

reaching out a hand to her little companion.

"Big sister!" she asked, pathetically. "Minnie Belle's big sister! Can't her come, too?"

Whether it was the unselfish sincerity of the child's appeal, or the wistful something that flashed into the sweet, innocent eyes of the older girl as Minnie Belle spoke, certain it is that a noble decision was born on the instant. The next day Mrs. Crossen came and took home two happy children, Minnie Belle and her big sister—Helen Moriarity, in The Magnificent.

THE PREVAILING CODE

There are those who tell us that crime is on the increase, that we are living in very bad times, that morality is lessening and that careless standards are being adopted more easily by the vast majority of mankind than those high ideals which make for true nobility of mind and heart.

To the onlooker this aspect of the world appears as self-evident. Men see about them extravagant fashions setting the pace for their votaries to follow, sensational inducements toward which they may easily incline without the exercise of strength of will and determination.

The late Cardinal Gibbons once opportunely said: "Crime is not more rampant today than it has been in the preceding generations. The cry of the public for sensational and scandalous news has led to the publication of the vices, leaving unsung the virtues that unobtrusively continue as they have in the past."

A casual glance about the world tells the tale. Take for example that most popular form of all American entertainment, which in the last decade has usurped to a great extent all other forms of mental recreation, the cinema.

So far as the cinema follows along the right lines, it may be a source of instruction, relaxation and keenest enjoyment. The great events of history have been portrayed through this medium so that once again men find themselves transported to those early times in the life of great nations when customs, manner of dress and even the face of the country was strangely different from the present. Great conquests have been faithfully rehearsed in most realistic manner; classical novels have been retold with all their quaint charm, pathos and humor; the passions, have been portrayed in all their good and evil effects upon the soul of man, and all this in a manner calculated to bring about healthful instruction and recreation, with no element of the sensational or harmful to alloy the integrity of that which is portrayed.

But, alas, "the cry of the public for sensational and scandalous news has led to the publication of the vices." A casual glance at the billboards of certain playhouses will tell the tale. Titles calculated to arouse morbid curiosity, scenes depicted in glaring colors on paper posters announce the lurid theme of the latest offering. From the story is carefully selected that portion of scene which is detrimental to morality, and suggestively worded expositions or unwholesome themes are calculated to draw the largest possible crowd to view this creation of an unworthy brain.

For the edification of the children, long lines of whom can be seen any Saturday afternoon waiting outside the ticket offices for admission to amusements far beyond their tender years, the immoral, are openly offered. In public places it is not unusual to hear discussions among the little ones on the popular heroes and heroines of the screen, and these characters who are not rightfully children's heroes or heroines, but the sensational type of performers whose specialty is the breaking up of home circles.

The exhibition of highly sensational posters in the public streets of large cities is hardly in keeping with the dignity and integrity of good government.

"A word," says a modern essayist, "is an act of the mind projected into the world of spirit where it does an unknown work for good or evil. Often affecting other men's minds profoundly, it acts upon the imagination, moulds feeling, directs life and so exercises an influence commensurate with the duration of our being, and that influence continues even after the voice that gave it birth is stilled in death."

An evil tongue is hardly tolerated in good society, if for no other motive than that it represents "bad form" to those persons who at all hazards must follow the prevailing code. Men have been done to death by evil tongues, perhaps more by the printed word which represents such tongues than by that which is spoken. But, unfortunately, the evil which is effected through the exploitation of sensational and unwholesome pictures, and through the columns of certain newspapers and magazines, is the deepest and most deadly.

Surprising to relate, the headlines of such papers seem to be deliberately calculated to arouse the morbid interest and the dangerous passions of the human mind. And it may happen that the real news, the worthwhile matter is hidden in some obscure paragraph because

forsooth, it lacks the element which the writer imagines will appeal to the minds of readers. Truly a doubtful compliment to the mentality of the great number who in train or street car, in the privacy of the study or at the breakfast table, unfold the daily sheet which purports to present to them the news of the day.

"The cry of the public for sensational news . . . has left unobtrusively continue as they have in the past. Man is an imitative being. He follows the example given by those about him. He imbibes the thoughts and aspirations of his friends, and by friends may be termed not alone the men with whom he has special bonds of sympathy, but the books and papers which he is in the habit of reading, the very thoughts which course through his fertile brain."

"Every report of the senses, every process of the mind, every form and figure in the soul's secret chambers of imagery is the result of contact with other creatures about us. The very trees and fields of our native village and the blue dreamy outline of our native hills, can so possess our souls as to sway them through a long life of travel, of moneymaking or of ambition," says Father Faber. So it is true that the images placed before men's eyes by those who, in their unscrupulous desire for money care nothing for the harmful effect of their works upon men's souls, can in time so possess those souls that they will retain the impression throughout life.

