

LORETTO, OR THE CHOICE

An Interesting Story for Both Old and Young.

Written by George E. Miles.

IN FOUR PARTS.

PART IV.

They are journeying to the north—two Sisters and the Wanderer. Agnes had conquered—he had tasted the Lamb that redeems the world—he was on his way to Loretto. But will he reach it? His face is wan and wasted, his shrunken limbs scarcely sustain his weight; hour after hour, that fatal cough, that incessant drain on life, continues. He makes no moan, no murmur, but humbly and patiently sits beside his child, hearing the story of her life, or filling up the outlines of his own. And as Agnes listened, and watched his bright, sparkling eye and beautiful head, she saw what power and strength had once been lodged in that crumbling wreck of genius and virtue.

They are half way to Loretto. Oh, will he reach it! Alas, the Wanderer is in his berth—he can no longer sit on deck beside his child—it oppresses him to speak—he can only smile and look at her. How could he endure the jolting stage and racking car!

There was strong will and strong hope within that wasted frame!

"Oh God!" he prayed—"grant my life, that I may see her once more, that I may hear the voice of pardon from her lips. I ask it not for my sake, but for hers! Let me see her again—let her see that her life of prayer has not been in vain—let her hear me bless her with my last breath!"

The grace of God, and the determination to live, kept him alive.

A carriage stood before the white palings of Loretto! They bore him in their arms through the porch into the parlor where a couch was placed to receive him!

He knew her as she bent over him—he knew her as she pressed back his hair and looked love and forgiveness into his eyes—he knew her as she clasped his transparent, emaciated hands to her bosom—he knew her as the cry of delight, the name of heaven burst from her soul—it was Mary, his own Mary! The Wanderer was in the arms of his wife! God of goodness, who hath measured thy mercy!

He knew his poor Clarence—he took his hand and placed it in hers and said—

"Be a mother to him!" He knew the Colonel—they spoke not, but the Colonel stooped and kissed his white lips—and the dying man smiled.

He was left alone with the Confessor of the Convent! And then they all returned and knelt around him—and the Wanderer died, holding Agnes by the hand, with his head on Mary's bosom, and his eye fixed on Gabriel.

They laid him in consecrated ground. And, day after day, the Colonel would visit his grave—but, day after day, he postponed his repentance. He was hale and hearty—there was many a good, quiet year before him—he had time enough to make his peace and die as good a Catholic as any of them. The Wanderer had profited by the last moment, and why should not he wait until then?

Alas, old man, thy heart is true and kind and warm—the finger of God is beckoning thee on—make haste—prepare! Thou hast heard the voice of warning—cast off the mantle of pride and self-confidence, which wraps thee so warmly—repent, repent!

CHAPTER V.

The snow is once more on the hills, and that bright crackling wood fire is again inspiring the quiet parlor of Loretto. The Colonel is dozing in his arm chair close to the piano that once belonged to Agnes. Mrs. Cleveland sits watching him, with a tenderness not unmingled with anxiety. Her brother was her sole remaining care—the agony of years had passed away in her husband's happy death—he was no longer a horrible phantom walking the earth, but a repentant soul in the hands of God. And safe in the Convent, safe from the world, with her beautiful child, to plead with pure hands for her penitent father. Call her not sad—there is no sadness in the calm resignation of one, who weary of earth, yet submissive to the will of God, waits patiently for heaven.

A step in the portico roused her

from a momentary reverie, and Mr. Almy entered, followed by Lel and Melville. The Colonel's head drooped heavily, and then he awoke. To Mr. Almy's salutation he made no reply, and just glanced at Melville—and then, as if fatigued even by that slight exertion, his eyes closed again.

"He is going!" sighed Lel, and then seating herself at his feet, she pressed his hand to her lips. At that instant Clarence came bounding in, glowing in youth and health, and with a merry laugh cast himself on his mother's neck—then, terminating the brief embrace which she wished to prolong, sprang towards the Colonel. The old man's eyes slowly parted, and something like a smile flickered on his lips, for he loved the boy.

"Oh, uncle! what a flock of part-ridges I saw! If I'd only had your gun, I could have killed twenty; they were all huddled up in the fence corner, just after you cross the wheat-field before you go to the lime kiln. And—" Clarence stopped short, for a tear began to trickle down the old man's cheek. He said not a word but drew the boy feebly to his breast.

