

MONTREAL, JANUARY 14, 1899.

ONE OF THE UNNUMBERED.

It was six in the morning of a cheerless December day. The lowering sky hung in dismal greyness above the bare brown fields. The country road stiff with the frosts of the night, stretched a forlorn streak of solitude. The dawn seemed breaking dispiritedly on the chilly world. A few fitful snowflakes, dry minute particles, floated about in the air, not even hardy forerunners of a cheering storm. It was an hour and a morning which they best enjoyed who were snugly bestowed in warm beds, asleep.

The numbing dullness of the scene was punctuated by one living thing. An old woman past seventy-five winters (she did not suggest past summers) was toiling along the road with resolute slowness. Her burden of years lent a feeble roll to her gait humorously suggestive of a mariner's. A black shawl was held tightly around her narrow shoulders. A warm but unsightly quilted hood sheathed her head like a baby's cap. From it her wrinkled face peered out, as a walnut might from its shell.

One intuitive of the soul in human features would have found an odd beauty in that old face, of a serene grace than the semile tenderness breathed for centuries from the stone Silenus with protective yearning for the babe in its arms; the beauty to which the heart quivers. As the face of age has its last ugliness when it shows the scorings of vice, this wrinkled visage held the mellowed sweetness of a lifetime on the heights.

The small sunken black eyes had the shy softness of a wood violet. The thread-like line of the thin, closed lips was movingly benign. The cheeks dipped from the broad high bones into hollows with a like pathetic accent.

Her dark brown woollen skirt cleared the ground by three or four inches, revealing the stoutly shod feet. One of the shoes showed a small rent near the toe, eloquent of poverty, rather than untidiness.

The old woman's hands were tucked away beneath her shawl, perhaps through the spirit that leads him who prays to his closet. For the stubby fingers were slowly passing one bead after another of a wooden rosary through their calloused lips. From longtime friction of this kind the grains had taken on a modest lustre.

Poor old hands, whose rest was prayer, though their labor was a prayer too. On their backs, in dim blue ridges, rose the veins, hypocritically, full conduits of the blood that performed its function for the outworn body with tepid laggardness.

Had the villagers seen her, this is what they would have surmised: her hands were doing, as they would also have known the term of her lonely course that winter morning before the sun had softened the iron grey sky to cloudy pearl. They knew nothing short of a cyclone would prevent Mother Brennan from journeying each morning to the ugly wooden church, on the outskirts of the village, a full mile from her own box of a house. Not a villager but felt heartened by her sweet homely smile of greeting. Never a smile breathed more dignity, content and warm fellowship of heart.

The ravens that brought his loaves to the Prophet were not more regular than was the lone old woman in quest of her daily bread—the manna of the Lord.

Lone, for Mike Brennan had been sleeping, tired laborer that he was, full forty years in the small graveyard on the slope of the hill, and only a few months back had her gently streaming eyes seen stout Tom Brennan, her only son, and she was a widow—lowered to a place by his father's side.

It was a pleasant place to sleep, that sunny slope, when one was to sleep so long, and one felt they must sleep in dreamless peace who were laid there.

The field flowers flecked it with their artless prettiness in Springtime, and in summer the ruminant kine roved along the hilltops above it, their cumbrously gracious forms a pastoral processionary athwart the sky. Yes, a sunny tract, one to charm from out the hearts of the living any rancor of regret for the dead.

Mother Brennan felt no farther removed from her long dead husband than from her recently lost son. They were both only over the border line of the two worlds, and few could know how close these two worlds were to each other for Mother Brennan. Now, especially when she was so near that border herself, she was nearer to her dead than to the living ones about her; she dwelt more in their company. The Communion of Saints was a lively tenet of her simple faith.

Each day she arose before the sun, lit her oil lamp, as neat and trimly kept as one of the Wise Virgins, then prepared her simple breakfast; a cup of coffee and a cut from the loaf of her own making. Having renewed her slender strength, she made her slow, loving way to the church,

where, with the child-like audacity of God's little ones, she held familiar converse with her Lord.

