

ST. BRIDGET.

BY FATHER RYAN.

Sweet heaven's smile... Sweet heaven's smile... Sweet heaven's smile...

THE CONFESSIONS OF A PHYSICIAN.

There is a period in the practice of every physician when he is baffled by the mystery of disease. At such a time he feels so helpless in the face of nature's forces that he asks himself: "Am I, after all, fitted for my profession?"

I say this mental battle occurs in the life of every physician. In order that the allegation may be applied to the medical profession in the most general manner, if you pin me down closely and say that, while I am correct, there are still notable exceptions to the rule, I will, for the sake of argument, accept the amendment. I think I am generous, though, when I say that there is not more than one exception among every thousand physicians. This fact, which must appear so startling to the layman, is my chief justification for placing upon record a fragmentary story of some things that are supposed to be carefully guarded within college walls, consultation rooms and the sick chamber.

Men who enter the sacred precincts of medicine are supposed to have a vocation for this noblest of all professions. Is it really true? I do not mean by the question to intimate that all the men who select medicine as their life work are ruled by sordid motives. Heaven forbid! Many are attracted by the opportunities for benefiting their fellowmen; others are led by the allurements which are presented to the student of science; others still like the dignity and respectability inseparable from the profession, and, finally, most of us regard it as an excellent way of making money. But, as I have said, the very great majority finally reach a point where they wonder if they are really fitted for the profession.

I fervently hope that the time may come when a real vocation for medicine will be the first requisite demanded before a student can begin his studies. It should be a matter for prayerful consideration. I can illustrate what I am trying to explain by saying that it should be something akin to the state of mind demanded by the Catholic hierarchy before they will consent to permit an applicant to enter upon his divinity studies.

I can begin my own story by saying that I never at any time had a "vocation" for medicine. But it was the fond desire of my parents that I should one day attach "M. D." to my name. When my profession was decided upon, I interposed no objection. I received my authority to practice in the shape of a very small diploma with a very large seal. I had my photograph taken in a group with my classmates, all of us attired in gowns and wearing mortar-board hats.

but only for a little time. His arguments satisfied me. He said they all did it; it was simply a game of "you tickle me and I'll tickle you." After that I paid \$500 in installments for the privilege of being the official physician of one of the largest hotels in my native city. Whenever a guest was taken sick in the hotel I was sent for as the hotel physician. I can assure you that I made the patients, who were generally well-to-do persons, pay me handsome fees. The installments of my \$500 purchase money for the practice had to be paid. And, anyway, business is business.

A colleague of mine, who boasted the ownership of a horse and carriage, used to drive at breakneck speed through the principal streets of the town in which he resided. The neighbors all said: "What a tremendous practice that young doctor has! He scarcely takes time to eat his meals." It was all a ruse, but it inspired confidence in the people and finally they did flock to him.

So I resolved to "get busy." One morning I took the curtains off my parlor window and determined to be my own laundryman for that day at least. Just at that awkward time two patients came in, one after the other—the first I had in ten days. My coat was off, my sleeve rolled up and I was deep in my work. What was I to do? Why, turn the incident to advantage, of course. So wiping my hands quickly I opened the door slightly and said: "Pardon me for a few minutes. I am busy with an operation."

Then I closed the door and resumed my operation, which was certainly important to me. When it was concluded and I had removed all evidence of my crime, I opened the side door, as if dismissing a patient, and said in a loud tone: "Now walk very slowly. Don't exert yourself unnecessarily. Good-by."

I walked down the hallway and opened and closed the front door with a bang. Quickly regaining my office, I opened the sliding door and cried out distinctly: "Next, please!"

A special opportunity comes in the life of every physician, which, if swiftly seized and securely held, leads to a good practice. My opportunity, all things considered, came sooner than I expected. A street car turning a corner and giving a sudden lurch threw a well-dressed, a dapper gentleman into the street. The usual crowd surrounded him and the usual voice cried out: "Is there a doctor present?"

But the usual number of physicians did not step forward, and I felt it my duty to push my way through the crowd and proclaim my profession. I compelled the gaping spectators to fall back and give the injured man air. Then I tore off his collar and tie and opened his shirt front. After that I administered a stimulant. The man, who had been in a faint, revived at once.

Thus far I had been successful. A further examination showed that the man had broken his right arm. I directed that he be removed to his home. "This is my home right here," he said, in a feeble voice, indicating a handsome brownstone house only a few yards away.

He was carefully carried to his room, and then the first crisis in my career confronted me. I was a medical and not a surgical doctor; and while in common with others of my profession I possessed an elementary knowledge of all the branches of the healing art, I felt some doubt about my ability successfully to set this particular broken arm, which presented unusual difficulties dismaying to my small experience. However, it would never do to yield to such misgivings in the presence of the patient. Assuming my best pleasing manner, I said: "Perhaps you have a family physician and would like to have him take charge of this case."

"I want my arm set," he replied, testily, "and I want you to do it—I'll pay you."

