

## UNWRITTEN HEROISM.

(From Catholic Union and Times.)

There are heroes and heroes. Heroes whose names are boldly emblazoned on the scroll of fame and whose courageous deeds are published to the world. There are others, too, whose fortitude is scarcely ever known. Not on history's page, nor on tablet or monument are their names to be found. To them it is enough that God knows enough that in eternity's imperishable record their name be placed.

History tells us of the frightful famine in Ireland in '47, and also of the terrible ship fever that brought desolation. The heroism displayed by the religious, however, was scarce worth mentioning from the historian's viewpoint. At that direful time the Grey Nuns of Canada were well high wipid out.

When news reached the mother-house that hundreds were dying unaided and unattended on the shores of Point St. Charles, venerable Mother McMullen at once visited the scene. She found the report only too true. She collected all the facts and sent them to the emigrant agent, requesting power to act so as to ameliorate the sufferings of the unfortunate Irish immigrants.

Preliminaries settled, she returned to headquarters. A little book published years ago and which is not in general circulation, gives details of later happenings as follows:

It was the hour of recreation. The Sisters, old and young, were gathered in the community-room, the conversation was animated, and, from time to time, peals of laughter issued from one group or another. The Superior entered, and the Sisters rose to receive her. Having taken her seat in the circle, she said after a short pause:

"Sisters, I have seen a sight to-day that I shall never forget. I went to Point St. Charles and found hundreds of sick and dying huddled together. The stench emanating from them is too great for even the strongest constitution. The atmosphere is impregnated with it, and the air filled with the groans of the sufferers. Death is there in its most appalling aspect. Those who thus cry aloud in their agony are strangers, but their hands are outstretched for relief. Sisters, the plague is contagious." Here the venerable superior burst into tears and with a broken voice continued: "In sending you there I am signing your death warrant, but you are free to accept or refuse."

There was no hesitation, no demur. All arose and stood before their superior. The same exclamation fell from their lips: "I am ready!"

Eight of the willing number were chosen, and the following morning they cheerfully departed to fulfill the task allotted to them.

On arriving at Point St. Charles the little band of volunteers dispersed among the sheds with the persons whom they had engaged to assist in the work of mercy. What a sight before them! "I nearly fainted," said one of the Sisters, relating her emotions on that eventful day. "When I approach the entrance of this sepulchre the stench suffocated me. I saw a number of beings with distorted features and discolored bodies lying heaped together on the ground looking like so many corpses. I knew not what to do. I could not advance without treading on one or another of the helpless creatures in the way. While in this perplexity, I was recalled to action by seeing the frantic efforts of a poor man trying to extricate himself from among the prostrate crowd, his features expressing at the same time an intensity of horror. Stepping with precaution, placing first one foot and then the other where a space could be found, I managed to get near the patient,

who, exhausted after the effort made to call our attention, now lay back pillowed on—dear God, what a sight!—two discolored corpses in a state of decomposition. We set to work quickly. Clearing a small passage, we first carried out the dead bodies, and then, after strewing the floor with straw, we replaced thereon the living, who soon had to be removed in their turn."

In the open space between the sheds lay the inanimate forms of men, women and children, once the personification of health and beauty, with loving and ardent hearts, now destined to fill a nameless grave. More sick immigrants arrived from day to day; new sheds had to be erected. These temporary hospitals stood side by side, each containing about one hundred and twenty common cots, or rather plank boxes littered with straw, in which the poor fever-stricken victims frequently lay down to rise no more. Eleven hundred human beings tossed and writhed in agony, at the same time, on these hard couches. The hearse could hardly suffice to carry off the dead. The number of Sisters increased till none save the principal officers, the superannuated, and those absolutely necessary to maintain the good order of the establishment, remained at the Grey Nunnery. The ardor of the sisterhood continued unabated, and, until the 24th of the month (June), no sister had been absent from the muster-roll. On this eventful morning, two young sisters could no longer rise at the sound of the matin bell. The plague had chosen its first victims, and more followed hourly after, until thirty lay at the point of death. The professed nuns of the establishment, numbering only forty, could not suffice to superintend their institution, tend their sick sisters, and assist at the sheds. There were at this time twenty novices who eagerly requested to be allowed to fill up the vacancies. Their offer was accepted, and side by side with the professed sisters did they toil and triumph—for what else is death when it gives the martyr's crown? Fears were entertained for the safety of the convent, fears that increased still more when seven sisters were called to receive their reward.

