

HER IRISH HERITAGE

BY ANNIE M. P. SMITHSON

AUTHOR OF "BY STRANGE PATHS"

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED

"I didn't know what in the world to get you," he said, "and then I got this, and put it in my pocket to-night to give you; but somehow I thought you might care for it, and I was nearly going to bring it back home with me."

He was unwrapping the package as he spoke, and drew forth a fountain pen.

"This is the kind I use myself," he said, "it is not the usual sort, and I want to explain it to you—indeed the young man in the shop told me to be sure and give the lady a demonstration before she started using it herself. I was rather amused at him taking it for granted that it was intended for a lady friend."

Then unscrewing the pen, he showed Mary how to fill it, and screw it—how it was to be cleaned and so on.

And Mary listened with a smiling face and with pretty words of thanks—but with just a tiny pang of disappointment. She tried not to feel it—not to think of it—but it came back to her again and again, as she lay sleepless through the small hours.

No! she had not expected a fountain pen—she had hoped for something very different. Then she began to worry over the sleeve-links. Would he think it forward of her? Perhaps she shouldn't have given him anything—no jewelry anyway? She tossed and turned and worried, but could not find an answer to her perplexities!

But in the morning, as it is usual with all, she felt fifty times better and brighter, and when later in the day, Theodore Delaney rang her up to thank her for the links, she told her how delighted he was with them—although he scolded her a little too—and that he was going to a medical dinner that night, when he would wear them, she felt at peace with herself and the world once more.

And so the great festival of Christmas came round and Clare Castlemaine in a letter to Mrs. Webb, told her first impressions of an Irish Catholic Xmas:

"Dearest old Webbie, except Angel who always remained her favourite—she liked Shamus the best. There was something so gay and boyish about him, he was so full of fun—so fond of teasing, and yet so tender and considerate—that to his half-English cousin he proved an irresistible mixture. He was an ardent Catholic, as she knew, but some of his dearest friends were amongst the non-Catholic sects, and she had never heard a bigoted or intolerant speech from his lips. He took to Clare from the first, and now that she felt equal to going about more, he often asked her to accompany him in the evenings. They went to the Abbey Theatre together, and there Clare for the first time saw Irish plays acted by Irish players, and laughed at the remembrance of the stage Irishman whom she had sometimes seen on the London boards. She went, too, with him to various meetings—Norah Donovan and Anthony Farrell generally accompanying them—and there she heard speeches from men whose names were destined to be written on the pages of Irish history later on, although neither she nor they understood it then. She began to understand—as she had thought she never could—the Irish point of view, and to look at things in general from an Irish standpoint. But all this was not easy and took time, for when one has been accustomed all one's life to gaze upon the world with the serene and placid stupidity of the average Englishman, it is rather puzzling to suddenly find oneself gazing at the same world from a totally different vantage ground.

Her friendship with Anthony Farrell progressed rapidly, in fact it had gone beyond the bounds of friendship, as each of them knew in their heart.

As for Shamus and Norah they had been sweethearts since they were children together, but they knew that they would have to remain sweethearts for some years yet, before they could attain to the little home which the two of them were busy planning in their own minds. But they were young and strong—full of hope and energy, and so content to wait.

Oh! Blessed be God! Who in His infinite mercy ordains that the future is hidden from us!

As for Mary Carmichael she seemed to be living in a happy dream most of her time. St. Columba's with its rigid rules, hard work, and monotonous food became for her a veritable Paradise on earth. In the morning she thought, "I will see him today!" or if they were not to meet—"I will talk to him over the phone—I will at least hear his voice!"

And she was full of such a deep gratitude, such a fervent love for God who had been so good to her, never do enough for Him now. "Oh! if I could only show Him how grateful I am! If I could only do something to prove my love for Him!" She used to think many a time.

