

THE QUIET HOUR

A FAITHFUL WORKER.

The men did the work faithfully.—
Chron. xxxiv.: 12.

"Only work that is for God alone
Hath an unceasing guerdon of delight,
A guerdon unaffected by the sight
Of great success, nor by its loss o'er-
thrown.—

All else is vanity beneath the sun
There may be joy in Doing, but it
palls when done."
—F. R. HAVERGAL.

I have just been reading the wonderful life of "Father Dolling," a clergyman of the Church of England, who died about four years ago, after working with wonderful success among the poorest people in Portsmouth and London. I should like to let you have a glimpse of this life, if only to prove that the miracle of the burning bush is still being worked in our midst, that God still manifests Himself wondrously through men who truly consecrate themselves to His service and love not their lives unto the death. Father Dolling may have only been a man like other men, but he was certainly "afire with God." He seems to have won the name of "Father" as he won the more startling title of "Brother Bob," by proving himself a real father and brother to everybody needing a friend. He was so enthusiastic in his efforts on behalf of the Postmen's League that he soon became "Brother Bob" to all the postmen of London, and a letter directed "Brother Bob, London," was certain to reach him safely. Like most good men, he had a splendid mother and was the child of many prayers. He says himself, "I look back over forty-five years and remember how my mother taught us children every day some little story from the life of Christ, and how real she made it by drawing pictures, and telling words, which made us almost see the actual event. As I sit writing this, I see them now, those pictures which, please God, I shall never forget." One result of this loving training was that he never seemed to have had to fight his way through doubts as some men do. His faith in Christ and enthusiastic love for Him was as free from strain or doubt as that of a little child. And his love for God flowed out in constant love for his neighbor, a love which won for him the answering devotion of thousands of hearts. Of him, like his Master, it might be said that the common people heard him gladly. In the Irish village, where he was brought up, he was the "brother, friend and helper of all the people especially of all the lads of Kilrea." When only a lad himself he gathered the children around him for classes of various kinds, taught the boys to grow flowers and vegetables, and gave prizes for swimming contests. He encouraged the boys to read in his library, cared for his sick neighbors, dressing wounds and carrying food and clothing when necessary.

Later on, when living in London, he was still always seen with a background of boys. One of his postmen friends says:

"When at Borough Road frequently on Sundays he had parties of poor boys—street scavengers, shoeblacks, newspaper sellers, and rough boys of that class. His method was generally to have the copper-fire lit, make them strip, and have a good bath (he very frequently providing them with new underclothes), give them a good tea, and send them away at least clean and well fed. I remember one Christmas party he had who ate so heartily of the good dinner that they could find no room for the Christmas pudding; so presently the unusual spectacle was seen of a stout gentleman followed by about twenty boys, running about six times round the squares. Then they came back and finished the pudding."

He was in the habit of calling his rough boys "angels," because their rags suggested wings. One starving lad once tried to steal from him, was

caught in the act by "Brother Bob," and tenderly reclaimed and made into a good and brave soldier. Dolling bent over him as he was dying in hospital, and says that his last words were, "I have kept straight." Another tried to steal his watch and was also reformed by Dolling, sent to one of the colonies, and was soon sending back money to help in the mission work of his kind friend at home.

Father Dolling was certainly startling in his ways. You might find him in the midst of crowds of rough men—mostly soldiers—adding his mite to the thick cloud of smoke which arose from many pipes, or singing the "Wearing of the Green" with great zest. Or you might find him in the little oratory beyond, where he prayed with his dear lads, and talked to them privately or publicly in a way which they never forgot. Or you might find him watching over one of his boys who had come home drunk, and whom he had put into his own bed. Sometimes he had grand services, with acolytes, incense, etc., and a congregation picked up from the streets who, many of them, had never entered a church in their lives before Father Dolling got hold of them. He would talk to these ignorant people about Jesus and his disciples as though he had seen them often. Or he would have a "prayer meeting," with extemporaneous prayers for all his people, never forgetting to mention those who had passed out of sight into the Great Beyond. He tried to brighten the lives of the slum-dwellers in every possible way, by games of all kinds, dancing, a small theatre and a gymnasium, and all the time he kept before them the remembrance of God's love. Of course there were plenty of people to object to his way of helping. Some objected to the dancing and theatre, others to the "ritualism," others to the prayer meeting, and others to the prayers for the dead. He was constantly in hot water, but changed foes into friends whenever he could—the transformation was generally very swift and lasting—and went on his own way serenely, undisturbed by what anyone thought of him. All sorts of people were entertained in the parsonage. "All poor human odds and ends and wreckage on the stream of life were the objects of his special devotion. Before suffering he bent with reverence as if before the mystery of Calgary. The lonely, the misunderstood, the scorned, were the objects of his special and peculiar regard. He used to say of such, 'They find a home within the Heart of God.'" It must have been a wonderful service that was held in the large and beautiful church built by Father Dolling in his Portsmouth slum, when he said farewell to his dearly-loved congregation. Large as the church was, it was crammed with the people who loved him as a personal friend. Then he made a tour in America, preaching 261 times in seven months. He also held a mission in New Brunswick. This was in 1898 and his biographer says, "By the end of ten days he had won the hearts of all the people of St. John's Church. We are told that each morning of the mission he might have been seen plowing his way through the deep snow in the center of the street, looking thoroughly happy and cheerful, and that he was full of boyish hearty." In Buffalo his preaching attracted large crowds of young men, but he never laid himself out to be a popular preacher. Indeed, his stern denouncing of popular sins brought down many a storm on his head—but he seemed to have an Irish love for fighting, when he felt that the cause was good. He explored the worst streets in Chicago, and seemed eager to "throw himself into the very center of its fierce life, and to claim that life for his Master."