The popular apology of satisfying one's curiosity because others are doing a certain thing, is not a satisfactory excuse for the evils of the hour. Unfortunately the votaries of the sensational and harmful recreations of the day will not realize the truth, and so live their lives until the passions are worked out like worn-out actors they are forced to withdraw from life's stage realizing that the tragedy of the presentation has been their own story.—The Pilot.

MARVEL WROUGHT BY PRAYER

Rev. Charles Charroppin (who died a few years ago) professor of astronomy in the University of St. Louis, who was a member of the expedition to the Pacific coast to view the solar eclipse of Jan. 1, 1889, relates an interesting and edifying incident in connection with the work of the party.

The place selected for their observations was the village of Norman, near San Francisco, where a cottage had been placed at their disposal through the generosity of Senator Bogg. We give the incident in Father Charroppin's own words, in a letter addressed to a relative in France. It will be entirely new to English readers:

Our party consisted of five astronomers, among whom was the only Catholic; but my companions—Professors Pritchett, Nipher, Engler and Valle—besides being men of learning, were perfect gentlemen, so that the expedition was in every respect agreeable.

After our arrival at Norman, there remained only five days in which to make our preparations. We had to determine exactly our latitude and longitude, which could be done only by stellar observation. We were obliged to work day and night, and it was only on the eve of the eclipse that our astronomical clock was put in working order.

That very night the weather became cloudy and threatening, and the probabilities were that the next day, Jan. 1st, would be the same. We were very much discouraged. After tiring our brains over mathematical problems, and having completed all our preparations, it looked as though a mean little cloud was going to spoil everything.

According to the calculations we had made, the first contact would take place at 12 o'clock, 12 minutes and 15 seconds; and the totality of the eclipse would begin one hour and a half later. After supper we lit our cigars and chatted about the prospects for the morrow. Not a star could be seen through the clouds, and my companions were almost in despair. At last, to give them courage, I told them that we would have a clear sky for at least the two minutes of the totality.

Professor Pritchett remarked: "Father, are you a prophet?"

"Neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet," I replied.

"How then, can you be so sure about tomorrow?" asked another.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I am fully confident, and I have the best of reasons; but you can neither believe nor understand them."

"Will you please tell us what they are, Father?" they all exclaimed.

"With pleasure. We have a good Mother in heaven, whom you Protestants do not know. She has all power with God, and she loves and protects in an especial manner all who honor her. Well, whenever I am very anxious to obtain a particular favor, I manage to have a good number of her devoted children unite with me in prayer, and she never refuses to grant what we ask. Now, there are at St. Louis hundreds of religious and innocent children who are praying to her, and saying: 'Dearest Mother, give Father Charroppin only two minutes of sun.' And I am sure that we shall have those two minutes; for she is a good, kind Mother."

My fellow astronomers smiled incredulously, and Professor Pritchett exclaimed: "Father, I wish that I had your faith."

Then Professor Engler said: "Father, if you are so sure about it, will you agree to walk to Ogden" (a distance of 500 miles), "in case the sky remains cloudy during the whole time of the eclipse?"

"Certainly," I answered. "I have been a devoted child of Mary my whole life, and I am sure she will not let me travel 500 miles on foot."

"Will you sign an agreement to that effect?"

"Gentlemen," said I, "it is not fair that a contract should be all on one side. I will sign for what you ask of me if you will sign for what I ask."

"Well, what is it?"

"If the sky is cloudy I shall walk to Ogden; but if we have a view of the sun, you promise on your part to kneel down and adore the providence of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin."

The contract was accepted and signed by all. Then Professor Engler exclaimed: "Father, you have burned your ships!"

Professor Nipher said: "Suppose the sun does show a little through the clouds, or that there is a kind of hazy atmosphere useless for purposes of observation, will you claim that you have won?"

I replied: "Our Mother does not do anything by halves. We shall have a full view of the eclipse. But, mind you, I have only prayed for two minutes. We may possibly lose the first contact on account of the clouds, but I am certain we shall have a clear and beautiful sky during totality."

Next morning, the day of the eclipse, the sky was covered with clouds. Breakfast was served but remained untouched. We were all disheartened, and at 10 o'clock my companions gave up in despair. I left them for a while, and began to say my beads, with this introductory invocation: "O Blessed Virgin Mary, my Mother, your honor is at stake! Do not give those unbelievers a chance to say you have no power." I felt assured that my prayer would be heard.

The time of the first contact came, but nothing could be seen on account of the clouds. My friends were in despair, but I tried to reassure them, and prevailed upon them to remain at their posts, each one with his instrument, telling them positively that the clouds would surely disperse when the right moment would come.

"Do you think that there are angels coming to sweep away the clouds?" asked Professor Nipher.

"That is exactly what I think," said I.

"Perhaps your camera will take a picture of those angels?"

"Angels," said I, "have no impression upon the sensitive plate. But they will be present all the same."

While we were talking in this way Senator Boggs and his family came up to us, all with looks of disappointment. The moon was encroaching upon the sun's disc and the obscurity became sensible. It was, indeed, an impressive moment, and the dim light shed on the surrounding country was awe-inspiring.