Lel, who, in joy and pain, always went instinctively to the piano, raised the lid, and after a mournful chord, began the melody of "Jesus Saviour of my Soul." Moved by the exquisite hymn, or by its association with Agnes, the Colonel's tears flowed faster—yet he sat as still as death, until the last note had died away. Then he began to move in his chair—his pale cheek flushed—and a bright wild light glittered in his eye. There was something unusual in the Colonel's manner, as he rose and smiled a greeting on Mr. Almy and Melville in his blandest way.

"It takes a good deal to wake me, Almy—I am getting old—and my limbs are full of death-proceeding pains and cramps," said the Colonel. "But I think a walk will do me more good. Come Clarence, let us see where those quails are hiding—we may have a chance at them to-morrow."

It was Saturday afternoon about five o'clock, when Clarence and the Colonel sallied forth—the sun was still bright, but had lost its power, and the road was crisp under their feet. The old man's pace was so rapid, that the boy almost thought he was walking with the ghost of him who had seemed so powerless in his chair.

The Colonel's eyes were bent on the ground, but occasionally he raised them, and they rested awhile on the slender spire of the Convent, as it came nearer and nearer.

"Now, uncle," cried Clarence, as they passed the bridge—"come this way, and I'll show you the birds."

But the old man raised his stick, and pointing to the spire, replied—"Let's see your sister first!"

They kept on their way in silence. In vain the ploughman bowed and the red-cheeked dairy maid curtsied to the Colonel as they passed—he heeded them not—he saw them not—he knew them not. They were puppets—nothing more: things apparently near, but really at an infinite distance. Clarence, amazed at such unusual abstraction and discourtesy, began to suspect him of sudden insanity, and trembled. They reached the gate—they stood by the church. It was Saturday afternoon, and sweet voices were singing the Litany of Loretto. The Colonel paused awhile, as if to inhale the melody and the keen, fresh air. The sun was just behind the mountain, and all along the west the graceful outlines of those blue ridges were marked in crimson and gold.

"The service is over," muttered the Colonel as the organ ceased. "Let us lose no time." They crossed the sloping terrace and rang the bell.

"My niece," said the Colonel to the portress. "I wish to see her for a few minutes." Sister Agnes soon appeared smiling. A year had changed her much—she was thinner and paler than before—but every feature and every action expressed perfect peace. Whatever had been the struggle, it was over—there was nothing left but the Sister of Charity—the meek servant of God. From the moment she entered the room, the Colonel's eye never left her, and though she had not at first remarked his agitation, she soon saw that he was almost supernaturally excited.

"Agnes," said the Colonel, "I am breaking to pieces—crumbling away—I cannot last much longer. I am going to leave you, Agnes—going to leave you forever. I am at the end of a long, unworthy life—and while I can yet speak, I have a duty to perform which I must now discharge. I cannot rest until I have

said that my opposition to your choice was the miserable result of selfishness and folly—and that I now thank God and bless you, for the defeat of my most unmanly schemes!"

The old man rose from the chair, as if lightened of some crushing weight.

"But to leave you, Agnes—you whom I have loved so blindly, that I was envious even of Him, to whom your soul belonged. To part for all eternity from—No!—no!—Agnes—Agnes tell me, have I yet time to meet you in Heaven?"

She said not a word—but grasped his hand and led him into the church. There, on the cold marble aisle, knelt the old man, trembling and sobbing—his head bowed to the step of the sanctuary, whilst kneeling like an angel beside him, his Agnes whispered—

"Think not of me, but of God!"

She left him an instant—and passed into the sacristy. A moment, and she re-appeared, followed by a figure in black—and the priest waited in the confessional. Three paces off stood the tribunal of remission and the minister of absolution!

"Not now!" said the Colonel, shuddering, and refusing her mute petition. "Not now—to-morrow!"

"To-morrow may never come!" replied Agnes—"Falter not at the foot of the altar!"

He rose and wavered—the Sisters were coming—"To-morrow—to-morrow—I am unworthy now!"—and as the Confessor advanced towards him, he shook off Agnes, who still clung to him—and left the church.

"Father in Heaven, be merciful!" said Agnes; but a cold chill passed through her heart, and she fell almost senseless on her knees.