Through sheer humility she would not receive communion except on Sundays, the Feast Days of the Church and the days of St. Michael the Archangel, Saint Thomas the Apostle and Saint Rose, the family patrons. Mike and Tom were saints now themselves, and though she never thought it, so was she. Those dear ones, their address was different from her own; but hers, like theirs, was in the "Care of God."

Friends she had on earth as in heaven. The whole village regarded her as a homely comfort and an honor rather than as a duty heritage to the community. The tender heart and other ties, not as close as those which bound her to the dear Unseen with Mike and Tom, nor as strong as the bonds between the good village folk and herself, yet sweet and soothing. There was the fragile rose bush, back of her kitchen window. It responded to her constant care by two or three sumptuous blooms which seemed to tax its whole system. This was in the Summer. The remainder of the year it pined, a chronic invalid.

Then there was the cat, sleek, demurely affectionate and house-loving. It would curl itself up on the hearth, when Mother Brennan went to church in the morning, and would come to greet her with a tremendous miaow on her return, arching its back carressingly against the brown woollen skirt, though it was cool from the morning air, and Bethlehem loved warmth with her whole soul.

For Mother Brennan had named it Bethlehem. It had not seemed quite right to call it after one of the Saints and yet she wished it to bear a holy name. There was an advantage in it she had not foreseen; for it was so long and said itself so slowly that it was like having a little talk with the petted thing to call it by its name. The soft grey creature answered to it with sweet simplicity and no more abashedness than if it were Jessamine or Mehitabel.

But Mother Brennan loved it dearly. For Tom had brought Bethlehem in one evening, a small, wild-eyed mop of stringy fur. He had plucked it from the mill-pond, where small boys had thrown her, not through a laudable Mathiasian view of kittens, but merely in exuberance of innocent cruelty.

When Tom's stout hand had placed the damp, rattled wail upon the sanded floor, it had worked to its feet, raised its head and regarded Mother Brennan with wide, arraigning eyes. Then with deep conviction it tottered toward her, doling out a feeble yowl. A mere fraction of such commending things would have won her hospitable welcome. Bethlehem always reminded the old lady of the sweet heartedness of her big, powerful son, who could never see a weak thing ill-used. Many a prayer had Mother Brennan breathed with deepest devotion for Tom's dear soul, at sight of Bethlehem dreaming in homely comfort on the hearth, a purring coil of contentedness.

One other object, dear to her old heart, she cherished with some spiritual reserve because its appeal was only human and roused reflections the good soul viewed askance in that they were tinged with melancholy. One who is a friend of God should not be a traitor to Him by any feeling of that kind. Not one drop of melancholy had ever mingled with her beautiful sorrow that Mike and Tom had gone from her. This qualified object of Mother Brennan's affection was a pot of Shamrock, grown from a tiny sprig Father Downes had brought back to her from his native Limerick. Like that little plant, she had been uprooted from the land of her birth. Unlike it, she had no one to care for her.

Other loved objects, partly of heaven and partly of earth, were the beautiful things of the bright world that surrounded her. The broad tranquil mill-stream in front of her small house, which the sun stroked with lambent touches and into which the wild swallows would dip in their heedless haste, and then dash away; the willows, that stretched their tenderest wands of palest yellow above the mirroring water, and when the wind ruffled them turned the silver underside of their lanceolate leaves, as if palpitating at the thought of a storm; the broad sweep of meadow, sparkling gaily with dewdrops in the Summer mornings, soft in soothing green after sundown, and hushed in white silence when Winter wrapped it in a pall of snow; the undulating line of hills melting into hazy blue against the distant horizon; the genial brightness of the sun by day, and the fantastic clouds, snowy, pearly, rosy, which God let play in His heaven; the stars that blazed in glittering confusion in the night's dome of blue each of which answered to God from just that spot where he had set it—these were all Mother Brennan's good, dear friends. She loved them all, for they were God's, and so was she, and kinship is cementing.

But kind, stupid, human friends had been telling Mother Brennan of late she ought to provide for herself and for her later days. Not that they were weary of supplying her with things to be knitted or made up; but they saw that she took longer to get to church and that the sturdy, falttering steps were more faltering, if still determined. She would need to be cared for at home, how soon none could tell, nor for how long. There was no one to give that care.

