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LOST AND FOUND.

A WAYSIDE REMINISCENCE.

(From the Catholic World.)

What woman, travelling alone, has not encountered the embarrassment of entering a car already nearly filled with passengers? Perhaps the awkwardness of the situation may not be as keenly felt by those who frequently meet, and who are accustomed to the manifold jostlings of this busy world, as by a recluse like myself. — However this may be, I can testify from experience that the ordeal is a painful one to a sensitive and skinking nature. So it chanced that, upon discovering this condition of affairs as I entered a car at Prescott, on a fine morning in June, 1867, I dropped into the first vacant place my eye detected, by the side of an elderly lady dressed in deep mourning. The first glimpse of her face and manner satisfied me that she also was from the 'States,' and I felt quite at home with her at once.

We soon fell into conversation, and I found my companion most agreeable, quiet and intelligent. We beguiled the monotony of a railway journey by a pleasant chat upon the scenery through which we were passing, and such other topics as came uppermost. I noticed, as we stopped a few minutes at Brockville, that she seemed to scan all that could be seen from the car with deep interest; and again, as we pursued our course up the river in sight of the Thousand Islands, she was quite absorbed in her observation of the scenery.

'Beautiful islands,' I remarked, 'I would like nothing better than occupy some days in exploring their fairy haunts.'

'You would find many of them beautiful indeed,' she repeated. 'They are very dear to me; for my early life was passed in their neighborhood, and I retain for them much of the affection that clings to the memory of dear friends, though I have not seen them before for many years. What frequent merry-making and picnic festivals did the young people from the American shore and those of Brockville enjoy among the windings of their picturesque labyrinth, long ago?' she added with a sigh.

She then informed me that she was on her way to Illinois, to visit her children there, and had chosen this route, that she might catch a passing glimpse of scenes most interesting to her from their connection with memories of the past.

Time and space passed almost imperceptibly to us, as we were engaged in discussing one subject after another of general interest, until some time in the afternoon, when, clatter! clatter! clatter! thump! thump! a jolt and a bounce brought every man in the car to his feet, and caused every woman instinctively to settle herself more firmly in her place, while a volley of exclamations, 'What can it be?' 'There's something wrong!' 'Cars off the track!' — 'We shall be down the embankment!' burst from every quarter, the swaying, irregular movement preventing the possibility of reaching the door, to discover the cause of all this disturbance. The time seemed long, but in reality occupied only a few seconds, before the motion ceased suddenly, with a hitch, a backward jerk, and a concussion, which had well nigh thrown us all upon our faces; and the conductor appeared for a moment in the door, uttering with hasty tremor, 'Don't be alarmed, ladies and gentlemen—no danger! axle broke — cars off the track. We shall be detained here some time.' And away he went.

This announcement was met, I am sorry to say, with more murmurs at the detention than thanks for our providential escape from imminent peril. 'How unfortunate,' cried one. 'And in this lonely, disagreeable place, too,' added another. A third wondered where we were, one of the company familiar with the route volunteered the information that we were not many miles from Toronto.

Now, from the moment I sat down by my new acquaintance, I had divined—by that sort of mysterious sympathy impossible to define, but which will be understood by all converts to the Catholic faith—that she was, like myself, of this class, and she had formed the same conjecture in relation to me: which was, perhaps, the cause of our having formed a sudden intimacy not quite in keeping with the native reserve, not to say shyness, of both. Our first and simultaneous act, upon the occurrence of the incident recorded—in fortifying ourselves with the blessed sign of benediction and protection, so precious to all Catholics—had confirmed the mutual conjecture, and established a strong bond of sympathy between us.

As we left the cars together, I observed that she still scanned the surrounding localities with an earnestness that did not seem warranted by any claims they possessed to notice; for a more tame and uninteresting region can scarcely be

imagined than that in which we so reluctantly lingered.

'What wonderful changes forty years will make in the face of a new country,' she at length exclaimed. 'I passed this way, going and returning, in 1827, at an age when the deepest impressions are received, and upon an errand so peculiar in its nature as to make those impressions indelible. I have always carried the picture of the route, slowly traversed at that time, in my memory; but the transformation is so complete that I look in vain for one familiar feature.'

After walking for some time in silence, she resumed: 'It is strange how vividly the most minute details of that journey and the incidents connected with its return to me, now that we are so singularly detained in the vicinity of the scenes I then sought, though there is nothing in the aspect of the country to bring them back.'

By this time we had loitered into a shady nook, at no great distance from the disabled car; and its coolness inviting us to remain, after we had seated ourselves upon a rock overgrown with moss, I begged that she would while away the time of our detention by giving me a history of those incidents.

'The narrative may not prove very interesting to you,' she remarked. 'The recollection of events that took place around us in youth has more power to move ourselves than others. But of this you shall judge for yourself.'

