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A Turn of the Wheel

"Now I will have a good square meal," Robert Radnor decided, listening to the pleasant and novel sound of money rattling in his pockets. It was difficult for him to realise that to-day he looked the whole world in the face, a man of independent means, when so short a time ago he had been sitting in George Square, one of the unemployed, sharing a half-penny roll with a less fortunate fellow-creature who had not even that. Robert's practice of sharing things had tended to keep him in the poverty in which he had been born; and the long period of commercial and industrial depression overshadowing the country and prevented his rising from it. If, as optimists tell us, there is plenty of room at the top, there is also plenty at the bottom, and there it seemed to Robert he was destined to stay; giving thanks the while to Providence that others were not dependent on him; that, if struggle and starve he must, he did so alone, and was spared the anguish of seeing near and dear ones suffer. Then had come one of those romantic turns of fortune's wheel which ever and anon occur, to prove that truth is stranger than fiction, and sometimes as kind.

As, one day of drizzle, he walked in compulsory idleness along a busy thoroughfare, a combination of greasy mud and banana skin on the pavement resulting in a bad fall for an elderly gentleman who was immediately in front of him. Robert went to the rescue at once, raising the breathless victim to his feet again, and gathered up his umbrella, his eyeglasses, and his newspaper, which had all taken different ways to damage or destruction.

"Give me your arm up that stair," the old gentleman commanded rather than asked, "or there'll be a crowd round us, thinking I am intoxicated. People always find it best to think the worst of others. Up there—my office is the second door."

So directed, Robert supported him, shaken, hurt and irritated, to a well-furnished office, past a gaping office boy, to an inner sanctum. He removed the old man's muddy coat, got a sponge and towel and water, and effaced traces of the disaster with the unflurried dexterity of one who is used to being useful; and the patient revived, though not to gratitude. With an air of sour suspicion, he made an inspection of Robert that began with his frayed collar and ended with his patched shoes, but took no cognizance of the genial kindliness of mouth and eyes vivifying a rather bony, bloodless face.

"You'll expect something more substantial than thanks," he said gruffly. "You have made yourself so busy just for what you think you'll get, of course. That's the way nowadays. All selfishness and self-interest; everything a commercial speculation, from religion to love and friendship. Friendship, forsooth! My friends like me only for my money, and would turn their backs on me if I lost it."

"It may be the only likable thing about some of us," said Robert, thoughtfully. "Strikes me as a bit unreasonable for disagreeable people to complain of not being liked. But here's a straight question, sir. You hint that I did you a trifling service only because I expected to be paid for it. Is there anything in that that should make me like you very much? And may not your friends have cause to ask the same sort of question of you?"

The old man chewed the cud of a new suggestion.

"Perhaps," he conceded. "And perhaps I should have gained your affection by a slap on the back and a fine speech. Both would help you a lot, no doubt. I suppose you have the usual story; out of work, rent unpaid, wife and children starving?"

"No," replied Robert, grandly. "I am a celibate millionaire, and adopted this mean attire in order to be loved for myself alone."

"I suspected it all along," said the old man, chuckling a little. "Well, I won't hurt your feelings by offering you money, but you can leave your name and address, and I may find you something to do—when you have spent your millions."

He chuckled again at his own joke. Robert yielded to persuasion, and scrawled his name on an envelope; he had no permanent address to give. He had closed the interview with a cheerful "good-morning!" when the old man called him back.

"You have dropped something," he said, pointing to an object glittering on the dark carpet. It had fallen out of Robert's pocket somehow whilst he attended to his queer patient.

"My rosary!" he exclaimed, and with reverence kissed the little cross and medal attached to the blue beads.

"Your rosary? You are a Roman Catholic? Humph! Well, I suppose that's neither your fault nor your merit. Like the rest of us, you would take your religion from your parents, and be just what you were brought up to be."

"Not exactly," corrected Robert. "I was brought up a Protestant."

"Indeed! And why did you turn your coat?"

"Because I found that I had got it on the wrong way," said Robert, of which reply the other's eyes flashed an appreciation.

"We have a little in common," he observed reflectively. "My gray hairs would not protect me if I called John Smith's mother a sinner and an ordinary woman. I do not insult the Lord by describing His Mother in terms I would not and dare not apply to my neighbor's. You will hear from me again, Robert Radnor."

The episode dropped out of Robert's memory. Months passed, and then an advertisement in the local papers invited him to call on a certain solicitor, when he would hear of something to his advantage. Responding, he learned that the eccentric old man was dead, and had bequeathed him a sum of money that made him rich, not beyond the dreams of avarice, but beyond his own wildest imaginings.

