

DICKENS AND THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

(Charles Dickens, unable to escape the anti-Catholic atmosphere of the first half of the nineteenth century, often spoke and wrote things that were calumnious of the old faith of England. The centenary of his birth has been celebrated this year, and Catholics will think more kindly of the great English writer as they read the following tribute from his pen to the Little Sisters of the Poor. It was published in his paper, Household Words, on February 14, 1852.)

Almsgiving takes the place of our workhouse system in the economy of a large part of Europe. The giving of alms to the helpless is, moreover, in Catholic countries, a religious office. The voluntary surrender of gifts, each according to his ability as a means of grace, is more prominently insisted on than among Protestants, consequently systematic taxation for the poor is not resorted to. Nor is there so great a necessity for it as in this country, for few nations have so many paupers to provide for as we English, who are accustomed to regard them as a natural element in our society. And thus it happens that when, about ten years ago, there was in France no asylum but the hospital for the aged and ailing poor, the want of institutions for the infirm but healthy was not so severe as to attract the public eye.

But there was at that time a poor servant woman, a native of the village of La Croix, in Brittany—Jeanne Jugan was her name—who was moved by her gentleness of heart, and the fervor of her religion, to pity a certain infirm and destitute neighbor, to take her to her side as a companion, and to devote herself to her support. Other infirm people earned by their helplessness a claim upon her attention. She went about begging when she could not work, that she might preserve life as long as Nature would grant it to her infirm charges.

Her example spread a desire for the performance of similar good offices. Two pious women, her neighbors, united with Jeanne in her pious office. These women cherished, as they were able, aged and infirm paupers, nursed them in a little house and begged for them in the vicinity. The three women, who had so devoted themselves, attracted notice, and were presently received into the Order of Sisters of Charity, in which they took for themselves the name of Little Sisters of the Poor (Petites Soeurs des Pauvres).

The first house of the Little Sisters of the Poor was opened at Saint-Servan in Brittany. A healthy fervor scattered seed around. We saw that forcibly illustrated in the progress from an origin equally humble of the Rauhé Hans near Hamburg; we see it now again in the efforts of the Little Sisters which flourished and fruited with prompt usefulness. On the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Saint-Servan, ten similar houses had been founded in ten different French towns.

The Petites Soeurs live with their charges in the most frugal way upon the scraps and waste meat which they can collect from the surrounding houses. The voluntary contributions by which they support their institutions are truly the crumbs falling from the rich man's table. The nurse fares no better than the objects of her care. She lives upon equal terms with Lazarus, and acts towards him in the spirit of a younger sister.

The establishment at Dinan, over which Jeanne Jugan herself presided being under repair, and not quite fit for the reception of visitors, we will go over to the Sisters' house at Paris, which is conducted on exactly the same plan.

We are ushered into a small parlor scantily furnished, with some Scripture prints on the walls. The Sister enters to us with a bright look of cheerfulness, such as faces wear when hearts beneath them feel that they are beating to some purpose in the world. She accedes gladly to our desire and at once leads us into another room of larger size in which twenty or thirty old women are at this moment finishing their dinner. It being Friday rice stands on the table in place of meat. The Sister moves and speaks with the gentleness of a mother among creatures who are in, or near the state of second childhood. You see an old dame fumbling eagerly over her snuff-box lid. The poor creatures are not denied luxuries, for whatever they can earn by their spinning is their own money, and they buy with it any indulgence they please, among which nothing is so highly prized or eagerly coveted as a pinch of snuff.

In the dormitories on the first floor some lie bedridden. Gentler still, if possible, is now the Sister's voice. The rooms throughout the house are airy, with large windows, and those inhabited by the Sisters are distinguished from the rest by no mark of indulgence or superiority.

