

but he well knew that no effort of his could now avail in behalf of the Prisoner. However, this conviction seemed but to increase his sympathy; and early dawn saw him again afoot, one of the first to arrive at the hall of judgment. He was a witness to the cruel flagellation, the mockery of the crowning with thorns, and the subsequent sentence of Pilate; after which he returned to his anxious wife, who had not joined the band of faithful women, friends of Jesus, in their sorrowful quest; but who, as her husband knew, would be all the more solicitous therefor, knowing nothing of the events which had followed in quick succession since the beginning of the unjust trial.

Seraphia met him at the portal.

"What news, Sirach, my husband?"

"They have condemned Him to death," he answered, taking her hand and pressing it hard between both of his.

"To death! What death?" she asked, with a stifled sob.

"Crucifixion, the malefactor's death."

"And is He, then, entirely at their mercy? Where are the guards?"

"The guards! They are the most brutal of all the motley crew. Even now they are on the way to Calvary, where He, with two thieves, is to be crucified. They must pass this way. Thou art cold and trembling, Seraphia; thy lips are white. Retire to thy apartments, that thou mayst not hear the noise of the rabble in their march of death."

"I thank thee, Sirach, for thy tender thoughtfulness; but I can not do thy bidding. I do not fear the rabble; they know me for thy wife, and dare not touch me. Let me prepare a cooling drink; there may be a chance to moisten His lips as He passes by."

"But Seraphia—"

"Nay, forbid me not, my husband!" she pleaded, her sweet eyes wet with tears.

"As thou wilt, then, Seraphia. But it will wring thy heart to see Him now."

"O my Lord, my Lord!" she cried, "that Thine enemies should do this thing! For a brief space she gave way completely to emotion. Then, composing herself once more, she said: "Go thou, my Sirach, and hover on the skirts of the crowd. Thou mayst meet Mary, and be of assistance to her; or Jesus may catch a glimpse of thee, and be consoled that some, at least, among His friends have not deserted Him."

"Seraphia believest thou He is the Christ?"

"Assuredly. And thou? Thy faith has not wavered, my husband?"

"Never, Seraphia. But, being so, does He need our human sympathy?"

"If He be the Christ, then is He the most sensitive of men. Ah! rest assured thy sympathy will be sweet to Him."

"And thou—wilt thou remain here?"

"I shall not go far from my own threshold. Fear not for me."

"So be it, then." And he left her.

Seraphia clasped her hands, whereupon a young girl appeared. "Go, Miriam," she said, "bid Rachel prepare some spiced wine, and bring it hither quickly."

The girl obeyed, soon returning with a silver vase, or drinking cup, which she placed on the ledge of the fountain.

"Hark!" cried Seraphia, pausing in her restless walk. "Hearest thou not shouts in the distance?" Go to the outer portal and tell me what thou seest."

The girl hastened to do as she was bid, looking out eagerly.

"I can scarce see for the dust, most noble mistress," she replied, shading her eyes with her hand. "Ah, yes! there are soldiers mounted and a multitude on foot. I see spears glittering in the sunlight. They seem to be prodding or pushing some animal along. Now they are beneath the archway—soul of my father, it is a Man! He has a burden on His shoulders. He stumbles—He falls—now they are at a standstill. He can not rise. Now come three men from behind the ruined wall—three bearing green branches in their arms. It is Simon the gardener and his two sons. Simon lifts the burden. I see now that it is a cross—a weighty cross. The Man looks up—my God! It is Jesus whom they call the Christ."

Tall stately, pale as the water lily of sculptured stone on which rested her shapely hand, Seraphia stood erect.

"It is enough, Miriam," she said. "I will go forth. Fetch me my veil, it lies there on the bench."

"Nay, my dear mistress," pleaded the girl, "this is no sight for thee."

"No more! I must go forth."

Wrapping the soft handsome veil about her head and shoulders, and taking the vase in one hand, she lifted her clinging robe with the other, and passed without the gateway. For a moment she stood irresolute, as though undecided whether to meet the advancing procession or await its coming. Finally she walked slowly toward it.

