

EASTER THOUGHTS

It is a time of triumph and my soul
As the glad Easter swells around her roll
Is joyful with the thought of that great trust,
Which reconciles her to her house of dust.

No longer doomed both soul and body may
Defiance fling to Satan's direful sway,
Through Him who from the portals of the grave
Rolled back the stone and hope to mortals gave.

O tranquil hope with awful fear impressed
Should we be lacking in the searching test.
A Living Lord! A Risen God indeed!
Leave not my soul, defenceless in her need,

At that dread signal on the final day,
When she invests her dwelling place of clay,
The flesh that is—the dust that shall be, rise
And re-united soar beyond the skies.

—*E. Duffy*

The Return

Dawn was just breaking o'er the little village of St. Joseph, as a young man ascended the path to a small cottage on the outskirts. It was evident that he had traveled many miles as his clothes were begrimed with dust and dirt from the roads. He was clad in a plain dark suit that would have been becoming, but for the fact that his beard was unkempt, his shoes rent in several places and an old slouch hat adorned his head. Certainly he was no stranger at this place for having found the door open, he entered. As he stepped across the threshold however the young man stopped and a look of surprise flashed over his countenance. Sitting in a rocker before the large bay window overlooking the beautiful Lake St. Joseph was a gray-haired lady, apparently his mother. She had not

heard the young man enter for she was engaged in deep thought. As if those thoughts were causing her pain, tear-drops were gently falling upon the care-worn face. As for Curly O'Malley, for that, was the young man's name, what were his thoughts as he stood looking up on that frail, gentle, mother before him? Evidently they were wonderfully concealed for his face did not betray them. As he was about to speak to her a tall form loomed up before him in the opposite doorway, the form of one he feared to meet, his father.

"Well you young scapegrace, where have you been," said his father sternly, "and what do you mean by keeping your poor mother up these three nights waiting for you to come home. Shame on you sir."

"I was over to Norton, dad, and missed the train last night so I had to walk it" answered Curley.

"So you were up to your old thricks over there, were you?" asked his father.

"Why what do you mean, dad?" exclaimed Curley.

"What do I mean?" said his father, wrathfully. "I mean that the midnight express was held up this side of Norton, the night before last, and that you were seen with the train-robbers."

At this outburst the mother who had been listening silently gave a startled cry and went over to Curley who had turned ashen pale. It was a few brief moments before he collected himself. Gently seating his mother again he turned defiantly to his father.

"It's a lie," he said calmly; "I knew nothing whatever about it until just now."

"Don't lie to me," said his father, his anger getting the best of him, "John saw you from the cab."

Curly reeled as if he had been struck. His own brother who was engineer of the midnight express had seen him?

Oh no, it couldn't be for he wasn't there. He knew nothing of the holdup! There must be some mistake here.

Well," said his father, "what have you to say? You know it isn't the first time you have stayed away from home, nor the first time you've been seen with the Norton gang and it isn't the first time you have caused your poor mother to hang her head in shame and brought disgrace to us both. You have had your turn Curly O'Malley and as sure as there is a God above I will not shelter a criminal under my roof. Get out."

"But dad," cried Curley, "don't you believe me when I say I knew nothing about it?"

His father turned from him with a disdainful look as if ignoring his presence. His mother who had risen again from her chair was now enfolded in his strong arms crying bitterly.

"Oh Curley dear," she cried, "I know it couldn't be you."

Curley struggled manfully to keep back the lump which was rising in his throat threatening to choke him. He could not bear to see his dear mother crying like this.

"No mother dear, it wasn't me," was all he said and kissing her tenderly, turned to go. As he reached the door Curley turned to his father again.

"Father," he said, "where is John? I am sure he has made some mistake. Can't I speak to him before I go?"

"No," answered his father, he does not wish to see you because if you are found out as no doubt you will be, it will mean disgrace and expulsion from the service, for him."

With a heavy heart, Curley wended his way down the road to the little village below. As he walked slowly onward he thought of his father's words, that he had been a black sheep, one who had brought disgrace upon his family.

