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## THE BLACK ROBE.

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—AUTHOR OF—

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE MOON STONE," "AFTER DARK," "NO NAME," "MAN AND WIFE," "THE LAW AND THE LADY," "THE NEW MAGDALEN," ETC., ETC.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.—MRS. EYRECOURT'S DISCOVERY.

The leaves had fallen in the grounds at Ten Acres Lodge, and stormy winds told drearily that winter had come.

An unchanging dullness pervaded the house. Romayne was constantly absent in London attending to his new religious duties, under the guidance of Father Benwell. The litter of books and manuscripts in the study was seen no more. Hideously rigid order reigned in the unused room. Some of Romayne's papers [illegible] been burnt, others were imprisoned [illegible]awers and cupboards—the history [illegible]rigin of Religions had taken its [illegible] place among the suspended [illegible] of the time. Mrs. Eyrecourt (after a superficially cordial reconciliation with her son-in-law) visited her daughter every now and then as an act of maternal sacrifice. She yawned perpetually; she read innumerable novels; she corresponded with her friends. In the long dull evenings the once lively lady openly regretted that she had not been born a man, with the three masculine resources of smoking, drinking and swearing placed at her disposal. It was a dreary existence, and happier influences seemed but little likely to change it. Grateful as she was to her mother, no persuasion could induce Stella to leave Ten Acres and amuse herself in London. Mrs. Eyrecourt said with melancholy and metaphorical truth, "There is no elasticity left in my child."

On a dim gr[illegible] morning mother and daughter sat by the fireside, with another long day before them.

"Lewis is staying in town," Stella answered, listlessly.

"In company with our enemy?"

Stella was too dull to immediately understand the allusion. "Do you mean Father Benwell?" she inquired.

"Don't mention his name, my dear. I have rechristened him on purpose to avoid it. Even his name humiliates me. How completely the fawning old wretch took me in—with all my knowledge of the world, too! He was so nice and sympathetic—such a comforting contrast, on that occasion, to you and your husband—I declare I forgot every reason I had for not trusting him. Ah! we women are poor creatures—we may own it among ourselves. If a man only has nice manners and a pleasant voice how many of us can resist him? Even Romayne imposed upon me—assisted by his property, which in some degree excuses my folly. There is nothing to be done now, Stella, but to humor him. Do as that detestable priest does, and trust to your beauty (there isn't as much of it left as I could wish) to turn the scale in your favor. Have you any idea when the new convert will come back? I heard him ordering a fish dinner for himself yesterday—because it was Friday. Did you join him at dessert-time, profanely supported by meat? What did he say?"

"What he has said more than once already, mamma. His peace of mind is returning, thanks to Father Benwell. He was perfectly gentle and indulgent, but he looked as if he lived in a different world from mine. He told me he proposed to pass a week in what he called retreat. I didn't ask him what it meant. Whatever it is, I suppose he is there now."

"My dear, don't you remember your sister began in the same way? She retreated. We shall have Romayne with a red nose and double chin offering to pray for us next! Do you recollect that French maid of mine, Stella—the woman I sent away because she would spit when she was out of temper like a cat? I begin to think I treated the poor creature harshly. When I hear of Romayne and his retreat I almost feel inclined to spit myself. There, let us go on with our reading. Take the first volume—I have done with it."

"What is it, mamma?"

"A very remarkable work, Stella, in the present state of light literature in England—a novel that actually tells a story. It's quite incredible, I know. Try the book. It has another extraordinary merit—it isn't written by a woman."

Stella obediently received the first volume, turned over the leaves and wearily dropped the wonderful novel on her lap.

"I can't attend to it," she said. "My mind is too full of my own thoughts."

"About Romayne?" said her mother.

"No. When I think of my husband now I almost wish I had his confidence in priests and retreats. The conviction grows on me, mamma, that my worst troubles are still to come. When I was younger I don't remember being tormented by presentiments of any kind. Did I ever talk of presentiments to you in the bygone days?"

"If you had done anything of the sort, my love (excuse me if I speak plainly), I should have said, 'Stella, your liver is out of order,' and I should have opened the family medicine-chest. I will only say now, send for the carriage; let us go to a morning concert, dine at a restaurant and finish the evening at the play."

This characteristic proposal was entirely thrown away on Stella. She was absorbed in pursuing her own train of thought.

"I almost wish I had told Lewis," she said to herself, absently.

"Told him of what, my dear?"

"Of what happened to me with Winterfield."

Mrs. Eyrcourt's faded eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Dou you really mean it?" she asked.

"I do, indeed."

"Are you actually simple enough, Stella, to think that a man of Romayne's temper would have made you his wife if you had told him of the Brussels marriage?"

"Why not?"

"Why not! Would Romayne—would any man—believe that you really did part from Winterfield at the church-door? Considering that you are a married woman, your innocence, my sweet child, is a perfect phenomenon! It's well there were wiser people than you to keep your secret."

"Don't speak too positively, mamma. Lewis may find it out yet."

"Is that one of your presentiments?"

"Yes."

"How is he to find it out, if you please?"

"I am afraid, through Father Benwell. Yes, yes! I know—you don't fear him as I do. He has some abominable object in view, and his eyes tell me that I am concerned in it.'

Mrs. Eyrecourt burst out laughing.

"What is there to langh at?" Stella asked.

