

A WAYSIDE SHRINE.

People making the "overland journey," as it was called in years gone by, to California are impressed by the desolation of the wayside stations along the great railroads after one goes beyond civilization, into the alkali region of what was once known as "The Great American Desert."

Some things in the next few days were very weird and dim in the maiden's mind. She could remember several men putting her mamma in a box, and a walk out on the burning sand,—a hole and mamma put down into it.

The next few days were very vague and misty in her mind. She remembered snatches of conversation between the agent and the train-men, from which she had gleaned that she had a father somewhere, but no one knew where.

She remembered her papa, a kind-faced man with black whiskers, who used to cuddle her in his arms, and she wanted him, oh so much, now! She knew the station agent had telegraphed all along the line, telling of the wail left at Singleton station, and asking about her father; but he could learn nothing.

Then, as the long, hot days dragged themselves across the desert, the idea somehow filtered into her little brain that if she could only do something to propitiate the Blessed Virgin, she would be able to find her papa.

But what could a little girl out on the plains find to do that would please the Lady in Heaven? Carefully she ran over her small accomplishments and opportunities for "extraordinary works of devotion," but none of them offered such an opening as she thought would be satisfactory.

Miriam's heart was very sad when, like a rift in the cloud, came an inspiration! She would build a shrine to the Good Mother of Jesus!

look in her eyes was pathetic to see, even in one who has grown wrinkled and gray under the world's rough hand.

As she sat there, her mind busy with the reasons for this shrine in a slough from which the water had dried centuries ago, she became lost in childish meditation.

The general manager was not a Christian, yet there was something so wistful and earnest in the face of the ragged girl before him that his face became unusually grave as he asked:

"Who are you, daughter? Maybe I can help you find your papa."

"Oh! did the Blessed Virgin send you?" Miriam exclaimed, jumping up, and a smile spreading over her face.

"Not so fast, little one," the official replied, a trifle sadly. "But, who knows? Perhaps she did. Tell me who you are and why you have dug this queer little hole in the ground."

Rapidly Miriam told her pitiful story. There was no doubt in her mind now, notwithstanding his disclaimer, that this man had been sent by the Virgin to help her. And at the end of her recital the man cleared his throat as he asked very gently:

"What is your name, little one?" "Miriam!" "Miriam! How long have you been here, child?"

"Oh! a long time. Most a year, I guess," the girl answered wearily. "And what was your papa's name?"

"I know that 'cause it's in my prayer-book," and lifting a corner of the brown wrapping paper from her altar, she drew forth a child's prayer-book.

"There, you can read it," she said, turning to the front fly-leaf and handing the book to the manager. He took it from her hands and read:

"William Kennedy." "Um-m," was all he uttered for a moment. Then, stretching out his hand to the girl, he gravely said:

"Come, little one. Let us go up to the station. Perhaps I can find your papa for you."

There had been a wreck of a freight train a few miles east, and the express was being held at Singleton until it could be cleared away.

"Quite a play-house, my little woman!" said the official, for he was a genial man, with a love for children, whatever strikers and disgruntled employees might think of him.

"Tain't a play-house," replied Miriam promptly. "Oh! I beg your pardon. What is it then, if I may ask?" the manager persisted, with a smile which won the confidence of the little priestess.

"It's a shrine 't' th' Bless'd Virgin. I built it myself 'cause I want her to find my papa."

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"Come, little one. Let us go up to the station. Perhaps I can find your papa for you."

"Perhaps she did, without my knowing it," the general manager replied thoughtfully. "The wreck is cleared away," was the operator's greeting, as the official appeared at the station, leading Miriam by the hand.

"Where's the engineer?" "Here, sir," replied that person, who had left his engine in charge of the fireman and was talking to the conductor.

express reached Tucson on time. At the terminus of that division they found William Kennedy. He was Miriam's papa. And to this day, the little girl, now grown to be a woman, firmly believes the general manager was sent by the Blessed Virgin in answer to her prayers.—Charles C. Hahn, in the Catholic World.

FALSE TESTIMONY.

Among the obvious marks which distinguish the Church from all other institutions in the world, says the Month, none is more notable than the part played by false testimony in the process eternally in progress against her, and the extraordinary manner in which, when she has to be attacked, the most elementary rules of fair play, and even of common sense, are cast to the winds.

