

When Stella had been in bed about three weeks, she felt that she could last but a few days if help did not come. She dreaded death; she knew not what it meant. She had never been taught to look beyond this life to look for something higher and nobler. She had, indeed, heard of a life beyond—a life of happiness or of misery; but she never had realised what it all meant. Others had told her that death is the last of us, that after it all is silence. She had heard several ministers preach, but they had given forth no definite, tangible belief on life beyond the grave. They had spoken on 'The Fellowship of Man,' on 'Character,' on 'Anti-Christ at Rome,' or on some similar subject. But what did these subjects teach her? What did they tell her of a life to come? They did not tell her how to gain it. The vitality of a true spiritual life was lost in vague and formless assertions.

One morning she called her mother and said, 'Mother, I would like to see Father Prince. Please go and ask him to come and see me. I'm sure he will if you only ask him.'

Mrs. Margrave demurred at first, saying that no good could ever come of it; but seeing the earnestness of her daughter, and hoping to please her, she went to get the parish priest. Father Prince was not at home, but the servant promised to tell him when he returned in the afternoon that she had asked for him.

When told about the old woman who had come for him, Father Prince wondered which one of his parishioners lived at 507 Lennox street. He could think of no one; yet, since he was called, he must go.

As he clambered up the crank stairs he knew that it must be a poor family that lived in so tumble-down a place. When he knocked Mrs. Margrave opened the door to let him in. A glance at the room he entered confirmed him in the estimate of the inmates' condition.

'Good evening, ma'am,' said Father Prince; 'so you sent for me this morning, and what can I do for you, my good woman? Do you go to St. Anne's?'

'No, sir, but my daughter, who is sick, wanted to see you. She knows you,' said Mrs. Margrave, as she led him into Stella's bedroom.

The priest at once recognised in the sick girl the one who used to pass his place so regularly in the summer. He recollected that he had not seen her lately.

'So, my child, it is you,' he said, holding out his hand to her. 'You look very sick. I know your face, but what is your name?'

'Stella Margrave, Father,' answered the sick girl, already feeling better at the kind manner of the priest. 'It is so kind of you to come and see me. I was almost afraid to send for you.'

'Afraid? Well, well! Afraid of a poor old man like me! Am I so very dreadful to look at?' asked the priest, laughingly.

'Oh, no, Father, I didn't mean that,' said Stella. 'I mean that I didn't like to ask you to come to see me.'

'Well, now, my good child, what can I do for you? Are you a Catholic?' asked Father Prince.

'No, Father; mother and I don't belong to the Church, but I feel I would like to become a Catholic before I die.'

'Very well, and why do you think that? What put such a thing into your head?'

'Oh, Father, you've been so kind to me that I thought if your religion made you so it must be good,' answered Stella.

'I kind to you?' said the priest. 'My good girl, you must be mistaken. I never did anything for you in my life.'

'Oh, Father, don't you remember how I used to go by your house every evening?' asked Stella.

'I do; but what has that to do with my kindness?'

'And you remember how you used to say "Good evening" to me each time?'

Father Prince nodded.

'Well, that was the one kind word that a stranger spoke to me the livelong day. I used to feel happy when I found you sitting on your lawn, because I was sure of receiving a kind word and look. When you were not there, I came home with a heavy heart and could not feel happy. Did you notice how I used to cross over the street before I came to your house?'

'No, I did not,' said Father Prince.

'But I did, in order to get your kind word, though it would have been shorter for me not to have crossed the street in coming home.'

'I am glad I caused you some small joy, though it was very small, indeed,' said Father Prince. 'But now, are you really sincere in your desire to become a Catholic on this frail reason?'

'Yes, Father, I am truly sincere,' replied Stella. 'I feel that I could be happier if I were a Catholic, like you, and I wish you to tell me about your religion. I've heard some things about Catholics, but I don't see how they can be true. Can I become one?'

'Certainly, my child,' answered the priest; 'but first I'll have to teach you the truths of our holy religion. Were you ever baptised?'

'No,' said the sick girl.

'Do you know anything about the Catholic religion at all?' asked Father Prince.

'I have heard some things about it, but I don't think half of them can be true. Won't you have time to teach me all, Father?' asked Stella, looking wistfully at him, for she began to think it would be impossible for him to waste so much time on her.

'Oh, yes, my good child!' answered the priest; 'I'm only too glad to do so. I'll come every day to teach you, and then in a few days you'll become a Catholic.'

'Oh, thank you, Father!' said the poor girl, now in tears. 'I'm sorry to give you so much trouble.'

Father Prince, seated upon a box which Mrs. Margrave had brought him, began to tell the sick girl of the religion she longed to know and to make her own. The mother, with pinched and hunger-worn face, sat on the opposite side of the bed, and both mother and daughter were attentive listeners to the explanation. Having thus begun the instruction, Father Prince promised to come every day.

Whilst in the house he had noticed the dearth of everything needful to life. The stove was cold from lack of fuel; the poor patient had nothing but a broken glass partly filled with water, and standing beside her; she had a thin quilt over her; in the corner of the room lay a straw mattress—evidently the bed of the mother. In the dining-room, or sitting room, were three boxes, but no chairs or table. He knew it was useless to ask whether they had a doctor. At the thought of all this he felt sorely grieved, and resolved to do something at once.

He went into the store on the first floor and ordered a supply of groceries. Taking them in his arms, and ordering the clerk to follow him with a bucket of coal, he went upstairs again. He lighted a fire, told the shivering mother to get herself something to eat, and said that he would send some more groceries, and that he would also send a doctor to see her daughter.

The doctor came, but gave no hope of final recovery. Stella rallied, however, under the influence of the food and warmth, and was able to listen with a small degree of physical comfort to the instructions. Mrs. Margrave soon became as eager a catechumen as Stella, when she, too, began to feel the kindness of Father Prince.

In three weeks both mother and daughter were baptised, and then Father Prince brought Stella her first Holy Communion. She received this with fervent devotion and before the priest left that day she thanked him with tears in her eyes for all his kindness to her mother and herself.

As the cold weather came on Stella grew worse and it was soon evident that she could last but a few days. Accordingly she received Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction.

'I'd be happy to die now,' said Stella, after receiving the last sacraments. 'God has been so good to me and given me such hope. Mother and I had to bear much in our poverty and sickness, but it is worth all these troubles and trials, and a thousand times more, to be brought so near to God in the end; and I'm sure,' continued Stella, turning to the priest, 'that you will take care of mother when I'm alone.'

It is seven o'clock on the morning of the 22nd of November, eight months since the day we first saw Stella Margrave going to her work. The morning is as foggy as it was then, but underneath it is dry.

The door of No. 507 opens, and four men, carrying a narrow deal coffin, issue forth. Regardless of these, the thin line of working people make their way through the fog. The newsboy still calls out 'Telegram! Morning Telegram! Grind—grind—grind—the human machine runs on. A wheel has been broken, cast aside, replaced.'

But amidst all this din and turmoil, amidst all this human surging to and fro, the Almighty God reigns supreme. By ways unseen and unthought of the grace of the world's souls from the darkness of joyless Redemer is spread abroad, leading error into the light of the living faith, whence they are wafted on the wings of eternal love to the realms of everlasting joy and peace on high.—The 'Carmelite Review.'

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