This was a command and a query. I obeyed the command and ignored the query. The job was a hard one, but it was not to be compared with the mental struggle that I underwent. Suppose I should bungle the case and lame the man for life. This and a score of similar thoughts flashed through my mind. I realize that confidence—assurance, if you will—was necessary, and I worked myself up to it so well that my work was completed without a flaw. I received a handsome fee and more free advertising than any young man of my age in our town. The papers spoke of my skill, and my distinguished patient informed all of his friends that I was a wonder. Little did they dream of the nervous trepidation with which I approached a task which was to bring me so much unearned praise.

enabled me to see her tongue. Then I said in a playful tone: "If you will get me a glass, I will treat you to some of my patent soda water."

She did so. I put a tablet in the water, and she drank it. I want you to know that I take pride in my original methods. I try to educate my patients to like and not to dread the visits of the doctor. In this case all of my work had been done within the direct knowledge of the patient and I felt very good over it. So I had my patient good-bye with extreme cheerfulness. She looked surprised and then said: "Of course you will come up stairs and see my sister?"

"Not to-day," I said. "Give her my respects." "Why," she said, looking mystified and startled, "how strangely you talk."

"Strangely?" I echoed. "Why?" "Because I sent for you to prescribe for my sister and you decline to see her."

It flashed over my mind in an instant. I had prescribed for the wrong sister. I was entirely too clever. Fortunately no harm was done. The medicine given the well woman was simply to head off possible fever and could do no harm. I was too mortified to confess my mistake, and, after giving the right medicine to the right woman, I left the house.

One day a wealthy Chicago man came to me to be cured of heart disease. He had fainted in his office and thought he was surely going to die. A hasty examination convinced me that his heart was all right and that he was troubled with an acute and peculiar form of indigestion. That should I tell him and be laughed at for my pains?

My conscience, my tact and my judgment were in a turmoil. But the habit of quick decision, which I had acquired in the hospital—and the saving grace that helps a man who tries to be as honest as circumstances will allow—came to my aid.

"My dear sir," I said, emphatically, "whatever trouble you have with your heart originates in your stomach. And the trouble in your stomach originates in your mouth originates in too much whiskey and tobacco."

That pleasing glow of honor satisfied, which follows every deed of duty done, spread all over me. I felt like curing him for the glory of the profession. But my patient was determined upon diagnosing his own case—and paying high for it.

"Stomach, Hades!" he rejoined, and his face turned white with anger. "Look here: I have been to seven other medical jacksasses—who know about as much as you do. I've got heart disease. If you want to cure me, you can, and I can afford to pay you. But if you are going to load me up with bread bills and charge me \$1.00 a visit, I'll drop the whole lunatic asylum of physicians and cure myself."

If he attempted to cure himself he would be a dead man within six months. "This is a remarkable case," I said, very slowly and very gravely. "In all of my experience with disease I have never come across anything exactly like this."

This was perfectly true. But it also was money king. There was just the suspicion of a tremor in his voice as he asked: "Do you think there is any hope for me?"

"Yes," I replied, drawing out the vowel of that simple word in the most painful and reluctant manner. "Yes; if you will subscribe to my conditions."

"What are they?" he asked anxiously. "That you will place yourself unreservedly in my charge—that you will follow my directions to the letter."

"I'll do that! I'll do that!" he cried out with eagerness that was truly laughable.

But I was not through with him. I sat down at my desk, sighed pensively, and gazed through the open window. "I do not know," I said, speaking again with that professional slowness and exactness. "I do not know whether I should undertake this case."

"Why not?" he exclaimed, in some alarm. "Because it will take up so much of my time—and my time, you know, is very valuable."

"So is my life," he interrupted, with a feeble attempt at humor. "Very valuable," I continued without an change of muscle and as if I had not heard the interruption. "I may have to see you twice a day for several weeks."

"How much do you want?" he asked, excitedly, as if eager that I should not get away from him. "The true physician," I said, "has no price. I will cure you first; you can pay me afterward."

"Sir!" I said, in a voice that was absolutely meaningless. It might have meant that the amount was entirely too much, or that it was ridiculously low. "I will give you \$1,000!" he shouted with the air of a man at a public auction. "I cured him in a month and received \$1,000 for it."

could do so with a show of decency shirked smallpox duty. Some of them said that they were not feeling well; others said they had families of their own to consider, and a few were honest enough to say that they were afraid of the disease and did not propose to take any risks.

The young physician I speak of, filled with lofty ideas of duty, determined to devote himself entirely to smallpox practice. He took all the precautions that were counselled by science and human reason, but otherwise he was absolutely fearless. He used to vaccinate himself every other week, and as the siege lasted nearly three months, his arms were almost covered with scars and scabs from the virus. He did wonders for humanity. He waited on the poor and rich alike. If they had no money he looked for no compensation. Where they had, he expected a fee in proportion to his work. He saved many lives. It is such men—and they are too rare—who enable the profession.

It is a profession whose days are made of diplomacy and whose nights are composed of crises. There is always a high duty calling, and there is usually a mere human man trying to respond. Had I possessed in the beginning the vocation for my profession which I belonged to my friend, who built a great career upon the foundation of a smallpox epidemic, I should have been either famous or dead. Such fame comes to a Jenner; such death comes to a Damien, who, if he had not been a priest, would have been a physician. All that I would say is that the physician should possess the intellect of a Jenner and the heart of a Damien.