The legacy would be paid over shortly; and meanwhile the lawyer advanced him money for his immediate necessities, chief of which was respectable clothing. He increased his experience by the knowledge of how it felt to have all his garments new at one and the same time; and he was desirous of experimenting further on himself by having enough, all at once, of solid, substantial food. Now that the dark days were over, he shuddered at the thought of what he had endured in pangs of cold and hunger.

He turned the pages of memory, and he saw the figure of a lad, emaciated and poorly clothed, sheltering in the doorway of a small shop from a storm of sleet and hail driven by a wind that cut to the bone. Presently the door opened, and a careworn woman looked out. The lad involuntarily raised his arm to avert a blow—a gesture with which she was familiar; for dread of personal violence, united to weary vigils and futile protests against the squandering of hard-earned shillings, constituted the chief features of Mrs. Connor's married life.

"Come in—come in! Sure nobody here will hurt you," she said, pitying the stranger's misery; and she had taken him into the back shop, dried his coat, and not only given him ambrosia in the form of hot tea and toast, but the certainty of a night's shelter with the pence she pressed into his hand. How true are the words of Dickens that what the poor are to the poor is known only to themselves and to God!

A gentle little girl with soft dark eyes increased Robert's possessions by presenting him with a blue rosary.

"Take it," the mother whispered as he hesitated to accept this offering. "I like her to give, and she has not anything else, the darling!"

"But I am not a Catholic," confessed Robert.

"Ah, now, my poor boy! But we'll pray for you, and you'll keep the rosary; and some day, please God, you'll be asking one of His priests to bless it for you."

Robert did not understand; but the rosary lay next his heart for many a day, ever prompting him to thoughts of that mysterious faith which gathered about its altars the lame, the halt, the blind, the outcast and despised; whose priests moved among them, tender, patient, compassionate, followers of the Crucified, until the hour came when prayer was answered, and humbly Robert sought for guidance ere long to feel in the very depths of his soul that for him had those sublime words been spoken: "Behold thy son! Behold thy Mother!"

He had not brought himself under Mrs. Connor's notice again. His poverty, which came near to destitution, held him back. But at intervals he passed down the dingy street, and a glimpse of the dark-eyed child and a younger sister wearing black frocks told him that the little family had been relieved of its unworthy head.

One Christmas he sent a card with the inscription:

"The poor lad to whom you gave a rosary one stormy night is a Catholic now. Pray for him to persevere."

The pitying mother, the gentle child, had been the source of many a dream, the central figures in the fairy tales he told himself in weary hours when hunger banished sleep; and he treasured the child's gift through years that seemed leading ever farther and farther away from the hope of those dreams coming true—years in which, somehow, he had ceased to see her. She must have grown to womanhood now, and joined the army of toilers, too. It was good to know that at last his turn had come.

In search of his earliest benefactor, he proceeded to that varied district of Glasgow known as the South Side, and to a part of it where the shops abound in fried fish, tinned provisions, an anemic sausages; where pallid children pursue the candy-man with his floating red and blue balloons, and barrows of crockery decorate the gutters.

Mrs. Connor's emporium still existed, despite dull trade and increasing competition. Over an array of pinafores, blouses, and skirts, still appeared the annually renewed device, "Greatly reduced," which applied to stock, not to circumstances.

Robert entered. She was there, gray-haired, wrinkled, her shoulders drooping under the weight of years and worry, but—and it was that that mattered—she had not gone beyond the reach of human care and kindness. By the eagerness with which she advanced, he judged that a customer was something of a rarity; no doubt his new attire conveyed an impression of unlimited buying powers, and her face brightened a little. He looked around for something that might be even remotely connected with a man's wardrobe; but in vain. He hesitated between a hat pin and a fringe net, then plunged boldly into the sea of adventurous purchase.

"I want a blouse, please," said he.

"Certainly, sir. What size?" asked she.

"Any size," he replied, smiling from sheer delight at having found her.

Mrs. Connor, however, misunderstood his radiance.

"For yourself, I suppose," she said dryly. "I'm thinking we haven't any neat enough for you."

"It is for a tall lady," explained Robert—"tall and slender, and must be the very best you have."

"Beg your pardon, sir!" said Mrs. Connor, mollified by the details. "I thought you were just after having a laugh at me; and I'm not much in the humor for fun, I can tell you, with one of my girls ill."

"Not seriously, I hope?"

There was so much anxious, kindly sympathy in his tone that Mrs. Connor expanded. She was a woman who kept rather aloof from neighbors, and there are times when silence seems like a prison from which one must escape.

