

## CHAPTER 1

### Mary Makes A New Friend

LITTLE did the young couple know, as they met on that beautiful Sunday morning at the close of High Mass and made their way together down the wide stone steps of St. Mary's, that within a week their courtship was to be marred and well-nigh wrecked.

"Tom," said Mary, "somehow I felt thankful in my very soul as I followed Mass today that I was born a Catholic. Oh, how great is our church! What splendor! Yes, I am proud I am a Catholic; aren't you? Think of those poor Protestants, all split up into various creeds and sects; it's no wonder their churches are so poorly attended."

"Yes, Mary," replied Tom, "I have thought the same thing many times, and for the life of me I can't understand why people choose to be Protestants. The only reason must be that they are born so."

Tom and Mary had known each other from childhood. They had attended the parish parochial school and were graduated from the higher grades at the same time.

Tom, in his early youth, had served as an altar boy, and now he and Mary sang in the wonderful choir of St. Mary's. Tom was no ordinary young man. He had high ideals and was not influenced by the spirit of worldliness so prevalent today. He came from a good family, and he was respected by all for his integrity and sincerity. His uncle, Bishop Galvin, had more than once tried to persuade him to enter college and

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study for the priesthood, and probably would have succeeded in his efforts had it not been for Mary.

But Tom loved Mary, and Mary loved Tom; and throughout the years of their acquaintanceship and association they were always happy to be together. For three years they had been engaged, and they were counting the days, it seemed, until they would be united in holy matrimony. However, it was thought only wise to wait at least another year or so before this long-hoped-for step should be taken.

Tom had secured employment in a department store upon finishing St. Mary's, and, while he was making splendid advancement, he did not feel that his salary was sufficient to support a wife as he would like. However, it had been intimated to him by his superiors that they were expecting soon to make him head of his department. No future ever looked brighter to a young man. He and Mary laid plans for their future home, and, to help their plans materialize, each had started a savings account and was practicing the strictest economy.

Mary, upon finishing St. Mary's, attended State College, and for the past two years had been teaching in the public school. Her mother, a sweet, white-haired woman, a widow of many years, with her small income had educated her two girls. Mary was the younger by several years. Ruth, the elder sister, quite against her mother's wishes, had taken the veil; and, as Sister Alexia of the Dominican Order, was now teaching in a city several miles away.

Mary's life had not been easy. Her father had died when she was quite young, and she knew what it meant to

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economize and save and work even while attending school. Her mother had passed through a long spell of sickness the year before, and her recovery was slow; and not until recently was she able to do her own housework. During all this time Mary had to care for her mother and attend to the household duties, besides teaching thirty-four live-wire sixth graders of a large city school, which in itself was no small task. This heavy responsibility, together with the worry over her mother's condition, had its effect, as we might well suppose, upon Mary's health. The physical frame can stand only so much, and when overtaxed, a break is inevitable; at least, it was so in Mary's case. As a result, she was forced, much against her own desire, to cease teaching for the remaining three months of the school year.

The small income her mother was receiving was not sufficient to cover all expenses, and especially when sickness came into the home, with the attendant bills for medicine and doctor. So, in such a time as this, Mary's help was especially needed. Surely the situation was not the most optimistic, to say the least; but, with Mrs. Kennedy's improvement in health to the extent that she was able to do much of her own work, and with Mary rapidly gaining in strength, brighter days were seemingly ahead. However, Mary was anxious to be doing something that would bring in a little money to help in the home.

"I'll go," she thought to herself, "to the employment agency, and see if I can get some light, easy work to do until I have regained my strength; then perhaps I can get something to keep me busy until school begins next fall."

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Without saying a word about her plans to her mother, she decided to try. Boarding a bus in front of her home, she made her way to the employment bureau.

Various propositions were offered, but Mary felt unable healthwise to accept them. "I have a place," suggested the lady at the desk, "that may be what you wish. Here is a Mrs. Crandel who desires a girl to assist her some during the daytime in doing her work. She has a small baby, and wants someone for a few weeks until she feels strong enough to do all her own work again. I believe this is something you can do, Miss Kennedy, and I would advise that you go out and see Mrs. Crandel; then you can make your decision."

