

rose obediently to go in search of the surplice. Come with me, Jack,' she said.

Hand in hand the brother and sister went out to the little Episcopal church next door. Mildred was sufficiently familiar with the place to be able to find the surplice in the moonlight, and Jack seated himself at the organ while she went to the sacristy in search of it. The youth struck a few minor chords and improvised a plaintive melody. Then voice and organ swelled in the 'Misere-re,' When his sister joined him she knelt; and all the fervor of two young hearts was poured forth while their reverent tones filled the little church with pathetic, earnest prayer.

'Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.'

'We must first conquer the Indians that are within ourselves, Milly dear,' the brother said as they went home together; 'and if we have patience and do that well, all the rest will come.'

The brother returned next day to the theological seminary, and the sister resumed her ordinary duties with a slight sense of relief that no heroic sacrifice was demanded of her as yet. She was ease-loving by nature and there seemed to be no present reason why she should not indulge in all that it craved. If, as occasionally happened, the longing for higher things grew so intense as to be troublesome, she would try to triumph over conscience by assuring herself that since her mother had forbidden her to talk of entering a Sisterhood, there was nothing better to be done than to make the most of the charming country life, to entertain and be entertained by congenial friends, and to give to the little Episcopal church next door such service as it required. So she made herself a dainty little housekeeper, and filled any leisure that remained with desultory reading.

Ordinarily, when conscience was stirred it was due to a letter from Jack—Jack was so terribly in earnest. But perhaps Mildred's letters were not quite satisfactory to him, for as the months wore on his religious enthusiasm found freer vent in his letters to his mother. She treasured these letters as only mothers can treasure the epistles of the boy who is closest to their hearts, and she did not always share them, even with her daughter. Thus it happened that Mildred was quite unprepared for the news she was to receive when her mother called her from the lawn where she was enjoying a novel while revelling in the delights of a perfect autumn day. The odor of ripened fruit, the singing of birds, the chirping of insects were thereafter associated in her mind with the event of that hour.

When Mildred had obeyed the unwelcome summons she found her mother bowed over an open letter in her brother's handwriting, weeping with uncontrollable grief. Mildred could recall having seen her mother weep but once before in her life. That had been when she had come from a neighboring town where she had seen a poor widow with six little children suffering for want both of bread and of fire—a thing happily unknown in her own prosperous little village.

'Mother!' gasped Mildred. Was her brother dead? No, for there was his letter. The mother pointed to it, unable to speak. Mildred took it up and read:

'My dear Mother,—I have before me to-day the hardest task I ever had, one the very thought of which has taken the life all out of me for the past two months. It is to tell you that I was this morning received into the Roman Catholic Church. God knows how I have prayed, and do pray, that He will soften the grief to you. You know how from a child I have had an instinctive longing for the Catholic Church; but you do not know how I have struggled and fought down that longing. I made a vow some time ago that nothing but the conviction that I could not otherwise be saved would make me leave the Anglican Church for Rome. I never went near Catholic churches, never saw Catholics, priests or lay; but the difficulties I had put away were only growing steadily. Against my own will I have had to do what I have done, or have a bad conscience for the rest of my life. It is a relief to be rid of my only secret from you—though I know how much it will grieve the dear ones at home.'

'Lovingly your only son,
'JOHN.'

Mildred was at first too stunned to speak, but her mother's grief aroused her from her stupefaction. She put her arms around her and tried to soothe her with caresses and loving words.

'Do not grieve so, dearest. We know that our Jack would do nothing but what he thought was right. Who knows but what he may be as nearly right as we are?'

'Mildred!' said her mother in a tone of stern reproof. 'Well,' said Mildred doubtfully, 'when I told our rector a short time ago that I believe Our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament, he asked me for my authority; and I could not answer him. I heard him

admit that he had always felt a great drawing towards the Church of Rome, and that he never allowed himself to read any works of controversy lest his peace should be disturbed. I cannot see why we should fear to look at both sides, if we are certain that we are in the right. I do not like the idea of looking at but one side of a question.'

'Am I to lose both my children?' wailed the poor mother. And Mildred put her arms around her and kissed and comforted her as best she could.

The long loving letters which came to her from her boy did much to soothe the mother's grief, and time, the great consoler, helped with the work; but it was different with Mildred. She had taken the change more philosophically in the beginning, but as the months and years wore on it was she who suffered most. She had always looked to her brother for guidance and she was like a ship without a rudder now that she could no longer apply to him for direction. She lost her cheerfulness and went about her ordinary duties so listlessly that her mother became seriously alarmed.

The girl was seated on the portico alone one evening when the rector came to call. Noting her dejected attitude, he seated himself beside her, asking,

'What is the matter, Miss Mildred?'

'There is nothing the matter, thank you; I am quite well.'

'Are you grieving over your brother's delinquency?'

'Not at all,' said Mildred proudly. 'John is thoroughly conscientious, and I should be sorry to object to his following his conscience. I know there are people in this village,' she added with a touch of bitterness, 'who would be glad to revive Puritan methods and force all to revolve within their two-inch limit.'

'I am not one of them,' said the rector gently.

'I know it,' replied Mildred, somewhat softened by the ready sympathy. 'I am not quite sure that I know what the matter is with me, Mr. Richards. Nothing interests me, and life no longer seems worth while.'

There was silence for a few moments, and then the girl continued:

'I wanted to go to Baltimore to try working with our Sisters there, but mother objects. Of course I could not leave here unless she were willing now.'

'Would she object to a compromise?' asked the rector. 'I have been thinking for some time of the great need of trained nurses which exists in this diocese. It is usually impossible to obtain even a very poor nurse. Now, if you were to enter a training school in one of our large cities and take a thorough course, you might perhaps be able to satisfy your religious longings a little later by founding an Order of nursing Sisters who would be prepared to care for the sick in their own homes at the call of the Bishop. I can think of no more useful life for women or of one that would be more pleasing to Him Who commanded His apostles to heal the sick.'

Mildred had brightened perceptibly while the rector talked. She was now an entirely different person in appearance as well as in mental attitude from the girl of half an hour ago.

'My life would be perfectly happy if I could do that,' she said gently.

'Well, think of it, and pray for light. I am going in to have a talk with your parents now,' and the rector sought the little sitting-room where he was quite at home, leaving Mildred to think and pray and dream in the old-time fashion. Only Jack could not share her life now!

The subject was not mentioned to her by her parents that evening, and much as Mildred longed to discuss it she could not bear to wound them by broaching it. But she had not long to wait. Her mother joined her the next day in her favorite retreat in the orchard, and after a little desultory conversation asked,

'Are you anxious to leave home, dear, to carry out the rector's plan?'

'Mother!' gasped Mildred, springing to her feet.

'Then you may go,' the mother said quietly. And Mildred sobbed out her thanks in her mother's arms.

O incomparable depths of mother's love!—Mildred felt its full force in the convulsive sobs her mother could not suppress as she clasped her in her arms on the morning of her departure. It was very hard to go, and only pride prevented her from abandoning her project. She had overheard her father attempting to console her mother. He had said:

'Don't be troubled. It is only one of Milly's whims. She will be back in a month and more satisfied than ever before to remain in the dear home nest.'

But, save for an occasional vacation, Mildred was never to know the dear old home again.

It was twilight in the old pavilion of one of our large city hospitals. Mildred had just been left on duty alone. She stood at one end of the long ward and looked down