



Dedicated to the Girls of the Civilized World

Watson Haddon, Carthage, Mo.

FOR THE AMERICAN:
THE NUN.
An Episode of Convent Life.

Translated from the French by Rev. M. J. P. Thiel, A. M.

CHAPTER IX.
THE REFUGE.—Continued.

Clarisse fixed upon him an intense look and the red blood rose slowly to his cheeks. Madame d' Ivanhois feared lest she should learn the truth too quickly, and tried to turn the conversation. Clarisse interrupted her, saying with a great deal of anxiety:

"This young man is your son, Madame, is he not?"

"Yes, my dearly beloved son," responded Madame d' Ivanhois.

"I thought I had heard," responded Clarisse, "perhaps I have dreamed it that when they placed me upon the litter that that called him Edward. I have had so many dreams, and I have passed through some realities from the illusions; but it is impossible," said she, placing her hand upon her forehead and shading her eyes, "yes, it is impossible that I should be dreaming now, and that all this agreeable vision should disappear like others of a very different nature. Ah! that would truly be the refinement of cruelty."

She looked at her brother again; a lively color spread over his features, and she exclaimed:

"Dear Monsieur—you will pardon me—but I am confused and ill at ease. I have strange thoughts! You ought not to look at me so attentively."

Then turning towards Madame d' Ivanhois, she said:

"Can he sit by my side? I fear that he will vanish as already so many things have gone. Certainly he does not wish to deceive me."

It was evident that a certain confusion of ideas was arising in her mind, and that it was accompanied with a feeling of fear. It was then necessary to redouble our care.

"Dear Madame!" said M. Beaumont, and in obedience to her wish he seated himself by her side. But he did not dare to say another word.

"May I touch your hand?" said Clarisse.

He extended his hand. She took it for a moment in her own; then she let it fall and said:

"No, this is not a phantom! No, this is not what I have seen or dreamed! I do not know which of the two it is. But, dear Pauline," said she, "you understand those things better than I; have you not followed my funeral procession?"

"I assisted in the ceremony that we believed to be your funeral. But that will explain itself. Do not think any more of that."

"I will think no more of it," she replied; "but tell me, Pauline, who is this gentleman? Am I still under an illusion? Is it possible to deceive me? Will it pass like the clouds of that horrible prison? O Pauline, Pauline!" she cried, throwing her arms around her neck and pressing her convulsively to her, "save me from my own imaginations; they are terrible!"

"No, no," said Pauline, "he will not disappear! Look at him! His eyes are full of tears. See with what love he looks upon you."

"I love him also," she answered, "for he saved me from a horrible death. But, Pauline, why do I remember him and then I do not remember him?"

"Because," replied my friend, "you know him perhaps, when he was a child, and you have not seen him since." "This is not Edward!" she cried, throwing herself backward, "this is not my well beloved brother Edward! No, it is impossible!"

I shall never forget the ardent look that she fixed upon him for a moment; but this expectancy lasted but a moment; a moment later and she was in her brother's arms, fainting.

We hastened to her to give cordials to revive her, but the gentle carresses of her brother had more effect upon her than all the remedies we were able to offer.

This last proof of the goodness of God towards her resulted in restoring her calmness and strength.

One of the cruel principles of the Roman Catholic religion is the breaking of natural ties. It is true, as our Saviour has himself said, that religion often causes divisions in families. But it is not in breaking these ties that it is done; this rupture is not the act of the Christian; his own thrust him away and do not permit him to be united to them.

The terrible device of the papacy is this: "Yield to me; I am more holy than thou!" and in this haughty sentiment, she orders that all natural affection shall be sacrificed to what the church commands. It was entirely different with Clarisse. The powerful current of her natural affections, so long repressed, took its course and directed its way without obstacle towards her brother, her noble, pious and amiable Edward. So, her spirit recovering promptly its peace and vigor, restored her, with the goodness of God and the maternal and multiple cares of Madame d' Ivanhois, and we had the joy of seeing her take on a degree of freshness and beauty that we had known in her only as a remembrance. A year or two later, all trace of suffering had disappeared from her pure and delicate features.

But it was not until many weeks after the scene that I have described that it was permitted us to speak of her sufferings. She recounted them to us as given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.
THE SUFFERINGS OF CLARISSA.

