

herself retires to the best done-up bedroom in her house, which is the post-office department, and empties out the letters, and stamps them, and reads the superscription and post-marks on each, and speculates who they are from, and what they are about, and how many of them contain cheques. When, after a long and careful study of all the evidence to be gathered from the outside of the letters, she emerges again from the bedroom and post-office, she imparts to what neighbors and customers may be in the kitchen the exciting intelligence regarding all in the parish for whom letters have come, and what country, state and city each letter has come from; who is likely to have sent it and what is likely to be in it. She asks her customers (who have a mile or two miles to travel home) to call round by John Doherty's of the Alt, and in form him that there is a letter waiting him from young Johnny; and by Una Brogan's of Dhinnaherik, and tell her that her husband Patrick, out in Iowa, has not forgotten her, but has sent a letter for her, and it is likely for her here, and it is more than likely there is a cheque in it, for it is thick; and by the Widow MacCallin's of the Long Brae to say that there is a curious kind of a long blue letter for her, and that there is a Dublin post-mark on it, and that the post-mistress does not know what it means, nor who it is from, nor what it is about.

Of course, when the happy individuals come for their letters, they never have the ill-taste to take these from the post-mistress' hand, and merely say "thank you" and walk out. The smallest return they can give her for her kindness in presenting them with a letter is that they should there and then also ask her to open it and see what is in it, and read it for them—a very congenial task which the post-mistress always graciously performs. And again, when they return to the post-office, to post a letter in reply, it is always good etiquette to inform the post-mistress, as she serves a stamp for the letter and even licks it and puts it on, what the contents are; and if there is anything particularly private in the letter, it should be whispered in the post-mistress' ear. He would be a very rude fellow indeed (a woman would be incapable of doing the trick) who would come to the post-office, purchase a stamp, lick it and stick it, go outside and drop the letter into the little slot of the window, say "Good-day Mrs. MacGroarty," and walk off! He would be a very rude, ill-bred fellow, indeed, and it is little wonder that Mrs. MacGroarty should complain bitterly to him to every customer that came into her house for a week after; and it is little wonder that Mrs. MacGroarty would, when a letter came for this ill-bred individual, hold it over undelivered for a fortnight; and when eventually he got it, give him a snub along with it. "Let him put that in his pipe and smoke it."

The post-mistress is, indeed, as a rule, most gracious, and accepts without remonstrance almost any and every letter given to her for transmission elsewhere. She never looks upon this as any trouble and would be very angry indeed with her customers if they protested that they were thereby pestering her. They promise not to offend again for months, and she assures them that it will only be a pleasure to her to send of another letter for them even on the following week—at which preposterous idea they laugh an apologetic laugh, and thank her, and praise her patience and good temper, and obliging disposition.

The only instance in which she refuses, or rather perhaps threatens to refuse to transmit letters, is when the subject is the universal passion. "I don't like" she will reprove the blushing one, "to see people making fools of themselves; and any silly fellow or silly girl that comes to me with a foolish blatherskitten letter about love and that sort of humbug, I will put the letter behind the fire. Let them not think that my post-office is to be used for mediums of that sort. If they must make fools of themselves, let them choose some other way of doing it than through me, or my post-office, for I will not knowingly be made the medium or mains of any such tomfoolery." In this way the country post-mistress is a capital check upon the impetuous youths and lasses, who, if there was no vigilant post-mistress on the alert, would commit themselves to paper to sentiments that twelve months later, they would be heartily ashamed to acknowledge.

One time it came to pass that the post-office of Mrs. MacGroarty, to whom I have referred, needed a letter carrier. The brilliant idea struck Mrs. MacGroarty (for she was an ingenious woman) that her own young single sister, Shiela, should make a capital postman. Of course such a thing as a girl carrying the post had never before been heard of there. But Mrs. MacGroarty was a woman of high mind and could not be bound down by the conventions; so Mrs. MacGroarty caused Shiela to apply for the post, discreetly holding her sex from the authorities in Dublin, and signing herself simply "S. MacGroarty." After references and recommendations had been sent, and after the post-office authorities in Dublin had generally satisfied themselves that "S. MacGroarty" was a fit and proper person for the post, they wrote down appointing the aforesaid S. MacGroarty to carry the mails from Donegal to Mrs. MacGroarty's post-office, twice a week, at the magnificent salary of eight pounds a year. The heart of S. MacGroarty was rejoiced. After a little time there came to Mrs. MacGroarty's post-office, for the new postman, a full postman's uniform, with a request that in accordance with the new regulations, the postman "Mr. S. MacGroarty," as they innocently styled Shiela, should when carrying the post, wear the full uniform. Shiela smiled, and Mrs. MacGroarty said that the uniform would suit Mickey Haran (the parish fool), and that they would give it to the creature in the course of a week or so, when he came that way.

Some way in the parish (for there were many of them) wrote to the

authorities to say that the new postman was not wearing the uniform as required by the regulations. So, by return of post Mrs. MacGroarty was started to receive the following communication: "G. P. O., Dublin, March 20th, 18—  
"Madam:  
"If I am rightly informed that, notwithstanding my communication of the 1st inst., your district postman, Mr. S. MacGroarty, has not adopted the uniform provided, in going his daily rounds, I beg to notify you that this is very irregular, meriting severe censure; and I beg to insist that Mr. S. MacGroarty will, for the time to come, adopt the uniform provided.