But just ten minutes before totality the clouds dispersed. Then there was a grand outburst of joy. Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, all near the sun, shone forth with great splendor. A little crescent of the sun remained, and nature seemed plunged in deep mourning. A greenish light appeared, shedding a strange halo over the surrounding mountains. Then the last luminous beam disappeared, and the corona appeared in all its grandeur and glory.

A total eclipse of the sun is certainly the most sublime of all the phenomena of nature. At our station it lasted exactly two minutes, and was a perfect success. As soon as it was over, the professors all rushed to me and shook my hands most enthusiastically. Professor Pritchett said: "We will all be Catholics now. We believe in the Mother of God. This is certainly her work." Whilst they were yet speaking the clouds again obscured the sun.

We accepted the kind invitation of Senator Boggs to dinner, but I took an early occasion to go and develop my photographs, which I found perfect. I told them not to wait for me, as it would take an hour at least to complete my work. But they all declared that they would not touch a morsel before I had blessed the table, and everything was sent back until I should be ready.

After dinner I remarked that there was a part of the contract to be fulfilled. At once, all knelt down, and we thanked the Blessed Virgin for the wonderful sign of her patronage. Professor Nipher said it was the first time in his life that he got on his knees.—Ave Maria, Aug. 23, 1899.

35,000 CHURCHES WITHOUT PASTORS

Washington, D. C., Jan. 10.—There are 35,000 more congregations of all denominations in this country than there are pastors to attend to them, according to a census taken under the auspices of the Federal Council of (Protestant) Churches. The census is said to include not only Protestant organizations but Catholic and Jewish and non-sectarian bodies as well.

In the summary of this census issued by Rev. Dr. E. O. Watson, secretary of the Washington branch of the Federal Council, the total number of church organizations, is given as 236,588. The total number of ordained ministers is said to be 201,280. Dr. Watson has announced that a supplementary analysis of this census will show that there are now more persons affiliated with religious organizations than ever before in the history of the United States.

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MANY MARTYRS NUMBERED AMONG THE PONTIFFS

Of the first thirty Popes, twenty-nine were martyrs, except St. Dionysius, who was the twenty-fifth. The total number of martyred Popes is thirty-three; we venerate eighty-two Popes as saints. One hundred and four Popes have been Romans; 108 were natives of other parts of Italy; 15 were Frenchmen; 9 were Greeks; 7 were Germans; 5 were Asiatics; 8 were

Africans; 8 were Spaniards; 2 were Dalmatians, while Palestine, Thrace, Holland, Portugal and England have each furnished one occupant of the papal chair.

Nine Pontiffs reigned less than one month, 30 less than one year, 11 more than 20 years, 6 have reigned over 23 years; the longest reign except that of St. Peter, who was in Antioch 7 years and in Rome 25 years, 2 months and 7 days, was the reign of Pius IX, who was Pope 81 years, 7 months and 21 days. The next longest was his successor's, Leo XIII., who was Pope 25 years and 5 months.

The combined successive reigns of these two Popes are the longest in history, covering a period of 57 years and 5 months.

Including the late Pontiff, Benedict XV., there have been only 9 Popes since the foundation of the American Republic, the longest series of reigns since the foundation of the Church. Benedict XV. was the two hundredth and sixtieth Pope.

THE WORLD WITHOUT GOD

As the Conference for the Limitation of Armaments draws to a close, the high hopes that flushed when in the name of America Secretary Hughes made his brave and astounding proposals, grow cold. The nations and the men who represent the peoples of the world have settled back into the old ways. And what can the end be, unless—

On a bright morning 2,000 years ago, a zealot breathing slaughter against an innocent people spurred his horse down the road to Damascus. Suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him, and falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Who said, "Who are thou, Lord?" and He, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

So is the old story told, for the consolation of souls that after persecuting Christ have turned to God. But the world today is persecuting Christ, scourging Him by lying and rapine and murder, nailing Him to the Cross when nations send their peoples intended by the common Father of all to live in peace and brotherly love, into the fields of death. The innocent are oppressed, the weak led into captivity, and the land is red with blood that has been shed by brothers. Because the Governments of nations have lied, lied shamelessly one to another, not one nation will trust another. Because every nation has seen its neighbor prey upon the helpless, not one nation will sheath the sword. There is no peace, no trust, no love, because today nations boast that as nations they can know nothing of Almighty God, and knowing nothing of Him may disregard His eternal law.

God's might is not shortened, although for the time He withhold it. Of Saul, who persecuted Jesus, He made Paul whose heart was the Heart of Jesus, a man boasting that no power was able to separate him from the love of God. There is no salvation for men or for nations save in the Name of Jesus. The world needs God desperately as every human heart needs Him. There is no peace, no rest, if He be rejected. May His power beat down the world, as of old it threw to the ground the most ardent of the Apostles, so that in its abjection it may find God, and with Him lasting peace.—America.

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