

# THE MARTYR OF CLONMEL.

In front of the Presentation Convent at Clonmel, Ireland, is a beautiful life-size statue of St. Joseph, which bears the following inscription:

A votive offering  
to  
Commemorate the Glorious  
Martyrdom of  
Sister Alice O'Sullivan,  
Born at West Gate, Clonmel, 1836.  
For some years a pupil of  
this Convent.  
She died for the Faith at  
Tien-Tsin, China, 21st June,  
1870.  
Pray for the Donors.

Sister O'Sullivan was a daughter of the late Cornelius O'Sullivan, who died in Syracuse, N.Y., several years ago. Captain O'Sullivan, her brother, is very well known in Syracuse. The Very Rev. Daniel O'Sullivan, visiting priest to the English-speaking Sisters of Charity throughout the world, is another brother. Father O'Sullivan has had his headquarters near Cork for the last twenty years, and in 1891, in London, celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination.

Thirty years ago Tientsin came suddenly before the world as the scene of an awful massacre by the Chinese rabble of ten daughters of St. Vincent de Paul, holy souls intent on the apostolic mission of spreading the Faith. Among these gentle sisters who had renounced the titles of home and fatherland were daughters of France, Belgium and Italy, and one of Irish nationality, Alice O'Sullivan, known in the religious life as Sister Louise.

Alice's parents had come from Newry, County Armagh, to Clonmel, shortly before her birth, and Mrs O'Sullivan dying while her daughter was still a mere baby, the child was left very much to the care of a devoted nurse, and to the loving attentions of her brothers, all older than herself. At a very early age she learned to read, and was permitted to indulge her love of reading as she pleased, but, fortunately, beyond exciting her lively imagination no great harm was done. She received her early education in St. Mary's Presentation Convent, Irish-town, Clonmel, a convent that has been instrumental in sending religious to all parts of the world. Some of the nuns who welcomed the little girl in those happy days still survive and speak with deep affection of their pupil, who when only ten years old showed great piety and expressed the desire to enter the religious life.

At a later date it was decided that she should become a Sister of Charity. Her brother was a Vincentian missionary, and, no doubt, this circumstance in part influenced the choice of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. A brother of St. Vincent she would become, and with a view to this, her father sent her to the Dominican Convent, at Kingstown, near Dublin, where her time passed happily under the care of the sisters. Alice's open and simple disposition and her great piety so impressed her mistresses that they would have gladly admitted her to their community had she desired it. The present prioress of the convent, who knew Alice very intimately, when asked to give her recollections of the appearance and character of her school-fellow replied that Alice was rather older than most of her companions, was dark in complexion, attractive in appearance, and possessed of a strong sense of humor, combined with mature common sense and the truest piety. She was loved by teachers and pupils.

It was not necessary for her to stay very long at Kingstown, and then came the parting. "Courageously she bade farewell to her father and her home on the pleasant banks of the Suir, where never again should she roam through the green fields, or climb the hills, or feel the soft Irish, 'rain-washed' breezes blowing on her brow. The kindly smiles and affectionate 'God save ye,' that came so readily from our humble Irish country people she would no more see or hear from those who had known and loved her from her infancy; the church where many a Sunday and feast she knelt repeating her prayers as a little child, she would never enter nor the streets of the old

Irish town that was her birth-place. Yet she never faltered, but departed to follow the call to a more perfect life—a life of obedience, of toil, of self-abnegation, of prayer, and union with God, in the modest and coarse greyish-blue habit and white cornette of a Sister of Charity."

Across two seas went the young Irish girl to the convent at Amiens, where she passed some time as a postulant, and from which she was sent to the Rue de Bac, where she received the habit of the Congregation and made her vows. As soon as her vows were made, Alice, now Sister Louise, went to Bologna, and from there to Drogheda, where she spent five years among the destitute of the town, her gentle heart grieving for their distress as she went on her errands of charity through narrow lanes and winding stairway. In the mission of Herford the Irish Sister unconsciously prepared for the great change impending in her life, a change that brought to pass the prophecy she had spoken when a school-girl of sixteen years; "Later on you will see that I shall go to China, and there die a martyr," she had said to a very dear friend.

