

SO AS BY FIRE

BY JEAN CONNOR

CHAPTER XI

"UNDINE"

And with this fierce resolve burning in her young heart Barbara Graeme went to Mount Merri next day to learn sweet lessons of Light and Truth from the gentle Sisters. It was vacation time, and the convent, usually thrilling with joyous young life, was calm and still, but Judge Randall was an old friend, and the Sisters welcomed this little summer pupil, whose strange story they heard with tender interest. She was to drive over every morning, it was agreed, for the lessons these wise teachers should find she needed most. She came for a while regularly enough. If the bare, spotless rooms, the veiled forms, the still, tranquil life of the convent were a revelation to her, the summer pupil was no less a startling surprise to the good Sisters themselves. For Nellie had learned "lessons" after a fashion of her own before.

In the old days when "no one would play with her" the lonely little girl of the Road House had turned to the dusty books in the garret for entertainment. The "pale wreath of a mother" whom the fierce old grandmother had scorned, had been of gentle blood, and had brought relics of her own orphaned home to furnish the wild mountain nest of the Graemes—among them the treasures of an old time library.

Little Sister Agatha who had guided many a girlish band triumphantly through the safe paths of expurgated literature, stood appalled at the wide and reckless sweep of Nellie's reading. All the lore and poetry and fable that filled the shelves of her grandfather's library had been hungrily devoured by the little starveling of the Road House. After a week's experience with her new pupil Sister Agatha came to Sister Celestia in hopeless perplexity.

"I really don't know what to do with that strange girl, Sister. She has read everything—she believes nothing. It is like groping in darkness to reach her mind or heart."

"It is," said Sister Celestia, "but I have learned to group in darkness, Agatha. Send her to me—"

And so it came about that other lessons were dropped, and every morning found Nellie in the quiet room, where flowers brought by loving hands to the dear blind nun bloomed all the week around, filling the air with their fragrance, and Sister Celestia sat in the vine-wreathed window, some soft knitting in her slender hands and "talked."

Such talks as these were, and true—vividly and delightfully true. For Sister Celestia had not always been a nun. She could tell of a youth in the gay world, of bright journeys in foreign lands, of Italy, France, even far-off Russia, where her father had held a high official position. She had met heroes, statesmen, authors. She had been received at the Vatican, presented at court. And Nellie listened with eager, breathless interest, unconscious that she was learning, by these traditions, courtly conventions, that she was hearing of men and women it was fitting a Randall of Roserolette should know. Then Sister Celestia would talk of the books she had read in those young days, and new light seemed to flash upon the dusty tomes in the old attic. Memory kindled and quickened—Nellie began to talk of books, too. In a little while she was reading the old favorites to Sister Celestia—discussing their beauties, their faults. But through all this, the clear insight of the blind nun was conscious of some shadow on the young mind she could not penetrate, some shrinking of the young soul from her touch and reach.

In the one hour of religious instruction every day this was especially apparent. Nellie was docile, distracted, defiant in turn—now accepting, now disputing, the good nun's teaching.

"Oh, I can not believe all this!" she broke out, passionately one day. "I will not. I would rather go on—on—on without any Faith, or Hope. I would rather go on in the dark to the end—to the end."

"Nellie, child, Nellie!" said Sister Celestia, reproachfully. "And what will that end be?"

"Rest," the girl answered, "rest and peace."

"No, my child," and the speaker's usually gentle tone was grave, almost stern. "After death comes judgment, Nellie. Can you face that judgment without fear?"

"Why do you talk like this to me? My life is my own—my own," said the girl, passionately. "I will live it as I please. I can not come into your laws, your rules. I can not—I can not."

"Nellie, my poor little child, what secret is your heart hiding?" asked Sister Celestia, and the sightless eyes were fixed upon the girl's face as if they could read into the depths of her soul. "You are holding to the darkness because you dread the day. Your life is not your own, child, it belongs to God, who, whatever your past darkness, is now giving you the light—calling you by every tender, blessed influence. Oh, Nellie, dear child, I tremble for you, for if you mock and reject this Light it will flame into fiercer power. I feel," and the low voice grew strangely thrilling. "I feel that you will be saved so as by fire, my poor child, so as by fire."

