well. She and Molly would be very happy here, and it would be agreeable for me to have them so near neighbors.

At the sound of the opening gate the ladies looked up, and, rising, came forward to greet me. They were smiling; but as I took their hands in mine I saw, with sorrow, that they were sad and dispirited. Mrs. Dimsdale had dark rings under her eyes and a nervous, tremulous look about her mouth, while Molly—bright, golden-haired Molly—was pale and worn, her once rosy, brilliant little face white as the dress she wore.

"Dear Father Cresham, how kind of you to come so soon!" Mrs. Dimsdale said. "After my long months of silence, you are indeed forgiving."

"Pooh! I know you are a busy woman," I laughed, "with your rounds of gaiety and a young daughter to take about. I was only too glad to get your note, and to learn that you were so near. I'd go farther than Sturry, I assure you, to get a glimpse of you, and" (turning round, smiling) "our beautiful Miss—"

But Molly was gone, and as I saw her slim, white figure disappear under the rose-grown porch I glanced in surprise and dismay at her mother.

"She knew I wished to talk to you alone," she said, hurriedly. "So pray sit down, Father."

I took the chair vacated by Molly a few moments before, and, laying my gloves upon the little table, looked away across the fields toward the river Stour and the thickly-wooded hills.

"Molly does not seem well," I said. "Are you here for her health?"

"Molly is not well, Father. The poor child is breaking her heart. I started round in alarm."

"But you must not allow that. Give in to her. If she loves some one you do not think good enough—"

Mrs. Dimsdale sighed heavily.

"I have done all that, Father—given in where I did not approve. Last Monday was to have been my darling's wedding day."

"Last Monday?" I stared at her. "What has happened?"

"The bridegroom" (putting her hand before her eyes) "disappeared. When the morning dawned he was missing."

I drew a long, deep breath and gazed in speechless sympathy into her

white, agonized face. A sob escaped her lips, and she turned away her head.

"The scoundrel!" broke from me, suddenly. "Did he give no reason for his conduct?"

"None. At their last meeting, three weeks ago, he was still the ardent, devoted lover. As he bade her 'Good-night' he said: 'I am going into the country to-morrow. When I return, which shall be very soon, sweetheart, I hope to have good news to tell you—news that will please you, and add, if possible, to our happiness.' She never saw him again. In vain, she waited and watched. Every morning she would cry, 'He will be must come to-day!' and continued her preparations for her marriage. But, alas! she was doomed to bitter disappointment. He never returned. Town became unbearable; seeing friends and answering questions, heartrending. Constance Levin, who was going abroad—she and I were at school together—offered me this cottage, and I carried my darling off to it at once. But, oh, Father Cresham, her life is wrecked, her heart broken! What her future will be I tremble to think! Sometimes I fear for her reason."

"My poor friend! 'Tis indeed a terrible trial. What is this man?"

"An actor—young and handsome, and a gentleman, I felt sure; but only taking poor and badly-paid parts. I used to fear he wanted my sweet Molly for her money—for she has a good fortune, you know."

"Yes. What is the fellow's name?"

"Stanley Westerton. Oh, would that we had never heard of it!"

"You made inquiries at his lodgings and at the theatre?"

"Yes, and over and over again. But no one knew anything about him. He had vanished."

"Who are his people? Where did he come from?"

"That I do not know. He was very reticent, so reserved about his past, that I, in my anxiety for my child, was very unhappy, and imagined all kinds of things about him and his. He had been badly treated by his parents, she said; she did not care to hear anything more."

"And he never told her who and what they were?"

"He never did. His past was a sealed book. Now I know why it was so. He had some black secret in it that he did not dare reveal. Some one knowing it must have turned up unexpectedly, and, terrified, he fled away."

"'Tis a strange story, truly," I said, feeling sad and heavy at heart; "and most mysterious. The young man may have been the victim of foul play."

"That I cannot believe, for, if so, we should have seen all about it in the papers."

"Seeing it was useless to argue that point, I did not press it, but devoted myself to soothing and comforting the unhappy mother as far as I could. It was a difficult task, and at last, finding that no words of mine were of the smallest avail, I bade her 'Good-bye,' promising to call to see her again very soon."

As I went quickly down the path toward the gate Molly flashed out suddenly from behind a great clump of rhododendrons and stood before me, her sweet face now red, now white, her eyes full of eagerness and anxiety.

"Don't believe one word against Stanley!" she cried, in a low, husky voice. "He left me, did not come back, but 'twas no fault of his. He is dead, Father Cresham! Nothing but death would keep him from me. He is dead, and I—oh!" (tears choked her). "God alone knows how desolate I am!"

"My dear child" (I took both her hands in mine, scarcely able to speak for emotion), "you must be brave and strong. Your trial is a severe one. God alone can give you strength to bear it."

"And you'll not believe—not think ill of Stanley?"

"No, not till I know more. It would be wrong to condemn him too readily."

"Oh, thank you, Father!" Her lovely eyes filled with tears, her lips quivered. "If only my mother would speak like that! Time must clear his memory. But she will not think so."