And then fear gripped him. What if his brother informed the law that he was one of the culprits? What if he should have to spend the next ten or twenty years of his life in a prison, cell, those years of manhood and freedom which meant so much to him. He would have to flee from the country, there was no alternative. It was his only chance, his only hope. Curley knew that he was not guilty of the crime but he also knew that if he was caught he could not prove himself not guilty. Then again they would take his brother's word in preference to his and they knew that he had always been a wild, wayward youth. No, he didn't have a chance, because all these things would count against him. Curley was troubled in mind. As he neared the village church situated on the main road he entered and there offered up a prayer to God that he would be able to make his escape from the country and that some day his good name might be vindicated. For a few moments he knelt there, but knowing that time was precious he soon hurried out. It was yet early. Down through the little churchyard he went and, before long, came to the south shore of the lake. Luck was with him for there floating on the calm waters, was a motor-boat probably owned by one of the residents of the village. Curley stepping into the bow started the boat in motion towards the country beyond which meant freedom to him. As he took a last look towards his home only one word escaped those trembling lips, "Mother," and the tears which he had so manfully kept back blotted out the beautiful vision of his thoughts.

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Ten years have passed since that incident in the little country village and with time many changes have taken place. The old homestead of the O'Malleys's no longer stands beside the beautiful lake. In its stead is a handsome

brownstone hospital conducted by the good Sisters of Charity. The village has become thickly populated and is now a manufacturing centre as well as an educational district. The inhabitants seem to be prospering in the numerous business activities with the exception of a few of the older ones who are not active enough to help the building up of the thriving little village. In a little cottage near the railroad station, lives the station agent, John O'Malley, who was forced to retire from service on the road, on account of ill-health. John is married now and a loving wife and two kiddies, a boy and a girl, have added to his happiness. As John hurries off to his work every morning however, a familiar form is outlined against the door waving a fond good morning to him,—his mother. Four years ago, Tim O'Malley had passed to his eternal reward leaving his good wife in John's care. No doubt she was happy enough in the company of John and his family but she could never blot out from her memory that day of ten years back when her wayward boy Curley was driven from home by an angry father. Each morning while at the Holy Sacrifice in the little village church, she would ask God in his Infinite goodness to send him back to her so that once more before she was called to eternal rest she could see her boy, Curley, the boy she loved.

One morning as she was returning home from her daily mission she remembered that John had gone to work that morning without his breakfast. Hurrying home she made a lunch of eggs and toast to take to him; not bothering to eat anything herself. She arrived at the crossing opposite the station just as the 7.10 train was pulling in from Quebec. As she stood there waiting for the train to start again before venturing across the track, her eyes rested upon a well built stranger who alighted from the train. She gave a slight start. Surely that person was

familiar to her? Where had she seen him before? The stranger who seemed interested in his surroundings, turned towards her. It was then that Mrs. O'Malley recognized her boy Curley.

"Mother" he cried

"Curley my boy," sobbed his mother as she crossed the track towards him. But that move was a fatal one. Without warning the big engine started. Just as the aged lady neared the platform where her son awaited her with outstretched arms, she was struck down by the fender of the engine and hurled unconscious between platform and track. With a startled cry Curley lifted the limp form of his mother in his arms and carried her into the station. His brother John who had witnessed the accident from the station window hurried to meet him. Without any words between them, only a look of recognition that John understood, they hired a waiting cab to take their burden to the hospital.

After their arrival there Curley asked the doctor in charge, if there was any hope for her recovery.

"She will hardly live twenty-four hours, sir," was the surgeon's reply. "She is suffering from internal injuries and besides that her age is against her."

Quietly they waited in the little room by her bedside for her to regain consciousness. Skillfully the surgeon worked over her. At last his efforts were rewarded. As she opened her eyes Curley bent over her.

"Mother!" was the only word he could utter.

"Curley dear," his mother softly whispered.

In a few moments she rallied and, asking Curley to bend closer, said to him, "I know that God is calling me Curley and before I go I want to tell you that it was all a mistake. Your father on his deathbed asked your forgiveness for the great wrong he had done you. I am

sure dear that you will forgive both your father and John, won't you?"

"Yes mother," answered Curley. But after all mother dear I have prospered and I've come back for you to share my prosperity."

"Never mind Curley dear," said his mother, as he gently kissed her, "someday, I am sure we will enjoy a greater happiness together—in Heaven. And now all I ask dear of both yourself and John is your prayers and I am sure that you will also remember your dear father."

Curley stepped aside when the parish priest entered carrying the sacred Host. He silently knelt at the foot of the bed as the priest prepared to give the last rites of the Church to his mother. Never in all his life did Curley feel so wretched and forlorn as at that moment, knowing that his dearest friend on earth was being taken from him. As he heard the prayers for the dying being recited he lifted his head and glancing towards the frail form lying there he caught a smothered a "goodbye" from the bloodless lips now closing forever. At last suffering was over and the pure soul went forth to meet its Maker. Poor Curley, all his fond hopes shattered, still knelt when all had left with the blessed prayer on his lips, "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done."

H. Osborne '25