

A Kentucky Pastel.

A Tear-Compelling Story of Priestly Heroism

(Anna C. Minogio in The Ave Marie.)

What traveler in the Bluegrass Country, gazing on her fruitful fields, her grazing herds, her tranquil homes, but finds it hard to believe that war and plague once left her lone and desolate, so swiftly and completely has over-partial Nature swept away all traces of her sorrow? From the ruins of which her new prosperity is built we lift a record of her past woe that a deed of heroism may illumine it only for a moment, the path of those who seek for that ancient virtue in the sordid and cowardly present.

At one point, where the counties of Nicholas and Bourbon join, stands the town of Millersburg in the fairest portion of the Bluegrass Belt. Previous to the war between the States the luxury of a rich agricultural society reigned supreme. When war broke out, its calamity fell upon them mercilessly. In the North and the farther South the division was only national, but in Kentucky it entered the family, setting father against son and brother against brother. It disrupted this community, and the vengeance of the contending parties left it utterly desolate.

Peace sent back those warring factions to take up the life that remained and knit it together after a newer, fairer pattern. With faltering hands they began their work. They divided their lands, for the slaves that had filled them and the herds that had stocked them were theirs no longer. On the ashes of their old homes they built humbler ones, for they were a brave people and they set their faces toward the future resolutely. But scarcely had they entered on their new way when a second scourge fell. From afar there had come to them ominous whispers that plague was following the victorious army on its homeward march, but though uneasy, they experienced no grave fears.

One night, however, the ghostly foe crept into town, and when morning broke its first victim, a negro, lay dead in his ramshackle hut. With blanched faces men whispered: "The cholera!" And they who spoke and they who listened drew home to take their loved ones from the stricken place. To the once stately carriages they hitched the army horses, those who had no other conveyance rode in wagons, some were on mules, others afoot. The roads were very much alive with men, women and children, hurrying on they scarcely thought whether so they put miles between themselves and the enemy who had gained possession of the town.

As the rear of that fleeing army of human beings was nearing the town of Carlisle they met a man whose face was turning toward the place they had quitted. He was tall and spare, wore a clerical dress and carried a pair of leather saddlebags. The face showed a paleness that harmonized with the exaltation and spirituality of its expression. His horse was a splendid creature, and he was riding at a hard gallop.

"Where are you going?" cried the affrighted men. "To Millersburg," he replied. "But the cholera is there!" "That is why I am going." For six miles he went over a desolate road, through a deserted country, then another crowd—a poverty-stricken, a sorrow-smitten crowd—met him. Men who had watched wife and children die, women who had laid the clay over all they held dear, children left parentless and poor—black and white, young and old, who having now but life were hurrying out into the wide world to save the only thing left, then—

"Turn back!" they cried faintly to the black-barbed rider. "You can do no good. The living will be dead before another day." "I can help them to die, then," he answered, and rode straight on. A curve in the road passed and the town lay before his eyes. As he reached its edge a sad-eyed man flung back the door of his cottage and, falling on his knees before the rider, cried:

"O soggarth aroo! soggarth aroo! Sure I knew nat you'd come!" The priest quickly dismounted and half raised the crushed man. "I was away on one of my missions," he said. "As soon as I heard the terrible news I started." His voice had the mellow tones of a native of Tipperary, and the tenderness of the Irish sky was in his eyes as he asked: "How many has it taken from you, Patrick?"

"They're all gone, your reverence, but little Patsy. And it's herself that's the heart-broken woman wis day!"

The hot salt tears were coursing down the weather-beaten cheeks, and a hard sob shook his bowed frame. "God help you, my poor friend!" said the priest, laying his hand on the man's shoulder. Thus they walked to the poor house. Its floor was bare and bare were its walls. A pile of ashes lay on the hearthstone and sign of food there was none. In a corner on a rude bed lay a young child with pain-distorted face; by him, with her head bowed on the coverlet, knelt the mother. The husband hurried to her side and, putting his arm about her, said: "Rise up, alanna, and see who's come to us!"