"I declare, my dear, there is something absolutely provoking in your utter want of knowledge of the world! When you are puzzled to account for anything remarkable in a clergyman's conduct (I don't care, my poor child, to what denomination he belongs), you can't be wrong in attributing his motive to—[illegible] Romayne had [illegible] Baptist or Meth[illegible] the reverend gentleman in charge of his spiritual welfare would not have forgotten—as you have forgotten, you little goose—that his convert was a rich man. His mind would have dwelt on the chapel, or the mission, or the infant school in want of funds, and—with no more abominable object in view than I have at this moment in poking the fire—he would have ended in producing his modest subscription-list, and would have betrayed himself (just as our odious Benwell will betray himself) by the two amiable little words, please contribute. Is there any other presentiment, my dear, on which you would like to have your mother's candid opinion?"

Stella resignedly took up the book again.

"I dare say you are right," she said. "Let us read our novel."

Before she had reached the end of the first page her mind was far away again from the unfortunate story. She was thinking of that "other presentiment," which had formed the subject of her mother's last satirical inquiry. The vague fear that had shaken her when she had accidentally touched the French boy on her visit to Camp's Hill till from time to time troubled her memory. Even the event of his death had failed to dissipate the delusion which associated him with some undefined evil influence that might yet assert itself. A superstitious forewarning of this sort was a weakness new to her in her experience of herself. She was heartily ashamed of it, and yet, it kept its hold. Once more the book dropped on her lap. She laid it aside and walked wearily to the window to look at the weather.

Almost at the same moment Mrs. Eyrecourt's maid disturbed her mistress over the second volume of the novel, by entering the room with a letter.

"For me?" Stella asked, looking round from the window.

"No, ma'am, for Mrs. Eyrecourt."

The letter had been brought to the house by one of Lady Loring's servants. In delivering he had apparently given private instructions to the maid. She laid her finger significantly on her lips, when she gave the letter to her mistress.

In these terms Lady Loring wrote:

"If Stella happens to be with you when you receive my note don't say anything which will let her know that I am your correspondent. She has always, poor dear, had an inveterate distrust of Father Benwell; and, between ourselves, I am not sure that she is quite so foolish as I once thought. The Father has unexpectedly left us—with a well-framed excuse which satisfies Lord Loring. It fails to satisfy me. Not from any wonderful exercise of penetration on my part, but in consequence of something I've just heard in course of conversation with a Catholic friend. Father Benwell, my dear, turns out to be a Jesuit; and, what is more, a person of such high authority in the Order that his concealment of his rank while he was with us must have been a matter of necessity. He must have had some very serious motive for occupying a position so entirely beneath him as his position in our house. I have not the shadow of a reason for associating this startling discovery with dear Stella's misgivings—and yet there is something in my mind which makes me want to hear what Stella's mother thinks. Come and have a talk about it as soon as you possibly can."

Mrs. Eyrecourt put the letter in her pocket, smiling quietly to herself.

Applying to Lady Loring's letter the infallible system of solution which she had revealed to her daughter, Mrs. Eyrecourt solved the mystery of the priest's conduct without a moment's hesitation. Lord Loring's check, in Father Benwell's pocket, represen[illegible]g such a liberal subscription that my [illegible]ord was reluctant to mention it to my lady—there was the reading of the riddle, as plain as the sun at noonday. Would it be desirable to enlighten Stella? Mrs. Eyrecourt decided in the negative. As Roman Catholics and as old friends of Romayne, the Loring's naturally rejoiced in his conversion. But as old friends also of Romayne's wife, they were bound not to express their sentiments too openly. Feeling that any discussion of the priest's motives would probably lead to the delicate subject of the conversion Mrs. Eyrecourt prudently determined to let the matter drop. As a consequence of this decision Stella was left without the slightest warning of the catastrophe which was now close at hand.

Mrs. Eyrecourt joined Stella at the window.

"Well, my dear, is it clearing up? Shall we take a drive before luncheon?"

"If you like, mamma."

She turned to her mother as she answered. The light of the clearing sky, at once soft and penetrating, fell full on her. Mrs. Eyrecourt, looking at her as usual, suddenly became serious; she studied her daughter's face with an eager and attentive scrutiny.

"Do you see any extraordinary change in me?" Stella asked, with a faint smile.

Instead of an[illegible]ering, Mrs. Eyrecourt put her arm rou[illegible] Stella with a loving [illegible] at variance with gentleness, enti[illegible]ssion of her character any ordinary ex[illegible] mother's eyes rested ter. The worldly[illegible] tenderness on the with a lingering daughter's face.

"Stella!" she sa[illegible] softly, and stopped at a loss for words f[illegible] the first time in her life.

After a while she b[illegible]an again.

"Yes; I see a cha[illegible]ge in you,' she whispered; "an in[illegible]esting change which tells m[illegible]ing. Can you guess what it is [illegible]"

Stella's color r[illegible]tly and faded again. She laid [illegible] in silence on her mother's bo[illegible]rldly, frivolous, self-interest[illegible] Eyrecourt's nature was the na[illegible]oman, and the one great tri[illegible]mph of a woman's life, appea[illegible] as a trial and a triumph soon[illegible] her own child, touched fibers[illegible] hardened surface of her heart[illegible]re still unprofaned.

"My poor darling,[illegible] "have you told the good n[illegible] husband?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"He doesn't care no[illegible]"

"Nonsense, Stella! You may win him back to you by a word—and do you hesitate to say the word? I shall tell him!"

Stella suddenly drew herself away from her mother's caressing arm.

"If you do," she cried, "no words can say how inconsiderate and how cruel I shall think you. Promise, on your word of honor, promise you will leave it to me!"

"Will you tell him yourself if I leave it to you?"

"Yes—at my own time. Promise!"

