

was only for a moment. There was nothing repulsive or alarming here. Seven or eight long tables, running parallel to each other, filled the room; and at each table, eight or ten women, ranging from the young girl of fifteen to the woman of sixty, were silently occupied in laundry work. All modern appliances to save human labor were there. The workers were neatly dressed and happy, if one could judge by their smiles. No human indignation, however powerful, could associate these eager workers with the midnight streets, the padded cell, the dock, the fall, or the river. It was a happy sight, working in perfect silence and discipline. And over all these presided a young novice, in her white veil, who stood calmly working, like her poor sisters, taking up now a white cuff, now a collar, and giving her gentle instructions.

"It is the old mechanism and perfection I once desired," thought Luke; "but the motive power is love, not fear."
They passed into an inner room. Here was miracle number two. The Clisterian alliance no longer reigned; but over the boom and buzz of vast machinery came a Babel of voices as the workers fled to and fro.
"Ver bleessin, Feyther," cried one; and in a moment all were on their knees for Luke's benediction. And then, with easy familiarity, these poor girls took Luke around, and showed with intense pride the mighty secrets of the machinery; how steam was let on and shut off; how the slides worked on the rails in the drying-room, etc. And, moving hither and thither among them, in an attitude of absolute equality, were the white-robed Sisters, their spotless habits carefully tucked, for the floor was wet, and they labored and toiled like the rest.

"'Tis the commonwealth of Jesus Christ," said Luke.
"And dear old Sister Petar came forward, an octogenarian, and showed him all her treasures and her pretty little oratory, with all its dainty pictures."
"How long have you been here?" he asked.
"Fifty years, yer reverence, come Michaelmas."
"Then your purgatory is over," said Luke.
"I don't want purgatory, nor heaven ayther," she said, "as long as God loves me with the Sisters."
The Sister and Luke passed out of the steamy atmosphere and the rumble of the machinery into a narrow corridor, which led to the boiler-room and engine house.

"I should like you to see our new boiler," she said; "I'll run on and tell the engineer to have all ready. This is our infirmary. Perhaps you would like to see it. There's but one patient here."
She opened the door, and pointed to the bed where Laura was lying. He went over at once, and leaning over the sick girl, said a few kind words. Then looking around, he saw another figure over near the southern window, her face bent down over the book she was reading. He thought it would seem unkind to pass her by, so he went over and said cheerily:
"Convalescent, I suppose?"
She rose up, trembling all over. Then a blush of untold horror and shame flashed her face and she turned her eyes away; but on her forehead, as if by magic, he saw another face, the face of the dead. He started back as if stung, and cried:
"Great God! Barbara! Miss Wilson!"
"Hush!" she said softly, placing her trembling finger on her lips. "That poor child is watching."
"But what? what? what?" he stammered.
"What? God's name is this mystery? Why are you here?"
"God's will, Father," she said simply.
"Of course," he said, in an excited manner; "but in what, in what capacity? Are you infirm?"
"No," she said, casting down her eyes.

"And how long have you been here?" he cried, his eyes wandering vaguely over her blue penitential dress, and searching the calm depths of her face.
"Ten years," she said, in a low tone. "Ever since Louis died."
"Ten years! And your uncle and father searching all Europe for you! What is this horrible mystery? How long are you possessed?"
"I am not a possessed Sister, Father," she said bravely.
"Then you are a nursing Sister attached to the city and coming in here."
She shook her head. Her heart was breaking with shame and sorrow, as she plunged deeper and deeper in the valley of humiliation. He drew back, as the horrible thought flashed across his mind, and he recalled the dress of the Magdalens. She saw the gesture and flashed again.
"I am afraid to ask further," he said coldly, and with reserve; "but do you belong to the community?"
"No Father," she said bravely—it was the *Consummatum est* of her agony of ten years—"I am a penitent."

She was looking out over the trees and shrubs, looking with eyes dilated, like a consumptive's, her temples still flushed, and her face drawn and strained in agony. He, too, looked steadily through the window, as if scarcely concealing the longing with which that reluctant confession filled him for this young girl, standing there, apparently so calm. The shudder he felt on entering the laundry where the Magdalens worked, and which gave way instantly before the sublime spectacle of their re-erectio, now filled him with tenfold horror. Here, he thought, there was no excuse. Neither ignorance, nor poverty, nor heredity palliated the shame. He was side by side, not with a sinful woman, but a lost angel. The transformation was perfect. He thought he read it in her face. There was—there could be—no resurrection here. He paused for a moment to consider what he would do. As he did so, the vision that had once seen in the garden of the Schweizerhof came up before him,

the vision of the wrecked soul and its guardian angel. The thought was too terrible. His memory of that one tempted him to stretch out his hand and say a kind farewell to one he should never see again. But one side glance at that ill-made, coarse, bulky dress of penitence deterred him. He bowed stiffly and said "Good-day!" with a frown. Barbara continued staring blindly through the window. Then slowly, as her heart broke under the agony, her hot tears fell, burned her hand, and blistered the book which she held.

