

away, tired and peacefully content, back to her own small home in exile. "Maman, will you always kiss me so much each time I go to Holy Communion? Because it will always be just as beautiful."

But while we were glad with the child, we did not forget the old toilworn life that was ebbing out in the lane at the foot of the garden; and, when the little one had driven away in her bridal white, we met again in the oratory to pray for the passing soul.

She was not of our Faith, and we could not kneel about her bed and see the solemn rites administered which are the consolation of the flock of Peter in their last agony. But while we said our own prayers, we knew we were in communion with the mourning family in the poor room, for their belief as fervent and guileless as little Hélène's own; and their love and sorrow such that we, who so well know what love and sorrow mean, could not but be linked lit them in their trial.

We had known Mrs. Heather ever since we bought the house on the hill-side; and we had seen with concern how in a few years illness changed her from a stalwart buxom matron to a dwindled old woman. Valiant to the very last, she would crawl out of bed to carry on her work; and we would find her, panting, beside a pile of the most snowy linen, being one who "would not like to miss my washing day." It was not that there were not plenty of willing hands to help her: for never have we seen more tender affection lavished upon anyone; and from her tall, handsome, greybeard husband to the youngest grandchild, she was the single thought of that humble home. But she had all her life "put out her hand to strong things"; she could not give in to weakness.

A two-storied cottage, facing the great sweep of moor, this home attracted our attention on the first walk we took down the lane. The little place was so bright, so tidy, so well tended. The very strip of turf that ran along the road, outside the clipped laurel hedge, was as smooth and close-mown as a college green: the garden had plots of flowers, all through the different seasons, which we never ceased to envy: a clump of lilies, sheaves of carnations, the biggest pansies, incredible sweetwilliams; but the sweetest flowers that bloomed there were of spiritual growth: Faith, Love, Devotion, and, when the time came, a most fragrant Resignation.

"I am quite prepared, my dears," she told her daughters, when it grew clear that the long struggle was nearing the end, and the "Reverend" had been sent for to "read" beside her bed.

She died the day of little Hélène's First Communion, surrounded by her family, except a soldier son, ill in hospital; died, lying against her old husband's heart, smiling, and, as she said herself, "Quite content." Just before drawing her last breath she looked at each of her children in turn and lovingly spoke their names: "Milly, Bessie, Tom," and the rest.

When she had smiled upon the last quivering face she said, with a little sigh, "Heaven at last," and so, quite certainly we believe, went there.

Old Mr. Heather, the Broom Squire as we call him, since he lives by the trade he plies with heather-brooms from the moor, was heart-broken; in this instance the phrase, often so idly uttered, applies in its utmost symbolic meaning. They had never been separated. He was forlorn as a lost child; he mourned passionately as a bridegroom mourns his bride. When he came out from behind his stack of broom twigs to grasp our hands the day after the funeral, his fine old face worked; he could not speak. He went back to his task, the tears pouring into his great grey beard.

"You must have been a very handsome couple," we said to Mrs. Heather one day, admiring the undimmed vivacity of her brown eyes.

Mrs. Heather had a little self-conscious smile and conceded, "Well, Mr. Heather was counted very fascinating!"

We are glad to think now that we had made such friends. In those last weeks, when she lay propped up on the narrow little black horse-hair sofa, fully dressed, with, always, a spotless apron just tied on, she would be cheered when we visited her; and the Broom Squire used to watch for us down the lane and rush in to tell her we were

coming. We only knew afterwards what store she used to set by these visits. And how she used to say: "There's our young lady," when the child of the Villino went by. Never would any of us have gone by without going in, had we known.

The soldier son, knotted about with so much red tape that the official untying of it successfully prevented him from being able to receive his mother's death-bed blessing, arrived in time for the funeral. It was his hands which used to keep the little garden so exquisitely neat and gay. A silent, earnest, steady, hard-working lad, he enlisted early in the war, and, unwilling to give in when the exposure of camping out brought on the first illness of his life—a violent attack of bronchitis—he struggled to drill and march with the rest, until, literally, his heart gave way. (It is perhaps irrelevant to these pages to state that, discharged from the Army a confirmed invalid, the War Office does not consider his case one deserving a pension.)

It was a very grand ceremony, that funeral.

"I'd like her to have everything of the best," said Mr. Heather many times, and his wishes were carried out.

The soldier slept with his father that night, to keep him company, and fought through a heart attack unaided rather than disturb the old man from his uneasy slumber.

It is pitiful to see the poor fellow crawl about the roads, scarce able to draw a breath; but Mr. Heather and the family have accepted this further trial with the uncomplaining and uncomprehending stoicism of their class. It is much to be feared that, such as these (the real salt of our English earth), bear many hardships and the injustice which causes them in too fine a spirit.

Old Heather finds comfort in his toll of daily strenuous work. Despite his age his figure remains as straight as a sapling. He would be a splendid model for a painter as he stands by the stack of purple broom-twigs. There is something of an antique and forgotten nobility about the severe lines of his face, in contrast with the childlike simplicity of his kind blue eyes. He is one of a generation fast passing away, and he can neither read nor write.

"I never had any book-learning," said he to us, the other day.

"And I don't think you seem the worse for that," said we.

"No," he agreed; and then, "It's not the learning that counts," he added, and with a great gesture struck his heart. "It's what a man has here."

Our Irish History Competitions

Our readers will remember that our annual Irish History Competitions will take place this year in October. The period to be studied is from the coming of St. Patrick to the Battle of Clontarf. Special stress ought to be laid on the lives of SS. Patrick, Brigid, and Columcille, and on the great schools and the great missionaries of the era of Ireland's Golden Age. With a view to helping the pupils we have secured a large number of copies of *Irish History for Primary Schools*, by Rev. P. Carey. Every teacher ought to order a sufficient number of these little books as early as possible. The chapters on "The Three Great Patron Saints of Ireland," "Ireland's Schools," "Ireland's Missionary Enterprises," "Irish Monks on the Continent," and "St. Columbanus" will be very helpful. As a more exhaustive work, for the assistance of teachers who want to supplement the lessons, we recommend O'Kelly's volume on early Ireland. It is a mine of information concerning the period with which we are dealing this year. Matter for secular and national aspects of the history may be collected from standard works, such as Sullivan's *Story of Ireland*. The *Brothers' Irish History Reader* has some excellent chapters also.

Irish History for Primary Schools

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