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Through Death to Life

It was so unexpected, so tragically unexpected to those who thought they knew her best, that you naturally wonder how it came about. Listen, and I will tell you.

Some time ago, I was spending my holiday in Bordeaux—not the French Bordeaux but quite a small place in the Channel Islands, on the north shore of Guernsey. The solitude of the spot suited me, none but the simple cottagers with whom to exchange an occasional friendly greeting. I would go for days without speaking to a single living soul. I was delighted with my solitary rambles, loved to watch the stormy Channel with its galloping "white horses" and the great waves sweeping over the rocks in the bay. Then there was my daily invigorating swim when I tattled with the innumerable undercurrents which make this part of the island sea so dangerous to those who do not know it well.

One Sunday morning after mass, for which I had walked to St. Joseph's at St. Peter Port, I was strolling along by the beach when I became aware of an honest-looking fellow who was greeting me from the opposite side of the road. I stopped for a second.

"Surely," I said, "I remember you. Were you not one of the men who worked at Mowlem's Granite Yard at St. Sampson's a few year's ago.

"Yes sir," he replied—"when you used to come down there to get to know all the Catholics in the Yard. I was one of 'em. We missed you when you went abroad."

"Are you there still?" I asked.

"We struck, you know. Perhaps you heard of the strike sir? It fairly sickened me. Some of my best pals were blacklegs. They wanted a day of eight hours. Most of the strikers gave in and came to terms. I wouldn't. After that I drifted without any aim in particular; a kind of wandering spirit got hold of me. So I went to the north of England for a spell to the pit's mouth and as a miner. But my own people here kept on sending me letters, begging me to get back to the Island. Why couldn't I get work in the granite quarries, they said. They were always dreading to hear of my death from foul gas, or that I had been buried alive or something of that kind."

"I suppose" I said, "there is more danger to life in a mine than in a stone quarry

"So I came back to my old mother and made up my mind to settle down. I got working a quarry, and the common. I am there now—as foreman."

"Are you married.?"

His brow clouded slightly.

"Ye-es. My wife is a very good woman. We have a nice cottage at the vale."

"A Catholic, I suppose?"

He sighed. "No, a Primitive Methodist." He looked at me suddenly, unmistakable sadness in his honest eyes. "And I always told you I could never dream of a mixed marriage—that they were the biggest mistake out."

"But yours—?"

There was a half-puzzled expression on his face. And, I thought, an unconscious insincerity in his voice, as he replied. "We have had our full portion of happiness. She's a splendid wife. Everyone says there isn't a better-kept place than ours anywhere."

"I am glad you are happy," I said. "Perhaps she'll be a Catholic some day."

He shook his head and smiled a little. "She's a Primitive Methodist out and out—there's no changing her."

We came here to the parting of our ways.

"I'd be glad if you'd come to see me sir," he said, "to talk of old times. The missus'll be delighted to see you. Say next Sunday afternoon. It's lonely here somehow, with scarcely a Catholic to talk to." I consented. He gave me his address with minute directions and we said good-bye.

I walked slowly up the lane to my own house, wondering at the intangible change I perceived in my old friend. He was the same evidently the old earnest Catholic of long ago—and yet he was not the same What was this change? I told myself with conviction it was an uncongenial marriage. Yes, indeed, these mixed marriages are a big mistake. I made up my mind to find out the truth.

On the following Sunday afternoon I made my promised visit to the vale. He was standing at the wicket-gate waiting for me, and took me in at once to see his wife. The cottage and garden were models of method, care and labor. To my manly eye the whole appeared spotlessly clean. Not a chair, not an ornament was out of place, not a speck of dirt was on the polished windows. And the woman whom my sturdy islander had chosen for a wife was as scrupulously clean as her surroundings - exaggeratedly so. She came toward me, ignoring my outstretched hand, her own hands crossed primly over her white apron, and made a little nervous curtesy without any sign either of pleasure or displeasure on her expressionless face. She gave me an impression of a wonderfully-finished automatic doll, an impression which deepened after a little conversation with her. She spoke in dull, even tones, quite devoid of individuality, opinions, or feeling. Even when speaking of her husband she seemed to think it necessary to politeness to talk of him with the utmost formality. She gave him his name in full, with a precise articulation of every syllable which was most trying. "Frederick William," she called him; or with an air of still greater aloofness—"Mr. St. Clair—my 'usband, sir." I inwardly decided that never in all my life had I met so unreal, so conventional, so lifeless a being as St. Clair's wife. From the depths of my soul I pitied him, and knowing him as I did, I realized what had puzzled me before.

