



he cannot have forgotten that this is our wedding-day, and when he sees me, he is sure to know me."

If tender-hearted little Mother Soulard had only known as she struggled across the Champ de Mars, muttering prayers for Marie and her nephew Ovide, her strength must surely have failed her. She was

so weak and worn that she fairly staggered across the Notre Dame and down Bonsecours Street; but her strength revived and her heart grew light again, as she saw in the near distance the famed Bonsecours Church, bearing on its lofty roof the great statue of the Blessed Virgin, which, with arms outstretched toward the River St. Lawrence, welcomes to port those whose business it is to imperil their lives in deep waters.

Although the hour was late, several French-Canadian women were in the church, crouched at the feet of the marble statue of the Virgin, near the gorgeous altar. As the church door complainingly opened and disclosed the wet, weary figure of little Mother Soulard, the worshippers, with that lack of curiosity so characteristic of French-Canadian women when in church, did not look up, nor even appear to notice her as she crowded past them, and also knelt before the statue that had given such wonderful answers to prayer. Devoutly she kissed the Virgin's feet.

One by one, the seekers after health and happiness stole away, and presently the Little Mother was all alone. Soon the only sounds that broke the intense silence were her loudly whispered supplications and the clicking of her prayer-beads, which waked weird echoes in the great galleries and organ loft.

Now it was Ovide, and anon Marie; over and over again she poured out her heart for them. If the dear Mother would put it into the hearts of the men who had sent Ovide, her nephew, from her—whom she loved as a son—to give him his liberty! She was sure he had never forged the note; it was cruel of them to have him kept in such an unhappy, disgraceful place. Even if he had fallen, might they not have shown him mercy? Better than anyone else the Blessed Virgin knew, that everyone needed mercy more than justice! Thus she pleaded, and in the innocence of her own simple mind she condoned the evil the loved one had done.

As she continued to pray, her religious enthusiasm increased, until, at last, raising her bowed head, and looking up into the immobile face, carved in pitying lines, she cried despairfully: "Dear Mother, hear my prayers for them both! This was to have been their wedding-day, and Marie is suffering so. She cannot sleep or eat, and they say her sorrow may drive her mad, and that she will have to be taken to the house of the imbecile. Poor, poor Ovide, that would surely break his heart!"

Unable any longer to control her sorrow, she sprang to her feet, and clasping both her arms around the statue, pleaded in a voice which started a thousand answering echoes: "Mother of us all, hearken to me. I know of the miracles thou hast wrought for those who have denied themselves for thee, and made sacrifices and done penance. And I will make sacrifices and do penance if thou wilt but restore Ovide to me again and give health to Marie. I will go on a pilgrimage to the Twelve Stations of the Cross, and pray

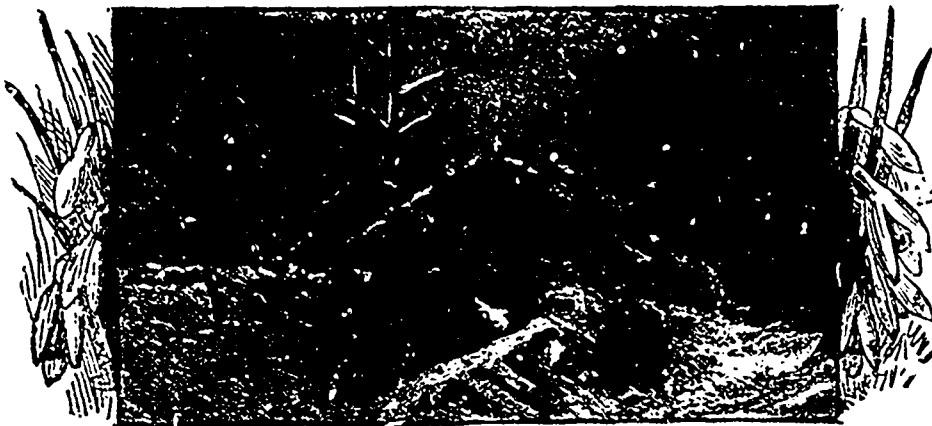
at each of them; I will pray every night for the souls in purgatory; I will go every day and collect for the Little Sisters of the Poor. I—I—*Mon Dieu*, I will do anything, anything, if thou wilt only answer my prayers."

Through utter exhaustion her arms slipped from the statue, at whose feet she sank, sobbing like a child.

Of a sudden her tears ceased, and her face lighted up with hope—the sermon that Father Benoit had preached about faith, the previous Sabbath, had flashed across her mind. He had declared that to those who had faith nothing was impossible; faith could cause even mountains to be removed—Christ himself had declared so. It was only through those who had great faith that the Virgin could perform mighty things.