Overcome by fatigue and with aching hearts the remaining ones saw themselves obliged to withdraw for a few weeks from the scene where the voice of sympathy and the hand of charity were so greatly needed. It was to their great relief that they beheld the good Sisters of Providence take their places at the bedside of the suffering and dying. Shortly after, the devoted religious of the Hotel Dieu obtained the permission of the Bishop to leave their cloister walls and assist in the good work.

Meanwhile, the venerable Mgr. Bourget, the priests of the seminary, the Jesuits, and several other members of the clergy, who from the first days had been unremitting in their efforts to afford help and comfort to the poor exiles, continued their heroic ministrations. Many were the grateful souls who carried with them beyond the grave the remembrance of their generous benefactors, not a few of whom soon followed to receive the crown reserved for martyrs of charity.

Survivors recall to this day with feelings of love and gratitude the draught doubly refreshing because held to their parched lips by the consecrated hand of a bishop or by that of a devoted priest so worthy of the name of Father.

Such is the religious hero. The priesthood and the sisterhood truly are possessed of that

"Courage-independent spark from heaven's bright throne By which the soul stands raised, triumphant and alone."

of emphasis, for I may not ignore or underrate the sacredness of rights, the holiness of justice or the splendor of battle for them. It is, however, of much importance to know the effect on individual souls of living in a time whose tone is marked by habitual insistence on rights.

Everywhere there is the demand for rights; rights of men, rights of women, of children; rights of animals, of laborers, of employers. Our ears are accustomed to the clamor, our sympathies are enlisted, and unconsciously we are developing a spirit of self-seeking, a desire for personal vindication, for personal comfort, which is the forerunner of a day when individual selfishness may dominate. The nobler, sweeter traits of the soul cannot flourish in such a climate. To protect ourselves against that tendency we must believe and we must teach with every energy of enlightened zeal, with every resource of firm conviction, that the dignity of life is in its obligations.

Rights were never necessary until men forgot their obligations; a soul that is bent on securing them alone is locked out forever from the benedictions of a truthful understanding of life. By the will of God, as St. Paul tells us, "none liveth to himself"; we are members of one race, one in nature, one in destiny and in elementary powers. God distributed strength and weakness over the race only after He had linked us together by the strong bonds which His hand welded, in moral, spiritual, social, physical and mental interdependence. To see ourselves in any other relation than that of extended dependence on one another, to fail to understand the resulting fundamental obligations of life, to judge of these obligations from the standpoint of personal comfort, preference, or individual interest, causes the deflection of life from the plan of God; it means a wandering, distorted spiritual career, a moral failure, splendid in its very ruins. It is substitution of self for God.

"Obligations are opportunities for self-realization." They are merely the demands of Almighty God made of us to realize His will in the race. St. Paul tells us that "we are God's coadjutors—us are God's building." Our obligations mark our place and function in God's building. Thus the measure of our obligations is the measure of our partnership with God and the pledge of our intended glory in His plans. A life to be a whole life, self-realized, must be part of a larger life, which larger life is the expression of God's divine intention. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will." God anchors us in the race, by our obligations, for who would cut the cable and sail the seas alone?

The right conduct of our life depends on our grasp of this great truth. It must be deep, very deep in our lives; deeper than our thought, deeper than ambition, than feeling, than impulse. It must go down to sanctify and direct dawning consciousness—beyond the zone of doubt or hesitation into the very foundations of life.

When we thus know—with the plentitude of understanding—that the dignity of life is in its obligations, we are protected in every concrete duty that we meet. Interest, preference, pleasure, self-seeking, passion, laziness, cannot then affect our honesty of judgment in determining obligations, nor the bravery of our consecration in fulfilling them. Moral poise, stability, security, come to a life thus directed, and there, too, the tender virtues of pity, mercy, loyalty, kindness, charity and tenderness, take up their habitation.

A life directed by consciousness of rights alone, judging its obligations by selfish or personal ends, by their relation to comfort or ambition, instead of judging them regardless of these, is a life that is wrenched out of its intended harmony. It directs the current of finer feeling and nobler emotion that flows into rightly directed lives; it knows only in fragments and provoking incompleteness the larger meaning of life and its purest motives.

