BY HENRY COVILE.

T was the night before Christmas, and very cold. Healthy and strong people called the weather priest, and then printed to her children. 'bracing' and 'seasonable,' and hurried quickly along the streets, wrapmed in furs or heavy costs, smiling and happy, for was it not Christmas Fve?

Elderly people met and wished each other Merry Christmas, and told one another it was like an old-fashioned winter, such as they used to have in the 'good old times' and then went on their way.

But there were some poor people—God only knows how many !- for whom the glad season brought no joy or happiness. Poor children who might hang up their stockings, if they had any, and on the merrow, look in vain to find in them some token of a parent's affection, some pretty trifle or toy to make glad their little hearts.

There were many abroad that cold evening, shivering and hungry, looking into the warm, bright stores and hotels. To such the joyous season meant nothing but cold rooms and empty stomachs; and often their misery was added to by sickness and ill health, drunkenness and

In a small room, high up in a great senement house near the Bowery, the three dark sisters, cold, want and illness, met that Christmas Eve. A poor woman lay on the bed in one corner; she was very sick, but was trying to seem well, and to cheer the heart of the little girl who sat beside her.

She was a mere child, about ten years old, with clothes patched and threadbare. Hunger had pinched the little pale face, and serrow had left its impress on her sweet countenance.

Dear mother, she said, 'what shall we do? If I was only a big girl, like Mary Walsh, I could easily get work, but no one will give it to me now, I am so small.

'We must hope for the best, Mary, desr,' said Mrs Egan. 'I will soon be up again, and then you can help me to

'It is sewing that has laid you where you are, mother,' replied the child. She wept so bitterly as she said this that her i mother half sat up, and stretched out her worn, thin hand to caress the little girl's face.

'Dear Mary, we must hope and trust in Our Father in heaven. In His own time He will send us the help we

'I know that God cares for us,' the child answered, looking at the large crucifix at the head of the bed,' and I do trust Him. I don't mind for myself-1 am thinking of you, mother, and Janie.

Mrs. Egan drew her little daughter closer to her, and said, 'God will not leave us nor forsake us. He will never call upon us to suffer more than we can bear!

They talked together in the same strain for some time and by and by the poor sick woman, exhausted fell asleep, her arm around the child beside her, little Janie, a sweet little innocent five years old.

When she had slept for a little while, Mary waked her gently, to give her the medicine, as the doctor had ordered.

'How do you feel now, mother!" 'Much better, dear,' she answered

feebly. Mary buried her face in her hands, as

she sat down on the bed.

'My child, you must not cry,' said her mother, gently stroking her nair. Be brave and strong. Remember you must be all in all to your little sister when I am gone. You must be her mother then.'

mother then.'
'Oh! mother, I shall die too,' sobbed the girl, 'Don't leave us. Say you will not. Oh, take us with you!'
'That can not be, my poor child! I wish I could stay with you, but if God wills otherwise, we must be resigned. He does all things for the best. He will be a Fa her to you both and care for No matter what may happen, you you. No matter what may happen, you must never doubt His love?"

It was a small room, with whitewashed walls and bare floor. In spite of the poverty visible, there were some slight marks of refined taste, such as cleanliness, touches of color here and there about the room, and muslin curtains on the two windows.

Near the bed was a picture of the Sacred Heart, and in the corner on a small shelf was a little statue of Our Blessed Lady, with two candle sticks before it. The head was adorned with a gilt paper crown, and a small china lamb completed the adornment of the humble shrine.

It was now quite dark, and the room was full of shadows creeping stealthily about the walls. The poor child felt instinctively that something was going to happen; a strange foreboding thrilled her young heart with the weight of coming sorrow.

She felt that she was looking for the last time on the face of her she loved best in the world—her loving, patient mother-with her great sad eyes, and the sad expression always on the pale wan face. Near her on the bed, smiling in her sleep, was Janie, all unconscious of the dread presence of the dark angel the messenger.

