

One Midnight Mass.

I had been sitting for some time in the shelter of a dismantled fishing smack that was lying on the shore, its days of usefulness past, watching an old man who was trimming his boat and making ready for departure. I wondered how one so old could venture alone on the bay in such weather, for quite a gale was blowing. Out beyond the protected harbor the billows rolled and tossed in a most threatening manner. Something in the garb and movements of the old gentleman made me think that I had seen him before, and that he was not an ordinary fisherman, though he went about his work in quite a sailor-like fashion.

When his sail was ready for hoisting he gave a tug at the halyards and then, without turning, called me by name and said, "If you are not too tired you might give an old friend a pull on this rope." I recognized the voice, and in less time than it takes to mention it I was in the boat giving and receiving in return a warm hand-clasp, not from a fisherman in the usual sense of the word, but from Father Hoyle, who is known and revered from one end of the peninsula to the other.

"Why, father, what in the world brought you over here? I mistook you for a fisherman."

"Young man," he said, "the Prince of Apostles was a fisherman. So also am I; I fish for souls, and it is just for that purpose I am here. My old friend Father Gardner is sick; he is getting most too old for active duty anyway. He wrote me that if I had a foot under me to come and help him over the holidays. A young man lately from Rome, whom the bishop is breaking in, will take care of my people while I am away. A passing boat left a message here this morning that a priest was wanted at the old Mansell plantation across the bay. The Mansells were decent people. I said Mass in their house many a time twenty-five years ago. I hear it is sadly altered since. Father Gardner is sick, so I arrived just in time.

"All the men of the village are off with the fishing fleet or in the lumber camps; otherwise some of them would accompany me. Not that I have any fear, as I am a pretty fair sailor. It is some one to be in the boat with me that I would like. Maybe you would come along?"

He looked at me quizzically. I looked over the threatening waters. He saw my hesitation. "Never mind, my son; I was only joking. Sure I have made many longer trips than this by myself."

That decided me. "I am with you," I said. "How far is it?"

"Well, it is not quite to Cuba, so you can compose your face and not look so frightened."

I gave a tug at the halyards and said, "Hoist away; I am willing to follow Father Hoyle to Patagonia."

"I thought you wouldn't let me go alone. To tell you the truth, I was very lonesome, and if the case was not really urgent I would hardly venture to make the trip by myself. It is now ten o'clock. I hope to reach Mansell's place by sundown. As for this breeze, it is nothing to be afraid of; it will only rush us through that much quicker. I saw the time that I liked nothing better than a day in a boat, and the stiffer the breeze the better; but of late years—" Here he paused and looked wistfully over the bay; looking back, perhaps, to the time when, full of the ardor of youth and zeal for religion, he volunteered for the then wild Florida mission; and, truth to tell, parts of it are little better to-day. He roused himself with a "Well, well! it is childish I am getting. I fear the bishop will soon be retiring me; though God knows when we are retired in this country it is generally in a wooden box we go."

"Poor Soggarth! And there are many such among the blistering sands and malarious swamps of the South, and parching plains of the West, tolling along uncomplainingly in the cause of Christ for the souls of men."

After hoisting the sail, and examining closely to see that everything was in good condition and working properly, he left me in the boat while he went back to see Father Gardner. When he returned I inferred from his actions and studious avoidance of conversation, that he had fetched the Blessed Sacrament. As he was about to shove off, he paused and said: "Have you still courage enough for the trip, my son? It may be six o'clock to-morrow morning by the time we get back here again."

I hesitated as I compared my comfortable room at the hotel, and the lazy loiterings about the sleepy little town which I had contemplated, with a day and night spent in an open boat on the treacherous gulf. Father Hoyle looked at me questioningly. I noted his gray hair and spare figure. Surely, I thought, if one so old and seemingly frail can make such a journey I can also. Then, could I refuse the offer of escort to the Sacred Presence that I knew was concealed in the pyx, the string of whose case I saw peeping above Father Hoyle's collar? I answered, "I am with you, father." He smiled in a pleased way; then with a "Mind yourself!" gave the boat a vigorous push, leaping aboard at the same time. In another moment our boat was speeding across the white-capped waters of the bay on its errand of mercy.

