

The Shattered Nest.

What earnest hand in wanton mood  
Would shatter thus that little nest?  
In rain and hail and tempest and  
The bird found shelter there and nest;  
At morn it left its tiny home  
Beneath a shadow in a cheerful smile,  
Nor sought beyond it far to roam,  
But dreamed its dream of joy the while.

A REMORABLE DISASTER.

A RECORD OF MARVELS AND GOLDEN DEEDS.

Ave Maria.

The burning of the Opera Comique, one of the principal theatres of Paris, on the night of the 25th of May, plunged the whole city into mourning, and the horrors of that disaster are still spoken of with bated breath by those who witnessed them. The scenery, it appears, took fire from the gas jets, and some sparks fell upon the stage. The director came forward and implored the audience to retire quietly, declaring that there was no danger; but, as burning material continued to fall on the stage, and the iron curtain was not let down—it was out of order—the theatre became filled with smoke, and a great panic ensued. Unfortunately, all the doors from the building into the passages opened inwards. People fought their way out as best they could, some leaping from the windows, and falling in shapeless masses on the pavement. Others by dint of hard blows right and left escaped, and in this struggle the weaker were knocked down and trampled under foot. The number of corpses found was eighty-three, nearly all of whom were identified. About one hundred persons were hurt and injured more or less severely. The exact number of those who perished in this fire will never be known, as after the first two days all bodies in the theatre were completely carbonized.

The bravery and heroism of the fire men were beyond all praise, but they were so poorly armed that they fought at a terrible disadvantage. On that fatal night, as there was no water at hand—two reservoirs which should have been filled were empty—all they could do was to rush into the building and try to save as many lives as possible. The first fire was burning for nearly an hour before any water was thrown on it, and it was not till eleven o'clock, when the theatre was a huge furnace, that fourteen engines began to play upon it. The first fire escapes did not arrive till one hour and twenty minutes after the fire began, and then, they required such complicated manœuvring that much valuable time was lost in getting them into order.

The cure of the Madeleine, on hearing of the disaster, rose immediately, and turning to the priests who were sitting with him, said: "Gentlemen, I must go at once to these poor suffering souls." All followed without a word. They were able to give absolution to many, and bear the dying confessions of a few. One poor *dame* had been crying out in great distress, "Où est Dieu?" And the Abbe le Bonheur had the unexpected consolation of being in time to administer to her the last rites of our holy Faith.

The Theatre Comique was considered the most respectable in Paris, and was frequented for the most part by the best class of the populace; therefore it is to be presumed that the greater number of the unfortunate victims were Catholics. In the pockets of many of the women Our Lady's Beads were found, and we can hope that Our Blessed Mother asked a special mercy for them—for all. This belief is shared by the venerable Archbishop of Paris, who said in the touching letter read from the pulpit of Notre Dame before the funeral service: "A cruel and sudden death is a lesson on which we can not too often meditate; it confirms the words of the Master, 'Watch and pray, for you know not the day nor the hour.' In that awful moment when the soul is suddenly brought face to face with eternity, and cries out to God, He answers by numberless graces. We may, then, hope and believe that the memory of their Baptism and First Communion brought back to God many of the souls summoned so unexpectedly to the judgment seat."

A few almost miraculous escapes and some deeds of the noblest heroism have been reported; they are quite authentic and deserve to be recorded. In the pages of *Our Lady's Journal*, the mysteries of grace and heroism wrought amidst those terrible flames, and that suffocating smoke will be revealed only at the Day of Judgment.

At the first sign of fire, a poor woman, box-keeper at the Opera Comique, was seized with fright; her impulse was to rush out of the theatre, but seeing a crowd hurrying to a corridor without egress, she turned back and called on them to follow her. In their excitement they knocked down the lamps lighting the stairs, and the confusion so increased in the dark that several persons were trampled upon,

among them the box-keeper. As she fell she sent up an aspiration, "O Notre Dame des Victoires, receive my last breath!" She then lost consciousness, and when she recovered her senses she found herself lying in a bed at the Hospital de la Charite. Her slight injuries will soon disappear. She is convinced that her preservation was due to the intervention of Notre-Dame des Victoires, under which title she has great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She begged a friend who visited her on the day following the disaster to have a Mass of thanksgiving offered, also to have her name inscribed as a member of the Archfraternity.