We see to-day much that gives cause for concern. The time is individualistic. Never before did the individual appear to be worth so much. Personal rights, personal views, personal ease are paramount. The gravest question of duty are answered, not by doing duty, but by asserting personal rights. Thus estimated at short range, duties are misjudged and lives are constantly misdirected. The spirit of the time visits no censure; it can in fact decree none when obligations are thus neglected and personal rights alone

are regarded. Living as we do in such a time, we find ourselves affected, our judgments disturbed, and our sympathies rebellious against the discipline to which we should subject them. Employers and laborers, striving for their rights, divide society into bitter contending parties; children asserting rights have lost docility and reverence and gained demoralizing liberty instead; wives and women seeking rights, however they may justify their course, have not contributed to the stability and harmony of home life nor aided any strength to the regard for obligations, in which regard they find their greatest power.

Jesus Christ did not teach the poor their rights. He taught the rich their obligations. The whole spirit of the Gospel is in duty, service, self-forgetting love, and not in self-guarding rights. A nobler justice, a surer guarantee of rights, is had when they struggle for their rights. When our obligations are as sacred to us in fact as they are to God in intention, our spiritual peace is secure, and our happiness is safe.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison said of his son, when bewailing the latter's early death, "He seemed born to take a century on his shoulders without stooping." We, too, are born to take on our shoulders the burden of a century: the burden of believing in and loving and fulfilling our obligations. But that is our glory. The richest and noblest lives have been made rich and noble by their obligations wisely understood and faithfully met. Deepest insight into God's ways will come only to those who co-operate with God as coadjutors in executing the divine will manifested in the duties which accompany person and place in life. The aimless, distracted, nervous hurry of current life harms our spiritual insight and weakens the spiritual sense. Thus true wisdom is threatened, that wisdom which understands all of the relations of life and all of its obligations in accord with spiritual reality.

The spiritual view is one that needs serenity, reflection, simplicity. But we are distracted in a hundred directions, nervous and hurried always. We are in touch with too many things; we seek to know and to be and to do anything and everything that popular fancy throws before us as an object of attention. We tip the surface in a thousand places, and attain depth nowhere. But the peace and calmness of the soul are deep as the peace and calmness of the ocean.

Our unrelated, useless, incomplete, provoking activities are killing nobler life. After fashion, and society, and games, and travels, and fiction, and business, and market reports, and war, and politics, and study have engaged us, there is left no time or energy or taste to look into the depths of the soul, to establish the sense of moral empire over its faculties, and keep clear of vagueness and cloud its holy vision. The value of not knowing many things, of not knowing many people, of not doing many things, the protection to be found in a discriminating ignorance, the moral calm of simplicity and retiring prudence in which St. John Chrysostom sums up all philosophy, the blessed value of leisurely living, are forgotten, ignored, despised.

We extend sympathy and pity to the submerged tenth, the victims of degrading poverty. But why stop there? Who is not submerged? We are submerged in pleasure, submerged in business, submerged in study, submerged in clubs, submerged in our extending ambitions. We know persons nowadays, but not souls. We seem to grasp minds and virtues, but not souls. From our business, our pleasure, our conversations, our thinking, our ambitions, one may easily see great minds, great energy, great culture—but only shriveled, shrinking souls. The soul is becoming an outcast. This submerging, this distraction, this neglect of the spiritual throughout life is the result of breaking up life into parts and allowing each part to become as the whole; to attract, absorb and shape our sympathies, standards and aims away from the one complete view which alone is God's.

The dignity of life is in our obligations; the wisdom of life is in spiritual insight; the glory of life is in personal loyalty to Jesus Christ. Let us fix our first and fundamental truths—let us know our dignity, love the true wisdom of the soul, seek our dignity, wisdom and glory in loyalty to Christ. More will be done when bravely, wisely and calmly we reflect or we suffer; we pray or work or wait; humble when hope is deferred, grateful when it is realized; brave when we must struggle, silent when we suffer; cheerful always and trustful that wise decision and ready

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## FORCE OF EXAMPLE.

A reverend contributor to a contemporary tells a little incident which carries a lesson for many well-meaning people:

In Central Park one day last summer, I was looking at a beautiful flowering shrub.