"She has been ailing and weakly a long time," she answered. "The doctor doesn't say what is the matter, but tells me she should have change of air and plenty of nourishing food. Glory be to God, it's easy for them to give orders! I can't even be with her all day, having to mind the shop, and my elder girl out working hard—typewriting morning, noon and night."

It was the elder girl who had given him the rosary; soon he would have the pleasure of showing it to her, now in a silver case.

"About the blouse, sir," said Mrs. Connor, recalling herself to business, and glancing over her stock in trade. "Did you want print or delaine?"

"I didn't want anything at all," he replied, suddenly and huskily. "I didn't come in here to buy anything. I—I came to see you, to remind you of something you once did. It was a long time ago. But I could better say what I want to say there."

He pointed to the back premises. Mrs. Connor thought she had a burglar or a lunatic to deal with, and mechanically felt in her pocket for her police whistle. However, she permitted him to enter the bare, clean room, where a fire made of smouldering cinders—the sort of fire that never wakens into a blaze, but dreams itself slowly to death—indicated that the problem of how to make ends meet still confronted her.

"You don't remember," said Robert—his throat had become dry, his usual facility of speech deserted him—"but I have never forgotten. I stood here—just here—a winter night when I was so high. You warmed me, you fed me. I should have died in the streets of cold and want that night but for your charity. Worse, I should have died outside the Fold. And so—and so I have come back at last to say God bless and reward you for what you did."

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A year later, and a dainty, dark-eyed girl was gathering flowers in the garden of a pretty suburban cottage. "The tender breath of an April day" swept through the misty green of the trees; blackbird called to blackbird from topmost boughs. The garden gate clashed, and a man, lithe and alert, strode in, singing as he came.

"Good child!" he said, as the girl fastened a cluster of violets in his coat. "Where are mother and Nora?"

"Out walking. Nora is strong as a lion now; and, really, freed from that terrible shop, mother is growing young. Oh, Robert, what an angel you've been to us!"

Robert Radnor patted his shoulders reflectively.

"I believe I can feel the wings," he declared, with a smile; and, to the music of his young wife's laughter, he entered his sunny home.—Mary Cross in the Ave Maria.

Around the Globe.

The Catholic population of China has already run up to more than 1,040,000, and the census for the past year will doubtless bring a higher figure.

Word has been received of the death at Moyne, Ireland, of Rev. W. Downey, who will be remembered in the northwest as the first president of St. Joseph's College, Dubuque, Ia.

At the conclusion of a non-Catholic mission at Columbus Grove, in the diocese of Cleveland, Ohio, the people of that town and vicinity subscribed $4,000 toward the building of a church and establishment of a parish.

A bequest of $10,000 each to two Catholic hospitals from a non-Catholic citizen has been made in Newark, N. J., by the late Amos H. Van Horn. The institutions are those of St. James and St. Michael.

A generous person whose identity has not been disclosed by request has given $175 to Rt. Rev. Mgr. P. L. McNamara, Vicar-General of the Brooklyn Diocese, for the relief of families in distress in that city. Mgr. McNamara turned the money over to the St. Vincent de Paul Society for that purpose.

As a testimonial to John J. Leahy, who since April 9, 1884, a quarter of a century has been sexton of St. Patrick's, Philadelphia, the parishioners on April 9 presented him with a gold watch and a purse. At all of the six Masses on Sunday, Mgr. Kieran, the rector, spoke of the sterling qualities of Mr. Leahy.

Sister Clare, of St. Mary's Orphan Asylum and Parochial School for Girls, died recently at the Craney Island pest station of smallpox contracted while nursing Genevieve Pumpell, aged eight years, who developed the disease shortly after reaching here from Frederick, Md., several weeks ago. The child will recover.

An attempt was made recently to assassinate Father Denner, rector of the Catholic Church at Belgique, Mo. It was the priest's custom to occupy a chair in his study directly between windows. The assassins fired through these windows, the bullet passing over the chair, which the priest had vacated only a moment before.

The citizens of Helena, Mont., irrespective of creed, are joining in a movement to raise a fund for the completion of the Catholic Cathedral under construction in that city. Many of these separated brethren unknowingly are extending the kingdom of Christ in their midst.

The divinity library of the Catholic University at Washington, comprises about 65,000 volumes. The building of a $100,000 library building is proposed.

In a class of 150 confirmed at St. Patrick's Church, Cumberland, Md., on April 18th, by Bishop Carrigan, there were 24 adult converts. In the afternoon of the same day there were 22 converts in a class of 198 confirmed at SS. Peter and Paul's Church.

