HER IRISH HERITAGE

BY ANNIE M. P. SMITHSON

AUTHOR OF "BY STRANGE PATHS"

CHAPTER IV. CONTINUED

ST. COLUMBA'S HOME

"What, Bride!" she exclaimed gladly, "how are you? You and I should meet in heaven—we meet so often in this part of the world."

Bride Blake laughed. "I was just thinking of you, Mary!" she cried, "I want to give you a case—listen till I tell you"—and she went into rapid details for Mary's benefit, and the latter listened and made a note of the name and address as she said gaily, "I will never want for cases, Bride, while you are slumming—you give me enough of them."

Bride smiled ruefully. "Yes, I know dear," she said, "but I really can't help it. Somehow you can do such a lot more than I can for the poor souls, and then I don't know whether it is some magic that the uniform possesses or what, but I do know that you are always welcome, and I—well my welcome is sometimes a bit uncertain."

"It's the uniform of course," said Mary, laughing. "Who could resist it? Well! I must be off—I haven't any spare time this morning."

"Oh, wait a minute," cried Bride, "our English cousin, Clare Castlemaine—you remember me telling you that we expected her?—arrived last Thursday."

"Oh! did she really! Well, and what is the verdict?"

"Far better than we anticipated—quite a nice girl, and not a bit of a swank, as the boys express it. Come out to-night and be introduced—will you?"

"I'm sorry Bride, but I can't to-night—I'm going to the opera."

"Oh! with Dr. Delaney, I suppose? Lucky girl, and its 'Faust' too! Well, I won't keep you; come any evening you can—you know how welcome you always are." And with a smile and a nod Bride was off to look up a defaulting "mother" who had been absent from her baby club for the last few weeks, and needed to be brought back to a realisation of her duty.

Mary Carmichael got through her morning's work and reached St. Columba's with just five minutes in which to change from bonnet and cloak to cap and apron and to generally tidy herself for dinner. Her room was at the top of the house and the stairs from the hall upwards counted a hundred. But she sped up them two at a time, breathless, but radiant.

She shared her bedroom with Nurse Johnson, who was engaged in an anxious survey of herself in front of the glass as Mary entered.

"Hallo, Carmichael!" she said, without turning round, "that you? Do you know I've discovered two more freckles on my nose!"

"Really," said Mary, busily pulling out drawers and searching for a missing stud. "I'm sure it's all those face creams and things—Oh! here it is, thank goodness!—that you are always rubbing on that develop those blemishes to your beauty!"

"Don't be a sarcastic idiot, Carmichael," was the polite retort, "and don't get flustered, we've plenty of time, there's three minutes yet."

But as if to prove her a prevaricator of the truth, the dinner bell sounded at that moment—it had been cracked for some time now, and the reverberations it gave out were exasperating and discordant.

"There now!" exclaimed Mary, as she stuck a cap pin in anyhow; "I must fly! It's all very well for you, but I'm supposed to set an example," and she left the room hastily, the click of her little heels down the stone stairs coming back to Nurse Johnson as she remained placidly arranging her hair and fixing on her cap. Not till the last hair was in place, and the cap at just the correct angle that suited her best, did she leave the room and leisurely descend the stair, to enter the diningroom just as the soup was being removed.

"Late again, Miss Johnson!" said Miss McFarland; but she spoke as one resigned to the inevitable, for Nurse Johnson's term of probation was nearly over, and she was hardly ever known to be punctual in her comings or goings or for her meals or lectures. The other nurses often wondered how on earth she had managed to get through her hospital training.

The meals at St. Columba's had not much variety about them; four days out of seven the dinner consisted of roast mutton brought to the table ready cut into slices and floating in tepid watery gravy—and always seeming to taste quite different from meat cut straight from the joint. There was a meat pie on one day of the week—to use up the scraps of other days—corned beef on Sundays, and fish, of course, on Fridays. They got fairly good soup and generally a pudding of some kind—not always—a day would come now and then when the cook would be "put out" over something, and on these occasions, after the removal of the meat, Anne, the elderly housemaid—who was a regular character in herself, having acted as wardmaid in most of the Dublin Hospitals, and thereby "knowing a thing or two," as she expressed it—would stoop down and whisper mysteriously into the matron's ear, whereupon that lady would proclaim as though in pained surprise.