"I will not enter, my dear friends," said Clarisse, "into the details of the first part of my sojourn in the convent. During this period I experienced the ordinary lot of favorites. At first beloved by the Superior, I was soon after treated with an extreme coldness; I had at an early date lost the affections of poor Anunciata, so soon after I had taken the veil that I doubted if I ever possessed it, especially when I saw that apparent tenderness change into a deep hatred, upon the suspicion that I had betrayed my friend in the matter of which I was informed later.

"The affair of the note had been discovered by Mother Ursula, who reported to Madame. I am hardly able to describe the state of my mind, since my profession until the day when was brought about the change of which I am about to speak.

"I was becoming weak and indifferent; each day I felt my dislike increase for the forms to which I had submitted. But I did not doubt their excellence, persuaded as I was that whatever the church commanded was indispensable to save us from purgatory or from eternal destruction.

"I was still the favorite of Father Joachim and of Mother Ursula, and

this was the reason of their good opinion they held for me; for when a lady named Mme. Barthelmy, became a boarder in the convent, expressing the hope of resting with us and of making some large gifts to the establishment, they placed me with her to take care of her under the surveillance of the assistant mother. This lady was confined to her bed by an attack of rheumatism, and directed me to remain with her with the express recommendation to do all that I could to favor the interests of our Holy Mother church; and, I did not propose anything else until that incident that happened which changed all my projects.

Madame Barthelmy was a person such as I had never yet met, so I did not comprehend her at first. She was a widow of a certain age, who had not yet renounced all ideas of beauty and external attraction. She was extremely impressive; the first time that she came to the convent she was so enchanted with the magnificence of the scenery there enjoyed and so charmed with our pantomimes that, but for her rheumatism, she would have taken the veil. But this sickness calmed her enthusiasm, and she soon tired of our sad and monotonous life. She did not wish to hear any longer my beautiful discourses upon the advantages of the cloistered life; on the contrary, she desired me to recount all that I had seen and found in the world.

"One evening in particular, she showed me a book, small but magnificently bound, and said with a sigh that the book was a present from a friend, who had made her promise to read it through before she bound herself with irrevocable vows.

"But alas! Sister Clarisse," said she, "it is very long, as you see, and I do not believe that in my whole life I have read as much as there is in this book."

"I was curious to see the book, and I asked her to let me take it, but she smiled and said:

"No, Clarisse, you must not read it. It is a forbidden book; it is contrary to our Mother church and her ceremonies; that is what my friend has told me. For my part, I must believe what is true, for I shall never be able to read that book through."

"She closed it and threw it carelessly upon the bed. I picked it up at once, for I had not seen a bible since the voyage from England, and I examined it with avidity.

"O dear Madame Barthelmy," said I, "give me this book; yes, if you love me, give it to me!" And I pleaded with so much perseverance that finally she consented, saying lightly:

"So be it! If this volume drags you before the inquisition, do not hold me responsible."

"I had told the bishop, in the subterranean chapel, when you, Pauline and Angelique, were present, what the first passage of the Bible was that opened my eyes upon the church of Rome; which was misquoted and then gravely under the statue of the Virgin. My eyes then began to open, by the grace of God, though I did not gather the truth without much confusion. My presence with Madame Barthelmy allowed me to read and re-read, and I did not lose one of the precious moments. I read without stopping, without giving any heed to the noisy gaiety of my company, who amused herself greatly about the ardor with which, said she, I imbibed things that sooner or later made me excellent material for a *auto de fe*. I am sure that self-love kept her from confessing

that she had given me a dangerous book, for each one said that 'Sister Clarisse would never have read that book if Madame Barthelmy had not fraudulently introduced it into the house.'

"It would take too long to describe how the Holy Word worked upon my mind, and how I was led to reject, one after another, the papal errors, to such a point that, a short time after so powerful and prompt is the work of God, that I was a Protestant at heart, though, alas! I was a cloistered and veiled nun.

"As long as Madame Barthelmy was with us I was permitted to remain with her; my conduct was free from observation. Immediately after her departure, a light illness confined me to my cell, caused especially by the fear I had of discovery.

"I have no cause to praise myself for the change so promptly produced by the reading of the Holy Word. It seems to me on reflection that in the beginning and end I was a passive instrument in the hands of the Lord. What convinces me is that in the midst of the most agonizing thoughts I was unable to form any plan of conduct; I always allowed my impressions guide me, or, if I may say, my momentary inspirations. It is marvelous to see how I was fortified, from hour to hour, until my arrival among true Christians. O God," cried Clarisse with adoration, "how true is thy promise! 'Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.'