My friend's frank, kindly nature was crushed by his wife's; while his tolerence kept him from criticism of a woman in whom his eyes could discern no fault. No doubt, too, his love of peace and a certain distrust of himself kept him silent. Yet, as I watched them together, I saw that there was that in the man's soul, which, in spite of his creed, in spite of his apparently perfect surroundings, still remained unsatisfied. His nature was pure, strong, peace-loving and unworldly. She would have moulded this nature to her own, crushing out the fine natural qualities to suit her narrow views. It was evident at once that her God was external appearances, the fear of her neighbor, material prosperity. Well she knew how to minister to the comforts of the body; about the spiritual needs of living, aspiring soul, she knew and cared little. Husband and wife it is true; but separated by so vast a gulf that I wondered whether it would ever be bridged. Below the calm surface, the apparent unity of married life, there lay the awful void of lovelessness and lack of faith. The dumb appeal in his eyes filled me with pity. How blind she was not to see it! I read in it a longing for a conversion to his creed, a creed for which his illiterate tongue could find no adequate expression. But she was adamant. What artificial upbringing and godless environment had produced so faultlessly apathetic a woman?

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She fidgeted in her chair, her brows puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no topics over the teacups. I even caught the flicker of a smile quickly suppressed, as we talked of Catholic morality—a morality higher than any she knew. To do one's unavoidable duties in life, to be in all outward things a respectable citizen, to attend chapel in best attire twice each Sunday showed faith in God enough She noisily pushed back her chair as she rose to throw more fuel on the fire, her lips compressed in a hard line of disapproval, at the mere mention of the Real Presence, and the Infallibility of the Holy See.

I sent up a silent prayer to God to defend me from lack of charity, to open the eyes of my soul to the wrong as it really existed, and to point out the way along which, His will permitting, I might bring these two severed souls together. Did not God send me here for this very purpose? Nothing in life is accidental.

"I'll come over to see you one day at the quarry," I said to him as I left, "Good night."

"Good night, sir," he said.

At the bend in the lane I turned, to see him still watching me from the small wicket-gate of his cottage garden. Did something whisper to me then how we should meet again?

My friend's future—the welfare of the woman's soul—these now became my daily thought and care. Indeed, I prolonged my holiday in the hope of effecting both. Frequently I found myself at the vale, but all to no purpose. She seemed hopelessly impervious to all advances. Without apparent vices, without even an obvious fault through which to open a camgaign upon the soul, at what point could I propose to begin my spiritual siege under the banner of my King? I was a Joshua marching around the walls of Jericho;—but the walls refused to fall. At length I had to confess that here was one of those hard cases in whom Truth in the ordinary way finds no responses. I put my whole trust in God; and prayed the more fervently that He would raise this slumbering soul from the grave in which a hard, cold, loveless creed had cast it. I waited for God to blow the trumpet which should make the stony fortress yield.

I had not seen St. Clair since my first visit. Accordingly one sunny afternoon I walked out from Bordeaux to the common. As I approached the quarry I heard the sound of a horn warning passers-by to keep clear of the blasting. I stood still until the roar and shower of granite were over. Then I made my way down the slope to the floor. As I approached my man I fancied I saw the side of the quarry move. At first it seemed my imagination. The next moment I had barely time to shout, "Look out there, men!" at the same time pointing to a great granite block which heaved and crashed with deafening noise to the floor of the quarry, stirring up the blue dust as it fell. The pit echoed with its thunder. Horror-struck, I covered my eyes, dreading to see what I most feared. At last I drew a panting breath and dared to look, St. Clair was nowhere to be seen!

The dust cleared. I found myself as one in some awful nightmare helping with the crane. It took us one hour to remove the great boulder from that poor mangled body. They brought a shutter from a neighbor cottage. The men stood aside leaving me to raise the remains as if it was my right. Reverently I laid him on the bier, still feeling dazed and helpless. Was this real or was it a dream? Was this changed form in very truth my friend of long ago?—changed, crushed, out of resemblance to himself, who could recognize him now? Once, we had held ideals in common. Now, the gulf of death stretched between us. Yet no; for when the body dies, the soul lives more truly than before!

It was indeed a solemn procession that silently moved across the common that fatal sunny afternoon.