"Oh, really! no pudding today! Dear me! Well you nurses will have to get your tea earlier, that's all."

As the tea was brought up every day at half-past three, the nurses being due on their districts again at half-past four, it was generally understood amongst them that Miss McFarland said this simply for the sake of saying something.

After dinner they were free until they left the house for their evening round. Supper was at eight o'clock, and any nurse who wanted to go out after that meal, had to ask permission, except it was her evening off duty.

They generally gathered together in the large room at the back of the house used as a recreation room, during the short time of leisure between dinner and going on duty again, and free from the restraint of the matron's presence, they could talk and laugh and "talk shop" to their hearts' content.

Nurse Johnson usually reclined gracefully on the sofa and Nurse Seely, her greatest chum, would sit beside her, and they would talk confidentially on the subjects dearest to them both. Nurse Ferguson, a typical hard-featured and harsh-tongued Northern, who always looked well after No. 1, generally managed to appropriate the corner seat on the fireside couch for herself, the two staff nurses had the arm chairs delegated to them, and the juniors found seats for themselves as best they could, the two most junior—in other words the two who had been the shortest time at the Home—had to cut the bread and butter and hand round the tea to the others.

Daisy Ray was the other staff nurse, and she and Mary Carmichael sat together chatting, for they had many interests in common, although they were not at all alike in character. Daisy Ray was a small doll-like little person very good-tempered and talkative, but with a fund of sound common-sense. She was engaged to be married to Brendon Kelly, a very decent young fellow in a government appointment, and they were only waiting for the promised "rise" in his salary to set up house together.

The telephone rang in the corridor outside—its sharp ting just making itself heard above the nurses' chatter, and one of the juniors answering it, came back to say that Nurse Carmichael was wanted.

Nurse Carmichael, her colour rising a little, left the room. Before she took up the receiver she guessed who was ringing her up.

"Hallo?"

"Hallo! Oh, is that you? How are you?"

"Very fit, thanks. All right yourself? Good! What about to-night, will it be alright?"

"Yes, of course, it is my evening off. Where will we meet—same place as usual?"

"Yes, top of Grafton Street; quarter to eight, I think I've got fairly decent seats."

"All right, I'll be there."

"And—are you there?—don't forget your latch-key—and be in time!"

"As if I was ever late! Don't *you* keep *me* waiting, that's more likely!"

"Well, good-bye till then. I have a crowd of patients to see yet."

"Well, get them through before to-night. Good-bye, till we meet!"

Mary hung up the receiver and smiled to herself happily. Even the sound of his voice over the telephone stirred all her being with joy unspeakable. Oh! but this man was very dear to her!

She came back slowly and sat down beside Daisy Ray, who glanced up at her with a quiet smile.

"That was Dr. Delaney, I suppose," she said, "and, of course, I remember now this is your evening off. Are you going out, Mac?" for by this abbreviation was Mary known to her chosen friends amongst the nurses.

She smiled back at Daisy. "Yes," she said, "we are going to see 'Faust,' and oh, Ray dear, I feel I am going to have a simply scrumptious time!"

On her evening "off" Mary had no visits to pay, so she sat down and wrote letters when the other nurses had dispersed, and that duty accomplished, she settled herself comfortably with a book till after six o'clock, when she descended carefully and quietly to the kitchen premises. Only the two staff nurses were allowed into the kitchen at St. Columba's and they were only supposed to go down with messages from the matron or on some business of that sort. Tea in the kitchen was strictly prohibited, but, needless to say, for that very reason it was indulged in as often as could be managed. This depended greatly upon what state of mind the cook would happen to be in, and also on what nurse asked for the privilege, for cook had her favorites, like others, but among them Mary Carmichael might be safely reckoned, so once safely in the kitchen without encountering the matron on her perilous way thither, she knew that she would get her tea all right.

Martha, the cook, was a stout woman with small suspicious eyes, and a suspicious mind also. She had an uncertain temper, and was held in awe by most of the staff at St. Columba's with the exception of Anne, the housemaid, who, according to her own words, could "hould her own with the ould boy himself."

