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## GRAPES AND THORNS.

By M. A. T., AUTHOR OF "THE HOUSE OF YORK," "A WINGED WORD," ETC.

### CHAPTER II.

A GLANCE FROM MR. SCHONINGER.

None but people of routine ever used their prayer-books while F. Chevreuse was reading or singing Mass, and it was seldom that even such people used them the first time they heard him; for it was not enough that those who assisted should unite their intention with that of the priest, and then pray their own prayers, recall now and then to the altar by the sound of the bell: their whole attention was riveted there from the first.

That penetrating voice, which enunciated every word with such exquisite clearness, speaking rapidly only because so earnest, was heard throughout the church, and its vivid emphasis gave new life to every prayer of the service. When F. Chevreuse said *Dominus vobiscum!* one replied as a matter of course—would as soon, indeed, have neglected to answer his face-to-face greeting on the street as this from the altar; the *Orate, fratres*, compelled the listener to pray; and, at the *Dominus, non sum dignus*, one felt confounded and abashed.

Was it, then, you asked yourself, the first time this priest had said Mass, that he should stand so like a man who sees a vision? No; F. Chevreuse had been fifteen years a priest. Had he, perhaps, an intellect more high than the ordinary, or a superior sanctity? No, again; though a clearer mind or a nobler Christian soul would scarcely wish to see. The peculiarity lay chiefly, we should guess, in a large, impassioned, and generous heart, which, like a strong fountain for ever tossing up its freshening tide, overflowed his being, and made even the driest facts bud and blossom perennially. In that heart, nothing worthy of life ever faded or grew old. Its possessions were dowered with the freshness of immortal youth.

Still, these gifts might have been partially ineffectual if nature had not added to them a sanguine temperament, and the priceless blessing of a body capable of enduring severe and prolonged labor. F. Chevreuse was spared that misery of a bright intelligence and an active will for ever pent and thwarted by physical incompetence, the soul by its nature constantly compelled to issue mandates to the body, which the body by its weakness is as inevitably compelled to disobey. In that wide brain of his, thoughts had ample elbow-room, and could range themselves without crowding or confusion; and the broad shoulders and deep chest showed with what full breathing the flame of life was fanned. His mind was always working, yet there was no sign of a feverish head; the eyes were steady, and the close-cut gray hair grew so thick as to form a crown.

For the rest, let his life speak. We respect the privacy of such a soul; and, though we would fain show him real and admirable, we sketch F. Chevreuse with a shy pencil.

The church of St. John was a new and unfinished one on Church street. This street ran east and west, parallel with the Cochequo, and half-way up the South Hill, which here sloped so abruptly that the buildings on the lower side had one more story at the rear than in front, and those on the upper side one more story in front than at the rear. In consequence of this deceptive appearance, those who liked to put the best foot forward preferred to live on the upper side, though it doomed them to a north light in their houses, while those who thought more of comfort than of display chose the other side with a southward frontage.

The church was set back so as to leave a square in front, and its entrance was but four or five steps above the street; but at the back a large and well-lighted basement was visible. The priest's house stood close to the street, on the eastern side of this square, and so near that between the back corner of its main part and the front corner of the church there was scarcely space for two persons to stand abreast. This narrow passage, screened by a yard or so of iron railing, gave access to a long flight of stairs that led to the basements of the church and of the house.

Seen from the front, this house was a little, melancholy, rain-streaked, wooden cottage, which might be regarded as a blot upon the grandeur of the church, or an admirable foil for it, as one had a mind to think. The door opened almost on the sidewalk, and beside the door were two dismal windows with the curtains down. In the space above, another curtained window was set between the two sharp slants of the roof. On the side opposite the church, where a lane ran down to the next street, the prospect was more cheering. You saw there an L as wide as the main building, though not so deep, and projecting from it so as to give another street door at the end of a veranda, and allow space for two windows at the rear of the house. This L was Mrs. Chevreuse's peculiar domain, as the house was that of the priest. Her sitting-room and bedroom were here; and no one acquainted with the customs of the place ever came to the veranda door unless they could claim an intimate friendship with the priest's mother.

