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THE SISTER OF CHARITY; OR, THE CROSS AND THE CROWN. (From 'The Lamp').

CHAPTER II.

The golden sunbeams fell slanting across the trees, and danced in the rippling waters and round the old stone cross. The breeze played gently with the ivy tendrils and the moss, making the sweetest music in the green hedges-trees. By the side of the cross, with one arm thrown lightly round it, as though for support, stood a young girl; she was evidently thinking deeply; the rustle of the trees and the grass, and the sound of footsteps, did not arouse her. Her eyes were fixed upon the little brook. What did she see in its clear running water? Were those bright diamonds, in their rapid flashes, but an emblem of the life of man, the brighter, the swifter; or was she reading the sermon in the stream and its banks?

You would not see such a face as hers out of old Ireland, and that look of meditation and repose suits it well, although it was originally intended for sunshine and smiles. The eyes were of a dark blue, that one would almost call violet; and the hair, black as night; the face, fair as a lily, save where the rose asserted its rights, but yet not so fair, as sweet, and modest; the pure, open brow, the calm, earnest eyes, and the sweet lips, all told the same tale. Her light blue dress was simple, and without ornament, and she had removed her bonnet, the better to enjoy the cool air. So she stood when Louis parted the bushes of the thicket, and saw her. He rested for a moment to watch her, to note with an artist's eye the picture; the golden sunlight gleaming through the green leaves and on the water, the old grey cross, and the beautiful, thoughtful girl who stood beneath it. Then he was by her side, and her reverie was broken.

'Kathleen, I have kept you waiting, I fear, but Father Paul detained me; tell me just what you were thinking of, standing there, looking like a statue of Minerva, or, wiser still, were you preparing a lecture for the tract?' 'No, indeed, Louis; I know lectures are of no avail; I was thinking what I should say to you for the last time, and for the best.'

'And you have prepared a sermon, Kattie?' 'No, not at all. I trust to my angel guardian to inspire me with the words that will be the best for you.'

'I will tell you, Kathleen, give me what a very one else refuses me, a few words of encouragement and hope; even Father Paul denies me these; he prays for me, but he has no hope.'

'Why, Louis, one must be as ardent as yourself to have your views. Father Paul is old; he has seen the end of all that dazzles you now; he knows just how much everything is worth, and estimates everything at its proper value.'

'What a little philosopher you are, Kathleen.'

'No, indeed, Louis, I am no philosopher. But I have not your imagination, and (with the best glimpse of a smile) I do not desire it, or, perhaps, I too should be wishing to set off to conquer; as it is I am satisfied to remain at home.'

'God has made men for action, and women for patience and waiting, Kathleen. I will fulfil my destiny, and you shall do the same.'

'Louis, it does not seem to me exactly right for you to speak so of fulfilling a destiny; to do God's will would do better. Who has told you your destiny?'

'My own heart ever since I was a child. See, Kathleen, when I have read the lives of David and Ben Hur; of the great soldiers Alexander and Cæsar; my whole soul has burned to imitate them. The noise of battle, the glitter of arms, the prong of war, the shout and in the field, have formed my dream from boyhood to manhood. I could not rest; I have tried the calm of country life, the excitement of great cities, and the repose of college, but in the midst of all, I have heard the same voice calling me from the grave of my fathers, and the ruin of my house, even from this old stone cross and this little brook. Oh, Kathleen, if you had not faith in me and in my work, I would ask no more.'

'I have faith in your will and energy, Louis, but I do not see any possibility of success, nor do I understand how your joining the English army to assist in the American war is to do all you wish.'

'I join the English army because there is a way open for promotion; with the English, merit and courage will make their way, and they know how to reward a brave soldier when they see one. Now I am poor; I have but little I can call my own, but, God willing, I shall win fame and rank, station and gold. Then I will come home, rebuild this old mansion, establish my house and name, as it once stood foremost amongst Ireland's lords and princes, gather round me the descendants of those who loved and served my

fathers, restore the Church to its former glory; help my neighbors, and assist my friends, and transform my blooming wild flower into a stately rose.'

A faint smile played over Kathleen's face, but she only said as Father Paul had done before, 'Dreams, dreams.'

'I say no; truth's knowledge is power—will is might; if I fall I die in a glorious cause. I prefer to die as a Christian warrior should, than to lead an inglorious life and useless life here. I will strive as only they strive who seek that which I seek, not my own glory or fame, but to give honor to the dead, and to give honor to my ancestors; to do what each one of them would have done, to restore fallen greatness, to win again that which has been lost; to prove myself worthy of the race I spring from. Do you not sympathize with me, Kathleen?'

