

DOCTOR THORN.

BY REV. RICHARD W. ALEXANDER.
Written for the Catholic Standard and Times.

"Please don't!" Sweet and piercing rang the child's voice, but there was such a depth of indignation and horror in the tones that it made the lad pause and stare.

It was in the city of Philadelphia, and at the time when long trains of mules dragged the freight cars through the streets from the depot to the suburbs to meet the locomotive. A long train of these animals had emerged from the wide gateway in Ninth street pulling a train of cars. As the first car appeared, the last mule caught its foot in one of the long chains, and by its frantic struggles threw the whole string of animals into disorder.

Two or three bystanders were delayed at the blocked-up passage, and among them, like a lost white dove, stood a tiny little girl, apparently not much more than six years old.

The mule driver was a tall lad, strong and active. He seemed furious at the accident, and swearing volubly, lashed the mules with a thick whip all along the line, until he came to the poor creature with its foot caught. He dropped the whip and picked up a heavy stick with a nail in it, and with all his strength hurled it at the defenseless animal, which reared and plunged and trembled as the cruel nail tore a track down its flank. A trickling stream of blood began to flow. The older spectators uttered a low murmur of disgust and indignation, but the child, her small arms extended, rushed forward, crying, "How dare you!"

The fellow stared at her. He was not radically bad, but his temper had got the better of him on this as on many other occasions. The mule had extricated its foot, and stood trembling and bleeding. The child's hat had fallen and, quick as thought, she had pulled the dainty white cashmere shawl from her little shoulders, and with flashing eyes was standing almost under the mule's feet, trying to staunch the blood.

"Poor horse!" she panted. "Poor horse!" The driver, with a reddening of his sunburnt face, which was rather handsome and intelligent, picked up the child tenderly, with the blood stained shawl in her little hands, and put her down on the pavement.

Fresh from loving hands, dainty in her white embroidery, her rich brown curls falling on her shoulders, cheeks glowing with excitement, her eyes dilated, her little face a very picture of outraged sensibility, she was like a vision. She did not struggle as he lifted her, but drew back her baby figure like a little queen, and with scorn in every eye, and straight indignation in him in this phrase: "You are a bad boy! God never bless you! I'd you swear!"

Just then a breathless nursemaid rushed into the little crowd and with a cry, caught up the child in her arms, kissing her. "O, 'Queenie,' why did you run off? We were all frightened to death." And she bore her off talking all the way.

The mules went on; the cars began to move; the few spectators dispersed. But the driver picked up a little ring, a battered turquoise ring, from the street, looked around to see if anybody noticed him, then kissed it and put it in his pocket, murmuring to himself: "She'll never wear it again; it's smashed up like I or wear it again; 'Queenie,' and I'd blowed if she didn't look like a young queen, that baby!"

blue and an old pitcher erected and soiled with putty. A wooden floor with two narrow open shelves made a toilet table and towel rack. The remains of three cane-seat chairs with boards over the seats, stood about the room. On one of these was an open valise, out of which peeped embroidery and painting materials of rich quality. There was a grotesque mixture of refined taste and incongruous surroundings, a placing of things for effect which pitifully told that the occupant of the room knew what the elegance of life were and had once enjoyed them.

On this November day when all within was mellow and radiant, the sick girl lay back on her pillow, just where the brightness fell through the little draped window. One hand clasped a crucifix of peculiar design. Its color was yellow, and there were fourteen small, circular insertions of mother of pearl upon it, each marked with the letters "S. M." and a Roman number. The figure of Christ was of silver. It was a precious relic to its possessor, for it was made of olive wood from the garden of Gethsemane, and was enriched with the indulgences of the "Way of the Cross." It was intended for the consolation of the sick, as the good friend said who obtained this treasure for her, and was a relic of spiritual reality. Poor sufferer, it helped her so much to be patient. Just now she looked very peaceful, for the atmosphere of prayer was about her. A face still soft and round, a chin dimpled like a child's, a low, white forehead, blue-gray eyes and a sensitive mouth, ever changing, yet always sweet, such was the aspect of the girl who lay there quite still and all alone. She was accustomed to solitude; there were few who cared for her, because there were few who knew her. Yet that dying girl of seventeen had a mind and heart pure and beautiful and a great soul. A footstep on the stairs outside brought a gleam of brightness to her pale face, and she smiled a greeting to the visitor who entered after an emphatic knock. "I am so glad to see you, doctor," she said, as she held out her hand.

