

than he anticipated; however, he set sail at last for England to take up his residence in his beautiful Sussex home.

II.

After an absence of several years Cecil Stanmore stood once more beneath the portal of his ancestral home, unexpected and unannounced. All nature was arrayed in her most festive adornment at this home-coming of 'the young squire,' as he was commonly called.

Cecil was deeply touched at the acclamations of delight with which he was received on all sides and in every direction. It was the dawn of a new era for those poor people who had suffered much since the decease of the squire and his good lady.

Cecil was not unmindful of the rosary in his charge and he was impatient to restore it as speedily as possible to its owner, but unavoidable business with his agent detained him for a few days, and more than a week had elapsed from the day he found it before he had his horse saddled and set forth on his projected visit to his godmother, Mrs. Lamoureux.

'There, I do think St. Anthony ought to grant my petitions now. Don't you think so, dear Mrs. Lamoureux? This is the last day of the novena, you know.'

The speaker had just finished placing some exquisite roses around the small statue that stood on a bracket in Mrs. Lamoureux's drawing-room, and she concluded her sentence by turning her sweet, expressive countenance towards her friend.

Mrs. Lamoureux had ceased her embroidery, and her hands lay idly in her lap as she watched Margaret's deft fingers so tastefully arranging the flowers.

'I do think he ought to send your rosary, dear, but as for the other petition, oh, Margaret, I was just thinking and hoping that St. Anthony had sent me a daughter, and you a home. My dear, I wish you would never leave me.'

Margaret came over and sat down on a low stool near Mrs. Lamoureux. 'Dearest and best of friends,' she said, 'I know you would spoil me if you could, but I cannot consent to be a burden on you always. I am poor now and must work for my living, for you know I lost everything at my uncle's death, but don't think I have any regrets about that—no, indeed.'

Mrs. Lamoureux looked down sympathetically at her young friend, who continued:

'Now, I have asked St. Anthony to find me such a place, and although I want him to send me my rosary without delay, well,' she added with a smile, 'I am not going to hurry him over the other matter. Let me see—this is June, and if he would find for me a suitable place in September I should enjoy three months of your society—that is, if you will be burdened with me for so long a time, dear Mrs. Lamoureux.'

Mrs. Lamoureux took hold of her hand. 'Well, Maggie,' she said, 'I have given ear to all you have to say: now you in turn must listen to my plans. In the first place, as for being a burden to me, you know that is absurd and all nonsense. What I propose is—'

But all further conversation was here interrupted by the announcement of a visitor.

'Mr. Cecil Stanmore.'

Mrs. Lamoureux arose and faced the caller in astonishment. 'Cecil, my dear boy,' she exclaimed, 'is it really you? Can I believe my eyes?'

You have excellent testimony, replied Cecil laughingly, as he heartily shook hands with his godmother, and then he was introduced to Margaret.

Well, this is an unexpected pleasure,' said Mrs. Lamoureux. 'I thought you were abroad. When did you return?'

'Only a few days since,' replied Cecil, 'and I was compelled by a twofold duty to call upon you with as little delay as possible—the combined duty and pleasure of paying my devoirs to my respected godmother, and the duty of restoring this—and he drew out the rosary—to Miss Seager.'

Margaret gave an exclamation of delight at the sight of her restored treasure, and Cecil thought, beautiful as she looked the first day he saw her in her sorrows and her tears, surpassingly so was she now with the look of radiant happiness on her face.

'Oh! how did you get it? where did you find it?' she asked as she took it from his hand. 'But I rather suspect St. Anthony had something to do with it,' she added, as her heart sent up an ejaculation of thanksgiving.

Cecil then related the incident of his finding the rosary, with which facts the reader is already acquainted.

'I do not wonder that you regretted losing it,' said Cecil in conclusion. 'It is such a beautiful rosary, it must be very valuable.'

'It was given to me by my aunt and uncle as a souvenir of my First Communion,' answered Margaret. 'For that reason I value it most.'

And then they talked of other matters—Cecil's travels abroad, where he had been and what he had seen, the pictures he had painted, and various other subjects.

A very pleasant afternoon was passed, and evening closed in all too soon for Cecil. He made his adieux and rode leisurely home in the fine summer twilight, whilst an unwonted feeling of contentment took possession of his heart.

This was but the beginning of frequent visits from Cecil. He found his godmother's advice invaluable concerning various plans and projects, and whatever philanthropic scheme he had on hand. If a children's tea or school treat was to be organised he invariably wanted to consult and ask the advice of Mrs. Lamoureux, whom he playfully designated his 'fairy godmother,' and a week seldom passed by without his paying her a visit.