Near the city of Vancouver, B. C., is a settlement of the Squamish Indians. The families are well housed, and the former warriors and hunters have become industrious, prosperous farmers. There is a neatly-kept frame church, and in the public square stands a full-sized crucifix with the inscription, "Erected as a memorial of solemn homage to Jesus Christ by the Squamish Indians, A. D. 190[illegible]."

Mgr. Patrick F. O'Hare, pastor of the Church of St. Antony, Brooklyn, who has received many letters lately from women in his parish complaining that their husbands gambled away their weekly earnings, investigated the complaints and as a result he has decided to begin a crusade to close several gambling places in his parish. Mgr. O'Hare since he assumed charge of St. Antony's a quarter of a century ago has figured in many crusades, in many of which he was successful.

News From Ireland

Antrim.

Stouppe Maginnis, the rate collector for Belfast Corporation, who absconded in 1907 with a sum of money, was apprehended in Manchester, England, on May 12.

Armagh.

The death occurred suddenly on the evening of May 9, in the townland of Mullan, near Middletown, of Mrs. Hinthorn, who was in her usual health all day.

Cavan.

The death of Felix McGerry, one of the best known residents in the Cootehill district, occurred on April 6, at his residence, Knappagh, at the ripe old age of [illegible] years. He is survived by five children, three living in Ireland and two in Nebraska.

Derry.

The Local Government Board have sanctioned the permanent employment of John Redmond as a sanitary officer to Derry Corporation at 30s weekly.

Donegal.

Rev. Patrick Sheridan, of St. Charles', Kelvinside, Glasgow, where he has been working for a number of years, has been recalled to Ireland to his native diocese of Raphoe.

Married.—April 28, at St. Mary's Star of the Sea, Portstewart, by the Rev. P. O'Rafferty, C. C., Edward O'Callaghan, C. E., Buncrana, to Maggie, second daughter of the late Dr. Neil Farren, J. P., Buncrana, County Donegal.

Down.

The County Surveyor of Down has been empowered by the County Council to again apply to the Kilkeel Rural Council to vote £[illegible] for the repair in that district of a retaining wall, which is seriously unsafe, and likely to become a [illegible].

Fermanagh.

The Misses Flynn, daughters of Lawrence Flynn, merchant, [illegible], and Miss Boyle, barmaid, were out for a drive in a pony trap on May 9, and when returning by the Knockballam road the pony, which was driven by a boy named Thos. McDonald, took fright at a motor bicycle and bolted. The trap was overturned and the occupants thrown out on the road. Miss Jennie Flynn sustained a severe wound on the back of the head, and was subsequently attended by Dr. E. A. D'Arcy. Miss Boyle was injured in the back and arm, and Miss Maggie Flynn also received slight injury.

Tyrone.

The presentation of a handsome gold badge and scarf pin were made to Charles and Edward McDevitt by their fellow members of the Knockmoyle Div. A. O. H. on May 2, on the occasion of their departure for the U. S.

Cork.

The premises of Messrs. Hart Brothers, builders, Copley street, Cork, were completely gutted by fire on May 5. The loss runs into hundreds of pounds, but the exact sum is not yet known. Happily, the Brigade were successful in cutting off the flames from a yard stocked with petroleum at the rear of the concern.

His Lordship, the Most Rev. Dr. Kelly, Bishop of Ross, has made the following changes: The Rev. J. J. Sheehy, C. C., Rosscarbery, to be C. C. Clonakilty. The Rev. J. Crowley, C. C. Skibbereen, to be C. C. Rosscarbery. The Rev. T. O'[illegible] C. C. Cape Clear, to be C. C. [illegible]. The Rev. [illegible] Cahalane, Clonakilty, to be C. C. Cape Clear. The Rev. J. Collins, Glasgow, [illegible] C. C. Clonakilty.

Kerry.

Most Rev. Dr. Mangan, Bishop of Kerry, recently subscribed the sum of £1 to the Parliamentary Fund. [illegible]

Lord Listowel has offered [illegible] the erection of 20 artisans' dwellings in the urban district of [illegible] The matter was discussed at the last meeting of the Urban Council, when a vote of thanks was unanimously passed to Lord Listowel and his agent, Mr. F. [illegible], for the offer.

Limerick.

At the Convent of Mercy, [illegible] County Cork, Miss Teresa M. [illegible] Ryan, in religion Sister Mary [illegible], made her final vows on [illegible] 11. She is the fourth daughter of Patrick J. Ryan, [illegible]

[illegible]