Great clouds of dust flew in her face, almost blinding her. The clatter of spears mingled with the shouts and curses of the crowd. Nearer and nearer it came—it reached her: it parted, surrounding her, drawing her to its very centre; pushing her this way and that, as she passed, head erect, eyes downcast, holding the silver vase high above the heads of that furious crowd of demonic men.

A sudden halt—a human form stumbling forward on its knees. Oh, what a sight that was! half naked His one ragged garment, stained with the foul mire of the streets, soiled with

filthy spittle, torn in many places, all but dragged from His trembling limbs; blood on the erstwhile bronze brown hair, so like unto Mary's own; blood dripping from the thorn wounds on His forehead, down the hollow, pallid cheeks; blood streaming from gaping wounds in His soft, white shoulders; from His beautiful hands, bruised by the heavy, unwieldy cross; blood upon His perfect feet, unsandalled, torn and mangled by the sharp stones of the highway—blood everywhere—a holocaust of blood!

As Seraphia sank upon her knees that He may be known and ardently before Him, some one dashed the vase from her trembling hand but she lifted the veil that hung over her shoulders, saying, in a tearful and almost inaudible voice: "Permit me to wipe the face of my Lord!"

Jesus pushed back the dripping hair which partially hid her from His sight. His eyes met,—in her's supreme pity, reverence, adoration; in His, love, gratitude, everlasting remembrance. Taking the veil from her hand, He pressed it to His bleeding face, and gave it back to her without a word. She received it reverently, and arose to her feet. They thrast her aside, still erect and stately in the midst of that evil throng. Suddenly she perceived the impress of the Saviour's features on her veil, and her strength failed her; her head grew dizzy; and had it not been for her husband, who caught sight of her at that moment, she would have fallen to the ground. The strain had been too great for human nature, much less the most tender and faithful of womanly natures, to endure.

Miracle of miracles! Thou art as new today as on that Good Friday night two thousand years ago! O Holy Face, swollen, livid, stained with blood and spittle, and the vilest of all vile things that can be named! O silken hair, tangled, matted, torn by the roots, dropping blood on bruised shoulders! O gentle eyes, bedimmed and sightless from the cruel thorns piercing through and through the swollen forehead! O patient mouth, which opened not in remembrance or reproach before Thy executioners! O Sacred Face, still beautiful in Thy disfigurement, divine even in Thy desolation, Thou art our heritage and consolation to the end of time! O brave Seraphia, faithful friend and fearless woman, thy name has rung down the centuries, and still shall ring even to the consummation of ages! Thou art Veronica (true image) for evermore.—Ave Maria.

Contrasts.

BY FATHER RYAN.

There never was a valley without a faded flower.

There never was a heaven without some little cloud.

The face of day may flash with light in any morning hour.

But evening soon shall come with her shadow-woven shroud.

There never was a river without its mist of gray.

There never was a forest without its fallen leaf.

And joy may walk beside us down the windings of our way.

When lo! sounds of a footstep, and we meet the face of Grief.

There never was a seashore without its drifting wreck.

There never was an ocean without its moaning wave.

And the golden beams of glory the Summer sky that fleck.

Shine where dead stars are sleeping in their azure mantled grave.

There never was a streamlet, however crystal clear.

Without a shadow resting in the ripples of its life.

Hope's brightest rays are brooded with the sable fringe of fear—

As she lures—but abysses girt her path on either side.

The shadow of the mountain falls athwart the lowly plain.

And the shadow of the cloudlet hangs above the mountain head—

And the highest hearts and lowest wear the shadow of some pain.

And the smile is scarcely fitted ere the anguish-tear is shed.

For no eyes have there been ever without a weary tear.

And those lips cannot be human which have never heaved a sigh.

For without the dreary winter there has never been a year.

And the tempests hide their terrors in the calmest Summer sky.

The cradle means the coffin—and the coffin means the grave.

The mother's song scarce hides the *De Profundis* of the priest.

You may cull the fairest roses any May day ever gave.

But they wither while you wear them ere the ending of your feast.

So this dreary life is passing—and we move amid its maze.

And we grope along together, half in darkness, half in light.

And our hearts are often burdened by the mysteries of our ways.