Martha was in the best of humour this evening, Anne was not present, and peace reigned.

Mary was soon pouring out tea "that would stand of itself" and enjoying hot buttered toast.

"Cook, you are a dear," she said, "this is the only decent cup of tea I ever get in St. Columba's and only for you this evening I would have had to go down to the D. B. C. It's such a nuisance supper not being till 8 o'clock, and nothing allowed between!"

"Well! that's true, God knows! It's often I pity ye all, with such long fasts between meals. Drink up that tea now, its fine and strong and will stand to ye. I suppose 'tis to the theatre that ye'll be going to?"

"Yes, cook. The opera is on you know—'Faust.' Well, thanks ever so much—you're a jewel; but I must go and dress now." And, mounting the long flights of stairs once again she entered her bedroom, and was speedily discarding her uniform and dressing for the evening. She brushed out the soft masses of her hair, and arranged it again in a more elaborate style than was allowed in uniform, sponged her face and hands, and slipped on a dainty underskirt and camisole. She changed her stockings too, and put on pretty shoes, for Mary was particular over the small details of her toilet, which was one reason why she always gave one the impression of a well-dressed woman. Then came the black evening skirt, the dressy blouse, with the little finishing touches to her hair—the little dash of powder on her face, the cobweb of a handkerchief breathing violets which shared her theatre bag with her purse and—the latch-key!

As she flung the latter in and shut the bag with a hurried little snap, she said, half aloud, "I didn't forget you this time, anyway!"

Then she got into her long coat, drew a motor veil over her head, and taking up a pair of long gloves in her hand, went downstairs.

Daisy Ray had come in from the district and was in the sitting-room when Mary looked in for a moment on her way out, and she greeted the latter with a smile. Mary stood in the doorway fastening her gloves and Nurse Ray exclaimed, "You do look nice, Mac! Are you off now? Well! have a good time! and give my love to Theodore," she called after her friend's retreating figure.

Dr. Delaney was waiting at the top of Grafton Street when Mary got there. She recognised him while she was still some distance away. He was very tall and slight, and looked very well in his light over coat and silk muffler. He had brown eyes with a very slight cast in them—only noticeable at times, and especially when he was at all excited or annoyed—his hair, although he was still under forty, was thickly sprinkled with grey, and a slight moustache hid a rather weak mouth.

He came forward now, lifting his hat, as Mary approached, and smiling down on her with the half whimsical, half affectionate look which always made her heart beat a little faster.

"I'm not late, am I?" she asked as they shook hands.

"No. Indeed for a wonder I think you are fairly well up to time! I was just wondering whether I would have time to finish this cigarette?"

Mary laughed. "Smoke it as we go along," she said, "I don't want to miss the overture."

They sauntered towards the theatre in the midst of a crowd of others going the same way; couples walking like themselves, the ladies in theatre wraps and with motor veils or scarfs thrown around their hair—others driving up in carriges or motors.

"Have you got your latch-key?" asked Dr. Delaney. This was a standing joke with them, for several times Mary had been late at an appointment through leaving her key at the Home, and having to race back for it when she was perhaps half-way to the meeting place. The idea of daring to *ring* at the sacred portal at such a late hour as her return would be never entered her head. Miss McFarland was a light sleeper and anyone who made the slightest noise when coming in late would be sure to hear of it next morning. Some sarcastic allusions would be made to "fairy footsteps," and so on, and the unfortunate culprit would writhe in silence at the breafast table.

Mary laughed now as she answered, "Yes, I have it safe this time."

"Do you know that I knew you were coming before I saw you," he said suddenly.

"What do you mean?" said Mary. "How could you know that?"

"I don't know—but I was standing just there at the bicycle shop and I *felt*—there is no other way to describe it — that you were coming round the corner just as you appeared."

Mary laughed rather unsteadily. "Telepathy, I suppose," she said, and just then they reached the theatre.

It was filling rapidly, but they had good seats in the parterre. The overture was just beginning and as Mary divested herself of her coat and leant back in her seat she felt that she was going to have a good time.

