

could only get her to kneel there for him—perhaps Father Bouchard could persuade her—but what woman could keep or assume such an expression to order. No, he must get it distinctly into his memory and conjure it again with the aid of his imagination. He lingered till Mass was over then he hurried home like mad and gathered what things he needed. He was at work in a short time. That day more of the old glow of his first efforts in art's service was upon him than he had known for a long time.

The next few mornings he went to Mass. One morning, he met Father McLean, who said to him: 'You don't get to work this early, do you? You know Mass is being celebrated just now.' 'I am going to Mass,' answered Foster, with a twinkle in his eye that baffled the young priest. 'Arn't you afraid we'll make a Catholic of you if you do such things?' 'Not much afraid, wish you could,' said Foster.

There in the same place when he went in, was his unconscious model. There was a great charm about her face; simplicity and purity were its keynotes, a spirituality he had never seen before illuminating it, and adding to it a certain intellectuality he had not hitherto known, though his friendships had been with women whose mental calibre had undeniable distinction. That was the thing that first set him thinking—her unmistakable, cool intelligence about what she was doing and about what was about going forward on the altar.

What a strange thing it was that the persuasion to which Agnes had been a martyr in that old, far-off time still endured, still had its supporters! As he watches his 'little Saint Agnes' praying at the Consecration, he knew her devotion would not flinch from the severest ordeal for what she was worshipping there on the altar. It was the first ray athwart the darkness—what then did happen in Galilee? over and over he began thinking. It lent a grave quality to his work as he continued finishing the shrine, a reverence to his presentation of what he was just beginning to comprehend.

When the shrine was completed and Father Bouchard was grateful beyond his expectations, he was also baffled beyond comprehension at how a man with ideas such as Gerard Foster had honestly confessed, had been able to grasp and depict with his brush that impalpable spiritual beauty born only of an exaltation which he had felt sure was an unknown quality to Gerard Foster. Yet there was a quality in his light and tone that Father Bouchard knew only too well came not from mere artistic composition, but from an innate spirituality—Raphael and others in 'the day-spring of art so fresh and dewy' had worked in it with their pigments.

About a year after this Foster returned to Pleasant Valley. He had been abroad again, but had come back to Father Bouchard to be baptised. The morning of his First Communion he lingered in the church after everyone else had gone. As he stayed there making a long thanksgiving, wrapped in the comfort and the joy of it, the sacristan came out to drape the church—there was to be a funeral.

After a few minutes the funeral procession came into the church. Very sweetly the organist was playing the Chopin march. Across the aisle and pews was borne to him the fragrance of flowers. It was the first service for the departed he had ever attended, and the beauty of it made a profound impression upon him. He said to himself: 'you've come to the best port, old man, whence to embark for eternity.' As the Mass went on he grew a little exhausted, having had no breakfast, but he did not like to leave. As his attention flagged a little he glanced about the church, his eyes falling upon his own work, and he lived again some of his old life; then his coming to Pleasant Valley and his conversion came before his mental vision. As his eyes rested on the shrine of St. Agnes, spontaneously they passed to the pew whence he had received his inspiration—the 'little St. Agnes' was not there. He thought again of how she had been not only his inspiration, but the sweet instrument, as it were, of his conversion, first revealing to him a faith he had not realised before. He felt that he would like to see her again. She was probably some girl of the village, but no matter he felt he would like to see her, perhaps know her. Once again the tones of the Marche Funebre came plaintively from the organ loft, distracting his thought. He glanced at the cortege. It was apparently a young person there borne out under all the white flowers, perhaps—she?

One afternoon later he strayed into the church, thinking he would look over his work critically. It had been finished long enough for him to get the right perspective.

As he entered the church he saw an old man and woman standing in front of the shrine he had decorated. As he drew near, looking intensely at what power he had put into it. 'I wish some of the fellows could see it: I believe it would convert them!' As he drew closer he observed the aged couple. The woman was crying; he heard her say: 'Isn't it like her? I feel as if I could just come here every day and almost have her back again.'

Foster bent his head and passed into a pew. 'O, little St. Agnes, thank God that once at least my brush has been true, thank Him that you led me to His feet—' Donahoe's Magazine'

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THE GREAT BLACK WHEEL.