A factory man wanted her plot of land. He needed it for business ends. With the money he would give her she could comfortably provide a refuge for herself in her last days. She could go to the Little Sisters of the

Poor in the neighboring town and be tenderly looked after till she died, and with a sense of independence without.

Mother Brennan, who had gone on in utter truthfulness to God, nursing her rose-tree and caring for Bethlehem, her soul exhalant an aroma that sweetened her lone but not lonely life, lent humble ear to their superior wisdom. She did not want to trouble any one. She had thought before that came to pass, the Angel would have called and taken her to Mike and Tom. God knew how willing she was to go. But the simple faith that accepted and did not analyze, or rebel, or even pray that something that God wished might be changed to something that she wished, felt that duty might point to what the neighbors urged. She was not insensible to her growing weakness. She had noted it with inward joy as a loosening of the bonds. But she had no right to impose herself as a burden upon others. She had no wish to.

So the small house where she had lived for half a century, where Tom had been born and where Mike and Tom had died, with her quarter acre of ground, including the forlorn rose tree, passed to the factory man, who could hardly wait to tear it down. Her few household goods she gave to a poor shoemaker who had made shoes for Mike and Tom and her good shoes, if they were the only thing she wore out. To him she also gravely consigned Bethlehem, her cherished trust on his promise that the cherished thing should never want a home or food.

Then Mother Brennan rode in the milkman's cart ten miles to town, the neighbors coming to the doors and waving their hands and handkerchiefs to her as the rickety white horse slowly jogged by the cottages she bowed simply and gravely to them like an old queen going into exile.

She endured her asylum in the noisy, ugly city six months without a murmur of tongue, look or feeling, not knowing that she was making greater headway toward heaven than ever before. But one soft early day of Spring, a broad sunbeam stole into her room, and the tepid air that lightly stirred the grey locks on her temples smelt of the warm, resolute earth. It said budding willows, the peace of a sunlit stream, the elms waving in a mist of green welcome, the long sweep of meadows quickening to emerald life after their Winter sleep, the mountain dim in the azure distance. Oh, so distant!

A yearning for the soothing touch of that old environment, as possessive as Death's fingers, laid hold of Mother Brennan's soul. The balmy Spring, the joyous Summer were coming to the hillocks of her dead, and she would not be near them.

There was an almshouse in her little village. She would go there and wait so long as God should will. It was His inn, and they would take her.

She told the Sisters with slow earnestness that she must go back. They had been good and kind. Yes, very. But she was nearer to God there, where she had lived so long. She knew the pathways better to Him there.

They strove to dissuade her, strove innocently, ignorantly, and in vain. They told her they could not give her back the money, for it was gone. She did not want it. She was glad the poor old things for whom they cared should profit by it. She must go back. They would not ask anything for her keep in the almshouse. She must go there. The graveyard on the hill, the meadow, the stream, the waving willows, all the beautiful dear things God had lavished on her, and which had woven themselves into the slow pulsations of her tired old heart—she said almshouse, she meant them.

So they reluctantly let her go. For her soft, sweet patience was so different from the querulous exactions of the other old people, that the Sisters loved her. She revived visibly in that dear home-setting. Poor old woman in an almshouse; everything about her was her own.

A tinge of pink crept into the fine skin with its myriad wrinkles, like the reflection of a rose petal on old ivory, and the dim, worn eyes had almost a glow.

Never had Spring been so soothingly gentle, never a Summer so bountifully sweet. They were as great flags brimming with Nature's wine, from which her weary old body and grateful young soul drew gladness and refreshment.

Then came the nipping touch of Autumn. The willow leaves turned their silver backs upon the harsh air with artless aversion. The sleepy stream broke into a dumb-whisper of steely ripples, and the blooming meadow fell into shrivelled brownness before its Winter sleep under the snow.

Mother Brennan felt the chill of the dying year like those friends of hers. The almshouse was not her cosy, if humble home, seasoned with hallow memories and brightened by Bethlehem's sympathy. The Fall was despoiling her as it was the other creatures of the dear God, and the coming winter foreboded her brave, resigned spirit. She must take her heart to what warmed it most, the Lord in His little Church.