"Hush, hush; don't excite yourself, my love; I promise. Give me a kiss. I declare I am agitated myself!" she exclaimed, falling back into her customary manner. "Such a shock to my vanity, Stella—the prospect of becoming a grandmother! I really must ring for Matilda, and take a few drops of red lavender. Be advised by me, my poor dear, and we will turn the priest out of the house yet. When Romayne comes back from his ridiculous retreat—after his fasting and flaggellation, and heaven knows what besides—then bring him to his senses; then is the time to tell him. Will you think of it?"

"Yes; I will think of it."

"And one word more before Matilda comes in. Remember the vast importance of having a male heir to Vange Abbey. On these occasions you may practice with perfect impunity on the ignorance of the men. Tell him you're sure it's going to be a boy!"

CHAPTER II.—THE SEED IS SOWN.

Situated in a distant quarter of the vast western suburb of London, the house called the Retreat stood in the midst of a well-kept garden, protected on all sides by a high brick wall. Excepting the grand gilt cross on the roof of the chapel nothing revealed externally the devotional purpose to which the Roman Catholic priesthood had dedicated the building.

But the convert privileged to pass the gates left Protestant England outside, and found himself, as it were, in a new country. Inside the Retreat the paternal care of the church took possession of him; surrounded him with monastic simplicity in his neat little bedroom, and dazzled him with devotional splendor when his religious duties called him into the chapel. The perfect taste—so seldom found in the modern arrangement and decoration of convents and churches in southern countries—showed itself here, pressed into the service of religion in every part of the house. The severest discipline had no sordid and hideous side to it in the Retreat. The inmates fasted on spotless table-cloths, and handled knives and forks (the humble servants of half-filled stomachs) without a speck or [illegible]eir decent brightness. Penitents [illegible]d the steps of the altar (to [illegible] expressive Oriental phrase), "[illegible]" Friends, liberal friends, per[illegible] to visit the inmates on stated days, saw [illegible]pies of famous Holy Families in [illegible] reception-room which were really [illegible] art, and trod a carpet of stud[illegible]odest pretentions, exhibiting [illegible] emblems beyond reproach in co[illegible] design. The Retreat had its [illegible]esian well; not a person in the [illegible] drank impurity in his water. [illegible] perfume of incense was percept[illegible] the corridors. The soothing [illegible]erious silence of the place was [illegible]fied rather than disturbed [illegible] footsteps, and gentle opening [illegible]osing of doors. Animal life wa[illegible] even represented by a cat in the [illegible]chen. And yet, pervaded by some [illegible]scrutable influence, the house was not dull.

On the morning when Mrs. Eyrecourt and her daughter held their memorable interview by the fireside at Ten Acres, Father Benwell entered one of the private rooms at the Retreat devoted to the use of the priesthood. The demure attendant, waiting humbly for instructions, was sent to request the presence of one of the inmates of the house named Mortleman.

Father Benwell's customary serenity was a little ruffled on this occasion by an appearance of anxiety. More than once he looked impatiently toward the door; and he never even noticed the last new devotional publications laid invitingly on the table.

Dr. Mortleman made his appearance—a young man and a promising convert.

"Be seated, my son," Father Benwell said. Mr. Mortleman looked as if he would have preferred going down on his knees, but he yielded and took a chair.

"I think you have been Mr. Romayne's companion for a few days, in the hours of recreation?" the priest began.

"Yes, Father."

"Does he appear to be at all weary of his residence in this house?"

"Oh, far from it! He feels the benign influence of the Retreat; we have had some delightful hours together."

"Have you anything to report?"

Mr. Mortleman crossed his hands on his breast and bowed profoundly.

"I have to report of myself, Father, that I have committed the sin of presumption. I presumed that Mr. Romayne was, like myself, not married."

"Did I tell you that he was not married?"

"No, Father."

"Then you have committed no sin. You have only made an excusable mistake. How were you led into error?"

"In this way, Father. Mr. Romayne had been speaking to me of a book which you had been so good as to send him. He had been especially interested by the memoir therein contained of the illustrious Englishman, Cardinal Acton. The degrees by which his eminence rose to the ranks of a prince of the church seemed, as I thought, to have aroused in my friend a new sense of vocation. He asked me if I myself aspired to belong to the holy priesthood. I answered that this was indeed my aspiration, if I might hope to be found worthy. He appeared to be deeply affected. I ventured to ask if he, too, had the same prospect before him. He grieved me indescribably. He sighed and said: "I have no such hope; I am married. Tell me, Father, I entreat you, have I done wrong?"

Father Benwell considered for a moment.

"Did Mr. Romayne say anything more?" he asked.

"No, father."

"Did you attempt to return to the subject?"

"I thought it best to be silent."

Father Benwell held out his hand.

"My young friend, you have not only done no wrong you have shown the most commendable discretion. I will detain you no longer from your duties. Go to Mr. Romayne and say that I wish to speak with him."

Mr. Mortleman dropped on one knee and begged for a blessing. Father Benwell gave the blessing.

Left by himself again, Father Benwell paced the room rapidly from end to end. The disturbing influence in his face had now changed from anxiety to excitement.

"I'll try it to-day," he said to himself, and stopped, and looked around him doubtfully. "No, not here," he decided; "it may get talked about too soon. It will be safer in every way at my lodgings." He recovered his composure and returned to his chair.

Romayne opened the door.

The double influence of the conversion and of the life in the Retreat had already changed him. His customary keenness and excitability of look had subsided, and had left nothing in their place but an expression of suave and meditative repose. All his troubles were now in the hands of his priest. There was a passive regularity in his bodily movements, and a beatific serenity in his smile.