God help you both, my poor children!' cried the dying woman, her solicitude and fears for their future overcoming for the moment the faith that was hers. What will become of you?"

Did you not say just now that God was our Father, and that He would care for us, mother? said Mary, and she rested her cheek upon the sick woman's cold

hand: Just then a gentle knock sounded on the door, and Father Bogan, the parish priest, entered with a neighbor. Early that morning he had administered the last rites of the church to the poor woman, and prepared her for the journey but for him she might have suffered much more. It was he who had furnished her with medical attendance, and he also provided food and a nurse to watch nights—a good woman named Mrs. Ryan, who lived on the floor below.

Father Bogan lit the lamp, and also the candle at the shrine. When he looked at the sick woman, he knew that the end was at hand-that she was dving. She was quite unable to speak, but she looked imploringly at her friend, the

'Yes, I will be their friend,' the good man assured her; 'do not worry about that. I have seen the sisters at the home, and they will take the girls. They will be well cared for, never fear, and I shall see that they are kept to gether.

The poor mother's anxious face became radiant with joy, and she kissed Father Bogan's hand again and again, vainly trying to express her heart-felt thanks.

She motioned for Mary to come to her, and she kissed her many times, looking into her face with a yearning, questioning expression which the child never for got. She then clasped Janie to her breast, and her head fell back on the pillow.

A strange sound came from her throat and her spirit, purified in the furnace of pain and misery, winged its flight to her eternal home, where there is never any pain, never any sorrow

Mother, dear mother -sneak! Why do you look like that? Don't you know Wake up, Janie! cried Mary, me? frantically shaking her sister. 'Lookdon't you see us, mother? Speak to her Janie-kiss her, and ask her to open her eyes!"

The two children caressed their dead mother again and again, pleading, with heart-rending cries, for a word, a smile, but alas! the cold clay could not respond. Father Bogan, accustomed as he was to such sad scenes, could not bear to look at the poor children's grief-at their tears, the bitterest the eye can ever shed -at their misery, the deepest the heart of man can ever know

'Take them down stairs,' he said to Mrs. Ryan, and when she had led the reluctant children away, he wiped his eyes, and then knelt and said the office for the dead.

A few of the kind neighbors performed the necessary services in such cases, and they placed the body in the plain coffin, sent to the house by Father Bogan the next day.

Mrs. Ryan cared for the two children until after the funeral, and then the priest took them to the Home for orphans. The Sister Superior took charge of the orphans, and promised to give them her special attention until time had softened their grief for their great loss.

The first few nights the children were very restless and unhappy, crying and calling piteously for their mother. The Sister in charge of the dormitory was kind and patient; she soothed and quieted them, assuring the girls that hey would both see their mother again. 'Will we see her to-morrow?' little Janie would ask wistfully, her lips quiv-

'Not to morrow, but soon, perhaps, it you are good, and go to sleep, the Sister would answer, comforting her.

Again it was Christmas eve, and a ear had passed. The two children were in the play-room, when they were sum moned to the office by the Sister Superior. Father Bogan and a tall gentleman came forward as they entered the room. The stranger, sitting down, took the girls on his knees and kissed them, the tears running down his face.

Mary, don't you know me?' he asked The girl looked at the man earnestly, but could not recognize him, although his face did seem strangely familiar.

'I am your father!'
"But he is dead!" eqclaimed Mary; he was a sailor, and was lost at sea Poor mother cried and cried, oh so hard all the time, but he went to heaven." "And mother is there, too!" said

Janie. "Yes, my darling, she is there," said Mr. Egan, his voice trembling with emotion. "But I was not lost at sea. The ship I sailed with was cast upon an island far away in the southern ocean. and we were obliged to remain there for two years, when we were finally rescued

by an English trading vessel.
"Oh, father, I am so glad!" and Mary clasped her arms about his neck. Little Janie, too, kissed her father, but she could not understand why it was that her mother could not be there with them, to share their happiness.