"You are saying dreadful things to me to day," Nellie answered, with the hard little laugh that always warned Sister Celestia her pupil's

mood was hopeless. "And I am a brand for the burning, I suppose, as the camp meeting preacher told me when I laughed at his mourners six years ago. But I—I can't change," the words came in an odd, despairing gasp. "I can't be anything but the wild heather thing I am, Sister. And so—so—I am going home."

"And she went to come to Mount Merri no more. The drive was too long, she told Judge Randall and the weather too warm. And gentle Sister Celestia could only pray for the child who would have neither light nor guide on her darkened way."

"My dear, dear boy!" standing on her jasmine wreathed porch, Madame Van Arsdale lifted her handsome old face for her nephew's kiss. "This is a surprise indeed. I thought you were in San Francisco."

"I was six days ago," answered Mr. Leigh. "But the breath of the jasmine reached me in my dreams and I am here—"

"You best of boys," she said, tapping his cheek with the charming coquetry which never deserts the Southern woman of the old regime. "To come three thousand miles for your old aunty's fête."

"And risk a five thousand fee. But it was the call of the blood and I could not resist. How lovely everything looks," and the young man cast an ardent glance around him, the wide sweep of shaded lawns, the box-bordered garden beds, the sheltering oaks.

"Lovely, yes, Allston, though the west wind is nearly down and half the roof gone. But the jasmine is wreathing the gap and no one will see. It will hold out as long as I, Allston—as long as I do, dear boy."

"Which means, I hope, a jubilee of sweet summer years for both," he said, drawing her to a seat on the rustic bench. "Who are here with you?"

"Oh, quite a crowd already. The Lansons and Bennetts, Cousin Lucy Lester, and Lida Stewart and Billy Wayne. Old Colonel Percival, of course, and Major Lewis. They are all off on a picnic this morning at St. Omar's spring. And there is a boat-load, of course, coming down tonight. They have chartered the River Queen and she will wait their return, for the old house stretched to its limit will not hold all."

"I should think not," he said, with a laugh. "How you manage this open house I really can't see."

"Oh, I have \$200 in the bank," she answered carelessly. "And chickens and peaches are plentiful. Uncle Jeff has two cows on the place, and a fair garden this year. And all the old servants are back. Aunt Chloe and Martha, Rebecca with both her girls, and Dick and Pete. You are laughing, Allston. I am an old fool, I know."

"You are, Aunt Van, and so am I. There is some sort of midsummer madness in our blood. Let us be fools together, and enjoy it. The Roserolette crowd are coming, of course?"

"Oh, yes, to-night. I have kept a room for Milly and Nellie. Nellie!" repeated the old lady, whimsically. "I wonder why they call that child by that foolish name? It doesn't suit her at all. She ought to be Sara or Judith or Barbara, or something quaint and strong. It is as I told you, Allston. That girl is waking up. I stopped at Roserolette for a day last week and saw it plainly."

"Waking up?" he echoed.

"How?"

"Oh, every way. Some wild free spirit in her seems breaking loose. You know they sent her to Mount Merri for instructions. My dear, it was like putting an eagle in a dove cote. She shocked the good nuns breathless. Then dear blind Sister Celestia took her in hand, but she broke away even from her gentle hold. Told the Judge that it would drive her mad to think and believe what Sister Celestia taught."

"Ah, there was a scene then, I know!" said the gentleman in breathless interest.

"No," answered Aunt Van, "strange to say, there was not. As Marian says, she never saw any one gain so strong a hold on the Judge's heart. Besides, it seems the doctor had warned him that she would be restless, nervous, hysterical, perhaps, for some time after the shock. He talked that matter over with me, and I advised him to take her abroad. I have written to Paris to Louise Charrette. She travels with young girls as governess and chaperone, since her husband's death, and is one of the most cultured, clever women I know. She will be invaluable to Nellie. The child will come back transformed. This wild little offshoot from the family tree will bud into strange bloom, Allston, as you will see."

And Allston Leigh listened to the old dame's prophecy with a strange thrill—half pleasure, half pain. He watched for the "wild little offshoot" that night eagerly.