The parlor with the two dismal front windows beside the entrance was used as a reception-room. Back of that was the priest's private sitting-room, with two windows looking out on the veranda, and one window commanding the basement entrance of the church, but the pleasant green space around, and

the flight of stairs that led up to the street. F. Chevreuse's arm-chair and writing-table always stood in this window, and behind them was a door leading into a little side-room containing a strong desk where he kept papers and money, and a sofa on which he took an occasional nap.

Upstairs were two sleeping-rooms; down stairs, as the hill sloped, the kitchen, dining-room, and the two rooms occupied by Jane, the cook, and Andrew, the priest's man. There was space enough in the house, and it had the charm of irregularity; but from the street, as we have said, it was a melancholy-looking structure. F. Chevreuse, however, could not have been better pleased with it had it been a palace. Within, all was comfort and love for him; and he probably never looked at the outside. The new church and his people engrossed his thoughts.

Mrs. Chevreuse was not so indifferent. "It would not look well for me to go up on a ladder, and paint the outside walls," she said to herself, her only confidant in such matters; "but, if it could be turned inside-out for one day, I would quickly have it looking less like an urchin with a soiled face."

No one could doubt this assertion after having seen the interior of this castle of the rueful countenance. There she could go up on a ladder without shocking any one, and from basement to attic the place was as fresh as a rose. But the nicety was never intrusive. This lady's house-keeping perspective was admirably arranged, and her point of view the right one. Cleanliness and order dwelt with her, not as tyrants, but as good fairies who were visible only when looked for. If you should chance to think of it, you would observe that everything which should be polished shone like a mirror; that the white was immaculate, the windows clear, and the furniture well-placed. You might recollect that the door was never opened for you by an untidy house-maid, and that no odors from the kitchen ever saluted your nostrils on entering, through a bouquet on the stair-post sometimes breathed a fragrant welcome.

Now, housekeepers know that the observance of all these little details of order and good taste involves a great deal of care and labor; but they sometimes forget that their exquisite *menage* loses its principal charm when the care and labor are made manifest. It cannot be denied that the temptation is strong now and then to let Caesar know by what pains we produce these apparently simple results, which he takes as a matter of course; but, when the temptation is yielded to, the results cease to be entirely pleasing. The unhappy man becomes afraid to walk on our carpets, to touch our door-knobs, to sit in our chairs, eat eggs with our spoons, lay his odious pipe on our best table-cover, or tie the curtains into a knot. The touching confidence with which he was wont to ask that an elaborate dinner might be prepared for him in fifteen minutes vanishes from his face like a rainbow tint that leaves the cloud behind. "A cold lunch will do," he tells you resignedly, and you detect incipient dyspepsia in his countenance. The free motions that seemed to feel infinite space about them are no more. The anxious hero pulls his toga about him in the most undignified and ungraceful manner, lest it should upset a flower-pot or a chair. In fine, the tormenting gadfly of our neatness stings him up and down his days, till he would fain seek refuge and rest in disorder.

Mother Chevreuse knew all this perfectly, and behaved herself in so heroic a manner that he soon never suspected what was quite true, that the unnecessary steps he caused her might make several miles a day.

One morning after early Mass, toward the last of May, she seated herself in the arm-chair by the window, and watched for the priest to come in from the church. This was a part of her daily programme, and the only time of day she ever occupied what she called his throne. After his breakfast, they did not meet, save incidentally, till supper-time; for, except when they had company, F. Chevreuse dined alone. The mother had perceived that, when they dined together, there had been a struggle between the sense of duty and courtesy which made him wish to entertain her, and the abstraction he naturally felt in the midst of the cares and labors of the day, and ever on the watch lest she should in any way intrude on his vocation, had herself made this arrangement. The fact that he had did not oppose it was a sufficient proof that it was agreeable to him.

This mother was the softer type of her son, as though what you would carve in granite you should first mould in wax. There was the same compact form, telling of health, strength, and activity, the same clear eyes, the same thick gray hair crowning a forehead more wide than high. Their expressions differed as their circumstances did; cheerfulness and good sense were common to both; but, where the priest was authoritative, the woman was dignified.