Early on the morning of the 26th of May two ladies, mother and daughter, were at the same favorite shrine to thank God for having spared their lives. They had come to Paris on business for a few days, and wished to see "Mignon." To their great disappointment, they could obtain seats only in a top gallery; afterwards they were shown to a box, but it was already too crowded to admit even one more. There was nothing left for them but to leave the theatre. Coming out, the young girl said: "Mother, let us go to the May devotions at the Madeleine." The mother gladly assented, and both were delighted with the services. The sermon was eloquent, and the music exquisite. "Mother," exclaimed the young girl on leaving the church, "how glad I am that we came here! I could not have enjoyed the theatre half so much."

On the way to their hotel they had to pass before the Opera Comique. To their horror they saw it blazing in a cloud of smoke, and the victims, dead or dying being carried away. Then they realized the hand of Providence; their gratitude knew no bounds, and they hastened to our Lady's shrine to pour out their hearts before the privileged altar.

Another marvel was related in a wine-shop by a person of very weak religious sentiments, but, when under the impression of what he had seen the night before, he spoke with much warmth. "From my window," he said, "I commanded a full view of the burning theatre. One group of men and women had taken refuge on a cornice of the monument. They were the image of despair, paralyzed with indescribable terror. Just in front of them a woman knelt, her hands lifted up in the attitude of supplication; she remained thus for some minutes—minutes that seemed hours—when suddenly a fireman appeared; he lifted her in his arms, but hardly had he reached the ladder than a terrible crash, burying them in tongues of flames." The narrator did not add what conclusions he drew from the fact, but it was evident from this one that he believed it to be a supernatural answer to fervent prayer.

The fourth episode cannot be read without emotion; it illustrates in a striking manner the beauty of heroism inspired by religion. Several young men of the Faubourg St. Germain bore testimony to it; one of them, M. de M— related it to a circle of friends. The fire was raging with intense fury, casting a dazzling glare on all the surroundings. Several members of the firebrigade gathered about their lieutenant awaiting his orders; their attention was directed to a group of five people standing on a wall threatening to crumble every moment. The lieutenant turned to his men. "I can not ask any of you," he said, "to succor those wretched creatures; it would be certain death, with faint hope of saving them; yet if there be one amongst you who will attempt the rescue, here is a ladder." Deep silence greeted the officer's words, then a voice was heard: it was that of a brave-hearted Breton. "I will go." And making a great sign of the Cross, he added: "Farewell, comrades!" In another moment he was nimbly climbing the ladder. To the amazement of all present, he succeeded in rescuing one after the other, the five, who but for him must have perished in the flames. As he finished his perilous work, he fell exhausted into the arms of his valiant comrades.

READING ALOUD.

If you ask eight people out of ten now they will tell you that they hate being read to. And why? Because from their childhood they have been unused to it, and used only to such a monotonous drone as robbed even the "Arabian Nights" of half their charm. The husband, at the end of a hard day's work, returns home to pass the evening absorbed in his book, or dozing over the fire, while the wife takes up her novel or knits in silence. If he read to her, or if he could tolerate her reading to him, there would be a community of thought, interchange of ideas, and such discussion as the fusion of two minds into any common channel cannot fail to produce. And it is often the same when the circle is wider. Large families pass the hours between dinner and bedtime, each one with his book or work, afraid to speak above his breath because "it would disturb papa." Is this cheerful or wise, or conducive to that close union in a household which is a bond of strength through life, which the world can neither give nor take away? They cannot be blamed, for they all read adorably; and it is enough to have endured the infliction of family prayers, gasped and mumbled by the head of the family, to feel that listening to such a delivery for any length of time would exasperate one beyond endurance.

But it is not always so. In the last century—even as late as fifty years ago—reading aloud was regarded as an accomplishment worth the cultivation of those (especially those who lived in the country) with pretensions to taste; and it was, consequently, far more frequently found enlivening the domestic circle. There were fewer books, fewer means of locomotion, fewer pleasures of winter nights outside the four walls of the country parlor. The game of cribbage, or the sonata on the spinet, did not occupy the entire evening after six o'clock dinner; and Shakspeare and Milton were more familiar to the young generation of those days than they are now.