So she told the Observer one day that she must go to church the following morning. It was the anniversary of Tom's death, though she was characteristically silent about that. The Overseer remonstrated that the air was too cold for her, the walk too long. At least she should have some bread and coffee before going, and she could not get that before seven. Let her wait till then. No, she could not. There was only one Mass and that was at six. She wished to receive communion. She could do it well, she had often done it before. The sullen dark morning found her

faring slowly over the old familiar road. The chill got into her blood, but there was something in her heart that made her insensible to it as well as to the feeble lagging of her feet. The enfolding peace of her thoughts surpassed the churning of the Springtide. Mike and Tom seemed never too near. As she passed the graveyard and looked at their two graves, side by side, a more than wonted tenderness for her dead made her poor old eyes grow moist with unshed tears as she plodded on without a pause.

When she got to the dear little church, with its three or four worshippers, she made her way to a pew near the sanctuary and sank exhausted on her knees. When the time for Communion arrived, a young girl near her, a factory hand, marvelled that she did not rise and go to the railing. She knew Mother Brennan well.

Looking at her more closely she saw that her head drooped, that she was breathing with the fitful respiration of a gaunt dog, dreaming on the hearthstone. Leaning forward the girl touched her, and as Mother Brennan roused herself with conscious effort, asked if she did not wish to go to Communion. The sweet smile came to the old woman's lips, her smile of lowly gratitude.

She rose laboriously, and with tenacious purpose, made her flagging strength bear her to the Communion rail. When the Priest came to her, the venerable old head sank back upon her shoulders as she raised her face, that he might place the sacred particle upon her tremulous tongue. Then it slowly bent in touching dignity of obedience to her Lord, and the small black figure did not stir.

She clung close to the Communion rail, as a ruffled bird snuggles into some tiny niche in a Cathedral tower, seeking shelter from the scurrying blast.

The priest had marked the expression of the wan, worn face. The soul had never stood forth so strongly in it. When he came down the altar steps at the end of the Mass, he looked her again, keenly. He made his genuflection, walked quickly into the sacristy, and having set down the chalice, took a leather case containing the Holy Oils from a closet, and without unvesting hurried back to her. He touched her sloping shoulders, then gently raised her head. Mother Brennan revived under his hand like a fainting flower, and slowly the sunken eyes turned to his with the look of a baby in their mother's gaze.

"You're ill, Mother Brennan, are you not?" he said in his warm, methonic tones. "Would you not like to have me give you the Last Sacrament and Absolution? Then I will send you home, or take you there myself."

The holy fingers feebly interlaced themselves and the lids fell over the dimmed eyes in meek assent. With light touch of the Holy Oils the priest anointed the eyes, ears, nostrils, lips and hands, those organs of the senses which Mother Brennan had never used, save to get at God, with through His vesture of the sweet, clean universe, never anything but sweet and clean to her.

Then the weary old head, with its touches of the consecrating chrism, sank slowly forward once again and the homely little figure became motionless. The priest, walked rapidly back to the sacristy, returned the leather case to the closet, took off his vestments as quickly as he could and, in soutane and biretta, returned to her at once—the shepherd to his stricken sheep.

Now, Mother Brennan," he said, with quiet, cheerful tones, "I will take you home. Come."

For the first time in her life, Mother Brennan paid no heed to the priest. He placed his hand on the bowed figure. There was no movement. Stooping, he peered into the placid face, which seemed to be shyly hiding, as if with a smile at her own playfulness. Mother Brennan had gone home by herself.—John J. a Beckett, in the Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOLS.

The commission of which Dr. William R. Harper, President of the University of Chicago, is chairman, which has been making a critical enquiry into the school system of Chicago, compared with that of other cities, has made an extended report recommending many changes. Besides recommendations for changes in regard to school administration the report advocates the additional manual training-schools, a broadening of the evening school system, and an improvement of the teaching force by means of better distribution of the funds available for salaries.

CHINESE ECONOMICS.