"Alone again. Always alone. This is outrageous!" And the physician, his clean-cut features darkened by a frown, drew one of the chairs to the side of the bed and carefully sat down. There was a breadth of forehead in the man's face that told of thought, a firmness in the square chin that told of will, and a kindness in the brown eyes that told of heart. His face relaxed into a smile at the evident pleasure of his patient in his presence.

"I don't feel lonely, doctor," said the cripple. "I've just finished my Stations." "Finished your what?" asked the doctor, with wide opened eyes. "My Stations. See this crucifix, and—"

"Oh-h-h!" said the physician, with a shrug of impatience. "You Roman Catholics have such a lot of praying arrangements that one must be always prepared for the unexpected. But, my child," he added seeing the pained look on the girl's face, "if all Catholics pray as you do, on their crosses and strings of beads, I'd take my chances for 'kingdom come' with them. But they don't, half of them, until they come to die, and then they do the whole business up in a hurry; that is, if they get the time. Pray ahead, Mary, and put me in the prayers, too; I haven't time to pray. You are better to-day. Keep on with the nourishment and don't take any medicine unless the pain returns. I'll give them a raking down-stairs for leaving you alone so much."

"Please don't, doctor; they are all so busy. They come up whenever they can. Don't say a word, doctor," pleaded the cripple. "It does me so much good to see you, doctor; you are so very kind to me. May God bless you," and her eyes moistened.

"Pshaw!" said the doctor, twisting his watch-chain between his fingers. "I don't see how you can lie here for months, in such a place, and never get lonely. You won't let me fix it up, either. Such a rickety-looking place as it is!"

"It's good enough, doctor. You know I won't be here long, and what is the use of wasting money? I'm comfortable and very happy. My religion makes up for everything."

The doctor looked around the little attic, then at the sweet, pale face, whistled softly, and said: "Well, as I said before, you're a queer set, and if I had time I would be a Roman Catholic myself. There is always something pulling me in that direction, whatever it is. Now, don't begin to preach," he added, as he saw the girl's face glow and her lips unclose eagerly. "I must be going; I stay here longer than anywhere else. But what are you looking at? He had seen her eyes following his fingers twisting his watch-chain. "Ah! you are looking at this battered little baby ring," he continued. "Well the next time I come I'll tell you all about it, for it has a history."

III. Mary Thurston was an orphan; a girl finely educated and bred, but reduced to poverty by one of those reverses that are of such common occurrence in the world. She had influential friends in England, her mother had told her, but of them she knew nothing. Only a year ago Doctor Thorn had been called to her widowed mother's bedside, and had seen her die, with a heart breaking look fixed on this lonely girl. A kind hearted man (although people who did not know him said his name suited him), he pitied the desolate child, and did not lose sight of her, for his practiced eye saw signs of the paralysis that threatened her. When it came he did his best for her, but he knew she would soon follow her mother.

Doctor Thorn's interest in his patient never relaxed, and now every day he ran in for a moment or two to brighten the little attic with pleasant words that few others suspected he could use; wondering why she never complained, why she never frowned, never expressed any longing to live, never seemed to be lonely, although, after the kind, poor people down stairs had attended to her simple wants, she was left alone hour after hour. The kind hearted doctor did not know that a Divine Visitation sometimes came to that little home in the early morning and left his peace in that pure young heart and made it happy. Though not a Catholic, Dr. Thorn had little respect for any other creed. He thought religion was not a necessity for him, because "he had not time," but as he told Mary something was pulling him in that direction, whatever that something was.

This and much more did Mary tell the dear Sister of Mercy who often called to see her, and who cheered her solitude and helped her to pray. At every visit of the nun, when the usual prayers were over, Mary would whisper: "Now, the 'Salve Regina' for Doctor Thorn's conversion," and Sister Hilda would utter the beautiful prayer aloud and feel herself strangely moved to pray for this good man whom she had never seen, and whose kindness to a lonely sick girl was the only claim to her interest; and in the convent chapel Doctor Thorn's name was mentioned many a time in fervent petition.

