'No, Father."

mas Day."
"Yes, Father. We want to get

married before Christmas Day."
"This is the forbidden time—surely
you know that? Marriage cannot be

solemnized in Advent. These weeks should be filled with preparation for—"

"Would the one dispensation do?"
"The one dispensation do? You mean—what?"

"He isn't a Catholic, Father."

Father Laurence drew a deep breath, looking at her as if he did not compre-

hend.
"That's pretty bad, child. What is he? What religion does he profess?"

"Believing in every religion?"
"Oh! I am very liberal, Father—
very liberal. A great deal more so
than most Cathalics, when you

than most Catholics whom you meet every day. I think each one is right in his own way, all roads lead to heaven."

Why-because we want to get mar-

"Why, you, Father."
"I? I am a Catholic priest, dear

"Yes, Father. He thinks the Catholic religion all right—he can't see, of course, the meaning of a good many things—he calls them superstitious and all that. But he has no feel forms and

all that. But he has no feelings against

Father Laurence. "You, out of your own mouth, admit that you are one with him". You don't believe in your own

"Oh, Father I am a Catholic—certainly, I'm a Catholic! I go to confession every three months. I receive—"

She looked at him, anxiously.
"We are all Catholics," she began.

"How long?,"
"Until I made my First Communion,

"Of course." He spoke dreamily.
"Until she made her First Commun-

'A year of religious instruction to last

a life time—to outlive the sterms and buffets of the unfaithful world! what

wender, what wonder, that such things

to bring up all children granted to your union in the faith of the Church.

looked. Father. His promising, I mean," she added, hastily. "Of course, I would not permit my children—"

"You are ignorant of the first rules

on his part such a marriage as you con-template is permitted only as the very last resort. Did you know that?"

'I knew priests didn't like it,

'Priests, child? The Church, rather.

Your great, wise Mother, the Church, who loves each little lamb of her flock

so dearly as to wish to guard it on

every hand from straying into forbidden paths. You are trying to drift away from your own Mother—a Mother, whom

Even with that promise

-I thought that could be over-

come to pass?"
He roused himself, sighing.

Did you know that?"

of your faith.

She looked at

"Yes, Father."

school?

"That is kind of him," interrupted

You don't believe in your own

ried."
Oh, you do? And whom do you wish to join you in Holy Matrimony?"
Why you, Father.

She did not understand him.

The point was lost on her.

quietly.

Father?"
"You would, certainly."

'I'd have to get a dispensation,

and waited lary of the to the sa

" he asked. How do you eld out his and shame-h head sunk.

ther ?" the priest's ment. Then

No. I ain't an' a beast belongs to belongs to bbe some day Mebbe, son shake hands

d Mrs. Lewis, aised. Amen. edge, Father, week ?" asked

low voice. py, miserable ar wife worse an, man, man.

op I'm able to sets me off; drinker,' said lly. "There's in the world. I'm not as bad t religion, the out the priests ays respect my up for being a

ather Laurence

-to-confession

the priest, and sorrowful—and took that tone than any combid is it to boast your heart is far i is it to say you hen every action e faith you proe faith you pro-, man, with your on clinging to you for guidance and you stoop to so which steals away wrong?" for the woman's

ach my hand beof God, of God," went on Ah, let me touch of a wandering son one with me, my ours and lead you even as he spoke, long will this last, or can your brain your body stand as? The end will ar you will go as er you will go as at you before your Five years, ten At most it will

And thenllowing me? You sin . . . You drunkards shall God. It is prom Drunkards shall . Drunkards shall of God! Look at ing you to a coffin.

f one who has died
o has died a drunkupon that face. It That is your bloated your wife. Your p a few tears—tears they regret? Can n heaven, man, can miserable human fied his Almighty

his knees. "Oh hear me—I swear-ar me, God! God the pledge, Father ver him tenderly.

nd my blessing with ng go with you, over-you, this Christmas ne faltering words of n they were finished in's trembling hand usband's. be with you," he with you, my childfor you."

m to the door, adleft, a slender girl, into the sacristy, a a face like a rose in elicate contour. see me?" asked the

ther Laurence-yes," her Laurence—yes,
inusical voice.
Laurence," he said.
to know your name,
ce is quite familiar.
church, do you not?"
ther, to 10 o'clock

ecognized you. my Sodality band?"