"Her great love for you, dear child, makes it hard for her to look calmly and dispassionately at the matter. If she loved you less—"

"I know—I know! And, oh," (wringing her hands), "it is all an awful and horrible mystery!"

Sad and perplexed, I sat up far into the night pondering over the young girl's unhappy fate. Her constancy and faith in her lover pleased me much; but her mother's view of the case seemed the more probable. A living man can sometimes disappear completely if he will, a dead man generally tells his own tale. Had Stanley Westerton died suddenly or had he been murdered, his body must be found, and the mystery of his apparent cruelty and desertion eventually cleared up.

Feeling sure that a sympathetic woman would be of immense value to the sorrowing mother and her heart-broken daughter, I told Mrs. Remington her sad story, and asked her to visit them. Greatly interested, she said she would go to Ivy Cottage that very day.

"You are very kind, and I am sure you will like them."

"So am I. And Miles, too—will be deeply interested in beautiful Molly."

"When does he return?"

"I can't say. His business has taken much longer than he imagined. But he may turn up, he writes, any day, and is bringing a friend with him. I am to have our best spare room ready."

"So there is no fear of his arriving while you are in Sturry?"

"None. I really don't believe he'll come for a week or so yet. This friend of his has been ill and is not quite ready to travel."

"An invalid? That will be trouble for you?"

"She smiled.

"Miles says he will be no trouble, and is altogether amiable. So, I assure you I am anxious for him to appear."

"You and Miles are a wonderful pair. Well, I hope they may soon arrive, and make you happy."

The result of Mrs. Remington's visit to the cottage was far happier than I had ever hoped or expected. The ladies took to each other at once. Their acquaintance developed rapidly into friendship, and before long, to my surprise, I heard that Mrs. Dimsdale and Molly had accepted an invitation to stay at Andover Hall for a few days, I was asked to meet them at dinner the evening after their arrival.

"Oh, I'll certainly come!" I replied. "Nothing could give me greater pleasure."

To my surprise, I was shown on my arrival into Mrs. Remington's private boudoir—a small but exquisite room opening into the rose garden. As I walked over to the window to get a nearer view of the lovely blossoms, wondering a little why I had been taken in there, the door was flung open and the lady of the house appeared upon the threshold. "She was flushed, and trembling with agitation and excitement; and as she took my hand I saw that her eyes were brimming over with tears.

"Oh, Father," she gasped, before I had time to speak, "the most wonderful thing has happened!"

"Nothing bad—nothing wrong with Molly or her mother?"

"No, no! They are here; you will see them presently in the drawing-room. But I felt I must tell you my news. Oh, Father, our prayers have been heard! This morning Miss Levin arrived, and the friend is—Hubert!"

"Your son? Well and forgiven?"

"Forgiven, thank God and our Lady! Well in a sense, but not as we should wish to see him. He has lost his memory; can tell nothing of himself—his life."

"A strange thing! Have the doctors examined him?"

"Yes; some of the first men in London have been to our dear old home in Dorset to see him."

"How did he come there?"

"In an extraordinary—and, only for the fatal result, I should say a providential—way. The day Miles went home five weeks ago the train he was in ran into another. No one was killed and very few were injured. Miles escaped absolutely unharmed. As he went about seeing if there was anything he could do for those less fortunate than himself, he came upon a young man lying white and unconscious upon the ground. He bent down, and, with an overwhelming feeling of anguish and remorse, recognized his son. At first he was convinced that he was dead. But a doctor who had hurried to the scene of the disaster, assured him that he still lived; and as soon as Miles could find a conveyance he drove the poor fellow home to Remington Manor, some ten or eleven miles away. His first impulse was to telegraph for me; but the doctor, who accompanied him to the Manor, persuaded him to wait. In a few hours, he declared, Hubert would be conscious; in a day or two, quite himself again; so it was useless to alarm me or any one else. Anxious to spare me, Miles followed his advice, and never even mentioned the accident in his letters."

"The next day Hubert recovered consciousness, and was soon able to get up and walk about. He knew he was at home, spoke to me as Miles, as though they had never quarrelled or parted and seemed pleased with everything. But of his life since he left us, in anger, three years ago, all recollection had passed away. This went on for some weeks, the doctor and Miles always hoping for a change. But it never came. The poor fellow's memory was gone. At last the doctor, who had hitherto advised against telling me of his state, counselled bringing him here. 'Do not tell his mother of his arrival,' he said to Miles. 'Merely mention that you are bringing a friend to Andover Hall and take him suddenly into her presence. Her surprise and joy at the unexpected sight of her son may have a good effect—rouse and restore his lost memory.'

"And did it do so?" I asked eagerly.

"Did he know you and remember all?"

"Alas! no!"—her eyes brimming over with tears. "He spoke to me as he had done to his father, as though he had seen me a few hours before; but he can tell me nothing of all that must have happened—of him during the last three years."

"'Tis very sad—a great trial. Does the doctor hold out any hope of his ultimate recovery?"

"Yes, but in a vague way. He now says that if some one he knew and liked during his time in London were suddenly to appear, great good might be done, and, even at the worst, time will surely do much for him."

"A perplexing state of affairs, truly. And meanwhile how does he seem? Is he happy, or troubled and anxious?"

