

of his innocent childhood served Mass daily in the little church of the village nestling among the mountains on an island set in the western seas. But like so many more from that same island, the lure of far-distant America had drawn him across the ocean to seek his fortune. And he had found wealth beyond his wildest dreams. But in the seeking he had lost faith; into his soul had entered the devils of unbelief, of lust for gold, for the power which its possession gives.

Such was the man, now a multi-millionaire, the touch of whose hand controlled the money markets of the world, but, who, like the fool in the Gospel, said in his heart, "There is no God"; who had cast off his only son, his first-born, as if he were the vilest of criminals, because that son had found God whom he had lost, and would serve at the altar of that God in whom his father no longer believed.

The years passed on. The disowned son had vanished as completely as if, indeed, he had never existed. And by no word or sign did the man of iron reveal to those around him that he ever gave a thought to the banished son. And then one day a letter came.

"Father," so it began, "let me call you by that name, for if you have forgotten that you had a son, I have never forgotten that I have a father. Never since we parted have I ceased to think of you, to pray for you. And to-morrow when I ascend the altar, and for the first time offer the adorable Sacrifice, you shall be the first on whom I will invoke God's mercy and blessing. Will you not send me one line of forgiveness?"

The next day a returned letter was sent to a college in a distant State accompanied by this brief note:

"I think some mistake has occurred. This letter is not for me. I have no son, never had one.

"Yours —."

One other child remained to the millionaire, a daughter, on whom in the days when his son had been his idol, his pride, he had bestowed but scant affection. His wife, mother of these two children, had died whilst they were still in early childhood. Like her husband, she had no religious belief, but worshipped wealth, high rank, social distinction.

This one daughter had grown up all that a parent's heart could desire. Endowed with rare beauty, and even still rarer and more precious gifts of mind and heart, she had won her way to her father's heart, but not until her brother's dethronement. As long as he reigned, there was no place in his father's love for anyone else. But she was so lovely, so brilliantly gifted, so winning, that after the first few months of terrific anger and bitter disappointment, the stricken man found in his beautiful daughter a certain solace for his wounded pride.

No money had been spared upon her education. The most famous teachers had instructed her in every accomplishment. Of no science alone was she wholly ignorant, the science of God and religion. All such knowledge had been carefully kept from her, or rather it should be said that she had been taught to regard these things as the

veriest superstition. As the crowning of her training this peerless daughter had been sent in the care of a family of assured social position for a year's travel in Europe. Much was hoped for from this tour. Her father, ambitious still, looked forward to an alliance with the head of some great, even princely house. She was lovely, brilliant, and she would have a colossal fortune. To what heights might not a girl so magnificently dowered aspire?

The year of travel had nearly run its course when the blow fell. The party had spent the winter in Rome, and were thinking of turning their faces homewards, but eventually they decided to remain in the Eternal City until after Easter. A letter came from his daughter. With mind perfectly at rest, wholly unsuspecting of its contents, the old man opened the missive. At first a dazed look came into his eyes; he seemed scarcely to understand what he read, but soon his brain cleared, and he realised to the full the news the letter contained. It told him in loving words, but clearly, unmistakably, that his daughter had followed in her brother's footsteps. She had become a Catholic, and had been received into the Church but a few days before she wrote. The writer was well aware at what cost her brother had taken this step, and whilst she grieved for the pain she was causing a dearly loved father, yet she was fully prepared to pay the same penalty.

A sardonic smile stole over the father's face as he read the signature, "Ella, your ever-loving child."

At once, with hand that never trembled, he wrote in reply:

"You have chosen, you know the result. Henceforth we are strangers; I have no child. Do not write again or try to see me. If you come, you shall not be admitted; such are my orders."

The letter despatched, he leaned back in his chair and a heavy sigh escaped him. He felt strangely weary and broken. It was borne in upon him as never before that unseen forces of tremendous power were fighting against him, and so far they had conquered. But he would never yield. Then followed a period of awful loneliness for the unhappy father, moments of bitterest remorse, of unutterable longing for the banished, the disowned. But the iron will, the proud heart refused to yield.

One evening as he sat lonely in his study, the door opened, and some one entered, a tall figure in priestly garb. How well even in the evening shadows the father knew that form! He rose, trembling in every limb, he tried to speak, but his tongue refused its service. Nearer with outstretched hands came that figure, and a voice which the father had never thought to hear again, uttered in tones of thrilling tenderness, the one word, "Father." Something seemed to snap within the listener's breast, speech was restored to him.

"My son," he said in hoarse tones, then falling on his knees, he cried aloud: "My God, Thou hast conquered. Forgive me. I believe, help my unbelief."

Tenderly the priest raised the prostrate form, and with words of sweetest consol-

ation telling of God's infinite love and mercy, poured balm into the heart, now nigh to breaking with sorrow for the past. And that night the father received God's absolution.

"And Ella, father," said the young priest as he and his father later talked together, "how happy she will be when she sees us! In a week's time she is to be received into the Sacred Heart Convent. You and I will be there, and then her happiness will be complete."

Yes, the unseen forces fighting against the father's unbelief and pride, had indeed proved too strong for him and, overcoming him, had won for him God's mercy and pardon.

Would you know what forces were engaged in this terrible conflict? Come with me to the early home in Ireland of the man who had denied his God. There, during all the long years since he had left her, morning, noon, and night, a mother had told her beads for the son of whose fate she knew nothing. Again, come to a quiet convent, not far distant from the old home, and there see a nun pleading, day and night, before the Tabernacle for the brother of whom no word had come throughout the years.

That mother's prayers for her son, that cloistered nun's pleadings for her brother: these were the forces that fought against his wickedness, and won for him and his children wondrous grace.

Sisters of St. Joseph, Wanganui

At the close of the Retreat preached by the Rev. Francis Chene, C.P., to the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. John's Hill, Wanganui, the following Sisters received the holy habit:

Sister Mary Monica (McLeod), Sister Mary Avelin (Brennan), Sister Mary Bertille (Devon), Sister Mary Perpetua (Quinlan), Sister Mary Austin (Kearns), Sister Mary Andrew (Lysaght), Sister Mary Malachy (McLaughlin).

The following made their holy profession:

Sister Mary Damian (White), Sister Mary Hilary (Reynolds), Sister Mary Cathbert (Cullinane), Sister Mary Felicitas (Garvey), Sister Mary Gonzaga (Coles), Sister Mary Cecilia (Durrant), Sister Mary Terese (McWilliam).

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