

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH HARRY DEE HAS SOME DIFFICULTY IN BRINGING HIS STORY TO A CLOSE.

IT is August 1st, one year and eight months since the adventures related in the last chapters. Arrayed in all the glory of graduating costumes, several very fine young gentlemen are seated in the parlor of the Jesuit Novitiate. The reader knows them all. He knows Harry Quip, grinning from under the first hint of a mustache. He knows Percy Wynn, who has taken the gold medal for excellence in the various branches of the philosophy class. He knows Frank Burdock, the only non-graduate present, now quite tall, and with a face eminently intellectual. He knows Will Ruthers and Joe Whyte—and as there comes a quick patter down the stairs without, and there enters, clothed in cassock and biretta, a handsome, dark young man, with bright twinkling eyes and merry face, he knows Mr. Playfair, S.J., who has taken his three vows and is now a religious.

What a chorus of babble and laughter arises, as we shake our dear friend's hand, and congratulate him on his happiness! For it was only yesterday that Tom, impelled with the desire of serving God, and trusting in His infinite sweetness and mercy, vowed in presence of the most sacred Virgin Mary and the whole heavenly court, poverty, chastity, and obedience.

"It's the happiest day of my life, almost," said Tom—I should say Mr. Playfair. "And if it were not for yesterday, I think I could say it is the happiest. "Well, Harry, it's consoling to think that

Caggett after all died penitent. The poor fellow had a long year's purgatory in the hospital, and his sickness and suffering proved to be the greatest blessing of his life. And how's the new magazine?"

"Strong *in spe*," I answered. "The money is safely invested, Tom; and it can wait better than Percy and I. We feel like making a start at once; but we're determined to be prudent."

"I hope to be a member of the staff, Tom—I mean Mr. Playfair," said Quip, feeling for the down upon his upper lip. "You see, I'm thinking of taking to journalism—that is, if I take to anything."

"And I," said Joe Whyte, "intend to study law."

"Will Ruthers, who looks so mild and gentle, is going to be a sawbones," added Quip grimly.

"What are you thinking of, Frank?" asked Mr. Playfair.

"My present vocation," answered Frank, "is to graduate. Then I think I'll marry."

"After which," put in Quip, "he'll look about to see how he can support a wife."

"I've got stock in a building association," said Frank seriously.

"These graduates are great fellows, Mr. Playfair," said Percy. "They're starting in at once, all except Harry Dee and myself."

"Don't believe Percy," said I. "He's doing the work of three, even now. He's the best friend of poor boys in the world. There's not a newsboy or a bootblack in Cincinnati who doesn't know and love him. He's studying up the lives and conditions of that class, and he intends giving much attention to bettering the poor fellows, and he's done ever so much good among them already, though

he's only had a chance of making their acquaintance the last two months."

I did not add what was the fact, that Percy was looked upon by many a homeless lad as a saint. They loved him, but their reverence kept pace with their love. Percy had not forgotten his adventure with the dying tramp. His great heart was filled with love and compassion for God's chosen ones, for the poor and the outcast. He was determined to help them on, beginning with the little ones, on the theory that all reforms are best effected from below up.

"Very soon," said Percy, changing the subject, "Harry and I shall take a trip to Europe."

"What then, Percy?" asked Mr. Playfair.

"Oh, we'll settle down, and take a special course of literature and philosophy. You see we intend preparing a *longue* for the great magazine that is to be. Harry Dee purposes, in addition, to study finances. We've settled it between us that he's to be business manager and I the editor. We have concluded not to make any start till we're thirty years old or so; and in the mean time there's a big sum of money gathering interest."

"By the way, where is Mr. Keenan?"

"He's out on a walk," said Tom. "But I think he'll be back soon. But there's another friend of yours here."

"Who?" came the chorus.

"Guess," answered Mr. Playfair.

Before we could make answer the door opened and—

"Oh, Mr. Middleton!"

There stood our beloved teacher and prefect beam-

ing upon us with his old-time smile. He had changed but little, though his face wore more markedly that expression which may be noticed in those whose thoughts have been constantly turned upon sacred things.

While we were still welcoming him, Tom called out:

"Boys, that's not Mr. Middleton. He's *Father* Middleton. He was ordained July 31st."