The Colonel walked more rapidly than before, and as he passed the quiet graveyard, the leafless branches seemed to creak, "Like a thief in the night! Like a thief in the night! Once more he turned towards the Convent, and a "figure like Gabriel's" stood an instant in the road beckoning him back. But he sighed to himself—"to-morrow—to-morrow," and at last the spire of the Convent sank behind the trees. Then the road grew dark at his feet—but when he looked up, the moon was shining, unobscured by a single cloud, and all the stars were joyfully twinkling.

"Are you tired, uncle?" asked Clarence, as they opened the white gate of Loretto. But before there was time for a reply, Gabriel overtook them.

"So you have really been following me," said the Colonel. "I thought I caught a glimpse of you."

Mrs. Cleveland, who had been anxiously watching in the porch, came to meet him.

"Sister," said the Colonel—"I thought myself a good, blameless man, but on reviewing my life, I find myself a traitor to my faith and a slave to sin. To-morrow shall find me once more in the noose of the Catholic Church. One night of preparation is all I ask. I have been with Agnes!"

The delirious strength that had hitherto sustained him began to give way, and he leaned heavily on his sister's arm. The secret was soon unfolded to Lel, Melville and Mr. Almy; and, revived by the happy group around him, the Colonel looked and felt better than he had done for many a day. Mrs. Cleveland was overwhelmed with joy at this sudden and unexpected change, and the last open wound of her heart was healing. Gabriel alone was sad and restless. He sat in a corner with Clarence, playing strange airs upon a guitar, with which he loved to give music lessons to the boy. They could distinguish, at times, words like these—

A woodman said to a snow-white flower

"Lily, I'll pluck thee in an hour!" So merrily, merrily hid he on, And came in an hour—the lily was gone!

And Gabriel sang other songs, mournful and slow—but the words were of some strange language, which none of them understood.

After an hour, which passed in congratulation and prayer, the Colonel excused himself and retired to his room. Gabriel, unseen, glided in after him. Through the open window he could see the cross on the Convent spire gleaming in the moonlight: he remembered the morning that Lel stood at that same window, when he tempted her to win Agnes to the world—to the world which he had exhausted—which left him nothing but tears and shame—which might separate him from Agnes eternally! Separation from Agnes was the point of contrition. He was

tempted to return and complete it once the work he had begun—but it seemed so childish and cowardly to be hurrying after a confessor as if afraid of darkness. So, with a resolute effort, he closed the shutters, saying—"To-morrow!"

The next morning he came not down to breakfast. They heard a shriek from Gabriel, and rushed to his room—the blood was gushing from the Colonel's nostrils—he was lying dead on the floor.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh what a change had come over Gabriel! His smile was gone—he shunned all company, even little Clarence who was dearest to him. A sad, unearthly light shone in his blue eye—he was worn away, almost to a skeleton. He rarely spoke, but when they questioned him, mournfully pointed to his heart—and they knew that the disease of which he had often complained, if not so gentle could be said to complain, was carrying him off. Once they heard him singing a strange song, which Lel remembered.

I hear a sweet voice, like the voice of a bird,

The softest and sweetest that ever was heard,

And it comes from the sky, from the blue, blessed sky,

And it warbles—"Prepare, for the hour is nigh!"

And that voice is meant for me—Far away, far away.

Ere another day, Shall I be!

I see two sweet wings that are not of the earth,

That shall bear me aloft to the land of my birth,

Yes, two glittering wings of the purest white,

With each feather enshrined in a circle of light!

And those wings are meant for me—Far away, far away,

Ere another day, Shall I be!

Oh! the blossoming stars are my playmates of yore,

I shall walk the bright fields where I've sported before,

And I know a sweet spot where the angels are,

That is high above the highest star!

And that spot is meant for me—Far away, far away,

Ere another day, Shall I be!

And after singing this, he kissed little Clarence, and seemed stronger and more cheerful; and his old smile returned, and he went forth alone.

The sun was down behind the gap in the mountain—the moon was shining on the porch of Loretto and Mount Gabriel; yet the pale youth returned not.

In the morning, they searched the fields and hills for him in vain; until, at last, guided by little Clarence, they found him dead on the Colonel's grave.

The End.

The court charged the jury in the Russell Sage-Laddaw damage suit that if Sage grabbed Laddaw deliberately, to use him for a shield from Norcross's bomb, a verdict must be rendered in favor of Laddaw; but if Sage grabbed the clerk instinctively the latter could not recover. The verdict shows that the jury decided that Uncle Russell grabbed instinctively, as usual.

