

of sharp physical pain, sent up the cry of her heart to the Mother of Sorrows, for her own mother. She realized now that mother-love is deathless and eternal.

The first dim rays of a cloudy morning broke over the sleepy city that was just beginning to awake. And with the first morning light little Christopher also awoke, wide eyed and frightened. His mother, out of her head now, was raving in delirium. Hastily she summoned a neighbor, and in two hours' time Mary Benedict, in an ambulance, was on her way to the County Hospital. And then the little boy realized that he was alone.

It was the 17th of December up in northern Wisconsin, and for the last 24 hours there had been a heavy fall of snow. Now the storm had ceased, it was toward evening and across the wide open country the sun, setting behind the distant hills and dark forests, in a splendor of red and gold, threw its rays far over the surrounding landscape, where farm houses sent up their curling blue smoke, sure sign of the bustle and life within. For was it not the blessed Christmas time when there would be mirth and good cheer, the singing of carols, and perhaps a dance in the barn. Many a busy housewife in her kitchen was preparing for the home coming of absent ones, and the children, with their sleds, brought from the woods the evergreen and holly with which to decorate, to add to the festal array.

From the door of the little church in the village a woman emerged. Pausing she glanced up and down the road, then at the sun which seemed to indicate that it was about 4 o'clock. A moment later a sleigh came into sight, driven by an old man whose keen dark eyes and erect figure almost belied his seventy years. He drew up his sleigh in front of the church, then throwing back the warm robe, assisted his wife to climb to the seat by his side.

"I am late, mother," he said, "but the train is not yet in. I met Tom Byrne and he says he is coming our way about 7 o'clock and will get the box and bring it up. So I needn't wait."

He glanced at his wife as he concluded and something in the sweet old face told him what was in her mind.

"You saw Father Wynn, mother?" "Yes."

"And you left a candle burning, and feel better, eh?" She smiled, a smile mournful in its pathetic sweetness, as again she answered yes.

The rest of the drive, a distance of two miles from the village was taken almost in silence, until a turn of the road brought them in sight of the long low gray farm house, set in a broad sweep of land that stretched away to blue lake beyond. Whether seen in summer or winter it was a lovely spot, the more so as the barns and outbuildings, unlike those of most American farms, were hidden behind a heavy growth of firs, and so were not seen from the road.

The wide clean kitchen with raftered ceiling and diamond paneled windows that looked south and west, was warm and cozy as the old woman entered and removed hood and shawl. A sleepy gray cat was dozing on the hearth of the open fireplace, and a k-tile was singing on the stove in a small room beyond where their meals were cooked. Surely, here was the abode of peace! But the intense silence spoke of loneliness and isolation. There was no sound of children's voices, no merry laughter of young people. Quietly and yet quickly the sole occupant of the room moved around, getting the evening meal, and ever and anon she glanced down the white road, as she had looked and watched in vain for ten years.

It was about 7 o'clock and together they sat in the kitchen with no light save the warm glow from the fireplace. But outside in the long side hall a lamp burned brightly in the window that faced east, a window that looked out toward the road that led to the village, beyond which was the railroad.

The old man moved in his chair. "Tom is late," he said, "still I ordered that box in good time, mother, it has my Christmas present for you, and something for the poor Carters who live down by the mill."

"You are good to try and make a happy Christmas for them, father—but—if only—"

And then suddenly the grey head was bowed on the table, and from the sad blue eyes there came a rain of tears.

"If only our little Mary Josephine was here, father—the child of our old age. Oh! I have borne this grief so long, father, and so have you, and now it seems as if our hearts would break."

She was on her knees in front of him and had taken his two toll-worn hands in hers, and clasped them close to her breast.

"Listen, father, we must go and find her, you and I. For ten long years I have said nothing, but I have suffered, the Blessed Mother knows how much. You love our child as much as I do, you want her back, and you must forgive her now."