I hurried on in advance to break the news to the wife. How would she receive it, I wondered? I entered the cottage. On the trim tea-table, the spotless tablecloth, the home-made bread and cakes waited for the man who would never need her ministry again. The kettle steamed on the hob; the cat purred contentedly on the hearth by the polished steel fender; where he never again might stand. I flung myself into a chair opposite her without a word. She had risen in her usual servile way. Perhaps it was something in my manner that arrested her. I made several attempts to speak, but the words choked me. At last, "Sit down, Mrs. St. Clair," I said with quiet authority. She obeyed, trembling a little and a look of apprehension creeping into her eyes. Gently I broke the news to her, as gently as I could, sparing her as much of the horror of it as possible. Her cheeks turned deadly white. She rose slowly to her feet clasping her hands in front of her beseechingly; one moment her body swayed, then she fell heavily on her knees before me. Not a word had passed her lips. Raising her eyes, she seemed to be searching mine for the truth as though she still doubted me.

There was the sound of the slow tramp of feet on the garden path. Someone lifted the latch and flung open the door. One moment she stood transfixed; then flinging up her arms she sent up a long low wail of misery and rushed madly towards all that remained of the man whom she had married, yet half-despised. I placed myself between her and the body, "Poor soul," I said, "you are not strong enough to bear it," and I forced her firmly back into her own place, limp and fainting.

The days that followed were full of agony for the stricken widow. Her husdand was dead and buried, yet she seemed incapable of believing in his death. All her comfort now seemed to be to sit at my feet and let me talk to her on those very subjects which before she had so much despised.

"He is dead and yet he is not dead," I murmured in her ear, "surely those who have taught you about God have told you that the dead rise from the tomb. He is risen. His soul is in God's divine keeping. The grave cannot claim that. He is free at last from the chains which bound him before. He has left his prison—he is free, and some day, when God wills, we shall all three be reunited where there are no delusions of sense, of the world to separate soul from soul, where the veils which hide us from one another are torn down for ever, and we know as we are known." She answered humbly, "Yes, I was told all this before, but I never knew it, never felt it until now. I feel as if I were nearer him now than when he was alive—sometimes, not always. Very often I can only feel—I have lost him. I have lost him: He is dead—dead—dead!"

"You will meet again: God Himself has promised that."

She looked at me with a patient, pathetic smile.

"Tell me more," she said, "I want to know more."

Then I spoke to her as simply as I could of the Church foreshadowed in the Old Testament of Christ and the hidden wonders of His life, of the one and only Church He founded on the Rock of St. Peter, how He promised to be ever with that one Church to the end of time keeping her free from those errors which must inevitably creep into every merely man-made institution such as the Protestant church and her own little Primitive Methodism. I pointed out to her how He spoke of His Church the kingdom of God, as growing from that little grain of mustard seed then being planted in Palestine, until, as one great undivided tree it should cover all the earth; how no branch lopped off from that divine parent tree by human hands can live.

She drank in my words, her eyes aglow with wonder and new-born understanding; and as the days passed I realized that God had wonderfully answered my prayers at last. It was the soul's awakening to divine truth.

Her happiness now was to kneel in the little French chapel in the place where her husband used to kneel. Through his death she had risen to life. The two divided souls were united at last. Some time afterward I heard of her reception into the Church. She was childless and, therefore, free to follow wherever God might call. I was never told the details as to how it came to pass, but the last I heard of her was that she had become a Carmelite nun.—From the English Messenger.

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News From Ireland

Antrim.

The death of Mrs. Patrick McAleese of Corkey, Loughgiel, occurred on Tuesday, August 31st. Deceased had reached the ripe age of ninety-three years; but was until a short time since, almost as erect of figure and light of foot as in her younger days.

Armagh.

Cardinal Logue, Most Rev. Dr. Browne, and Most Rev. Dr. O'Neill are at Salamanca, in Spain, to attend the floral games, of which Queen Victoria Eugene has been elected queen. Owing to the campaign against the Riffs, however her Majesty will be represented at the fetes by the Infante Isabella.

Donegal.

While a lad named McClintock was in charge of a horse and reaping machine in a field near Newtowncunningham, the animal became reative, and in his endeavors to control it the boy fell and received a severe kick on the head in addition to getting his leg broken.

Fermanagh.

The committee of management of Tyrone and Fermanagh Asylum has approved of the expenditure of £1,000 for the erection of sleeping accommodation for 110 extra patients to meet serious overcrowding in the Asylum.

Monaghan.

At a meeting of the Canons of the Chapter of Clogher Diocese held on Sept. 16, in the Chapter room of St. Marcarton's Cathedral Monaghan, the Papal Bull appointing the new Bishop was read and the Bishop-elect Right Rev. Dr. McKenn, formerly took over the charge of the diocese.

Tyrone.

The funeral of the oldest inhabitant of Trillick, John Campbell took place on Sept. 12, and was attended by a large number of all classes and creeds. Born at Drumareen, Ballinamallard, about 90 years ago, he went to reside in Trillick on his marriage.

Clare.

