

The young Italian seemed to look upon the situation in the same light. He whispered a few words to his admirers, and, putting his arms a-kimbo, stationed himself midway on the pavement.

Tom, ineffably serene, continued to advance.

"Yoy come-a to fight?" called out the bully.

"No," answered Tom affably. "It's against my precepts to fight."

The word "precepts" had occurred in Tom's last catechism lesson. It was the nearest word to "principles" that suggested itself.

"I'll knock your 'ead off," continued the Italian, still keeping his arms a-kimbo.

Tom came on with steady pace until he was within a yard of the enemy.

Then, quick as a flash, out from the pocket came the hand clasping a bar of soap. At the same instant Tom threw his arms about the Italian, and with one sudden and vigorous swing had his head in the trough.

There was a gurgling, a coughing, a quick motion up and down of the hand that held the

soap, a few lusty kicks upon Tom's insensible shins, and presently the Italian's face came up, clean, dripping, terrified, awe-stricken. His face had never been thus treated within its owner's memory. The few kicks which he had distributed upon Tom's legs at first were the beginning and the end of his resistance. The washing had acted upon him as blinders upon a horse.

His following was standing at a safe distance.

"There now," panted Tom, "I've given your face a good washing. It needed it. It was *virtuous* to wash it. Next time you bother me I'll wash your neck too."

With which horrible threat on his lips Tom walked away unmolested. Tom was not bothered again.

He went away, taking himself quite seriously. Perhaps the angels were amused at Tom's solution—of that I am not certain; but I am convinced, at any rate, that his application of soap upon the young bully was imputed to him by the angels' chancery unto justice.

FRANCIS J. FINN, S.J.

THREE CHRISTMAS EVES.

Written for the Catholic Almanac of Ontario.

DEAR Old Quebec! Who that has ever seen the quaint old city can forget it? Who that has ever dwelt there but loves every crooked street, every rugged, break-neck pathway that serves to lead the unwary stranger in the opposite direction to that he set out for? Quebec, the picturesque, is never more beautiful than in winter when covered with her deep, thick mantle of snow. Piles upon piles of beautiful snow everywhere; on the streets, upon the houses, on the fences—where there are any; one might say over the fences, for they are frequently buried out of sight; on the river, up and down and away across to the other side, over the Citadel, down the sides of the rocks; and beyond, where the view is arrested by the mountains, nothing but snow, sparkling like diamonds under the winter sun. Nowhere is the cold so cheering and bracing; bright, clear, crisp, sunshiny cold. One loves to be out and feel the invigorating breath of a winter's morning, and hear the dry, powdery snow crunching under the feet.

On just such a morning as this Mary Dawson looked out of the window after breakfast, up and

down St. Louis street. The sun was tempting, the snow looked as though it would crunch beautifully, the cold was sharp and keen.

"This is Christmas Eve; I think I'll run up to see Katie Wilson, mother; she always goes to midnight Mass; they have it every year, you know, in the Catholic churches and convents. I have often thought I would like to go to the service at the Ursuline Convent. They say it's beautiful there; the nuns and girls sing behind the grate; it must be lovely. If you don't want me this morning, mother, I'll run up and ask Katie to take me to-night. May I?"

"I don't want you particularly this morning, my dear," replied Mrs. Dawson, "but I hardly know what to say about your going to this midnight service, you are such an enthusiastic girl. What if you should be fascinated by these Catholic doings?"

Mary laughed a merry, light-hearted laugh.

"Mother, mother dear, what are you thinking of? I fascinated, or even yielding to fascination in matters of religion! No, no! I should want solid proof, and where can I find that but in my own faith, the Church of England? Katie Wilson