-" she hesitated. "I ach church work. compelled to do much belong to the Sodality said Father

Virgin," said half-smile. dear child?" sweetest name in the

as my mother's name cy on her," he added, ht. It was so hard to after-thought! "And Mother of God. You l girl with that name,

hink I'm very bad,

laughed under his

breath. "Well, then, I'm glad of that. of your faith? The reasons why you believe? Child, you have need to learn them yourself before you can teach another. Be wise, be wise. You would want to drift away from us? You breath.
You wanted to see me about anything in particular?"
'Well, Father — "she blushed, and hesitated and blushed again, and dropped her eyelids, and twisted her fingers, nervously. "I'm thinking of getting married." would want never to come to church?'

"Oh, no, no, Father-" "Yet what gift of grace are you so getting married."
"That's good news," and now Father
Laurence laughed outright. "Getting
married? Well, now! And who may
the young man be? A member of the sure of that this will not happen to you? Listen to an old priest who has seen greater, stronger holds on faith than yours give way beneath the carp-ing criticism of those who did not "No, Father."
"No? Where does he come from?"
"He lives uptown, Father. We—we
want to get married a week from Sunday!
"A week from Sunday! Dear
child, the following Friday is Christ-

"Put off your marriage to this man for six months. Come to me, then, for instruction, say just one half-hour a week. Let me show you why you are a Catholic. Join the Sodality. Ah! You don't want to lose Mary for a Mother? You don't want to lose, from out your life, the glorious presence of God upon the altar Now, do you?"

"No, Father."
"I thought not—I thought not. You are my own good little lamb, who will not drift away from us. I will pray for

You He put his hand upon her shoulder,

gently. "God be with you, little struggling

Father Laurence drew a deep breath, soking at her as if he did not compresend.

"That's pretty bad, child. What is ready as the religion does he profess?"

"Oh, none, Father. He believes in werry religion." She looked at him with her bright eyes, her lovely facefull off animation. "He believes all men are prothers. He believes in humanity, prothers. He believes in humanity.

"God be with you, little struggling of little struggling of little struggling of little struggling of little struggling. I wish I knew how to be as happy as you."

"Be content." said the strange old man.—Seaton Lord.

"God be with you, little struggling of litt "Oh, none, Father. He believes in every religion." She looked at him with her brighteyes, her lovely face full of animation. "He believes all men are brothers. He believes in humanity. Oh, he is so very clever, Father—very clever. I often wonder how in the world he can like me."
"But of course you do not agree with him?"
"In what way, Father?"
"Believing in every religion?" mother," he went on, raising his eyes to the star-studded sky. "And while I make petition for them—and you—do not forget, when it is God's will, to do the like for me, and those who are given

He went back again to the light that burned before the hidden Christ. And there he knelt. The heavy burden at his heart grew less. He saw the woman puffed with her own conceit grown humble. He saw the clouded home humble. He saw the clouded home made bright, and those in it made happy because one man could conquer Father Laurence turned aside, his eyes seeking the gas jet.

"Why did you come here?" he asked quietly.

"Why did you come to me tohis besetting sin. He saw the dormant soul of the girl, fragrant and fresh as a flower with devotion and love for God. All this he saw. And the heart of the riest beat high.

If dreams came true! You know Father Laurence, you people who read these lines. We all know him. He has come to us, every one of us, when most we needed him.

Let us be prodigal. Not of our good works, our alms, our love alone—but of our prayers for our priests, for those who daily win God's grace for us.

God be with them! Let us pray for those

A CHRISTMAS PHILOSOPHER.

