

Stairs of Sand

By Anna M. Regan

CHAPTER I

The silence of night had settled on Cherry Lane Farm and Sara Leavitt, bending over her drawing table in an alcove off her bedroom, lifted a tumbled head and glanced anxiously at the old wall clock that ticked above her head. It seemed to her that she was always waiting or listening for something. Even in the precious midnight hours when she cast her net for ideas she was conscious of listening for a sound that would shatter the silence and send the shirring idea darting off into oblivion.

The sounds were from various sources. Sometimes it was the peremptory bell from her father's sickroom; sometimes it was her younger sister, Hedda, returning from a party; sometimes it was her grandmother calling softly across the hall to know if Nat had gotten in; occasionally it was her brother Nat himself arriving, whistling or humming a late dance tune.

But tonight it was none of these that disturbed her peace. It was the astounding fact that Hedda had gone to the city early in the afternoon and failed to return or send any word. A dozen causes might have delayed her, but disturbing possibilities buzzed in Sara's mind. Hedda was a child about the dark, and would be terrified at coming up the lane alone, even in the moonlight.

Sweeping her drawings impatiently into a drawer, Sara arose, and after stretching her young body to its full height, she snapped off the light and went over to the window, where she took a seat to wait for her sister.

It was a night of brilliant moonlight, and here and there through the branches she caught glimpses of blue smoke curling up from the houses in the straggling village that lay in the long valley below, which was bounded on the farther side by fairy mountains now clothed in misty moonlight. Glenville, the little village, was of great antiquity, having been founded by some Dutch colonists in the early time of the province. There were some of the houses of the original settlers standing, within a few years, with lattice windows, gable fronts surmounted with weathercocks, and built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland.

Sara realized she was courting danger in thus exposing herself to the effect of the moon. The bold front which she presented to the world would never be able to withstand those shafts of silver that tore open old wounds and inflicted new ones.

It was two years now since she had broken with Randall Forbes, and the memory still brought pain. The insistent demands of her family, however, left little time for serious thought. She wondered, restlessly, how much longer she must wait here, doing the same things day in, day out, week in, week out, living everyone's life but her own.

For a century, time had apparently stood still at Cherry Lane Farm, mellowing, decaying so gradually that the process was scarcely noticeable. The family had settled here and no matter how far its members scattered, a few remained at the foot of the family tree.

Sara had gotten away once. By dogged perseverance and determination she had set herself free from the family home and gone to an Art School. For a thrilling year she had found a new world full of movement and space and ambition and love. Then the awful thing happened. Her father had a stroke and Sara was summoned home to take charge of the motherless, disrupted household.

"I shall never once let you leave again," her grandmother had sobbed, clinging to her helplessly. "You must promise that no matter what happens you will not leave us."

Sara, her heart bursting with love and sympathy,

had promised, but as she looked back on it now she wondered about a love that could be so grasping. That promise had cost her not only a career, but a lover as well.

She smiled now, grimly, as she thought of herself at twenty-two, attempting to steer the family with one hand and to draw with the other. It was such a worn-out old family, filled to overflowing with sentiment and tradition, so hopelessly marooned in this out-of-the-way village. She had been full of ideas for the betterment of the family, but for two years now her entire strength had been expended in preventing family friction, in keeping Dad off grandmother, and grandmother off Hedda, and Nat off of everybody.

As to her drawing she was yielding more and more to dashing off just anything that would sell. Anything that would return checks that would buy hats and shoes, and new curtains for the living room.

Sara thought, with bitterness, of the way history was repeating itself. As far back as she could remember the family demands had killed individual ambitions. Grandfather Leavitt had worked up a big business with a sand and stone quarry. His business forced him to build a narrow gauge spur to the railroad over the mountains. He was determined that his two sons should go on with the business after he passed on.

No matter what their individual tastes, and natural aptitudes or talents, they were automatically forced into the business, or else forfeited all income from it. Uncle Philo rushed away to make a niche for himself in the outside world. Jacob, Sara's father, couldn't leave, tied with his family and aged mother to the old place. Gifted with a singular genius for drawing, free hand, anything he wished, although he was obliged to work in secret, for, if it became known he would be jerked back into the world of sand and stone, as a brand snatched from the burning. Because of all this he found another means of escape. Sara could remember from early childhood his penitent returns from periodic flights from family boredom. He never returned without some small present for every member of the family. Sara could remember her grandmother saying, "No matter what happens he never forgets us."