'In 1826 I was visiting a dear friend who lived on St. Paul street, in Montreal. It was a pleasant evening in June, the close of one of those very warm days so common in the early part of a Canadian summer, where the interval between the snows and frosts of winter and the fervid heat, the verdure and bloom, of summer, is often so marvellously short as to astonish a stranger.'

'I was sitting in my room, at an open window that looked out on a narrow back court, the opposite of which was bounded by a row of low-roofed tenant houses parallel with the bank of the river, and over these, upon a magnificent view of the St. Lawrence, rolling gradually down past the city, at which I was never tired of gazing. I had been contemplating the mighty flood for some time, my thoughts wandering sorrowfully far up its waters and the stream of time to tranquil scenes now closed to me forever, when the words, 'Ah, Donald! that I should live to see this day! Do not ask me to sing the hymn we love this night, when my heart is so sair that it is like to break! I canna, canna sing the songs of Zion!' this strange place, and in our sharp, sharp griefs!' came floating to my ear on the evening breeze, from an open balcony along the rear of the tenements mentioned.

'There was a depth of anguish in the tones that touched the tenderest chord of sympathy in my heart, which was then writhing under the pangs of a recent sore bereavement.'

'My childhood had been passed near settlements of the Lowland Scotch in St. Lawrence county, New York, and I was therefore familiar with their dialect, the use of which added to my interest in the speaker, and I listened eagerly for further sounds. For some time I heard only a suppressed sobbing, and the low tones of a manly voice that seemed something an outburst of grief which was overwhelming his companion. At length I heard him say, with an accent that betokened a tongue accustomed to the use of the Gaelic dialect:

'It would drown the sorrows of my gentle Maggie, if she would only strive to sing. Let us not forget the dolors of our Blessed Mother in the agonies of our ain grief. I will sing, and mayhap she will join me.'

'Presently a singularly wild and plaintive air was borne to my ear upon the flowing cadences of a man's voice, as soft and musical as any to which I had ever listened. The words were in Gaelic, but the refrain at the close of each verse, 'Ora, Mater, Ora'—revealed their religion, and that it was a hymn of the Blessed Virgin to which I was listening. Before the close of the first verse he was joined by a voice, low and clear as the tones of a flute, bearing upon every strain the fervent outpourings of tender piety, though tremulous with emotion.

'Soon after it ceased, they retired within the open door of their room, and I heard them reciting alternately, in a low voice, that treasured devotion of the Catholic heart—of which I was then entirely ignorant, but which has since (thank God!) become inestimably precious to me the beads of the Holy Rosary.'

'Their evening prayers being over, they walked for some time on the balcony in silence, when she said in a trembling voice: 'It is a month to-morrow, Donald, a month to-morrow, sin' God took awa' our darlings: and och! wha wad hae thought I could bide sae lang! this cauld world without a sight o' their bonnie faces! I dinna ken why I live, when my sweet bairnies are buried far awa' their watery graves.'

'Ah, Maggie, why wad ye no' live for your poor Donald? He mourns for the bonnie bairnies, too; but he does not wish to leave his Maggie because God has taken them from her. Cast awa' these repining thoughts, ye own love, and let us go to the church, together to-morrow morning, and lay all our griefs before the altar of our God.'

'I heard no more; but resolving to accompany them to church, I arose very early the next morning, and preparing myself, watched an opportunity to join them, as they passed from the street where they were stepping into St. Paul street.'

'We walked on in silence after I joined them, and I saw that he was a tall, athletic young Highlander, of dark complexion, and with soft, black eyes; and whose remarkably fine face glowed with intelligence and mildness. Her beauty was more conformed to the Lowland type; her eyes being of a deep clear blue, her hair 'flaxen,' and her complexion exceedingly fair, while her teeth of snowy whiteness had a little prominence that caused them to be slightly revealed between her rose bud lips, even when her countenance was in repose. Her form was very slender, and her beautiful face so youthful as to seem child-like. I never saw such a perfect expression of soul absorbing yet patient and subdued sorrow as lingered upon every line of these beautiful features.'

'We entered the Recollect church, and I remained near them during the service. It was my first visit to a Catholic Church, and I had never before been present at the offering of the holy sacrifice.'

'Soon after our entry, I noticed that first one of them and then the other passed for a brief space of time into a little curtained box at the side of the aisle; but being ignorant of Catholic usages, I did not know for what purpose, though I was deeply impressed by their solemn, reverent manner, and the peaceful expression of their faces. During the progress of the service, which commenced soon after, I saw them approach the rail before the altar, and knew it was to receive holy communion. The sweetly serene and pensive light that rested upon their features after that solemn act is still vividly before me, notwithstanding the lapse of years.'

