

FATHER CARMEL'S TEMPTATION.

BY WALTER EDGAR McCANN.

"But your father never made a second will?" inquired the priest.

"No, but he died displeased with me, and I sometimes believe might have made it if he had not been called away so suddenly. He felt pretty well assured that I would eventually change my mind. I never would," added the young lady, with a toss of her beautiful head, "and I know I am right."

"Yes, there cannot be any question of that, child; and in the very sudden death of General Ludlow," said Father Carmel, forgetting where he was, and with whom he was talking, partly in one of those dreams which waylay old men in their conversation; "it does seem like the will of God that the property should not have been left away from you."

"If it had been, what on earth would have become of me?" said Rachel, with a laugh and a shudder. "George has nothing, and I would never have married him to drag him down, and I should simply have starved. As it is, I certainly am very fortunate—almost the richest girl in Maryland, I believe—and," she said, suddenly, with quite another sort of laugh, very bright and merry, "listen, Father Carmel—the very first thing I shall do, will be to give you a lot of money—in trust, though, because you are so extravagant—the prodigal father who has wasted all his substance in almsgiving—and you are to build a church, you understand—and so on as she talked, making great schemes for the future."

A little later George Milhurst came, on his great black horse—a handsome fellow, George, a law student with excellent prospects. And so, in converse, and planning air-castles, and recalling things of the past, pleasant and sad, the evening passed away.

About ten o'clock Father Carmel was shown to his room, a very spacious, handsome, but rather gloomy apartment, formerly the general's. The priest, always a happy man, was now in delightful spirits.

His little Radie, of whom he had always been so fond, whose growth he had watched and tended with a jealous care, had been so blest. Everything had turned out just as he could have wished.

He was not sleepy—he was, indeed, a little excited, the least bit nervous, perhaps, with his simple pleasure. What should he do for—say half an hour? His office he had already said; he glanced round the great old room, smiling with a listless inquiry.

Against the wall, near the window, he observed an ancient and rather battered oak cabinet; some old books in it, perhaps, and he had a curious taste and liking for old books; so up he rose and crossed the room to that antique depository, and in a minute held it open.

Yes, there were, among papers and all sorts of rubbish, really some old books, big fellows, in dusty brown and black uniforms, some standing erect, some toppling, some prostrate.

Father Carmel presently became quite absorbed in tumbling them over, with remarks upon each in scribbled.

"Johnson's Works—Rasselas—such a very dull book—and what's this? Montaigne—'The Idler's Breviary'—Young's 'Night Thoughts'—and what can this be?—'The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau'—Ha! what's that?"

Something had slipped from the leaves and dropped to the floor—a thick paper, with a big red seal on it.

He stooped and took it up, and carelessly unfolded it. Within, at the top of the page, in huge black letters, and in General Ludlow's handwriting, he saw these words:

"My Last Will and Testament."

Father Carmel read on. The instrument was dated only two weeks before the general's death, and as the priest grasped the meaning of its few and terrible sentences, they seemed to ring in his head like thunder.

The will was later than the other, and annulled it absolutely; every dollar of the general's vast wealth he left away from his daughter, and solely to her cousin, Oscar Ludlow, and his heir forever. It was signed and duly witnessed by Matthew Price and his wife, formerly servants of Crosswood, now supposed to be living in Leonardtown.

If an earthquake had shaken the world around him, Father Carmel could not have shown more consternation. With the dreadful document he had found clutched in his hands, and his fingers interlaced and uplifted, he stood there, in a panic, with a wild prayer upon his lips.

But, alas! it was one of those awful realities which are not to be put aside. The will was genuine and the last, and Rachel was a beggar.

The wild thought shot through his brain: "No one in the world knows of this paper's existence except myself and the two ignorant and stupid old

people who signed it. What easier than to destroy it at the lamp?"

How could he give it up? His little Radie—his pet—his bird—his flower! Should this be the hand to snatch from her her inheritance—to take the very bread from her mouth! His hand poured the water of baptism on her head; into his ear she had prattled her first childish confession.

With streaming eyes, the saintly old man struggled with his first temptation of his long and sublime life. For the first time he realized his great age—more than seventy years—fifty spent in the service of Almighty God—his soul still as innocent and spotless as when it was given him.

For half a century he had toiled and practiced every kind of self-denial, and had won many a convert to his faith. Would not a merciful God let these things plead? Only one sin—a trifling—to burn a bit of paper; and yet for this he was willing to undergo every kind of mortification and penance for the years that remained to him. He would live on bread and water, eating but once in three days, and would spend only an hour of each twenty-four in sleep; his religious seal should be a hundred-fold greater than it had ever been. All this for a trifle—a nothing.