And then when Lent drew near a sudden thought entered her mind. But it was a thought that she would

come, and also Mr. Anthony Farrell of whom, I think, I told you before. Dr. Delaney had to go to his mother and sisters, who live somewhere in Terenure direction. To tell you the truth, I was rather surprised that he didn't ask Mary Carmichael to spend Xmas with his people, for I imagine that they are now practically engaged, and I think she felt a bit disappointed but she was quite jolly in spite of it—indeed, everyone was in high spirits. Such a gay dinner, Webbie, and yet not half as elaborate as we are accustomed to on the other side of the water and yet twice as happy. That is what impressed me the most of all this Xmas—the importance attached to the spiritual side of the Festival. In England it always seemed to me that the so-called Christians simply regarded Xmas as a time for eating and drinking more than usual—but here, all that comes secondary to the great religious aspect of the Feast. They never seem to forget here that it is a holy sacred time, a time for rejoicing and gaiety certainly—but all within limits.

"Now Webbie, I am tired, so good-bye for the present, and write soon again to

"Yours lovingly,
"CLARE."

CHAPTER IX
"LENT"

The first few months of 1914 passed uneventfully for all our friends. How little did people imagine what that year was to bring forth, and what terrible devastation and bloodshed would overwhelm Europe before its close.

Clare Castlemaine had quite settled down with her cousins and daily grew fonder of them all, so that the thought of leaving them became very painful to her. Still to continue as their guest for an indefinite period was out of the question. Although not poor, neither were they wealthy, and even though so many of the family were earning, still she knew that the expenses of the household must be fairly heavy. So after a pretty hard tussle both with her uncle and with Mary, Clare gained her point, and it was settled that she should remain as a paying guest for as long as she liked. She was perfectly content from that on, and threw herself more fully into the life around her.

Perhaps of all her cousins—except Angel who always remained her favourite—she liked Shamus the best. There was something so gay and boyish about him, he was so full of fun—so fond of teasing, and yet so tender and considerate—that to his half-English cousin he proved an irresistible mixture. He was an ardent Catholic, as she knew, but some of his dearest friends were amongst the non-Catholic sects, and she had never heard a bigoted or intolerant speech from his lips. He took to Clare from the first, and now that she felt equal to going about more, he often asked her to accompany him in the evenings. They went to the Abbey Theatre together, and there Clare for the first time saw Irish plays acted by Irish players, and laughed at the remembrance of the stage Irishman whom she had sometimes seen on the London boards. She went, too, with him to various meetings—Norah Donovan and Anthony Farrell generally accompanying them—and there she heard speeches from men whose names were destined to be written on the pages of Irish history later on, although neither she nor they understood it then. She began to understand—as she had thought she never could—the Irish point of view, and to look at things in general from an Irish standpoint. But all this was not easy and took time, for when one has been accustomed all one's life to gaze upon the world with the serene and placid stupidity of the average Englishman, it is rather puzzling to suddenly find oneself gazing at the same world from a totally different vantage ground.

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And she was full of such a deep gratitude, such a fervent love for God who had been so good to her, never do enough for Him now. "Oh! if I could only show Him how grateful I am! If I could only do something to prove my love for Him!" She used to think many a time.

And then when Lent drew near a sudden thought entered her mind. But it was a thought that she would

not harbour at first, for it brought with it pain—pain and self-sacrifice. But the thought returned again and again with a persistency that would not be gainsaid, and at last Mary found herself compelled to give it her attention.

And this idea that filled her mind with such a strange mixture of joy and pain—what was it? Nothing more or less than the resolution to give up all communication or intercourse of any kind whatsoever with Theodore Delaney during the time of Lent—not to meet him or to write to him—not even to ring him up!—on the overworked phone at St. Columba's. From Shrove Tuesday until Easter they were to renounce each other, and to become as strangers.

But even as she was making up her mind to this penance, she shrank from the very thought. But over and over again she found herself thinking "God has been so good to me,—so good—so good—can I not do this for Him! Just to give up what I love best for six weeks? What is it after all when I am to have him afterwards for all my life!"

And still she faltered at the thought of the ordeal—for that would be a bit of real self-sacrifice she knew but too well. Not to see his beloved face—not to hear his dear voice, for six long weeks! Could she do it? For her Divine Lord—yes! Otherwise it had been impossible to her.

