

OLIVE'S OFFERING.

A STORY FROM LIFE.

For the Carmelite Review.

BY PHILIP A. BEST.

III.

"Their strength united best may help to bear."—*Dante.*

OUTSIDE of business hours few people knew of Gottlieb Guttman. He boarded quietly at a Mrs. Rice's, whose name, by the way, quite harmonized with a well known "celestial" dish, which she dished up under various disguises for "my boarders," as she always said when referring to her permanent and transient guests, who could all be reduced to one person, Mr. Guttman himself. The latter liked his good old landlady, and the kindness was mutually reciprocated. Guttman was in the habit of making very droll remarks, which Mrs. Rice seemed to enjoy, even if she couldn't always fathom them. And this was often the cause of little misunderstandings, since Mrs. Rice's interpretation of Mr. Guttman's saying was generally embodied in her little chat with her next door-neighbor. Hence it often happened that many things were attributed to Mr. Guttman when the case was just the opposite. This will explain some little incidents to be referred to farther on.

Guttman usually left his office about five o'clock, arriving at Mrs. Rice's about seven. If you were curious to know how he disposed of the intervening two hours, all you had to do was to follow his steps and you would find yourself descending dark cellars and ascending rickety tenement stairways. In other words, Guttman paid a daily visit to several poor persons. He did his work quietly but effectively, and the well-fed half of humanity knew nothing about it.

Guttman, as far as religion went, was a Catholic, and a very practical one at that. He didn't announce the fact to every passer-by—he rather acted his religion. It was a part of his daily life. In fact, on account of his retired life and general reserve, very few guessed at his real belief. All that his fellow business men and patrons said of him was that he was "a right good and

straightforward fellow and a gentleman." That is a great deal to say of a man. But Guttman deserved it all.

Guttman usually went to early Mass and hence was not observed going to, or coming from, church by those who knew him best, since at the time when he was on his knees at Our Lady's Church most of his business confreres were still stretching in their bed. If anyone did see Guttman coming from late services it was said good-naturedly that he had gone to church to hear the music, or perhaps as a harmless concession to his Catholic patrons.

One day one gentleman went so far as to remark in a subdued tone—and in Guttman's presence—that "Perhaps Guttman belongs to some Masonic lodge."

No one better enjoyed that remark than Guttman, who couldn't help but overhear it. He said nothing, expecting to see more amusing developments. All his expectations were fully satisfied.

As usual there was a woman in it, none other than Mrs. Rice herself, and behold what caused it to be rumored abroad that Mr. Guttman was one of "the brethren."

One afternoon—on an exceptionally cold day, Guttman arrived at Mrs. Rice's much earlier than usual. Not caring to disturb his amiable landlady, he quietly slipped up to his room, which was rather chilly, since Mrs. Rice, with an eye to economy, had shut off unnecessary calorific when "my boarders" were not at home. Throwing a blanket over him, Guttman managed to keep from freezing by sitting near the register, which hovered around freezing point. Here sat Guttman, when Mrs. Rice walked in, altogether ignorant of Mr. Guttman's presence. Before she had time to overcome her surprise, Mr. Guttman said in his funny way:—

"Say, Mrs. Rice, I have a conundrum for you. Why is this register like a free-mason?"

Mrs. Rice, thinking this might be the unwilling victim of some secret plot, beat a hasty retreat, saying as she went, "O Mr. Guttman, I always thought those masons would get hold of you sooner or later."

Guttman followed her and shouted down the stairs:—"Mrs. Rice, the thermometer in my room is like a mason because it rarely reaches thirty-three degrees. Don't you see?"