I have the honor to be, madam, Your obedient servant,  
The Secretary."

Mrs. MacGroarty and Shiela both thought the authorities too punctilious; talked over the whole matter for the length of a winter's night, and in the end it was agreed that Shiela should wear the postman's cap and cap, and Mrs. MacGroarty accordingly wrote to the secretary of the General Post-office, that S. MacGroarty, would, in compliance with the request, wear the cap and cape. Immediately there came another letter from Dublin—a sharper one—saying that their order must be complied with and the complete uniform worn by the postman, Mr. S. MacGroarty. Poor Shiela was very much distressed at this and after long consultation, she and Mrs. MacGroarty conceded another point to the red-tapists in Dublin, namely, that she would wear jacket and vest also, so Mrs. MacGroarty wrote them to this effect, and hoped they would be pleased now anyhow, if pleasing them was possible. By return mail, she had a further and still sharper reply, saying that in accordance with the regulations, complete uniform must be worn. The Secretary added, that he trusted to hear at once, that his third-time repeated order was complied with. Mrs. MacGroarty again replied promptly that "S. MacGroarty" had sincere conscientious objections to wearing the complete uniform; that she considered "S. MacGroarty's" objections valid and proper, and that she believed the authorities should not press "S. MacGroarty" to do anything contrary to conscience. The Secretary of the General Post-office wrote back demanding what were the possible conscientious objections S. MacGroarty could have to wearing the trousers. The post-mistress replied that she could not state the objections, but asked the authorities to take her word as post-mistress, that the objections of S. MacGroarty were valid and sufficient. The authorities, irritated and puzzled beyond measure, instead of replying sent down an inspector to inquire into the circumstances, and when the inspector stepped into Mrs. MacGroarty's post-office and asked to see the postman, and when Shiela MacGroarty, bowing and blushing, was ushered into his presence, he was amazed and the scales fell from his eyes, and he went back to Dublin again, and promptly there came down a letter to the post-mistress, from the Secretary of the General Post-office, to the effect that S. MacGroarty was, under special circumstances, absolved from wearing complete uniform, and that though the precedent never had been established before, S. MacGroarty was, though a female, confirmed in her office as postman.

So even over the great chief authorities in Dublin, the country post-mistress triumphed.

**A CATHOLIC SLUM MISSION.**

INTERESTING GLIMPSES OF ONE PHASE OF CHURCH WORK IN THE GREAT CITY OF CHICAGO.

From the New World.  
An immense black cross, entwined with a white winding sheet, and reaching to the low ceiling of the room; to the right of the cross by no means artistic statue of the Blessed Virgin; to the left a representation of the Sacred Heart, which is by no means a De Prato; in front of the ominous black sign a white and gracefully draped statue of Our Lady of Victory, before whom a tiny pink lamp burns; an oleograph picture of the Pope in high colors, and a cottage piano backed against the side wall on the low platform are the main features of the Catholic slum chapel at 458 South Clark street, where an immense amount of good is being done by a body of zealous young laymen who have set themselves the unenviable task of trying to ameliorate the condition of at least some of the thousands of Catholics who, from force of circumstances, pass their lives in one or other of the ten-cent rooming houses, dozens of which abound in this part of the city.

The store which has been converted into a slum mission chapel, and for which \$20 a month rent is exacted, is squalid and unkempt. The paper on the wall and ceiling is peeling off. The Welsbach mantles are mostly broken, or the glass globes cracked. There is a decided air of poverty about the place, and one regrets that young men, should be compelled through lack of funds, to bring men into so poor a place. This is to be the more regretted because within a stone's throw of this very poor Betheltem is a Baptist slum chapel which is as neat and prim as if it were a succursal chapel to some grand cathedral, and almost next door to it is a Salvation Army slum chapel, which is by no means uncomfortable nor unclean.

One day recently an occasional correspondent of the New World, who herewith records his impressions, was induced to visit this Catholic slum mission chapel by having a "dodger" put into his hand while waiting for a car at the corner of State and Van Buren streets. It bore the following legend:

OMNIA PRO JESU ET MARIA  
All are Welcome.  
A Free Lecture and Entertainment  
Will Be Given at  
THE MISSION OF OUR LADY  
OF VICTORY,  
458 South Clark St.,  
A Few Doors South of Polk Street, on

West Side of Street,  
THIS EVENING,  
at 7.30 o'clock.

Then followed a programme of about twelve numbers, consisting of readings, songs, duets and instrumental music, and containing the announcement that there would be a lecture by a well known Chicago priest.

While walking along South Clark street on my way to the mission, I chanced to look into the Baptist slum mission and saw there was an audience of not more than a baker's dozen. In the Salvation Army room there were about half that number to whom a Salvation Army lassie seemed to be expounding the Scriptures from a rather high rostrum. I imagined that probably it was an off night for slum mission work along Clark street, and that I should find a correspondingly small number at the Catholic mission, owing to some counter attraction elsewhere. My surprise was great when, upon entering the mission chapel of our Lady of Victory to see the place quite full of men. I was to learn afterwards what was the attracting power.