Such hours come to us now and then in a lifetime, when we seem to be completely happy—hours that will come like an oasis in the desert, times when we are able to put black care behind us, to forget the worry of the days gone by, and when we remember not the burden of tomorrow awaiting for us. Such an hour was Mary's this night and she enjoyed every minute of the time. The opera was one of her favorites, both she and Dr. Delaney knew it well and listened with keen appreciation to every note of Gounod's masterpiece. They exchanged confidences and criticisms and incidentally ate chocolate during the intervals and when at last it was over, Mary fetched a little sigh of regret.

"Well, did you enjoy it?" asked her companion as they walked back to St. Columba's, for they always preferred to walk when the night was fine.

"It was just *perfect!*" she said, happily.

Years afterwards when she was many miles from her dear Dublin and when she had almost forgotten what a theatre was like, when the zest of life was gone and her heart was sad and old—often then would Mary Carmichael go back in her dreams to that one evening which somehow seemed to stand out beyond all others in memory. Many a play had she seen with Dr. Delaney, many an evening they had spent together, but none ever seemed to her just so complete—so perfect, as this one when they had sat together in the dear old Gaiety and listened to those words which found an echo in their hearts.—"When all was young and fair."

TO BE CONTINUED

A PAIR OF GREY SHOES

By Mazie V. Caruthers in Rosary Magazine

After what seemed like a hideous nightmare, punctuated with half-lucid intervals, during which he tried to wage war upon a grinning devil perched on the bed-rail (being forcibly restrained therefrom by a strong, white-clad individual) Harding woke one morning, still clothed only in pajamas, but quite unmistakably in his good right mind.

He tried ever so hard to turn over in bed, but failed. "Smatter, anyway?" he croaked faintly. "Weak 's a cat!" At his feeble wail came hurrying on noiseless feet the identical, white-clad martinet of a nurse who had so plagued him with ice-caps and other sick-bed nuisances. And yet once again did she work her will on his helplessness! Promptly producing a thermometer, she slipped it into his mutely protesting mouth, stoically awaiting results.

Finally withdrawing the glass tube and finding that it registered normal, she addressed her patient as if he were a puling, sickly child, who only needed encouragement towards good behavior. "Splendid, Mr. Harding! All you have to do now is lie still and get well. Drink this!" and a feeding-cup was pressed to his lips.

Harding felt like bursting into unmanly tears. Who in thunder was this officious person, anyway? His brain registered the query, but his lips were too weary to formulate the words, so he muttered irritably for a moment—then, fell asleep again.

Followed a few more days of feedings and naps, when the world and the people in it, including himself, began to seem less shadowy, and the sick man at last summoned strength to inquire querulously what the fuss was all about—why was he in bed, and when might he get up? Nurse Mitchell paused in her interminable task of tidying up a spotless room. "Get up?" she exploded. "Not for a good two or three weeks! You've had a very serious case of typhoid, Mr. Harding—out of your head half the time, and as crazy as a loon. And I'll tell you right now you were the most obstreperous patient I ever had, what with slipping your ice-cap on the floor and throwing off your turpentine dressings every few minutes. It's been something awful!"

Harding explained fretfully. "But there was a little green devil on my bed-post all the time, and you wouldn't let me get at him. That was the trouble! Every time I tried to tell you about him, you'd clap that infernal ice-cap on my head, and then—he'd grin harder than ever." Nurse Mitchell did not seem at all surprised to hear of the green devil. Evidently, she had met him before in her nursing experience with other fever patients. "Well, at any rate, he's gone now," was her soothing reply. "You won't ever see him again, if you mind the doctor—and me," as an important personal afterthought.

So Harding slept once more, and the next thing there was his nurse with her eternal feeding-cup in hand, and her invariable stock remark, "Time for your gruel!" Thus a week more passed, and then the invalid was advanced a grade; two pillows instead of one at his back was indeed a step forward, and delicious, although totally inadequate, cups of broth supplemented the gruel at intervals. He began to look about him a bit and take more notice generally. His small basement apartment of three rooms had always seemed sufficient for a quiet bachelor, who occupied a stool in the Savings Bank by day and took his mild pleasures of an occasional theatre or concert after dining at the Swan Cafe every evening. It was a cosy enough little place, with a tiny kitchenette, where he liked to putter around and get his own breakfasts, making believe at keeping house. With the aid of Mary Niles, an ancient colored retainer, who "redded him up"—every other day, his tiny domain was a comfortable apology for a real home. Left with the entire care, when hardly out of his 'teens, of an invalid mother, her death found him a confirmed bachelor, and at forty-five he had never taken any active part in a love affair, nor desired to, either. Life, while not without its mild interests, was anything but exciting. He lived by rote, and the typhoid fever was the only unexpected thing that had happened in ages.