Mr. Egan was now in comfortable circumstances. He had been instrumental in saving several of the crew, and a large part of the valuable cargo, consisting of coral and ivory, on the wrecked ship, and is a reward for his courage and foresight, the company gave him command

of one of their vessels.
Christmas day the children spent with their father at the house of a friend, and he soon provided a pleasant home in the suburbs for them. While Mary and Janie often spoke of their dear mother in heaven they were very bappy that Christmas Day with their father, whom the Lord had so mercifully and kindly restored to them .- Young Catholic Messenger.

IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

How the Late Charles A. Dana Touchingly Answered the Question.

As a fitting tribute to the memory of the late Charles A. Dana, whose ready and ever busy pen did much to brighten the pages of our Christmas literature. we give the following letter answering an enquiry which a little girl addressed to the Sun upon the all absorbing theme in every household among the little ones, is there a Santa Claus. Mr. Dana thus wrote:—

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours access the dark river flowing to eternity. man is a mere insect, an ant, in his in.

The good priest, a Christ-like man, had tellect, as compared with the boundless been kind to her during her illness, and world about him, as measured by the intellect; as compared with the boundless And the snow shoer's call to his com-

telligence capable of grasping the whole

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they shound and give to your life its nighest beauty and jey. Alas how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished. Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no

proof that there is no Santa Claus. THE MOST REAL THINGS IN THE WORLD are these that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see the fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that is no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen or unseeable in the world. You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest men nor the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virgina, in all this world there is nothing else so real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives and he lives forever. A thous and years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, be will continue to make glad the heart of

OUR PHILADELPHIA LETTER:

Miss McKenna's Contribution to the Christmas Number of the "Catholic World,"

The Wealth of Hlustrations in Current Magazines-Their Character Dwelt Thou in An Interesting Manner.

Prilladelphia, December 13, 1897.— If there is a certain satisfaction in sharply criticising a story of good points, marred and weakened by exaggeration, sickly sentiment, or too great straining for effect, there is positive pleasure in heart ily commending work from the same hand shorn of all these defects. When I stammered out: "I I couldn't help it! I took exception a few months ago to Miss can't stand covered before that!" In a McKenna's expressed idea of the "priest in tiction," I was not by any means blind to the promise of her writings, and had I felt that they were soon to exhaust a bar and all of the link God the Father forged ren soil, I should not have considered it and bound indissolubly between Himworth my while to "waste a shot" upon self and lost and ruined mankind, and them. She has already won a victory through the thought of the Mother to and proved herself one of the wise who the knowledge of her Son, will silently profit by experience. The Christmas but surely help out the vexed questions number of the Catholic World contains of the day to their true solution. It is a Christmas story from her pen that is an unspoken hope with many. There is altogether charming. It is like a fine a hospital here in Philadelphia where etching in which every line is made to are gathered together the saidest and their outlying islands the students tell, and where a firm, sharp stroko mothers in life. On the wall of the ward, brings out clearly more than a multi- where it meets every eye from dawn un- own indestructible people. The remote tude of wavering touches could ever ex | til the glimmering of the night lamp, press. It is short and suggestive. The and through all the shadows of the night, lovely spirit and unworldly simplicity of Father Salvator is not only tenderly | Madonna and her wondrous Child. It brought out, but there is a certain humor is very large and splendidly framed-a and pathos that makes of smiles and thing to reverence and honor in every tears a near kinship. That he should sense. It was hung there by a great have been disappointed of his Christmas physician—not a Catholic! pleasure was impossible. No reader of the Catholic World could have borne it. From the first line until the last he grows upon everyone until he is at the close of the little story-one of those lifelong treasures of the imaginaton and memory, such as some few writers have given us. As I did not criticise before until I had tested the opinions of others -and there were priests among those whose views I sought-so I have waited to practice on the fancies and feelings of the many with "Father Salvator's for the salvation of souls; they had disengrated it as I have heard. It is wholly, attach us to life."—Southey.

beautifully naturally good—a Coristma of truth and knowledge. Yes, Virginia, story that is altogether of the season, and yet is new to us."

