

THE MESSENGER:

An Odd Midnight Charity.

If the absence of ostentation and public display in the administering of our charities be a merit (as the Scriptures declare), there is assuredly a special degree of merit and worthiness in the very remarkable charity which our artist has depicted in the strong and realistic illustration on the first page of this issue. When all New York with the exception of the few whose callings keep them up at night, is fast asleep, and when the great avenues of trade are silent and deserted, any pedestrian who might happen to walk in the vicinity of Tenth street and Broadway about midnight would witness a singular sight. Along the sidewalk on the northerly side of Tenth street he would see a long line of men, and if he were to go sufficiently near, he would discover that they were in almost every instance poorly clad, and hungry-looking, eager faces and a general air of helpless poverty. This line, usually about 300, but sometimes nearly 500 strong, assembles every night at the same hour, and by twelve p.m. it is complete. Sometimes there are a few destitute looking women in the line but the great majority are men. The head of the line is midway between Fourth avenue and Broadway.

At the stroke of midnight, a door opens and light streams out on the dark sidewalk. The crowded line presses up toward the open doorway, where several white capped and white aproned men stand beside great piles of loaves of bread. There is a grateful odor of coffee, too, and it is soon apparent that the outside crowd is appreciative of the fact, for they press the harder as one after another at the head of the line receives from the white capped men a loaf and a mug of coffee, and then, mumbling his thanks, marches off to make room for the next. Some receive half a loaf, others a whole one, and if the night be chill and frosty, the coffee is in as much demand as the bread. And so the distribution proceeds, until all are supplied. Some carry their loaves home, to wife or children, hungrier, perhaps, than themselves. Others begin to eat their portion at once and gulp down their steaming coffee. In cases of special need a couple of loaves are given. By one o'clock the line has vanished, the door has closed, and Tenth street has resumed its wonted quiet.

This unique scene—the only midnight charity in America—is enacted nightly at the Vienna Bakery, whose Tenth street side entrance is directly opposite the great business block erected by the late A. T. Stewart. It has been going on for twenty years past, though comparatively few New Yorkers know it. In 1876, Mr. Louis Fleischmann, having a successful business there, decided to give to the poor all the bread that was left undisposed of after his wagons came in for the night. He began to give a few dozen loaves at first, but the demand for the bread grew, and the gift brought blessing, for his business steadily increased also. The midnight distribution is made all the year round in the hot, sweltering nights of summer and the arctic chill of the winter. Among the beneficiaries are poor, idle workingmen, and many homeless tramps, all nationalities being represented. There are never any discords in the quiet line that gathers nightly and which encircles nearly half the block; the men know that a disturbance would mean the stoppage of their free gift, and that they cannot afford to sacrifice. A loaf of bread means much to a penniless, homeless man in New York. There are at the present time many thousands of honest idle men in the city, and to this deserving class and those who may be dependent

upon them, the nightly gift of a loaf or two come like heaven-sent manna.

The giver of this weekly secret charity (if anything that takes place on the streets of New York can be called secret), has purposely avoided publicity as far as possible; but the grateful prayers of the many thousands who have been helped by the 'midnight loaf,' during these twenty years, doubtless afford him a deeper and more enduring satisfaction than could be derived from mere worldly approbation of his generosity. It is truly Christian charity, with a single eye to the helping of a class whose members are helpless indeed.

The Pious Captain.

Captain H— was master of a whale ship sailing from a Long Island port. He made no pretensions to piety, but during one voyage, for some reason which he could not explain, he became strongly impressed with a sense of his duty, took a decided stand for Christ, and became a Christian. The next Sunday he called his crew together and conducted divine worship. The men said, 'What's the matter with the captain? Nobody's been aboard to make him a Christian.'

Not long after, one Sunday, several whales appeared in sight. There were other whaling vessels near them, and every other ship sent out boats' crews to take the whales. But Captain H— said, 'This is Sunday. Not a boat leaves my vessel to-day.' When he returned from that voyage he was met with a discharge by the owners. They wanted no such captain. When there were whales, whales must be taken, Sunday or not. After his return it transpired that in the town from which he had sailed, a number of the good Christian people in his absence had been thinking about Captain H—, and had made him the subject of special prayer. At that very time when they were praying he was converted, and the Sunday when he commenced having divine worship on shipboard was the next one after they had been offering special prayer for him. Now he was suffering for Christ's sake, and these Christian men, feeling that they had prayed him into trouble, thought that they ought to pray him out of it. They also believed that prayer and works should go together. A number of them formed a sort of syndicate. They bought as fine a whaling ship as could be found in the United States, placed Captain H— in command of her, and he continued master of that ship as long as he wanted to go to sea, and was known as 'the pious captain.'

Although fidelity to principle is not often, perhaps, followed so promptly by recognition and reward as in this case, yet we may be sure that he who has the Christian manliness to act up to his convictions of duty, though it be apparently to his own loss, shall not lose his reward here or hereafter.

—Congregationalist.

Round the World.

Let us throw ourselves with new energies and determination and enthusiasm into a great forward movement to carry the gospel of the Son of God to every creature in our lifetime. There is manifest need of it. Might we not take a short trip around the world? Before we leave our own country we might remind ourselves that there is in the United States and Canada, on an average, one Christian worker to every forty-eight people. Let us begin our tour with Mexico and South America. In these two regions there is only one Christian worker to every 32,000 people. On to Japan. Japan is said to be the Sunrise Kingdom; it is in a physical, and, thank God, in a spiritual

sense, and yet in Japan to-day there are 100,000 more Buddhist temples than individual Christians. On to China. We might have started several years ago and have taken a horseback ride with Professor Stinson and have cut a swathe a thousand miles by a thousand miles and have touched only one mission station; and since then only a few missionaries have gone into that wide expanse. We talk about the needs of our great cities, and yet note, there are in China to-day 913 walled cities having in them a population of 25,000,000 people without a single missionary. On to Asia Minor. There in that region where Christ came into the world and founded his religion, there is only one Christian worker to every 100,000 people. On to Europe. Take Paris. We can listen to the words of Ney, said shortly before his death:—'There are in this city a hundred thousand men who have never had their hands on the bible, to say less of accepting its truths.' Before we come back, drop down into Africa. Go to a certain place on the Congo with Mrs. Guinness. A thousand miles in one direction before you come to the first mission station on the great lakes! One thousand, seven hundred miles on the northwest before you come to the Red Sea, and not a single missionary light burning between you and the waters! Two thousand two hundred miles to the Mediterranean, and not a single missionary there! We are told that it is the great desert. True. It includes the Soudan of 90,000,000 souls; and 2,500 miles to the northwest before you come to the North African station! About seven hundred miles to the westward before you leave the last station behind you, and a thousand miles to the south-west before you come to the American station at Bihe! Just think of it! An immense circle encompassing 120,000,000 to 180,000,000 people with less than sixty missionaries! —J. R. Mott.

Julia Ward Howe's Battle Hymn.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His day is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
'As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel!
Since God is marching on.'

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.