Though its walls might be tottering, its roof gone, Van Arsdale Manor, arrayed for its yearly fête, was an enchanting scene. There was no need for Japanese lanterns or incense-burners, for the moon was at its full, the silvery beams trembling through groves and bowers, dappling the lawns and gardens with wavering shadows, making the river a shimmering roadway to some far unknown.

With the lace shawl that had been the bridal veil of three generations draping her shoulders, and the quaint old Van Arsdale jewels gleaming in her gray brocaded gown, the hostess stood on the wide porch to receive her guests. They came, as Mildred had said, from far and near, by boat

and carriage and stagecoach, for there was not only social prestige in Madam Van Arsdale's invitation, but honest affection for the cheery old chateleine brought many to her summer fête. And when at about nine o'clock the River Queen stretched with fluttering pennants and a stringed orchestra playing on its deck steamed up to the crumbling old wharf, the crowd of gay revellers that stormed Van Arsdale Manor was a tribute indeed to its ante-bellum queen. The Randall party was with the rest—they had boarded the boat from their own wharf twenty miles away. Mildred as "great grandmother" in a quaint costume of a hundred years ago, looked as if she might have stepped out of one of the family portrait frames. But even this belle of long ago was eclipsed by the strange beauty at her side—the "Undine" of the old story, with her red-gold hair falling loose over the shimmering green satin gown, garlanded with trailing grasses and water lilies. It was fully an hour before Allston Leigh, doing his duty bravely to Aunt Van's guests, could escape where his fancy led him, and make his way to this witching water-sprite's side.

The revel was at its height now. Knights and gnomes, princes and peasants, bandits and fairies, peopled the moonlit stretches of lawn and grove, and lingered on the wide-corned portico. Wax tapers burned in the old sconces and delatras, the tall old mirrors stretched the scene into endless vistas, old servants went to and fro bearing trays of ices and cooling drinks, the orchestra, stationed now on the western terrace, was playing the tunes of long ago. And the breath of the jasmine was through it all, the jasmine that in its starry bloom seemed to hold all the sweetness of the dead past.

It was a night for dreams, and Allston Leigh yielded to its enchantment when he found himself at last leaning on the stone terrace at "Undine's" side. He had led her away from Aunt Van, who had been introducing this new "bud" into the innermost circles of the old noblesse with pardonable pride.

There had been a fountain on the terrace in the days of the Van Arsdale grandeur and a tiny stream still trickled musically through the weeds and grasses. When "Undine" seated herself a little wearily on the broken rim of the basin the picture was complete.

"You are perfect," he said. "How did you manage it?"

"The dress?" she said. "Lottie made it out of one of Milly's ball-gowns. And I gathered the weeds and water lilies down by the creek this morning. They will wither, of course, but it is only for a night. Undine will be gone forever to-morrow."

"To-morrow I hate the word," he said. "To-morrow always means dull, hard prose. Don't let us think of it—to-night. What have you been doing in the ages since I saw you?"

"The ages?" she echoed, with a laugh.

"Yes. It has seemed about six centuries since we sat in the picture hall of Roserolette and I told you family stories you did not like."

"I remember," she answered, quietly.

"Of course you do. I have an unfortunate facility for doing disagreeable things that people remember. Let us obliterate that memory if we can. Tell me some of the pleasant things that have happened since."

"Pleasant things? Let me see. I have learned to row, to drive, and even to ride a little, Mr. Leigh. Grandfather has given me a gentle horse and a pretty watch. I have been to a dance at the Duvals, and a gypsy tea at the Dixon's and to school at Mount Merri."

"Good!" said Leigh, gaily. "Really one could not ask a more charming record."

"Not so charming as you think. I ran away from the tea and the dance and from the good nuns alike."

"Why?" he asked.

"The tea was too dull and the dance too gay and the nuns—Ah, to think and pray with the good nuns would drive me mad."

It was the soulless little pagan water nymph that seemed to sit there in the moonlight, and Allston felt the chill of her mocking tone.

"Was it as bad as that?" he asked.

"Yes. Or no doubt it is I who am bad beyond help or hope."

"Not bad," he said, "only untaught and astray."

"Astray?" she echoed. "I believe that is the word for it. Did you ever walk in your sleep Mr. Leigh?"

"Never," he answered.

"I did once when I was a very little girl. Some one had told me of grapes that grew high above the waterfall—that none of the boys even could reach. I dreamed about them and went for them in my sleep."

