

THE LAST SACRAMENTS.

I find this a very pleasant and enjoyable world—one that has used me kindly. Everything has gone smoothly. I have health and happiness and comforts; I freely relish all the innocent joys about me—reading, study, the arts, plays, society. Though many friends are dropping away, it seems to me that I am to be exempt. Yes, the end seems a long way off yet; not that I am so rash as to assure myself of such a thing, but there is that sort of instinct within. But these things scarcely touch me. There is influenza about, and I hear of those known to be "succumbing," as it is termed. I catch cold myself and stay in for precaution's sake, meaning to "shake it off." It is of a shivering sort; and a smiling doctor comes and says that I "have such a fine constitution we shall do very well;" of which I am more certain than he is, but still it is amoying.

So it goes. Some nights are sleepless and oppressive; the cough, too, does not mend, and I find breathing hard work; almost painful and annoying and tedious, but I am to recover, by and by, of course; that is assured. Suddenly some one comes in softly and even tenderly, and, with many hesitations and apologies, falters something about "would I not like to see Father So-and-So?"—just for my comfort, that's all. That's all! The notion makes me start, gives a sort of chill I have never experienced. Father So-and-So comes in the next moment, and, after a little general talk, glides off to the subject—the last Sacraments. What does this mean? It is such a shock—yes, shock to me. Can there be danger? "No; only precautionary," he says, in a very soothing, yet rather peremptory way, as though time were precious. But now for Confession, and he will be back in a couple of hours to give me the last Sacraments—"God above!" I gasp when he is gone, "this means dying, and naught else!"

Such, like enough, is the common sequence of things in this dread matter. On three-fourths of the world it comes somewhat after this fashion, and with a terrible shock.—Catholic Citizen.

TASSO'S DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

The great Italian poet, Tasso, was, like Dante, profoundly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, and sang her praises in some of the most beautiful verses ever written. It happened that he was once journeying from Mantua to Rome; and, although weary and without money, he having made a vow to our Lady of Loretto, turned out of his way to visit her shrine. He might have fared badly if it had not been for a friend—one of the princes of Gonzaga—who happened to be visiting Loretto at the same time, and who ministered to the poet's simple wants, and enabled him to fulfil all the duties of his pilgrimage. That done, and body and soul refreshed, Tasso wrote an immortal canticle in honor of Our Lady, and then proceeded on his way to Rome.

When the poet was about to die, he called young Rubens, son of the great painter, to his bedside.

"I once gave your father a silver statue of the Blessed Virgin," he said, with much difficulty.

"And I have it with me now," exclaimed Rubens.

A look of happiness came into the face of the dying man, and he held out his hand, into which the young man reverently placed the precious little statue.

"Take it back when I am dead," whispered Tasso. And then, clasping the sacred image tightly in the hands which were fast growing cold he prayer fervently until the end came. Young Rubens was profoundly affected by the scene, and while the body of his father's friend was being borne to its last resting place, he, instead of occupying an honorable position in the procession of mourners which followed it, was prostrate before an altar of the Blessed Virgin in a quiet corner of St. Peter's at Rome, holding the little silver statue and praying for the soul of Tasso.

He who pleased everybody was dead before he was born.

He who laughs at crooked men should need walk very straight.