The trip had more of excitement than comfort in it. Many times I trembled for our safety, and once, when the deck was almost perpendicular and the lee rail under water, I suggested, in a voice whose anxiety I could not conceal, the advisability of shortening sail. Father Hoyle shook his head and replied: "There's some one dying across the bay; we can get there none too soon. I pray God we may arrive in time."

It was exactly four o'clock when Father Hoyle dropped sail at the mouth of Rattlesnake Bayou, which, from its narrow and serpentine windings, well deserved its name. An hour's poling and rowing brought us to the Mansell place. An old colored man who all his life had been a faithful son of the church was dying. Father Hoyle immediately prepared him for the end. After administering the sacraments he repeated the prayers for the dying. The faithful old black passed away a few minutes later, clasping the crucifix in one hand, the other held tenderly between the palms of Father Hoyle.

When we again reached the mouth of the bayou it was so dark that we could see but a few rods ahead. The roar of the waters rushing up the bay and the wind through the pines, to me, at least, was frightful. That, with the darkness, completely unnerved me. I turned to Father Hoyle and said: "Father, you surely will not attempt to cross the bay to-night?"

He looked at the sky, which was overcast, then at me, and replied: "I must go. To-morrow will be Christmas, and people will come for miles along the coast to hear Mass and receive the sacraments. I also promised Father Gardner that I would surely be back in the morning to say Mass for him, as he is not able to leave his bed. God help us! I never thought I would see the time that a bit of wind like this would make me hesitate; and, while I am not really afraid, I can't deny feeling a strange quiver—old age, perhaps, running through me. A man going on seventy years hasn't the heart he had at thirty."

His large, beaming eyes, unclouded by age, had now a very thoughtful expression. "My son, I must make this trip alone, as there may be some danger, and I do not wish you to share it. You can go back to Mansell's for the night. In the morning make your way over to St. Andrew's. From there you will have no trouble in getting across, as there will be many leaving to spend Christmas in town. Help me to close reef the sail and I'll be off."

"I will not budge an inch, father; nor you either, if I can prevent. The idea of our risking our lives for that bunch of dogs over there!"

He was stooping over the tackle in the boat, and before I could say more he straightened like a flash. I thought he grew several inches taller, and his eyes shot a look at me I had never seen in them before—a look that a mother might have when her child was assailed.

"Young man, I am ashamed of you! I thought you were made of better stuff. I did not ask you to risk your life; and as for the people whom you designate as 'a bunch of dogs,' there is not a better or braver or more Christian set of people in the country to-day than is contained in that village across the bay. They are plain fisher-folk, to be sure, but I would not give them, with their honest hearts and simple ways, for the richest congregation of kid-glove Catholics in the country; and, if God spares me, I will bring our Blessed Lord to them in the morning."

He stooped again over the tackle. I was thoroughly abashed for my hasty words, as I well knew that he spoke truly, and knew also that had he so desired he could long ago have had his "kid-glove" congregation, and, perhaps, much higher honors; but he preferred to spend his life on the mission among the simple, honest people who looked upon him as a saint, and who asked his advice on all matters, whether spiritual or otherwise.

In a moment I was in the boat helping him with the sail. His rebuke had knocked all thought of fear out of my mind. I would face a much greater and more immediate danger to be reinstated in his good opinion.

After fastening a small jib-sail he reached his hand to me and said: "Jump out." Instead I threw off the fastening and poled the boat from the shore.

"No, no, young man!" he said. "You must not venture. You will be of little help except for company. I will not have you take the risk."

"Well, father, I am going for company's sake, if you will forgive me for my hasty words."

"You were forgiven before you asked; but I would rather you'd not go. If it blows no harder than now there is no fear; but if it grows much worse, which it may at any moment, then I will have very grave fears."

"Were it blowing a hurricane, father, I would not let you go alone."

"Bless you, my son. We will put off in God's name."

When we got beyond the shelter of the land we felt how really bad the storm was. A fierce gale was blowing from the west. At about ten o'clock it changed to the north-west, bringing with it lightning flashes and rumblings of thunder.

This shift of wind was blowing us out of our course, as we could make no head against it. Father Hoyle lowered the mainsail, but with jib still up was running before the wind. It looked bad enough now, and if it grew any worse I felt nothing but a miracle would save us. Each wave that rushed upon us from out of the darkness appeared a mountain in height and must inevitably send us to the bottom. There was a steady hand at the tiller, however, and at each flash of lightning a pair of watchful eyes could be seen peering anxiously ahead.