On the other hand—what? What was he about to do?—he, the false priest, the Simon Magus, for whom was prepared by unquenchable fire! He was not about to destroy a simple piece of paper, but to steal a vast inheritance; after that, to live a life of lies, pursued everywhere with the memory of his spectral crime; and at last, when he was called, to go to his judgment and hear the thunder of his condemnation to the lake of darkness.

What were his seventy years of innocence? He had not sinned, because by a special grace he had never been tempted; here he was, ready to fall at the first offering of evil—he who had so often counseled resistance in others, and had told the sublime stories of the martyrs, trembling with the secret hope that he might be tried some day at they were.

Again he glanced at the unlucky paper and thought what Rachel—Ludlow—of his promise to her dying mother to watch over Rachel while he lived. How could he make her a beggar and still be true to that trust? How could he take this great wealth from a daughter of his Church and give it over to a wicked man who would misuse it, and who hated and execrated him and his calling, and religion of every kind?

So, in his dreadful agony, his up-raised face, wild and wet with tears, the priest, struggling with his temptation, sank upon his knees and prayed for light.

Next morning, very early, in the bright sunshine, rode two horsemen along the road that leads from the river all the way to Crosswood. One of these was a thin little man, with gray hair and a pert nose, through which he was constantly sniffing, like a small animal scenting for prey. This was Mr. Chalks, the lawyer. The other gentleman—dark and stern, with vicious and profligate eyes—was Oscar Ludlow.

As they rode, Mr. Ludlow was moody and silent, while his companion talked incessantly, and amused himself in various other ways—outting at and killing all the bees and butterflies that came within the singular skillful reach of his whip, and stopping once to rob a bird's nest.

When they arrived at Crosswood, it was still a long time before breakfast, and Mass was yet to be said by Father Carmel in the little chapel attached to the house. George Milhurst had come over to attend the celebration of the latter, and was now walking up and down the piazza with Rachel. The young lady had just said:

"I have told them not to wake Father Carmel. I don't think he slept well, for he was heard walking about his room till almost daybreak."

She had scarcely finished her sentence when the two horsemen emerged through the trees and drew up at the foot of the steps.

Rachel greeted her kinsman graciously, and with some stiffness to his friend, Mr. Chalks.

He smiled pleasantly, and said, "Well, we are rather early callers, I suppose you think, Miss Ludlow; but we come on business. We came, in fact, to search this house."

Rachel flushed, and haughtily ignoring the lawyer, turned to Oscar Ludlow. Before she could speak, he said, raising his pale, dark face and resolutely meeting her proud gaze:

"Rachel, it's no use mincing matters. We have come to search for your father's will—my uncle, General Ludlow's will. I have the strongest reasons for believing that it is hidden in the house."

"My father's will, sir, has been read and proved. You know that as well as I."

"Yes; but not his last will. We have the most positive proof that he made a will still later than the one already recorded, in which he dis-

inherited you and bequeathed his property to me. You have never liked me, Radie, and I don't see what reason I should have for hesitating to take what is mine, even though it impoverishes you. It seems, in fact, that you chose to be a sort of enemy of mine, and you can't expect me to act like a fool, and be what fools call magnanimous. The house I have reason to know is mine, and I demand to search it."

"What reason?" demanded Rachel, frightened by the earnestness of his manner, in spite of herself.

"We have seen Matthew Price and his wife at Leonardtown. They both declare positively that they witnessed a will made by General Ludlow only a fortnight before his death."

Aunt Phoebe hearing the altercation, had approached.

"Matthew Price and his wife! Pooh!" she interrupted, with scorn. "Both old and imbecile. You know very well, Oscar Ludlow, that they would swear to their very dreams as realities."

"Very well," said Mr. Chalks, briefly, "supposing it is all a dream, so much the better for you; but we don't think so, and nothing but a search will convince us. As an honorable lady, Miss Ludlow, anxious to do what's right and keep a clear conscience, I am sure you can't refuse us the privilege of looking for ourselves."

"You'd be troubled in your mind, I know, to hold this property under a doubt."

"Don't listen to him, Radie," said Miss Phoebe, vehemently, noticing that Rachel showed signs of yielding. "Don't let them search the house. You don't know what trick they may be up to."

"We intend to search the house," returned Oscar with a savage oath, losing his temper.

"No, Mr. Ludlow," said a new voice, tremulous and gentle, behind them all, "do not do that."

It was Father Carmel—pale and sad.

Never had they seen so much misery in a human face.

"What have you to do with it?" demanded Oscar, brutally, exasperated at the sight of the clergyman—a class whom he considered, in his own elegant phrase, as "canting interlopers."

"If you won't let me make the search peaceably, I shall make it by force."

"Not while I stay here, sir," said George Milhurst, quietly; "and utter one word more in the presence of these ladies in the tone you have been using, and I shall throw you over that railing."