"Good heavens! Was there no one to watch you?"

"No one," she answered, drearily. "My mother was dead, and my father—away. How I got to the place I do not know, but when I woke I stood high on the rocks, my arms full of grapes, and the waterfall roaring beneath me. I dared not take a step, I could only cling there, crying for long, long hours until some one passing in the road below heard me and climbed up and took me home. I often feel as if I were walking in my sleep now—and if I wake, if I wake but, her tone changed suddenly, "I will not wake. I mean to dream on forever and ever. Do you know we start for Europe to-morrow, Mr. Leigh?"

"To-morrow?" he echoed. "Not—not to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow. Our trunks are packed, and everything is ready. Some friends of grandfather's had their passage engaged and could not go, so we take their place. We are to stay two years and I am to have a governess, and learn everything. Two years is, in a long time," she said, with a little catch in her breath, "a long time."

"It is an eternity," he said, excitedly. "Two years! When six weeks away from you seems centuries! When only to spend this one moonlit hour with you I have traveled over a continent. When, when—" he paused. The gray eyes were fixed upon him with the wide-open question of a startled child. For there was a music in his voice she had heard brokenly, rudely, from poor Dafy's lips in the long ago, a music that seemed ever afterward a part of the enchanted night, blending with the trickle of the waters at her feet, the gleam of the moonlight, the breath of the jasmine, the sweet, full notes of "The Old Kentucky Home," from the orchestra under the trees.

"I must go," she said, in a half-frightened voice. "Grandfather will be looking for me, Mr. Leigh, for we must go back to Roserolette to-night. To-night! I will never forget to-night. It seems like a dream in which all things end, all things that have gone before. Aunt Marian says I will come back another girl. So it must be good-by forever to me, to-night."

"Not for me," he answered. There can be no other girl for me. You will be yourself always and forever. And I will not be banished into outer darkness for two years. Neither oceans nor continents count against your spell, little water witch. May I come?"

"Yes," she answered, softly. "Come."

TO BE CONTINUED

THE PROUD LADY

The inevitable changes that marked the passage of time lifted from Margaret Kilburn's willing shoulders responsibility after responsibility until scarcely a burden was left. The unwelcome removal of the tasks that had occupied her days brought unwished for leisure in which to contemplate the long stretch of loneliness before her—the weeks and months, the years perhaps, of solitude that she had to face and live through.

And it was only the prospect of being at last alone in them aroused her to a full sense of the altered aspect of her surroundings, of the astounding transformation of the neighborhood in which she lived—a transformation wrought so gradually but with such tragic completeness. The great city, stretching out in its phenomenal growth, allured its more fortunate inhabitants to the outskirts for quiet and breathing space. They were glad to escape from the crowding throng of aliens that poured in upon them, bringing strange customs and the savor of other lands in speech and dress.

When she was a child of three, Margaret's father had built the home that was still hers, selecting that locality, that particular street, because it promised to be a place where gentle, friendly people would come to dwell. For a long time it had fulfilled that promise. It became the birthplace of six other Kilburns, and within its sheltering walls parents and children had known many happy and contented years. From its first tender, much loved mother and then the good father had been borne to their long rest. One by one the sons and daughters had gone forth to homes of their own; and only Margaret, the eldest, was left.

After her mother's death, which occurred when the youngest girl was eight, she had selflessly devoted herself to the others of the household, sinking her own interest into theirs with a completeness that left her doubly lonely when happy marriages took them from her. She rejoiced heartily in their good fortune, but a pang of regret that they no longer needed her care, that they no longer needed her, was always a part of the year since the last one, the baby sister, became a bride; and that was the longest year of Margaret's life. Frequent and pressing were the invitations to make her home with one or the other, but she clung to her independence and to her house of memories.

The place was dear to her, and almost unconsciously she assumed the attitude of defense. She would hold it from the encroachments of the invaders who had usurped every other home in that section and who looked with desiring eyes at the square white house, that would make a dwelling place for so many of them. They seemed to reach it with a small yard that had once seemed so much larger because of similar space on either side of it. Now a tall tenement building pressed against its iron fence on the left where it was widest, and a similar structure crowded up on the right, leaving only a narrow passage.