She broached the subject one night to Dr. Delaney, as they were taking a long walk together near Ballsbridge.

"What are you going to give up for Lent?" she asked him.

"Well now, that's just what I was considering a few days ago, and he answered, "I suppose we will have to forego theatres and the pictures—eh?"

Oh! that little word "we"—how it pierced her heart tonight!

"Oh, of course," she said, "but that's nothing! I always give them up—don't you? But I have been thinking, then, that this Lent, as God has been so good to us—Well, I was thinking that we ought to do something a little harder."

Dr. Delaney looked down at her whimsically. "Well, what do you want me to do?" he asked teasingly. "Live on bread and water, or give up smoking? I'd prefer the former, although as a matter of fact, I always limit my tobacco fairly strictly during Lent."

"No, I don't want you to live on bread and water, or do without your pipe," said Mary, "but—but I thought perhaps that you could do without me."

Theodore Delaney almost stopped on the footpath to stare at her.

"Do without you, Mary?" he asked, "what on earth do you mean?"

Then she explained to him, and told him what she was planning for Lent. As she had expected, it did not meet with his approval, and he argued against it pretty strongly, but in the end he found himself unable to hold out against Mary's unanswerable plea—"Our dear Lord has done so much for us!—can't we do this one little thing for Him?"

And so it was arranged. From Shrove Tuesday night until Easter Saturday morning, they were to be absolutely separated. But on Easter Saturday morning at 9 a. m. he was to ring her up on the telephone, and in the evening they would meet once more!

"That's if we are both alive, you wicked girl!" said Dr. Delaney, "six weeks, why it will be an eternity!"

Mary laughed too, but rather shakily.

"You may send me something for the fifteenth," she said.

The fifteenth of March was the day on which Mary Carmichael had been received into the Catholic Church, and to her it was always a very special day of thanksgiving and rejoicing. Also on that day she was accustomed to get little gifts and congratulatory notes from those of her friends who were really intimate with her.

"Well! I wasn't likely to forget that day, Mary," said Theodore, "and I suppose I may write—just a little note."

"No, don't write," she said, "but you may send me a new prayer book—I want one very badly. Get me a copy of 'The Flowers of Nazareth'—I never use any other. But you know, dear, I won't acknowledge it—only it will make me so happy to know that you remembered me on that day."

They were to meet for the last time before their voluntary separation, on Shrove Tuesday, and as on that day both happened to be very busy—Dr. Delaney especially so—it was late in the afternoon when he rang up Mary on the telephone.

"I have to go to Terenure this evening, can't get out of it," he told her over the wire. "Could you be at Harcourt Street station at ten o'clock? I know it's rather late, but I can't possibly manage to meet you any earlier."

Of course she would be there! Where and at what hour would she not have gone to meet him on this—her last—night?

It was just ten o'clock when Mary left the tram at Harcourt Street railway station. It had been raining all evening—a cold drizzle, unpleasant and depressing. She took her stand under the clock from which she could see the various trams passing and re-passing on the street, and at seven minutes past ten she espied Dr.

Delaney's well-known figure and familiar walk, as he crossed the street towards her from a Terenure car.

They shook hands almost in silence—the gloom of the night seemed to have affected them both.

"Rotten evening—isn't it?" he said, and Mary assenting in silence, they started to walk down Harcourt Street together.

Neither of them mentioned a tram, or thought of such a thing—both had taken trams on their way to meet each other, but they started to walk to St. Columba's as a matter of course. Surely their time together was short enough tonight without taking a tram!

Altogether it was rather a silent walk. They spoke but little, and that on impersonal matters, until they came within sight of St. Columba's.

TO BE CONTINUED

RECOMPENSE

Samuel threw his great cloak about him; the winds were strong tonight and too chilling for his liking. Overhead the silent sky was white cloud coldly swept by on its eternal journey. The streets were deserted, approaching night was coming to disagreeably upon the world to be welcomed by the people of the great city. These had taken refuge indoors, leaving the twilight hours to those whom necessity kept upon the pavements.