When Alice entered the Congregation she frequently expressed her willingness to go on any distant mission, and her generous spirit was gratified when she was selected to go with a band of foreign sisters to take charge of a hospital of Shanghai. On their arrival at Shanghai the sisters met with great discouragements; no preparation had been made for their reception and the hospital committee, having changed their minds, no longer wished for their services. Being Protestants they could not understand the wants of the nuns, who were compelled to reside in a wretched lodging with hardly anything in the way of furniture or food. Sister Alice, the only one who could speak English, acted as interpreter between her French superioress and the committee, and so well did she fulfil her task that in a short time the Englishmen became the sisters' sincere and influential friends. In the hospital where the sisters were soon hard at work, Sister Louise's charm of manner and heartfelt kindness had an immense influence over the sick, one of whom, a Scotch Presbyterian Freemason, wrote to the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin after the massacre: "Amongst those saints was my kind-hearted nurse, Sister Louise, who was at my bedside day and night, cheering my drooping own country. Earnestly she sought out spirits, broken down with sickness and pain. Often she told me how delighted she was to have the privilege of conversing in her native tongue with a Scotchman. I will not dwell longer on the characteristics of this ministering angel, who is now with her Redeemer." In a letter written to her brother, Alice tells him that on St. Patrick's Day, 1867, thirty Irish soldiers came to pay her a visit and to present her with five pounds for the poor, out of their meagre pay.

Having made the sacrifice to go on this arduous mission, Sister Louise endured great mental suffering when she found out that she could not sympathize with or understand the people for whom she had given up all that was dear to her. The dispositions and customs of the Chinese excited deep repugnance, but she prayed for strength and endurance, and her prayer was heard. "I am now, thank God," she writes, "quite at peace, only that now and then I feel a little lonely, but happy in having nothing to trouble my conscience, and with great trust in God, who has taken such care of me up to this time." And suppressing her yearning for her far-distant home, with its dear, kindly, Catholic people, she devoted herself to the care of the Chinese.

In the year 1867, Sister Alice O'Sullivan was stationed at Peking having traveled thither with Mother Azais under most discomfiting circumstances, the last stage of the journey being accomplished its way through clouds of dust, resembling ashes. Sister Alice was soon busily employed in the infant school and orphanage, which play a most important part in the work of the Holy Childhood carried out in our Chinese missions.

The society for the redemption of pagan children was established among European children during the pontificate of Pius IX., towards the middle of the nineteenth century, and its special work, entrusted to the Sisters of Charity in China, was the

support and education of baby girls, who are so frequently killed or abandoned by their inhuman mothers, many of whom have the firm conviction that infants are born without souls, which only develop at a more advanced period of existence; consequently there can be no harm in getting rid of such superfluous mouths as those of little girls, who are numerous enough everywhere.

"We receive almost every day little babies," wrote Sister Alice, "and I hold them for the Sacrament of Baptism." This seems to have been her great consolation. Through striving ever to overcome her antipathy, she could not become accustomed to the Chinese, and finally wrote to Pere Etienne, the Superior-General of the Lazarists and Sisters of Charity, admitting her failure to acclimatize herself to her Eastern surroundings. In reply he instructed her to return to France with the Sister Visitation, then on the eve of departure. Great was the joy of the little sister! To see once more the civilization of Europe, to escape her constant struggle against her own feelings, to make this voyage with Sister Azais—all delighted her and they started together for Tientsin on their way home. The people of Tientsin were filled with hatred and scorn for "the devils from the West," and the missionaries of those days, between 1862 and 1870, had indeed great need of patience and trust in God. That His Providence had marked out for the Irish Sister a different fondly dreamed when granted permission to depart from China was soon made manifest.

Sister O'Sullivan with Mother Azais stopped at Tientsin, at the convent of the Sisters of Charity, known as the Jen-tse-t'ang. Here were orphanages for boys and girls, a dispensary, and a hospital for Europeans. The sisters had been making a novena that their community should be increased by an English-speaking member and consequently on the arrival of the young Irish sister they begged her to stay with them and undertake an important post in the hospital where were many British and American subjects. Poor little Sister Alice! where now were her visions of home? Was she never to hear again the language of her childhood, or look into the kindly eyes of her dearly-loved friends and relatives? Must she give up all for the cold-hearted, deceitful and often cruel Chinese? Heart-wrung and almost crushed by anguish the poor little exile reached the bitterest hour of her existence. Love of home with the Irish race often amounts to a passion and Sister Louise was thoroughly Irish, passionately longing for even a short time among her own kindred. She thought that she could interest friends in the work of the mission, and would come back herself with renewed zeal. Unhappy and resentful because she had been asked to stay, she went with some of the sisters to see the Church of Our Lady of Victories, greeted by Lazarist missionaries. There before the silent tabernacle she knelt, after her companions had left the church, her heart rent with conflicting feelings. Touchingly does the author of "The Martyr of Clonmel" depict the struggle and surrender of this brave, true Christian spirit:

"Surely God having accepted the sacrifice of her whole existence did not wish that she should remain in China. He must see how very lonely she was, not even one Irish sister or priest or friend in the whole of the strange Chinese town to whom she could turn for counsel, only these foreigners, kind and good though they were, who could not understand her utter loneliness, or what the giving up of the journey meant to her. It must have been a great struggle for the poor sister, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, and trying not to admit the thought that it might indeed be the Divine Will that she should make this supreme renunciation of her cherished wish. We are told by Father Faber that 'holiness of the highest kind is distinguished by the quickness and fineness of its ear in detecting inspiration, and by its promptitude and docility in following it.' Now, Sister O'Sullivan was an extremely holy soul, and when she recognized the voice of Jesus gently calling her to accept this cross and follow Him, all hesitation, all doubts, all opposition, instantly ceased, and the renunciation (a very real mental martyrdom to the little sister) was simply made. 'Not my

will, but Thine, O Lord.' It has been thought that our Blessed Lady came to her in those moments of agonizing pain and encouraged her to hear and obey unreservedly the call to duty and self-sacrifice from the Holy Spirit, whom as Our Lord Himself has said, 'breatheth where he will.' Into those few minutes had been compressed the combat and the glorious victory over human nature. When the other sisters came to fetch the Irish nun they were electrified to hear her say, 'I am not going home, oh, I will not go.' 'What in the world has happened, dear sister?' they exclaimed. She answered: 'If I were to tell you, you would not believe me.' She hastened to find Sister Azais, and told her that she placed herself at her disposal to remain in China as she thought it was God's will. Sister Azais said to her at the moment of departure, 'Good-by till we meet again.' Sister O'Sullivan answered: 'We shall never meet again in this world. You will return, but we shall all be gone.'"

A miracle of grace had been worked in the soul of Sister Alice. "Thanks to God and Our Lady of Victories, who is as powerful at Tientsin as at Paris," she wrote to Pere Etienne, "my heart which had suffered from illusions for so long a time has been entirely changed, and to-day I fully understand why it would be more perfect for me to remain till death in this poor country. I reckon on the Blessed Virgin to give me the grace of perseverance in this resolution, for it was she herself who said to me 'Remain for the rest of your life with these poor people.' With renewed ardor she took up her work, always humbling herself in the knowledge that her companions served the Chinese with pleasure, while she did constant violence to herself to overcome her dislike. In the last letter written by Sister Marquet to the community we read: 'We are very happy to have Sister O'Sullivan. Our Lady of Victories has not done her work by halves. I do not think our dear little sister has any thought now of leaving China. She is a devoted worker and does all that is in her power to supply the place of any of the sisters who may be ill or convalescent.'"

The mission of the Sisters of Charity at Tientsin was one of the most remarkable foundations of their congregation. Its beginning was most humble, a small house, of which five chairs and two huge Chinese saucepans were about the only furniture. At first not a single child or a sick person was given to the sisters' care, but by degrees they opened an orphanage, a dispensary, and a hospital, and at the time when Sister Alice gave up her journey home they were 200 orphans in the Jen-tse-t'ang and 200 out at nurse; 2,007 dying children had been baptized, 48,000 sick cared for at the dispensary, fifty adults baptized before their death and 56,700 starving poor had been given relief. The sisters became a familiar sight in the town where they daily visited the poor and sick, who called them the "White Devils" on account of their cornettes, a name given to them even by those whose liking they had won.

But untoward circumstances wrought a change in the friendly feeling of the natives. A season of drought followed by a flood made sad havoc. Starvation stared the people in the face, and the babies brought to the sisters' creche arrived in such condition that they died in great numbers. Then followed an epidemic in the orphanage, and the hospital and dispensary wards were so crowded that the sick lay about on the floor. The time was ripe for the schemes of enemies, and early in 1870 a number of fanatics came to Tientsin and began a campaign against the missionaries. Among the infamous charges circulated was that the sisters tore out the eyes and hearts of Chinese children, for medicinal purposes. As the spring advanced even the respectable element at Tientsin looked towards the sisters. Angry looks met them wherever they went, accusations multiplied, and the rabble became more menacing in words and deeds, even perpetrating the outrage of digging up coffins in the cemetery to see if the sisters had torn out the eyes and hearts of the children who died in the Jen-tse-t'ang. The streets were strewn with placards calling on the people to make away with the sisters, who, however, remained at their

post despite the repeated warning of the native Christians and a few Europeans. Calmly and steadily they pursued the routine of duty, so bravely subduing natural fear that neither the children nor native under-mistresses in the orphanage knew of the storm gathering about them.

On the 19th and 20th of June, the Chinese part of Tientsin showed signs of activity inimical to the sisters, and the mandarins, secretly conniving in the disturbance, sent word that they would visit the orphanage on the 21st of June to assure themselves that all was in order.