While I looked a well-dressed, nice-looking man accompanied by a handsomely gowned woman drew near the tree and paused to admire it. After a moment the man broke off a branch of blossoms and handed them to the lady.

She took the flowers deprecatingly.

## Society Directory.

ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY.—Established March 6th, 1866 incorporated 1868, revised 1847. Meets in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander street, first Monday of each month. Committee meets last Wednesday. Officers: Rev. Director, Hon. Mr. Callaghan, P.P.; President, Rev. M. Callaghan, P.P.; Vice, Rev. M. Callaghan, P.P.; Secretary, J. J. Doherty; Treasurer, F. E. Devlin, M.D.; Auditor, F. J. Curran, B.C.L.; Recording Secretary, J. Kahala; Corresponding Secretary, T. P. Tansey.

ST. PATRICK'S T. A. AND B. SOCIETY.—Meets on the second Sunday of every month in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander street, at 8.30 p.m. Committee of Management meets in same hall on the first Tuesday of every month at 8 p.m. Rev. Director, Rev. J. K. Moran; President, W. P. Doyle; Recording Secretary, J. P. Gunning, 718 St. Antoine street, St. Henri.

ST. ANN'S T. A. & B. SOCIETY.—Established 1868.—Rev. Director, Rev. Father McPhail; President, D. Gallery, M.P.; Sec., J. F. Quinn, 625 St. Dominique street; M. J. Ryan, treasurer, 18 St. Augustin street. Meets on the second Sunday of every month, in St. Ann's Hall, corner Young and Ottawa streets, at 8.30 p.m.

ST. ANN'S YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.—Organized 1885.—Meets in hall, 157 Ottawa street, on the first Sunday of each month, at 2.30 p.m. Spiritual Adviser, Rev. E. Strube, C.S.S.R.; President, P. Keshan; Treasurer, Thomas O'Connell; Rec.-Sec., Robt. J. Harb.

O.M.B.A. OF CANADA, BRANCH 26.—(Organized 13th November, 1873.—Branch 26 meets at St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander St., on every Monday of each month. The regular meetings for the transaction of business are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month, at 8 p.m. Spiritual Adviser, Rev. M. Callaghan; Chancellor, P. J. Darcy; President, W. F. Wall; Recording Secretary, P. McDonagh, 139 Visitation street; Financial Secretary, Jas. J. O'Connell, 325 St. Urban street; Treasurer, J. H. Kelly; Medical Adviser, Drs. H. J. Harrison, E. J. O'Connell and G. H. Merrill.

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I thought, and I heard her say, "You ought not to break the rules of the park."

His reply was, "One branch will make no difference."

I strolled along beside them, thinking about the philosophy wrapped up in the little scene, when, hearing a boyish shout behind, I turned and looked back.

A group of boys had been playing ball near the flowering tree, and had never thought of breaking branches from it until they saw the old gentleman's example. But he was one hundred yards away before half a dozen boys were of the tree breaking down branches, until in five minutes it was a ruined and ugly wreck.

I walked along, thinking to myself that this is the way anarchists are made. Respectable, well-bred people break the law in little things when it pleases them, and forget the multitude that, looking on, breathe the law when it pleases them until the law is filled with lawlessness and riot.

## THE DIGNITY OF LIFE IS IN ITS OBLIGATIONS.

Under the title "College Life for Catholic Women," Donahoe's Magazine gives extracts from addresses delivered by Catholic educators at the closing exercises of Trinity College, Washington, D.C., an establishment devoted to the education of women, and affiliated with the Catholic University of Washington.

One of the addresses was delivered by Rev. William Kerby, Ph.D. Its theme was "The Dignity of Life in its Obligations." Father Kerby said:

In analyzing the apparent characteristics of our time, we find in it two elements which seem to bear directly on our spiritual life and to threaten its interests: one is insistence on rights, and demand for recognition of them; the other, an aimless, distracted, nervous and varied hurry; the first threatens our sense of duty, the second destroys the spiritual perception. A spiritual life which is deprived of these essential supports promises little for God, little for fellowmen and has disappointing results for itself.

In undertaking to estimate the modern demand for rights, I do not

in its Obligations." Father Kerby said:

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