"As I have already said, I was confined some time after the departure of Madame Barthelmy, in my cell, and the tears I shed were attributed to the grief I had for the departure of this friend. But when they judged that it was a frightful sin to manifest so much grief at the separation from a person who had returned to the world, after having shown a desire to take the veil; and Mother Ursula assured me that I could only expiate this sin with an abundance of penitences, which would be surely inflicted upon me as soon as my health would permit it.

"What would the poor mother have said if she had known that I carried upon my body the Holy volume that condemned so forcibly all the forms adopted by her church!

"It was impossible to play the invalid; but it was also impossible to bind myself down to the forms of worship exacted by our life of religion. Who does not know, however little of right knowledge there may be in the heart, that these forms are, for the most part, idolatrous in the highest degree? Finally, in spite of all the susceptibilities of the Romish church, there is every evidence that they render to the Virgin and the saints the worship due to God alone; so, when they address Mary as the only Mediator, the prerogatives of our Saviour are violated, and His dignity as only Mediator is thus transferred to another. Every right and clear mind cannot fail to recognize also that the man who arrogates upon earth the government of a church renders himself guilty of an odious heresy, since the seat of the universal church is not here below, and that its head is Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and not a mere man.

"It was during my detention in my cell, caused by my illness, that these truths acquired over me all their power; I saw at the same time that it would be impossible for me to conceal

my principles. I recoiled, without doubt and with fright, before the terrible combat that was preparing for me, and for which I felt myself to be powerless; but I was fortified by the promise that the help of God would be given me in the hour of need.

"The fever had left me and I had no further excuse to remain in my cell; so I was invited, one morning after the service, to appear before Father Joachim in the confessional. This message was brought by Sister Anunciata, who, entering into my cell and looking at me with the air of an interrogator, made me to understand that she believed that I was only pretending sickness, that I had long enough neglected my duties, and that it was the desire of Madame that, sick or well, I follow henceforth all the services in which the sisters assisted."

"I made no answer, but as soon as Anunciata had departed, I made haste to dress myself and seek where I could hide my Bible. I could not leave it in my chamber, and I dared not guard it longer upon my person; finally the idea came to me to hide it in the pedestal of the bronze statue of St. Augustine that stood in a niche above the stairway. Precious Bible! thought I, if I am able to preserve thee, ah! I shall not be without consolation; and who will ever think of seeking thee, feeble sheep, in the cavern of the lion? I succeeded in hiding the volume, and with my mind in repose I descended the staircase to the confessional to listen to Father Joachim.

"I have often reflected upon the singular state of my mind at this time. I was perfectly calm, and if I had any apprehension it was only concerning my precious Bible, the loss of my Bible would have been an inexpressible misfortune.

"The father confessor arrived soon after. I heard his steps, and he entered the confessional and called me by name. As I did not respond immediately he pressed me to begin without losing time, saying that though I might have been delivered promptly from venial sins, there might be mortal sins that I had committed since my last interview with him.

"My father," I answered, "I have confessed my sins to God, and He has made me understand that I am pardoned by the blood of Christ our Saviour, which has been poured out for me. Knowing myself thus purified by His blood I consider it an impiety to return to my sins."

"The father was so astonished by my response that he was silent, but I, far from feeling intimidated, continued in these terms:

"A powerful and marvelous change has been made in me, my father, since the last time I knelt in the confessional. I believed then that it was in the power of the priest as representing Jesus Christ to absolve the penitent, according to the Latin formula: *Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis*. I believed that scarcely was this phrase pronounced than the sins were pardoned, and that the penitent received a new grace by which he recovered all that he had lost. But since then I have had a revelation, not by flesh and blood, but from God himself, in His Holy Word that the ministry of man is without efficacy for the accomplishment of man's salvation, that this ministry should confine itself to making known this salvation to sinners, and to certifying to those who, having believed in the grace of Jesus, are inheritors of it. That is what the Word of God has said,

my father. It declares that those who are in Christ have been predestinated before the foundation of the world by the will of the Father, that they have been saved by the Son and are regenerated by the Holy Spirit; such is my firm belief!"

(To be Continued.)

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