

her presence all one could think of was that she was a very pathetic, lonely little figure. That's the way she looked now, sitting unasily on her chair, her color coming and going, and watching them with bright, eager, questioning eyes. Bertha heard herself say as gently as Den had spoken:

"You're always buying me pretty things, Mrs. Doran. And now this beautiful picture! It must be the last. Remember now!"

Mrs. Doran drew a deep breath and smiled up at Mrs. Moore.

"Yes," she said rather jerkily, "it will be the last. That's why—that's the reason I wanted it to be good—you know? Something nice—to remember me—after—I'm gone. You see, I must go now—in a day or so." She dropped her purse on the floor and Den noticed that her hand was shaking as she stooped to pick it up. He felt suddenly guilty, knowing how welcome the announcement ought to be, and yet, oddly enough, it was not, Bertha, too, experienced a remorseful qualm.

"You don't look well today, Mrs. Doran," she said quickly. "You must not think of going until you feel like it." She said to herself with amused impatience: "There I go again! When she wants to leave I won't hear to it!"

Den backed his wife up cheerfully, but the old lady said, as she got to her feet slowly, that she had to go.

"In a day or so, maybe," as she turned to the door. "I'm—I'm glad you like the picture." "I love it!" Bertha told her sincerely. She followed Mrs. Doran into the hall. "You'd better lie down awhile, Mrs. Doran," she adjured her. "I'm going to get Den to help me hang the picture and when you come down to supper you'll see how grand it looks!"

She was rewarded with a grateful look. "Oh, that will be nice," declared the old lady, softly. Then, "I believe I will lie down a while."

"Wouldn't you like a cup of tea?" asked the young hostess, struck anew by the old woman's spent look. But Mrs. Doran thanked her and refused hurriedly.

"I had lunch down town. I'm not a bit hungry," she stated.

Bertha had heard this before and had never doubted it, but today she was seized with a slight suspicion. Back in her room she confided the suspicion to her husband. "I believe she's lying like a lady," she told him. They stared at each other, vaguely troubled.

"You don't think—" began Den in a horrified tone.

Bertha nodded unhappily. "I shouldn't wonder. Lately she's hardly been in at noontime at all. She always told me not to wait—that she had a habit of taking a sandwich wherever she happened to be. I—until today never dreamed of doubting her word. And sometimes, you know, she wouldn't eat any supper either—said she'd had too much lunch. I wonder—"

Den rumbled up his hair fiercely. "It looks as though we had failed in hospitality if she felt like that. You didn't—" he gave his wife a keen glance—"you never made her feel—unwelcome, did you?"

"No, I never did. Honestly, Den, I couldn't be anything but nice to her if I tried. I often thought I would try—to give her a slight hint, you know. But, well—"

Bertha paused with a faint smile. "You know how she is—so gentle, and appealing and kind. Instead of snubbing her I'd find myself making the greatest fuss over her and coddling her to beat anything. And I never knew anyone so grateful for a little bit of attention. No," she wound up, "there couldn't be a more unobtrusive visitor. Still, you don't expect the nicest visitors to stay forever!"

Den admitted that. "And it's true, you can't help liking her. To me too. The way she looks at us sometimes, as though—as though—well, it gets me, that's all." Then he grinned a little. "It's our fatal charm, Bertha," he jested, she can't bear to leave us."

The Moores chatted and laughed light-heartedly as they hung the picture, the slight worry about the giver retreating into the background.

When supper was ready Mrs. Doran did not appear, so Bertha ran gaily upstairs to call her. She found the visitor in bed. She was so tired, she explained, and she knew she could not eat any supper, so she went right to bed. She hoped Mrs. Moore would excuse her. "Oh, I made hot biscuits and everything, in honor of the new picture!" Bertha said disappointedly. "I'm so sorry you can't come down. But I'll bring you up something—"

"No, dear, don't," Mrs. Doran interrupted quickly. "I wouldn't let you do that! And I couldn't eat a thing—if I could I'd only be too glad to come down."

"A little tea, then? No? Do you feel sick, Mrs. Doran?"

A frightened look came into the old woman's blue eyes. "Oh, no, no," she said nervously, "not a bit. I was just tired—I walked a good bit today—I'll be all right in the morning. Please go and eat your supper, my dear, she begged with her gentle smile. "I'm ashamed to be bothering you like this."

"She looked as though she was ready to cry," Bertha told Den, "so I didn't say anything more. I think I'll take her something later though, wouldn't you?"

"I certainly would. She looks to me as though a good hearty meal would put new life in her. Not that she has much of an appetite," Den added.

An hour or so later Bertha with a dainty tray in her hand entered Mrs. Doran's room after a light tap at the door. That the elderly guest had been crying was evident though she made a strong effort to conceal the fact. Bertha fussed with the tray and made merry chatter to give her time to recover.

"You are too kind to me, Mrs. Moore," the guest protested. "I wish you wouldn't take so much trouble! How nice the tray looks! I believe I am a little hungry now—"

But her first effort at a bite of toast was a failure and after one swallow of hot tea she set the cup down and looked up at her hostess with eyes of dumb anguish. Then she dropped back on her pillow and began to cry with the quiet, hopeless misery of old age.