As Luke passed Laura's bed, she beckoned to him.
"Would yer reverence tell me," she said, "on yer word of honor as a priest, do ye know that girl?"
"Yes," he said sharply; "I know something of her."
"Would ye tell me, yer reverence, once and for all, is she the Blessed Virgin Mary?"
"Nay," he said shortly; "she is not."
"Taan' God an' you," the poor girl cried. "I struck her wance with them five fingers. I saw the print of 'em this morn' on her face when she blushed. Taan' God, I now die aisy."
The Sister, who was awaiting him in the corridor, was surprised at the change in his manner and appearance. There was a wire cutting outside the window, to ward off the stones that were habitually aimed at window panes, according to the established custom of the quarter.

To-night, no one threw any stones, and in the tenement room an eerie silence reigned. I cannot say why, but the unwonted stillness gave me a curious impression of unreality. I felt somehow as if I had been a disembodied spirit listening at the gates of earth.
Not that I was particularly interested in what was passing outside the tenement room; nor, to be frank, did I wish to hear. But sometimes I became conscious of certain impressions that stood out quite clearly in the darkness, as the waves of human sound ebbed and flowed throughout the night.
It was early yet. But through the tenement wall I could hear the swing and counter-swing of a door. It was the public house door and every other swing meant a client. The clients were of both sexes. I could hear the sound of their voices. I could not distinguish the words—only the intonation. Occasionally some one spoke in a loud or shriller tone, then I could hear what they said.
There was a weekly sing-song tonight, in the saloon bar several voices called for drinks. After that there was a scratching of matches, as the men lighted up. Presently the musician of the evening sat down, and the piano stool creaked as a preliminary. The first strain was a waltz, ending in shakes and arpeggios. A pause ensued. Some one was asked to sing. I heard the click of a pipe as the man laid it on the table. Then, in the accent of the quarter, he lifted up his voice in a comic song. The first verse finished, the saloon bar responded in a nasal chorus. Verse after verse followed, each more drawn out than the last, until finally the chorus was merged in applause. Pipes and glasses were evidently refilled; the men talked.

Here my thoughts drifted into more congenial channels, and I was only recalled to my surroundings by the sound of women's voices outside the window. They were standing under the street lamp, with their shawls drawn around them. Their faces were turned away, but the voices reached me over the area railings. They spoke in half tones, and they seemed weary. It was of sin and of sorrow that they spoke. One of them was sobbing, while the other tried to soothe.
Then the voices got rabbed out in the night, and the footsteps fled away. I was following those women in thought down the squalid side streets, when the sound of renewed revelry broke in upon me. The saloon bar was becoming exhilarated. "Why can't every man have three wives?" came the refrain. Glasses were banged on the table to mark the rhythm, and a slow voice from a far corner came in half a bar late.
The spirit of the revellers was in no way dissimilar to the spirit of the quarter. But it struck me as lacking in modernity. It suggested an older and a pagan spirit, as when the Persian poet rallied his adherents to his banner and sang to them the song of earth.

Arise! the sunlight in the tent is creeping. The drowsy soon will fall to death's sure sleep. Attune thy harp and fill a brimming measure. Not a soul will return, of all the sleeping.
This was the song of ancient agnosticism. But it is a song which is fast becoming the principle of the Christian masses of today. The plea for materialism is threaded in and out of the "Rabulayat," yet who shall say that the theory of finality satisfied the tent-maker whose doubt peeps out in many a closing line. Thus he says:
Ah make the most of what we yet may spend, Before we too into the dust descend. Dust into dust, and under dust we lie, Sans wine, sans song, sans singer, and — sans end.