Sulkily deploring the poverty which compelled me to come to work on Christmas Day, I entered the office of

Christmas Day, I entered the office of The Daily Dozer and went to my desk.

"Jenkins," said the city editor,
"here's five dollars a lady sent us to give a poor old chap up on Tenth street. You see, she wants to know it reached him and doesn't want to reg-ietor, eletter, for he must not know "Why, why, why?" he asked, insistently. "Since every religion leads to God why bother about the Catholic religion—the idolatrous, the superstitious? Why are you a Catholic?"

She leaked at him accionals. ister a letter, for he must not know who sends it. So run up with it and get a receipt for it that we may send her."

I was soon on Tenth street. The number sought was a tumble-down old rookery, and the children snowballing each other in the street stopped leng enough to teil me that old Mr. Jones "My mother—my sisters—"
"But why are you a Catholic?"
She hung her head. She did not know how to reply.
"Have you ever attended Sunday report?"

enough to tell me that old Mr. Jones lived on the top floor.
"Come in!" piped a cheery, shrill voice as I knocked on his door I did. Seated by the window, nightcap on the company of the head and spectacles on nose, sat a bright-eyed, gray-haired, much wrinkbright-eyed, gray-haired, much wrink-led old fellow, clean shaven and very tall and stooped. "Merry Christmas!" he piped as soon as he saw me and grinned affably, displaying a few large

He roused himself, sighing.
"It is against every law of the Church to bind together a Catholic girl and such a man as you describe," he went on, addressing her. "Of course you are aware that he must pledge himself to bring up all children granted to

on the fire escape were pecking at a piece of his loaf.
"It is this that has made you happy

to day in spite of —"
"It is one of the things. That was

my Christmas giving. It was all I could give until you came, but now I am under the necessity of seeking human objects for my bounty. The alms share of this is too big for the birds."

"Can you find any peoper then you "Can you find any poorer than yourself?" I inquired.

"Yes, even in the palaces," he said solemnly. Rising and leaning on the long stick which he had kept beside

iong stick which he had kept beside him, he thus went on:
"I began my celebration of Christ-mas yesterday afternoon by going to the free library and reading Dickens' Christmas Carol. For years I have read it on Christmas eve—that is, to from your own Mother—aMother, whom Christ, when He came on Christmas Day, came to leave for you. Look what you are doing, beloved child! Two weeks from now is the anniversary of that day when the great Creator came to earth a helpless Infant—came to the cold of Bethlehem, the sneers of the world, the agony of His cross, to establish this Church, this fold for you. For your dear sake He came. And what

cold of Bethlehem, the sneers of the world, the agony of His cross, to establish this Church, this fold for you. For your dear sake He came. And what are you doing? You are thrusting His priceless Christmas gift away from you. You are putting Him out of your life—making His heart to ache worse than when the spear transferate worse than when the spear transferate worse than the spear transferate worse the spear transferate worse than the spear transferate wor go skimming over the snow. I lost half the sport. I could not see the cutters skim by, the rosy cheeks of the riders, and I ran risk of a spill. I could hear no bells but those on my own teem, but she standing on the making His heart to ache worse than when the spear transfixed it. Childwhen the spear transfixed it. Child—named after His beloved Mother—you wen't do that? Surely, surely you do not want to go out into that dark country beyond the Catholic faith where all own team, but, ah, standing on the roadside—how different!

is unbelief and indecision? Let me show you what you are doing. Let me prove to you what a heritage you are relinquishing—you, who are named for Christ. St.

my eyes fully from the outside of the windows. It was the best Christmas shopping I ever did, and I have done much shopping in my time, I can tell you.

you, "Midnight Ma s-grand, celestial!

ant waters of summer that are all mine, sir, as much as a king's.

"See my Yule log! He pointed to a piece of cannel coal beside the stove.