The death of Rev. Lawrence J. Doonberg, died on Sept. 15, Deceased was a sterling patriot who, in other days, took a most prominent part in the National struggle. He had largely at heart the welfare of the people and projects for the amelioration of their condition had its active support. He was also leading member of the West Clare Education Committee. The departed clergyman was a native of Ennis and subquently went to Kilrush, where he spent a large number of years as curate and on a vacancy in Doonberg, by the death of Father Cilme, was elevated to the pastoral charge of that extensive parish. His administration was marked by the greatest zeal for his flock.

Cork.

The appointment of John D. O'Connor, chairman of the Kanturk rural district council to the magisterial bench has given wide satisfaction to all classes in this district and throughout the country.

Kerry.

A fire took place at Lohar, about three miles south of Waterville, recently in which two outhouses belonging to a tenant farmer named Jas. Murphy, were demolished. It is not known how the fire originated but it is supposed to have been caused by a lightning flash.

Tipperary.

Married.—At Powerstown Church, by the Rev. T. Hannigan P.P., on the 8th of Sept., Simon Stephen Downey, Woodbine Cottage, Masterstown, Cahir, to Mary eldest daughter of Thomas Cleary builder, Clonmel.

Carlow.

At the Cathedral, Carlow, on Sept. 2, Most Rev. Dr. Foley, Bishop of Fildare and Leighlin, assisted by the Rev. L. Brophy, S. T. L., vice-president of Carlow College, ordained to the priesthood the Rev. D. Murphy for the home Mission.

Kildare.

Died.—Sept., 11, Miss Anne Dowling, Vicarstown, aged 36 years.—Sept., 7, John Talbot, Ballynoe, aged 36 years.

Around the Globe

Of the large capitals of the world the most unchristian is probably Berlin. Only 2 per cent of the Berlinese are churchgoers and this 2 per cent. is largely made up of Catholics. The Catholic body of Berlin is an admirable one.

The poor inmates of the Carmelite Convent of Doual, France says an excellent exchange, are about to be pitilessly expelled, and their dwelling will be put up for sale by auction. Thus it is the authorities of that wretched country are still engaged in their diabolical work of ruthlessly driving from their land the saintly followers of the Blessed Master.

Rev. Canon LePailleur, during all the Masses on a recent Sunday in his church in the town of St. Louis, near Montreal Can., spoke at great length on the important duty of mothers in the care of their children. He advocated a more scientific care of the children, and appealed to the doctors of the town to give free public lectures on the care of children.

Canon Beeching of Westminster Abbey complains that famous edifice is in debt $45,000 for repairs made twenty years ago. The suggestion is made that some professional American debt-raiser be sent over. A much more pertinent suggestion made by the Sacred Heart Review is that Westminster Abbey be restored to the Catholic Church to which it belongs and from which it was taken by violence.

On the morning of September 11 the Pope received, as usual, many people. Among them was a man of the name of Merlini, 68 years old and an old cripple, the man who was wheeled into the presence of the Pontiff in a wheel-barrow. Both pilgrims came from Modena, the man walking and pushing the cripple in the barrow. They took seventeen days to make the journey. The Pope received them most cordially and thanked them for their great proof of attachment. He presented each of them with a silver medal.

A press despatch from Cincinnati says: "One who perhaps was one of the most religiously inclined woman of a half-century in this section died at her home, No. 816 Central avenue, Newport, (September 26). She was Mrs. Mary Smith, widow of John Smith. Both were born in Lancashire, England, and came to Cincinnati forty years ago. Mrs. Smith who was eighty-eight years of age, went to Mass every morning for more than six years, making a total of approximately twenty-two thousand times she attended church at St. Peter's Cathedral.

The Rev. Ignatius Renaud, S.J., aged 70, the of the most prominent Catholic educators in this country, died in Philadelphia last Friday. At the time of his death he was treasurer of St. Joseph's College in that city. Since he was admitted to the Society of Jesus in 1861, he has been connected with Fordham College, N. Y., St. Mary's College, Montreal, and St. Francis College, New York. He also served as a missionary in Maryland. He has been in ill health for the past six months.

Of the late Very Rev. Eugene Laussie, vicar general of the diocese of Hamilton, Ont., it is recorded, says an exchange, that he labored forfifty-two years in the priesthood without a single holiday.

The lecture on the "Bahama Islands and the Landing of Columbus," given by the Benedictine missionary residing there, the Rev. Father Chrysostom, O.S.B., under the Auspices of Columbus Council, proved to be of intense interest to the large audience present, which gave evidence of pleasure by requesting a continuation when the reverend lecturer intended to conclude after speaking more than one hour.