Which are never all in shadow and never wholly bright.

And our dim eyes ask a beacon, and our weary feet a guide.

And our hearts of all life's mysteries seek the meaning and the key:

And a gleam o'er our pathway, on it hangs the Crucified.

And He answers all our yearning by the whisper: "Follow Me."

Cathedral Churches in Great Britain.

There are no fewer than 103 cathedrals in the United Kingdom. Of these 48 are Catholic cathedrals, 36 Church of England, 12 belong to the Church of Ireland, and seven to the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

"It is a Great Public Benefit."—These significant words were used in relation to Dr. THOMAS E. HOLMES, O.R., by a gentleman who had thoroughly tested its merits in his own case—having been cured by it of lameness of the knee, of three or four years' standing. It never fails to remove soreness as well as lameness, and is an incomparable pulmonary and corrective.

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WHO WAS THE STRANGER?

Ave Maria.

Forty years ago, when the city of Chicago was in its swaddling clothes, the good men of Holy Name parish, with its zealous pastor at their head, had formed themselves into a society for the relief of the needy, placing the organization under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul. There are representative men in every society, and this was no exception. To these men were assigned certain streets, or precincts; and their duty was to see that no one within their districts suffered for the necessities of life during the winter then upon them. In order to secure a relief fund, each member contributed of his stores, or in hard cash; so that in a short time a considerable quantity of family supplies was accumulated in the basement of the church, subject to levy when occasion required. With one of these officers of charity, Mr. Smith, a worthy hardware merchant, our story has to do.

It was dusk on an evening in the middle of December. A blizzard, such as visits lake cities only, was at its height; and the unlucky pedestrians hastening homeward in the teeth of the storm—there were no convenient cable cars then—were buffeted and blinded by the whirling sleet. Among these was Mr. Smith. With overcoat tightly buttoned, throat and lower part of the face well swathed in a scarf, and fur cap pulled low over the eyes, he was striding along, with bent head, when he was suddenly accosted by a stranger, who said:

"Good evening, Mr. Smith."

Startled at the address, coming as it did in the gathering darkness, and when, as he was even then thinking, his own house would not recognize him, he looked up, saying:

"Good evening, sir! But you have the advantage of me: I don't know you."

"No," replied the stranger, somewhat tall, gentlemanly looking person; "but I know you; and I want to tell you that there is a family in your district that are in want, and need immediate relief."

Mr. Smith thanked the stranger for the information; and, having made the necessary inquiries as to the whereabouts of the family, promised to see that the wants of its members would be promptly attended to. The two then said good-night, and went their respective ways.

Arriving home, Mr. Smith told his wife that he would defer supper until he had looked up a certain poor family a few streets away, of whose destitute condition he had been informed that evening.

It was with some difficulty that he found the house, and all was dark and silent within. By dint of knocking and calling, the inmates were at length aroused, and a masculine voice asked:

"Who is there, and what do you want?"

Mr. Smith replied: "A friend; I came to see what you want. Open the door, and I will explain."

It was a sorry picture on which the gentleman looked—a fireless stove, a few chairs, and a table on which stood some dishes innocent of food, and a general woe-begone air, emphasized by the keen cold within as well as without.

"I understand," said Mr. Smith, "that you are suffering, and I came to ask what I can do for you. What do you need?"

"Well," said the man, "we need everything. I have been in town two weeks, but could find no employment; and the trifling amount of money we had went for fuel and food. There was nothing but a crust for the children this morning, and my wife and myself have eaten nothing for many hours."

"That's too bad; but where is your wife?"

"Well, the fact is, we had all gone to bed in order to keep from freezing."

Mr. Smith, deeply moved at the tale, promised to return as soon as possible; and, hurrying home, he partook of a hasty supper, sketching the scene for his wife and sister as he dispatched his meal. Calling a neighbor who owned an express wagon, he accompanied him to the church basement, where the conveyance was loaded with supplies. Soon generous hearts and willing hands had transferred the contents to the room in the cheerless house. A bright fire drove away the biting cold, and the poor man's wife was enabled to prepare a meal for her hungry family. The appetizing ham, the meaty potatoes, the bread and butter, and the coffee, enticed the children from their bed; and it was a happy family that sat around the table, the pangs of hunger being now appeased.