"My dear friend," said Father Benwell, cordially shaking hands, "you were good enough to be guided by my advice in entering this house. Be guided by me again when I say that you have been here long enough. You can return, after an interval, if you wish it. But I have something to say to you first, and I beg to offer the hospitality of my lodgings."

The time had been when Romayne would have asked for some explanation of this abrupt notice of removal. Now he passively accepted the advice of his spiritual dictator. Father Benwell made the necessary communication to the authorities, and Romayne took leave of his friends in the Retreat. The great Jesuit and the great landowner left the place in a cab.

"I hope I have not disappointed you," said Father Benwell.

"I am only anxious," Romayne answered, "to hear what you have to say."

CHAPTER III.—THE HARVEST IS REAPED.

On their way through the streets, Father Benwell talked as persistently of the news of the day as if he had nothing else in his thoughts. To keep his companion's mind in a state of suspense was, in certain emergencies, to exert a useful preparatory influence over a man of Romayne's character. Even when they reached his lodgings the priest still hesitated to approach the object that he had in view. He made considerate inquiries in the character of a hospitable man.

"They breakfast early at the Retreat," he said. "What may I offer you?"

"I want nothing, thank you," Romayne answered, with an effort to control his habitual impatience of needless delay.

"Pardon me—we have a long interview before us, I fear. Our bodily necessities, Romayne (excuse me if I take the friendly liberty of suppressing the formal 'Mr.')—our bodily necessities are not to be trifled with. A bottle of my famous claret, and a few biscuits will not hurt either of us." He rang the bell and gave the necessary directions. "Another damp day," he went on, cheerfully. "I hope you don't pay the rheumatic penalties of a winter residence in England? Ah, this glorious country would be too perfect if it possessed the delicious climate of Rome!"

The wine and biscuits were brought in. Father Benwell filled the glasses and bowed cordially to his guest.

"Nothing of this sort at the Retreat," he said, gayly. "Excellent water, I am told—which is a luxury in its way, especially in London. Well, my dear Romayne, I must begin by making my apologies. You, no doubt, thought me a little abrupt in running away with you from your retirement, at a moment's notice?"

"I believed that you had good reasons, Father, and that was enough for me."

"Thank you; you do me justice; it was in your best interests that I acted. There are men of phlegmatic temperament, over whom the wise monotony of discipline at the Retreat exercises a wholesome influence—I mean an influence which may be prolonged with advantage. You are not one of those persons. Protracted seclusion and monotony of life are morally and mentally unprofitable to a man of your ardent disposition. I abstained from mentioning these reasons at the time out of a feeling of regard for our excellent resident director, who believes unreservedly in the institution over which he presides. Very good. The Retreat has done all that it could usefully do in your case. We must think next of how to employ that mental activity which, rightfully developed, is one of the most valuable qualities that you possess. Let me ask, first, if you have in some degree recovered your tranquility?"

"I feel like a different man, Father Benwell."

"That's right! And your nervous sufferings—I don't ask what they are, I only want to know if you experience a sense of relief?"

"A most welcome sense of relief," Romayne answered, with a revival of the enthusiasm of other days. "The complete change in all my thoughts and convictions which I owe to you—"

"And to dear Penrose," Father Benwell interposed, with the prompt sense of ustice which no man could more becomingly assume. "We must not forget Arthur."

"Forget him?" Romayne repeated. "Not a day passes without my thinking of him. It is one of the happy results of the change in me that my mind does not dwell bitterly on the loss of him now. I think of Penrose with admiration, as of one whose glorious life, with all its dangers, I should like to share."

He spoke with a rising color and brightening eyes. Already the absorbent capacity of the Roman Church had drawn to itself that sympathetic side of his character which was also one of its strongest sides. Truly and deeply indeed had the physician, consulted in bygone days, reasoned on Romayne's case! That "occurrence of some new and absorbing influence in his life," of which the doctor had spoken—that "working of some complete change in his habits of thought"—had found its way to him at last, after the wife's simple devotion had failed, through the subtler ministrations of the priest.

"No," said Father Benwell, "Your life must not be the life of our dear friend. The service on which the Church employs Penrose is not the fit service for you. You have other claims on us." Romayne looked at his spiritual adviser with a momentary change of expression, a relapse into the ironical bitterness of the past time.

"Have you forgotten that I am, and can be, only a layman?" he asked. "What claims can I have, except the common claim of all faithful members of the church on the good offices of the priesthood?" He paused for a moment, and continued with the abruptness of a man struck by a new idea. "Yes! I have perhaps one small claim of my own—the claim of being allowed to do my duty."

"In what respect, dear Romayne?"

"Surely, you can guess? I am a rich man; I have money lying idle, which it is my duty (and my privilege) to devote to the charities and necessities of the church. And, while I am speaking of this, I must own that I am a little surprised at your having said nothing to me on the subject. You have [illegible] yet pointed out to me the manner in which I might devote my money to the best and noblest uses. Was it forgetfulness on your part?"

Father Benwell shook his head.

"No," he replied; "I can't honestly say that."

"Then you had a reason for your silence?"

"Yes."

"May I not know it?"

Father Benwell got up and walked to the fireplace. Now there are various methods of getting up and walking to a fireplace, and they find their way to outward expression through the customary means of look and manner. We may feel cold, and may only want to warm ourselves. Or we may feel restless and may need an excuse for changing our position. Or we may feel modestly confused, and may be anxious to hide it. Father Benwell, from head to foot, expressed modest confusion and polite anxiety to hide it.