As for me, I am a doctor, practicing medicine.—The New York Independent.

WHY THE CARDINAL WROTE "THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS."

The distinguished Texas missionary, Rev. P. F. Brannan, writes interestingly to the Southern Messenger of The recent visit to the East where he called on Cardinal Gibbons:

"I went about 4 p. m., presented my name, and in a few moments he was present. After talking for some fifteen minutes he invited me to return at 5 o'clock and go out with him for a ride. I returned at the appointed time, the coachman was there with a team of fine horses hitched to a handsome Victoria. We began talking about the work in which I am engaged and he listened with attention and evident pleasure. 'The Faith of Our Fathers' became a subject of conversation, and he told me how he came to write it. When Bishop of North Carolina, he and Father Mark Gross, brother of the late Archbishop Gross, were frequently out on the missions preaching to the Protestants as well as the Catholics. The interval between their visits to the mission was sometimes very long, and one day the present Cardinal said to Father Gross that he would like for him to write a kind of a brochure on dogmatic subjects, have it printed and distributed so the people would not forget what they had preached about before they returned. Father Gross replied: 'Bishop, why don't you do it yourself?' His suggestion was the initial, impelling force that led to the writing of a book which will reach to the end of the world. He picked up a pen at once and began and finished an introduction. At odd times, and when not otherwise engaged, he worked upon that book day and night, until it was finished. He says he did not think much of it and disposed of it to publishers who, doubtless, have made many thousands of dollars by its sale. When I suggested that he would live and work in this book as long as the English language is spoken, the serene and happy smile which illumined his countenance was most pleasing to see."

"I have known the Cardinal for some nineteen years, and my impressions of him have been confirmed by my recent visit. He is kind, gentle, simple, tactful with no apparent thought of the attitude of his dignity. Long may he remain the gentle and unobtrusive, yet towering, exponent of our holy religion in the United States!"

"I met in New York the big, earnest, rugged Ajax of the Catholic missionary to non-Catholics, Father Elliott. He was on the Federal side in the Civil War and I was a Confederate. We spent a pleasant time talking over the war. He told me he was captured in the valley of Virginia at Fort Republic. I was there at the very place where he was captured, and as I saw all the prisoners I must have seen the embryo priest, author and missionary on the 9th of June, 1862. He was forty years before I met him in New York City. He asked me if I was ever captured. I told him yes—but not by a handful of men like he was captured, as it took all of Grant's army to capture me at Appomattox. We are now in the same army, under the same General, the Prince of Peace, a life of whom he has written of a copy of which work he made me the grateful recipient."

THE MONTH OF THE HOLY ROSARY.

Although no special instruction has been issued regarding devotions for this month, the fact that it is the month of the Rosary is so widely known as to necessitate no reminder to the body of the faithful. Since the wonderful victory of the Christian arms over the hosts of the Moslems at Lepanto the Church has signalled her belief that the triumph was due to the intercession of our Blessed Lady by consecrating the month which witnessed it to her honor and enjoining the recital of the Rosary in the churches as well as in the homes of the faithful. Now, it is quite habitual for superficial critics of Catholicism to sneer at this Catholic practice as indicative of a low level of intelligence and a form of religion which seems to them purely mechanical. Such criticism denotes either an un-Christian spirit or an inability to appreciate the Catholic view of the sublime mysteries of the Atonement and the means by which, in the Divine mercy, it was brought about. The perfect faith of

the Catholic system is better reflected in the composition of the Rosary, perhaps, than in any other prayers recommended by the Church; and it is needless to remind any one who seriously considers the nature and object of prayer that that attribute which makes it most acceptable at the Throne of Grace is the absolute and implicit faith of the supplicant in the Divine mysteries as taught mankind in the birth of the Redeemer and the teaching which fell from His own infallible lips. Now, all these things are comprehended in the prayers of the Rosary. They tell in detail the marvellous story of the Redemption in every section of the five joyful mysteries and the five sorrowful, and bring home to the devout mind more forcibly than the most eloquent efforts of the orator can, the boundless love of God for His human family, the awful abomination of sin and the tremendous power of virgin purity, as crystallized in the being of our Blessed Lady, to turn aside even the justice of heaven and overthrow the uttermost powers of man's eternal enemy. The efficacy of the Rosary, so often proved by nations as well as individuals since its institution, may seem to spring from the intense affection in which it is held by Catholics, because it furnishes them with a substantial and imperishable link between Divinity and humanity, and so brings home to the mind more vividly than would be possible by any other means known to man the actuality of God and the actuality of their own share in the glorious fabric of His kingdom on earth and in purgatory. All the principal truths of revelation are condensed and have their culmination in the events which are immortalized in the prayers of the Rosary; and if our separated brethren could only realize it besides and its efficacy, they surely would hesitate before they would describe it as devotes as ignorant or unintellectual.—Standard and Times.

HELP FOR MOTHERS.

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