Jane Barden sat in her wattle 'shanty' on the main Quartz Gully-road, gazing out gloomily at her bit of garden, where the few cabbages and beds of onions and other vegetables struggled down to the bare patch of ground, where a lordly rooster and his harem picked a precarious livelihood. The front fence was not in the best state of repair, and several feathered truants were enjoying full liberty out on the public way, where also a pet goat and her kid wandered at will. However, as few people passed along, and those who did were too much accustomed to goats (Quartz Gully being a happy hunting ground for those climbing animals), it didn't matter much.

Mrs Barden was reckoned a 'bit daft' by the inhabitants of Quartz Gully. 'She's had her troubles, poor woman!' said the more sympathetic; 'her man's sudden death unhinged her mind.' 'And it was a terrible shock when her son was killed,' observed others. While the cynical declared: 'She's an idiot to mourn over one son's loss when the other has deserted her so shamefully.'

Indeed, it was of this son, of whom report spoke so badly she was thinking as she let her glance wander to the gurgling creek and the opposite high mountains—which nearly shut out all sign of sky—and her dark brow grew darker, and her sombre eyes more sombre as she lifted an open letter from her lap and groped her slow way through it once again. 'Dear mother,' it ran, 'you will be troubled when you know I have lost my billet. I was never a success at business, and was one of the first to be put off when the depression set in. I've been expecting dismissal for some time, so it was not a surprise to me, but I kept it from you as long as I could, because I knew you would worry. Since I left I have been trying to get work elsewhere, but have not succeeded, so I've resolved to go back to Quartz Gully and start mining again.' When she read this Mrs Barden groaned and clenched her hands fiercely. 'I understand battery work, and perhaps will get taken on at the "Lone Star." I will be home Tuesday.' And this was Tuesday.

The woman laid the letter down, and covering her face with her hands, rocked her body to and fro in bitter anguish. Only she could tell the pain those written words gave her, bringing back as they did the memory of all her past troubles with terrible force. 'He must not! He shall not!' she exclaimed at last, starting up and walking about excitedly. But after a while her agitation calmed somewhat, and taking her sewing, she drew a chair towards the open door, and, sitting down, worked away feverishly, as if to drown the remembrances called up by her son's letter.

In spite of her efforts, however, her thoughts would wander, and every now and then she let her work drop into her lap, and gazed abstractedly across the road and creek, and half way up the side of the mountain, to the discharged droppings of mixed yellow clay and stones which told where the great 'Lone Star' mine was. A little nearer to her was the inclined tramway, down which were rolled the trucks filled with quartz for the battery, and the battery itself stood just in front of Jane Barden's own door. Whenever she looked out her eyes fell on the big black water-wheel which swirled round and round in perpetual motion as the volume of water from the race above it rushed on to it. The great black wheel was no novelty to her. Year in, year out, it spun round and round, keeping the massive machinery going, and putting power into the mighty stampers to do their proper work. And as the thud, and the crash, and the roar went on unceasingly day and night, she was used to the noise, and would have felt lonely without it. Indeed, the big black wheel had become a friend and companion to her, living alone as she did, and being of an imaginative temperament, also much given to gloomy brooding; and in the quiet evenings when the twilight was stealing over the surrounding ranges, the noise of the battery took the sound of the human voice, and spoke strange words to her. Now, as she sat with firmly-clasped hands, letting her mind dwell on those dear to her who had passed away, and thinking of this son who wanted to follow in their footsteps—to work as they worked, and perchance die as they died—the battery seemed to her fanciful mind to take a tone of warning, and the thud and roar of the stampers said prophetically: 'He will be killed! Just like the others! It is his fate!'

An hour later Stephen Barden arrived. He was a tall well set up young fellow, with palish cheeks and dark eyes, like his mother's. They were not demonstrative, these two, and greeted each other quietly, yet a keen observer would have seen there was a large store of affection between them. Steve was as the apple of his mother's eye—and she read every thought of his, and anticipated every wish, and her hard face softened wonderfully as she gazed on him.

After the meal was over, the evening being warm and the living room close, Mrs. Barden moved her chair to the doorway, while her son lounged on the step and talked to her.

'The life didn't agree with me a bit, mother: I always felt ill and out of sorts.' His mother sighed compassionately, noting his pale face and dull eyes and recalling her boy as she saw him last, three years ago—when he was plump and his cheeks were rosy. 'I'd never get much wages by my pen. Clerks are as plentiful as gooseberries in Melbourne, and are usually badly paid; thirty bob a week is a fair average, and they have to dress decently. So I've determined to go back to my old work. Education was wasted on me. I wasn't made to live with white hands—much as you would like it.'