About a month after the day we have mentioned Doctor Thorn had time to tell the story of the battered little ring to the lady, whose changing face and breathless interest betrayed her emotion. Of course, Doctor Thorn was the lad who drove the mules twenty-five years before at the Ninth street depot in the distant city. He it was who picked up the little turquoise ring that Queenie had dropped and bore it as a talisman through his life. The vision of that white-robed child and the amazed look of those shocked day eyes were in his dreams constantly and the clear, bell-like voice, with its quaint, childish reproach, rang with an undying echo in his memory.

He told Mary how he had given up his situation on that very evening; how he left the city; how he struggled against rebuffs and disappointments; how he was employed in a medical college, where his early education was renewed; how, at last, he began to study medicine, and after much patience and untold difficulties took his diploma and began to practice; how he steadily gained ground, made himself a name, and now he is above want and far up in his profession. "And if I am alone in the world," said he, "it is, first, because when I began I had not the means to support a wife, and secondly, because it seems to me that some other chapter in my life is to come first, whatever it is."

And then Dr. Thorn laughed, and pushed back the iron gray hair from his handsome brow and stood up to go. He had told the story in just ten minutes, and had told it in a way so people would have called blunt; but Mary knew his great heart and valued his confidence. She looked up to him with filial reverence and deep devotion, and loved him as she might have loved the father she had lost before she was old enough to understand. Doctor Thorn knew this and valued her appreciation more than he was conscious of. As he bent to shake hands with her, the little ring hung close to her eyes. She smiled.

"What became of little Queenie?" "I never saw her again, and never expect to. I left her hundreds of miles away from here. But what would make it easy for me to believe in images, relics and such Catholic things is the way I feel about that little ring. Good-by."

Mary lay quite still, thinking. Was it not strange that such a little thing should have made such a grand man as Doctor Thorn? She was somewhat disappointed, too. This was not the early life she had pictured for her hero. But then she reflected: "The end crowns the work." The real nobility of the man was there all the time, waiting to be called forth. She tried to picture how sweet and beautiful little Queenie must have looked in her impulsive rashness, as she rushed forward, pleading for the poor mule. Then she thought of Doctor Thorn as he described himself at the moment, and she began to pray that she might find Queenie, and together they would wrestle for this noble soul and bring it into the fold. And when, from utter weariness, she slept, when she opened her eyes two Sisters of Mercy were in the room, and from the light she knew it was about sundown. She seemed so well and talked so brightly that Sister Hilda said: "Why, Mary, you must have taken a new lease of life."

And then Mary told the nun the doctor's story. As she told what in the invalid's broken voice, a delicate flush crept into Sister Hilda's face, and its expression was one of far away thought. As Mary closed she looked up to hear the admiration she expected her dear Sister to express, but the latter was silent. When she did speak, it was in a hushed voice, as if she had been disturbed at prayer. "It is strange," said Sister Hilda, "how many ways God takes to bring souls to Him. Let us keep on

praying for that good doctor. And now it is getting late, dear, so good by till to-morrow." And before Mary had realized it, she had pressed her hand and noiselessly passed out of the door. Mary was disappointed, nay, astonished. Why had her dear Sister been so abrupt? She pondered over it, but could not solve the problem.

Night fell, and a wretched night it was for the poor sufferer. Her brightness during the afternoon was the flickering brightness of a lamp that is going out. At sunrise the next morning, when they came to minister to her wants, they found her so much worse that they thought she was dying. Quickly the priest was sent for, and her god friend, Doctor Thorn. When the latter arrived, he knew at once the end was near. Mary smiled feebly as he entered.

"It has come at last, doctor," she whispered. "Won't you stay with me till I die?" The doctor nodded his head. Somehow, this poor, lonely girl seemed very dear to him. He cared for very, very few, and he would miss her out of his own lonely life.