The boat plunged and tossed through the heavy seas, one particularly large wave almost knocking me overboard. Father Hoyle saw my fear and spoke encouragingly, telling me to hold fast; that the boat was a staunch one and that God was in the storm as well as in the calm. He said that he thought we were heading towards Point St. Blas, and that he would risk beaching the boat if he got a chance. A short time later, during a flash of lightning, I was startled by an alarmed cry from Father Hoyle: "Stand clear and be ready to jump!"

"It is all up with us now," I thought. As I turned to look ahead a huge wave picked up the boat and tossed it high upon the shore. Father Hoyle landed safely, grasping his mission case containing his vestments and other articles necessary in the celebration of Mass, and which he had brought along in case something unforeseen should prevent his returning to Apalachicola Christmas morning.

I was thrown on my head and partly stunned, but quickly recovered. After looking about, we found we were on a little island, or key, but a few acres in extent. We had escaped from the dangers of the deep. For so much we were thankful; but it did not take us very long to realize that there were new dangers assailing us. The sea was slowly swallowing the bit of land upon which we were thrown.

Father Hoyle returned to the boat and began taking everything movable out—poles, oars, a loose seat, and some strong fishing twine, remarking: "We may have to swim for it yet, and an oar or so will come in handy." Shortly after a tremendous wave rushed in, picked up the boat, then rushed back into the darkness with it.

Father Hoyle made a trip around the small circle of sand, and returning, said: "This is very serious; an hour from now this spot may be under water, and we battling for our lives. My son, I am now very sorry that I brought you on this trip." Here I tried to check him, but he continued: "I expected it to be rough; but not dangerous; and as it would be a long trip I wanted you to keep me company. If it comes to the worst will ye forgive me?"

I grasped his hand and told him, as well as my emotion would allow—for I loved Father Hoyle very dearly; as, indeed, who wouldn't?—his kindly nature and heroic usefulness endearing him to all—that had I let him go alone and anything had happened to him, I would all my life have felt myself a murderer. And now, let the end come as soon as it may, I thanked God

that I was with him. A gentle pressure of my arm was his answer. He picked up the pole that he had taken from the boat and cut a notch about four feet below the smaller end. Into the notch he set an oar which he lashed fast with the fishing twine; the oar and pole forming a cross. He then directed me to take the other oar and with the blade to dig a hole in the sand, which was soon accomplished, and into this he dropped the end of the pole. I packed the sand tightly about it, and made it more secure by heaping it around the base. From the arms of the cross with several wrappings of twine he suspended, shelf-like, the boat-seat, forming as it were a table; above this he fastened a crucifix. The wind had ceased blowing, but overhead it was as dark and threatening as ever. The waters were steadily creeping nearer and spray from an occasional heavy sea fell about us. Father Hoyle lit the lantern which he always had on these watery journeys and hung it from an arm of the cross; then turned to me and said:

"It is now midnight. We have the privilege in this diocese of saying Mass at that hour on Christmas morning. In a short time the waves may be dashing over the spot where we are now standing. I am going to celebrate Mass—it may be for the last time. While I am getting ready you kneel down and prepare for confession and the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. If the end comes we will meet it as Christians should."

Father Hoyle then proceeded to dress his impromptu altar. Taking the heavy oil-cloth from around the case he carefully laid it, wet side down, over the boat-seat, which it completely covered, forming at the same time a rude antependium; next his altar linens were displayed, and before I was aware of it he had an altar "dressed" for the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

When through his preparations he heard my confession, and then, finishing vesting, began the Mass whose ending we might not live to see. After receiving Communion I felt strangely calm; fear gave place to peace; if it was God's will that this should be the end, I was resigned.

At the Elevation a succession of blinding flashes and terrific peals of thunder, followed by a dash of cold spray about my knees, made me think our time had come. I thought of Mass at home; the well-trained choir, the incense and sort-toned bells warning the kneeling worshippers that the sacrificial moment was at hand. Here, the improvised altar on a speck of sand, midst a seething cauldron of angry waves; the deafening thunder and dazzling lightning; an old, gray-haired priest with a look of profound exaltation upon his face, seemingly oblivious of his surroundings, reading Mass by the dim light of a lantern.