The ashken hue had deepened into inkish blue ere Samuel reached his home far at the end of the hilly street that wound its way into the heart of the city. As he approached the house the man drew a sigh of heavy trouble, and scanned his frontage half eagerly, half sorrowfully. With another sigh he stepped across the wide stone porch and was about to enter when he noticed a figure on a low bench which stood along the garden-side of the veranda. Samuel stepped quietly towards his unbidden guest, but ere his words of dismissal were uttered, he drew back with a feeling of unaccountable awe.

Before him sat a boy, not more than twelve. His head rested on the arm which was flung over the bench-back, while his face, though calm and full of peace as he slept, revealed extreme weariness, was small and full of peace as he slept. On several moments Samuel scanned the figure with interest. The boy was, he saw, tall and graceful; even the odd-hued tunic he wore seemed to fall in harmony with any motion of its wearer. His hands were purest white, finely formed, but strong and sinewy. And then the face—delicate, beautiful, firm and sweet—surely, the lad must be of royal descent, decided the Jew. Again the winds blew coldly, and tenderly the man touched the sleeping child.

"Awaken, my child," he said; "come within the house. Thou must abide with me until the morning, for the night is chilly, and thou art but lightly clothed."

The boy arose and followed the old man without a word. At the door Samuel reached within a small side crevice and drew forth a lamp, beckoning the young stranger to follow him as he found his way through a low stone passage evidently leading to the back of the house. Once only he turned, gave the boy a silent, searching look, then continued his way, becoming more occupied in his own thoughts and more rapid in his pace as he neared the door which terminated in the long hall.

With careful softness he pushed the door inward, standing a moment on the threshold as though loathe to disturb the scene within. The room in which they now stood was large, comfortable and tastefully furnished, as could well be seen in the glow of the great fire in the open grate near the side end of the apartment. Samuel gave one long look forward, then, with motherly tenderness, stepped softly toward the only occupant of the room.

"Esther," he whispered, as he stooped beside the chair near the fire, "thou art still sorrowfully dreaming thy moments away, while thy silken threads are all about thee, neglected and unwoven. Hast thou succeeded at all in thy work to-day?"

The boy whom Samuel had brought with him, stepped to the side of the room where, unnoticed, he could watch father and child. Samuel, he noted, was addressing a girl of scarce ten summers. Near her was a tabourette on which was piled skeins of varied colors, while on her right stood a small, and evidently neglected, weaving frame. Her face was strong and pretty, but her expression was most fretful and depressed. The question of her father seemed to increase its sorrow and she made no other answer than to throw her arms about him and cry piteously like one who was fast losing hope. The strong man too let fall unbidden tears, and drew her close to him as though to impart some of his strength to her desolate heart. Suddenly, amid the silence, he remembered his guest.

"Esther, my child, we have another with us tonight; a boy near thine own age whom I have brought within our home to shelter from the cold winds without."

As Samuel spoke, the boy himself stepped forward, standing in front of the little girl with extended hand. Esther turned with scarce a show of interest; her eyes fell upon him as she asked:

"Where is he now, my father?" The youth placed his hand on hers and spoke for the first time.

"I am here beside thee, Esther," for he realized that she was blind. The memory of the evening which followed was the sweetest consolation; the greatest hope of Samuel and his blind child. How oft in the after years had they not rehearsed its every moment. The first sound of the boy's voice, what peace it had brought. The old man and the little girl had poured their separate and combined griefs into his boy's heart without scarcely realizing they were doing so. They had told him that only a year since, first the mother, then the child, had been stricken low with a dreadful fever. The mother had died and the girl had lived, but had faced the new life blind and desolate. Samuel, in his sorrow, had sought to engage his little Esther in every work which might, perchance, take her mind from her affliction. All had failed, even the weaving at which she had become so skilful before she had lost her sight. The last few days something akin to despair had come to the hearts of both father and daughter, and both were suffering a pain beyond human aid. Duty and thoughtfulness had prompted Samuel to end the happy hours by offering to lead the boy to where he would take his night's repose; but deep in the man's soul, and deeper in the little girl's was a yearning that the sweet, silent boy should never leave them. He had spoken so seldom, yet so full of sympathy and understanding, that they had unconsciously gathered new courage.