Illustrated Christmas Magazines.

What a lovely and varied collection (Christmas pictures our magazines are giving us this year! And when the day is really upon us I have no doubt there are a number of our weeklies which will add to the gallery. While there are many things whose newness is their beauty—and very beautiful at that—the old pictures are still the loveliest; and the more modern works of art can only compare with them by approaching their semblance. There is a painting of Müeller's seen more frequently this Christmas season than ever before,-a Holy Family, representing the three resting by the roadside. An angel kneels before the divine Babe, lightly touching the strings of a heavenly lute. Neither the Blessed Mother nor St. Joseph see this celestial visitant, nor hear the strain of music, but the Babe's sweet eyes are lifted as though recog nizing the sounds of His Father's court on high. The beauty and innocence of the Blessed Mother are a fitting portrayal of her spotless life, and the Babe is altogether young, helpless, appealing and divine. This is comparatively a "new" picture, yet it has been conceived in the spiritual and reverential marner of the old master. pieces. Too many of the modern Madonnas are only beautiful women, more or less demure or sorrowful. And while there should always linger around the mother of any child a touching and appealing dignity and charm, it is no less true than sad that there are very many mothers who are altogether lacking in the approach to anything of the kind. Hence it is absolutely requisite that the representations of the Mother of Our Lord should be an ideal woman in the highest sense. More is asked in her portrayal than a pretty woman with a bahy in her arms. It is a delightful thought that we have so many holy pictures of her, and a very cheering thought that, at last, the rarest, the most valuable and the most lovely have been brought

WITHIN THE REACH OF THE POOREST and the most ignorant among us. It has been said again and again, by non Catho lics no less than Catholics, that the Sistine Madonna has an effect on every one who sees it. Years ago, a woman far enough removed from all Christian belief or practice wrote a description of that painting and of its effect on her that reads like a prayer and a meditation and an act of contrition in spite of herself. Within a year or two, a Western cowboy, entering the gallery where the painting hangs, passed suddenly and took off his hat, retained before that through a long tour of the galleries of Europe. Seeing an expression on the faces around bim that moved him to an explanation, he lesser degree, we have every reason to hope that this wice-spread dissemination of Our Blessed Mother's face in its fairest and holiest aspects, reminding one appealing in humanity's loveliest form there hangs a superb copy of the Sistine

SARA TRAINER SMITH.

"The zeal with which the Roman Catholic priests visit hespitals and prisons deserves all praise. These priests every where show themselves to be men full of courage and conviction."-Protestant Missioners of Batavia : Official Statement, 1894.

"The Catholic priesthood were zealous

A CHRISTMAS REMINISCENCE,

By AGNES BURT.

HE had journeyed far from her Northern home, where the frost-kingholds his reign, kingholds his reign, To the sunny South, in the fond vain hope that health might be her's

THE RETURN.

Back again to my own Canadian home-Back, and at Christmas time-Back from fair Florida's orange groves. And it's sweet rose scented clime. Bright as a poet's vision.

Is this Land of the Passion Flower, With it's gorgeous tropical tinting, Great Nature's glorious dower.

But my soul grew sick of it's beauty, I had but one wish on earth, Twas to feel my mother's clasping arme.

In the old home of my birth. Then gather me to your heart, mother, Let me feel your kisses rain. On cheek and brow, as in childhood's

years, They soothed my young heart's pain. But short my stay, for I've heard them

say, That, before the old year dies, My soul will have answered its summons,

Beyond the star-lit skies. Past sights and sounds I used to know Come thronging quick and clear, And old Noel chants and New Year's rhymes

Are murmuring on mine ear.