So numerous had become the Italian element in the new population that it had been deemed advisable to place the parish church in charge of priests of the nationality. That seemed to Margaret the last desolating blow. She was then indeed a stranger in a strange land. She made pilgrimages on Sundays to attend high Mass at some church where a sermon was delivered in English, but every morning, and early Mass on the

Lord's day, found her in her old place at St. John's.

Her erect figure, her pale, sweet face, with its crown of white hair became very familiar to the dark-eyed worshippers. They regarded her while and with not a little awe. She smiled at them sometimes with surprising timidity, but never spoke. It was not dislike that held her from neighborliness, but a nameless dread she could not conquer. So many of the men were rough and wild looking, the ways of the women so unlike her own! Her heart went out to the children, who drew together and regarded her with round, wondering black eyes when she passed them at their play. Their little faces were frequently grimy, and their dresses often soiled and that held a furtive glare from even a furtive glance. There was something that they said too—some name that they called her, not exactly in derision, but which she felt to be not entirely complimentary either. She could never quite catch the words, and was not at all sure that she wished to do so.

The visits of her brothers and sisters and their children were the bright spots in her days. The old house was at its best when it was crowded, when their bright faces and the sound of young laughter dispelled the shades of loneliness. Her nephews and nieces were growing up and she was quick to notice that, while there was no one as fervent in their welcome when she went to their homes, they came to hers with increasing reluctance. She understood their hesitation perfectly. It was all very well to go to the poorer quarters of the city to help people who needed it, but to have father's or mother's own sister living there—that was entirely a different matter. The offers of a home with John, Will or Alice became more urgent; and when she smilingly shook her head, they grew a little angry and wanted to know why she could not rent or flat near them, since she was so enamored of living alone. But that would suit her no better than living with some one else. Nothing would suit her exactly save that by some magic the old place should be restored to its former condition and bring back her friends from their new abiding places.

There was another shrine now in the church—the innovation that did not jar upon Margaret. From her height, the Sorrowful Mother looked down compassionately, as if she would draw all earthly griefs into her pierced heart, and drown them there in her supreme desolation. Miss Kilburn knelt before that altar many an hour, lost in an outpouring of prayer for she knew not what, and amid a whispering of the cloud of loneliness with no definite idea of what she would most desire to have fill the empty hours and dispel the gloom and terror that were closing in upon her.

She was not afraid of the hurdy-gurdy man, nor of the energetic little woman who peddled lemons, nor yet of the swartly fruit vendor who set out with his pushcart in the early morning. There were throngs of beautiful, sturdy girls and young men who went away to work in factory or store—happy, laughing groups. No, she had no fear of them. She had grown used to them; she saw them all at church. But there was a new element; dark-browed, evil-visaged men who glanced quickly from small, glittering eyes—men who, she felt sure, never went near a church, they were so Godless looking.

She was afraid to stay and afraid to go. She could not bear thought of people like that in the house where her mother had lived—the house that had so many sacred memories. Her problem began to rob her of restful sleep, as it filled her days with anxiety.

There came a night in the early autumn when she was particularly restless. She was sinking at last, toward midnight, into uneasy slumber, when the sound of stealthy footsteps below her window, in the passage on the right, aroused her to agonized wakefulness. For a long time there was silence, the stillness that falls on the jungle when the tiger crouches for his prey. Then came the quiet tread of other footsteps, and a hesitating, home-ward bound. A sudden outcry as suddenly muffled, and the dull thud of a stricken body falling brought Margaret to the open window in a flash. In the dim light that shone in from the street lamp she looked down on the evil, scarred face of a man glowering beside his insensate victim, the gleaming instrument of his crime still clutched in his hand. One horrible instant he waited, then dropped the weapon beside the slain man and fled into the night.

Margaret tried to cry out, to move, but the room was whirling around her, and she dropped down into senselessness. When consciousness returned it was almost morning. She was very cold, though her face and hands were burning; and every attempt at movement caused intense pain. Her brother John, turned out of his way to his office by the startling headlines of the morning paper, found her so ill that he asked no questions, but made arrangements to have her taken to his own home at once.