"One thing I should like to know," said the head of the family, as he rose from the table. "How did you learn of our condition?"

The visitor then related the story of his encounter with the unknown gentleman.

"That is strange," said the other. "No one knew of our destitute circumstances."

Thereupon Mr. Smith, in describing the man, recalled that, while he was dressed comfortably, he wore no extra protection against the storm; that he seemed courteous, calm, and dignified, as one sure of himself in every way.

After theorizing for some time as to who their unknown benefactor could be, the poor father remarked that the affair was an evident answer to prayer; for about an hour before Mr. Smith's arrival, at his wife's suggestion, he and family had said the Rosary, praying earnestly for divine aid; and then, resigning themselves to God's will, retired. Shortly after came the wished-for relief.

Entering the employ of his friend in need, Mr. B. himself was soon in a

position to contribute to the St. Vincent's relief supplies, which had afforded him aid so opportune in his hour of darkest need.

For many a day thereafter Mr. Smith scanned the faces of the passers-by on the street, in the market-place, and in public assemblies, in the vain endeavor to see again the mysterious stranger of that winter evening. His pious wife and sister insist on believing that it was St. Vincent himself, who assumed the guise of the unknown gentleman in order to succor the poor, to whose service while in the flesh he had devoted his life.

ATTENDANCE AT MASS.

Health of the body and mind, the spiritual health of the soul, and a due regard for God's rights demand, says the *Sacred Heart Review*, that we should not work on Sunday, but that the day be given to prayer, meditation, family worship—but especially public worship—attending Mass. The primary duty of the Christian on Sunday is to worship God by sacrifice. Sacrifice? What is that? Few, very few, know. Yet we can offer God nothing to take its place. Neither prayer, nor fasting, nor alms, nor care of the poor—all very good and even necessary—can take the place of sacrifice. By sacrifice has God been always worshipped. Thus did Abel, Noah, Abraham worship. The very essence of the worship revealed, and arranged in all its details for the Jews by God Himself, was sacrifice. The essence of the New Dispensation revealed by Jesus Christ is sacrifice. "Christ hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God." This sacrifice, prefigured by all others—the shedding of the blood of Christ—is the real true sacrifice. The Mass is the same sacrifice, different in manner, in method, in appearance; the same in substance, in purpose in effect. Christ—God—first offered it. Christ, being God, gave the power to His priests to offer it. "Do this in commemoration of Me." Thus does Jesus Christ provide for that form of worship by which man from the beginning expressed his relation to God—his dependence, his gratitude; by which he obtained pardon and grace. "Do this in commemoration of Me." By these words did Christ institute the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." By these words we learn why the Mass is necessary for us—we are sinners, we need pardon, we need God's help, and we offer to God by the hands of His appointed ministers the blood of the Lamb. Thus do we appropriate to ourselves, do we make our own, the Blood shed on Calvary. That blood was shed once in a real manner; now it is shed in a mystical manner. On Calvary it was shed for all men, whether they avail themselves of it, make it their own, or not; in the Mass it is put within the reach of those who attend, applied to the individual soul. At the Mass the attendant may offer to God the body and blood of Christ—something worthy of God's acceptance—they offer it in recognition of God's supreme dominion over His creatures; they offer it in thanksgiving; through it they ask pardon and help. Thus does the Mass become a memorial—a real putting before our minds—of the sacrifice of Calvary. This is the sacrifice of Calvary renewed before our eyes. Holy Mass is therefore the highest form of worship. It is, as it were, the back-bone of religion. The Mass repeats and recalls all the wonders of His life. He comes in the Mass silently as on Christmas night; He renews His life of humility and poverty, of silence in Nazareth. He recalls His sufferings on the cross, His life of humility, patience and obedience. In the Mass, as during His earthly career, He is a servant to men and a sacrifice to God. The Mass recalls His self-sacrifice in many ways. The cross appears everywhere—on the altar, on the vestments of the priest. In the Mass our Divine Saviour is always mindful of our salvation, and adopts a thousand devices to bring to our minds His love, His sacrifice, His sufferings, His longing desire for our hearts. Here He is "always living to make intercession for us" and asking us to make some sacrifice for Him.