Mr. Robert A. Yerburch, a rich Lancashire M. P., and leader of the so-called China party in the British House of Commons, is carrying out an interesting educational project. He has provided money to found a professorship of Chinese economics in one of the great English commercial centres, with a view to promote the success of British traders in the Far East. Manchester and London are both putting forward claims to the chair, which, however, seeing Lancashire's large trade in China, probably will go to Victoria University, Manchester.

There is nothing too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of ohaving as little misery and as much happiness as possible.—Dr. Johnson.

Poetry is the naked expression of power and eloquence.

RANDOM NOTES

For Busy Households.

The Ottawa "Free Press" raises a very interesting question. It says that the amount of fruit consumed in Ottawa during the past year was three times greater than during any preceding year, and that there was also a marked decrease in the death rate, from which it argues that it is more than likely that there was a connection between the two circumstances. It appears that a number of prominent local physicians, to whom the question was referred, agree that the decrease in the death rate might well be due to the amount of fruit consumed. In these northern lands the people are too much given to meat-eating, and in past years the scarcity of fruit due to the transportation facilities, provided a good excuse for over-indulgence in meat-eating. Last year, however, married an era in fruit importation, and it is altogether reasonable to suppose that the decrease in the death rate may be due in part at least, to the increase in the consumption of fruit.

There is an inclination in many families in Montreal, to introduce what is called a "day system" of domestic service. The idea was mooted in London, Eng., and the newspapers of that city have devoted much consideration to the subject. In France and Germany the day servant is an established fact.

Many heads of households with limited incomes, would be only too thankful to secure half a day the services of a really efficient servant, while the servant herself might be able to live with her invalid mother or do the work of her home in the spare hours. Others again, with limited accommodation in the home, would be pleased to have servants sleeping away. A woman writing to an English magazine on this topic says:

I know of an excellent cook, who would be only too glad of a daily place, though she must be at home morning and evening, with her old mother. In time, too, the domestic ranks would be recruited by many not willing to entirely give up their freedom. Surely a beginning might be made.

We of the "old school" have long been sorrowful over the diminished state of private life against the invasion of the world, remarks a well-known contributor to the New York Post. It has seemed to us a curious loss of sweetness and grace that our fair young daughters are without ceremony or permission, described in the public prints, their dress, their complexions, their pursuits, and their accomplishments made the subject of amusement to the world at large. It becomes intolerable when the story of their gentle, girlish love affairs is used to lengthen the column of "society notes," without which a newspaper is called old and uninteresting.

The mere mention of the names of women in paragraphs solely printed for public use, side by side with the record of crime or the horror of disaster, pushes them into the dusty arena of the world's strife, and changes their position from the sheltered dwellers in protecting homes to that of amusers of the vulgar crowd.

Oh! for some power to rouse in those who, being gifted with influence and distinction, lead the public mind, a revival of that reverence for the sanctity of home that should cover its joys and sorrows with the shields of reticence and self-respect. Surely there must be some way to find protection for what is dearer than life to any man or woman, and to preserve young lives from being subjected to such lowering discussion. Is it inevitable that henceforth a man's roof must lack protection to those who dwell beneath it? Because the populace like true stories of real lives are we obliged to afford them amusement?

Somewhere down deep there must exist both a lack of reverence for the sanctity of family life and an indifference to what makes a home, or these things could never be. With all the rest of the great struggle to live as kings and princes do, there must abide a desire to be "in the eye of the public," as the phrase goes, and a belief that in some way it is a token of greatness. And if this be true of any of us, we have found a root hard to eradicate. From it will continue to grow an evil influence which will touch even the simple lives of those who give no reason for this hard treatment except that they are fair, and bright, and beautiful. When the few who are notable afford no "news" (!) the simplest, most modest life must be pressed into the service of the "society column." May time develop some way in which to revive the old traditions of gentlemen and gentlewomen, and give refuge to those whose lives are too sincerely simple to make food for sensation!

Gloom, despondency about every thing, and a pessimistic view of all things, says a writer in an American Magazine, are the fashion with a certain set of people, who unfortunately do not keep the disease to themselves—for it is mental malady—but communicate it to others, and rather enjoy doing so. That is, of course, if they can enjoy anything.

Now this state of things is evil, and it should be fought against when it exists in a home, ousted from it if possible, and, above all, warded off by prevention.