Presently her face brightened, for the fold of a black robe showed some one standing just inside the chapel door, and the next moment F. Chevreuse appeared, his hands clasped behind him, his face bent thoughtfully downward. Seeing him thus for the first time, you are surprised to find him only medium height. At the altar, he had appeared tall. You might wonder too, what great beauty his admirers found in him. But scarcely had the doubt formed itself in

your mind, before it was triumphantly answered. The priest's first step was into a shadow, his second into sunlight; and, as that light smote him, he lifted his head quickly, and a smile broke over his face. Wheeling about, he fronted the east. The river-courses had hollowed out a deep ravine between him and the sunrise, and the tide of glory flowed in and filled that green hills like wine-froth over a breaker. He stood gazing, smiling, and undazzled, his face illuminated from within as from without. It might be said of F. Chevreuse, as it was of William Blake, that, when the sun rose "he did not see a round, fiery disk somewhat like a guinea, but an innumerable company of the heavenly hosts crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!'"

The mother watched, but did not interrupt him. She knew well that such moments were fruitful, and that he was storing away in his mind the precious vintage of that spring morning to bring it forth again at some future time fragrant with the bouquet of a spiritual significance. "Glimpses of God," she called such moods.

He threw his head back, and with a swift glance, took in the whole scene—the treeless hill overhead, the closely gathered city beneath, the lights and shades that played in the dewy greensward at his feet, and, turning about, his mother's loving face, a fit climax for the morning.

"Bon jour, *Mère Chevreuse!*" he called out, touching his *barrette*. As he disappeared into the house, Mrs. Chevreuse went into her own sitting-room, which opened from his and gave a last glance at the table prepared for his breakfast. The preparation was not elaborate. A little stand by the eastern window held a pitcher of milk, a bowl and spoon, and a napkin; and Jane, following the priest up-stairs, added a dish of oatmeal pudding.

F. Chevreuse walked briskly through the entry, and threw the street door wide open, then came back singing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of glory shall come in!" and continued, as he entered the room, his voice hardly settled from song to speech, "What created things are more like the King of glory than light and air? They are as His glance and His breath."

The look that met his was sympathizing, but the words that replied were scarcely an answer to his question. "Your breakfast is cooling, F. Chevreuse," she said.

He took no heed, but, clasping his hands behind him, walked to and fro with a step that showed flying words to have been the more congenial notion. "Mother," he exclaimed, "the mysteries of human nature are as inscrutable as the mysteries of God. Would the angels believe, if they had not seen, that a Mass had been said this morning here in the midst of a crowded city, with only a score or so of persons to assist? Why was not the church thronged with worshippers, and thousands pressing outside to kiss the foundation-stones? When I turned with the *Ecce Agnus Dei*, why did not all present fall with their faces to the floor? And when Miss Honora Pom-broke walked away from the Communion-railing, why did not every one look at her with wonder and admiration?—the woman who bore her God in her bosom! And just now, when the sun rose—he stopped and looked at his mother with a combative air—"why did not the people look up and hail it as the sign of the Almighty?"

Mother Chevreuse smiled pleasantly. She was used to being set up as a target for these unanswerable questions, especially in the morning, at which time the priest was likely to be, as Jane expressed it, "rather high in his mind."

"If you could take your breakfast, my son," she suggested.

"Breakfast!" He glanced with a look of aversion at the table that held his frugal meal, considered a moment, recognized the propriety of its existence, finally seated himself in his place, and began to eat with a very good appetite. "You were quite right, my lady," he remarked; "the sunshine was drinking my milk all up. What thirsty creatures they are, those beams!"

Let it not be supposed that F. Chevreuse was so ascetical as never to eat except when urged to do so. On the contrary, he took good care to keep up the health and strength necessary for the performance of his multifarious duties as the only priest in a large parish, and he used a wise discrimination in allowing others to fast. "Some fasting is almost as bad as feasting," he used to say. "Besides injuring the health, it clogs the soul. You look down upon eating when you have dined moderately; but, when you have fasted immoderately, the idea of dinner is elevated till it becomes a constellation. I do not wish to starve, till, when I kneel down and raise my eyes, I can think of nothing but roast beef. Asceticism is not an end, but a means."

"Mother," he said presently, laying down his spoon, "why is it that the oatmeal and milk I get at home are better than that I find anywhere else?" "Children always think the food they get at home better than what they get abroad," she replied tranquilly.

Why should she tell him that what he called milk was cream, and that the making of that "strabour" was a fine-art, which had been taught Jane line upon line, and precept upon precept, till every grain dropped according to rule, and the motion of the pudding-spoon was as exact as a sonnet? Instead of being pleased, he would have been disturbed to know that so much pains had been taken for him.