We know now what the Mass is. We know why we go to church on Sunday. We know what a sacred place the church is and how precious are the moments we spend therein. We know that we should attend Mass with sentiments of humble adoration, of generosity and love. We ought to prepare ourselves—our minds as well as our bodies—by leaving the world, its cares, anxieties and pleasures outside the church door. In the church our thoughts must be taken up altogether with our Divine Saviour. Besides offering Him the homage of our hearts, we have a thousand needs to place before Him—temporal and spiritual. From these brief moments spent once a week in the presence of our dear Lord and Saviour we will carry away the light and strength and courage that we shall need during the week.

One duty is obvious and certain. We should be mindful of His presence. Better stay away than insult Him by irreverence, by levity, by a manner more becoming the theater or public hall than the house of God. Let it not be said of us as it was of the Jews: "There had stood One in the midst of you whom ye knew not."

Is there anything more annoying than having your corn stepped upon? Is there anything more delightful than getting rid of it? Holloway's Corn Cure will do it. Try it and be convinced.

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FORGAVE THE CAPTIVE.

A Touching Incident Which Showed the Catholic Spirit of the King of Spain.

A very touching episode in connection with the beautiful custom of carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession to the sick occurred during the lifetime of the late King Alfonso XII, which is worth relating, says the *Rosary*. One evening, when that most kind-hearted and noblest of monarchs was returning from a ride with his aide-de-camps, he chanced to meet the Viaticum, which was being carried to a condemned prisoner, who was lying between life and death in the Carcel Madeiro. The King at once dismounted, and giving his horse to one of the grooms (as he had no carriage to offer), followed the procession on foot, with a burning candle in his hand, his aide-de-camps, of course, doing the same. Arrived at the prison gates, the procession was met by all the prison officials and prisoners, who, with candles, accompanied it into the sick man's cell.

One of the aide-de-camps who was present said afterwards that he had never seen so touching and beautiful a scene in his life. The bare, dark prison cell, lighted by the flickering tapers, held by the prisoners, in their rough prison dress and the crowd of outsiders, all with bent heads and reverent mien, the young King in his uniform, humbly kneeling on the flags beside the miserable bed where lay the poor prisoner, who recognized him, and gazed speechlessly at him as if trying to divine how he had come there, the impressive words of the priest, the evident contrition and fervor of the penitent, made a picture never to be forgotten.

The King himself, deeply moved, stood up as soon as the last sacraments were administered, and, taking the prisoner's hand, gave him a free unconditional pardon, saying:

"God has forgiven you: I cannot do less, and from this moment you are free. If it please the Almighty to spare your life you can leave this moment the doctor says you are fit to be removed." On hearing this, all the other prisoners cried out with one voice: "Viva el Rey!" The ready sympathy and generosity of these poor prisoners, who, whatever their crimes may have been, were, at least at that moment, free from envy or discontent, and were full of enthusiasm at the King's act of clemency in favor of their comrade, touched the King's generous heart to the quick. He took the hand of every one of them to show his appreciation of their conduct, and he said, afterwards, when speaking about it in the intimacy of his family, that it had cost him a great deal of effort not to pardon them all then and there, but, of course, that would have been impossible.

On his return to the palace, though it was very late in the evening, he sent for the Ministers and desired the necessary papers and formalities for the release of the prisoner to be drawn and sent at once to the prisoner.

Curious to say, the man recovered, though the doctor declared he had not a day to live at the time of his receiving his pardon. The shock of joy and surprise had evidently had the effect of curing him, through the goodness of God, who did not wish that the young monarch's act of mercy should be for naught.

The Pope and Sunday Rest.

The Pope in a letter to M. Keller, president of the Paris Sunday Rest Society, says: "The association tends to restore to God an honor due to Him by a cessation of labor which He Himself has strictly prescribed from the beginning of the old law. . . . Contempt for the Lord's holy days causes the greatest evils to men and nations." Sunday closing has for years been steadily on the increase in the best quarters of Paris.

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