

end. In her bereavement she had taken to going into the Church of the Holy Angels and sitting there quietly with her sleeping child in her arms. She did not pray—she scarcely knew why she went there day after day, only that she found peace for her aching heart in the silence of the sanctuary, and it may be that she fumbled, in some ill-defined way, for the 'hem of His garment.' The good priest in charge of the little seaside mission had noted her visits, and that she was evidently not a Catholic; yet he had not spoken to her. He had put the matter into more capable hands, he said to himself, when he recommended the widow and her child to the Holy Angels who guarded them, and to the other blessed spirits who stood about the earthly throne of their King.

Little by little the widow came to love the refuge she had found from the cares and troubles of life, and when she began to attend Mass on Sundays, and to hear the simple sermons of the good pastor, she speedily came to realise, for the first time in her life, the claims of the Catholic Church. And so, step by step, she had accepted them and was now prepared and eager for baptism.

The first few months of her life as a Catholic passed peacefully enough with her child to care for and her new faith to study and test. She lingered in the little seaside village, too, for her health was failing, and sometimes she was anxious for the child's sake—for her own she was willing to lay down her life at any moment—but who would care for Joyce if she were left alone? She put the dark thought steadily from her.

'She is God's child,' she said once to Father Hall: 'if I have to leave her, He will take care of her.' And the priest had turned aside hastily, that she might not see the mistiness of his eyes.

The call came suddenly—it was Joyce's third birthday—the first anniversary of her baptism. Father Hall had just time to administer the last rites. The widow looked toward Joyce—the priest understood, and guided her hand to the child's head. She traced the Sign of the Cross on the little forehead, and her hand fell back.

'God's child!' she said, but so faintly that no one but the priest heard her—then, with a smile, she passed away.

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John Olliver was a Protestant of a most uncompromising type. He had been sent for by Father Hall as the only relative of the child, and he came, attended the funeral, remaining seated in his carriage outside the church while the ceremonies were being conducted within it, then accompanying the remains of his sister-in-law to the grave in the hill beyond the village, where they laid her within sight and sound of the restless waves that broke over the golden sands at the foot of the cliffs. The following day he departed, taking the child with him.

'I don't believe in it, Mr. Hall,' he said to the priest. 'I can't bring up the child in a religion that I think erroneous.'

'But the child's mother was surely the best judge of what is fitting for her own child,' represented the priest, 'and she has already been baptised a Catholic, Mr. Olliver.'

'Excuse me, sir, we don't see alike in this. I thank you for your kindness to my deluded sister-in-law—I am sure you meant well—but I may not peril the child's soul.' Father Hall looked deeply into John Olliver's eyes for a moment, and saw there only honesty and steadiness of purpose. With a sigh he held out his hand.

'She is God's child,' he said reverently. 'Good-bye, Mr. Olliver; God deal with you as you deal with His child.'

'Amen!' he responded. 'Good-bye, and thank you once more for all your kindness.' He turned to his carriage as he spoke and lifted out Joyce. 'Come and say good-bye, niece Joyce,' he said, and led her to the priest.

'God give His angels charge over thee, little Joyce,' said Father Hall huskily. He stood looking after the carriage until it turned the corner where the

road runs in behind the hill—then he walked slowly into the church and knelt for a space at the altar-rail while he commended the dead mother and the living child to the guardianship of the Holy Angels. It was his pet devotion. Frequently he referred to the Angels Guardian as the forgotten friends of men, and in season and out of season he sought to impress the memory of the blessed spirits on the flock committed to his care.

John Olliver's house was a handsome, though somewhat gloomy, residence in North London, and faced a chapel noted for its Calvinistic tendencies and ultra-Protestant tone. Joyce was taken there solemnly every Sunday by her uncle, and in due course she was entered at the Sunday-school. She grew up to be a very beautiful girl, with her mother's deep blue eyes and fair white skin, and the dark curly hair of the Ollivers. John Olliver was proud of her as she knelt beside him in the red-cushioned pew of his favorite chapel, or shared his hymn-book with him when it was time for them to sing. There were some wonderful days when he rose and went to the platform to address the congregation, and Joyce sat with puckered brows trying to follow the hard, dry doctrine that he endeavored to instil into his hearers. When she was seventeen she began to think for herself, and then John Olliver was often hard put to it to answer her questions.

'But you said that we must think for ourselves, uncle,' she said a little helplessly once, when he had been more than usually dogmatic. 'You are as bad as the Pope. You won't let me believe what I think is right.'

He started.

'What do you know about the Pope?' he questioned.

Joyce hesitated.

'Not much, uncle—only what you have told me. You said that he enslaved men, and would not permit them to think for themselves—that—that—he wanted to lay down the law for all his followers. I don't see it, uncle—you do the same thing yourself.'

'Yes, but, Joyce, the thing is different—the Pope is a Catholic, and Catholics are superstitious idolaters—that alters the case; if he taught the truth, it wouldn't matter.'

Joyce thought for a long while.

'It's all very hard to understand, uncle,' she said absently, 'and you may be wrong and the Pope right, after all.'

'Joyce!'

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'I didn't say that you were wrong,' she said, and threw one arm about his neck in the fashion that he could not resist. A new realisation of her beauty came to him, and with it a dream that he had had for her future.

'You are getting quite grown up,' he said, after a silence. 'What shall I do when you go away and leave me?'

She flushed a little.

'I wanted to talk to you about that,' she said, and there was a catch in her voice. 'I should like to be a nurse, uncle. I think nurses can do so much good. Next year I shall be eighteen, and then I shall be old enough to start training.'

'A nurse! There will be no necessity for you to work, Joyce. Listen, child—it is time that I told you something of your history. Your father and I were twin brothers. We were all in all to each other until we met—Joyce—your mother. We both wished to marry her. She preferred him, and so I stood aside. Even when poor Charles died I would not intrude upon her, for I loved her too well. Then, for some inscrutable reason, because she was lonely perhaps, she embraced the Catholic faith—'

'My mother! How awful!' He drew her to him tenderly.

'Not awful, dear child, because I feel sure that she thought she did right. I suppose that she was happy in her belief—I don't know—but she died a Catholic and even had you baptised so.'

'Me? Am I a Catholic, then, uncle?'

**Ken. Mayo**

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