"Stay!" commanded Father Carmel, advancing. "There is no need, Mr. Ludlow, to search your uncle's house for the will. I found it last night in the oak cabinet in my room, and I now surrender it to you. By its provisions you are master of this place and of all General Ludlow's estate, and his daughter is a beggar."

Oscar took the paper, smiling, scarcely believing his senses.

Rachel burst into tears and fell upon her aunt's bosom, while that astonished lady ejaculated with a terrible reproach:

"Oh, Father Carmel! Your little Radie! How could you? What have you done? What have you done?"

His duty; but Miss Phoebe's ethics, were regulated in feminine fashion by her sympathies, and, for the minute, I think she looked upon the trembling old man at her side as the blackest and most ungrateful of traitors.

About a week had passed. Rachel was residing temporarily with the Milhurst family. The day was a lovely one and in an old-fashioned, and perhaps not very picturesque, sun-bonnet, and with gauntlets on, and a krowl in her hand, and watering-pot and hose and rake and other horticultural implements about her, she was working in the garden.

Out came George. With a gentle delicacy he had avoided her as much as possible since she had come as his mother's guest, until some arrangement for the future could be made; but now as he stood under the little porch of the cottage and saw her toiling among the flowers—so beautiful, so sad—he could resist no longer. So, assuming a smile, and with his hands in his pockets, he lounged carelessly to the spot she occupied.

"What an industrious little woman," he said. "Can't I be of some help? You don't know how miserable idle and lazy I feel. Upon my word, Rachel, you must use some sort of magic with these flowers, they have so thriven since you began to care for them."

"Do you think so?" she smiled from the depths of that curious old bonnet.

"Every one thinks so; and not only the flowers grow better, as if they really enjoy growing, but, Rachel, we are all brighter and happier since you came, and—and—I thought—I hope."

He stammered, "that you won't be angry if I say that we should all be still happier if we were certain you would always remain with us. As for

me, I should simply be the happiest mortal on earth."

She bent over the pretty plant at her feet and was silent for a moment; and then she said, in a low voice: "I am sorry, George, but it could not be."

"Why not? But for that—that misfortune—you know—we should have been married by this time."

"Yes, but now we shall never be married," she said, standing erect again, and smiling in his face, sadly but resolutely.

"Oh, Rachel! you don't mean it—you can't! I could not lose you—you are mine already."

"As Miss Rachel Ludlow, the mistress of Crosswood, I should have married you, George, and been the happiest woman in the world, I think. As plain Rachel Ludlow, of nowhere at all, I shall never marry anybody."

Without incoherence, you have a brilliant future before you, George; with me to provide for, you could never rise. In romance, a young wife is always the great spur to exertion and success; but in real life, George, I know too well how different it is."

"Rachel, you will drive me mad! What are you going to do? You cannot have formed any really wise plan."

"Oh, yes, I have; and one I shall speedily execute, as you will see. But, come, let us talk of something else—of something pleasant—of my cousin Oscar and his doings, for instance," she said, with a bitter laugh. "Have you heard how he is getting on under his new conditions?"

"It is the scandal of the county," said George. "He has allied Crosswood with a crowd of profligate wretches like himself, and their life there is a continual revel. I suppose you have read the life of Lord Byron and his friends at Newstead, when he was a young man—something, perhaps, well, Oscar's is a great deal like it."

"I am sorry; but it is pleasant to know that he is enjoying his inheritance. Oh, here comes Father Carmel; and I do believe he has walked all the way from the landing in the hot sun!"

It was quite true. Very much altered looked the kindly old man as he came up, almost breathless with his long walk—days had made the difference of years. So, after greetings, they went into the house.

A little later, the priest and Rachel were alone together, and he said: "My child, George tells me you have made some plan for the future and will not reveal it. Will you not tell me?" he asked, anxiously.

In the simplicity of his character, I think he had a kind of dread that he had lost her confidence.

"Yes, I will tell you, Father Carmel; I have a mind to go into a convent."

A look of trouble, pain, surprise, flitted across his face, and, after a little pause, he said:

"But you have no vocation, I am afraid."

"It will come in time, Father Carmel, and I can at least pray for it; and I suppose there are some who have entered upon a religious life without a distinct vocation. I don't expect to be happy; but I can be resigned."

"I hope you will not resolve upon any step rashly, my child," he answered, still troubled and a little afraid.

She saw that he did not approve; that he doubted if she could ever be, as she said, resigned; and there were, no doubt, other considerations which made him still more anxious—the real motive, impulse, or what you please, at the bottom of all this.

A silence succeeded.

The sweet summer breeze came in at the window, the voices of the birds, the faint shout of the distant plowman to his horse—the world looked so happy.

Suddenly there was a sound of rapid footsteps—a man was running up the garden-path, red-faced and out of breath. He looked like a groom.

"What is it?" asked George, who was on the porch.

A whispered confab ensued.

"Something happened," thought Rachel, turning pale.