'When they left the church, I followed closely, determined to learn something, if possible, of their history. At the church door the man parted from her, and went away in an opposite direction from that by which we had come, leaving her to walk back alone. As I walked by her side, I addressed some casual remark to her and then, confessing the interest I felt in them on account of what I had accidentally overheard the evening before, begged her to tell me, as her sister in affliction, of the griefs which were oppressing her.'

'We sauntered slowly down the narrow streets from the Recollect Church to our places of abode, and our young hearts being drawn together by the bonds of sorrow, I mingled my tears in sympathy with hers while she related her artless story.'

'She was the only child of a minister of the Scottish Kirk, whose name was Lauder, and who died when she was quite young. Her mother, being left in feeble health, and destitute of any means of support, gladly accepted the home offered by her sister, who was married some years before to a highland gentleman by the name of Kenneth McGregor, and who became a Catholic after her marriage.'

'They were welcomed to the house of her aunt with true Scottish hospitality; and the most devoted and delicate attentions which affection could devise were lavished upon her broken-hearted mother, to soothe and comfort her while the little Maggie became at once the pet of a large household of cousins older than herself, who regarded her ever after as a dear sister. So kind were the whole family to her, that she was not permitted to feel the loss of her father in the sense most chilling and painful to the heart of the orphan, that of being an object of indifference and neglect. They went frequently to visit their Lowland friends, and kept up an intercourse with them during the life of her mother.'

'When she reached her twelfth year, the minister of the kirk which they had attended since their removal to the Highlands, with several of his small congregation, among whom were her mother and herself, made their profession to the Catholic faith, soon after which event her mother died.'

'When Maggie was in her fourteenth year, she became acquainted with Donald Macpherson, whose father was a warm friend of her uncle Kenneth. A strong attachment soon grew up between the young people, when she was sixteen she was married to Donald. When they had been married about six years, and had three children—the oldest of them a daughter five years old and named for herself, and the others boys—Donald thought best to join a colony

(among whom were two of his cousins and their families) who were preparing to depart for one of the new and remote districts of Upper Canada. Donald as the one best fitted by education for that purpose, was appointed surveyor of the wild lands, and to lay out roads in the wilderness.'

'They suffered much in parting with home and friends, but alas! subsequent floods of affliction obliterated all traces of those lighter griefs.'

'Their voyage was long and stormy, and when they were at length in sight of Newfoundland, and hoped they were about to reach the end of it in safety, a storm in the Gulf of St. Lawrence drove their vessel upon the rocks in the darkness of evening, and it was wrecked.—The poor young parents lashed their little Maggie firmly to a plank, and committed her to the waves; then taking each a child, and imploring the aid of heaven for themselves and their little ones, they plunged into the water. The mother was soon exhausted with the buffeting of the waves; her husband was bore from her arms just before she was thrown with the reach of friendly hands, and taken up unconscious. Donald was dashed against the rocks, and caught from the receding waters of an immense wave, shortly after, by those who were on the shore watching to render aid to the sufferers, insensible and apparently lifeless. The child he had was also lost.'

'They were taken to a fisherman's hut, and by the persevering efforts of those in attendance, animation was restored, though it was some days before they recovered their consciousness, only to find that their children and their relations had perished. But a small number of their companions on the voyage survived. Their goods and clothing, with the exception of what they wore, were all lost; but this was too trifling to be thought of in comparison with their other misfortunes.'

'As soon as they were able they proceeded to Montreal, in company with the survivors of the wreck, and Donald showed the certificate of his appointment as surveyor—which he fortunately carried in his vest pocket—to the mayor of the city, who provided comfortable quarters for them, and advised him to remain there until he should receive remittances from Scotland, for which they sent immediately after their arrival in Montreal.'

'They had not yet decided whether they would return when these funds should arrive, or go on to the place for which they had started, as their companions were anxious to have them do.'

'She expressed entire indifference as to going on or returning; her children bring gone, she did not care where she was. The terrified, imploring look of her darling Maggie, as she was dashed from them on her frail support, amid the merciless buffeting and boiling surges of the furious waves—her eyes straining to catch a glimpse of them, and her dear little arms extended so pitifully to them for protection—haunted the imagination of the broken hearted mother, and, he assured me, had not been absent from her thoughts one moment since, sleeping or waking.'

'My sincere and fervent sympathy seemed to afford her some comfort, and it was freely and heartily offered; for I was myself, as I have hinted, at that time a mourner over the recent loss of the kindest and best of fathers, whose only daughter and cherished pet I had ever been. His death, when I was yet but a child in years, was followed by severe pecuniary reverses, which had driven us from our home and involved our hitherto affluent and happy family in difficulties and poverty. In my ignorance of sorrow and of the religion which alone can sustain the afflicted, I had thought there could be none so unhappy or unfortunate as ourselves. I could not then believe the truth of the assurance, which was the solace of my invalid mother, that 'The Lord loveth whom he chasteneth.' I could not see the tender mercy and love that had inflicted this cruel bereavement and surrounded our helpless family with such calamities, in the clear light with which His grace afterward made it manifest to me.'