In a well-known passage, which we shall make no apology for quoting once more, Cardinal Newman finds in this very feature of her history that which most plainly identifies Catholicism as we see it to-day with the primitive Church.

Having carefully examined the history of the first centuries, he thus continues (Essay on Development, c. iv. 1.): "On the whole I conclude as follows: If there is a form of Christianity now in the world which is accused of gross superstition, of borrowing its rites and customs from the heathen, and of ascribing to forms and ceremonies an occult virtue—a religion which is considered to burden and enslave the mind by its requisitions, to address itself to the weak-minded and ignorant, to be supported by sophistry and imposture, and to contradict reason and exalt mere irrational faith—"

"a religion the doctrines of which, be they good or bad, are to the generality of men unknown, which is considered to bear on its very surface signs of folly and falsehood so distinct that a glance suffices to judge of it, and careful examination is preposterous; which is felt to be so simply bad, that it may be calumniated at hazard and at pleasure, it being nothing but absurdity to stand upon the accurate distribution of its guilt among its particular acts, or painfully to determine how far this or that story is literally true, what must be allowed in candor, or what is improbable, or what cuts two ways, or what may be plausibly defended; a religion such that men look at a convert to it with a feeling which no other sect raises except Judaism, Socialism, or Mormonism, with curiosity, fear, disgust, as the case may be;"

"a religion which men hate as proselytizing, antisocial, revolutionary, as dividing families, separating chief friends, corrupting the maxims of government, making a mock at law, dissolving the empire, the enemy of human nature, and a conspirator against its rights and privileges; a religion which they consider the champion and instrument of darkness, and a pollution calling upon the land the anger of heaven; a religion which they associate with intrigue and conspiracy, which they speak about in whispers, which they detect by anticipation in whatever goes wrong, and to which they impute whatever is unaccountable; a religion the very name of which they cast out as evil, and use simply as a bad epithet, and which from the impulse of self-preservation they would persecute if they could—if there be such a religion now in the world, it is not unlike Christianity as that same world viewed it, when first it came forth from its Divine Author."

How exactly this description portrays the course adopted by a certain section of our aptagonists, the weekly performances of what distinctively styles itself the religious press abundantly testify. Nothing is too gross and ridiculous for it to assert about us, nor seemingly for its readers to swallow, and no refutation of a slander, however complete, in the least interferes with its reiteration.

CONVICTS AND THE COMMANDMENTS.

Of more than 2,000 prisoners received in the Ohio State Prison last year not one could repeat the Ten Commandments, though many professed to be sons of church members.

Marriage based on honest affection will withstand the ravages of time.

Subscribe to the "True Witness"

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

SOME P'S AND Q'S.

Pray, little lads and lasses gay, One lesson do not lose; As through the world you wend your way, Oh, mind your P's and Q's!

For while P stands for pears' and plums, For peace, politeness, praise, For pleasantness and plays, For patience and for promptitude, For peace, politeness, praise.

Yet, lackaday! it leads in pert, In pinches, pests and pain, In perverse and petulant and pry, And also in profane.

Q stands for Quaker quietness, For quinces, quality, For quickness and for queenliness, For quaint and quittance free.

But then it heralds quake and quail, And querulous—indeed, And quibbles, quarrels, quips and quirks, And quacks it serves at need.

Then watch them, little maids and men, For folks will soon excuse Full many a fault and foible when You mind your P's and Q's.

—Elizabeth Carpenter.

AT THE LAST.—Although John Frederick never went to Mass himself, he did not interfere with "Little John," as his son was called in the village. The mother of the boy had been a good Christian, and there was a time when John himself had been a faithful attendant at Mass and the sacraments. Still Little John never remembered the time when his father had put his foot inside the door of the church.

Drinks and dissipation had sodden his faculties; he had grown so stupid of late that he seldom worked. All they had to depend on was the product of the vegetable garden, which Little Johnnie took care of between running errands and doing chores for the neighbors.

One morning the boy said to his father: "Father, the priest said yesterday evening at Vespers that he would like some more boys to serve. May I learn?"