Esther sighed softly as the boy arose to depart for the night; then, as though in answer to that sigh, he had spoken those words on which, through the long years that followed ere they met again, she lived and hoped. As the boy had passed her, he had stooped and, placing some skeins of silk in her hand, said gently:

"Learn in patience to weave, Esther, now while thou art young, and I promise thee that some day thou shalt weave a cloth so wonderful that it will be venerated until the end of time."

Lightly his hands touched her fingers, and then he had passed her the room.

Early on a fresh spring morning, just eighteen years after the visit of him whom she fondly called her "Boy-Propheet," Esther, daughter of Samuel, slipped quietly into the park of the palace in which she now lived. Arrived here, she sat near a tiny, humming fountain, and commenced her work. First, she unfolded with fond care a white mass of finely-woven linen cloth. Her deft fingers then began the work of fashioning, tightening and securing the border which finished the exquisite fabric. Meanwhile, her thoughts journeyed at her will.

"Eighteen years," she mused. "What a long time!" How changed her life had been since her Boy-Propheet had come to her! Who might he have been? Why, indeed, had she asked no questions of him while he was with them? Only the next morning, just after he had departed, a beautiful lady and a venerable old man had met her father and asked him if he had seen a boy whom they described exactly as the visitor of the previous night. Three days, they said, they had searched for him in vain. Samuel told them of the boy's visit, and then gave all the information he knew—that the boy on leaving had said he was going to the Temple.

Eighteen years ago! Yes, she, Esther daughter of Samuel, had learned much during those years. She had patiently woven day by day, until her name was whispered now as Jerusalem's most dexterous daughter. So it was that, when Samuel had departed this world to repose in the bosom of his fathers, she had been brought by her present mistress to this palace and, as her hands fashioned beautiful designs on marvelously-woven fabrics, her life also had developed into a pure, noble and gracious womanhood. One only yearning was left unsatisfied—she had not yet woven the cloth of which her Boy-Propheet had foretold. Her desire to do so had become more intense with each unfolding day, because her heart told her that when at last the little prophecy was fulfilled, she would again meet him, how he alone knew.

The sun had risen high in the heavens ere the last silken thread was secured, but Esther saw it not. Her face brightened with childlike delight as she folded the long scarf and prepared to go. This was her sweet mistress' birthday—and the scarf was Esther's love-gift.

The place was singularly quiet as Esther found her way to the upper veranda where her lady always spent these morning hours, but Esther did not notice it, for her mind was too intent on her gift.

At the door leading outward she paused, "I am sure," in the silence whether her mistress was present, but at the sound of her voice she crossed the porch and knelt beside her.

"Fair mistress," she said, "I wish you special joys on this your birthday; and when thou hast received them may they never end, may they ever increase. I beg you to accept my scarf with my grateful and devoted love."

A little cry of delight from her lady told the blind girl that her gift was giving the joy for which she had so carefully woven it.

"How beautiful! How beautiful, my Esther," murmured the lady. "Come, sit here with me awhile, you understand me so well. Though it is my birthday, I am troubled exceedingly. There, I have draped your gift about me and shall wear it as we speak." She drew Esther tenderly to a low stool beside her, and for a moment, or so both were silent.

From where they sat most of Jerusalem was visible. A pair of stone steps led from the veranda to the street below, which rock and hilly as it was, seemed to be a long, straight connection between the extreme ends of the city. Off in the distance, the Governor Pilate's Palace boldly threw back the sunlight, while to the right, almost opposite to them, the Temple rested, its turrets and domes speaking the silent language of expectation to the throngs below.

Turning from the scene, the mistress commenced to speak on the subject nearest to her heart:

"Esther, hast thou ever heard of the Nazarene—Whom some say is the Christ?"