To glorify gloom and invest it with charm is very objectionable, particularly if in many cases it is discovered what the gloominess is about. Your bright-natured daughter gets despondent, and takes a dismal view

of life in general, and her own in particular. Perhaps she has been having a course of the up-to-date novels, and it has impressed her and saddened her. In these novels she has found the old fashioned way of Jack and Jill loving each other, having probably the inevitable ups and downs of love, which rarely runs smooth. Love and marriage, and all things pertaining to both, are all turned topsy-turvy, and the sole interest of many of these otherwise wishy-washy productions lies in the fact that they deal with subjects hitherto left alone and shunned by womanly women. Everything goes wrong in books of the kind, for no one loves the right person whom they could marry, and they inevitable care for the wrong one whom they cannot.

In denying an application for a new trial Justice McAdam, of the Supreme Court, of New York, recently, called attention to the statute protecting the privacy of the sick room. What occurs there, the justice said, physicians themselves should be the last to divulge.

The application for a new trial was made by Dr. McGillicuddy in a suit to recover \$23,885 from the estate of Mrs. Jane A. Dwyer, known as the Duchess de Castellum, for professional services. A similar action, begun by Dr. Cerio, was dismissed some ago.

Justice McAdam, in his opinion, said: "The lips of the patient now being sealed in death, the plaintiff did not offer himself as a witness, but attempted to establish his claim by Dr. Cerio, who had attended the patient daily as his medical adviser. The plaintiff's obvious purpose was to have Dr. Cerio divulge information which he acquired while prescribing for her professionally. The answers of the witness, to be at all serviceable to the plaintiff, would have to disclose the ailment with which the patient suffered, the nature of the treatment, and the value of the plaintiff's services."

"This would be a breach of confidence which the statute was designed to make inviolate. To bring the case within the statute is sufficient that a physician attended as such, and obtained information in that capacity."

"The statute was not passed for the primary benefit of the medical fraternity, but to silence its voices and in a manner protect those seeking medical assistance, by excluding inquiry which may offend the sensitiveness of the living, or reflect in the slightest on the memory of the dead. It was to throw the mantle of charity over the sick and unfortunate, and at the same time elevate the medical practitioner to the high plane with the clergy and the good Samaritan leaving him to protect his fees according to professional ethics, so long as he does not infringe on the humanitarian sentiment embraced in the statutory prohibition. It is a beneficent statute, clearly indicating the policy of the state. It should not be impaired, but preserved in its integrity according to its manifest spirit and purpose."

THE RIGHT KIND OF BOY ORATOR.

The Hon. Albert J. Beveridge, who has just been selected a Senator in Congress from Indiana, is a fine example of the success that is in the reach of every American who deserves it by working for it. Mr. Beveridge, who is only thirty-five, was born in Ohio with a wooden spoon in his mouth. His people moved to Illinois in the hope of finding fortune kinder. At twelve years he was pegging away on the farm. At fourteen he was working on a railroad. Working, mind you, and not shirking and imagining himself to be a blighted being ruined by corporations. Graduated from the railroad he became a teamster. At sixteen he was boss of a lumber camp. Studying in such times and with such means as he could get, he fitted himself for the De Pauw University, where he worked to support himself. He overdid it a little, so he went west and took up cow punching and studied law. He picked up a good practice easily at thirty-five. He was a boy orator that he needed.

He won cash prizes that he needed. But he is not a boy orator now. He has not remained a devoted himself orator. He has not the country, abating to wandering about the citizens, using a great part of that there is no chance for poor folks and making a living by speeches that go to show that you cannot make a living on account of the "wrong" and "oppressions" of the rich. He has been a good stump speaker, but his best speech in his life, the resolute and strenuous labor which conquers difficulty and ill fortune. If he had spent his time in envying and denouncing the prosperous, he would never have made himself prosperous.

To the numerous persons who believe that eruditions against the gold-standard and the trusts are a sufficient substitute for a day's work we commend the history of Albert J. Beveridge.—New York Sun.

Poetry is the morning dream of great minds.

The excellence of poetry is ruined by impiety.