"I will light that by and by. I will roast a little joint of meat over it and make area, little joint of meat over it and make area, little joint of meat over it and make me a little wassail bowl of elder with a roast apple in it—and when my pipe is lit and the street lamp shines on the ceiling I will recite for myself some of the old mirac'e plays of Christ-

"Pardon me," said f, starting up. I must go. You tempt me to share your ferst and lose my position. I must go. I wish I knew how to be as happy as

It is fitting that we should owe the most beautiful of Christmas devotions o Saint Francis of Assisi, the brown robed mendicant whose passage through the hills and valleys of Umbria has left a golden memory in the heart of the world for seven handred years. He was the apostle of simplicity, this gentle saint who could speak so wisely to his little brothers, the birds, who could learn such wonderful lessons from his little friends, the fishes. He found God everywhere and saw His likeness in every thing. He sanctified the commonplace, seeing the symbol of the Creator in the least of His works, blessing the beasts, praising God in the flowers, loving every created thing. He loved the lambs because they reminded him of the Lamb without spot, and we read that when he met them being led to the shambles he wept tenderly and would not go on until he had redeemed them from death. One day, seeing a poor little sheep walking in the midst of a troop of goats, he said sadly to his brethren: "It was thus that our Saviour walked with the Jews and Phari-sees." His friars wished to buy the sees. This make the same to shop to save their gentle master from distress, but they had no money. A passing dealer—one of those opportune providences that follow the footsteps of Francis—seeing the embarrassment of

the brothers, paid for the sheep and gave it to the saint.

Is it any wonder that such a man should have been seized at once with the idea of the human hearty of the Inthe idea of the human beauty of the In-carnation? Is it any wonder that he earnation? Is it any wonder that he should have seen in the Nativity not the coming of the King, not the unspeakable mystery of the Redemption, but the birth of a Babe in Bethlehem? but the birth of a Babe in Bethlehem? Saint Francis may not have originated the devotion of the Crib—it is one of those beautiful heart growths by which Christianity has nourished the human soul from the beginning—but he at least popularized it in Italy. Christmas was his spiritual holiday. It was the feast of love, and Saint Francis is the world's great preacher of the love of world's great preacher of the love of God. His brothers asked him one day God. His brothers asked him one day it it was right to eat meat on Christmas when the feast fell on Friday. "Assuredly," answered Francis, he of all the saints the closest to the Passion, he of the Stigmata—"assuredly. I would even wish that princes and great one of the earth strewed the country

upon an idea so universal, an appeal so irresistible, as the cradle of infancy. From a purely human piont of view, the Nativity is one of the great master stroles which makes Christianity, as a human system, so incomparable, so magnificently daring. To cloak the utmost power in the most abject helplessness, to weigh down a little outcast Babe with the omninotence of the ness, to weigh down a fitter batcher babe with the omnipotence of the Creator of the world—what conception of human genius could be at once so bold and so beautiful, so awful and so

Saint Francis saw the possibilities of increased devotion to his dear Master him, he thus went on:

"I began my celebration of Christmas yesterday afternoon by going to the free library and reading Dickens' Christmas Carol. For years I have read it on Christmas eve—that is, to fill myself with the true Christmas spirit of charity, love, peace and good will. It always succeeds, Has any that would follow the emphasizing, the craved leave to go to Gresio to cele-brate the birth of the Saviour with his brethren, to gather together the populace from all the neighboring hill towns and to make the underlying mercy and love of the Incarnation so mercy and love of the Incarnation so patent to all that no heart in Italy should be able to resist it. With the Pontiff's blessing and Godspeed, he started forth, the joy of Christmas already singing in his heart. It was the vigil of the feast before he arrived in Grecio. He had conveyed minute instructions to his good friend, Giovanni structions to his good friend, Giovanni Velita, and he found everything in readiness in accordance with his pious plans. An altar had been builded in the open air. A skilful craftsman among the brown-robed brothers had

shopping. Oh, I saw everything - all led thence a strange company of mounther riches of the earth displayed in windows. Remember that the great delight in most of them is in looking aisles of the forest with flickering delight in most of them is in looking at them, and if they are personal cornaments you cannot very well see them after you put them on. I feasted my eyes fully from the outside of the mysterious silence with song, repeating over and over again the haunting verses of the Umbrian Christman

Francis was jubilant. We are told that he could not refrain from sheding criticism of those who did not understand. Listen to me now."