Bertha took one of the trembling old hands and held it closely.

"Don't cry, Mrs. Doran—please! You know you are with friends, and if there is anything troubling you—Are you worried about something?"

"Yes," Mrs. Doran murmured brokenly, "yes—I'm worried—"

Bertha spoke soothingly. "Take your time. There, don't cry any more. You know Den and I—"

The old woman wiped her eyes and checked her tears resolutely. "Yes, I know how kind you both are. If you weren't, would you have put up with an old woman—and a stranger—who came to stay two weeks and stayed over two months, and—God help me!"—clasping her hands against her breast—"has no place in the world to turn to now!" Her eyes closed for a moment but she went on quickly before Bertha could think of anything to say: "It's the little income I had—I lost most of it. The man who had it invested for me made away with it. Well, I hadn't much to begin with. But when that happened I didn't know what to do. I never had many friends, being so quite-like and backward, and I had only a few distant relatives—"

The pitiful little story went on. Bertha questioning here and there with tact and sympathy, finally coaxing Mrs. Doran to eat a little and to drink her tea.

"You are so good to me, dear," the visitor said with wistful gratitude. "You don't know what it means to a lonely woman, and I've been alone nearly all my life. People that I used to know are dead or scattered. I thought I could locate some of them after I came here, and that by visiting around for a while I could eke out my little income. Do you think that was wrong, Bertha—Mrs. Moore? I never was a hand to visit much—or to impose on people—"

She stopped with a dry sob.

There was an ache in Bertha's throat. Good heavens, a homeless old woman! "Don't please, Mrs. Doran," she implored huskily. "You haven't imposed on us, anyhow—we loved to have you! And do call me Bertha, if you like," she added with a teary smile.

"I always call you Bertha to myself, and Den. I used to wonder how it would be like, she went on dreamily, "if you were relations, you know, and I—" The haggard old eyes held Bertha's for a moment and then her face broke up into misery of tears. "If you'd only let me stay for a little while," she sobbed out, "I haven't much, but it would help—there's something pathetic about her little—and it seems so like home—" "I'm glad it does!" Bertha broke in cheerfully though her eyes were wet. "For it's going to be your room from now on. There—we're not going to cry any more, are we?"

Such an ecstatic look of peace came over the old woman's features that Bertha was awed. "Oh, my dear," she breathed softly, "Oh, my dear!"

"It's a comfort we both like her," Bertha reflected as she slipped quietly downstairs. It was no joke, she realized, to take a stranger into their home. "But I don't think we'll ever regret it," she concluded thoughtfully.

Neither have they. She is with them still, Auntie Doran to them and their friends and Grandmas to the Moore children, who idolize her. "We just couldn't get along without Auntie Doran!" Den often declares.

At which the little old lady glows happily. After long years of loneliness she has found a home.—Helen Moriarty in The Magnificat.

who watches over the destinies of the great flock which Christ has entrusted to his charge.

Time and again the hour of public distress and calamity, in great national or world catastrophes have men looked to the Vicar of Christ, imploring his protection, prayers and succor in their miseries. And the Holy Father has never turned a deaf ear to their pleas. Again and again has his voice been heard, pleading the necessities, not of himself, but of his stricken and needy children of all conditions, of all nations, in the time of need.

Not alone those who enjoy the special protection of the Pope, the children of Holy Mother Church are the object of his solicitude but even those who are without the fold, who, as the present Pontiff, Pius XI, so beautifully said, belong in his embrace and for whom he yearns until they too shall be united to him in one common bond of faith.

There is One Whom you know not dwelling in the midst of you—these significant words may apply to the Holy Father. For did men but realize how the great heart of the Pope closely resembles the human Heart of Christ, they would yield to his desires and recognize in him the true representative of One Who is Charity and Truth.

Like His Divine Master, the Holy Father is imprisoned, persecuted, reviled, mistrusted, ignored and repudiated in certain quarters. In a special manner he may be called an "alter Christus" another Christ who watches with solicitude and unwearied vigilance lest one of those whom Christ has given to him should be lost.

History has recorded numerous instances of the tender universal character of the Pontiffs, and the veneration and esteem in which they have been held by many outside the fold. No more beautiful story is related than that which pictures for us the saintly Pius IX, ministering to a poor sufferer in the public streets. A contributor to the Catholic World retells the story which was discovered in an old manuscript.

Passing through a public way, Pio Nono noticed a crowd gathered around an old man stretched on the ground and beating his head against the pavement in strong convulsions. "It is a Jew! It is a Jew!" cried the people, and, restrained by the name, not one afforded the poor man the least assistance.

"It is a man!" cried the Pope, descending from his carriage and pressing through the crowd. And raising the poor Jew in his arms, he placed him in his carriage and conducted him to his home where he remained until his senses returned. The same day he sent him his physician, and the following day one of his secret chamberlains to make inquiries concerning him.

Without the Pope this world would in truth be like a great ship rolling in mid ocean without a rudder. Although many refuse to acknowledge the Great White Shepherd in the midst of them, yet no honest man can deny the benign influence which the personality and deeds of the Holy Father have exercised on a sick and sin-swept world.—The Pilot.

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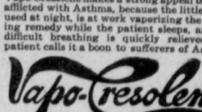
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