The public house door now swung open and a man lurked out. His gait was unsteady. I could hear the uneven sound of his feet. He was muttering thickly as he propped himself up against the area railings. A while he groaned, then stopped. He was trying to recall the words of the song. It seemed an effort, for he felt each iron rail steadily, as if for an inspiration, but words and tune evaded him. He was using his temper, when a woman emerged from the darkness. She threw back her shawl and hurled reproaches at him. Then it seemed as if the air became obscured with curses.
The sick woman moved restlessly, otherwise the tenement room was still. In the saloon bar the evening was relating the joke of the punning; roars of laughter came through the dividing wall.
Outside the window, and in the middle of the public street, a man and a woman exchanged blows. Both had been drinking freely. At the prospect of a fight, all the windows of the neighboring tenements were thrown open, and dishevelled heads appeared. Leaning out of a top window was a

stout man with his short sleeves rolled up. His face beamed with the enjoyment of the scene. He might have been some old-time pugilist watching the fray, thumb down. "Chortling" in evil mirth, his stentorian voice rang out:
"Pay 'im, Susan! let 'im 'ave it!"
The encouragement was addressed to his own wife. Thus adjured she struck out from the shoulder, and her fist came against her antagonist's head. A burst of appreciation came from the top window. But the crowd now intervened and the combatants were separated.

"Time was wearing on. The men in the bar emptied their glasses and had them refilled. The musician turned on his stool for a final effort. With a harsh, strong touch he struck a few chords, and with one voice they sang the latest music hall ditty.
"Ear, ear!" ejaculated a sleepy enthusiast.
"Ave it again," suggested a coarse voice in a far corner. Again they sang it, some of them standing up to roar the chorus. Glasses rattled; irresponsible fists thumped the table. There was a noisy shuffling of feet as the men passed out. Then the door closed for the night.
It was now Sunday. A church clock hid its face in the darkness and struck the hour. Twelve o'clock! Each stroke rang out as if in condemnation of an erring world. And as I sat in the tenement room and counted the strokes, it seemed to me as if the evening angel were holding up the scales, piled high with human crime. And then I thought another angel came, with pity in his eyes, who when he had marked how the scales fell, raised a pitcher—and the pitcher was filled with tears. Then, one by one, like so many precious stones, he poured them into the opposite scale—and lo! the sorrow outweighed the sin. Twelve o'clock! A new leaf was turned in the Book of Life; a new day was begun.

After a while the sound of children's voices came through the window. They were playing on the steps. Then two people approached and claimed the step for themselves.
"Go home," they said, with a curse. But the home of the little ones was opposite—at the top window. So they crept down a side street instead.
Next door the potman seemed to be tidying up the bar. I could hear the swish of the broom as he swept up the bits and set the chairs straight. Then his broom lingered—the publican and he began to dispute. High words filtered through the tenement wall, after which the publican made his way up stairs. Each stair creaked under him. The publican had drunk deep.
A few minutes later the sounds died away, and for the first time that night there was silence.

Half an hour passed, during which the breathing of the sick woman was the only thing to be heard. Then through the wall came the sound of a piano. The publican tossed in his bed. He was evidently querulous, but his wife answered nothing. I could hear him upbraiding her. Still she was silent. Then it seemed as if her negative attitude became a supportable—something heavy was flung on the floor.
An hour passed. A vagrant cat now stole along the leads and mowed forlornly. It mewed again. It went on mewing. By and by another came; then more. They increased and multiplied. Presently the mewing ceased and the teine assembly opened its mouth wide and howled. They hissed and spat. A furry scull's entrance was interrupted by a tenement window being opened, whereupon someone threw straight. There was a diminuendo of sound, and the cats vanished.
The night seemed very long. The clock had not struck for a long time. I was beginning to wonder if time had gone to sleep, for the world appeared to be dead.

Then I heard a new sound, a sound that seemed to cleave the silence, ruffing the air with its quick, frightened flight. It reminded me of the fluttering of a bird, whose wings were beating with a sickening fear, of a feeble, wounded bird who knows that its capture is but a matter of moments. But this was the flight of a woman—hurried and fearful. I could hear her quick breathing as she tried to outdistance her pursuer; now he was on her heels. They were under the window. A blow was struck and a body fell. And as it fell I heard a voice break upon the night. It was only a faint cry; but it was an ugly whisper. Immediately, as if by magic, the whispered accusation ran through the tenement, as if its denizens, whereof a glimpse of life such as Aubrey de Vere must have seen in vision when he penned those lines that throb with deepest pity.
Touch thou the gates of soul and sense; Touch darkening eyes and dying ears; Touch stiffening hands and feet, and hence Remove the traces of sin and tears.