'Tis a joy to hear the vanishing tones Or sleigh bells on the hill,

As they tramp along at will. 'Tis almost time for the Midnight Mass For the bells begin to ring, Filling the air for miles around, With the song that the angels sing.

Then open the windows, mother, Open them far and wide, Let in the music of the bells— The bells of the Christmas tide. Great Bourdon pours it's wealth of

tone, In waves of jubilant glee; And the minor chime speaks unto my soul. Like an anthem from the sea.

Come, mother, we may not linger, For angels are on their way, And the flash of their wings exceeds the light

Of the brightest of bright noon day: They are gathering in countless thousands.

Round Bethlehem's crib and shrine, And the opaline gleams-like jewels rain On Mother and Babe Divine.

e arth's glory pales beside such light, And hark! 'tis angels that sing, The glorious old Venile, Round tue Crib of our Infant King. Jesus and Mary be near me, The last dread summons has come; Father and God, receive my soul, Adoremus Dominum.

One fluttering sigh, one soft farewell. and the weeping mother pressed Her kisses upon a cold white brow, her darling had gone to rest.

THE STUVER TONGUED PATHER THOMAS BURKE

An Appreciation of His Power of Bratery.

Sir Charles Gavan Duffy's Interesting Beminisance of His Meeting With the Great Orator.

In an article in the Contemporary Review, entitled "Reminiscences," from the pen of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, that noted Irishman tells in pleasant style the story of " A Holiday in Rome," and incidentally touches on his meeting the Rev. Father "Tom" Burke in the Eternal City. He says :-

"The morning after our arrival in Rome a visitor came to us, who proved to be the most gracious of friends and the most skilful of guides in the Immortal City. Father Tom Burke, the Irish Dominican orator, had risen to eminence during my absence in Australia, but l knew him and he knew me by repute, and wespeedily became friends. I necessarily recognized immediately what keenness of intellect, natural humor and knowledge of character Father Burke possessed, but his pulpit oratory, when I came to hear him, was a profound surprise. He was preaching at the time in one of the churches of the Piazza del Popolo, where sermons were delivered weekly for the English, Irish and American visitors of various creeds who winter at Rome, and in a letter to his biographer I afterwards stated the impression he made upon me :

Lkad heard all the contemporary preachers of note, in the Catholic church at least, and all the parliamentary ora-tors of the day, but I was moved and impressed by that sermon

BEYOND ANY HUMAN UTTERANCE to which I had ever listened. I desprir of conveying the sort of impression it made upon me, but I think persuasiveness was it's most striking character istic. He marched straight to a fixed end, and all the road he passed seemed like a track of intellectual light. You were gradually drawn to adopt the preacher's views as the only ones compatible with truth and good sense. His accent was Irish, but his discourse bore no other resmblance to any Irish utter ance with which I was familiar. We have the school of Grattan, and the school of O'Connell, the artificial and the spontaneous, into which most Irish oratory may be distributed; but Father Burke's belonged as little to one as to the other. The lucid narrative which, without arguing, was the best of arguments; the apt illustration, which summed up his case in a happy phrase, might have recalled Plunkett, but in truth, like most original men, he resembled no one but himself."

IRELAND IN ROME.

But nothing in the capital of the Christian world, not St. Peter's or the Sove eign Pontiff, was a sight fit to match in interest to Irishmen the exhibition of the Accademia Polyglotta, where students from Asia, Africa, Australia and America spoke, each of them, the language or chanted the music of his birthplace, and from three continents bore names that marked them of our history of Europe, when the children of Conn gave missionaries to half the known world, seemed revived again in that spectacle What a volume steeped in tears, but illuminated, too, with glorious incidents, might be written on the Irish monuments and institutions in Rome! His own San Clemente furnished my friend with a constant text. for its Irish friars were the hosts and often the trusted counsellors of princes. from Charles and James Stuart, and Charles Edward in a later generation, down to Albert Edward of Wales in our own day, who has knit a friendship with the good friars, and, what is nobler and better, it was the constant

GUARDIAN OF IRISH INTERESTS

when Ireland had a foreign policy and a diplomatic corps hid under the black or brown robes of monks and professors.