The loss of the steamer Chicago is only another proof of the risk run by boats upon the inland seas after the storms of winter have set in. For winter navigation they need to be as staunch as ocean vessels to resist wind and water; as strong and almost as well equipped and provisioned as Arctic exploring craft. The quickly formed ice, the narrow waters that limit steaming, and the shallow shores are a constant menace to winter navigation. Nevertheless the profit and usefulness of it, will undoubtedly increase rather than diminish its extent and the necessary precautions for safety from the ever-present perils.

Judge Gaynor of Brooklyn has rendered a decision having an important bearing upon the street car strike and upon labor matters in general. In brief, the court holds that the Brooklyn Street Railway Company must give the public continuous service or forfeit its charter. Judge Gaynor adds that the company cannot interrupt its service in order to coerce its employees into working for lower wages. If its employees refuse to work for the wages offered by the company the latter must get new employees or increase the rate until men can be secured. The public must not be made to suffer because of the negligence or cruelty of a grasping corporation. This decision will have a wide-reaching influence. It has long been a common practice for railway corporations whenever a strike occurs to charge to the employees all the inconvenience of the traveling public, and thus cause the wrath of the people to fall upon the strikers instead of upon the corporations. The new ruling places the responsibility upon the common carrier. This is a radical change and is bound to create a lively sensation.

PATRIOTISM—TRUE AND FALSE.

"Patriotism," says Archbishop Ireland, "is innate to all men, but it grows its full growth only where thoughts are elevated and heart-beatings are generous. If patriotism is, as the Archbishop says, innate to all men, there must be two kinds of patriotism. The one, which is one of earth's highest virtues, worthy to have come down from the atmosphere of the skies; and the other kind of patriotism which is earth's greatest curse, worthy to have come up from the atmosphere of hell itself. The former is true patriotism to which the human race pay homage. It is unselfish, non-calculating and, next to religion, most pleasing in the sight of God who plants it in the heart of every human being. But like the seed which the sower went out to sow, some fell upon acid ground and among rocks, and there being no nourishment it sprouted and died; other some fell among brush and, which sprung up and choked it. Other some fell on good ground where there was a rich soil, and it took deep root. This is the patriotism to which the Archbishop refers, but that which fell among thorns and underbrush and disappeared is the patriotism of hell, which is defective in elevated ideas and totally devoid of every sentiment of generosity and manhood. Such is the second kind of patriotism—the patriotism of the war-widow A.P.A. Their patriotism is of the Luciferian order—the patriotism of the brigand—begotten in the slums of foreign cities and nourished from the poison imbued at proletarian treatise schooled in the seminars of treason, bigotry and intolerance. This country is America," says the brilliant Archbishop, "only those who are loyal to her can be allowed to live under her flag, and they who are loyal to her may enjoy all her liberties and rights." This is a good deal like the pangs of a chaplain of the lodge over the remains of a departed brother-mason, who recounts the good qualities of the departed brother. The Archbishop pours forth gems of patriotism upon the golden altar of public attention, every word of which is true so far as patriotism is concerned. But the distinguished orator goes too far when he says "only those who are loyal to America can be allowed to live under her flag." Would that this assertion of the Archbishop were correct! But have we not anarchists in every city of the nation? Have we not the A.P.A. violating the provisions of the Constitution of the United States, in nearly every state in the Union? Are these self-proclaimed enemies of the Nation not allowed to live under our flag. They are, and they are encouraged and upheld in their treason and disloyalty by public officials, and their acts spurred over by others.

Another Bif Van Winkle. Van Winkle Cranfill after a sleep of some four hundred years, more or less, startled the Southern Baptist Convention in Washington, D.C., a few days ago by announcing that the Catholic Church had "crushed out life and liberty in all ages," and that "it must be killed off forthwith, together with its twin brother, rum; that the Convents must be all opened up to the Van Winkles of Texas, so that light may shine upon the community. Poor Cranfill must have taken too heavy a night-cap, and awoke bewildered, but the intelligence of the Convention, represented by Rev. Pickard of Kentucky and Hildner of Virginia, sat down on Brother Van Winkle Cranfill. They told him his suggestions were obsolete. Alas, why are such fools permitted to take part in Christian Conventions?