"I can hardly say. At times he smiles and talks cheerfully. Then, again, I fancied just now, when he thought no one was observing him, eyes, as though he were striving to recall something to his mind. But I would like you to see him, Canon, without his knowing that you were looking at him."

"That will be a difficult thing to accomplish."

"No, not at all difficult, if you will do what I ask, and that is to go at once into the drawing-room and take your stand in the big bow window, just behind the large palms and ferns at the side near the sofa. They will shelter you completely, and you will be unseen by any one entering the room. I'll send Hubert in as soon as possible. But if one or even two of our guests come in first, pay no attention, but remain in your hiding-place. The palms will conceal you completely; and when you have seen and formed an opinion of our poor Hubert, you can step out by the open window and re-enter the drawing-room, when we are all assembled in the usual way."

"Anxious to do anything I could to please my poor friend, I hurried off to the drawing-room and stepped into the secluded corner she had mentioned. As I did so the door opened, and dropping my book, I turned quickly round, eager to catch a sight of the young man's face in the full light of the large window as he entered. It was not Hubert Remington, however, who came in, but Molly Dimsdale. As my eyes rested on the sad countenance of the sweet girl, I breathed a fervent prayer, begging our dear Lord and His Holy Mother to console her in her great sorrow.

Believing herself alone, Molly passed slowly on and sat at the piano. She passed her fingers lightly over the keys and played the opening bars of a soft melody. Then her hands fell away from the notes, and a sob escaped her.

"Not that!" she murmured. "It recalls—too much!"

The sound of quick, firm steps hurrying through the hall made me turn round and startled Molly at the piano. Putting her handkerchief to her eyes for a second, she rose to her feet,

DAY OF MONTH	DAY OF WEEK	COLOR OF VESTMENTS	MEMORIALS
1	S.	v.	Of the Feria.
			Fourth Sunday of Lent
2	Su.	v.	Fourth Sunday of Lent.
3	M.	v.	Of the Feria.
4	T.	w.	S. Isidore.
5	W.	w.	S. Vincent Ferrer.
6	F.	r.	S. Sixtus L. Pope.
7	F.	r.	Most Precious Blood.
8	S.	v.	Of the Feria.
			Passion Sunday
9	Su.	v.	Passion Sunday.
10	M.	v.	Of the Feria.
11	T.	w.	S. Leo I. Pope.
12	W.	w.	S. Julius I. Pope.
13	T.	r.	S. Hermenegild.
14	F.	w.	Seven Dolours of B. V. Mary.
15	S.	v.	Of the Feria.
			Palm Sunday
16	Su.	v.	Palm Sunday.
17	M.	v.	Of the Feria.
18	T.	w.	Of the Feria.
19	W.	w.	Holy Thursday.
20	T.	r.	Good Friday.
21	F.	b.	Holy Saturday.
22	S.	w.	
			Easter Sunday
23	Su.	w.	Easter Sunday.
24	M.	w.	Of the Octave.
25	T.	w.	Of the Octave.
26	W.	w.	Of the Octave.
27	T.	w.	Of the Octave.
28	F.	w.	Of the Octave.
29	S.	w.	Of the Octave.
			Low Sunday
30	Su.	w.	Low Sunday.

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The Silver Lining

There was never a day so sunny
But a little cloud appears,
There's never a life so happy
But has had its time of tears
Yet the sun comes out the brightest
When the stormy tempest clears.

There's never a garden growing
With roses in every plot;
There's never a heart so hardened
But it has one tender spot,
We have only to prune the border
To find the forget-me-not.

There's never a cup so pleasant
But has bitter with the sweet;
There's never a path so rugged
That bears not the print of feet;
And we have a Helper promised
For the trials we may meet.

There's never a sun that rises
But we know 'twill set at night,
The tints that gleam in the morning
At evening are just as bright,
And the hour that is the sweetest
Is between dark and light.

There's never a dream that's happy
But the waking makes us sad;
There's never a dream of sorrow
But the waking makes us glad;
We shall look one day with wonder
At the troubles we have had.

There's never a way so narrow
But the entrance is made straight
There's always a guide to point us
To the "little wicket gate."
And the angels will only be nearer
To a soul that is desolate.

There's never a heart so haughty
But will some day bow and kneel,
There's never a heart so wounded
That the Saviour cannot heal,
There's many a lowly forehead
That is bearing the hidden seal.
—Sacred Heart Review.

While more prevalent in winter, when sudden changes in the weather try the strongest constitutions, colds and coughs and ailments of the throat may come in any season. At the first sign of derangement use Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup. Instant relief will be experienced, and the use of the medicine until the cold disappears will protect the lungs from attack. For anyone with throat or chest weakness it cannot be surpassed.

We cannot, indeed, ignore the tendencies in our nature that would bring us to a higher, broader, truer life without ignoring that which is best in our being. We would thereby clip the wings of our soul in the unholy attempt to keep it grubbing on the earth for ever. The progress of the world, the human conscience, the stamp of nobility impressed upon individual men are all the effect of the unending aspirations of the soul to reach a higher state. He, indeed, is wise who sees his life lying in the path above.

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