

Though in the middle of the book her acceptance of Wormold and Beatrice getting married seems improbable, at the end she accepts it plausibly: pagans can do almost anything—they are lucky! And when the old lady in the Temperance Hotel is shocked at Wormold's kissing Beatrice, she quietly remarks that it is time the old lady learned a little about life. She has learned this; it was, after all, and still is only Hawthorne and his organizations who belong to 'the cruel and inexplicable world of childhood'.

Chapter 2, *inter alia*, shows Greene's light touch with Catholicism; neither irreverent nor pompous, it leaves him free to incorporate it in the story of three human beings, Milly, Beatrice and Wormold. Clearly Greene is interested in human beings; Beatrice and Milly and Wormold are not simply parts of a theological allegory; and Wormold particularly is the old Greene figure transplanted: compelled into action. The sad man is cock of all his jests: the serious man wins the victory! Pinkie, for all the seriousness with which Greene treats him, is not a human being; he is a container for Péguy's holy sinner. Humour and humanity have entered the nightmare world of Greene; and in these days of organizations, blocs and alliances—the thrones, powers and dominations of our day—nothing is more important nor more relevant than the laughter of Mr Greene's sad man.



BLESSED MARGARET WARD

P.C.C.

LIKE many other members of the Catholic gentry in penal times, Margaret Ward had to earn a livelihood in domestic service. She was born in Cheshire at Congleton and went to live in London with another gentlewoman named Mrs Whitall, probably in the capacity of companion or housekeeper.

The Catholics of the district around Bridewell, where she lived, were much agitated by the plight of a secular priest named Richard Watson who was imprisoned in the gaol there. Margaret

would hear his story, how during his first imprisonment he had been so weakened by starvation, vermin and close confinement in the fetid atmosphere of the place, that he had renounced his faith and attended a Protestant service.

Afterwards, his conscience becoming a greater misery than all he had endured in the gaol, nothing would satisfy him but to go to confession and be reconciled. Overwhelmed by a tremendous desire to atone for his lapse, he stalked into Bridewell church and shouted out the catalogue of his sins and the resultant scandal he had given to fellow Catholics. So enthusiastically did he give tongue that the congregation seized him, clapped hands over his mouth and hauled him back to prison, where—from the physical point of view—his latter state was worse than the first.

Word came that he had been flung into a crawling dungeon; he was weighed down with irons; he was starving on a diet of bread and water; he was left without food altogether. There were Catholics who would have liked to help him but they dared not for fear of being accused of persuading him to recant. A little later news arrived. Mr Watson had been moved to a cell at the top of the prison where he had more light and space but more persecution from zealous Protestants. He was given no peace, being threatened, questioned, harangued and even prayed over. There was much anxious talk of him when the Catholics were together behind closed doors. The poor man was sick and weary of his life and no friend was at hand to give him the crumb of comfort.

At this point Margaret Ward decided they had all talked enough. She determined she herself would get into the prison and do what she could, come what may. Inconspicuously dressed and loaded with a basket of provisions she set off. At first she was not allowed to set foot inside the door, but being a friendly woman with a sprightly wit and challenging personality, she set about charming the gaoler's wife. Through that lady's good offices she was eventually admitted to the priest's cell.

Naturally the authorities were suspicious. Margaret's basket was searched and all her loaves and pies broken open in case they should conceal written messages. A guard was present to listen to all the conversation that passed between her and the priest, and on her departure she was subjected to further search.

Gradually, however, the goalers grew accustomed to her visits,

and perhaps even welcomed them for the coins she distributed in return for amenities granted to the prisoner. Vigilance slackened, diminished, and disappeared altogether—except that they had taken the precaution of finding out where the amiable Mistress Ward lived.

During one of their talks Richard Watson confided to Margaret that he had discovered a way to escape. All he needed was a rope, and a boat on the river, and a hide-out. Margaret undertook to provide all three requirements. She herself would bring the rope under cover of a nicely-browned pasty and her own disarming manner. A Catholic water-man and her own young Irish serving-man, John Roche, would wait on the river with a boat and smuggle the priest to a safe place.

All went well. In came the lady with the rope, a cheery word for the turnkeys, a titbit of news for the gaoler's wife and a new recipe perhaps; and out she went again, none suspecting her. Unfortunately, poor Mr Watson does not seem to have been very handy with a rope. He used it double only to find, when he was dangling in the midnight air with no visible means of support, that it was too short. Being a man of faith and courage and having no other solution anyway, he commended himself to God and let go the rope, landing on top of an old shed. This worm-eaten construction collapsed with him, making a resounding racket that brought the gaol officials at the double.

It also brought the water-man and John Roche, who dragged the groaning man from the wreckage with a broken arm and leg, bundled him into the boat and made off into the darkness. Too late they remembered the rope which the priest had fully intended to take with him. The gaoler did not need to be told where the rope had come from and lost no time in sending 'constables and justices' to Margaret's house. They caught her as she was on the point of escape and imprisoned her immediately, for eight days fastening her with chains and fetters.

No doubt they were a little annoyed at being taken in and anxious to exculpate their carelessness in the eyes of higher officials, and so the prisoner, although a woman, was hung up by the hands and scourged before she was even brought to trial. She bore it all with an amazing courage, saying it was only the prelude to the martyrdom she hoped for.

When she was at length brought before the judge and asked

if she were guilty of treachery to the Queen and the laws of the realm by furnishing a traitor with the means of escape, she answered that she most certainly was. Moreover, never had she done anything she repented less 'than the delivering of that innocent lamb from those bloody wolves'. One can almost hear that pleasure in producing strong language in a righteous cause that any woman of spirit longs to experience at some time of her life.

Nothing would induce her to disclose the whereabouts of the priest and she was sentenced to death. At the same time she was assured that the Queen was merciful and that if she would beg Her Majesty's pardon and go to the Protestant church she would be set free, otherwise she must look forward to certain death.

'As to the Queen', said Margaret calmly, 'I have never offended Her Majesty, and it is not just to confess a fault by asking pardon for it where there is none.' Concerning her connivance at the priest's escape, she believed that the Queen would have done the same herself—again the robust roll of the Elizabethan tongue—'if she had the bowels of a woman and had known the treatment he endured'. She had long been convinced, she said, that it was unlawful for her to go to their church and—the British habit of understatement seems to have been even then in evidence—she saw no reason to change her mind now.

'I am willing', she said, 'to lay down not one life only but many if I had them, rather than betray my conscience and act against God and his holy religion.'

She was hanged at Tyburn, 30th August, 1558, showing such steadfast cheerfulness and eagerness to die for the love of God that the spectators, even those who had merely come to gawp in ghoulish enjoyment, were deeply impressed.



LETTER OF ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH TO ST POLYCARP

Translated by P. T. A. D. ALLEN

St Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was convicted about the year A.D. 110 of being a Christian and sentenced to be taken to Rome, there to be thrown to the lions. Accordingly in the custody of ten Roman soldiers he