There was a solemn silence.

Each of us knelt, and Father Middleton, passing from one to another, gave us his priestly benediction.

What a delightful time of it we had that morning! Old memories—pleasant and fragrant they were—came back again. We fought our battles o'er, and talked and laughed with an abandon which sent time flying on the swiftest and lightest of wings.

Harry Quip presently mystified us not a little. He called Father Middleton aside, and went off with him, we knew not whither.

When he returned after half an hour he made up for lost time. He talked, and joked, and laughed till Frank Burdock brought him to a stand by saying:

"Harry, have you been drinking?"

"No," said Harry. "It's worse."

"Let's hear your confession, then," said Mr. Playfair.

"I just made it to Mr. Middleton—Father Middleton—a general confession of my whole life."

Harry was now quite serious; so were we; we saw that something more was to come.

"And besides I've had a talk with the novice-master."

"Oh, Harry Quip!" exclaimed Percy.

"He's of the same opinion as Father Middleton; and in a few days I'm going to join Donnel in the Baltimore Seminary."

"Well, Harry Quip," exclaimed Percy, grasping his hand warmly, "you always were a lucky fellow. Here you go and get one of the sublimest of calls, and leave Frank and Harry and Joe and me out in the cold."

Percy was smiling as he spoke, but there was sadness in both smile and voice.

"Well," said Harry, "you fellows deserve to be left out in the cold. When Tom went away you didn't throw an old slipper after him. I did, and now I'm thrown after the slipper."

Perhaps the reader may think I am exaggerating; but it is a fact that before dinner Joe, Percy, Frank, and myself contrived to hold a secret interview with our saintly Father Middleton. But none of us came from it with the abounding joy that Harry had carried away; still all of us, I trust, were more at peace with ourselves and with God after our interview. We did not, like Harry, find a great vocation, but we received such advice as Father Middleton, who knew us so well, judged best for our interests.

When I returned from my conference with Father Middleton I found that another young religious had joined our little reunion.

"So this is Harry Dee," he exclaimed, with the most engaging of smiles, as he grasped my hand warmly. "I know you very well, Harry; though probably you have never even heard of me."

"Yes, he has, *Carissime*," put in Mr. Playfair. "All my St. Maure's chums know you pretty well. What a pity we're not allowed to have pillow-fights here."

"What!" I burst out, "Arthur Vane?"

"The same," laughed Arthur. "I'm the youngest novice in the house."

"He came to pay me a visit several months ago," said Mr. Playfair, "and fell in love with this place. We could hardly get him out. He came back in two weeks to stay."

"And now I'm happy," said Arthur, "and I look upon the night I met Mr. Playfair as *the* night of my life."

During the hour that preceded dinner Percy and Arthur became warm friends. They struck me as being remarkably similar in their tastes and manners.

In the afternoon Tom rearranged the "Blue Clippers." Our genial friend Mr. Keenan played his old position, and, pressing into our service Frank Burdock and Arthur Vane, we put out a full nine which Tom as of old led to victory. The young religious pitted against us played very well, but—well, we played better.

The time came but too quickly for our departure.

"Boys," said Mr. Playfair, as we were about to leave the parlor, "before you go, suppose we visit the master of the house."

Somewhat mystified we followed Tom. He led us into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Frank, Harry, Joe, and myself kneeled upon the bench farthest back in the chapel; Tom and Percy were in front of us. Impressed with the occasion, I was

praying with more than usual fervor, when I felt a light touch upon my arm.

I lifted my head and saw Frank. "Look," he said reverently, "isn't it beautiful?" and he pointed to the kneeling figures of Tom and Percy. The evening sun was shining upon them, mingling the glory of earth with the heavenly glory that seemed to play about their faces. To look at them, as they then appeared, was as powerful an object lesson in prayer as this earth can give. Yes; before them, concealed by the tabernacle, was the one sweet secret to their sweet lives. It was the *Incarnation* that had made Tom our Tom, and Percy our Percy.

We were on the eve of separating, and taking different walks in life; but, different as were these walks, they were all to conduct us, we trusted, to the same goal—to an everlasting union with Him before whom we were now bowed in fervent adoration.

THE END.

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