**A PATHETIC SIGHT.**

Not wishing to be influenced, but desiring to be unmolested in forming my own impressions of the work, I let it be understood that I was one of the ten-cent rooming house inmates and wanted to hear the concert. I secured a seat where I could conveniently study the faces of many of the men present. It was a pathetic sight. Men of almost all ages were represented. Youths of eighteen years or less were there, on whose faces a life of hostility to the laws of God, or the ravages of intemperance had not yet had time to leave indelible traces.

Other faces showed marks of years of dissipation, while many had the scared, hunted, weary look of those who, if not actual pariahs of society, live a hand-to-mouth precarious life. Here and there could be distinguished a reputable mechanic who have met with the misfortune of being unable to find work. The most impressive feature in the motly gathering was a certain wistfulness on many faces, indicative to those who could read character, of a desire to lay down the burden of sin and guilt and be at peace with themselves and their Creator. The opportunity to effect this was offered as the interesting programme of the evening proceeded.

Mr. M. F. D. Collins, the real head and animating spirit of this Catholic slum mission, began the entertainment by the recitation of the Rosary, at which he insisted that all the men should kneel down and not merely sit forward. Then a popular hymn was sung at the beginning of which all were told to "please arise."

Before the concert began Mr. Collins spoke for about five minutes, giving a strong and earnest exhortation to temperance. This gentleman has been engaged in slum work for some years and he gives it as his opinion that drink is the chief cause of the degradation and misery of most of those who are habitués of rooming houses. He did not, consequently, spare his hearers, but gave them a vivid address on the necessity of leaving whisky alone.

Just as he finished his address all heads were turned towards the street door. Some one had arrived in whom the men were much interested. It was the priest who was to address them. Faces brightened as he came up the aisle, and the satisfaction that he had come found expression in vigorous hand-clapping. He was a short, thick-set, rather stout Father, with a pleasant smiling face. The slum element seemed to take to him immensely. He had evidently often paid them a visit. The secret of his popularity with these men became evident when he addressed them. In a magnetic, earnest way he spoke and appealed to the men and in their own idiom, making an appeal for cleaner and better lives. He appeared to be able to enter into their lives and their way of thinking and gradually to lift them to higher aspirations and better things. As the speaker proceeded I closely watched the faces of many of his auditors and saw that emotions had been aroused that must have lain dormant in the breasts of many for long long years.

At the close of the instruction a hymn was sung, and then the Father invested several in the scapular. He then made an unconventional act of contrition aloud, to which every one responded with a hearty "Amen." The priest then gave his blessing, after which Mr. Collins, quite unceremoniously, dismissed the ladies and gentlemen who had furnished the concert for the evening. A portable confessional was immediately set up and the priest began hearing confessions at once, while Mr. Collins and his zealous corps of assistants at the other end of the room were busy urging as many men as possible to go to the Father and "straighten up." I became interested and determined to stay till the end. It cost me a part of my night's rest, for the Father did not come out of the confessional until 11.45 p. m., and then he absolutely refused to let his name be mentioned in connection with these impressions.

A NERVOUS PENITENT.  
Once during the evening the Father

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was called out of the confessional by Mr. Collins.

"Father, here is a young man who is very nervous. Will you help him. He seems afraid, and yet wants to go to confession."

The priest beckoned the young man and smiled. For a moment he put both hands on his shoulders and then whispering a word or two, he took his arm and walked him around to the penitent's side of the confessional. In ten or twelve minutes the young fellow came out and said to Mr. Collins: "My goodness! I made my confession almost before I knew it. I never felt so fine in all my life as I do now. I'm going to keep straight now, Mr. Collins, sure," and then turning to me he said: "Say, neighbor, you needn't be afraid to go to that Father."

The slum chapel is open every night and on Sunday afternoons. In connection therewith there exists a club, the essentials for membership being that the men shall take the pledge for six months and promise to go to confession and Holy Communion once a month for that period. That is a very efficacious means of helping many who are more weak than vicious. On the Communion Sunday Mr. Collins always manages to get the men a breakfast at the slum chapel, although frequently the night before he does not know where the means are to come from.

This gentleman, who seems entirely devoted to the men of the slums, does not confine his work to the slum chapel. He is well known in the big rooming houses, where he seeks out and encourages Catholics and distributes Catholic literature. He personally distributes the "dodgers" early every Wednesday evening in many of the huge caravansaries which lie south of Van Buren street on Clark and in that neighborhood. The Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul pays the rent of the store used as a chapel. Difficulty is sometimes experienced in securing a priest to give the instruction. Sometimes a Jesuit, sometimes a Paulist or a Carmelite, and frequently a diocesan priest performs this charitable work. Any cast-off men's clothing would be thankfully received at the mission of Our Lady of Victory, 458 South Clark street.

The way of the Cross is the path of the predestinate, the way of the saints, the royal road, the king's highway.

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