"My good friend," he said, "I am afraid of hurting your feelings."

Romayne was a sincere convert, but there were instincts still left in him which resented this expression of regard, even when it proceeded from a man whom he respected and admired."

"You will hurt my feelings," he answered, a little sharply, "if you are not plain with me."

"Then I will be plain with you," Father Benwell rejoined. "The church—speaking througn me as her unworthy interpreter—feels a certain delicacy in approaching you on the subject of money."

"Why?"

Father Benwell left the fireplace without immediately answering. He opened a drawer and took out of it a flat mahogany box. His gracious familiarity became transformed by some mysterious process of congelation into a dignified formality of manner. The priest took the place of the man.

"The church, Mr. Romayne, hesitates to receive, as benevolent contributions, money derived from property of its own arbitrarily taken from it and placed in a layman's hands. No!" he cried, interrupting Romayne, who instantly understood the allusion to Vange Abbey. "No! I must beg you to hear me out. I state the case plainly at your own request. At the same time I am bound to admit that the lapse of centuries has, in the eye of the law, sanctioned the deliberate act of robbery perpetrated by Henry the Eighth. You have lawfully inherited Vange Abbey from your ancestors. The church is not unreasonable enough to assert a merely moral right against the law of the country. It may feel the act of spoliation—but it submits." He unlocked the flat mahogany box and gently dropped his dignity; the man took the place of the priest. "As the master of Vange," he said, "you may be interested in looking at a little historical curiosity which we have preserved. The title-deeds, dear Romayne, by which the monks held your present property in their time. Take another glass of wine."

Romayne looked at the title-deeds and laid them aside unread.

Father Benwell had roused his pride, his sense of justice, his wild and lavish instincts of generosity. He who had always despised money—except when it assumed its only estimable character as a means for the attainment of merciful and noble ends—he was in possession of property to which he had no moral right, without even the poor excuse of associations which attached him to the place.

"I hope I have not offended you?" said Father Benwell.

"You have made me ashamed of myself," Romayne answered, warmly. "On the day when I became a Catholic I ought to have remembered Vange. Better late than never. I refuse to take shelter under the law—I respect the moral right of the church. I will at once restore the property which I have usurped."

Father Benwell took both Romayne's hands in his and pressed them fervently.

"I am proud of you!" he said. "We shall all be proud of you when I write word to Rome of what has passed between us. But—no, Romayne, this must not be! I admire you, I feel with you; and I refuse. On behalf of the church, I say it—I refuse the gift."

"Wait a little, Father Benwell! You don't know the state of my affairs. I don't deserve the admiration which you feel for me. The loss of the Vange property will be no pecuniary loss in my case. I have inherited a fortune from my aunt. My income from that source is far larger than my income from the Yorkshire property."

"Romayne, it must not be."

"Pardon me, it must be. I have more money than I can spend without Vange. And I have painful associations with the house which disincline me ever to enter it again."

Even this confession failed to move Father Benwell. He obstinately crossed his arms, obstinately tapped his foot on the floor.

"No," he said. "Plead as generously as you may, my answer is, No."

Romayne only became more resolute on his side.

"The property is absolutely my own," he persisted. "I am without a near relation in the world. I have no children. My wife, if I die before her, will be amply provided for. It is downright obstinacy—forgive me for saying so—to persist in your refusal."

"It is downright duty, Romayne. If I gave way to you, I should be the means of exposing the priesthood to the vilest misinterpretation. I should be deservedly reprimanded, and your proposed deed of gift would, without a moment's hesitation, be torn up. If you have any regard for me, drop the subject."

Romayne refused to yield, even to this unanswerable appeal.

"Very well," he said, "there is one document you can't tear up. You can't interfere with my making another will. I shall leave the Vange property to the church, and I shall appoint you one of the trustees. You can't object to that."

Even rigorous Father Benwell was now at a loss for any further expression of honorable protest. He could only [illegible] mediate change of subject. "No more, dear Romayne, you distress me? What were we talking of before this unfortunate topic turned up?"

He filled the glasses, he offered more biscuits; he was really and even perceptibly agitated.

Noticing this unusual expression of feeling, Romayne began to regret that he had not more gently expressed his intentions to his sensitive and excellent friend.

In offering the hospitality of his lodgings the Vange property had been the object which Father Benwell kept in view. He had gained the victory for the church without (to do him justice) thinking of himself; like Romayne he cared nothing for money for his own sake. The necessity that now remained was to make the victory secure. He had resisted the temptation to accept the deed of gift in Romayne's lifetime. The restoration in that form, while there remained a possibility of an heir being born to the estate, would, under those circumstances, have led to a public scandal. On the other hand, a testamentary legacy (especially in the absence of an heir) would be an unassailable proof of the testator's attachment to the church of which he had become a member. Still, even with these prospective advantages, adverse chances might lead, as things were, to a revocation of the will unless some serious obstacle could be placed in the way of any future change of purpose on the part of Romayne.

Father Benwell had long since made up his mind as to the choice of an obstacle. The agitation which he betrayed had its origin in his own keen sense of the perils that threatened him in safely setting the obstacle up. Under astute encouragement Romayne had become a Catholic, and had pledged himself to restore the Vange property. Under astute encouragement there remained one more act of submission—serious and even formidable in the consequences that it involved—into which it was now necessary to lead the new convert. Even the priest's steady nerves were shaken by the prospect before him.

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Romayne sat looking thoughtfully into the fire. Father Benwell, walking up and down the room, was the first to break the silence.

