

**MAUDE; OR, THE
ANGLICAN
SISTER OF MERCY**

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Maude; Or, The Anglican Sister of Mercy by E. Jane Whately

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EDITED BY

MISS WHATELY,

AUTHOR OF

'ENGLISH SYNONYMS,' 'LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP WHATELY,'
'THREE CASSETS,' ETC.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE establishment of numerous **SISTERHOODS** in this country, within the last few years, makes it very important that all the facts which may throw light upon their character and working should be widely known and carefully studied.

These institutions having received the approval of some of the bishops and clergy of the English Church, many persons naturally suppose that no evil results are likely to follow from their establishment, and that the spirit in which they are conducted is not inconsistent with the principles of the Reformation.

When, therefore, circumstances enabled me to become very intimately acquainted with the true condition and secret working of these institutions, I felt that the public ought to be in possession of such knowledge; the more so as it was evident that there was a very general and serious misapprehension as to the real state of the case.

The narrative which I now bring forward, and to the entire authenticity and absolute truth of which I pledge myself, is not of recent date. Nearly twenty years have elapsed since the events it relates took place. And had it been a mere isolated case—had the effort to restore to the Church of England the old conventual system of Rome been a mere ephemeral scheme, which 'sprang up and died away in a night,' then the facts recorded in these pages, however interesting in themselves, would only be of importance to readers who love to study the various phases of human nature, and it might have been doubtful how far it were worth while to republish, in this point of view, a narrative of events so long past.

But the reverse of all this is the case. The history I bring forward relates to a movement which is going on at this present

moment. It unveils the secret tactics of those who have been and are deliberately and perseveringly labouring to restore the practices of the Church of Rome in our country. It reveals the steps by which the Sisterhoods, supposed by many to be mere associations for charitable purposes, have become identified in principle and action with the Romish Conventual System.

The subject of this narrative, whom I have called 'Maude Deerswood,' is a personal and intimate friend of my own. She was the daughter of a gentleman of old family and good position, was introduced at an early age, and for the next few years was taken much into society, both in England and on the Continent. Some little time before the date at which this history commences, she had begun to experience that awakening to serious thought, and that sense of the unsatisfactoriness of the pleasures of the world, which is so often felt by intelligent and earnest-minded young people entering on life.

The course of thought and action to which these reflections led her, and which occupied the next two years of her life, are recorded in these pages. She was led subsequently to make for her mother very full and minute memoranda of the events of these two years still fresh in her memory,—and these accounts she placed in my hands.

So important did my father, Archbishop Whately, consider these facts, that he not only urged their publication, but offered to edit this narrative himself, which was only prevented by his death.

I have, for obvious reasons, thought it right to alter the names of the persons and places referred to in the following pages; but, after all, it matters comparatively little who are the *individuals* responsible for the introduction and spread of these Sisterhoods; the really important question to the public is, whether the doctrines thus promulgated are, or are not, identical with the monastic system of the Church of Rome? If they are, the next question for consideration is, whether the English people will encourage and sanction the growth of institutions in this country which, even in a social point of view, are now regarded, even in Catholic countries, as utterly fatal to their well-being?

E. JANE WHATELY.

September, 1869.

MAUDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESOLUTION.

THE Sunday morning service had just ended in the little country church of Wilsden, and the villagers were dispersing, many lingering near the churchyard gate to drop a curtsey or touch their hats, with glances of respectful sympathy, to Mrs. Rivers, who, with her younger sister, Maude Deerswood, walked slowly home through the fields. Both were in deep sorrow of heart, for only a few months had passed since Mr. Rivers' sudden death.

It had been a terrible calamity, casting sorrow and gloom over the whole neighbourhood. Month after month had passed away, but the shadow of that fatal summer morning hung over the young widow's heart, and darkened all the world to her. Maude was at home with her mother in a distant county when the accident happened, and had hastened to her sister in very deep grief and sympathy. Happily there were little children at Wilsden to claim their mother's thoughts, and the presence of her baby boy seemed at times to lighten the sweet, sad face. Now as they reached the house, the merry little voices greeted them, but the exertion of the morning had been too much for Mrs. Rivers. Maude sent away the little

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ones to the nursery, and was glad at the end of an hour, to leave her sister comparatively restored.

Her heart ached ; she felt so incapable of consoling such grief ; she knew that there were times when all human sympathy fails. She made her way to a favourite nook on a wooden bridge which crossed the little river running through the grounds, and, leaning on the rails, gave herself up to the thoughts which burdened her mind.

As it will be necessary to understand somewhat of her character, in order to trace the powerful influence of the Romanist 'religious life' principles, which were as yet unknown to her, we will give her thoughts at this time more in detail.

Mingling with her deep sympathy in her sister's sorrow, was an undefined grief for herself. Why was there so much misery in the world ? Why were all bright and beautiful things to pass away so quickly ? Why was nothing reliable—nothing that could be safely leant on for happiness ? All that the world could give, all the treasures of love and happiness that the human heart could crave, seemed given but to be taken away in a moment, leaving the spirit to utter desolation.

What meant all this ? Surely there must be some secret in this earth-woe which she had not fathomed. Surely God must have some panacea for the terrible aching of the hearts He had made. Surely there must be some wonderful compensation for the misery of the souls He had created ?

She thought of all her intense longing for calm, patience, peace of mind, belief in God's love to His creatures, and contrasted it with her reckless impatience of sorrow, her utter inability to banish from her mind the thought that such misery was not deserved ! . . .

That drive of yesterday ! She seemed yet to feel the

tight grasp of her sister's hand as they passed a labourer playing with his children, the smiling wife standing at the cottage door. She seemed still to hear the sad, low voice,

If he were only here, and we like them.' What an utter desolation was this! and Maude's thoughts wandered over hours too sacred in their grief to be more than touched upon; would that she could comfort and sustain her sister!

What was there on earth worth living for but to help to bear the burdens of others, to help to lighten the sorrow and misery around? Yes, a Sister of Mercy's life must be a most blessed one! And here her thoughts fell into a channel they had been accustomed to flow through for many weeks past.

She had heard of a Protestant Sisterhood at Westbury, and was daily expecting to hear from a friend who had promised to write to the Superior, and make inquiries for her about it. Already an ideal future was presenting itself to her mind of what a Sister of Mercy's life might be. Could there be a holier vocation than that of all day helping the poor and sorrowing?

And then, was it not the nearest following of the Lord's footsteps on earth—He who went about doing good, He who said it was more blessed to minister than to be ministered unto?

Yes, when she should be no longer necessary to her sister, she would go and devote her life to the poor and the suffering in this Protestant Sisterhood. And her thoughts now were calm and restful as she gazed abstractedly down into the river.

At this time Maude Deerswood had no particular bias toward any sect or party in religion; brought up in the Church of England, she had from her infancy been educated in all the great principles of Christian morality.