She lifted her face, and, seeing the priest, stretched out her arms toward him, crying:

"O father, father! can't you save little Patsy? He's all I've got now." Tears came to the priest's eyes and fell unheeded as he looked on the kneeling woman before him. When he had last stood here she was a comely, happy mother, with six sturdy children clustered around her, to-day he saw a white-haired, crushed woman bending above her fast dying child.

"O Christ!" he prayed, kneeling by the low bed, "who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, have compassion on Thy poor children and spare this little life!" He opened his saddlebags and, taking a bottle, poured some of the liquid it contained between the white lips, then he read the prayers of the Church, and with him prayed the sorely tried parents. God was merciful that night the crisis passed. Little Patsy slept a quiet, refreshing sleep, and woke next morning to a life which (this being no imaginary tale) we gladly write here has proven a good and useful one.

When the priest returned to where his horse stood, Patrick told the harrowing story of their sufferings. "I was the first taken down," he said, "then the two eldest children. I'd have died, I reckon, father, but for the thought of herself being left to bury them. They both died about the same time. A nigger brought her the coffin, but sorra a one, black or white, would enter the door. She had to wash them and dress them with her own hands, and then she had to nail down the lid over them! And she had to carry them out and put them in the spring-wagon that belonged to one of the neighbors and drive to Paris with them."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the priest. "It's no lie I'm telling you, father," said the old man, in an anguished voice. "The sexton dug the grave and buried them for her. When she got home the next three were sick, and they died. And she had to do for them as for the other two. It's eight long miles to Paris. Think of it, father—think of her making those two trips with her five dead children! What kept her from going mad? I got well," he concluded, "and then little Patsy took down."

The voice died in a broken sob. Before such unutterable misery the priest was silent. He had no words of comfort for such a sorrow, for there are none. Silence and prayer are best. He mounted his horse and rode down the street. He secured some provisions and returned with them to Patrick's cottage, then he began his work of ministering to the sick and dying.

There were only a few families of his own creed in the village. They, like Patrick, had been sorely afflicted. After doing for them all that lay in his power, the priest turned his attention to the other inhabitants. He went into the houses of the whites and the hovels of the blacks. He gave them medical aid, and when that proved unavailing he helped them by prayer and gentle exhortation to die. He prepared the bodies for burial, and when no assistance could be obtained dug and laid them in their shallow graves. Almost alone he fought the deadly plague. Then men heard of how one man was holding the town in the name of God and Christian brotherhood against the power of despair, and a few heroic souls took their stand with him, and together they worked and struggled until finally the grim foe departed from the place.

When the glad tidings were borne through the country and the long untraveled roads were dotted with returning dwellers, the priest mounted his horse and went back in the night to Carlisle. In the stable of his boarding house one of his parishioners met him with a suit of clothes. He changed his attire and, after burning his old garments, quietly took up his duties as missionary priest.

The years passed. Wealth came back to the community slowly but substantially, and with it luxury and elegance. In their new security the fear of war and the horror of plague were forgotten, or, if recalled, it was the recollection of things that should no more confront them. News traveled slowly in those days. Finally it came to them like the echo of an echo that smallpox was raging in Cincinnati. But Cincinnati was farther away in those times than London now is, and they continued to pursue their pleasures and their interests without a quiver of fear.

One evening a strange boy came to the town. He was footsore and hungry and a hospitable Irishman gave him food and shelter. He complained of being ill, and the good wife mothered him as she would one of her own nine children. He told them that he had walked from Covington, but he did not say that he had run away from the pesthouse there and left a black trail of death in his journey thither. When morning came he departed. Then one of the late host's children was taken ill, and another, then a neighbor's only son fell strangely sick. Other cases were reported from various parts of the town.

"It is smallpox!" declared the physicians. Again the long roads were filled with people flying like mad from hideous death. And again the fear-stricken crowd met the priest hurrying to the thrice-accursed town. "Stop!" they called to him. "Death

has claimed all your parishioners by this time."

"There are others there besides my parishioners!" he answered, and rode bravely on.