"What was it I had to say to you?" he resumed. "Surely, I was speaking on the subject of your future life, and the right employment of your energies?"

"You are very kind, Father Benwell. The subject has little interest for me. My future life is shaped out—domestic retirement, ennobled by religious duties."

Still pacing the room, Father Benwell stopped at that reply, and put his hand kindly on Romayne's shoulder.

"We don't allow a good Catholic to drift into domestic retirement who is worthy of better things," he said. "The church, Romayne, wishes to make use of you. I never flattered any one in my life; but I may say before your face what I have said behind your back. A man of your strict sense of honor, of your intellect, of your high aspirations, of your personal charm and influence, is not a man whom we can allow to run to waste. Open your mind, my friend, fairly to me, and I will open my mind fairly to you. Let me set the example. I say it, with authority, an enviable future is before you."

Romayne's pale cheeks flushed with excitement.

"What future?" he asked, eagerly. "Am I free to choose? Must I remind you that a man with a wife cannot think only of himself?"

"Suppose you were not a man with a wife?"

"What do you mean?"

"Romayne, I am trying to break my way through that inveterate reserve which is one of the failings in your character. Unless you can prevail upon yourself to tell me those secret thoughts, those unexpressed regrets which you can confide to no other man, this conversation must come to an end. You have found a refuge in the bosom of the Catholic church. Is there no yearning in your inmost soul for anything beyond the position which you now occupy?"

There was a pause. The flush on Romayne's face faded away. He was silent.

"You are not in the confessional," Father Benwell reminded him, with melancholy submission to circumstances. "You are under no obligation to answer me."

Romayne roused himself. He spoke in low, reluctant tones. "I am afraid to answer you," he said.

That apparently discouraging reply armed Father Benwell with the absolute confidence of success which he had thus far failed to feel. He wound his way deeper and deeper into Romayne's mind with the delicate ingenuity of penetration of which the practice of years had made him master.

"Perhaps I have failed to make myself clearly understood," he said. "I will try to put it more plainly. You are no half-hearted man, Romayne. What you believe, you believe fervently. Impressions are not dimly and slowly produced on your mind. As the necessary result, your conversion being once accomplished, your whole soul is given to the faith that is in you. Do I read your character rightly?"

"So far as I know it—yes."

Father Benwell went on.

"Bear in mind what I have just said," he resumed, "and you will understand why I feel it my duty to press the question which you have not answered yet. You have found in the Catholic faith the peace of mind which you have failed to obtain by other means. If I had been dealing with an ordinary man I should have expected from the change no happier results than this. But I ask you has that blessed influence taken no deeper and nobler hold on your heart? Can you say to me, 'I am content with what I have gained; I wish for no more?'"

"I cannot truly say it," Romayne answered.

The time had now come again for speaking plainly. Father Benwell no longer advanced to his end under cover [illegible]

"A little while since," he said, "you spoke of Penrose as of a man whose lot in life you longed to share. The career which has associated him with an Indian mission is, as I told you, only adapted to a man of his special character and special gifts. But the career which has carried him into the sacred ranks of the priesthood is open to every man who feels the sense of divine vocation which has made Penrose one of us."

"No, Father Benwell! Not open to every man."

"I say yes."

"It is not open to me."

"I say it is open to you. And more—I enjoin, I command you to dismiss from your mind all human obstacles and discouragements. They are beneath the notice of a man who feels himself called to the priesthood. Give me your hand, Romayne! Does your conscience tell you that you are that man?"

Romayne started to his feet, shaken to the soul by the solemnity of the appeal.

"I can't dismiss the obstacles that surround me!" he cried, passionately. "To a man in my position your advice is absolutely useless. The ties that bind me are beyond the limit of a priest's sympathies."

"Nothing is beyond the limits of a priest's sympathies."

"Father Benwell, I am married!"

Father Benwell folded his arms over his breast, looked with immovable resolution straight into Romayne's face, and struck the blow which he had been meditating for months past.

"Rouse your courage," he said, sternly. "You are no more married than I am."

(*To be continued.*)

### A Portrait Sent by Mail.

A souvenir of the electric exposition in Paris has been brought to this country by the Hon. Strickland Kneass. It is a lifelike drawing of the shoulders, head, face and mouth of an officer of the French Grenadier guards, which was transmitted a considerable distance by electricity. The drawing is about six inches long by three wide, on ordinary white paper, and the method of executing this remarkable feat was in this wise: The original sketch was made by hand in the form of dots, metallic ink being used. The sheet was then placed on a table directly under the pointer of an ordinary telegraph wire. This pointer was moved rapidly to and fro over the drawing, a receiver at the other end being worked in precisely the same way. Each time that the pointer came in contact with the metallic ink dots the circuit was closed and a corresponding impression made upon a piece of paper at the other end of the line. This process was continued until every dot had been carried over the wires, and the transmission was so perfect that without a distinguishing mark the person who made the original sketch could not have told one from the other. The words 'Parteouneaux, first brigadier de Paris," were also transmitted in fac-simile. During the session o the congress letters were written and transmitted by electricity, and signatures to checks and notes of hand are now being forwarded hundreds of miles in the same manner in the sister republic.

Another monster devil-fish has recently been secured on the Newfoundland coast. The creature was driven ashore by the high tide at Portugal cove and secured by fishermen. It is 33 feet long from the tail to the termination of the long tentacles. This is the first fresh, complete, unmutilated specimen secured and landed of this monstrous fish.