The old man gave a half-strangled sob. "I want to, Mary, but I can't, I can't. It seems as if it would kill me to ask her to come back."

The sweet old face in front of his became tender, transfused, illumined as if by a divine message of healing and power.

"Yes, Joseph, you can, you must. For ten years you have stayed away

from the Sacraments; you have foregone all the helps that would make you mighty to forgive. You must go to confession now, this very night. Tomorrow night, go to the city and our child. We must bring her home and have a happy Christmas together; for it is Christmas, father, the time of forgiveness and joy; the time when that other Joseph and Mary were given the Divine Child to love and cherish. Who knows but that our own child needs all our love and our care now, as much as we need her."

Yes, she had conquered at last. Slowly Joseph Carroll arose from his chair.

"The horse is not unharmed yet, mother. Put on your wraps and come with me. We'll drive right down and I'll see Father Wynn."

And so it happened that driving to the village they missed Tom Byrne, who had turned off his cart from the main road to deliver a Christmas box at another farm. Ten minutes later, the good-natured Tom had carried their box into the unlocked kitchen. Then he glanced around, and looked into the other rooms.

"They've gone out," he said aloud, "but they'll be back soon. You've just got to wait." With which mysterious remark, directed, perhaps at the box, Tom closed the door and took his departure.

The drive home, about 9 o'clock, through the keen and frosty air, was fraught with happiness for both father and mother. Strong in her faith, Mary Carroll that afternoon, following an earnest novena and Communion, had left a candle burning before the Blessed Mother's altar for her intention; how miraculously soon her prayer has been answered!

As to her husband, there had rolled from his back a burden that seemed to completely master him. Pride, that had supported him for ten years, had made of him a slave, until his wife's passionate pleading, aided by a miracle of grace, had broken it down.

They would go to Communion together to-morrow, he and she, and then they would take the 10 o'clock train for Chicago and use every effort to find their child.

Arriving at their door the mother alighted, and the old man gathered up the reins to drive to the stable.

"I'll give Jennie a rub, mother," he said, "and see her safe in her stall for the night. I won't be more than half an hour, if so long."

Slowly Mary Carroll entered her kitchen, removed her hood and shawl and hung them on a peg. Then in the soft glow made by the flickering fire light she crossed the wide kitchen toward the open hearth where logs of wood had burned all day. And then she stood still, rooted to the spot, too astonished by what she saw to utter a sound.

It was only a little boy, curled up on the floor in front of the fire, sound asleep, with one arm thrown around the cat, who was also slumbering peacefully.

A log of wood broke and fell from the andirons. The child stirred and spoke in his sleep.

"A mother old and gray," he said. And then that mother was on her knees by the child's side, and as the log gained new life from turning over in its fall, and broke into a bright red flame, she scanned the little face snuggled down on the arm of a torn jacket. And there, line for line, with the same curling brown hair, with the same straight, delicate brown, with the same short upper lip and firm little nose, she traced the likeness of the little Mary Josephine of eighteen years ago, whom she had so often seen, a small girl, curled up in this self-same place near the hearth. An agony of love and joy shook her from head to foot. How poor the child's clothes were, how small he was, had he really come there alone, was he indeed her beloved daughter's child?

The little boy opened his eyes, eyes as blue as his mother's, and in a moment he was wide awake and sitting up.

"Oh," he said, "you're the mother old and gray, and you are beautiful; I knew you would be when mother told me to come here—because the song said so."

She had him on her lap and in her arms.

"My boy, my little boy, tell me your name?"

"Why, I'm Christopher, and you are my grandmother. Mother sent me here. She's very sick and wants you to come to her. She needs you as much as you need her." And Christopher, mindful of the song, fascinated by the sweet face framed in its gray hair, proceeded to answer as best he could, because his mind was in a curious jumble from his novel experience of the past 48 hours, all the questions that this new found grandmother asked him.

And presently she put him down, and went to the door and opened it. "Father," she called, "Father," and in her voice there was a note of joy that her husband, just coming from the barn, was quick to recognize.