'But here was an instance far more inscrutable and heart-rending. Strangers in a strange land; and the broad Atlantic rolling between them and every heart upon which they had any special claim for sympathy; their children relentlessly torn from them; and all their worldly substance buried in the consuming deep! Why had they thus been singled out as marks for such a shower of fatal arrows? I pondered much upon it, and my eyes were opened to see the mercies that had been mingled with the chastisements of a loving Father in our own case. We had numerous and kind friends, whose sympathy had poured balm upon our wounded spirits, and whose generous hands had been opened to aid us in our necessities. Of these, the dear friends with whom I was then staying had been among the first, and their assistance and advice at that dark period of my life have ever been remembered with gratitude.'

'While my new acquaintances remained in Montreal, I passed much time with poor Maggie, to the entire satisfaction of my friends, to whom I communicated the sorrowful story on the day I heard it, and whose active sympathy contributed much towards the relief and comfort of the youthful mourners.'

'When they at length received the expected funds from Scotland, they decided to comply with the wishes of their surviving fellow-sufferers in exile and affliction, by accompanying them, according to their original intention, to Upper Canada. Our parting was very affecting. They had learned to look upon my friends as kind benefactors, while they regarded me as a sister. I felt very lonely after they were gone; but the lesson I had learned from my intercourse with them was never forgotten. Their unaided and unquestioning acquiescence with will of God, and the persistent patience with which every action of their daily lives expressed, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' made a permanent impression on my mind.'

'At the invitation and by the advice of my friends, I remained much longer in Montreal than I at first intended, in order to learn the French language, and to acquire the knowledge of some other branches, for which superior facilities were presented by the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, and which were necessary to advance my education sufficiently to fit me for teaching, the object I then had in view.'

'Nearly a year had passed since our parting with the Macphersons, when some friends from Vermont arrived on a visit to those with whom I was staying. I was requested, in consequence of the indisposition of the lady of the house, to accompany them to several places of interest in the city which they wished to see. Among these was the house of the 'Grey Nuns,' a sisterhood devoted to the care of a great number of foundlings. In passing through the rooms appropriated to the children, I was particularly attracted by the face and attitude of a delicate-looking little girl of surprising beauty, who was sitting on the floor and devoting herself to the care and amusement of a little boy about two years old, whose beauty equalled her own, though entirely different in character. She was fair as a lily; her large blue eyes were shaded by drooping lids and long silken lashes, which imparted a touching pensiveness to their expression, while her golden hair floated in shining curls to her shoulders. The little boy's complexion was dark and clear, his black eyes soft and brilliant. The startling timidity combined with searching earnestness in their expression as he raised them to mine and encountered my admiring gaze thrilled my very soul, and turning to the good Sister who was conducting us, I exclaimed, pointing to them:

'What beautiful children!'

'Yes,' she said, with fond pride, and evidently flattered by our notice of her pets, 'they are indeed beautiful, and alas! their misfortunes are as striking as their beauty. They belonged to a Scotch family on board a vessel that was wrecked off Newfoundland, and their parents perished. Mr. Ferguson, a Scotch gentleman in very infirm health, from our city, was visiting some friends in that vicinity, and happened to be passing in a carriage with one of them on the evening of the storm and the shipwreck, when, noticing the torches and bustle on the shore, they stopped to inquire the cause and to render assistance, if possible, to those who were washed ashore. This little girl had been lashed to a plank, and by a wonderful Providence, when the baby was borne away from his mother, the same wave carried him within reach of his little sister, who seized and clung to him as with a dyot grasp, until she was snatched insensible by Mr. Ferguson from the top of a wave which rolled far up on the shore, and would have buried them back in its receding surf but for a powerful effort on his part, which had nearly cost him his life, for he received injuries in the act which rendered him almost helpless for some weeks. His friend took the children and himself in the carriage to his residence, over two miles distant. Mr. Ferguson was unable to leave his bed for some weeks. Unfortunately the physician of that neighborhood was absent.'

'It was long before they succeeded in restoring any signs of life to either of the children, and when their efforts were at length rewarded by faint evidences of returning animation, they had to exert themselves to the utmost for many days to keep alive the vital spark. When they began to revive, another difficulty met their devoted friends. The nerves of the little girl had sustained so severe a shock that she could not be aroused to a sense of anything around her. When the physician returned he gave little hopes of her recovery.'

'As soon as the gentleman who had taken them to his house dared to leave them and Mr. Ferguson so long, he went to inquire after the