

THE BADGE OF THE SACRED HEART

A TRUE STORY We were talking of the Badge of the Sacred Heart; discussing its merits. One of our party was valiantly enthusiastic. As chaplain of a city hospital he had, he declared, witnessed wonderful cures—cures, conversions, etc.—effected by the little badge. Through the influence of its grace most stubborn sinners finally yielded after refusing, again and again, to see a priest, or even to say a prayer.

grace? By chance one day I found my answer.

And that answer? Only the act of a child—a confident child of simple faith. Longing to have her mother a really fervent, faithful Catholic, this child, full of confidence, went to the Sacred Heart as to the author of every good and perfect gift. She besought that loving Heart to send a special grace to her mother; to pour into that mother's heart such a love that, unable to resist, she would be drawn to the practices of her holy faith. To accomplish this the child had recourse to the little wonder-worker—the badge of the Sacred Heart. She recalled that our Lord and Himself promised to bless all who honored the image of His Sacred Heart; to bless all who wore the little badge. If she might persuade the mother to do so? But then—perhaps it might displease her mother to thus, as it were, rebuke her for her indifference. In due time a happy thought came to her mind. She would conceal the little badge inside the lining of her mother's hat. Thus each time the hat was worn, the best badge would be close very close to her mother. An immense blessing, she thought. The rest she left to the Sacred Heart.

THE ASHES OF A SAINT

For the CATHOLIC RECORD BY REV. D. A. CASEY Ireland is a land of holy places. There is not a parish from Malin Head to Cape Clear but shelters some honored relic of the distant past when saintly men and women trod the green earth that we call Ireland. Sacred relics are in the shadow of whose ivy-covered remains "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep;" a "holy well" where even to-day the faithful pay "rounds," that is, perform certain devotional exercises in honor of the Saint reputed to have blessed the waters; a nutcracker that sheltered the ashes of one of God's holy ones long since scattered to the winds by reforming iconoclasts. Jealously guarded by the descendants of those who consecrated them to God in the golden age of Irish history, when native kings vied with their subjects in glorifying their Creator, they are now the property of the State. But it is not of those ancient holy places of Ireland that the present writer would speak, for the faith of Patrick and Brigid and Columba is still the faith of Ireland, and their children to-day still walk with God. Saints are not the special property of any age. God's arm is not shortened, and the same old, same old, same old Ireland to-day, men and women and little children who may never be raised to the altars of the Church, but who are saints for all that. And it is the story of one of those present-day Irish Saints that we would tell.

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Christmas gift. The child's face, before so pale and haggard, was glowing now. Her eyes were bright with some strange, unworldly brilliancy. "If ever anyone was in ecstasy," declares an eye-witness, "Nellie certainly was then." The bells rang in the New Year, but for little Nellie there sounded a death-knell. The dreadful malady of consumption was hastening to conclude its work of devastation. The jaw bone was disintegrating, and soon several little pieces came away. While others wept at the pathetic sight Nellie was happy and resigned. "Why are you crying, Mudder?" she said one day to the Superior, "you should be glad that I am going to Holy God." "Everthing spoke to her of Holy God. The clouds that she saw through the window of the sick room were 'the friends and angels of Holy God.'" When she heard the merry laughter of her little friends at play she was glad that "Holy God's children" were so happy. She could not suffer to have artificial flowers on her little altar. "Take dem away," she said, "dey are too stiff for Holy God; I want Holy God's own flowers." Sometimes she asked her if she were not lonely and afraid during their absence; and the answer was always the same: "Oh, no! I was talkin' to Holy God." If she questioned her further she would only say, "Holy God says I must not speak of these things." She had been asked to pray for the recovery of a well-known friend, a young girl who was very fond of Pader. "I said a few days later, 'he will get better, but he will never see me.' Her words proved true.

Shortly after Christmas she was enrolled in the Apostleship of Prayer. After this her prayers for the Church and the Pope became incessant. One day Rev. Mother showed her a picture of the Sacred Heart. The child examined it closely. "Dat is not de way I saw Holy God," she said. "How did you see Him?" asked the mother. "Dis way," answered Nellie, crossing her hands on her breast as she looked at the picture. "I saw His vision to Sister Immaculata and the nurse. The Mother was astounded; she had not heard of this 'vision of Holy God' before. She spoke to the Sister and the nurse, and they declared their treasured secret.

As her days drew to a close her hunger for the Blessed Sacrament became more and more intense. "I want Holy God, I want Holy God," she said one night. "Will it soon be morning, mudder?" she asked one night. "Try and sleep, dear," answered the nurse, "Father—will not be here for a long while yet." "Go and call him, an' tell him I want Holy God." Does he lib in the garden mudder? "No, Nellie, he is very far away, down in the city. I could not get him now." At last morning came and the little one's holy craving was satisfied. This was the occasion already referred to, when her deathrattle lasted until her little cot, turned towards the window. At a quarter to five she turned suddenly round and said to the Sister, "oh, mudder, I'm so happy. I've been talking to Holy God." Her voice trembled with delight, her face, previously so dusky with the ravages of disease, now glowed with a strange brilliancy. Her smile had a sweetness not of earth, and around the bed was the distinct aroma of incense.

Nellie was going to Holy God. She forgot her sufferings in the anticipation of the joy that was soon to be hers. She would go to Him on His own day, she said. She could wear her First Communion dress, she could go in nurse's arms, and she should make a dress for nurse. On Thursday, January 30th, the rosary tickets were distributed by lot amongst the children, and Nellie was the fortunate one. It proved to be the feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple. That day to fall upon the following Sunday, Friday and Saturday she hung between life and death. Sunday came, and all day long the sufferer's agony was heart-rending to behold. The Sisters came in turn to kneel in prayer around the little cot. Towards three o'clock the little sufferer became quite calm, and remained motionless for about an hour. Her eyes were fixed on something which she seemed to see at the foot of the bed. "There was an extraordinary look in those lovely eyes," the Sister said. "It was not the sightless, glazed expression of one dying." Then she moved. Her eyes now filled with tears, it seemed with tears of joy. She tried to rise and draw near to that "something" on which she gazed so longingly, and then she smiled. From the movement of her lips she seemed to speak with someone, and raising her eyes, she followed with a look of supernatural love that "something" which seemed now to hover above her head. Presently, with the ecstatic smile of one who "has found Him whom her soul loveth and will not let Him go," little Nellie fled to Holy God. It was 4 o'clock on Sunday, February 2nd, 1908, the Feast of the Presentation of the Temple. That day was to Holy God "on His own day." Nellie was then four years, five months, and eight days old.

They buried the holy child in the public cemetery of St. Joseph across the Lee, and as the story of her holy life spread amongst the public, the little grave gradually became a shrine and strange rumors were abroad of wonderful cures obtained through the intercession of little Nellie. It was now sought to have the remains transferred to the convent cemetery at Sunday's Well. A little more than a year after her death, the grave was opened to see if such transference could with safety be accomplished. There were present a well-known Cork priest, the nurses, and two other reliable witnesses. To the great astonishment of all, for it had been borne in mind that the child had died of phthisis) the body was found intact, except for a small cavity in the right jaw where the bone had been displaced. The cornea which the child was still alive. The fingers were quite flexible and the hair had grown a little. The dress, the wreath and veil of First Communion with which she had been buried, as she desired, were still intact. The silver medal of the saintly child of Mary was

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