

The Green Rosary

IT was a beautiful summer evening in the month of June. Not a breath stirred the evening stillness while the birds were singing their evening chorus to the parting day. In a few moments the sun would disappear behind the western hills, its long rays casting beautiful reflections in the evening sky.

On this particular evening, Ray Westway was taking his last drive for some time, in that section of the country adjoining the picturesque little village of Breneau. With him as usual was his dearest friend Kathleen Arlington. They had been the truest of friends for almost a year, but now their friendship seemed to be drawing to a close. They had come as it were to the parting of the ways.

Both were silent as their red brown pony was walking at its ease. Kathleen seemed in deep thought. Presently however, as they were passing the little village churchyard, the deep silence was broken by a rich mellow voice with a tone of sorrow in its music. It was Kathleen who spoke.

"Ray" she said, "Do you remember the first evening we strolled along this familiar road."

Ray however remained silent for he was also picturing that self-same evening. How clear in his memory remained their first meeting on that memorable eve about a year before at a little gathering in a country home not far from the village. How he had been delighted from his very first acquaintance with her remarkably interesting ways and conversation, and what a thrill went through him as they strolled along that previous night, when passing that same still graveyard, she said in a tone of sorrow:

"Dear papa lies within that cold still ground."

That was his first knowledge of her father being dead and his sympathy even then went out to her just as it did many times after.

The silence was not broken for some moments. Then Kathleen again spoke.

"Ray," she broke in, "Our last drive together is fast drawing to a close and with it our many happy times spent together."

Then, handing him a neat little case, she continued in softer tones:

"Here is something which will Serve as a remembrance of a true friend."

Ray with a pleased smile breaking over his countenance opened the pretty grey case, and with a look of extreme satisfaction he exclaimed in a surprised voice.

"How beautiful ! And green ! My favorite color !" Then taking a beautiful rosary from its enclosure he pressed the little gold cross to his lips, and after a slight pause continued.

"A reminder of you dear Kathleen is entirely unnecessary, yet those will be always dear to me, and I will not forget you in my weak prayers." Then drawing from his pocket a little packet containing a beautiful diamond ring, he said in an excited tone :

"Give me your hand, Kathleen."

It was just what Kathleen expected. She had often before thought the matter over, and felt certain that Ray's walk in life was far different from that to which this would lead. She also knew what Ray's mother thought and expected of her son. Was she going to be the means of destroying his vocation? Yet was she going to turn aside him who was dearer to her than life itself, Certain it seemed to her that

if she refused, he would finally fulfil his mother's wish. But how was she going to refuse him? Instantly at Ray's last words, her countenance fell, and a troubled look ran over her features. Then raising her eyes to his she looked piteously at him, and in a choking voice said to him.

"Ray I cannot take your gift."

And seeing the great disappointment in Ray's face, she grasped his hands in hers and wearing that same pleading countenance she continued, "Dear Ray, you know my poor heart aches and longs to take it, but my conscience says "no." You have often told me about your mother's expectations of your future, I could not bear to destroy her hopes."

"Yes, but Kathleen," broke in Ray, "I don't——"

"You might not have a liking to do so just now," interrupted Kathleen, "but dear Ray let us part as we met, and through time you will see your true vocation."

Alas! her feelings were far different from this, yet she kept up her courage, and with a great effort stayed herself from giving way to them. Ray continued his arguments for considerable time, but after long persuasion on the part of Kathleen he had to yield to her strong determination.

It was now growing late, and as Ray had some preparations to make for his journey the following morning, he, painful as it was, had to take his departure. As he held her hand in his, he said in a faltering voice:

"When I am gone, remember me as your true friend."

Those words when I am gone, almost turned poor Kathleen's heart into stone, and tears rolled down her cheeks. Yet she kept them hid from Ray and in a voice that was half a sob, she bid good-bye to her

dearest friend on earth. In a moment Ray was gone.

She remained some time where she had been standing, then with a heavy heart slowly wended her way into her home. She threw herself into a chair in the drawing room, and freely gave way to her tears. It was only then she realized what she had done. How clearly to her came back many happy times of the past! How she pictured Ray with his straight manly figure, brown curly hair, and eyes of hazel hue. Clearly and strikingly she heard his voice distinct from all others who usually joined their company in the long evenings. Could she believe he was gone, or was he still there? No! she had to believe in the reality that they were parted forever. But she would have to bear her grief with a brave heart; and consoling herself that she had made the sacrifice for God, she retired to rest. Sleep however did not overtake her ~~for~~ hours. Finally she fell into a broken slumber. When she awoke, Ray was some miles on his journey from Rreneau.

It would be folly to attempt a description of the pain that stabbed his heart like a cruel dagger, as he took his last view of the charming village resplendent in the rays of the morning sun. And, there, across the calm still water stood the beautiful cottage so dear to him, within which was that girl for whom he would have given his life. Was she thinking of him? At least she saw him, heard him, yes, spoke to him in her slumbers. Probably she dreamed of the future that lay before him.

A long dreary week to both of them slowly dragged by, and Ray was at the end of his journey. What a host of friends greeted him as he stepped from the train! He was once more in the town of his birth, New Westminster, B. C. One of the first to greet him

was a slight, neatly dressed woman whose dark hair was becoming silvered.

"Welcome! Welcome! my dear Ray," she exclaimed extending her hand to him.

"Thank you mother!" he answered grasping her wrinkled hand. "You are looking as well as ever dear mother," though he noticed a wonderful change in her looks.

"And how is father," he continued, "I suppose busy as ever."

"Yes," she replied, "he is busy as ever. I received your letter only this morning, after your father had gone to the office. I scarcely had time to get ready and come down to meet you. If he had known you were coming he would be here."

