

'Milly, Milly, don't!' pleaded the mother despairingly.

'You won't mind hearing it now,' continued the sick girl. 'Long ago, when I was a child, I used to steal off to the little chapel at home—St. Margaret's. I knew that father would be angry, he used to say such dreadful things about Catholics, so I never told. It was so beautiful, mother—the lights, the flowers, the music, the little boys in their red and white gowns, the priest in his shining robes! Once I saw old Aunt Norine kneeling near the altar, and I stole up to her; she patted my curly head and made me kneel down at her side. Then she took me home with her, and gave me cherries from the tree that shaded her porch. Oh, what a beautiful porch it was, with the red roses climbing over its white pillars, and the cool breeze blowing up from the river below.'

And the speaker sank back among her pillows with a long, wistful sigh.

The mother set her strong lips together in a hard, thin line. She could have cried out in her pain as Milly spoke. The old porch, the old home, the beautiful, blessed life that had been hers in the long ago, for which her child was hungering, body and soul! All night long the memory lingered, rising like the desert mirage before the dying traveller's despairing eyes. All night long, while Milly tossed restlessly in delirium, raving of flowing waters and waving trees, the sword seemed turning in the mother's heart.

The lamp burned low in the close little chamber; the hoarse cries of drunken revellers came from the street below. In the strange, dead hour that follows midnight, Milly started up, panting and wide-eyed, struggling for breath.

'I am afraid,' came the piteous, gasping cry—'I am afraid to go out in the darkness! Help me, mother—help me—to die!'

And then, at last, Marian Morton called her little boy from his wretched pallet and bade him go find a priest.

Father Maurice came at once—a white-haired old man, with kind, dim eyes and gentle voice.

'My child is dying!' was the greeting of the haggard woman who met him at the threshold. 'It is God's just judgment on me I have robbed her of faith, of hope, of heaven. She is dying unbaptised!'

'May God forgive you, my daughter' was the pitying answer, and Father Maurice stepped to the bed where the dying girl lay struggling in fear and agony, took her icy hand, and whispered words of comfort and hope.

In a little while the waters of regeneration were poured upon Milly's pale brow, and when the grey dawn trembled in the narrow window, the young soul went forth, spotless in its baptismal innocence, into the radiance of Eternal Light.

III.

Five days later a crushed and humbled penitent knelt before Father Maurice's altar. Penniless, homeless, heart-broken Marian Morton bowed at last in sorrow and submission at the feet of her God.

Her little household goods had been taken by her creditors; her boys were to go to the asylum on the morrow; Milly lay, her weary hands folded on her breast, in a nameless grave; yet for the first time in long, bitter years her mother's proud, restless heart was at peace.

The 'Stations' had been the penance fitly imposed by her confessor, and, with Aunt Norine's prayer-book—that had been cast out from the bureau drawer when her furniture was sold—Marian Morton prepared to make the Way of the Cross.

The tarnished clasp of the old prayer-book was stiff with rust, but, once unfastened, the pages, still stained with Aunt Norine's tears, fell open at a touch. Pressed close within the yellow leaves, as if marking the old lady's favorite devotion, was a folded sheet of paper.

'My beloved niece and goddaughter, Marian Morton,' were the words that started out before the mourner's tear-dimmed eyes, bringing with them bitter, remorseful memories of that summer evening long ago when the old prayer-book had been flung aside, unopened, scorned, all its lessons of faith and hope and love forgotten.

Wondering, she read on, even there at the foot of the altar, bewildered, confused, breathless. What did they mean, those cramped lines, witnessed, attested, signed the week before Aunt Norine's death?

That by this late deed of gift the old home was hers; that porch and roses, trees and river, all that her dying child had craved, all that would have given health and life, had been within her hold, her touch these long, cruel years; that all that the pastor of St. Margaret's held in trust, this yellowing bit of paper made her own. And Milly, whose childlike touch had softened the old woman's heart—Milly had died

paring for cool waters, pining for the breeze and bloom held in the old prayer-book's rusting clasp.

Gasping and panting, the wretched mother started to her feet in remorseful agony. But aisle and pillar seemed to reel around her, and she fell fainting and senseless, Aunt Norine's legacy clasped at last in her icy hand.

A gentle, white-haired woman sits on the rose-wreathed porch, and listens to the rippling flow of the willow-girdled river. The shout of her happy boys comes from meadow and stream, and the wide halls of Aunt Norine's old home echo with song and music and laughter. Life is still full of duty and love to the mistress of the great house, whose doors are open to the needy, the sorrowful, the sinful of every rank and age and race.

But one spot on Mrs. Morton's wide beautiful grounds is kept sacred from all intrusion. A high trellis covered by clambering roses guards its approach. And far down by the river-shore the drooping willows sweep a spotless pedestal, on which a slender marble figure is poised as if for upward flight. The inscription below reads simply:

Milly,
Who Died August 4, 18—. *Mea Maxima Culpa.*

And the low ripple of the river seems always to echo the penitent words that are the burden of Marian Morton's prayer by night and day: *Mea Culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!—Ave Maria.*

The Catholic World

ENGLAND—Father David Fleming

The General of the Franciscans has received a communication from the Holy Father to the effect that the Very Rev. Father David Fleming, although absent from Rome for the time being, is still to remain, by the Holy Father's special wish, a Consultor of the Holy Office. The Holy Office is the most important of the Roman Congregations, the president of which is the Holy Father himself.

Catholic Successes at Oxford

Mr. Cyril Martindale, S.J., of Pope's Hall, Oxford, has completed his triumphant career at the University by securing a first class in the Final Classical School. The honors obtained by Mr. Martindale (who is an old Harrow boy, and a convert to the Catholic Church) include a first class in Moderations and 'Greats,' the Hertford and Craven Classical Scholarships, the Chancellor's Latin Verse Prize, and the Gaisford Prize for Greek Verse. Other Catholic successes at the final examinations include second classes in 'Greats' obtained by Mr. Butler, S.J., and Mr. Devas, of Corpus (son of the well known writer on political economy), and second classes in Modern History obtained by Mr. Nolan, of New College, and Mr. B. Nevill, of Hunter Blair's Hall.

FRANCE—Reaping the Whirlwind

The French Republic (writes a Paris correspondent) is reaping the whirlwind which it has sown in educational matters. In its efforts to 'emancipate' the young from all religious influences, it has expelled those natural educationalists, the Religious Congregations, from the schools, and has replaced them by men whose principles and methods could never be too 'advanced.' The result is that the French schoolmaster has become a byword. His 'socialistic' and 'internationalistic' tendencies and the way in which he contemptuously brushes aside the past and abuses the glories of France have been giving a good deal of trouble, not only to parents, but to the educational authorities as well. The Ministère de l'Instruction Publique has had to intervene in the matter of the Schoolmasters' Association of Brittany, to address severe remonstrances to some of the members, and to dismiss others. And the tendency noticeable in Brittany is making itself felt in other parts of France as well. M. Rouvier's Cabinet is endeavoring to counteract as much as possible the effect of the unwise encouragement given to these people by M. Combes, but the fight is likely to be a long one and a scandalous one. One of the first steps of M. Rouvier has been to prohibit the use in the schools of a 'Manual of History' by Professor Herve, who is an advanced Socialist, and who made himself famous by his propaganda against what he calls 'the fetish of fatherland.'