The door of the cabin that had been Patrick's showed the ominous yellow sign. He dismounted, and thanking God that his old friend was now far from the town, the priest walked to the house. He found a Negro crouching by a pallet on which lay a little suffering boy.

"He's de las' one, massa—do las' one uv selen!" she cried to him, and she remembered the white mother's lamentation. He administered a medicine which a physician had prepared for him, and with a prayer for the heart-broken mother, an appeal to the merciful Christ to spare the little black baby, he continued his journey. He went to the Irish family that had sheltered the strange boy. A high fence now separated it from the street, and the yellow flag told the gruesome story. Undaunted the priest entered the humble and once happy home. Of nine beautiful, healthy children only two remained, and the mother lay dying.

"I knew you'd come, father," she whispered, "to hear my confession before I'd go!" Her peace made with her God, she went to join her children. Again, as in the time of the cholera, the priest labored among the people, white and black, Catholic and Protestant. When a second time he saw plague driven out, he quietly withdrew and returned to his duties elsewhere.

Within a narrow circle men heard of his heroic acts, praised them and forgot them. He lived among them for many years. They loved him for his pure, simple, holy life, but no one laid the mantle of the hero on his shoulders. Must all noble deeds perish which find not the pen of a poet or historian to immortalize them? With molten gold, we are told, the fairest colors of the old cathedral windows are obtained. In the precious molten metal the artist laid the crystal thought and secured it in imperishable beauty for the admiration of all time. In the pure melted gold of sacrifice the priest cast his young life, and as the window adds beauty to the great church, so in the minister built of human worth which feet of angels tread these sublime deeds of his show forth with resplendent beauty, although men have forgotten them, and on his tombstone in the Washington Cemetery, where so lately they laid him, will simply inscribe:

FATHER JOHN HICKEY RESQUESCANT IN PACE.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE D'YOUVILLE READING CIRCLE.

Editor of The Register:

The second fortnightly meeting of the D'Youville Reading Circle was held Tuesday evening, Oct. 21st. Among other things it was said that one of our objects in meeting is to speed one another on to constant endeavor as far as intellectual things are concerned because they will keep us young in spirit and even if we should live into the hundreds we will never lose the feeling of being in wonderland. Another advantage is that there will scarcely ever be a possibility of our making a mistake in the selection of books for we shall have authorities to consult whom we know can be trusted. And after all we do not learn the essential things of life from books. According as we live more seriously and gain more experience of life we should be able to say that we read books some, our own hearts more but our souls most. This soul-reading means a state of mental prayer that the busiest person can enjoy.

The first few minutes after generalities have been disposed of, are always given over to the noting of current events. The coal strike portions of a pamphlet circulated by the I.C.T.S. were read. It has for its title "The Christian Aspect of the Labor Question," and comes from the pen of the Rt. Rev. Abbot Snowe, C.S.B. It is very timely and very wise. He says that to abolish wealth is visionary, to attempt to equalize the conditions of society Utopian, while to hope for the equal distribution of worldly goods would be unreasonable. The Christian solution of the question admits the necessity of wealth and poverty in the world for "The poor you shall always have with you." And our Lord came down from Heaven and was a carpenter's son, but it also teaches the rich how to exercise their stewardship worthily, for their own happiness and that of others. According as men grow more Christian this present unhappy state of things will cease to be, but while the great thinkers and writers continue to take the Christ out of the world there will be darkness, consequently misery and oppression. The Philippines is another question which interests us very much. Accordingly an article in the November number of The North American Review was recommended for perusal. It is written by Mr. Bonsall who, though a non-Catholic, gives us quite an impartial and exact statement of the conditions prevailing there. Another thing to be looked forward to in connection with this matter is the result of the commission which has been appointed to look into and verify the very black charges against

the friars. In England the Education Bill becomes the topic of the hour. In France the condition of the religious orders has occupied attention all summer and it has grown very tragic these later days. The two last topics will be more fully discussed at the next meeting.

