

giving her to us. She will reach Tai-nan to-day on the afternoon boat. This letter is dated a week ago. Had our lazy mail carrier been a few hours later she would have found no one there to meet her.

As he listened John anxiously watched the priest's face, thin and haggard for all its boyishness, wondering why this was not good news.

"We are poor, very poor," Father Labarge continued, after a long pause. "We have hardly enough food for two, and whatever comes she must not suffer."

John was greatly relieved. So this was what was troubling Father Labarge! "Oh, I can eat less, much less!" he said stoutly.

With real admiration the priest smiled into the stolid contented face of the catechist. Already he was living on what was starvation diet for a growing boy, because it was famine year in northern China, and though generous to a fault, their people were too poor and too hungry to have more than a pittance to give away.

"And Father, perhaps she knows how to cook. Of course I don't mean that you do, but—but, why, that's what women are for," he stammered taking this Chinese view of the matter; then hastened to add: "Maybe you will get stronger if you have better food. And your mother might help us pay, if you seek her. Do you remember you said once that perhaps she would? She knows that you are not as strong as you were at first. She'd be glad to think that there is some one to be good to you."

"Yes, she knows all about my health. The bishop made me write and tell her that the doctor said last winter. I am afraid I shall have to ask her for money. I can't allow you and this old woman to suffer. But, John, my mother is not rich, and she has many charities, each dearer to her than anything else in the world. I know well that all she sends us will come out of her living, not out of the part of the income she gives away."

Father Labarge sat twirling the bishop's letter for a while before he continued hopefully, to himself, rather than to John.

"Perhaps the doctor is right, and I could grow strong if I had better food. Somehow, I can't cook. John can't. Practise only makes us more incompetent. And each time he sees me the Bishop threatens to send me home if I do not get well. It was the doctor who first put this mischief into his head. I might be kept there for months, or even years, away from these dear people and this field, white for the harvest and so poor in laborers! It would break my heart to go—though I often dream of being home again, just for one hour, just to look once more into my dear mother's face."

That there was a possibility of Father Labarge being sent back to France John had not known. He was deeply distressed.

"Oh, Father, you won't leave How-chow!" he exclaimed.

"Never, John, of my own will, or without an aching heart!" Then, abruptly changing the subject, he said in a matter of fact way: "We shall give the old lady my room and move my books and papers out of her way. Henceforth I'll spread my bed beside yours on the kang in the back room. We must be very good to her John. She will be homesick and lonely, you know, so far from France."

But Father Labarge did not go at once into the house to make the necessary changes. He was more thoughtful and weary than any one guessed. Every least effort cost him heroic effort. And John, lazy by nature, was only too glad to crouch down on the ground and gaze idly and dreamily at the cloudless sky. Presently he broke the silence which had fallen over them, saying in a hesitating, wistful way, unlike his habitual unemotional stolidity:

"Father, this old woman who is coming—I wonder if she is anybody's mother?"

Father Labarge's tender heart was touched, and he laid a caressing hand on John's shoulder. The boy could not remember his own mother, and this was not the first time he had said something which showed that deep in his heart was a hunger for the love he had never known.

"Yes, John; I forgot to tell you all the Bishop said. She has two sons. Both are settled in life and she is carrying out a project which has long been her dream. So you must be a son to her and fill the place of those she has left behind."

Before noon Father Labarge set out towards Tai-nan, four miles away. Though very miserable, he was too courteous to allow John to meet the old French woman. To protect himself from the heat of the midday sun he carried a large umbrella of strange, unearthly shape, the worse for muscle; but he could not shield himself from the dust which lay several inches deep in the road and almost blinded him whenever a car joggled past. As he dragged himself along his heart was oppressed with the fear which grew on him day by day; that he would be sent to Europe to recuperate. During his four years of work in China he had seen several men break under the strain of hard work and poor food; a few had gone home and never yet been allowed to return; others, and these he envied, had died without respite until the Master Himself had come to take them home to rest forever. He was troubled, too, about the woman thrown upon his hands by the Bishop. She would doubtless be a care in many ways, a help in none, unless she could cook. She might be ill-

natured, as good people of a certain type are, in China as elsewhere. She might become discontented; she might be a gossip; she might be mad; she might be a dozen menacing possibilities.

On and on Father Labarge trudged, the day seemed to lengthen endlessly and haggard for all its boyishness, wondering why this was not good news.

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last day: "Whatever ye did to the loss of My brethren, that ye did unto Me." Men loved one another because they believed that Christ is God.

When men lose their faith in Christ, their charity grows cold. When they cease to be inspired by the sublime example of the love of God made man for us and for our salvation, their hearts shrink up into the poor petty narrowness of selfishness, individual, tribal, national. This is the lesson that men may read upon the very surface of history. The thoughtless irreverence which regards our Divine Saviour as no more than a merely human teacher is very near to the coldness and hardness of heart that shows itself in blind and bitter hatred of the fellow-man.

It is true that even in societies which have been robbed of the priceless treasure of faith in Our Lord, there remain a kindness and charity, such as were unknown in the pagan world. But this kindness is due to the momentum of long centuries of faith and of true Christian love. Our philanthropists are living upon the accumulated capital of ages of Christian charity in the hearts of their forefathers. Even while they are foolishly tearing up the roots of that divine flower of love, the beautiful old Catholic tradition still whispers in tones that grow fainter day by day, and warns them that even love itself demands clear knowledge and strong conviction. It is one of the strangest notions of this age, that the most urgent of our needs may be trusted to a mere irrational sentiment as adequate foundation and motive. Politics, literature, art, having nothing inspiring or cheering to tell us about human nature, its capacities, its aims, its destiny, since civilization became apostate from Christ. They tell us nothing except that man is unlovely and unlovable. Philosophy and pseudo-science aim at making this lesson of pessimism absolutely irrefutable in itself and universal in its grip upon the human mind. Then come the poor forlorn sentimentalists, asking us to go back again to the ages of charity without remembering that they were also ages of faith and that the heart of man craves realities not dreams. Amid the stern realities of life, we need a greater reality to raise our hearts above petty, sordid details of selfish well-being. If we are told, as the best wisdom of the world, that there is no such thing as a higher reality, then talk about charity and devotion to the cause of human progress ceases to have meaning.

Without faith in Jesus Christ there can be no real lasting love among men.—St. Paul Bulletin.

French Republic. He expressed the opinion that Benedict XV. is willing to do everything in his power to bring about such a reconciliation. It is asserted that French legislators, to quote the Archbishop's words: "unlightened by the immense growth of religious feeling in this supreme crisis, will not deprive victorious France of the great moral benefit she has spontaneously acquired. And I am convinced that at Rome there is the disposition and the readiness to make an end of all sorry and regrettable errors."

It may well happen that good will come out of the deplorable necessity that caused France to plunge into the present war. She had set her feet on the downward path to atheism. It is not too late for her to retrace her steps. The new spirit of which the Archbishop of Rouen speaks may induce her to do so.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

### A TRUCE OF GOD

The London Daily Chronicle publishes a despatch from Rome stating that Benedict XV. is endeavoring to induce the belligerent States to suspend hostilities during Christmas-tide. It is to be earnestly hoped that his Holiness' efforts to have even a temporary suspension of the wholesale slaughter now going on, may be crowned with success. The Father of Christendom beseeches the rulers of the countries now at war to put a stop to the clang of arms, whilst Christians are everywhere celebrating the Feast of the World's Redemption. The despatch to the London Daily Chronicle adds: "It is stated that his Holiness has directed that particulars of his appeal be com-

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