What happiness and yet what anguish was in the house that night, as the grandparents, unable to sleep, sat by the bed of the little boy, who now was soundly sleeping, till nearly midnight.

Their child was found, but she was very ill, and she had sent this beloved grandson to summon her mother.

"She did not ask for me," said Joseph Carroll, "my poor girl, she was afraid of me; but I will make it all up to her now."

The early morning found them all three in the little church, and with thankful hearts the father and

mother received the Bread of Life, without which they would not have strength to go forth and meet whatever might come. At 10 o'clock they were steaming toward Chicago, at 2.15 they were in a cab driving to the County Hospital.

"She is very ill," said the doctor to the white capped nurse who had followed him out of the long ward, "but it is not pneumonia, as I feared it would be. It is simply a severe cold joined to reduced vitality. It may develop into pneumonia, but I think the danger of that is nearly passed now."

In spite of her run-down state some strong purpose seems to have been at work in her mind, giving her courage and strength to fight.

"I noticed that," said the nurse, "in her delirium she talked constantly of a mother old and gray, and twice she tried to sing some bars of a song about a mother old and gray who needed her now."

"Well, whatever it is, nurse, it has kept up her will power, and as we know, that's half the battle."

The physician passed on, and at that moment a message was brought to the nurse.

"Mary Benedict, Ward K," said the messenger. "Can she see any one, nurse? Her father and mother and little boy are here."

The nurse hesitated a moment. "Let her mother come," she said, "but no one else today. I will go and prepare her."

"And so it was that 'the mother old and gray' walked down the long ward to the bedside of her child, and taking her in her arms with that wealth of divine mother love that is deathless and eternal, all the anguish and pain of those past ten years were blotted out for them both.

"Oh, I am strong now," said Mary Benedict, "I will soon be well, and you'll take us home, mother, my boy and me? He was born on Christmas day, mother. That's why I called him Christopher. Oh, how good God is!"

Five days later, on the 23rd of December, the happy father and mother were allowed to take their child home. How radiant they all were when the blessed Christmas day dawned! As to Christopher, in his short life he had never known such a Christmassy Christmas. The church bells and the sleigh bells without, the Christmas cheer within; the little creche his grandmother erected under his Christmas tree, all was full of wonder and delight.

"And to think," said Mary Benedict, "that our reunion all came about so wonderfully because of a song!"

The sweet face of the mother old and gray looked out of the window, illumined as with a shining light.

"It is the little things of this world," she said, "that sometimes the Christ-Child uses to confound the wise."—Georgia Pell Curtis, in The Magnificat.

THE CONVENT HOME OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

"The Little Flower of Jesus" has inspired many Catholics to holier living. To them, this article on "The Convent Home of the 'Little Flower,'" taken from the Ave Maria, will be doubly inspiring—first because of the heroism with which the foundation of the convent was undertaken, and second because of the sanctity of the little nun whose life was so closely associated with it.

The now world-famous Carmelite convent at Lisieux is not a very old foundation; for it can not celebrate its first centenary for another twelve years. Clients of its most famous daughter, Soeur Therese de l'Enfant Jesus, the beloved "Little Flower of Jesus," may be interested in learning how this house, which was to be such a sanctuary of grace to their little patronesses, first came into existence.

Indirectly, it owes its origin to the French Revolution; for it was because of the devastation by the revolutionaries of the Carmelite convent at Pont-Audemere that, when peace came again to France, and scattered communities were able to re-forgather, and ruined convents to be rebuilt, the Carmelites of Pont-Audemere were obliged to open a school to provide for their own subsistence.

This was in the spring of 1803, and amongst their boarders were two sisters, Therese and Marie Gosselin. When the time came for these girls to leave school, they had learned so much of the Carmelite life and rule that they both implored to be allowed to remain as postulants in the convent where they had been so happy. Neither of them was strong, and because of this the superiors were obliged to refuse their request. But, undeterred from their purpose, they determined to devote their not inconsiderable fortune to founding another convent of the same Order, where, as foundresses, they would be allowed to live, not exactly as nuns, but bound by simple vows and following rules which are customary in such cases.