If your children are troubled with worms, give them Mother Graves' Worm Exterminator; safe, sure, and effectual. Try it, and mark the improvement in your child.

CLERICAL EDUCATION.

WHY NOT DEVOTE, AND FORM, AND BY YOUR PRAYERS AND LIFE INSPIRE HIM TO BE A PRIEST OF JESUS CHRIST?

A little while ago you made your offerings for the salvation of the most helpless of our flock, this is for orphans, orphans and destitute. To-day we ask your help for those upon whom the salvation of the flock must, under God, depend; that is, for the education of priests who shall bear the pastoral office. Our Divine Master made the feeding of His sheep the test of love to Him. The words, "Feed My Sheep" were spoken indeed to St. Peter; but in him they are spoken also to all pastors in all the world, and in all time, so the day of His coming. The charge to feed His sheep, in a true sense binds all the disciples of the Good Shepherd. They ought to help, in their measure and state, by their opportunities and worldly means, to provide for the needs of His flock. The first and chief need of souls is pastoral care. This you cannot personally fulfil; but what you cannot do personally you may do by others. If you are not called to watch as pastor over His sheep, you can help to train and to multiply the future pastors of souls. And yet how many among us never give a thought to this duty of faith; or rather how few lay to heart this vital need, and the duty which it lays upon them. Many live and die without gratitude to our forefathers whose self-denial has provided for us the pastoral care. By them we have learned the way of life; and in all time, have not thought of providing in like manner for those who are to come after us when we are gone. It is a heartless religion that dwells only on its own needs, and provides only for itself. There is a spiritual selfishness, as there is a worldly selfishness. The worldly selfishness is exacting, and anxious, and self-denying, in providing for its every want. It may not be unjust to anyone; but it cares for no one. It is so wrapped up, as we say, in itself, that the needs, dangers, privations, and sufferings of others, never touch it. So it is with the spiritual selfishness which goes to Confession and Holy Communion, and makes its offerings at Mass, but is narrowed to its own needs, and lives and dies unconscious of the claims which the Church, the diocese, the priesthood, and the work of souls lay upon them. It is good for us, therefore, to bear in mind, that our Lord has made the perpetuity of His word, the application of His most Precious Blood, the oversight of His people, to depend upon the perpetuity of an order and succession of men who shall be responsible to Himself for the care of souls. The truth and grace of Jesus Christ are necessary to salvation; as necessary in every age as in the beginning; for only He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. For this end it is necessary that they who guide others should know the faith in all its fulness. It is not enough to know the faith, unless, both in mind and life they are witnesses of His humility and charity. We are bound to perpetuate both the teaching and the example, the counsels and the spirit of our Divine Master. Nor does this suffice unless we impress upon others the character which has been first impressed upon ourselves. But for these things, what is sufficient? It is your most vital interest that they who are to be your teachers, guides, and examples, should be most like to their Divine Master. It is the flock that suffers when the shepherds are unfit. They may be unfit by an orthodoxy or by want of the mind of Jesus Christ. Of the unworthiness which arises from positive fault or sin we will not speak, but of the unfitness which arises from the want of natural charity, confidence and sympathy, self-command, patience, generosity, sympathy, self-command. Even good men, that is, otherwise good, may be lacking in the pastoral qualities. It is the flock then that suffers; the young and the old, the sick and the poor, the helpless and the little ones of Jesus Christ. To you, therefore, we appeal, and for your own sake. There can be no greater happiness than the union of hearts to serve the altar. You are careful and anxious, confidence and sympathy, no unrest, no distress, greater than when the salt has lost its savour, or has never had it. It is, therefore, not enough that the future pastors of the diocese be instructed in literary and intellectual culture. It is, indeed, more than ever necessary in these days that their intellectual culture should at least keep pace with the education of the world around them. They further need a careful and complete knowledge of the sacred science of the faith in all its branches, and of all the studies which ministers to its completeness and its defence. But a student may be profusely furnished with all these things and yet be unfit for a pastoral care. For this, not the formation of the intellect alone is needed; but the training of the life in character, conscience, heart and will. It was in this sense that it was said of old: "The world is full of priests, but priests are few." This is our most anxious care, and our most arduous work. For this we ask your help. God's hand is not shortened in these days. There is no lack of vocation to the priesthood. We have always more than we can support. We are straitened, not in vocations, but in means. It is here that you can share in our Master's work. Your first and best contribution would be to offer a son to serve the altar. You are toiling, perhaps to place him in some worldly calling, and are denying yourself for his education until he can support himself. It will cost you much to make him a man of the world. Why not devote, and form, and by your prayers and life inspire him to be a priest of Jesus Christ? If you will offer him to God you may have the confidence of God that He will accept and call him to the altar. It is here that parents fail. We do not only mean evil, or unbelieving, or aversive, or seditious parents; but worldly, or fastidious, or night-minded parents. Many a vocation is deliberately killed, and many unconsciously stifled. And yet with great honor, what greater joy than to see a son saying the holy mass, or kneeling by your dying bed, with the certainty that after you are gone he will remember you day by day in the Holy Sacrifice? But if you can not do this for a son of your own, there are many fathers and mothers, sometimes a widowed mother, whose daily prayer is for means to educate their son to be a priest. You can