In the literary course we have two subjects of study. The Renaissance is taken one week and a comparative study of the four greatest poets of the 19th century the next. Last year the Renaissance constituted our sole theme and we managed to consider at some length its causes and effects. Its painters, sculptors and architects. This season we intend to study its men of letters, especially keeping our minds on the English part of it. Accordingly Mr. W. F. Stockley, of the University, will give a lecture on "Utopia" in November. This is very appropriate, because our first lecture, delivered on St. Theresa's Day, dealt with Sir Thomas More himself. Through that we became acquainted with the man, naturally it remains to get an insight into some of his best work. Last Tuesday, however, happened to be the evening for poetic study, so a little introductory talk was given about Tennyson, Browning, Coventry Patmore and De Vere, the merits of the first two being more fully discussed. In the Tennyson study "The Idylls of the King" will be part of the year's work. They are taking us back from where we are at the time of the twentieth century, when the talk seems of "dust and ashes all that is." And our feelings are all so materialistic, back to seeming superstition, but superstition that stands for a great many things we were in danger of forgetting. The great fact about the Idylls is not the proof of the existence of either as the Dutchman who criticizes them as a long, thick, palpable life would have us believe, but the knowledge that we have them and in Tennyson's beautiful rhythmical setting, "a story of shadowing sense at war with soul, of a constant quest and combat, and of a failure that has something of a triumph in it. Geoffrey Mallory's collection of stories was one of the first books that Caxton put through his press. He was no ordinary printer this Wm. Caxton, he was a critic as well and set forth his candid opinions of the books he was called upon to print in what we would call to-day a preface. Accordingly he sets forth in his quaint and charming English that he Idylls are noble and joyous books, pleasant and profitable, that he no more doubts the existence of Arthur than he does that of David, Joshua and the other great Scripture characters. Then we have James Lane Allen's beautiful estimate of the Idylls in "The Choir Invisible." "The Arthurian Romance" represents the love of courage, the love of courtesy, the love of honor, the love of high aims and great actions, the love of the poor, the love of a spotless name and a spotless life, the love of kindred, the love of friendship, the love of humility of spirit, the love of forgiveness, the love of beauty, the love of love which is the Love of God. It casts its deathless scorn on all cowardice of mind and body, all lying, all oppression, all unfaithfulness, all secret revenge, all hypocrisy and double dealing, the smut of the heart and the mind." The authorities on Tennyson who will be consulted are Vandyke and Geo. H. Myers, who has lately brought out a book called "Tennyson as a Prophet."

Browning is of a different order from Tennyson, but as great as far as merit is concerned, some say greater. Aubrey de Vere says of him: "Shakespeare's gnarled oak unweeded yields not so sweet to harp or lyre." He boldly declares where Tennyson only ventures to suggest, but the latter is more approachable and will be read for his beauty of expression and music even where he is not understood. The Browning study will be "The King and the Book," his longest poem. In the most obscure of all his obscure poems, "Sordello," he begins by saying that he wants to show the development of the soul as that is the only thing worth studying in this life. St. Paul says "I forget the things I have done. I am constantly pressing forward. Tennyson implores the silent voices to lead him on and always on, and Browning says that there is a heaven above us and that our reach should exceed our grasp. One is an Apostle and the other two of the same mind with him may be called unordained priests.

What Tennyson begins to say, what Browning elaborates, Coventry Patmore fully expresses. Father Tyrrell says: "He is to be classed with those writers whose power lies in the beautiful utterance of the truth rather than in the truthful utterance of the beautiful. His marriage sermon in 'The Angel of the House' was recommended for reading, as well as a little volume of essays called 'Religio Poetae.' It takes its name from the chief essay, but he also gives a nice little measurement of 'Distinction' in his talk under that name apart from our social interpretation of the word. In the case of Aubrey de Vere it is not likely that we will be wound up to any dangerous degree of enthusiasm. He is dry and cold, but clear, and some of his fragmentary gems prove his right to be called a great poet.

