

Now that his attention had been called to it, the good priest had to admit Mrs. Thornton's flippancy, and her ready and thoughtless wit that seldom stopped to note where its sharp arrows pierced. Had he not more than once in his occasional visits to the Society of St. Martha, seen the droll twinkle of the eye with which she received the measured utterances of the stately president? Had he not even caught her in a telling caricature of the president's good manner? The offender received his remonstrances with a penitent sigh, but her lowered eyelids scarcely veiled two mirthful sparkles. There was no doubt, too, that she made the most of her widow's privileges in leading honest John Hamilton on a dance for her amusement.

Yet among the poorest of his flock her name was never mentioned except in benediction; her coming the herald of unfailing relief and gladness. But Miss Tallon also was assiduous in her visits to the poor; generous with material goods, lavish of advice and correction.

As one victim of adverse fortune was wont to put it: "Yes, I know she has given me many a thing, but she makes a body feel like a worm of the earth at the same time. Its 'Why don't you keep yourself clean?' and 'Why don't you mend your clothes?'" as if a body had two pairs of hands and could be goin' all day, after being up all night with a sick baby, to say nothin' of a drunken husband thrown in now and again. But the little woman, God bless her! In she comes, and not a word about the dirt, but she takes up the baby herself, and bathes him as nice as you please, and makes me lie down for a couple of hours while she straightens up things and leaves a bit of dinner ready for us before she's off. And I've known her many a time to go down on her knees and wash poor old Granny Grogan's feet, makin' nothin' but a joke of it; and the other day she was at the Polack's, way down the road where nobody else goes. The poor mother had hardly the clothes to cover her, and didn't that good little creature slip off her old warm woollen skirt, savin' your presence, and put it right onto Mrs. Zamfoxy, or whatever you call her."

Sometimes the priest found a poor sick room made beautiful with the flowers Mrs. Thornton had carried thither. Often he came upon her perfectly at home in some wretched hovel, while she mended the tattered clothing of the children and made them presentable for school. She had not much to give. She had to manage her little income well to keep up appearances, but she gave of her time and labor without stint, and forgot the charities of the day in the girlish pranks of flirtation of the evening.

"After all," mused Father O'Connor, "she has never an ill word of anyone, and if she only had the vocation she would make a grand Sister of Charity." But he smiled in spite of himself at the thought of Mrs. Thornton in a convent; the while he prayed for something to soften the daily increasing bitterness of Miss Tallon's heart toward Mrs. Thornton.

It had been a trying day for Miss Tallon. Mrs. Thornton's absence from the meeting of the Society of St. Martha had not been a relief; for on all sides there were regrets for her.

"She is so handy about making things over, and so ready to show one how," said even Rosa Deering, erstwhile Miss Tallon's shy and silent worshipper.

For once Miss Tallon did not call on Father O'Connor after the meeting. She hastened back to the stately solitude of her own home, where she might be free of bitter thoughts of the woman who was supplanting her, and whose mischievous qualities seemed hidden from all eyes save her own. She would have denied herself even to Mr. Hamilton, who still visited her now and then, but that she met him face to face in the hall before the maid could announce him. Almost on his heels came Father O'Connor.

"I haven't seen Mrs. Thornton for more than a week. What has become of her?" asked the former. His hostess had heard the same words forty times that afternoon. This was the last straw. A bitter word that could never have been recalled sprang to her lips, but the priest's heavier voice drowned it unheard.

"Oh, Mrs. Thornton! Why, the children of those poor Zamofskys, down the road from the hollow, all have malignant diphtheria; the mother is in a bad way herself, and could get no help, so Mrs. Thornton went over last week, and shut herself up with them, 'for better or worse,'" as she says. I found it out only this afternoon. Dr. Stone thinks the children will come through all right—she's a great little nurse—but he fears for her, for all that she makes so light of it."

"She's a brick!" cried John Hamilton, "but she must be relieved. Did you ever hear of anything finer Miss Tallon?"

The priest held his breath; but the demon was exorcised.

"The woman is a saint," said Miss Tallon, "and I am not worthy to loose the shoes from her feet."

"Oh, Miss Tallon, you would have done as much if you knew." There was no mistaking the sincerity of the man's voice and eyes.

"No matter about me. The question is of relieving her," said Miss Tallon, hurrying to the telephone, as she spoke. She was a woman who always had her wits about her in an emergency.

But the relief came too late. The Zamofsky children would recover, but their brave little nurse was poisoned through and through with the malignant disease.

"I suspected it," Mrs. Thornton said calmly, when Father O'Connor told her, and bade her prepare for her last hour. She was in Miss Tallon's best chamber, with an experienced nurse in attendance. Realising her change of abode, she smiled faintly.

"Well, Father, in this case it will be as blessed to receive as to give. She is a good woman, with a Puritan streak in her, and I have been her torment."

"I meant no harm. I never cared a pin for John Hamilton. . . . nor he for me. . . . but I was full of . . . levity, you call it . . . and her seriousness drew out all my mischief. . . . You never knew; but there's insanity in our family. . . . and I was fearing it, fighting it all the time. . . . my own happy hours were when I was in church or with the poor. . . . Then I forgot. . . . The rest of the time I just had to keep fooling. . . . Tell her, and tell her, too, I'm glad to die her debtor. . . . God was so good to give me that chance with the Zamofskys."

"It will count—won't it, Father?"

"Count, my child! Haven't you laid down your life for those poor strangers? You know what our Lord has promised for even a cup of cold water given in His name; and you have given your all."

The tears were on the old priest's cheeks as he gave the last Sacraments to the dying woman, and stood by her through her agony, terrible, but mercifully short.

After Mrs. Thornton's death, Brucetown folk noticed a great change in Miss Tallon. The poor people down in the hollow said she was like their little favorite come back—only without the fun. Instead, were winning gentleness and humanity which they could not quite express, but which they came to like as well. But no one found the change sweeter than John Hamilton, and when, by and by, he and Miss Tallon decided to spend the rest of their days together, their little world was sure that this was one of the marriages made in Heaven—"Monitor."

The Queensland Irish Association (Brisbane) makes a good showing in its annual report. The year began with a nominal credit balance of £35 19s 1d, the assets being £357 16s 10d, with liabilities amounting to £74 15s 5d, leaving a debit balance of £38 16s 4d. At the end of the year the assets amounted to £570 19s 4d, including a credit balance of £234 14s 9d, while the liabilities were nil. During the year 156 new members were admitted, and after accounting for losses by death, resignation, etc., there were 290 financial members on the register.

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