During his illness, for convenience sake, Harding's bed had been moved out into the sitting-room, and at first, with the childish curiosity of a convalescent, he took a languid interest in looking around again at his time-worn furniture; his mother's old mahogany desk, the long, cushioned chair where she had spent most of her days at the last, the claw-footed table, his father's big brass ink-well—all these were like dear familiar friends. He glanced approvingly at the blue Wedgewood bowl, and noted with quiet pleasure a bunch of daffy's prettily arranged in the tall glass vase; their color was deliciously spring-like he thought.

"Miss Tyler sent 'em in today with her compliments, and glad to know you were better." Nurse Mitchell intuitively supplied the information his eyes questioned. "Very kind of her," was all his comment, for there was nothing particularly thrilling in the thought of his neighbor, the little governess, who occupied the apartment, twin to his, across the hall. They had exchanged polite "good mornings" for over five years, and occasional "good nights;" once or twice Harding had picked up her evening paper, from a too windy doorstep, and she, in turn, occasionally rescued his matinal bottle of milk from the too close attention of the janitor's cat, but their acquaintance began and ended there.

After a while interest in his room wavered, and his eyes sought something new. His rooms, situated in what had originally been the areaway of the old house, gave but small vision of the street above him; well propped up in bed, however, he could get a rather amusing view of peoples' feet, as they passed back and forth on the sidewalk. In his healthy normal moments Harding, the prize accountant, would have scoffed at the very idea that there was anything interesting in foot-gear, but for want of something more exciting he began to take a growing interest in the feet that passed and re-passed, day after day.

Finally, the pedestrians' promenade came to be his daily delight; of course, each morning brought different passers-by, but there were many steadies, who came and went by his windows regularly, little realizing how much entertainment they afforded the occupant of the basement apartment. "Exactly as good as a movie," Harding chuckled.

There was one pair of honest, common brogans that clumped by stolidly at eight o'clock, returning punctually about six each evening; a visiting nurse—or a department clerk, maybe—shod for ease instead of elegance, he decided. Two pairs of high tan sport shoes invariably accompanied each other; something about them suggested high school students to the sick man; then he scented a romance in the fact that some nifty, high-heeled feminine patent leathers, which always started out alone o'mornings, always returned about noon walking with glad little skips and jumps beside a polished, well-shaped masculine pair of shoes. They never failed to walk past at noon together, though the patent leathers always started out alone. "Not married yet, but courting," soliloquized Harding. There was a neat tan-gaitered woman, who tripped briskly along just before nine, with four chubby buttoned shoes as her satellites, presumably going to the kindergarten around the corner; these feet always returned about noon, too, the chubby ones usually running in advance, as if glad to be released from bondage.

There were several groups of solid, self respecting boots (neighbors, perhaps, no doubt talking politics,) that stumped along together quite regularly; Harding recognized the type, something like his own, and wondered longingly when he would be able to resume his footgear, so like theirs, and return to his beloved office ledger. Then there were, of course, many transient feet which plodded or hurried by, for his apartment was on a well-traveled corner; "waifs and strays" he catalogued them, especially one soiled tan pair, with too high heels, already beginning to run over, somewhat like their owner's character, he fancied. Some days they tramped up and down so wearily, followed at times by a pair of men's boots, suspiciously resembling a police officer's. And sometimes, alas, the two pairs of feet, so dissimilar, walked off together!