In the anxiety of the weeks that followed, when she hovered between life and death, her people almost forgot the crime committed so near their old home. They did not think of it as having anything to do with Margaret's illness. It could not have caused pneumonia of all course, Margaret had probably been ill all night,

and so knew nothing of the dreadful thing so near her. That conviction of theirs led them to say nothing to her of the tragedy even when all danger was passed and convalescence well advanced. Suffering had mercifully dulled the vividness of it for her, and when she thought of it all it was like the memory of some evil dream. With returning strength came anxiety for the deserted home, a fretting desire to be back, lest harm befall it.

Her sister-in-law still insisted upon sending up her breakfast, and sometimes the morning paper accompanied it. One morning Margaret felt so much better that she could see no reason why she should longer remain indoors. She glanced through the paper, seeking the weather forecast, hoping wistfully that it might promise a fair, dry day. A headline on the first page caught her eye, and in a moment she was reading breathlessly. It was a recital of the crime she had witnessed that dreadful night six weeks before, and of the evidence that fastened the guilt of it on the prisoner, Angelo Lusano, whose trial was drawing to a close. His picture was there—a sad faced, rather good looking young fellow, who might be anything but a criminal.

When the terrible significance of that picture dawned upon Margaret, she sprang up and began to dress with trembling haste. If she should be too late! It was the last day of the trial. If the verdict of guilty should come in before she got there. Even so, they would reverse it. But that would mean, perhaps, the formality of a new trial, more days in a cell for an innocent man. There was not a moment to lose.

She got out of the house without being seen, and, excitement lending her strength, made her way to the criminal court. The car that took her there seemed barely to creep along; but at last the gloomy, grey building lay before her. She was directed to Judge Landon's courtroom, those of whom she inquired wondering at her strange eagerness and haste.

There was a strained silence in the crowded room when she entered, the judge just having arisen to charge the jury. One swift glance she cast at the prisoner and then walked straight to the judge's desk.

"Your honor," she cried, "this must not go on. There's something wrong—some dreadful mistake. This is not the man."

Her wringing words had an electrical effect on the drooping, despairing man about to be condemned. He was instantly erect, renewed hope gleaming suddenly in his gloomy eyes. Astonishment held court and spectators silent for a long moment. Then lawyers sprang to Margaret's side, and amid a smothered rumble of excited comments, the case was re-opened. She was led to the witness stand and the oath administered. Very simply her story was told, the reason for her long silence being accepted without question, so apparent were the traces of her recent illness.

Her unmistakable statement that the accused was not, could not be, the man with the scarred, evil face whom she saw so plainly that terrible night, broke through the net of circumstantial evidence that had encompassed the prisoner so completely. Not a shred of it held when the strength of the truth pressed upon it; and nothing remained of the case constructed of such flimsy material but the memory of some black hours and a mystery for the future to solve.

Margaret stepped down from the witness stand, weak and shaken now that the excitement was ebbing. A woman, young and beautiful, who had been sitting near the prisoner, came swiftly and knelt down at her feet.

"The good God," she said brokenly—"the good God and His Mother—they will not forget!" And she covered Margaret's hands with tears and kisses. Then other women thronged around her, laughing and weeping; and one of them thrust a baby into her arms.

"The bambino of Angelo," she said. "You saved his papa."

Some little children pushed their way in to touch her dress and smile up at her. "The Proud Lady," they said softly—"The Proud Lady." And she knew that that was what they used to say when she passed them at their play, but they said it differently now.

Something swelled up in her heart—a great tenderness, a mighty longing that broke down the barriers and swept the old loneliness into oblivion—that went out to embrace the lowliest of them in a warm and enduring friendship. She saw the hurdy-gurdy man smiling at her ecstatically, and smiled happily back at him. The little brown faced lemon peddler waved a vivid hand and cheered and the fruit vendor cheered unabashed. Over all glowed the warm, worshipping gratitude of the man to whom she had brought back life and hope—to whose aid she had come like some kind angel of the beloved Christ, who had not forgotten him in his bitter trial.

The judge's voice was husky and there was suspicious moisture in his eyes when he arose to ask, in silence, that the formalities of freeing the prisoner might proceed. He, too, was grateful to the woman who had come to Angelo's aid; for he had found it hard to believe him guilty.