They applied to the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux for approval of their scheme; and in December, 1805 he gave them permission to start a Carmelite convent at Lisieux. Therese and Marie were afraid that his death, which occurred soon after, might alter this permission; but the new Bishop, who was an old friend of their family, bade them continue as they had intended doing. He gave them as superior of the new foundation the Abbe Sauvage, head curate

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of the parish of St. Jacques at Lisieux who threw himself heart and soul into the project; and it was owing in great measure to his untiring zeal and perseverance that the foundation was finally secured.

It was no easy matter, at that time to find a Carmelite convent with subjects to spare, and house after house was applied to in vain. Meanwhile several would-be postulants gathered round Mademoiselle Gosselin and her sister, and they joined in prayer, especially during the time the Monsieur Sauvage was making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame de Grace for the intention they all had so much at heart. At last in February 1807, the Abbe received a letter from the mother superior of the Carmelite convent at Poitiers, saying that her community was willing to undertake the new foundation, and that she would receive Mademoiselle Gosselin and her companions, and permit them to begin their novitiate immediately.

Six weeks later four of them entered Carmel, taking the names of the first four Carmelites of the Reform of St. Teresa. After a year's probation, two professed Sisters from the Poitiers community were lent to the Abbe Sauvage, Soeur Elizabeth de St. Louis as Prioress, and Soeur Genevieve de Ste. Therese as mistress of novices and subprioress. These, with the four novices, traveled by diligence to Lisieux, arriving there on March 1808, and taking up their abode under the thatched roof of a charitable friend, Madame le Boucher, until a more suitable convent could be provided. Their arrival was not unprovided some of the adventures of St. Teresa herself when founding houses of her Reform in Spain.

It was late at night; the rain was pouring down; and, impressed by all they had heard of Carmelites' holy poverty, the friend who had promised the Sisters from the diligence to Madame le Boucher's house, sent not a carriage but a farm wagon, with no covering except a tarpaulin, which was anything but waterproof. To make matters worse, Madame le Boucher received them in total silence, thinking that nothing, not even a first arrival, could break the rule of silence which all Carmelites keep after 8 o'clock in the evening. Rigid, too, were the good lady's ideas of holy poverty. "We are enjoying the poverty of Bethlehem," Mere Genevieve wrote to Poitiers. "It is what we have thought of in our meditations, but which up to now we have never practised."

The rooms placed at their disposal were miserably small. Two garrets, with an open doorway between them, formed their dormitory; and the thatched roof seemed to be the harbor of every member of the spider and beetle families. On the next floor, a fair-sized room served them as a chapel; whilst the single apartment on the ground floor had to be divided by curtains, and used as kitchen, as refectory and community room, and, in one corner, as cell for the Mother Prioress—or, rather, as the standing room for her bed. The slightest movement against the curtain which formed her bedroom wall threatened an earthquake amongst the frying pan and two sauce-pans which formed their batterie de cuisine. Their china cupboard, which was represented by a wooden box, was so poorly furnished that, when their soup was eaten, the plates had to be washed before the remainder of their dinner could be served.

The strip of garden which was at their disposal was open at one end to the street; so that to the Sisters, longing for the privacy of their beloved enclosure, it was a real and penance to take the air at all. Their coming was not welcomed by the people of Lisieux, who had not yet overcome the anti-clerical ideas of the Revolution; and the parish priest of St. Jacques, who was uncle of their friend and superior, the Abbe Sauvage, used to warn them to keep as quiet as possible, so that people might forget that they were in the town at all.