"What will Tom think?" Mary mused to herself as she boarded a Sixteenth Avenue streetcar. A peculiar feeling came over her as she rode on. "Housework! What an experience! What will Tom think? Suppose some of my teacher friends hear of this!" Pride again and again whispered in her ears, and she was almost tempted to turn back. Then she thought of Father Hara's sermon at High Mass the Sunday before, and the words of our Lord: "But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."

"Why," she thought, "I ought to be ashamed of myself for even thinking of such things. Did not our Lord wash His disciples' feet? I will follow Father Hara's admonition. Here I can help a convalescing mother, and, after all, that is work of charity even if I do receive some pay for doing it. I am sure this would be pleasing to God, to the angels, to the saints, and to my priest. Tom and mother will understand; and as far as my friends are concerned, why, let them think what they will." "Sixty-first Street West," called the conductor. In a few

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moments Mary found herself in the small but comfortable home of the Crandels. She was received warmly by both Mr. and Mrs. Crandel. With a mother's pride, the two-weeks-old infant was shown, and it would have taken a heart of stone not to fall in love with it.

Mary was won over, and decided to remain the rest of that day. After telephoning to her mother, she began her work with a feeling of satisfaction; and surely there is a satisfaction in doing something for someone else, especially for people who are as appreciative as the Crandels appeared to be.

With Mary's assistance, Mrs. Crandel prepared dinner. As Mary sat together with the Crandels to partake of the noonday meal, she was made to feel more like a guest than a hired girl. Not until then did she recognize that the Crandels were Protestants. All bowed their heads while Mr. Crandel gave thanks for the food prepared for them, and then thanked God for sending Mary to help them. Mrs. Crandel noticed that Mary made the sign of the cross, and, of course, realized that she was a Catholic.

Dinner ended, Mr. Crandel made plans to be gone during the afternoon, explaining that he would return early.

Upon his departure, the two women fell into conversation, which is only natural, especially when a hired girl is considered an equal, as in this case. A real surprise came to Mary as she learned that Mr. Crandel was a Protestant minister, and had gone out for the afternoon to visit some members of his flock, one of whom was ill.

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"This is interesting, to say -the least," Mary thought to herself. "What will mother and Tom think? and a Protestant minister at that!"

"Mother," Mary exclaimed as she stepped into her home that evening, "you couldn't guess what I am doing." Mrs. Kennedy smiled in her usual pleasant manner, and, with a certain question in her voice, mentioned a few things she thought Mary might be doing.

"No, mother, I knew you couldn't guess it. Well, I'm doing plain housework, and for a Protestant minister at that!"

"A Protestant minister!" exclaimed Mrs. Kennedy. "And may the saints save us!"

"Oh, well, mother," Mary broke in, "you see I had to get something to do, and this place seemed the only opening. The work is easy; but I didn't know I was getting into a minister's home until after I had been there some time. They seem to be very nice people, even if they are Protestants."

Mrs. Kennedy had no worries as to Mary's conduct in such a place; yet, if she had had any premonition of what was to happen and the trouble that would arise from the experience, she would in no uncertain terms have demanded that Mary leave right then and there.

"Mother," exclaimed Mary, "what will Tom think? Housework - and for a Protestant minister at that! Well, it's an experience that will be interesting, I am sure. I'll be able to see for myself, and at close range, what a Protestant preacher acts like. Oh! here comes Tom; I can hardly wait until I break the news to him."

"Tom, you can't guess what I am doing. I wanted to do something now that mother is so well and I am nearly back

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to normal again. I went to the employment office to get a job."

"Employment office to get a job!" exclaimed Tom. "Oh, you're only fooling, Mary."

"Well, Tom, I am doing housework."

"Housework!" exclaimed Tom. "Oh, you're joking!"

"No, I am not," Mary began to explain. "Perhaps I'd better say I am helping a mother to do her housework. And, Tom, what do you think?" Mary exclaimed, with an amused twinkle in her eye, "it's in a Protestant minister's home at that."

Mother Kennedy watched for a reaction on the part of Tom, but was satisfied when he finally said, "Can you beat that?"