For spiritual reading we have decided to take the works of Father Geo. Tyrrell, S.J. Two sets have been ordered for the library, because nearly all the volumes of the first one have been taken out. As they are not books which we can sit down and read straight through, it was thought

desirable to have duplicates. Father Tyrrell is an authority for the right kind of philosophy. Then his English is charming and touches on some of the ordinary questions of life, as well as on our great soul concerns. The best verdict to give his works as a whole is that he tells the truth about the truth. Besides the Tyrrell sets two beautiful editions of the works of Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte, including a life of the latter by Mrs. Gaskell, have been lately put on the shelves. Among the magazines which find their way to the library every month are The Catholic World, The Dolphin, The Messenger, Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly and The Canadian Magazine, the weekly newspapers, The Pilot, The Register, Catholic Record, The Philadelphia Standard and Times and The Catholic News.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE (Barrie Gazette)

Mr. C. R. Munro has again called us to task on our recent remarks, on Christian Science, but he has made no progress in reconciling us to his views. He has undertaken to prove that his theories are "christian" and "scientific." The oust of proving lies on him, and he has proved nothing. This is a specimen of his proof that his theory is "christian." "Christian Science is Christian because it is in accord with the life and teaching of Jesus, and through it we are in a measure enabled to follow out in some measure the Master's commands and make them practical in every day life." This is simply an assertion and being merely such, is not deserving of a reply.

In reading the above sentence, we had expected that it was the major proportion of a syllogism, and that it was to be followed in regular succession by the minor and conclusion, but it was not, and consequently as a proof it amounts to nothing. It is said there is no lie so difficult to refute, as the one that has in it a web of truth. This is partly so with Christian Science. We say partly, because in it there is not enough truth or consistency to delude any but those who are almost devoid of intelligence.

Reading the Bible is good, praying for the sick is good, but to attribute to these exercises in the Christian Science sense all that the Christian Scientists claim, is gross superstition. So many absurdities, and contradictions, have been obtained by religious schemers and adventurers from the Bible, that discredit is brought upon it, and many are now obtaining, through the higher criticism of it—that is disproving its inspiration—a great reputation for ecclesiastical wit, learning and piety. In proof that it is science, he says: "It is scientific because based on principle, and when understood, is as demonstrable as mathematics. Practical experience proves that in proportion as we understand its principles, we are able to do the work which the Master commands us to do."

This is a mere assertion and no proof. If, however, he will prove Christian Science by the same, or equivalent process of demonstration, required in a mathematical proposition, he will remove all our objections to his theories. So far, he has not even approached the subject. In such a demonstration he would establish the highest kind of certitude to which a criterion may be applied. It is quite evident that this defender of Christian Science does not understand the science at all, and it is only because of the dangerous results of the practice of this so-called science that we trouble ourselves with its refutation.

"One swallow does not make a summer," nor does the result of one or more experiments, even if successful, constitute a science. We are told by logicians that a general conclusion or law, or say science, does not follow from particular instances. The deductions of science are always exact. If there are exceptions, it is not science. Applying these principles, the theories of the Christian Scientists are a snare, a delusion and a fraud.

Through a superstitious belief in their power of healing, those deluded readers of the Bible, would even in some critical cases, exclude the physicians. We would respectfully call their attention to Eccles. 38 "Honor the physician for the need thou hast of him. For all healing is from God. The Most High has created medicine out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them. The virtue of these things is come to the knowledge of men, and the Most High has given knowledge to men that He may be honored in His wisdom. By these He shall cure and shall allay their pains, and of these the apothecary shall make up ointments of health, and of His works there shall be no end."

Read the remaining portion of this chapter and do not longer appeal to the Bible to find in it the principles of Christian Science. Honor the Physician for man could not possess such power had not God himself bestowed it. Honor him for his knowledge his devotedness for the vacation of benevolence he has received from on high, honor him for the power he has of nearly always relieving, and often of curing. Expect from him what he can do, and ask not impossible prodigies. God is the author of remedies in the natural order, as he is the author of remedies in the supernatural order. When you are ill, send for a doctor, and let Mrs. Eddy and her disciples alone.

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