The sisters rose at their usual hour, and passed the morning in their respective avocations, though at nine o'clock they could hear the ominous gongs in the town where their enemies were assembled under the command of the Tai-Ping chief. In the course of the day the mob massacred Fathers Ou and Chevrier, the French Consul, and several other French and Russian subjects, and set fire to the consulate, the mission station, and the church. So the hours wore on. When flames issuing from the roof warned the sisters of the burning of the mission station and church, Sister Marquet ordered every one into the chapel, in the crypt of which the babies were placed for greater safety. As the cries of the approaching mob were heard the doors were locked, the sacred vessels, hidden, and kneeling on the altar-steps received their Viaticum from the hand of their superioress, who to preserve the Sacred Hosts from profanation consumed those remaining in the ciborium, with Sister Andreoni. "Before their sick, their orphans, and their little children," says Lady Herbert in her description of the massacre, "they remained firm and strong, like their holy Mother on Calvary. Only that day they called together all those employed in the house to go into the chapel and to pray to our Lord to appease the tempest which raged against the missionaries and the sisters."

They had scarcely completed their sacred office when the house door was forcibly broken in by the infuriated mob, fresh from their atrocious work at the mission house and consulate. Sister Marquet quietly placed the pyx inside her habit over her chest and intrepidity stood before the chapel to make a supreme effort to save the children, who she thought, would be massacred with the sisters. There she could hear the mob wrecking everything in the dispensary in their mad search for the children's eyes and hearts which, they asserted, were used as drugs by "the white devils," while others were engaged in maltreating the porter of the convent, so terribly that he died of his wounds some weeks later. They then rushed to the inner court, where the chapel was situated. On their appearance Sister Marquet turned to the leader, saying calmly, "What do you want with us? We only try to do all the good we can to your poor and sick. If you wish for our lives here we are, all ten of us; we are ready to die; but spare, at least, our poor children."

This dignified and touching appeal made no impression on these Chinese fiends, who instantly cut open her head with a sabre, killing her, and then they murdered Sister Andreoni who was standing near.

While this martyrdom was going on two of the other sisters went into the crypt with the orphans, and Sister Alice O'Sullivan and five of her companions left the chapel by the side doors, in the hope, no doubt, that by exposing their lives they might thereby save those of the children. Sister O'Sullivan having come out by a door not far from the kitchen, the murderers seized a saucepan of boiling water and scalded her fearfully. In her agony she ran towards the chapel, and was killed there near her superioress. Her death, though painful and shocking enough, was, however, merciful in comparison to the tortures inflicted on three of the other sisters, one of whom had her eyes and heart torn out before her death, amid the jeers of her barbarous murderers, while two others were literally roasted over a fire. Nameless barbarities were inflicted on the mangled remains of these ten defenceless women, and before three o'clock these holy souls had all gone to claim the martyr's crown. It was stated by the pagans that as the massacre was

going on the wife of a bonze, or heathen priest, was watching the terrible scene from her balcony, and as each sister expired she beheld a brilliant cloud soaring up into heaven. She was so impressed by this prodigy that she exclaimed that these people must have been dear friends of God, and she ran over to the sisters' courtyard. On being asked what brought her there she said they were killing holy people, and that she had come to adore the God of the murdered sisters. One of the rabble at once cut off her head, and in her baptism of blood the poor ignorant soul went to join the martyrs' glorious band.

On the 3rd of August, the few carbonized remains of the hapless sisters, collected from the charred ruins of the Jen-tse-t'ang, were solemnly interred in a grave on the side of the destroyed mission station, in the presence of an immense crowd, among whom were the native and foreign high officials and all the foreign residents in the Tientsin concession. Mgr. Thierry, the Pro-Vicar of Chi-li, who conducted the funeral service, in his oration observed that "the death of the victims had been to them a gain; coming to China with a hope of martyrdom, they had attained the accomplishment of their sincere wish, and had given their lives for Jesus Christ."

For thirty-two years these heroines of the Church have rested in their quiet grave, but the lesson of their lives can never be forgotten while hearts respond to the high impulse of holy deeds. Two years ago a movement for Sister O'Sullivan's beatification was inaugurated at Rome, but was suspended because it was impossible in view of the Boxer uprising for the Apostolic Delegate to China to reach Rome. His testimony was required. Now the proceedings are about to be resumed.

The little Irish sister who hungered and yearned for the home she was never to see again has there an enduring place in the treasure house of memory. In the years to come, before the door of the convent school where her pure young heart first gave itself to God, generations of children will learn from the beautiful monument the sublime story of the life and work of Alice O'Sullivan, the martyr of Clonmel.—Francis Hogan, in Donahoe's Magazine.

## Power of a Mother's Prayer.

Once, says a writer, I suddenly opened the door of my mother's room and saw her on her knees beside her chair, and heard her speak my name in prayer. I quickly and quietly withdrew with a feeling of awe and reverence in my heart. Soon I went away from home to school, then to college, then into life's stern duties. But I never forgot that one glimpse of my mother at prayer, nor the one word—my own name—which I heard her utter. Well did I know that what I had seen that day was but a glimpse of what was going on every day in that sacred closet of prayer, and the consciousness strengthened me a thousand times in duty, in danger and in struggle.

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