### UNDER THE HUDSON.

**The Great Tunnel that is to Connect New York and Jersey City—Working on the New Tunnel Beneath the River's Bank.**

A reporter of the New York *Herald* stood under the Hudson river 550 feet from the New Jersey shore. He was in the Hudson tunnel. Fifty feet overhead rolled the water of the river, some of which trickled through the great walls of mud and dripped monotonously into the chamber, where, by the electric light, about twenty men were industriously working. It was a weird scene. The men looked like spirits, and very dirty ones at that. Their spades were noiseless in the work, even though a whisper was magnified by the compressed air that made a visitor's head buzz, but did not seem to affect the men in the least. There were two things that connected the scene with the realistic world and forced the belief that it was not all a fancy. One was the presence of General W. Sooy Smith, the chief engineer of the company, and the other the telephone, that looked as natural and comfortable as it might have looked in the corridor of the Fifth Avenue. This telephone is moved forward under the river as the work progresses, and communicates at the shore end with the engine room. The jingle of the bell by the superintendent on duty at the "heading" is heard by the engineer. Perhaps a corner of the overhanging mud appears to be settling. The telephone conveys the order to increase or reduce the air pressure, as necessity requires, and the order is obeyed instantly. The presence of the telephone seemed to have an assuring look. It was the only connection with the outside world, save by a long journey through air locks and chambers and shafts, and up steps and ladders innumerable to the bottom of the great shaft, to the top level of which the waters hissed and bubbled on that awful July day of 1880 when so many men lay buried under tons of clay far below. There has been a great change since then in the appearance of everything, and probably the miners worked without a thought of the fact that they were 500 feet further out than the spot where their comrades had met death so bravely.

The dirt as fast as dug out was thrown by the diggers into a sort of trough, through which a stream of water was constantly forced by a powerful steam pump on shore. There were two pipes, one of which forced the water in, and the other which drew the mud and water out of the chamber through the air locks and completed tunnel up to an enormous tank on shore, where the mud settled and the water flowed away into a reservoir to be used again. It is an ingenious apparatus and seemed to work like a charm. It did away with the tedious and laborious method of filling the silt into cars and dragging it to the shore end, to be hoisted to daylight. Its use makes the work easier and quicker in every way.

One tunnel is now 550 feet from the New Jersey shore, the other is about 450 feet. They are progressing at the rate of between three and five feet each day. There is no suspension of the work. The men, divided into "shifts," succeed each other with the regularity of clockwork. Day and night, week day, holiday and Sunday, the digging goes on. Each foot of new work is carefully propped and secured and the tunnel is fully arched and cemented for several hundred feet beyond the [illegible] One tunnel is lower than the other and it was found that an equal pressure of air would not do. So a system of bulkheads was adopted which works very satisfactory, both to the engineers in charge and to the men themselves, who are very quick to appreciate anything that is done for their comfort or safety. By means of these bulkheads it is now possible to do away with compressed air at the completed or shore end of the tunnel which is also lighted with electricity. The entrance is still at the old shaft, although the caisson that was sunk after the accident is about forty feet nearer the river. A long and winding stairway leads down the great shaft to the mouth of the old air-lock in which five or six men were drowned. This air-lock is now kept open at both ends, but is hardly large enough for two men to pass in opposite directions. Passing through with body bent one comes on a little wooden platform, from which another pair of stairs lead down about twelve feet further to the bottom of the tunnel proper. Here the two tunnels unite, and a large electric light hangs at the junction, casting fantastic shadows on the slimy walls.

A small railway track leads down each of the tunnels and a car is now drawn to the first bulkhead with strengthening timbers, brick or anything else that is necessary for the progress of the work.

Looking out from this point towards the middle of the river the scene is a peculiar one, and there is a greater oppressiveness about the place than is usual with underground work. The thought that the river rolls overhead is uppermost in the mind of the visitor, and one can imagine the face of heroic Peter Woodland peering out of the plate-glass windows of the air-lock.

"This is the spot where Woodland stood," said one of the superintendents, "when he gave the men directions to pass out, and this is the spot where he gave his final command to break out the deadlight and save themselves."

The reader of the *Herald* will remember that Woodland was one of the superintendents at the time of the disaster, and was heroically cool and brave even after the advancing water was up to his chin. His spirit seems to pervade all the men, and the reporter never saw laboring men display so much courtesy towards each other as he saw down under the river.

Passing forward toward the New York shore the tunnel is found to be completed for several hundred feet. It has all been bricked and cemented and is dry, with the exception of a certain moisture made by the condensation of atmosphere. Up to the bulkhead this state of affairs exists; beyond that, through the air locks, the men are at work digging out the silt and everybody is wet and muddy. There are two air locks leading into the extreme end, one of which is kept always open, so that in case of real danger the men may hurry into it. The longer one remains in the tunnel, however, the more the impression increases that everything is well ordered and safe, and that the system of discipline is very perfect.

It is expected that under fairly favorable circumstances the work will be completed in about two years and a-half.

### A Big Baby.

Sarah Jane Roland, of Waynesville, O., is eight years old, twenty-seven inches high and weighs eighteen pounds. She looks like a baby of two years, with the exception of a mature look in her face and eyes. "No bigger than a minute or a piece of chalk," it was difficult to realize that such a diminutive specimen of humanity could weigh even eighteen pounds avoirdupois. Her eyes are dark and bright and overhung with long silken lashes. She is well-proportioned in body, the only thing being an amplitude of forehead, indicating an unhealthy mental development.

It is the care of a very great part of mankind to conceal their indigence from the rest.