On his return to England, he started in again to work with his usual energy in the East End of London. "The redemption of the body was to Dolling a practical truth," says his biographer, "and a most vital part of the Christian religion. It supplied to him the motive



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power of his ceaseless efforts as a social worker. He was a scourge to anyone who degraded, dishonored or ill-treated the body of any human being, just as to those who stunted the mind, or polluted the soul, or made money at the expense of the innocence or happiness of others. Such people felt for Robert Dolling the instinctive dislike that a rat does for a terrier. They accused him of unceasingly worrying them, and with great truth, for he gloried in doing it. They hated him as vermin do the light."

He took great delight in his camps for boys and girls, and in the winter when outdoor recreations were out of the question he encouraged socials and dancing classes in order to keep his young people off the streets. He set his heart on the uplifting of the children, and his day-schools, in connection with his church, were "the most efficient probably in East London, with clean, wholesome buildings, and every encouragement to the scholars to strive for proficiency in their studies."

But his greatest and most wonderful work was probably with individuals. Only God knows how many a broken-down man and despairing woman has been helped by Father Dolling to stand upright and walk again. He was full of tender kindness and patient trust, and roused men and women to believe that they were really made in the image of God, and able to grow into the likeness of Christ. I wish I could quote from some of the many letters from sin-sick souls who were healed by being brought by him to the Saviour of sinners. And there are also innumerable stories told of his acts of self-sacrificing kindness, such as on one occasion when he crossed Portsmouth Harbor in an open boat in order to baptize a dying baby, though he was suffering from an abscess in the jaw himself. He won the love of all sorts and conditions of men—rich and poor, ignorant and educated, Protestant and Roman Catholic, saint and sinner. A lady who managed one of his clubs for rough lads says: "I feel sure I could never have persuaded them to go and talk about their lives to anyone else. They said, 'Oh, he's different; we don't mind him.' I could tell of miracles of healing under Mr. Dolling's touch. One young soldier said to me, 'He laid his hand on my head, and I don't know why, I told him all I had ever done.' They always thought when they went to church and anything was said that fitted them, that Mr. Dolling was meaning them. When once he said in an address, 'Are you a thief? Do you give as much of your wages as you should to your mother?' they had an idea that he knew all about them."

When Mr. Dolling was fifty years old, he wrote to his friends: "If you want to give me a really jubilee birthday present, you must help me to start my new buildings here. My ministerial life has been so short, for I was not ordained until I was over thirty, that I have not had half the chance of doing the things that I wanted to do before I lay down my ministry at my Master's feet." It was only a little more than a year later that he was called to lay down his ministry, and enter into the joy of his Lord. One sign of fatherly strength was his

absence from the daily Celebration of the Lord's Supper that last Lent of his earthly life. As his friend and biographer says: "All through his life, whenever possible, this had been his strength and joy." When the last illness, so patiently endured, was over "his tired yet happy soul sank to rest as in an untroubled sleep. The peace of God folded him round as the perfected consecration of his strenuous life, or rather as the introduction to a life yet more strenuous, in the clearer air of the Great Beyond."

Thousands of Father Dolling's poor friends attended his funeral, feeling, as the Bishop of London said in his address, as if they had lost their best friend on earth, and often the only earthly friend they had. When every body else had given a man up, it was always said, "Dolling will take him."

Though he was by no means faultless, his life was singularly lovely. A soul, white and unsullied as that of Sir Galahad, dwelt within a pure and healthy body. His love went out unsparingly in acts of service which wore him out early. He fought many fierce fights, but was followed to his grave by the love and prayers of thousands of hearts. As a "Free Church" preacher declared at a memorial service, "hundreds of men who had no sympathy with his creed found in Father Dolling a brother greatly beloved, a beautiful human soul, whose life was an inspiration, and whose memory is a treasured possession. How dwarfed do all the little things which separate us as Christians become in the light of that splendid devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ which was his all-pervading passion!" Is not that the real secret of his life of power which was the instrument of turning multitudes to God and righteousness? Could such a life have been inspired—has such a life ever been inspired—by anything else than a pure and intense devotion to Christ? When other religions can bring such miracles forward to prove their claims, we can begin to examine them seriously; as it is, Christianity stands supreme in its countless lives of devoted self-sacrifice. The lives of true Christians are, and have always been, the most convincing proofs of Christianity's claims. The responsibility lies on all professing Christians to witness for Christ. Are we doing it, in the place where He has stationed us?

"God asks not what, but whence thy
Work is—from the fruit
He turns His eye away, to prove the
inmost root."

HOPE.

A member of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin tells of some amusing replies made by a pupil undergoing an examination in English. The candidate had been instructed to write out examples of the indicative, the subjunctive, the potential and the exclamatory moods. His efforts resulted as follows:

"I am endeavoring to pass an English examination. If I answer twenty questions I shall pass. If I answer twelve questions I may pass. God bless me!"—Harper's Weekly.