When a man neglects his health for a day he marks two days off the calendar of his life. When he neglects his health for two consecutive days he marks four days off his life's calendar. And so on.
That's about the fatio, and it doesn't take many days to cross off

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Medical 'Association, Budalo, N. Y.

fand, he did not forget that other Irish house, founded by the great Kranciscan who was ambassador from the confederation of Kilkenny to the Holy Sea, or the more modern college in whose hum. ble church the heart of O'Connell is preserved. There is a granite obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo in which my friend found a type of the Irish race. It is covered with hieroglyphics sculptured by Egyptian artists before Moses received the tables of the law on Mount Sinai; it has seen cities grow and perish, generations and cycles or me and go, the Goth and the Gaul in turn masters of Rome, the Piratical soldier of fortune, and the crowned Emperor holding the cradle of Christianity to pillage; but it still lifts its eternal face to the run as fresh in the days of Bismarck as in the days of Casar. The eloquent Dominican saw in this eastern monument a type of the Celticrace, destined to outlive charce and change and remain fresh and imperishable in the old age of the world.

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Regular monthly meeting held in its half. IS Dupre street, first Wednesday of every month at 8 o'clock, P.M. Committee of Management meets every second and fourth Wednesday of each month. President, JAS, J. McLEAN; Secretary, M. J. POWER; all communications to 6 addressed to the Hall. Delegates to St. Patrick's League: W. J. Himphy, D. Gallery, Jas. McMahon

Ancient Order of Hibernians.

DIVISION No. 2. Meets in lower vestry of St. Gabriel New Charch, corner Centre and Laprairie streets, on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each mouth, at 8 p.m. President, ANDREW DUNN: Recording Secretary, THOS. N SMTH, 63 Richmond street, to whom all communications should be addressed. Delegates to 8t. Patrick's League: A Dunn, M Lyach and B. Connaughton.

A.O.H,-Division No. 3,

A.O. H.—Division No. 3.

Meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month, at Hiberma Hall, No. 2042 Notre Dame St. Officers: B. Wall, President; D. Gallery, Vice-President; John Hughes, Financial Secretary; Wm. Rawley, Recording Secretary; W. P. Stanton, Sergent atarms; T. Erwine, Chairman of Standing committee. Delegates to County Board: B. Wall, D. (tallery, John Hughes, L. Brophy, Wm. Rawley, Delegates to St. Patrick's Lengue: B. Wall, M. J. F. Qu. nn. M. P., M. MeGoldrick. Hall is open every evening (except regular meeting nights) for members of the Order and their friends, where they will find I rish and other leading newspapers on file. will find I rish and other leading newspapers on file.

.C.M. B. A. of Canada. ...

C.M.B.A. of Canada, Branch 26

(ORGANIZED, 13th November, 1883.)

Branch 26 meets at St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander Street, on every Manday of each month. The regular meetings for the transaction of business are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month, at 8 P.M.

Applicants for membership or any one desirous of information regarding the Branch may communicate with the following officers:

M. SHARKEY, President, 1238 Notre Dame St. J. H. FEELEY, Treasurer, 719 Sherbrooke St. G. A. GADBOIS, Fin.-Sec., 511 St. Lawrence St. JAS. J. COSTIGAN, Secretary, 325 St. Urbain St

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St. Patrick's Court, No. 95,C.O.F.

Meets in St. Ann's Hall, 157 Ottawa street, every first and third Monday, at S P.M. Chief Ranger, JAMES P. FORBER. Recording Secretary, ALEX. PATTERSON, 66 Elem or street.

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