We descend now into the old men's department, and enter a warm room with a stove in the center. One old fellow has his feet upon a little foot-warmer, and his thin pipes out that he is very comfortable now, for he is always warm. The child of age and the child of the cold pavement remain together in his memory; but he is very comfortable now—very comfortable now. Another decrepit man with white hair and bowed back—who may have been proud in his youth of a rich voice for love songs—talks of music to the Sister, and on being asked to sing blazes out with joyous gestures and strikes up a song

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THE "WEEDING OUT" OF CATHOLICS FROM PUBLIC OFFICE

Editor CATHOLIC RECORD: Dear Sir,—The CATHOLIC RECORD is an influential and independent newspaper, and always ready and fearless in upholding Catholic rights. I therefore want to point out a few undisputed facts for your readers to ponder over. Never at any time have the Catholics of Halifax had anything like fair representation in the principal government offices. For some years past, some influences have been successful in depriving them of the few positions they held. For example, some twenty years ago, the position of agent of the Department of Marine and Fisheries was filled by a Catholic, the only position of the kind held in Nova Scotia by a Catholic. Upon his resignation, the post was promptly filled by the government of the day by the appointment of a man who had no particular qualifications for it except possibly that he was not a Catholic. That was the beginning.

A couple of years ago, the harbor-master of Halifax—a Catholic—died, and his place was soon filled by a Protestant. Within the past year, Mr. Keating, the chief clerk in the Austin house, a Catholic, died and his place was soon filled by a Protestant. Within a year, Captain O'Neill of the government steamer "Argus," a Catholic, died, and a Protestant was appointed to fill his place. Less than a month ago, Captain Doyle, in charge of the port physicians tug, a Catholic, was dismissed, and a Protestant appointed in his place about a year ago. Dr. J. J. Doyle, assistant port physician, a Catholic, died, and a Protestant got his place.

These are a few notorious cases. If the same piece is kept up for another year or two there will not be a "Roman" left in the public service. The Catholic public official will be extinct. Perhaps some other reader of your paper can tell why it should be so. CITIZEN

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teen. They divide the duties of the home among themselves—two serve in the kitchen, two in the laundry, one bogs, one devotes herself to constant personal attention to the wants of the old men, and so on with the others, each having her special department. The whole sentiment of the household is that of a very large and amiable family. To feel that they console the last days of the infirm and aged poor is all the Little Sisters get for their hard work.—Truth.

BEWARE OF THE "DOPE" DOCTOR

The Catholic Sentinel of Portland, Ore., says that a pastor of that city on the occasion of a recent sick call was in time to hear the penitent's confession only because the attending physician had forgotten the "dope" which he had intended to administer, and had to return to his office for it. The patient was in great pain, and the physician purposed rendering him unconscious until death should relieve his sufferings. He did not, however, tell his patient of his intention. "We fear," comments the True Voice, "that instances of 'dopping' by physicians are by no means infrequent. Catholics should insist that the physicians of the soul should be given a chance to do what he can for the spiritual welfare of the patient in the last hours. The man who is dying has nothing of more importance to attend to than his eternal welfare and he should not be deprived of the opportunity to make his peace with God. The 'dope' doctors should be rigidly excluded from every Catholic family. Under the pretense of easing the patient's last hours they are inflicting the worst cruelty possible."

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FAVORS RECEIVED

A reader wishes to return thanks for a favor received after prayers to the Sacred Heart, and Rosary.

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DIED

MCCARRON.—In Guelph, Ont., on Sept. 19, 1912, Mrs. McCarron, aged sixty-five years. May her soul rest in peace!

PURCELL.—In Guelph, Ont., January 4th, 1913, Michael Purcell, aged seventy-five years. May his soul rest in peace!

WEBSTER.—At her residence, 581 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, on Saturday morning, January 4, 1913, Georgina Ross McIntosh, beloved wife of Dr. T. Shaw Webster.

DONOVAN.—In this city, on January 8, 1913, Mrs. John Donovan, at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. Daniel Regan, 294 Central Avenue. May her soul rest in peace!

MARRIAGE

PARSONS-POCOCK.—At St. Peter's Cathedral, London, Ont., on Tuesday, January 7, 1913, by Right Rev. M. F. Fallon, Bishop of London, Frederick G. Parsons, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. L. Parsons, of Sarnia, to Miss Edna Anna, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pocock, London.

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