"Learn!" answered his father, "there isn't much to learn; you just have to wait on him at the altar." "But I don't know any Latin." "He would teach you enough to answer the prayers."

"And I haven't any good clothes." "That's so," said John, eying his son's ragged garments. "I'll have to put in a week on the railroad when I feel better; you do need a new suit, Johnnie."

The boy's eyes brightened, not so much at the prospect of a new suit, as at the idea of his father going to work again. Once actively employed, he hoped some ambition would return to him. As things were now, he earned only scanty dimes occasionally, and all these were left in the saloon.

"And I would have to borrow a surplice and cassock until I could earn the price of them," said Johnnie. "I'll get them for you all right, son," responded his father. "You are a good boy, and if you find pleasure in going to church and being pious, I shall not object, and your mother would have liked it. I'll go down to the tracks to-morrow morning, son, and try to get work."

Little John was delighted. All that day he went about singing and smiling. His father was not in the house when the day's work was finished, so Johnnie ate a piece of dry bread and took a drink of water before going around to Father Moeller's to ask him if he would allow him to serve Mass. The priest was at supper. His housekeeper, with whom the boy was a favorite, made him sit down and have some cold ham and sliced peaches.

sock and surplice." And I'll be glad to have the clothes, but not just now. I think—I think—Father, it would be a good thing if my father thought he would have to get me clothes. It would put him in the way of working, and maybe make him all right again."

"Maybe so, Little John," answered Father Moeller, doubtfully. He feared that all the money John earned would be spent in drink, but did not like to discourage the boy.

"Your father has had a good thought and means well," he said. "God will reward the poor man for his intention, no matter how it turns out; and the clothes are there for you, whenever you want them. I won't give them to anybody else. Come in again to-morrow evening, and I will teach you to pronounce the Latin, and then give you a little book on the manner of serving Mass."

Just then old Anthony, the sexton, tapped on the door. He was an odd, eccentric individual from Father Moeller's town in Germany, and both had brought many of the church customs of their native land into the little country village where they now lived. For instance, Father Moeller seldom attended a sick call, to administer the Viaticum unaccompanied by Anthony, ringing a little bell, to let the villagers know, as he said, that our Lord was passing by. And at the summons everybody would pause in their work, make the sign of the cross, and breathe a prayer for the soul in extremis.

Johnnie's father obtained work on the railroad, which was being extended for some miles into the country, where it was to meet a branch line. All that week he toiled faithfully, and on Saturday night was coming home with his money in his pocket. Manfully he passed the saloon near the depot, as well as that nearest to his home. Drawing a long breath of thankfulness, he was about to open the gate which led to his dwelling-house. Johnnie, standing on the door-step, hastened to meet him. Suddenly, as the man's hand was on the gate-latch, a horse, maddened with fright, plunged around the corner, and dashing against him, threw him down and trampled upon him, then went on in its mad career.

Johnnie rushed out to him. His father was dreadfully injured, but he could speak. "The priest, Johnnie," he said; "go, go!"

The boy did not tarry. He flew to the rectory. Father Moeller responded at once. Leading the way with Anthony, who carried his little bell in one hand, while in the other he bore a lantern containing a blessed candle, poor, ragged, trembling Little Johnnie conducted them to his father's side. There, in the open gateway of his own home, the last sacraments were administered to his father.

When the rites were over, the dying man murmured, "What will become of my boy?" "I will take care of him," answered the priest. "I have long been watching him." "Thank you, Father," he whispered. "In my pocket—Johnnie—the ten dollars for your suit. It was hard to pass the saloons, but I did it, Little John—"

That was all. A long-drawn breath, a tight clasp of the hand on that of his boy, and the poor man had gone to meet his God. And who shall say that the six days of toil he had passed, the conquering of one of the most violent temptations ever suffered by mortal man, had not redeemed much in his life of sin? We shall not be the ones to doubt it.—Mary E. Mannix, in the Young Catholic Messenger.

You will find that the mere resolve not to be useless, and the honest desire to help other people, will, in the quickest and most delicate ways, also improve yourself.

The Blessed Sacrament is not one thing out of many; but it is all things, and all in one and all better than they are in themselves, and all ours and for us—and it is Jesus.

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