Francis telephone messages from home sent the frightened John in search of the missing Margaret. It was the startling announcement of a loudly cried "Extra" that gave him a clue. Something told him that from that scene in the court she would go

straight to the place she loved, in spite of everything. He was met at the door by a radiantly smiling sister, who looked none the worse for her trying day.

"Yes, I'll go home with you, John," she said in answer to his anxious demand, "if only to prove to Sarah that I am still alive. I am conscience-stricken at the anxiety I must have caused her. But I hear to have pined for her. And there was not a moment to lose. Oh, yes, I'll go with you now! But I'm coming back here—back to my own place to-morrow."

"But I thought this terrible thing—and your illness—would teach you a lesson, Margaret. I can't let you stay here. It is not safe. You must be with us or near us, where we can look after you. I should think you'd see this yourself."

"But I shall not be alone, John—never alone any more. I shall have the little children in—all the dear little children; and their mothers and their big sisters, too, perhaps. It came to me to-day, there in that courtroom, how I can help them, and they can help me. I will try to show them how to be better Catholics, and good Americans. Some of them are poor, John, and so they are tempted away from their own church for the sake of food and clothing. Why shouldn't I try to give them what they need in a worldly way, and keep them safe where their hearts and their hopes are at the same time. Here, where our mother was the soul of hospitality, will it not be sweet for them to find warmth and food and all that I can give them of life's refinements? And who knows, but that some of you, and our old friends, too, may be disposed to help me out? And this cure for my loneliness may develop into something that will advance in this little corner the greater glory of God."

John grew enthusiastic in spite of himself, for it was many a day since he had seen Margaret look really happy. After a while the other brothers and sisters, as well as the nephews and nieces, caught the fever and were eager to help to put the plan into execution.

So in course of time the old home became a neighborhood house; and sweet young girls and wise matrons came to assist the busy, happy head of it to entertain and care for the small, dark-eyed guests, whose shyness soon wore off. They learned so many things at the house of their "Proud Lady"—to keep clean, to sew, to cook, to care for the still smaller babies, to pray. And the mothers and big sisters came—out of curiosity at first, or to please the little ones, but after that because they found so much that helped them in their daily lives. They grew to love very dearly the good woman who took such an interest in their welfare, never dreaming how much they had done for her—the ache they had soothed in her lonely heart.

—Anna Cecilia Doyle, in the Ave Maria.

QUESTION BOX

1. What proof is there of the inspiration of the Old Testament? 2. Do you think that an all just and all loving God could command such cruelties as are described in Deut. 14 21, where it says: "But whoever is dead of itself, eat not thereof. Give it to the stranger that is within thy gates or sell it to him: because thou are the holy people of the Lord thy God." 3. Why are the Books of Samuel omitted from the Catholic Bible?"

1. Catholics accept the inspiration of the Old Testament on the authority of the Church. The Church has that authority from God Who preserves her from error in using it to teach doctrines of faith and morals. To show that the Catholic Church has that authority all we need to do is to show that it is the true Church of Christ. In answer to another question you will see a brief outline of only one of the many arguments that prove the divinity of the Catholic Church. Thus having established the Church, when she tells us that the Old Testament is inspired we have all the argument we need. Another line of argument would be as follows: Our Divine Lord and His Apostles under His guidance and with His approval accepted and enforced the official teaching of the Jewish Church of His time about the inspiration of the Old Testament. This can be shown from various passages of the New Testament. Now what Christ accepted and authorized must be true. 2. You ought to have indicated where exactly the cruelty came in in the passage you quote. It contains merely one of the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic ritual about unclean food. The mere fact that God Himself imposed these laws is an all-sufficient reason for accepting them with silence and submission. Still you can see that God Himself deigns even in the very verse you quote to give one reason for this particular law, namely, "thou are the holy people of the Lord thy God." Almighty God assigned certain laws, customs, manners, etc., as distinguishing marks of His chosen people; this tended to remind them of the divine favor shown them, of His divine blessings showered upon them, and the destiny assigned them among the nations, and thus to keep them faithful. The law in question was not cruel but kind to the Jews at all events. Perhaps you see cruelty to the strangers in the prescription that they were to get or to buy "whatsoever is dead in itself." You ought not to assume at once that the law referred to animals that died of virulent disease that must be necessarily fatal, or seriously dan-