"I like no earthly comfort that has cost any one much trouble or pain," he would say. Like most persons who have been spared the petty cares of life, he did not know that in this discordant world there is no earthly comfort to any one which is not a pain to some other.

Breakfast over, the priest went promptly about his business; and Mrs. Chevreuse, shutting the door between their rooms, brought her work-basket to the stand where the tray had been, and seated herself to mend a rent in a *soutane*.

It was a pleasant room, with its one window toward the church, and an opposite one looking over the city and the distant hills, and most enticingly comfortable, with deep chairs, convenient tables, and tiny stands always within reach, and an open fireplace which was seldom, save at mid-summer, without its little glimmer of fire at some time of day. And even then, if the day was chilly or overcast, the fact that it was midsummer did not prevent the kindling of Mother Chevreuse's belated flame. From this room and the bedroom behind it could be heard on still nights the dashing of the Cochequo among its rocks.

Mrs. Chevreuse worked and thought. The sunbeams sparkled on the scissors, needles, bonkins, and whatever bright thing it could find in her work-basket, on her eye-glasses and thimble, on the smooth-worn gold of her wedding ring, and the tiny needle weaving deftly to and fro in an almost invisible darn, of which the lady was not a little proud. Her mind wove, too; not those flimsy fancies of youth so like spider's webs upon the grass, that glitter only when the morning dew is on them; the threads of her dream-tapestry ended in heaven, though begun on earth, and their severance could only change into fruition. And all the time, while hand and heart slipped to and fro, the lady was aware of everything that went on in the house. She heard Andrew come into the next room with the morning mail, heard the sound of voices while he received his orders for the day, heard him go clumping down-stairs, and out through the clumping resounded outside, and glancing across the room, she saw the old man standing on the basement stairs, his head on a level with her window, looking at her across the space that intervened, and gesticulating, with a twinkling candlestick in each hand.

Mother Chevreuse, still holding her work, went and threw the sash up. "I think, madame, begging your pardon, that I can clean these just as well as you can," says Andrew, with a very positive nod and a little shake that set all the glass drops twinkling and tinkling.

"Do you, Andrew?" returned Madame pleasantly. "Very well, then, you can clean them, and save me the trouble. But don't forget to rub all the whitening out of the creases."

Andrew changed countenance as he turned slowly about to descend the stairs. Mrs. Chevreuse had been gradually taking care of the altar from his rather careless hands, and this had been his diplomatic way of escaping the candlestick cleaning of that day without asking her to do it. He hobbled down stairs again discomfited, and the lady went smiling back to her work.

"It is all very well for Sharp's rifles," she remarked, threading her needle; "but I don't like being fired at in that spiral manner."

Still weaving again with hand and heart, she heard Jane going about, like a neat household machine doing everything in its exact time and place, severe on interruption, merciless on mud or dust, ever ready to have a skirmish on these grounds with Andrew; she heard the rattle of paper from the next room, as letters and parcels were opened, the scratching of F. Chevreuse's quill as he wrote answers to one or two correspondents, or made up accounts, and the little tap with which he pressed the stamp upon the letters.

How peaceful and sweet her life was, all she loved within reach, all she hoped for so sure! She breathed a sigh of thanksgiving, then dropped her work and listened; for the priest was preparing to go out. Every morning was spent by him in collecting for his church. He had found in Crichton a thousand or more practical Catholics, with one shabby old chapel to worship in, and nearly as many nominal Catholics who did not worship at all; and in three years, with scarcely any capital to begin with besides faith, he had raised and nearly finished a large and beautiful church, and gathered into it the greater part of the wanderers.

"Be prudent, my son!" the mother had warned him when he began what seemed so venturesome an enterprise. "I am so," he replied, with decision. "It would be the height of imprudence to leave these people any longer straying like lost sheep. When the Master of the universe commands that a house be built for Him, is it not for me to fear He will not be able to pay for it?"

She said no more. Mme. Chevreuse always remembered to distinguish between the son and the priest, and was never more proud of her motherhood than when her natural authority was confronted by the supernatural authority of her child. But she always sighed when he started on a collecting-tour, for his faith had to be supplemented by hard work, and often he came back worn with fatigue, and depressed by the sights of poverty, sorrow and sin he had witnessed.