And then, with a cry for heaven's forgiveness, he strikes the note of the Christian's hope, gathering into a single stanza that strong spirit of faith, of which his own soul is filled. Listen to the pleading which he flings out in challenge to a materialistic world:
This night in 'Aboliver' issues forth: This the Eternal Vicar bleeds. 'Tis wind and words! 'Tis heaven and earth. Be still this night. The rite proceeds.
A hush lay upon the crowd. Even the

denizens of the quarter were not proof against it. It was the sudden transition from life to death, from the visible to the invisible, that stayed their speech. They loitered a while in silent, sheltering groups. Then, with noiseless feet, they melted away into the night. But before they dispersed I saw an upturned face. It was the face of a woman. On it were penciled the lines of want and privation, but in that face there was a look of horror mingled with entreaty. And as the light fell upon her, I saw her cross herself, while her lips moved. What petition she uttered, I know not, or whether she prayed for the living or the dead. But it seemed to me as if the De Profundis surely fitted the time and place. For, indeed, it was out of the depths that her prayer went forth, whether it were for the living or the dead. It was the fact that counted; the fact that, amid a sea of unbelief, she held fast to her faith. For, like a rainbow that lights up a sullen sky, the prayer of the woman seemed to proclaim the promises to a forgetful world.

All was silent again. I made up the fire afresh, and wondered when the night would end. The sick woman had almost ceased breathing. Her fingers no longer twitched. She lay still and motionless. For an hour she remained thus. Then the crisis passed and the woman slept.
So I sat and dreamed by the fire; and in my dream I visited the spot I loved best. And little by little England became blotted out of my memory lent its wings, and together we passed over sea plains, and through the snow-capped Alps. And down through the sun-kissed vineyards we went, and on through the sad olive groves, until the salt lagoons lay out before us. Beneath the shadow of the flight of steps a gondola lay in readiness, and stepping in, we drifted through the quaint Venetian streets, which were all so still. There was no sound but the long swish of the single oar as the boatman handled it lovingly. I could feel the prow of the gondola cleave the water as the waves rippled past. Then a voice rose up from the stern—a rich Southern voice, that sang the sweet songs of Venice. I could hear the notes of the gondolier flooding the night. The echoes seemed to float out across the face of the waters and, with dreamy, outstretched arms, they feel asleep in the moonlight. The church domes glistened against the azure sky. The porticoes were wrapped in gloom; while across the steps lay a broad band of light. And all the time came the lap, lap of the waves as they played against the white marble. Presently the boatman gave their lingering cry of warning and the gondola shot round a sharp corner. The side canal was the home of shadows. It looked dark and sad, save for a flickering gleam above, where a lamp burned before a wayside shrine of the Mother and Child. Then I said:
"Twas all a dream—the wrong, the strife. The scorn, the blow, the loss, the pain! 'Tis immortal gladness, love and life. Alone are lords by right and reign; The earth is tossed about, as though A young angel tossed a cowslip ball; But rough or level, high or low.

Ah! not so; not so, at least, in city slums.
Two cockney voices broke in upon my reverie. And at the sound the picture of faith vanished. Gone was the wayside shrine, and the church cupolas melted away. Instead of being in the streets of Venice, I found myself in a filthy room in a London slum. On the night of the night, a couple who spoke words of love. Their speech was unsavory and unwelcome, but there was no escape from the voices of the two. And when they rose and went their way I thought that

where I stood in the shadow I could see what passed outside. The street was blocked; it was a moving sea of heads. Here and there a policeman's lantern flashed in and out among the crowd, and presently a dark mass was lifted up and carried away.
There was no pall for covering, only a woman's rage. Neither were there any tears—just horror strained faces, as if a scene for a painter's hand; as striking as if it were lurid. It was a glimpse of life such as Aubrey de Vere must have seen in vision when he penned those lines that throb with deepest pity.
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the sound of their feet seemed to de-secrate the night.
In the sick room the woman slept quietly, while the first streak of dawn appeared in the sky. My vigil was nearing its end. At any moment now the woman's husband would return. I was glad to think that a fresh day had begun, because many things had been brought home to me that night. Amid such surroundings, sin appeared less evil, and it seemed to me little wonder that crime was rife in the quarter.
And, thinking thus, my heart went out in pity to those vast numbers of toilers whose lives are cast in such arid places; to the denizens of mean streets; and to the dwellers in squalid tenements, where the decaying become a mockery.
But even as I pondered those things, there was a loud crash in the basement below. Then I heard a woman scream. This was followed by a volley of curses from a man. Furniture was being hurled across the room. I could hear it strike against the wall to the accompaniment of shuffling feet. There were cries of protest—cries which were stopped up with blows. A low moaning ensued. And just as the domestic brawl was at its height, a key turned in the tenement door and the sick woman's husband came in.
"Listen," I said, while something went crashing against the basement wall. "What if he murders her?"
"Wot ev' 'e do," answered the man, "ain't the fact."
He pointed to those dark splashes on the wall of the tenement room.
"Rooms is cheap wether them marks is," he said. And taking his pipe from his pocket he rolled some tobacco in the palm of his hand.—M. F. Quinlan, in Catholic World.

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