But all these feet, amusing as they were in their own way, paled in interest before one dainty pair, always clad in smart, immaculate grey suede, which went by at nine-thirty, and returned about four every day, rain or shine. Graceful in outline, fine, clear-cut arch, and clean, well-balanced heels, they walked as though their owner enjoyed the exercise. Harding found himself waiting each morning for the grey shoes; on rainy days they were kept neat and dry with sensible rubbers, which protected without concealing their beauty. Harding often speculated over this unknown woman, who was the proud possessor of such graceful pedal extremities.

"Let's see," he would puzzle, for his knowledge of the feminine sex was somewhat vague, "she is probably a young and beautiful stenographer." She must be in business of some sort he thought—the regularity of her hours showed that—and the fact that she always came and went alone pleased him, for he would have felt a childish jealousy had any one else appeared to manifest any interest in the grey-footed mystery. He wondered where she went every morning, and what life held for her in its puzzle-box. Somehow, during this enforced idleness Harding's prosaic mind, freed from percentages and dividends for the moment, found time to reflect on things to which he had never given much thought, such as other fellow's homes, and how it happened that so many people married, etc.

Came a wonderful day when he was at last promoted to his mother's cushioned chair, and the change to dressing gown and slippers was delightful. More than that, he had been freshly shaved, and had likewise been treated to a real man-size luncheon, with knife and fork menu, instead of spoon-diet. Then, to make happiness more complete, the grey shoes had passed by, a full hour in advance. All was well with the world of Harding!

To him suddenly entered Nurse Mitchel, in as much of a flutter as her professional decorum would permit. "Oh, Mr. Harding, I've broken my eye-glasses, and just can't see a thing without them! If you don't mind, I'll go right down-town and have them mended. It won't take me more than an hour, and Miss Tyler is coming in to sit with you, so everything will be all right. It's just two o'clock now, and you take your medicine in half an hour. Miss Tyler says she will attend to everything, and I'll hurry back just as soon as possible."

Hustling into her street clothes, Nurse Mitchell was ready to start when a modest knock at the door announced her temporary substitute. "Come in, Miss Tyler." Harding felt pleased at the prospect of a little visit, even from his next-door neighbor. It meant a break in the monotony of eating, sleeping and medicine dropping; besides, though his thanks had been transmitted by way of the nurse for the daffys and sundry delicious jellies, with floating island thing-um-bobs on them, he wanted to voice his appreciation personally, feeling in an unwontedly sociable mood.

So Miss Tyler, with a gentle word of greeting, found herself grasping a big, bony hand, murmuring pleasant trivialities, and generally taking upon her slender shoulders the position of nurse for an hour or two. Producing some knitting, she settled down in the big chair opposite him, ready to entertain the patient, or to keep silent.

She was a mousey little thing, redeemed from actual plainness by a lovely pair of brown eyes and quantities of fair hair, wound in a braid about her finely shaped head. A gentle primness of manner, rather in keeping with her profession, made her seem quite interesting on the whole. Harding found an unexpected, placid pleasure in listening to her low, quiet voice, and idly enjoyed the flash of her needles as they worked their shining way through the intricacies of pale pink wool, which lent a bit of color to her cloth gown. "It's a sweater for the Hyde baby," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Hyde is so dear to me that I'm only too happy to do a little service like this for her. I love the children as if they were my own." Her brown eyes shone with real affection. "It's ten years since I became a fixture in the Hyde household, for there always seems a baby to be taught in the nursery."

She stopped to count stitches, and Harding seized this opportunity to return thanks for past favors, including the present pleasure of her company. "Oh, but I was glad to come and sit with you! Usually, I'm not home so early, but the family went away for the day, and that gave me a half-holiday. I had just come in when Miss Mitchell called me."

Harding was genuinely conscience stricken. "It seems a shame for you to sit in-doors with a nuisance of an invalid like me, when you should be out enjoying your holiday. I'm awfully sorry Nurse called you, for there's no reason whatever why she couldn't leave me alone. I'm quite strong enough now."

Mary Tyler smiled, showing pretty, even teeth. "Indeed, you're not, either. Now, stop fussing, as the children say, or I'll be sorry I told you about my holiday. Besides, it's time this very minute for your medicine." She folded her knitting and hurried over to the invalid's table where all his bottles, carefully labeled, were arranged

Harding's eyes followed her contentedly. She really was attractive in her quiet way, and resembled

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