### Musical Fish.

That some fish make an approach to vocal performances by emitting tones was known to Aristotle, who specifies six different kinds. The family of the Maigres are famous for the sounds they make on being drawn from the water, and also when remaining in it. These fish are remarkable for the size and complicated structure of their air-bladders, which, however, in many instances seem to have no external openings; and great cavernous recesses existing in the crania of many, it has been suggested that these sinneses may afford the true explanation of the phenomena. In some of the genera they are more striking than in others; and one of the most remarkable, the Pogonia (of the Maigre family) had acquired the popular name of drum-fish. The sounds seem to vary widely in their character and tones, and are described in very different, not to say discrepant, terms, being designated sometimes as dull hummings, at other times sharp whistlings, and frequently as the fishes' song. It has sometimes been supposed that they are uttered by the males alone, and the fisherman by imitating them can frequently collect a troop of the fishes around them. The boatmen, also, by putting their ears to the gunwale of their boat can often readily perceive the sounds, though at the depth of twenty fathoms, and thus guided can successfully cast their nets and procure a draught. Lieutenant White, of the American service, in his "Voyage to the China Sea," published in 1884, relates that, being at the mouth of the Cambodia, his crew and himself were greatly astonished by hearing certain unaccountable sounds from beneath and around the vessel. These were various, like the bass notes of an organ, the sound of bells, the croaking of frogs, and a pervading twang which the imagination might have attributed to the vibrations of some enormous harp. For a time the mysterious music swelled upon them, and finally formed a universal chorus all round, but as the vessel ascended the river the sounds diminished in strength and soon altogether ceased. Humboldt was witness to a similar occurrence in the South Sea, but without suspecting the cause. Toward seven in the evening the whole crew were astounded by an extraordinary noise which resembled that of drums which were beating in the air. It was at first attributed to the breakers. Speedily it was heard in the vessel, and especially toward the poop. It was like a boiling, the noise of the air which escapes from fluid in ebullition. The sailors began to fear there was some leak in the vessel. It was heard unceasingly in all parts of the vessel, and finally, about 9 o'clock, it ceased altogether. The interpreter belonging to Lieutenant White's ship stated that the marine music which had so much surprised the crew was produced by fishes of a flattened oval form, which possessed the faculty of adhering to various bodies by their mouths. This fish might have been the Pogonia.—*All the Year Round.*

### China's Army.

The troops which compose what may be regarded as the regular army of China consist, it is estimated, of only 140,000 men. These receive monthly pay at the rate of from five dollars to eight dollars, and a daily ration of rice. They are lodged in barracks, and supplied with arms from the Government; but they have to provide their own clothing. The nominal effective of the Chinese army to 700,000 infantry, and 227,000 cavalry, can hardly be regarded as regular troops, since they have to maintain themselves by cultivating ground allotted them by the Government. Most of these men are married, and their sons at their birth are enrolled as future recruits for the army. The organization and conditions of service of the cavalry are similar to those of the Russian irregular horse, to whom they are admitted, even by Russian writers, to be in no way inferior. On the other hand, the artillery of the army is miserably inefficient. The number of guns is large, but they are of indifferent manufacture, have neither range nor accuracy, and are badly served. The number of fortifications in China is extraordinarily great. No fewer than 1,709 towns are fortified with walls and ditches, while thousands of fortified posts of greater or less strength are scattered over the country. Most of the latter, however, consist only of brick walls with ditches, and would not be capable of withstanding the fire of even light field pieces. The only fortifications in China which can compare with modern European works are those constructed for the defense of the Peiho or for the protection of other estuaries, and which are armed with ordnance purchased in Europe.

### A Master of Twenty-Six Trades.

Ransom Cook, who died at Saratoga last summer, was master of twenty-six trades, and owner of seventeen patents. Among the latter was one for the improvement in the manufacture of wrought iron and steel cannon. This idea was appropriated by Sir William Armstrong, who made both fame and fortune out of it. Among the other patents was one for a lunch case, one for a fan blower, one for a hydraulic apparatus for producing a blast, for an improved electro-magnetic ore separator (made by Mr. Cook when eighty years old) an improvement in blast pipes for carrying heated air and gases to furnaces, an improvement in scissors, an improved boring instrument known as the "Cook Auger," an improved machine for turning the lips of augers, an improved bit for boring wood, an improvement in ventilating and excluding dust from railway cars, an improved exhaust fan, and an improvement in the mode of straining saws for saw-mills. There were several others of more or less importance. Some of his inventions, particularly the patent auger, were very profitable. He was making a machine, and wanted an auger that would bore at an angle with the grain without starting with a gouge. He hit upon the idea of examining the tips of the worm commonly known as the wood-borer, with a microscope, and from this model, furnished by nature, he made his auger, which was very successful. His workshop was a curiosity. He made all his own models, and had engines and machinery well adapted to the purpose. He also accumulated one of the most complete and valuable collections of scientific and mechanical books in the country.

### The Cat Woman.

A woman died recently at Philadelphia in squalor at the age of seventy-eight who, from a singular monomania, was called "the cat woman." Her name was Myers, she came from South Carolina to a Philadelphia school sixty years ago, when she was a handsome, attractive girl, afterwards taught a school there, finally became irrational on some subject and developed a strange fondness for cats. She lived a solitary life, supported by friends, and almost starved herself to feed her numerous pets, allowing them to steal her food from the table and going into ecstacies when an adroit pussy would jump over the hot stove and get a bit of meat from the stew-pan.

A Paris surgeon received $5,000 for removing a wart from the nose of a woman who wasn't very good-lo[illegible] at best.