"Yes, Father." His voice was so grave and gentle—and so sad. "I will listen."

"Put off your marriage to this man then, for the property of so strong in all true sons of Italy. The Italian immediately groups his ideas icto pictures: he at once seizes upon the right artistic moment to perpetuate an emotion. It is for this reason that faith in Italy flowers into so many lovely fancies, and that Italy has been the world's inspiration and the world's

teacher in art.
At the midnight Mass that followed the procession to the crib, Saint Francis filled the office of deacon and preached, there in the midst of the trees, as he liked best to preach, of the birth of the Babe, of the augels and the shepherds, of the manager and the exen, of all the dear traditions that had glori fied the Cave of Bethlehem for tw headred years, that are as near and as clear after nineteen hundred. The love of Jesus so welled up in the preacher's heart that every time he came to the sacred name he was obliged pause for very ecstacy of devotion. His voice faltered as if he had tasted a delicious honey," says one who writes of him, "or heard a hidden melody the notes of which he wished to catch. The Cavlaiere Giovanni Velita, a trust-werthy man who had abandoned the worthy man who had abandoned the career of arms the better to serve Jesus Christ, affirmed on oath that he saw a child seemingly asleep over whom our saint bent, covering him with kises and as it were awakening him from his

The straw which the apparition touched is credited with afterwards working several miraculous cures. A chapel was built on the site of this first Italian crib after the death of Saint

Francis.

The devotion was taken up as promptly and as ardently as the saint foresaw. His holy friend, Saint Clare, immediately introduced the custom into all the convents of her order. Like Saint Francis himself, she was never so happy as in preparing the crib, in meditating with her Sisters on the infinite itating with her Sisters on the infinite sweetness of the mystery of Bethlehem. It is related in the quaint and pious chronicle of Bernard of Besse that her devotion to the Christ-Child

once merited for her a proof of the divine favor of the young devotee. He relates that the Sisters of the convent of Saint Damien were preparing to celebrate the feast of Christmas. Only Saint Clare, the victim of a torturing illness, was unable to share in the festivities. When her daughters went down to the chapel at midnight to chant the matins of the Nativity, she could not control her disappointment and burst into tears. She upbraided her heavenly Spouse with the pious familiarity of those who are nearer the things of heaven than of earth. And the Master listened. Bernard records that Clare felt herself suddenly transported, whether in spirit or reality she as never afterwards certain, to the Church of the Sacro Convento. She distinctly heard the coanting voices of the Friars Minor; she distinctly saw the crib with its smiling Infant; she distinctly felt that she received the new-born King in the Blessed Euchar-

Whether or not Saint Clare was favored with such a miracle, it is certain that the devotion of the crib spread over Italy and over the world with miraculous enthusiasm. The "Bam-bino" is almost a national institution grinned affably, displaying a few large teeth that were still white.

"Still down on that other chair and gladden my Christmas," said he. "This gift of money is nothing to your company. I deserve it," he added a little pettishly. "I have gladdened others Christmas to-day."

"You have?" I was impolite enough to say in my bewilderrent.

"The birds," said he, pointing out the window to where a few sparrows on the fire escape were pecking at a

ent from the Christmas of the impulsive, the imaginative peoples of the South. The traditions and customs are different, but the idea of the Crib of Bethlehem is the same all over the world. Its accessories may change with changing climes, but the spirit that builds the crib is as universal as the mission of the Church. The old gospel story is re-told every year in every church; it is told in picture letters, that all alike may take it into their hearts, that all alike, as children on the verge of life, may touch the on the verge of the mystery that encompasses the Christmas tide, seeing dimly in human fashion, what it was given Mary to see when the angel came to her one March morning in the little house of Nazareth.

TWO WONDERFUL CHRISTMASSES.