"Yes," replied the blind girl. "I have heard of Him. Often have I longed to see Him, for they say that His touch has opened deaf ears and sightless eyes. Perhaps my lady, He may some day come near and open my eyes to the light of day."

"Alas, Esther, I fear not! This very morning my servants told me that the Nazarene has been betrayed by one of His Own followers, and that Pilate has sentenced Him to crucifixion. This it is that has made me sad, and though I have never seen Him, I feel His presence and my heart tells me woe unutterable will come to our city if He be crucified."

"Hark, what is that?" called the blind girl in fright, for scarcely had her mistress ceased when horrible cries filled the air. Both women ran to the railing and turned toward the sounds now growing nearer and more distinct. Esther clinging in blind fear to the lady of the palace.

"It is the Nazarene!" the latter cried. "They are leading Him to be crucified."

Soon the rabble filled the streets and coarse cries rent the air. As the terrible procession drew nearer, the lady could distinguish the three cross bearers. Which was the Nazarene? Oh, how she longed to speak to Him, to have but one look from His Eyes; but the heads were bent low as each man stooped beneath his burden, and the crowds were closing in to close upon them to attempt any approach.

Nearer, nearer, nearer came the crowds and their victims. Now, they were beside her garden wall, now, they had stopped just below her. It was then that the Bearer of the first Cross raised His head and slowly, painfully lifted His eyes, not to the rabble about Him, not to the Roman guard, but straight into her eyes. He looked in piteous appeal. Like one suddenly maddened with anguish, the lady threw Esther from beside her, and made her way down the steep stone steps to the street, then through the crowds she swept, her silent, frenzied action causing those between herself and the Nazarene to move aside without question. His burden had bent Him low, so when she reached Him she had to kneel to see His Face. Once more the Eyes of Christ met hers and a wave of faith and compassionate love flooded her soul as she tore Esther's scarf from her shoulders and held it towards the poor, blood-stained Face of the Nazarene. Lower He bent; she felt the pressure of His Face on her hands as He buried it within the folds of the veil. That was all. Another instant she was pushed aside. The procession passed on, and the Lady Veronica went sorrowfully up the steps to the porch she had left.

"Esther, oh! my Esther," she cried as she reached the top. "Thy birthday gift shall be the treasure of the world. Come and see."

At the sound of her voice the blind girl came forward, then a cry of exultation rang from her lips. In a moment she was on her knees before the scarf her fingers had fashioned. The dim eyes of the girl had brightened, their sight fully restored, and were now looking in rapture on the blood-stained Face of Jesus of Nazareth as He Himself had imprinted it on the Lady Veronica's Veil.

For a moment she bowed in adoration, then burst forth in a canticle of gratitude.

"Jesus of Nazareth, Thou it was Who came to me in the days of my youth. Thou wert my Boy-Propheet, and Thy prophecy is true, for on the cloth my hands have woven Thou hast left the Likeness of Thy Holy Face? I adore Thee, I thank Thee, my Lord and my God!"—By Dolores, C. I. M.

A THOUGHT

The fishermen of Brittany, so the story goes, are wont to utter this simple prayer when they launch their boats upon the deep: "Keep me, my God; my boat is so small, and Thy ocean is so wide." How touchingly beautiful the words and the thought. Might not the same petition be uttered with as much directness every morning and evening in our daily life: "Keep me, my God; keep me from the perils and temptations that throng around me as I go, so helpless, so prone to wander, so forgetful of Thy loving kindness. I am tossed to and fro

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High School, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th, 156th, 157th, 158th, 159th, 160th, 161st, 162nd, 163rd, 164th, 165th, 166th, 167th, 168th, 169th, 170th, 171st, 172nd, 173rd, 174th, 175th, 176th, 177th, 178th, 179th, 180th, 181st, 182nd, 183rd, 184th, 185th, 186th, 187th, 188th, 189th, 190th, 191st, 192nd, 193rd, 194th, 195th, 196th, 197th, 198th,