When Father Hoyle turned to give his blessing at the conclusion of the Mass a huge wave, that seemed a mountain in height, rushed towards us. Father Hoyle stood with hands outstretched, his lips moving in prayer, looking toward but not seeming to see the avalanche of rushing water. Perhaps behind that wall of water he saw the reward of his years of faithful and uncomplaining ministrations. The wave paused an instant within a few yards of the altar, then sank back, leaving its crest to topple over at our feet.

And who will say that blessing, made so impressively over the warring elements, did not bring peace? Yet so it was; the tremendous billows disappeared, the thunder rumbled faintly in the distance, and the sound of the waves died down into a solemn requiem at the blessing of that humble priest. Was it not the voice of God in his representative whispering to the mighty waves, "Peace, be still;" and they, recognizing the Authority, obeyed as on a former occasion?

The Mass was ended. Father Hoyle knelt in grateful thanksgiving. I joined him for a few minutes; then, being completely exhausted, I stretched myself upon the sand, and in a moment was sound asleep.

When I awoke two hours later the scene was comparatively peaceful, only the great long swells of the sea giving evidence of the recent storm. Father Hoyle had placed his seat over me while I slept; he was still kneeling before the cross, his grey head encircled in an aureole of moonlight, for the moon was now shining brightly and lending much beauty to the scene. As I watched him kneel there with eyes fixed upon the crucifix, I could not but think that God's holy angels were not far away.

He arose when he heard me moving. When I spoke of our escape and the likelihood of our spending this Christmas Day on earth after all, a look which I took to be resignation came upon his face as he

replied: "Well, my son, our work is not yet done."

During the remaining hours of the night Father Hoyle spoke of his work on the mission, of his vexations through the hard-heartedness of some who remained deaf to his call to come to the sacraments, and his rewards in the shape of an occasional stray sheep brought back to the fold. He had ambitions once, he said; he gave them up—that was his hardest trial—for his humble and scattered flock.

At the first glint of the morning sun upon our humble Calvary he began a Mass of thanksgiving. About ten o'clock boats were seen approaching from different points. Soon about two dozen men were gathered around Father Hoyle, offering such sincere expressions of joy at his safety as brought tears to the old priest's eyes. He thanked them for their interest and affection, and said: "It will be too late to say Mass when we get back to town. I have already said two Masses this morning; but on this day we have the privilege of celebrating three. I will offer up this for the repose of the souls of those lost at sea."

I will venture to say that throughout the broad land there were few more fervent worshippers than were these humble fishermen kneeling before Father Hoyle's simple altar that Christmas morning. And since then I never hear the bells at the Elevation, but my thoughts involuntarily go back to one Midnight Mass on the Gulf coast some years ago.—James M. Keating, in the Catholic World Magazine.

The Use of the Scapular

The scapular is the badge of an order of chivalry which is purely devotional; it is a livery of the Blessed Mother of God, which all are free and none are forced to wear. It is an external sign of love, fidelity, and service. It is a great honor to be enrolled in the confraternity and to wear the scapular on account of its origin, its meaning and the numerous and extraordinary privileges which have been attached to it.

A reason sometimes urged against the scapular is that people have superstitiously looked upon it as a charm, which will secure heaven for them in spite of all their sins. It will do nothing of the kind. And unless a person earnestly endeavors to lead a good life, frequenting the sacraments, hearing Mass on Sunday, saying his prayers, avoiding the occasions of mortal sin, the scapular will avail him nothing.

To remove the charge of superstition, it ought to suffice to note the way in which St. Simon Stock, in making known his vision of Our Lady with the Scapular, urged on all his brethren perseverance in good works and prayer, so the promise of the Blessed Virgin might be glorified and fulfilled in them. A master does not reward his servants because they wear his livery, unless they also conduct themselves worthily.

Three classes need Our Lady's help: First, poor sinners who are continually falling through weakness, but who really desire to repent and to serve God. If they are devout to the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel, she will not fail to assist them by obtaining for them the graces for repentance.

Secondly, penitents, that they may persevere in their repentance to the end.

And thirdly, the innocent, who have never grievously offended God, that they may continue innocent.