KEEPING HIS ACCOUNTS.

NECESSITY THAT EACH CHRISTIAN SHOULD MAKE UP A DAILY INVENTORY.

From the Messenger of the Sacred Heart. One day, says a workman, my employer told me the story of his conversion. "My father was pious and my mother a saint. Till I was twenty-two years old I followed in their steps. At that age, I stopped frequenting the Sacraments, or, as they say, practicing. I had not lost the faith, far from it! I still prayed; I went regularly to Mass on Sundays. Only the confessional made me afraid. It was not without remorse that I gave up making my Easter duty. Little by little, I accustomed myself to so grievous a transgression. I got to persuade myself that confession and Communion can not go along with the habits of a man of the world. Of course I pronounced myself—well! to call in a priest at my first serious illness. The thought of dying without the Sacraments frightened me. The impiety of burial without the rites of religion caused me as much horror as disgust. You see such conduct is very inconsistent. I had, however, in the highest degree the spirit of order in my temporal affairs. It is this spirit of order which saved me. "One day, in Lent I went to church and heard a sermon, simple, familiar, but original, and seeming to be given purposely for me. The preacher, who was a good Franciscan Father, spoke to those Christians who, though they still have the faith, live far away from the Sacraments. He compared such conduct to that of an honest merchant who should neglect during several years to take his inventory. "Take your inventory, unhappy man!" he cried, "take your inventory! Otherwise look out for ruin, bankruptcy, dishonor. "It is impossible to tell you the impression produced on me by these words, which yet were simple. You know that St. Augustine was converted by a voice which cried out to him—'Take up and read.' I owe my conversion to a voice crying to me, 'Make up your inventory, wretched man! Make up your inventory.' I struggled against it for a long time. Perhaps I should have succeeded in forgetting the recommendation of the Franciscan Father, if the spirit of order, which was inborn in me, had not embroiled on his idea all manner of other reflections and considerations. "At last, one Sunday after Vespers, I went to the preacher and said to him: 'I come, Father, to have you help me make my inventory.' "Very well," he answered smiling, "very well. Kneel down and begin."

THE SCOURGE OF ROMANCES.

EVIL LESSONS TAUGHT IN THE ADVENTURES OF THE HEROES AND HEROINES.

La Verite, an able Canadian journal, makes upon this important subject some warning remarks which are here condensed or adapted: "The terrible scourge of bad novels keeps advancing day by day. It is a pestilence of which the ravages are extending rapidly and silently. It makes numerous victims, but because its subtle poison does not hurt the body, very few are troubled by it; if it were the cholera, the smallpox, or typhoid fever, it would be exterminated in a few days. For this reason, it is necessary that we should be on our guard against it. It is a pestilence of which the ravages are extending rapidly and silently. It makes numerous victims, but because its subtle poison does not hurt the body, very few are troubled by it; if it were the cholera, the smallpox, or typhoid fever, it would be exterminated in a few days. For this reason, it is necessary that we should be on our guard against it. It is a pestilence of which the ravages are extending rapidly and silently. 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