Then mother and son slowly walked up the street. In a few moments they arrived at their home. Ray was delighted to be there again, yet he could not forget the little girl he had left many miles behind him.

His father, a noted lawyer of the town, did not arrive home till late in the afternoon. After hearty greetings were passed between father and son, the little family of three spent a very happy evening together. Ray worn out by his long journey retired early. His father and mother remained talking for some time. How proud they were of him can only be imagined by parents of such a youth. Their hopes of his future rose higher than ever, and clearer than ever to his mother was that picture of her son standing on the altar of God chanting those holy words:

"Gloria in excelsis Deo."

The summer passed quickly and in the autumn, Ray resumed his studies in Queen's College, Victoria. Here he was the favorite of all the students and professors. In three years he completed his course grad-

dating with high honors. At the end of this time, he had grown tired of college life, and decided to make a change for a while. Consequently he left his home and went out into the world again. But alas! this time he was without his little guide Kathleen. He was no longer under her gentle influence but fell in with evil Companions. He was never before exposed to the dangers of the world among unworthy associates. His nature gave way little by little under the burden of temptation and there was no one with him now to encourage him and give him a helping hand. Gradually he grew careless of his religion and his prayers became few. Finally as time went on he turned away from his God and refused to receive His Holy Sacraments. It is true that his parents wrote him frequently. They knew of the great change that had come over their son. But of what avail were their fetters in combating against the evil companions with whom he spent most of his time.

Then war broke out and reckless Ray was one of the first Canadians to land in France. There he led the same wayward life. It was not only months but years since he had been inside a Catholic Church. Pity his poor grey-haired mother mourning the change that came over her dear, dear Ray. There was no hope, now of his ever fulfilling her earlier expectations. Wow well she recalled his earlier piety and his faithfulness to her? How she pictured him kneeling at her knee lisping his childish prayers. Oh! What a sad change! She would be thoroughly satisfied if he would but return to the faith for too well she knew that the gates of Hell were open wide to receive her only son if he died as he was living. There was little hope that he would ever reform now, and God alone knew the hour when he might be called in his sabbath of

sin before the great white throne. But through it all there was one little ray of sunshine. He never neglected to carry his little green rosary as a remembrance of his early friend.

One cold dark morning over the war-stricken fields a priest calmly made his way among the dead and the dying, stooping occasionally to minister the healing balm of peace to many a weary soul, weary of its long journey through this vale of misery and sorrow. Reverently he knelt down beside a poor wounded soldier, lying in a pool of blood and shattered limbs, and his clotted locks furrowing his pale brow. He tried to rouse him from his unconsciousness, but to the chaplain's words of comfort came the broken reply in scarcely audible tones.

"Mother forgive me!—The green rosary—
Dear papa lies within that cold still ground.—"

"Poor boy" muttered the priest, as stretcher-bearers gently carried him from the field. He was then conveyed to the field hospital.

The little green rosary was found in his pocket by a red-cross nurse. After binding up his wounds, she stood over him a moment smoothing away his clotted locks. A slight shudder went over him. Suddenly he opened his eyes and gazed wildly into that anxious face before him. How familiar were those features, on which he gazed? How often he had admired those auburn locks and those bright brown eyes that now looked into his. In a feeble voice he spoke to her.

"Is it you dear Kathleen or am I dreaming?"

"Yes dear Ray," she replied, "but speak no more just now."

Then she handed him his rosary and expected

to see him use them. Imagine her surprise as he said in a sad tone:

"Kathleen, I don't know how to pray now."

She repeated the creed for him on the gold cross and as she prayed the years of his wickedness rolled away as a dark cloud, leaving in the clear, bright sunshine his happy days in Breteau. He was brought back in fancy to the time when they were friends together. How regularly he went to church then and how attentive he had been to his prayers. Then his memory went back over the years of his youth. Clear to him came the vision of his little, white-haired companions as they played their innocent, childish games along the streets of Westminster. How he was carried back to his first remembrance, when he knelt at his mother's knee repeating that self-same prayer which Kathleen was now saying for him. Tears filled his eyes, trickled down his bronzed cheeks as he thought of how much worry and suffering he must have caused his dear parents. Then his frame trembled, and Kathleen thinking it was the shudder of death began to pray most earnestly. But he opened his eyes again and in a wavering, high-pitched voice he cried:

"Kathleen! save me!"

"Dear Ray," she replied. "Be calm and remember God is merciful."

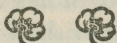
The next moment, that same chaplain who knelt over him on the battlefield that morning, was at his bedside, and Ray who had forsaken his God for years, now with true contrition confessed the sins of his past life.

For six hours after in an agony of dread broken by illusive glimpses of hope that her prayers might be answered, the little red-cross nurse waited for the

end. With the rosary slipping through his trembling hands, he calmly breathed his last and his soul with perfect reconciliation to the will of God, winged its journey heavenward to its Divine Master.

A few weeks later a little gray-haired mother read from a letter written in a strange hand the news of her son's death. She grieved as any mother grieves over the death of her only child, yet her sorrow was mingled with joy as she learned that he had received the last rites of the Catholic Church. Little she knew that Ray was dearer to another, if that were possible, and that one was she who had sent the tidings to her.

B. L. W. '22.



'Tis thus that on the choice of friends
Our good or evil name depends.

Friends are like melons. Shall I tell you why?
To find one good, you must a hundred try.

The rule of my life is to make business a pleasure,
and pleasure my business. — Aaron Burr.

Sanctity consists in the right performance of
everyday duties. — Father Farrell.

The only way to have a friend is to be one. —
Emerson.