It is not pretended that Our Lady confines her special attention to those who wear the scapular; but the experience of five hundred years proves that she obtains innumerable favors and blessings for each of the three above-mentioned classes of souls, when they wear her livery with devout dispositions. These favors consist not only of graces in the spiritual order, but of frequent deliverances from dangers and difficulties which belong altogether to the natural order.

By all means, then, wear the scapular.

Whatever you do in honor of the Mother of God will be meted out to you again with an overflowing measure of blessing. But, however high your hopes may be raised by the promise of Our Lady's assistance in this world, and by the prospect of the manifestation in purgatory of her compassionate maternal love and tenderness, remember that your first obligation is to put into daily practice the instruction of St. Peter: "Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."

For this you need an abundant supply of divine grace.

Prayer and the sacraments and a constant devotion to the Blessed Virgin will obtain this.—Le Coultoux Leader.

Missionary Heroes.

The "Missionary Record" of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for November contains a reference to two heroic missionaries who are working within the Arctic Circle. Bishop Clut, coadjutor of Bishop Girouard, of Athabasca, has been in the frozen North for over forty-five years, with only three or four visits to civilization. His diocese would make a good-sized empire, and he has traversed it repeatedly in birch canoes, making in this way about thirty miles a day. His first thirteen years as missionary were at Fort Chippewah, Lake Athabasca, and the next twenty-five at Providence Mission, about forty-nine miles down Great Slave Lake, in the Mackenzie river colony. He passed two winters within the Arctic Circle, where overwork and bad food brought him very near to death. For thirty years he had no bread to eat, only meat and fish, with rarely a few potatoes. But when, recently removed from there for treatment of his completely broken down health, he was asked if he expected to return, he answered: "Oh, yes, to be sure, I would not go out if I was not to go back again." This is a passion easily found among these heroic souls.

A fellow missionary and subject of his, Father Seguin, O.M.I., who has been forty years within the Arctic Circle, and without eating bread, now nearly blind from cataract and for the last six years suffering constantly from a dislocated shoulder, which there was nowhere around him a surgeon to set, was some time ago ordered to France for treatment. But he pleaded that even if he became blind he might be let return to his beloved savages.

Rev. Mother M. Amedeus, Provincial of the Ursulines of the Rocky Mountain missions, has written to the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith from St. Peter's Mission of Montana:

"Let me speak to you once more about our boarding school. Our first efforts with the children were very difficult. They were such wild little savage maidens! Time and again they would jump out of the window in the midst of class, and run like deer for the Witanece. We used to follow them, these blessed young ones, and beg them to come back to the 'white house,' our convent. But instead of responding to our motherly solicitude, they flung off the little dresses we made them with so much care, threw them in our faces, and leaped into the river, screaming 'take your old white clothes, we don't want them.'

"For all that they were not gone for good, and ended by coming back. Could our little Iewonona be lost, do you think, our graceful, brown-eyed child who was one of them? No, her father, Mieshkon (one-fingered man) brought her back to us, and little by little she commenced to love us. The missionary baptized her, and gave her the dear name of Teresa. She became a good Christian, and married a young man known as Yellow Hair. She has been a faithful wife to him, and their little son Paul is now growing up and making fine progress at St. Lebro's Mission.

"Parents were so delighted to see how our children progressed that they came every day, their paposes strapped to their backs. By patience, prayers and sacrifices, I have been able to turn this proud race to good works. By the uprightness of their lives, their respect for the priest, their love for work, our new Christians are a living sermon to all the rest.

"Our great mother, Queen Victoria, Crowfoot, a great chief among the Black Feet, used to say, 'give us bread to eat; but the Black Robe has done better, he has given us words of hope.'

"Father," said a dying child to his father, "I am going to heaven, the priest has just told me. You ought to go there too. Go to find him; do what he tells you; obey him; and we will be happy together."

"Oh, if we could only cultivate these good dispositions on the part of our neophytes! The best means would be to gather them at church. They love the celebration of Mass, the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the May devotions. These services stir up reflections among them that are worth a thousand sermons."

STRIKING MEMORIALS.

The statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is to adorn the gable of the Pilgrimage Church of the Immaculate Conception, Mt. Adams, will be made of metal, and will cost over \$1,000. It will be illuminated by electric lights. The Passionist Fathers of Mt. Adams are likewise contemplating the illumination of the large cross which crowns the Cross Church with electric lights.