How is it that we know this intuitively? She stepped to the window.

"Is anything the matter, George?" she asked, trying to command her voice.

George, also pale and excited, approached.

"Something serious, I am afraid. Father Carmel is needed immediately at Crosswood. The doctors are already there," he said rapidly.

"But what is it?" demanded Rachel, impatiently.

"Well, there has been a disturbance, and Oscar Ludlow has been hurt—very badly, I am afraid—and they think a clergyman had better see him at once; and, in fact, this man says there is not a second to lose."

Great commotion, of course, then. Father Carmel rode away on horseback.

When he had disappeared, Rachel, frightened, paler than before, asked for additional particulars, and Simble, the groom, told what he knew in his homely way.

It was all about a boy who had been stopping at Crosswood with his father, Colonel Mathews, as the servants reported.

The Colonel, who was a very robust gentleman, had quarrelled with Mr. Oscar Ludlow, and Mr. Ludlow had done a pack of cards in his face, whereupon the Colonel had stabbed him three times—once in the neck and twice in the chest near his heart, and Dr. Buddie and the other physicians—who had posied in hot haste from Leonardtown—both said Mr. Ludlow's state was most dangerous.

Rachel went up to her room, and there, on her knees, prayed for the life of her cousin; and, if too late, for mercy for his soul—and never in her life had she breathed a more sincere prayer. He affliction changes us.

The great fortune she had lost—that now, perhaps, might return to her—she would give it all if that unhappy man, whom she had never liked, who had never liked her, could have reprieve—or, at least, mercy—in his dreadful hour of trial.

But respite was not to be. Two hours later Father Carmel returned, and she read the intelligence in his face.

"He is dead," she said, quietly. "You were not too late?"

"Not too late, child, thank God!" answered the old man, with a great sigh.

The vast Ludlow fortune was Rachel's again. Short had been the interval since he lost, but she was a wiser and better woman.

I need scarcely add, I think, that Rachel did not go into a convent. She married George Milhurst and made him a good and happy wife, and they lived at Crosswood, where Oscar was fat and cheerful Aunt Phoebe.

Often came, also, Father Carmel, no longer walking from the landing—also, tettering a little in his steps—but simple, serene and cheerful as of old. Remaining overnight he always occupied the room formerly used by General Ludlow—the room where the oak cabinet stood.

Mrs. Phoebe Brittingham, in case of her enthusiastic heart, sometimes said:

"Dear old Father Carmel! I do think he is a saint. I don't believe he ever had even a temptation to sin in his life."

Did she but know!

[The End.]

The order has been sent to the leather trust of the United States that the price of skins and bones of a large must be advanced one-quarter of 1 per cent.

Leather is to be advanced 1 per cent. Since 1904 there has been a steady decline in the quantity of raw hides imported into this country. In that year \$21,040,830, and the amount has steadily fallen off so much that last year the imports of hides amounted to \$14,006,787 in 1909. In 1904 the countries that furnished the most hides were England, Argentina and Uruguay, and from these came more than one-half of all the raw hides imported. It is this large falling off in the importation of raw hides that has so reduced the stocks of leather in this country, that they can be compared by the leather trust. The reason assigned for this advance in price is that the shipping along the Amazon River, while slow to learn, have found out the shortage in the American market and have advanced the price of raw hides, which would explain it if it were true, but the fact is this country buys comparatively few hides in Brazil. In 1904 the imports of raw hides from Brazil amounted to \$4,077,720 and in 1909 to \$234,544, while from Argentina there were imported in 1904 hides to the value of \$4,264,007, and in 1909 only \$1,100,000. In the meantime the supply of domestic hides has remained a very constant quantity.

Five hundred men and boys, steamblowers, employed at Bridgeton, N. J., went on strike a few days ago. They demanded to be paid for the time they had spent without it. But the employers and drawn the line at this extraordinary and costly demand, and refused the demand. They would have dismissed an obnoxious foreman on disciplinary partnership to get rid of an unpopular boss, but they failed to do so, and the motto "No law water" and sent him to the next town where they did not begin to blow when the ball game was to be drawn. The ball game was drawn, and how the men went on the blow in some other factory.

One of the most wonderful of the many discoveries in science which have been made during the last few years is the fact that a ray of light produces sound. A beam of sunlight is sent through a prism so as to produce what is called the solar spectrum, or rainbow. A disk having a slit in it is revolved swiftly, and the colored light of the rainbow is made to break through it. Place the ear in a green container, silk, wool or other colored material. As the colored lights of the spectrum fall upon it sounds will be given by the different parts of the spectrum, and there will be silence in other parts.

Hetty Green is referred to as a woman without a home. It is a sad thing for a woman to be homeless, and yet Hetty is not exactly an object of pity. If she would scrape her means together she could buy a very comfortable little cottage, and pay most of it down.

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