

been so long banished, Elizabeth left America, she declared, forever. No hint of her wrong-doing ever crept out, and when the fair-weather friends of old came flocking about them, the two, who had been, so sorely tried, knew what value to place on their pleasant speeches and effusive apologies.

That was many years ago. Laura has been, for a number of these years, the loving and beloved wife of Dr. Burton. He, as well as her best friend and counselor, Father Reade, can say, as the latter said of old:

'She has the firmest faith I ever saw in a woman.' From Benjamin Wing's daughter, Elizabeth, they never heard again.—Benziger's Magazine.

## THE WOMAN WHO NEVER DID WRONG.

The housekeeper announced, 'Miss Tallon, Father!' Father O'Connor set his book-mark in at the eviction scene of 'Luke Delmege,' and with a momentary compression of the lips that meant facing a frequent and not altogether agreeable duty, passed into the parlor.

This was the meeting day of the Society of St. Martha, and Miss Tallon always called on him directly after adjournment. Through several years' experience he knew that these calls always meant complaints—more in sorrow than in anger, to be sure—of the other officers or of certain members; with a contrast hardly conscious of her own fidelity to duty, and the sacrifices she had made for the society and its beneficiaries.

For Miss Tallon was president of the society. She was 'the head of everything among the Catholic women of Brucetown,' as any member of St. Joseph's parish would have explained to a stranger. Indeed, if the Golden Rose or the Laetare Medal were to be given in Brucetown, the people would have deemed it Miss Tallon's inalienable right.

Truly, she had many claims, ancestral and personal, on local Catholic gratitude. Her grandfather had given the site of St. Joseph's, now one of the most valuable properties in the town, together with a generous offering to the building fund. At the dedication of the church, her father's gift was the high altar and two memorial windows; and on her parents' death, Miss Tallon and her brothers and sisters—all married but herself—had given a beautiful marble altar, in keeping with her father's earlier gift, to the Lady Chapel.

In wealth and respectability, the Tallons had long been the foremost Catholics in Brucetown. Miss Tallon, as the eldest and most masterful, held life tenure of the family residence, a few blocks from St. Joseph's, where her aged uncle and two maids growing gray in the service of the house, abode with her.

She was nearing her fortieth year in single blessedness, and ably keeping up the family tradition of generosity to religion; adding thereunto new forms of social service, not only among the familiar poor, but among the oft-times needy foreigners drawn so numerously to Brucetown in recent years by the big wicker furniture manufactory.

Yet, while everyone respected Miss Tallon and acknowledged all her claims, there was hardly one who would not have braced himself for a private interview with her just as Father O'Connor did.

'How are you, Julie?' asked the priest, pleasantly. He had baptized every one of the third generation of the Tallons, and had seen this one grow from infancy to her prime maturity; he himself verged on his vigorous and young-hearted old age.

'Well, considering everything,' sighed the lady, standing respectfully, as the priest settled himself as well as he could in the slippery horse-hair arm chair opposite her.

'I trust there is no trouble in the family,' said Father O'Connor, with kindly solicitude.

'No, indeed, we never have trouble, in the ordinary acceptance of the word,' rejoined Miss Tallon, with a perceptible stiffening of her exceedingly erect person.

All the Tallons were as proper as Miss Tallon herself. The young people were the painful models of the various schools they attended. On their occasional visits to Brucetown, Father O'Connor would have given much to see one of these decorous nephews 'hanging on behind' to a grocer's cart; or one of the nieces with a torn gown or hair disordered in healthful play; just as he wished for an occasional lapse from grammatical accuracy or a hearty laugh from the model aunt herself.

'I thought of possible illness,' said the priest gently. 'This is a sickly season.'

'Our family rarely has illness. All the children have inherited sound constitutions and get the best of care. No, it is a little worry about our St. Martha's Society. To be frank with you, Father O'Connor, it was a mistake to admit Mrs. Thornton to membership.'

'Why, she seems to be a very constant and eligible visitor among the poor.'

'That is not the question, Father. It is her bad influence at the meetings. She is so very frivolous; all for dress and jokes and the notice of men, as if she were a badly brought up girl of eighteen, instead of—There, look at her now!'

The lady in question was passing, evidently happy in the company of the tall man of middle age, who, beaming with good fellowship, had to bend a bit to catch the words of the bright-faced, gaily dressed little widow.

'I suppose it's only a matter of taste,' said the priest, keeping his mind on the spoken criticism, and ignoring Mrs. Thornton's escort. 'A young woman adorning herself always seems to be like a bird sitting on a bough and preening its feathers. It's nature, and so long as it's modest—'

'But Mrs. Thornton is far from young: she is at least as old as I am.'

'And you are still a young girl to me,' he answered.

But Miss Tallon was not to be placated nor diverted from her grievance. Was it zeal undefiled for righteousness, or was it John Hamilton's apparent admiration for the little widow that opened the eyes of a woman who never blundered, to the shortcomings of her frailer sister? The human heart is a labyrinth in which the wanderer is as often surprised by unlooked-for evil as by unlooked-for good. Few knew its tortuous windings better than Father O'Connor.

Miss Tallon's 'might have beens' as to Holy Matrimony had better ground than most of those maiden ladies verging on middle age. Was she not an heiress and good to look at even yet, though a little sharp of feature and angular of figure? Who in Brucetown, or even in the city a hundred miles east of it, where most of her family dwelt, equalled her in delicate refinement of dress—the result, no doubt, of observant sojourns in Paris, with a well-filled purse.

But the advances of all suitors were repelled with gentle but unmistakable coldness; and only one besides herself realised that John Hamilton, the playmate of her childhood, who having acquired a competence, could not be suspected of mercenary motives, might at any time have had that well-controlled heart for the asking. True, he had sacrificed many of his best years to the claims of filial and brotherly duty, but at last he was free. And now, if he paid to any woman attention in which the little world of Brucetown could read the slightest significance, it was to this gaudy, flippant stranger.

This was the thought, albeit vague and unacknowledged, which tortured Miss Tallon during the uncomfortable silence which had fallen between herself and her old friend.

'But, there is nothing so wrong as to be ground for remonstrance,' said the priest at last.

'Only that she is slangy and flippant to the verge of irreverence, brazen in her pursuit of men's attentions, and, having a ready though hardly refined humor, she has cast a sort of spell over all our younger members. But, knowing her brothers and sisters as we do, what could we expect?'

The priest had no answer, for he had himself accounted it a miracle of grace that the youngest of the wild and godless family in question had been brought through her widowhood and the death of her idolized child within the range of his influence, and finally into the Church.

'I had hoped so much for both from a possible friendship between you,' he said regretfully.

'I can't imagine what Mrs. Thornton could have done for me,' said Miss Tallon coldly. But, rising, 'I must go. I have already taken far too much of your valuable time.'

'Don't mention it. My thought was rather of what you might have done for Mrs. Thornton. At least, dear child, knowing all the good God delivered her from in bringing her into the Church, you will make allowance for some little foolishness, not yet outgrown, and pray for her perseverance. We who have always had the faith cannot quite enter into the difficulties of a convert.'

'It strikes me that we are more likely to err on the side of over-indulgence than of neglect, where converts are concerned. Good evening, Father.'

Miss Tallon was down the steps of the rectory before Father O'Connor had found another parting word.