A trolley whistle, sharp and near, broke the stillness. Flinging on a light coat over her thin house dress, Sara slipped down the stairs and out into the night. At the edge of a plateau, Cherry Lane fell away abruptly to the lower street level, and a steep and picturesque lane led down to the trolley station. Up this path a small figure climbed, picking her way daintily from rock to rock, and trailing behind her a long scarf of green chiffon.

Sara's heart softened as she watched her. Hedda was, she reflected, so dainty and sweet and unlearned in worldly ways. Would she always have to climb life's rocky paths in French-heeled shoes and trailing dresses? She was steeped in romance inherited no doubt from their southern-bred mother.

As she reached the upper level, and found Sara waiting in the moonlight, she laughed guiltily. She was a slender, round-faced little person with fair hair and blue eyes. Standing beside her tall, capable sister, she looked charming and small and ineffectual.

"See here, young lady, what does this mean?" Sara demanded with mock severity.

Hedda laughed as she slipped her arm through Sara's. "Does Dad or grandmother know I am out?" she asked.

"Nobody knows but me. What on earth kept you? Why didn't you telephone?"

"I tried to, but your line was busy here. I'm so glad though, you waited up for me. I'd have been scared stiff coming up this hill alone. Is Nat home?"

Sara shook her head. They were in the hall now, tiptoeing past Father's room, and cautiously creeping up the stairs.

"Nat telephoned he wouldn't be home tonight," whispered Sara. "He's coming down tomorrow bringing with him a friend of his who is employed laying out new parks and subdivisions. He has often spoken of this man. His first name is Neil."

"Neil," Hedda breathed. "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it was the same man I met on the trolley going to the city. He's wonderfully attractive, Sally. I feel thrilled that I am going to meet him here in my own home. Oh, Sara, did you laundry Lois' things for her? Poor kid, never does it right."

"Yes, I washed everything for her," Sara confided, "and I finished her white dress so she'd have it for the church picnic Saturday."

The girls whispering in the hall had awakened their grandmother and they could hear the tap-tap of her cane as she moved about her room. "Let's hustle into our rooms," Sara whispered, "before grandmother comes out."

"I'm really dead tired," Hedda whispered. "Pleasant dreams, dear." Sara pressed a kiss on Hedda's lips, and both girls passed quietly to their rooms.

Sara moved about the room, putting things to rights. Once she halted before a long mirror, a prized family possession, and viewed herself dispassionately. She was glad that her figure was good. Although she preferred small women like Hedda, she could not deny the fact that her lips were so thin and straight! They made her think of her father's lips. Just then she laughed, and the lips in the mirror rounded into soft curves, and through her stinging brown eyes an imp of daring mischief peeped forth. A thrilling sense of satisfaction passed over her. She was young and strong, and not so bad to look at. After all, she was rather glad that she was Sara Leavitt!

Snapping off the light, she once more stood by the window and breathed the warm richness of the night. It was hard to turn away from the joy in the play of the wind on her bare throat, and the heavy odor of cherry blossoms.

It was long before she slept, as her worries and perplexities swarmed about her. Was she doing right in taking upon herself the responsibilities of the whole family? Maybe she could do more for them all if she went away and secured regular work. But how could she leave her bed-ridden father and dear grandmother? Delight, so feeble and helpless.

The sunbeams playing on her face roused her the following morning.

(To be continued next week)

The Pope's Encyclical On Labor

(Continued from Page Two)

strongest men, such that it can all still be done, and the end intended by God. Wealth, therefore, which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress, must be so distributed among the various individuals of a society that the common good of all, which Leo XIII spoke, be thereby promoted. In other words, the good of the whole community must be safeguarded by those principles of social justice. One who is forbidden to furnish the other from a share in the goods. This sacred law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who, in the excess of the good fortune, deem it a just state of things that they should receive everything and the laborer nothing. It is violated also by a propertyless wage-earning class who demand for themselves all the fruits of production as being the work of their hands.

Some Go Too Far

Such men, vehemently incensed against the violation of justice by capitalists, go too far in vindicating the one right of which they are conscious, they attack and seek to abolish all forms of ownership and all profits not obtained by labor, whatever be their nature or significance in human society, for the sole reason that they are not acquired by toil. In this connection it must be noted that the apostle made by some to the words of the apostle: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2) It is as though it is understood that the apostle is here passing judgment on those who refuse to work though they could and ought to do so; he admonishes us to use diligently our time and our powers of body and mind, and not to become burdensome to others as long as we are able to provide for ourselves. In so doing we have a right to a living or to profit. (40)

Each class, then, must receive its due share, and the distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good and social justice. For every sincere observer is conscious that the vast difference between the few who hold excessive wealth and the many who live in destitution constitutes a grave evil in modern society.

