

fibre of the soldier and the merchant, without losing the tenderness of the woman and the sweetness of the faith. Calm and solid as the mountains in the distance, she watched, not over the desert, but over deserted, desolate, lonely humankind.

'One must look close and deep to see things,' the poor lady sighed to herself, as all her past folly rose up before her. 'I thought these people commonplace, and they are pure gold. I thought this desert horrible, and it is more lovely than the Riviera.'

She was looking at it one morning at dawn, toward the west, while yet the sun was hidden. A heavy dew had fallen during the night and washed the hills and the plain clean of the dust. The moisture dropped from the cactus plants and sparkled in the foliage of the trees. The hills to the west had lost their grey tones, and looked like olive-green velvet, soft, sweet, inviting, peaceful—a pathway to the sky. What depth of color! Dressing hastily, she ran out to see the vast plain toward the east, which now lay before her as delicately colored as the eye of a painter could desire. It was ravishing. And everywhere a solemn peace and silence, as tense as if the scene were awaiting the voice of an archangel. No murmur of the wind, no rushing of waters, no sound of human life, hardly the note of a bird, breathed in the ear; and yet so eloquent the silver sky, the tinted plain, the majestic face of the mountains, that one expected suddenly a solemn burst of harmony as from a cathedral choir.

'We are both breaking the rules, I think,' said a voice near; 'but I just had to come out and see.'

'You have been up some time, Sister Lucia; have you not?'

'The poor boy in the county ward had a bad spell, and I said the prayers for him. But he is better. He will live a little longer like myself.'

Mrs. Graham shuddered, and yet smiled on the little nun who talked so lightly about death.

'Have you no hope at all, Sister?'

'None whatever, although I look fairly well and can get around better than most. The doctor told me as soon as I arrived that the desert would do nothing for me. I am only waiting to die.'

'And the boy in the county ward?' the lady ventured.

'He may live a week. Such a happy fellow, so resigned, and so utterly alone!'

'I would like to see him.'

'Let us go down after breakfast. He will be so glad; for he likes visitors.'

Mrs. Graham felt that it was the last straw, but she followed Sister Lucia into the county ward bravely, after learning that here the poor were housed at the charge of the county, that there really was no room for them, but Mother Fidelia had accepted them in charity, lest they die in the road, and that they were quite happy to get decent shelter and care. The patients were mostly half-breeds and Mexicans, poorest of the poor, ruder than the stones on the hill; and among them sat the white boy, smiling even with the death-dew on his white face, comfortable and joyous as a college youth in his room. He had good manners and thanked the ladies for their visit.

'I am so sorry for you,' Mrs. Graham said. 'Sister tells me that you are quite alone in the world.'

'The very last of the family, m'am; and we were a big family, and all died young. I'm glad that they're gone. They're safe anyway, and I don't have to worry about any one but myself. And I'm happy and content. Once I thought I'd have to die in the road. It feels so good to have a bed and a roof and care, and people around you, and things to eat, and visitors, that I can die just happy. I'm not worrying about what I haven't got. I'm just hugging all the good things I have.'

'It is good to die among friends,' said Sister Lucia.

'So good that I don't mind when I go.'

Then he demanded of Mrs. Graham, in a boyish way, the story of her travels, of the wonderful places which she had seen, and listened in rapture to her account of an audience with the Pope; and when she described how she had held the hand of the Pontiff and

kissed his beautiful ring, the lad reached out his hand shyly, saying:

'May I touch the hand which touched his?'

She took the cold, wasted, delicate hand in her two and held it a little while, without a thought of contamination. While they were chatting, the cheery Virginian boy came in, and later the superior herself, and then Sister Thomassina, each with a kind word for the simple-hearted sufferer and for one another. Mrs. Graham held back her sobs. They had all come from the ends of the earth, strangers. She was rich and these were poor; she had been the idler, and these were the workers; her path had been among the roses, and theirs among the thorns, when it should have been otherwise; and misfortune and love had assembled them about the deathbed of a poor boy, to learn the great lessons of God. Strong lights indeed rose up out of this desert to guide its children.

After having looked straight into the face of Death, Mrs. Graham found herself wonderfully strengthened; and out of the bitterness of her lot she had tasted a sweetness hitherto unknown,—the sweetness of strength. She knew now, with the poet,

how sublime a thing it is

To suffer and be strong.

And all at once the hospital became a delight to her, and the desert a great charm. She interested herself in the details of hospital life, and made the acquaintance of the inmates, travelling along the main road of suffering, and down its many bypaths, greeting death at odd intervals with a sigh and a smile and a prayer. Her sweet nature, her great beauty, made her a favorite. Her courage was not surpassed by the Sisters, and her resignation rose to that point which earned the respectful tribute of Sister Thomassina.

'Our life is nothing more than a desert,' said the Sister; 'and it is a grave mistake to try to make it a paradise. We can live in the desert; beautify it a little, perhaps; but we must keep our eyes on heaven, where we belong. Now, you found in the foolish paradise of the world the terrible desert, sickness; but here in the desert of Arizona you found the paradise of the soul and the paradise of health,—for I think you are going to get well. But you surely were a stubborn creature at the beginning.'

'I shall always be grateful to the desert,' said Mrs. Graham.—The Rev. John Talbot Smith in the *Ave Maria*.

THE HOME RULE ISSUE

AN IMPERIALIST'S SUGGESTION

The following is the fourth—and, so far, the most interesting and important of a series of letters entitled 'Irish Unionists and the Home Rule Bill' contributed to the *Irish Times* by 'An Ulster Imperialist.'

Having completed this outline sketch of the chief reasons which seem to be responsible for the failure of Unionism to excite the old enthusiasm of English electors against Home Rule, and also for the growth of a considerable body of Irish Unionists who recognise that, sooner or later, Home Rule of some sort is bound to come, I will pass on to a very short discussion of the situation as it actually is at present, and as it seems likely soon to be.

In the old days Unionist bulwarks against Home Rule were many and powerful. A violent anti-Irish sentiment in England, a vivid recollection of the 'bad' times during the land war, a secession of Liberals as soon as a Liberal Government touched the question, the impregnable citadel of the House of Lords—such were some of the Unionist defences. One by one these have disappeared, until now, in 1913, the only hope of defeating the present Bill is that, by some fluke, the Government may have to go to the country

On Some Other Issue

before it is enforced. Irish Unionism hangs by a single hair, where it used to be supported by a dozen hawsers of steel. That single hair is the English Conservative

Ken. Mayo

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