The priest knew her well. Her preparation for death had begun long ago. Holy Viaticum was received. Extreme Unction and the last absolution given. Doctor Thorn watched the whole proceedings. He saw the lines of pain in the white face settle into a peace which even physical agony could not efface. Then the priest said he would send the Sisters to her bedside. Mary's eyes told her gratitude. She was not able to speak. Doctor Thorn sat beside her, his finger on her pulse, his fine face grave and very pale. The silence was broken only by the labored breathing of the sufferer and the subdued movements of the few neighbors who were there to show charitable sympathy for the poor, dying girl.

Then the Sisters came. One glance was enough. Softly moving to the head of the bed, Sister Hilda detached poor Mary's cherished crucifix from its nail and laid it in the cold hand. Taking a blessed candle from the little table, she lighted it; then, sprinkling holy water on the pillow, she signed the cold forehead with the cross, and, kneeling, began to read the beautiful prayers for the dying. When the clear, sweet, bell-like voice rose softly on the hush of the death chamber, Doctor Thorn raised his head with a startled expression. The nun's face, framed in its close, black bonnet, was turned full towards him; every line of it absorbed in the solemn and holy duty of the moment. The gray eyes were never lifted.

The Sister prayed and Dr. Thorn listened. What was it in that voice and in those prayers? He had never felt like this before. God was surely there. There was a faith that held out its arms and drew him to its heart. He felt the touch of grace, and, bowing his head, he murmured "Credo!"

Suddenly there was silence. Mary's eyes opened. She tried to smile; then her lips moved. Dr. Thorn bent to catch the words, very low and broken: "Doctor—I would—be glad—to die—if you could try—to believe my faith—Sister and I—have prayed—so long. Won't you?"

"I'll try, Mary," was the husky answer. And in his heart he said, "A second time led by a child." A radiant look lit up the thin face, then a mute glance toward the

enclosed Sister, as if she transferred the trust to her; and then a little quiver passed through her frame. Again the voice of prayer began, in plaintive, hushed tones. A few more sighs, a long, long breath; another, then stillness.

"All this over," said the doctor, as he rose and abruptly left the room. "Eternal rest grant to her, O Lord." The old, sweet petitions for the dead fell on the awed stillness, and when the last Amen was said all arose to gaze at the marble face with its closed eyes. Each felt it was well with the child and none would dare to wish her back. Doctor Thorn assumed the responsibility of the funeral. When it was over he lingered a moment at the lonely grave, then bent his steps towards the city and wooded his way to the convent. He had thought much since that deathbed scene, and thought with him was the herald of prompt action. But first he must verify his almost positive certainty. He came in sight of the tall building. He knew it well for he had passed it frequently, although he had never entered its doors. Nor was his name unknown to the Sisters, for they had heard of his goodness and kindness from the poor they visited. He entered and sent up his card, asking to see the Sister who assisted at Mary Thurston's deathbed.

In a few moments a tall, queenly nun entered with quiet step. The sweet serenity and peace of the beautiful face touched him, and the subdued light of the gray eyes flashed conviction on him. He rose.

"I have called, Sister," he said, "with respectful dignity, to tell the friend of the poor child we buried to-day that I intend to keep the promise I made at her bedside in your presence. I do believe in her faith and yours, and I am resolved this very night to take steps towards professing it. But I beg you not to deem me impertinent if I ask a question that will throw light on a starting point in my life, which hitherto has been like a faith of its own. Did poor Mary ever speak of me to you?"

"She did, doctor," said the nun gently, and I have helped her to pray for you for a long time past, I thank God that a noble mind like yours will at last be safely anchored where alone it will find peace."

"But the question, Sister. It is this: I owe the development of all that is good in me to an incident that happened twenty-five years ago in a distant city, and of which poor Mary has surely told you."

Sister Hilda bowed her head, and her eye rested for a moment on the worn little turquoise ring that hung at the doctor's watch-chain. The doctor followed her look, smiled slightly and then resumed gravely: "It seemed to me when I saw you, Sister, at the dear child's deathbed, and heard your voice, I knew you. Those twenty-five years rolled back, and that incident was present and living, and you were the angel of the scene. Am I wrong?"

The nun smiled. "Twenty-five years ago, doctor, I was a willful little child, much too small to do good to any one."