It had been a day of Rome in her glory—the Saturnalia. Through the imperial streets had passed grand imperial streets had passed grand pageants. Aurelian had returned from his conquests. The temple of Janus was closed; banners of peace swung every where. Aurelian feasted in the capital.
At the table sat nobles and peasants;

At the table sat hots and pale and were equal on that one day.

Let us turn to the gloomy quarries under the Campagna. Along the Appian Way of monuments and palaces in removing the stones for building there nad been created countless cavern had been created countless caverns, where from early periods criminals had taken refuge. Latterly, these cells had been secretly used as chapels by persecuted Christians; and here to-night, hard by the blazing and drunken city, these proscribed men and women were gathered to celebrate the birth of our Lord. Turnhes famed on the dame prove to you what a heritage you are relinquishing—you, who are named for Christ's Mother. You know, just as surely as you stand there, that this man will never become a Catholic?"

"Yes, Father," she answered, humbly.

"I went out to do my Christmas among the brown-robed brothers had fashioned a crib, and grouped around it fashio

feast of Charity, an old man rose - the venerable Alexander. His name was on the list of the condemned for whom the Roman officers were seeking. He pointed upward: "The roof of stone hides the stars, but they shine; and they that stars, but they sime, and they turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars of heaven. I know that when the Saturnalia passes, I shall be given to the beasts. But the hosts of the righteous shall increase, shining in their beauty, and Bethlehem's star shall

But a clear and holy light, as from the remembrance of the unshaken faith in which their brethren died, rested upon every face. The places of the martyrs were filled. Men, women and consecrated youth swelled the host that gathered to keep the birth-night of the Christ. The Star of Bethlehem shone steadily over heathen Rome.

A Genoese mariner believes himself born to carry the gospel of Christ to an unknown people and an undiscovered world, a world lying in the mysterious waters of the West. He travels from city to city seeking a powerful patron, natil at Santa Fe, in the south of Europe, takes place the memorable meeting with the king and queen of

With an equipment of three ships he With an equipment of three ships he looses from Palos, and sails to the mysterious waters whose secret shores no eye has seen. Golden days come and go; nights of calm and new stars. Near midnight on Oct. 11, 1492, he sees a light in the far horizon, knows his desting is accomplished, is sure God has fulfilled the prophetic meaning of his name — Columbus, the seeking dove. Morning comes; the New World stands revealed; he leaps on shore, unfurls the banner and cross of Castile.

stands revealed; he leaps on shore, unfurls the banner and cross of Castile, and sings Te Deums.

The missionary mariner sails away again. He discovers Hispaniola, and here he and his followers offer the first Christmas devotions in the New World. Santa Fe, on the Rio Grande, probably was the place where the first Christm's sails away the place where the first Christm's was the place where the first Christman was the place where the first Cristinis anthem was sung in our own land. Co-onado visited the region in search of the Seven Cities of Gold almost one hundred years before the Mayflower sailed into the Christinas-tide storm of Provincetown Bay. The Franciscan missionaries soon followed Coronado.

How poetic must have been the first Christmasses in the new-born town! The mission church is surrounded with mountains whose summits are covered with eternal snow. The sun of the fitful December day goes down, leaving every peak a colossal monument of light and splendor. Evening's curtains fall. It is Vespers. Down the light ladders of the pueblos come the descendants of a race unknown, and make their way to the church. Music tells the tale of the Virgin and the Child. Then arises the Gloria, and it floats out like a breath from the Bethlehem angels over the mighty solitudes that are to become the habitations of the dominant race of the world. The moon rises over the mountains, and turns into whiteness pueblos and chapel. In the bright air stands the mystic sign of the cross like a shadow, and there ascends heavenward in the silence the sweet words, in the Latin tongue, "On earth, peace!" The Star that shone over Bethlehem, upon

In all the affairs of life let it be your great care not to hurt your mind or offend your judgment. And this rule, if observed carefully in all your deportment, will be a mighty security to you in your undertakings.—Epicte-



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