Who would refuse it that saw the eloquent play of the beautiful features, the light and fire of the dark glowing eye, the animated action, and the ardor and fervor of that brave, bright, sanguine spirit? Not Kathleen, for the cloud passed from her sweet face, and gave place to a light reflected from his own. There was silence for a moment, and then she said timidly, 'But, Louis, is there no other way for you to do all this except by going abroad and joining an army you can scarcely love?'

'No, it is the only way I see. I might work at a desk or books for centuries, and yet never gain sufficient to redeem one acre of my ancestral home. In the army I can make rapid progress; many a man has made a fortune there in one day. I will leave nothing undone that man can do.'

'But it is a great risk, greater than any other. You may lose your life; you may lose all but life, without having gained the least of your wishes; what then?'

'At least I shall have followed the voice of my heart, and have done what I could.'

'Is the voice of your heart the one you ought always to follow?'

'No, my little philosopher, not in every case, but in this one, yes.'

'But would it not be better for you to remain at home, and work steadily and quietly?'

'I could not, Kathleen. I tell you I am born for action. I could not endure the life of a farmer, a student, or a merchant. I must have action, scope, and, above all, liberty. You talk like all women, Kattie; they lose sight of the end through fear of the means.'

'Or do they see the end too clearly, and so overlook the means? but as you are determined, Louis, I will say no more.'

The arm clasped closer still the old stone cross, and the fair face bent lower over the moss and ivy. A perfect type of man the worker, and woman the helper, they looked; he with his tall, manly figure, eloquent face and eager action, the ardent hope that spoke in every word; he longing for the strife, thirst for the combat, weariness of inaction; she with drooping head, patient, sweet endurance; clasping the cross—seeking first to influence, and then to comfort.

'And remember it is all for you, Kathleen—my own Meaveenueen. If I had not you to rely upon, and to work for, I should not be what you have made me.'

'I know, Louis, I sympathize with all my heart in your design.'

'You do, Kathleen? Then I am content. You are the only friend I have in the world, save Father Paul, and what you are to me you know quite well. You have been my comfort for many years, and are my greatest earthly blessing ever.'

'How long do you think it will be, Louis, before you return?'

'I cannot tell; most probably two or three years. But I shall write very often, and tell you all my adventures. And you, Kathleen, must keep a brave heart, and a bright eye, for my sake. Send me as many lectures as you possibly can; never make yourself miserable by sitting and thinking of the dangers of war; have faith and confidence in God, and trust in me. I know I am leaving you here almost friendless, but it is partly for your sake I go, and a true-hearted Irish girl never failed in courage yet.'

'I will have both faith and confidence, Louis; but there was something in the still lighter clasp of the grey-sword, that told from whence it would spring. 'You make me braver, Kathleen, when you speak so. I have read so much of you, "Good-bye." If you had wept and sighed, I should have been so unhappy. You will make a worthy princess for my little court.'

'I must go now, Louis; say good-bye to me here. I shall not see you again.'

He saw how great an effort she was making to speak calmly, and scarcely wished to prolong a scene so painful.

'I have one little present to make you,' she continued. 'I will not let you burden yourself with promises; only make this one; take this crucifix, wear it always; never let it leave you for one minute; and promise me on it that you will be faithful to God, our dear Lady, and our holy religion; that, no matter how great or how violent your dangers and temptations, you will in each case have recourse to the hearts of Jesus and Mary; and that, if by God's will, anything should happen to you, you will, if possible, send me this cross, that I may know it.'

A change came over his face, and the light faded from his eyes. He took the cross reverently, and placed the ribbon round his neck, then gave the promise, word for word, as she had said.

She stood before him, pale and silent, and when he had finished, said: 'Good-bye, dear Louis; God bless you. Do not speak again; let those be your last words, and you will the better remember them.'

Another minute, and he was gone; darkness and silence fell around her. She had said farewell to the only friend she had, except the kind old priest, and only God knew when she should see him again. There are some moments in life when our sorrow is too deep for tears—it would almost seem for prayers, if the very action of enduring that grief patiently and quietly for God's sake were not a prayer. Closer still she clasped the stone cross, until her head bent down upon it; and then the recollection that there she had perhaps for the last time on earth seen him and heard him speak, flashed across her, and it was followed by such a burst of tears as only the lonely and friendless can know. But then she was kneeling by a crucifix, and when she raised her head and regarded it, how small all her troubles and sorrows seemed—how little to suffer for that dear Lord who had endured so much for her; how trifling her loneliness after one thought of His great loving heart, broken by the unkindness and desertion of men; how small the pain of her separation after thinking of Him, deserted by friends, and betrayed by one of His own disciples! Oh, dear reader, have you a sorrow or a trial, take it to the foot of the cross, and it will less its sting.