How to Hang Pictures. An artist being asked for a simple rule for hanging pictures gave the following directions: The height, size and decoration of the room should be taken into account, but it is best, where only one row of pictures is hung, to have the central point in each on a level with the eye of the ordinary person. For instance, in a vignette portrait the central point is the chin. You can make no mistake about the point in any picture, for the eye invariably rests upon it at the first glance. That reminds me to speak of a frequent error on the part of framers who lack artistic knowledge. The central point should be at the exact intersection of two diagonal lines drawn from the corners of the frame, not the mat. Many pictures appear to those who know this rule, as if they were slipping out of their frames.

A Chicago man is suing two local doctors for \$25,000 damages, alleging that after his experience with them he found that one of his legs was too short. Is he quite sure that that is what ails him? Perhaps the other leg is now longer than it really ought to be.

Some Friends in American History. The discoverer of the Salt Springs at Onondaga, New York, was the Jesuit Father Simon Le Moyne, 1664.

The first oil well called attention to the mineral oil near Lake Erie, was the Franciscan Father de la Roche d'Alion, in 1667.

The first who worked the copper mines on Lake Superior was a Jesuit, lay Brother.

The first cargo of wheat that was sent down the Mississippi from Illinois, was raised at a Jesuit mission.

The first sugar cane was raised by the Jesuits in New Orleans.

The first book printed west of the Alleghenies was the Epistle and Gospels in French and English, printed in Detroit by P. Maron, 1815.

The first printing press in the Northwest was set up by Rev. Gabriel Richard, priest and member of Congress from Michigan.

Whatever may be said of the value of the underground railway, the British Isles, the negroes who were saved from slavery do not indicate a decrease of poverty among the laboring classes of that country since all might "they." A recent pamphlet report of the savings-banks of Massachusetts for 1894 shows 2,044 accounts of the class of working folk like domestic servants, crochets, farm hands, shoemakers and machinists. The amount of these people amounted to \$1,000,000. Of this sum \$78,000 was from domestic servants, \$20,110 from shoemakers and milliners, \$20,000 from painters, coopers and plumbers, \$17,000 by shopkeepers, clerks and others, \$15,270 by widows and orphans. Forth the deposits of the same class of people amounted to \$1,000,000 for each depositor. It shows that general business depression, which is hardly to be expected among the people most likely to feel the effects of a depression.

A race horse has been found in a park. It is a white horse and is named "A. B. C."

Behold, with what energy the man of the world digs in excavating for a concrete or rock foundation for his monument of imaginary and price, short-lived popularity, comparative fortune of the estimated wealth of the world, flatters the pane of the surface of the earth and land and water, or costly palace of beauty for others to look upon and admire, while its owner—though he live to see it finished—occupies a solitary chamber in which to study or to sleep, and from at the time and deformity of the structure is no closet dictates. It is wisdom that such men live to complete their work, because they are the greatest bi-actors of society. They work as circumstances dictate. They are at war with and prey upon society. They desire one million of a hundred million, as opportunity offers. They have no thought for one object—gold! gold! gold! They fix no point where their labor of accumulation should end—it is always a little more. Does it ever occur to any of this class of humanists that they have as little hold on this life as the poor mendicant who obtains his daily necessities by begging. Indeed, the life of the mendicant and that of the monument builder are similar in this, that their work never ends until they are called away to render an account of their stewardship to the Master. But the mendicant's work is complete when he is called, because his labor was to supply necessities for his use in this life. The accumulator's labor is not ended—that is, on his deathbed he has regrets that he could not live long enough to accomplish this or that—to his many great undertakings. Perhaps man, in ten days after your death—so to speak—you will not be thought of, not even by your most intimate friends, except to jest and crack jokes over your eccentricities, or it may be that your life-labor ends in a knotty law-suit between heirs or presumptive heirs—from which lawyers will skim off the cream.

What provision has this man made for the future state? If any one, through charity, had asked him such a question, he would have told the questioner to mind his own business, or that he would attend to that later—when he got his temporal affairs settled! Foolish man, in what way will your temporal affairs benefit you if you are in Hell, and how can you expect to be in Heaven or with God, whose graces you repelled during your mortal life? Reader, remember your first duty, and that of every human creature—to God, from whom you have received all blessings—whether of poverty or of wealth, ingratitude or popularity—they are all blessings if so accepted.

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