All had gone well with the church, however—so well that a new enterprise had been added, and a convent school

was just making its small beginning in Crichton.

"Is madame visible?" asked a voice smothered against the door. "Entrez!" she answered gaily; and the priest put his head in.

"Say a little prayer to St. Joseph for F. Chevreuse to-day," he said; "for he is collecting for the great note."

"Oh!" she looked anxiously at him, and met a reassuring smile in return. "Never fear, mother!" he said cheerfully. "Do not all the houses and lands belong to God?"

"Certainly!" she answered, but sighed to herself as he went away: "it is very true they all belong to God, but I'm afraid the devil has some very heavy mortgages on them."

Later in the day, Miss Ferrier called for Mrs. Chevreuse to go out and visit the Sisters at the new convent. "I have taken all I could think of this morning," she said, and enumerated various useful articles. "I suppose they want nearly everything."

Mrs. Chevreuse commended her liberality. "But I am glad you did not think of cordage," she added: "for this is the very thing I did remember."

She opened a large basket, and laughingly displayed a collection of ropes and cords varying from coils for clothes lines and curtain-cord to balls of fine pink twine. "Jane's clothes-line gave out yesterday," she said, "and that made me think of this."

Miss Ferrier gave a little shiver and shrug. "It is very nice and useful, I know; but ropes always remind me of hanging."

"Naturally," returned the lady, tying on her bonnet: "that is their vocation."

"But hanging is such a dreadful punishment!" And the young woman shivered again.

"Why, my pictures seem to enjoy it," Mrs. Chevreuse replied, persistently cheerful.

"Now, really, madame—"

"Now," really, mademoiselle, was the laughing interruption, "what has put your thoughts on such a track this morning? If you want my opinion on the subject, I cannot give it, for I have none. All I can say is that, if I thought any one were destined to kill me, I would instantly write and sign a petition for his pardon, and leave it to be presented to the governor and council at the proper time. Think of something pleasant. I am ready now. We will go out through the house."

She locked the veranda door, and put the key in her pocket. "I have only to give Jane an order. Jane!" she called, leaning out the window.

A head appeared from the kitchen window beneath, and the mistress gave her order down the outside of the house. "It saves so much going up and down stairs for two old women," she exclaimed. "Now, my dear."

They went into the priest's sitting-room, and again the door was locked behind them, and the key this time hung on a nail over the writing-table.

"Wait a moment," said Madame then, and began picking up bits of paper scattered about the room. The priest had torn up a letter, and absently dropped the fragments on the carpet instead of into the waste-basket, and a breeze had been playing with them.

"How provoking men are," remarked Miss Ferrier, stooping for a fragment which a puff of air instantly caught away from her.

"Are they?" asked Mrs. Chevreuse quietly. "I do not know. I have so little to do with them. Most people are provoking sometimes, I dare say."

Having made a second ineffectual dive for the strip of paper, the young woman had not patience enough left to bear so cool an evasion. "F. Chevreuse deserves a scolding for stewing this about," she said.

The mother glanced at her with that sort of surprise which is more disconcerting than anger. Miss Ferrier blushed, but would not be so silenced. "If you should oblige him to pick them up once," she continued, "that would cure him."

"Oblige him?" repeated the mother with a more emphasized coldness. "I never oblige F. Chevreuse to do anything. I should not dream of calling his attention to such a trifle. He has

"August Flower"

The Hon. J. W. Fennimore is the Sheriff of Kent Co., Del., and lives at Dover, the County Seat and Capital of the State. The sheriff is a gentleman fifty-nine years of age, and this is what he says: "I have used your August Flower for several years in my family and for my own use, and found it does me more good than any other remedy. I have been troubled with what I call Sick Headache. A pain comes in the back part of my head first, and then soon a general headache, until I become sick and vomit. At times, too, I have a fullness after eating, a pressure after eating at the pit of the stomach, and a sourness, when food seemed to rise up in my throat and mouth. When I feel this coming on if I take a little August Flower it relieves me, and is the best remedy I have ever taken for it. For this reason I take it and recommend it to others as a great remedy for Dyspepsia, &c."

G. G. GREEN, Sole Manufacturer, Woodbury, New Jersey, U. S. A.

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