Vividly she recalled how the priest had pointed to the crutches in the glass case near the altar, and had told them that those who had left them forever behind, had been possessed of faith that nothing could daunt, and so had brought the blessing down.

The "faith that could remove mountains!" How the words rang and rang in her ears! Soon her heart grew so light that she could have shouted for joy. "Of course," she murmured with beaming eyes, "if I do not believe she can do what I ask, how can she answer my prayers? How simple I have been, and how clear it all is to me now. I do believe and know that what I have asked will be granted, and that this very night Ovide will be restored to me, and Marie's



mind be made well again. Again and again, out of the fulness of her heart, she kissed the marble feet, and give thanks for the faith within her—the faith that could remove mountains!

Not for a moment did she stop to think what hard requests she had made.

Fatigue and weariness now no longer beset her, and in glad eagerness to see her dear nephew again, and Marie, Mother Soulard fairly ran out of the dimly-lighted church, brushing against the shadowy pews as she sped along the narrow aisles. So bound up was she in her newly-found faith, that she scarcely noticed, on reaching the street, how heavily the rain was falling and how fierce the storm had grown. So boisterous, indeed, was the wind on the bleak Champ de Mars that again and again she had to halt for breath.

"I can imagine I see them," she thought, as she struggled on, "sitting in the parlor with Delmia. How surprised Delmia must have been when Ovide walked in! and how Marie must have cried and kissed him! But the miracle will soon be known to all the neighbors, and will be told of in the churches, too. They shall be married in the church by Father Benoit, because it was through his sermon the miracle was brought about. Ah, what a blessed day this will always be to me!"

As she turned the corner of St. Dominique Street and saw her house, with the yellow glare of the street-lamp still upon it, she caught her old, dripping black dress in her hands, drew it in above her ankles, and began to run, painfully. "*Mon Dieu!* At last, at last!" she panted.

Delmia, who had fallen asleep in her chair, sprang hastily to her feet as the street door was burst open, and uttered a startled cry on seeing her sister standing in the doorway, looking with dazed expression around the parlor, the water pouring in great streams from her dress, which she still unconsciously held.

"Where are they? Where are they, Delmia?" she asked, stretching out her hand for support. The heavy fatigue she had borne seemed to come back to her all at once.

In her surprise and haste to reach the door, the bent and palsied Delmia let the crutch slip from her hand, and as she fell heavily after it, and lay struggling to regain her feet again, she looked like some distorted creature of fancy.

The sodden, pitiful figure in the door, seemed not to have seen her. "Ovide! Ovide!" she called brokenly, staring around the room.

At last Delmia reached her side. Very gently she drew her into the house and closed the door.

"Has Ovide not come, then?" she asked again, as she sank on the crazy rocking-chair.

"Is Ovide coming?" asked her sister, wonderingly.

The blood rushed back to the Little Mother's face, and she rose hastily. "How very foolish I am to-night," she said, trying to be brave. "I had forgotten that he may not have had time to get here yet; but he is coming, Delmia, surely coming. I have prayed to the Virgin, and the miracle is sure to be performed. I have the faith now, Delmia."

Her poor old face quivered with hope and fear. Across her bosom, she made the sign of the cross. "I did not mean to doubt," she said, penitently.

Suddenly catching her sister by the arm, she cried quickly, "He may be here, though, Delmia, at any moment, and we must tell her of his coming before he arrives, or the shock may make her worse. Ah! but I had forgotten. She must be quite well now, for I prayed for her, too! But we must go and see her; she has been asleep so long."

The Little Mother sped across the room in the direction of the bedroom, holding above her head the flaring lamp, Delmia hobbling after her.

As she eagerly entered Marie's room, and the light fell across the bed, she uttered a cry of deep dismay. The bed had not been disturbed. The horror on her face deepened as she saw a piece of wedding veil, which the window still securely held, noiselessly beating against the panes. Slowly she turned her stricken face to the side of the wall, where Marie's wedding clothes had hung, covered with a sheet; the finery had gone, and the sheet lay in a disordered heap on the floor. At length, endurance had come to an end; she had suffered so much, and the shock had been so very great. The hand that held the lamp began to shake as though it were palsied; she swayed weakly from side to side; then there was a crash, and they were in darkness. As she fell heavily across the bed, she uttered a cry of anguish that was pitiful to hear.

In the blackness Delmia feebly groped her way to her sister's side, and throwing her shrunken arms about her, tried to win her back to consciousness by childishly calling her endearing names.

While Delmia called to her sister in the darkness, the storm without continued to rage. It had shown no mercy to the hapless leaves, neither did it lessen any of its malignity now as it tore along the straight road leading to the penitentiary of St. Vincent de Paul, and overlook the sadly bedraggled figure clad in bridal robes. The heavy rain had wet her through and through, and she

(Concluded on page 27).