Educational.

New Term

from Jan. 2nd. Enter any day for long or short course. New Catalogue ready. Write for it if you have any idea of a college course. Address W. H. SHAW, Principal, Central Business College, Toronto.

St. Jerome's College, BERLIN, CANADA

Commercial course - latest business college features. High School course - preparation for matriculation and professional studies. College or Arts course - preparation for degrees and seminaries. Natural Science course - thoroughly equipped experimental laboratories. Critical English Literature receives special attention. First-class band and orchestra only \$15.00 per annum. Send for catalogue giving full particulars. REV. A. L. ZINGER, C. R. PRES.

HOLY NAME MEN SAVE MEMBER'S LIFE.

THIRTY GIVE STRIPS OF THEIR SKIN FOR GRAFTING OPERATION, WHICH WAS SUCCESSFUL. Monitor, Newark, N. J. Frank Waters, a member of the Holy Name Society of St. Lucy's Church, Jersey City, had a joyful Christmas which was shared by thirty fellow-members who had allowed physicians to cut healthy skin from their arms to heal the frightful burns on the young man's body.

The display of fraternal devotion is a topic of conversation on all sides, and not a more pleased person concerned in the affair can be seen than Father H. J. Watterson, director of the society. Waters was burned last 4th of July by a premature explosion of fireworks. Up to a few weeks ago there appeared little hope for the young man. Then there was a decided improvement in his condition and the physicians told the Rev. H. J. Watterson, first assistant pastor of St. Lucy's Church, that they would probably be able to make him whole by the skin grafting process. Such a vast amount of healthy tissue was required, however, to cover the burned area that they hesitated to undertake the contract of getting a sufficient supply.

At the next meeting of the Holy Name Society Father Watterson told about four hundred and fifty men who were present about the condition of their fellow-member and asked how many would be willing to part with some skin to help Waters to recovery. To the delight of the priest, every person in the room volunteered to bare his arm to the surgeon's knife and permit them to help themselves to all the cuticle they wanted.

Send \$1.00 receive 5 wool remnants suitable for Boys' Knee Pants up to 11 Years. Give size and we will cut out pants free. Add 25c. for postage. N. Southwick & Co., 4 Coote Block, London, Canada.

Advertisement for Curzon Bros. suits. Text: "EVERY LINER CARRIES 'CURZON' SUITS". Includes an illustration of a man in a suit and a ship. Text: "Industry and thrift go hand-in-hand, and the man who wants to prosper must practise both. There's neither sense nor reason in paying twice over for anything. Money saved is money earned, and if you save 50 cents in the dollar you are doubling your spending capacity or increasing your bank balance. There's not a Liner crossing the Atlantic to-day which does not carry our Suits. Our system is perfection itself, and thousands of those residing overseas are availing themselves of the opportunity afforded by us to secure their clothing from the old country. Our Catalogue-Booklet describing our business is worth getting, and the perusal of same will at once convince that we are a 'live,' 'up-to-date' firm with brains and straight business principles. Our method of Mail Order Tailoring is simple, and you can rely on obtaining the latest styles, either Home Fashions or American cut, correct and unequalled finish, at prices miles in front of any demanded in Canada for much inferior goods. The process is simple. Merely fill in a postcard and address same to our Distributing Agents for Canada—The Night Directories Ltd.—asking for our selection of materials. By return you will receive our latest assortment of patterns, together with latest London and New York fashion plates, instructions for accurate self-measurement, tape measure, All free and Carriage Paid. To measure yourself is so simple that we guarantee—an official form of guarantee is enclosed with each Booklet—to refund your money in full if the goods do not fit and are not to your thorough satisfaction. We dispatch your order within 7 days from receipt, and if you don't approve return the goods, and we will refund your money." OUR GUARANTEE: Clothing at half Usual Cost. CURZON BROS. The World's Measure Tailors. (Dept. 58 B), 60 E2 CITY ROAD, FINSBURY, LONDON, ENGLAND. Address for Patterns: CURZON BROS., c/o Night Directories Ltd. (Dept. 58 B), 74-76 Church Street, TORONTO, ONTARIO. Please mention this paper.