CHAPTER III. Far back in the annals of old Ireland, you will find the history of the Redmonds. They have counted kings and princes amongst their ancestors. The bravery and chivalry of their men was only equalled by the beauty and virtue of their women. There never was a Redmond who denied his faith, deserted his king, or dishonored his house. Loyal and true, brave and honorable, they ever ranked amongst the first of those who once formed Ireland's lords. Times were changed. Little by little the large estates were lost—some taken by violence, others confiscated. The noble race of men once so numerous and flourishing were reduced to obscurity; many lost their lives in war, others passed their existence in exile; and so, when the time of our story opens, the sole descendant and representative of this once princely line was Louis, the sole remnant of its ancient possessions, Redmond's Cross.

Arthur Redmond, the father of Louis, was possessed of a small fortune, which he had received from his wife, an Irish lady of no great wealth, but of great virtue and talent. She lived but to see her little son and bless him;—then God took her home. The father educated his son himself; and that education consisted in recounting the deeds and glories of his ancestors.

It was no dress, for the boy had a strong and glowing imagination, an ardent love for all that was brave and chivalrous. Before he could reach the lowest step of Redmond's Cross, he used to say: 'Never mind, father; I will be a great general, like our Patrick Redmond, and then I shall build our house again.'

Mr. Redmond was himself of a melancholy, morose temperament—he could dream of great deeds, but could not execute them. The one pleasure of his life was sitting in the old court, listening to the rippling of the waters and the sigh of the linden trees, and building high hopes on the little Louis. He thought what he had not been able to do, his son might be able to accomplish, and so realize his wishes.

He looked sometimes on the bright sparkling face, and his heart beat with hope when he heard the ring of his childish laughter, and the spirited energy of his words. It was a strange training for a child, and one can hardly wonder at its results. Before the boy could talk plainly, he listened little tales of the great Patrick Redmond. Many a night his father sang him to sleep with legends as wild as their music. His ancestors

and their former glory was his one subject of conversation with the child, who, young as he was, delighted in it, and would run to his father whenever he saw him, and say, 'Papa, another story, please.'

Mr. Redmond had no friends in the city of C—, and he would not make any acquaintances. Many would gladly have sought him, but he shunned all approach, and lived near the great city a life as secluded as that of a hermit on the mountain. The only person he ever conversed with was Father Paul, between whom and himself there existed a friendship sincere and devoted. The good father remonstrated in vain on the singular training the boy received, and prophesied that it would spoil his future. But Mr. Redmond was deaf to all. He saw nothing improbable in the idea that his child should fulfil the end for which he had destined him; that he should win a name to command respect, and gold to redeem, as far as he could, the property that had once belonged to the family; that he should rebuild the home of his ancestors where it had stood before, and found again the family so long forgotten. Many, many hours father and child passed in these dreams.

Louis was a beautiful boy. His face was bright and animated, his eyes dark and eloquent; his talents were extraordinary, his imagination ardent and vivid. He was the kind of boy of which the best and noblest men are made.

Father Paul regretted greatly to see him educated so strangely. After much effort, he persuaded Mr. Redmond to allow Louis to take lessons from him, and was himself surprised at the rapid progress he made. But the Latin language, which he acquired with great facility, was but another aid to his dreams. It opened to him a world of literature that fostered the ideas his father had so carefully instilled. The exploits of Cæsar occupied him. There was no more dreaming in the old court, no more listening to the little brook. All day, when not with Father Paul, he was directing music armies, erecting small fortresses, and besieging imaginary cities. It became soon a passion with him, that science of warfare; and he studied it as one who loved it well. He saw in it the means to realize all his father's hopes.

But Father Paul insisted that he should go to college for two years at least, and reluctantly enough Mr. Redmond consented. The time had not expired when Louis was summoned home to his father's death-bed, and arrived only in time to receive a last blessing from the lips that had almost ceased to breathe. Oh! the boy's wild grief and despair when he stood by the grave of all he loved on earth, and felt himself without a friend. His sorrow was so intense that it destroyed his health and broke his spirit. Father Paul took him home (for at Mr. Redmond's death his house passed into other hands) nursed him, and soothed him with the greatest love and tenderness. No mother could have been more gentle in her devotion, no father kinder in his love. For two years Louis remained with the good priest. He finished the studies so sadly interrupted, but the one idea of his life was still paramount; it seemed to him no longer an inclination, but a duty; his father's dying eyes had asked from him a promise to fulfil his wishes, and he had given it. His studies had been somewhat interrupted, but had not destroyed his love for the army, and it became now the subject of his hourly meditation. On the morning of his twentieth birthday, he received most unexpectedly a letter from a merchant in Bristol, a second cousin of his mother's, inviting him to reside with him, and offering him an excellent situation in his counting-house. This began a long struggle between Father Paul and Louis. The good priest wished him to accept it; he tried to show him that this opportunity was better than all his dreams and castles in the air. Louis disliked the idea; he detested the thought even of being imprisoned in a counting-house; he who spent the greater part of his life in the woods and fields, free as the air; he who had been nurtured with the most romantic and chivalrous ideas; he so full of ardent love of a warrior's life; could he submit to that? No; a thousand times no! But the kind priest, who was his only friend, entreated and prayed. Gratitude urged him strongly, and against his own inclination, Louis consented and promised to try.