It was five months before a suitable house could be found for the future convent; and even then the building which Monsieur Sauvage decided upon, in the Rue de Livarot, was very old and inconvenient. The situation and surroundings, however, were suitable; and the prioress and the two Sisters who accompanied her, to inspect their new domain, declared themselves satisfied. The work of transforming the place into a Carmelite convent brought to light the talent of organization which had helped the superiors at Poitiers to decide upon Mere Elizabeth as the foundress of Lisieux.

September 5, 1808, was the day on which the Sisters took up their residence in the convent, which the Bishop, Monsieur Robin, had already blessed. From that day subjects came seeking admission; and

the enlargement of the convent became so necessary that, as houses nearby came into the market, the community struggled with poverty so as to be enabled to buy them. Providence sent them charitable benefactors, yet holy Poverty remained in the ascendant—so much so that on the occasion there was nothing in the house for dinner but a dish of stewed leeks; and a postulant ready for her clothing had to wait for some months before they were able to buy enough cloth to make her habit.

Thus, in the midst of the poverty that Our Lord loves, this community, which He has so favored, took root at Lisieux. By slow degrees the convent was brought into the form in which thousands of Catholics from all-the world over pilgrims to the home of the Little Flower, now know it. The last wing—in which Sister Therese's cell was to be, with the Way of the Cross and the Oratory of the Sacred Heart, and the fourth cloister was built during the priorate of Mere Marie de Gonzague, who was later to receive little Therese Martin as a postulant.

So was the material foundation of the convent of Lisieux made. Its spiritual foundation is due mostly to Mere Genevieve de Sainte Therese, and it is she of whom the Sisters speak and write as their foundress. "It is Mere Genevieve," wrote one amongst them, "who made known to us the secrets of the perfect life; it is she who walked before us along the path that leads to the highest possible spirituality; and, aided by her counsel and example, we have followed as best we could." How high this "best" has been may be judged by those who know and love the Little Flower.

PAID DEFAMERS OF THE CHURCH

(By William H. Sloan, convert, and former Baptist missionary in Mexico)

"We ourselves were engaged in writing and preaching such stuff against the Church probably before the editor of the—was born—for his articles show that he is yet in the 'puppy' age, as well as of the 'puppy' character—and we know all about the origin and source of the lies and calumnies that he gives the public every week. We ourselves have waded through all the disgusting mire of slanderous attacks on the priests and nuns; we have anathematized the bishops who wanted to take public funds from the treasury for the support of Catholic institutions; we have cried to Heaven to defend our attacks against the insidious attacks of Rome; we have accused the Pope of lying awake at night to devise some way by which he might surreptitiously win over the United States to the 'Romanist' cause; we have painted the ignorance of Mexico and of South America in most lurid colors; and we have reason to believe that much of the bigoted drivel now going the rounds of the Guardians of Liberty-press, and heard in bigoted Protestant pulpits, had its origin in our soporific declamations years ago when we traveled through the States in search of work of Protestant propaganda, and inveighed in most bitter terms against 'superstition, immorality, ignorance and vice,' as found among the Roman Catholic people where we labored."

"We were not entirely to blame; we were paid for doing it (as is the editor of the—) and we were easily persuaded it was all true. We learned the truth after a while. A compassionate God took hold upon us, lifted our feet out of the mire, and placed them upon the Rock.—Ave Maria."

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God gives the supplies. Man retards them to his brother man. The Catholic Herald gives this case in point: "We have a man in Chicago holding seventy million eggs in cold storage, we have another somewhere else keeping back butter until it reaches a dollar a roll. We have six thousand boxes of crabs stored away in San Francisco; we have flour and bread going up by bounds. We learn from the papers that tons of fish are being thrown back into the rivers and sea to keep up the prices of that commodity, and that farmers are allowing vegetables to rot that they may get a bigger price for those they preserve. It is not necessary to point out that all of that is contrary to the law of God and that those who thus artificially cause suffering and want simply to make money are in the same category as those who are so severely denounced in the catechism for withholding the wages of the laborer."



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