Uplifting the Proletariat

This is the aim which our forefathers urged as the necessary goal of any effort at uplifting of the proletariat. It calls for more emphatic assertion and more insistent repetition on the present occasion, because these salutary injunctions of the Pontiff have not infrequently been forgotten, especially if ignored, or deemed impracticable, though they were both feasible and imperative. They have lost none of their force or wisdom for our own age, even though the horrible condition of the laborer in Leo XIII's time has lessened to-day. The condition of the workingman has indeed been improved and rendered more equitable in many respects, particularly in the larger and more civilized States, where the laboring class cannot longer be said to be universally in misery and want.

But after modern machinery and modern industry had progressed with astonishing speed and taken possession of many newly colonized countries, no less than of the ancient civilization of the East, the number of the dispossessed, laboring masses, whose groans mount to Heaven from these lands, increased beyond all measure. Moreover, there is the immense number of laboring immigrants whose condition is depressed to the extreme, and who have no hope of ever obtaining a share in the land. (41) These, too, unless adequate remedies be applied, will remain perpetually sunk in their proletarian condition.

Not Rightly Distributed

It is true that there is a formal difference between pauperism and proletarianism; nevertheless, the immense number of propertyless wage-earners on the one hand, and the superabundant riches of the fortunate few on the other, is an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed, and equitably shared among the various classes of men.

Every effort therefore must be made that at least in future a just share only of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy, and that an ample provision be supplied to the workingmen. The purpose is not that those become slack at their work, for man is born to labor as the bird to fly, but that by thrift they may increase their possessions and by the prudent management of the same may be enabled to bear the family burden with greater ease and security, being freed from that month-to-month uncertainty which is the lot of the proletariat. Thus they will not only be in a position to support their changing families, but will also have the reassuring confidence that when their own lives are ended, some little provision will remain for those whom they leave behind them.

Forces of Revolution

These ideas were not merely suggested, but stated in frank and open terms by our predecessor. We emphasize them with renewed insistence in this present encyclical.

(Continued on Page Five)

Ritual of Initiation Will Be Staged at Convention of Mission Crusade at Niagara

Over 250 Students Will Take Part in Dignified and Ancient Ceremony of Knighthood—Three Thousand To Sing At Reception

Niagara University, June 4.—Over 250 students of the Buffalo and Niagara districts of the Mission Crusade will participate in a ritual of initiation of the Seventh National Convention of the Mission Crusade, June 24 to 27. The players, musicians and dates will stage a pageant of the life of St. Ignace, the characteristics of these crusaders. The ceremony will be held at the historic spot of the Niagara Falls, and will afford a beautiful setting.

The ritual is a dramatic and dignified ceremony by which knighthood was conferred on St. Ignace, the first of the group, after a singing and music. Then the initiation, questions the candidates to determine their fitness. The approved candidates make a solemn profession of allegiance, first, to the American flag; for it is an American crusade; secondly, to the Mission Crusade, embodying the Crusade spirit through which the conversion of pagans is to be obtained; thirdly, to the Cross, to express loyalty to the most fitting image of Christianity.

For the Month
The candidates are dressed by music, pageant, and by the approval of the group. The ritual is a dramatic and dignified ceremony by which knighthood was conferred on St. Ignace, the first of the group, after a singing and music. Then the initiation, questions the candidates to determine their fitness. The approved candidates make a solemn profession of allegiance, first, to the American flag; for it is an American crusade; secondly, to the Mission Crusade, embodying the Crusade spirit through which the conversion of pagans is to be obtained; thirdly, to the Cross, to express loyalty to the most fitting image of Christianity.

We, Knights and Ladies of the Mission Crusade, solemnly affirm and swear to God, our Father, and to the Holy Virgin Mary, our Mother, that we will defend the Faith, the Church, and the Holy See, and will strive for the conversion of the heathen, and the redemption of the souls of the damned. We will never be divided, and we will remain united in the love of God, our Father, and of the Holy Virgin Mary, our Mother, and of the Holy Angels, and of all the Saints in Heaven. We will never be divided, and we will remain united in the love of God, our Father, and of the Holy Virgin Mary, our Mother, and of the Holy Angels, and of all the Saints in Heaven.

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