Cecil meanwhile derived more and more pleasure from this intercourse with his friends; but he was no self-deceiver, and his

own feelings soon revealed to him the fact that, worthy as Mrs. Lamoureux was of inestimable esteem, yet it was someone else with a younger and fairer face who was the object of his great attraction. Yes, Cecil awoke to the fact that his heart had passed into the keeping of another. He was aware of Margaret's intention to leave Mrs. Lamoureux in the month of September, and as August drew to a close he dreaded to think that the ray of sunshine that had crossed his path for so brief a space of time was so soon to be withdrawn and leave him once again cold and lonely on the wintry path of life!

But before Margaret had concluded her arrangements with the superioress of a certain convent an incident occurred which completely upset her pre-arranged plans and entirely turned the tide of events.

Mrs. Lamoureux, who was not of a robust constitution, contracted a severe cold, which terminated in an attack of pneumonia, and although there was no immediate danger, it was sufficiently serious to cause grave anxiety to those about her. Under the circumstances Margaret would not entertain an idea of leaving her friend. She took charge of the patient, and soon proved herself to be a skilful and efficient nurse.

Mrs. Lamoureux, thanks to the good nursing and unremitting care bestowed upon her, soon made rapid strides towards recovery. The period of convalescence was a very happy time to her, and she was able to appreciate then to the full all the love and attention that was lavished upon her; the sight of Cecil's exquisite flowers and rare exotics refreshed her vision, and the delicious fruits which he ceased not to bring in abundance tempted her returning appetite.

One day towards the end of November Mrs. Lamoureux, who had quite recovered from her recent illness, sat with Cecil by the fireside. Margaret had gone to afternoon Benediction, and Cecil, availing himself of her absence, unburdened himself of his feelings in her regard, and made Mrs. Lamoureux the confidante of all his hopes and fears. The revelation was no subject of surprise to Mrs. Lamoureux. She had long suspected how matters stood, and though she was no matchmaker she could not but be gratified at the prospect of a union between two who were so eminently suited to each other. Such a union would remove from her mind all further anxiety with regard to Margaret's future, and at the same time make Cecil the happiest of men.

'Well, Cecil,' she said, 'you must plead your own cause, and I most assuredly think your hopes will be fully realised in the answer you will get.'

Mrs. Lamoureux spoke with confidence—she had noticed for some time past the tell-tale blush that mantled in Margaret's cheek when Cecil Stanmore was announced.

'Bless you for those words, dearest of fairy godmothers!' said Cecil fervently. 'Thus encouraged, I shall put my happiness to the test without delay.'

Acting on his godmother's advice, Cecil eloquently pleaded his cause, with the happy result that Margaret was not only persuaded to remain with Mrs. Lamoureux till her year of mourning was over, but at the end of that period to exchange her sombre garb for a bridal array.

Once more the month of June came round, and with it the Feast of St. Anthony. It was an unusually hot summer, and the long, straggling street up which the Cure of St. Etienne trudged was almost deserted; people were glad to be out of the glare of the midday sun. But it was not altogether the heat of the day that made the Cure carry his slouched hat under his arm while he vigorously mopped his forehead with a large red handkerchief: it was rather his perturbed state of mind that caused the large beads of perspiration to stand out upon his brow.

'My poor Pierre!' he murmured. 'What can I do for you? And then he fell to wondering whether perchance there were a few francs stowed away in an old purse that he had not used for some time. 'Seven little mouths to be fed daily,' he sighed, 'and no bread to go in them. But how wrong of me!' he added. 'Does not "le bon Dieu" know how to provide for all their needs?'

The Cure had just been visiting one of his parishioners, Pierre Lebeau, a poor but very good man. He was a mason, and only that morning, whilst engaged in his work, had fallen from a building, the result of which was a broken leg. He was the father of seven small children, and the Cure had been doing his best to console the poor stricken wife and mother. How the family were to be provided for during the weeks that Pierre must necessarily be laid up, the Cure knew not.

'It is the Feast of St. Anthony,' he softly said as he reached the church door. 'I must go now and ask the Saint's intercession.'

The Cure reverently entered the church and knelt in fervent prayer.

'Now I can rest whilst I say my Office,' he said to himself as he regained the presbytery; but as he laid his hand on the knob of the study door 'A lady and gentleman have called to see you monsieur,' was the message he received. The Cure turned the handle and in a moment he was face to face with his two young friends, Cecil and Margaret. 'My children!' he exclaimed, as he looked from Margaret's blushing countenance back again to Cecil's beaming one, 'is it possible? What is the meaning of this?'

It was Cecil who was spokesman.

'The meaning of it is this monsieur: We are on our wedding tour!'

'The explanation is scarcely necessary,' said the Cure as he rubbed his hands gleefully; but I am glad—very glad—delighted. But how came you,' he added, 'to keep the old Padre in ignorance of this great event?'

Again it was Cecil who spoke: 'The fact of the matter is, monsieur, we just wanted to pay you a surprise visit.'

'Well, it is not only a surprise, but a very, very pleasant one. Oh! my dear young friends, what a happiness it is to me to see