But I am forgetting the most important part of my history. Near Mr. Redmond there dwelt a lady, Mrs. Dunroven, with her orphan niece, Kathleen, a child of great beauty and intelligence. Mrs. Dunroven was the widow of an officer who died before they were a year married. Kathleen was the child of her brother, who had fallen in the same campaign with her husband, and whose wife did not survive him many months. Mrs. Dunroven was amiable and accomplished, and warmly attached to her beautiful niece. Kathleen was thoughtful and serious, very pious and devoted to her religion. As children she and Louis had played together; she

had been the queen of the old court-yard, and be the King; she had crowned him sometimes when he returned victorious from some magnificent exploit. Their childish affection had increased with their years.

Mrs. Dunroven was much attached to Louis, and was consequently delighted when he asked her permission to think of Kathleen, as he timidly expressed it, though, as she often said to Father Paul, she wished he had not those ideas of being a soldier, it was so very sad. Soon after the death of Mr. Redmond, Kathleen lost her aunt, and a very lonely life she led in the old white house, with only her nurse, Bridget. But she was Father Paul's right hand; she was by every sick bed and in every poor house; she was the sunshine and the blessing of the neighborhood, and only an earnest prayer followed her beautiful figure and sweet thoughtful face. When Kathleen heard Louis was to go to Bristol, in spite of the separation, she rejoiced. It seemed to her sensible and reasonable, and more in accordance with her ideas of prudence than going off to the wars to seek a fortune. So Kathleen and Father Paul rejoiced, and saw him depart with a light heart. For a month or two his letters were dull, but not desponding; then by degrees the old love of liberty and longing for a soldier's life appeared; then his scruples about his promise to his father, his dislike to the desk, his thirst to be up and doing, grew stronger and stronger; nature could not always be silenced; and at last, weary of a life so foreign to his every thought and desire, Louis gave up the situation. The little son his father had left was expelled in the purchase of a commission and outfit and Louis joined the English army. When on the point of leaving home for the American war, Father Paul and Kathleen remonstrated and entreated in vain; the bright, brave young spirit saw no danger, needed no forbodings. You have heard his arguments, dear reader; he left home as you know. Will you follow him to that fair future so wisely foretold from mortal eyes?

CHAPTER IV.

Life in the old white house was now tedious now; there was no cheerful ring of the postman's bell, no glad voice calling over the hedge gate, no sound of light footsteps along the gravel walk, but Kathleen was free to go and do as she pleased. She could not sit to nurse on the couches she could not attend. She played more than ever; never was present entered the chapel to salute her Blessed Mother, as he passed, who did not sit on the pale, beautiful face before her altar; she looked more, she went more than ever among the rocks and pools. Many a poor old woman and the only gleam of sunshine to Kathleen, who would read to her, with the dearest of voices, the passion of Jesus and love of Mary which she prayed by her when her own trembling lips could utter no more words. A little child's dream of hanging there, look for her as she passed, looked for the sunlight hour after hour, her presence, with a little head drooping over her breast, weary and faint; many a long day has she closed, whose last looks were fixed on her with unutterable love and gratitude. — It was one summer they had known and loved Louis, who had ever been generous and kind. Many were the prayers offered by those good, warm hearts, for his welfare and his happiness; and God answered them, though not as they expected.

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The day after that it was not very long, but cheerful. It was written on shipboard, while the sailors were embarking; and there was a gleam of light in the eyes of the waves who were clapped in despair to their husbands, and begging to go with them, or do; of little children, who were crying and clinging to the father they were never more to see.

'My heart is strong and Louis,' but it aches in my breast, and I think Heaven you are not here. He was well and happy, and, oh! so full of hope.

There were many long weeks, there was silence, no one prayed, and hoped, and trusted; but the great great pain, and her voice less steady and true. Did Bridget dread her coming in the morning? she no longer asked if there was a letter, but looked at the table where they were always played, with such a heart-ache in her eyes. Never mind, honey, it'll come to-morrow, maybe; she said it's a long journey, and there's no time for writing.'

Father Paul grew anxious, too. Another week passed, and suspense grew into pain, but no news came. Even the moaning of the wind round the house seemed to Kathleen to sound like the roaring of the waves, but faith and hope were rewarded at last; and, one morning Bridget entered her young mistress's room, with a face that needed no words:

'It's from him himself, darlint; I know the writing well, and God send you good news indeed.'

Kathleen sprang up, but before she touched the seal, she knelt and thanked God with a