

Gasping out the words, she leaned back with a white face.

Pere Bardet spoke a few hurried words to his host, and the next minute he had disappeared into the church for the Blessed Sacrament. When he returned, Jules, the faithful sacristan, took his lantern and bell, and started off with the Cure for the house of the man who was soon to meet his God.

The other priest, who had observed Jeanne's troubled face, remained behind.

'You are upset with it all, my child,' he said, kindly. 'Let me call Marie; she will look after you—or, if you should prefer it, I will drive you home.'

'It is too late, Father,' she said, tearfully. And then, realising that he could scarcely understand what she meant, she continued: 'I was expecting someone to see me this afternoon—and—and—he will have returned to Paris by the 6 o'clock train.'

Pere Vergerac smiled to himself. He had not been long at Vivet, and he knew nothing of Jeanne's affairs. But his white hair had not made him less sympathetic to the young, and he guessed the reason of her troubled face.

'Come along, my child,' he said cheerfully, 'there may yet be time to catch your friend. Let us pray that the good God may keep him. I assure you that Simonne, my horse, is in excellent form.'

A new light came over Jeanne's face.

'Is it possible, my Father?' she asked, rising eagerly. 'Oh! I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently.'

'The trap is at the door; I was about to drive my guest home,' he observed, leading the way. 'Of course, he has gone by the path through the woods to reach Henri—the way, I suppose, you came, which is so much quicker. Now, jump in, child!' So saying, he helped her up, and following her into the trap, he took the reins, urged on his horse, and was soon driving at a high rate towards Mermont.

Jeanne never forget the drive home. The country was at its best. Flowers and fruit were growing in profusion. At another time it would have given her intense pleasure to see them, but her eyes were now fixed ahead, and as every minute brought them nearer 'La Retraite,' she became hopeful and despairing by turns. Would it be too late, she wondered? Would Kevin have really gone?

'We are nearly there, Father,' she said with a sigh of relief, as they approached Mermont, and drove through the main street. 'Simonne has done splendidly.'

The tall trees which surrounded the house could be seen close at hand, and a moment later Jeanne had jumped down, and was speaking to her mother, who stood with an anxious face at the gate of the sunny garden.

'Why, Jeanne, what has happened to you?' she exclaimed, and then, seeing Pere Vergerac in his trap, she hurried up to him. 'I see you have brought Jeanne home, Father; you must come in and have some refreshment.'

'Not to day, Madame,' he said, with his sweet smile. 'I must hasten home, but I thank you very much, all the same.' Without waiting for Jeanne's thanks, he nodded brightly to the two ladies, whipped his horse gently, and disappeared round the corner.

'Maman,' said Jeanne, in a tremulous voice, 'is Kevin here?' unconscious that she had dropped the usual prefix.

Madame Conway looked at her quizzingly.

'I'm delighted you've come, cherie,' she said. 'Kevin has been here all the afternoon. As a matter of fact, he is staying the next few days with us. He finished his business in Paris sooner than he expected, and he will stay here till he leaves for America.'

Jeanne laid her head on her mother's arm. Her pride melted away, and she burst into tears of gratitude.

'Jeanne, petite, what is it? What has happened to you all this time?' asked her mother, as she linked her arm through her daughter's, and looked at her with a troubled face.

'It's all over now, maman,' said Jeanne, brushing away her tears. 'I should have been home long ago, only, on my way through the woods, I found Henri prostrate.'

Madame Conway uttered an exclamation of surprise.

'It must have been a case of sudden illness,' continued Jeanne. 'I could see he was nearly gone. He asked for Pere Bardet, who has been spending the day with Pere Vergerac. There was no one I could send to Vivet, and so I had to go as quickly as I could myself.'

'To Vivet!' interrupted her mother, in amazement. 'You must be exhausted.'

'I found him there,' Jeanne went on, as they entered the house together, 'and of course he went straight to Henri, and Pere Vergerac brought me home. That, in brief, is the story—and—oh! Kevin!'

The young man had been seated in the drawing-room, and had seen Jeanne approach. He stood at the door, tall and fine-looking, to welcome her.

Jeanne forgot convention, and as his name escaped her lips, her eyes shone with happiness and told their own story.

Kevin took her hand, and then with a look which expressed something of the love in his heart, he kissed it.

'Well,' said Jeanne, laughingly, as she blushed, and as Madame Conway left the two together for a brief moment, 'you are audacious! Did I give you permission?'

'Your face did,' was the triumphant reply, leading her into the room. 'Mavourneen, I've been waiting for this for months.'

* * * * *

'It was the funniest proposal possible, Father,' said Madame Conway, as she and her husband sat in the presbytery garden the following evening, after dining with the cure.

'As far as I can make out,' said Mr. Conway, 'it was no proposal at all. Kevin simply claimed Jeanne as his fiancée, and she was quite content. But, seriously speaking, we are delighted.'

'No wonder,' said the priest, thoughtfully. 'Kevin is all that can be desired, though I doubt if anyone is quite worthy of your little girl. As I told you, I found Henri almost gone yesterday when I reached him, but he was still conscious. He made his confession, received absolution and holy Viaticum, and died perfectly penitent and resigned. I am quite sure the merciful God has forgiven him all. He said to me, by the way, "I owe all to Mlle. Jeanne. She has saved the soul of a sinner."'

The tears came to Madame Conway's eyes.

'Poor Henri!' she said. 'I can truly say, Father, that even if Jeanne's whole happiness had been involved, I would not have had it otherwise—if it could have helped Henri.'

Mr. Conway looked up, and his voice, too, was not as steady as usual.

'You must say a Mass of thanksgiving for us that it was not necessary,' he said.

'Indeed I will,' the cure replied. 'The good God is never outdone in generosity.' And, as he looked towards the road, along which Jeanne and Kevin were approaching with happy faces, he added, 'I am sure that Jeanne has found that out already.'—*Mt. Angel Magazine.*

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