

El Miserere.

(Translated from the Spanish by Alice Gray Cowan.)

Some months ago while visiting the celebrated Abbey of Fitero I busied myself in examining some of the ancient volumes of its deserted library. Two or three books of music covered with the dust of years contained a "Miserere."

Although not a musician, I have a great love for music, and without understanding the art I often take an opera and pass hours in idly turning over the leaves, looking at the groups of notes, more or less joined together, the lines, and curves, the keys, deriving no benefit whatever from the occupation.

In this way I looked over this ancient manuscript music, and the first thing that really attracted my attention was that although the last page contained the word "Finis," the Miserere was really not finished because the music was composed only to the tenth verse of the Psalm.

Then I was surprised to see that instead of the Italian words commonly used, "maestro," "allegro," "ritardando," "piu," "vivo," etc., there were lines written in very small German letters, some of which explained things difficult to perform, like this: "Crack, crack the bones; the cries come from the very marrow," or this: "The chord is not discordant, the metal thunders without deafening; for this reason all is harmony, nothing is confused, it is only humanity that sobs and groans." At the end of the last verse these words were written: "The notes are bones covered with flesh." "Unquenchable light—the sky and its harmony, strength—strength and sweetness."

After partially translating these lines, which seemed to have been written by an insane person, I asked the old man who accompanied me if he could explain the matter, whereupon he told me the following story:

Many years ago on a dark, rainy night, a pilgrim stopped at the cloister door of the Abbey and begged to dry his clothes by the fire, and for shelter until morning, when he would continue his journey. The good lay brother whom he addressed immediately placed his own meagre repast, his seat by the glowing hearth, and his poor bed, at the disposal of the traveler, and after the latter had rested a short time he began to question him about his journey.

"I am a musician," replied the pilgrim, and have enjoyed a grand reputation in my own country, which is far away. I made my art powerfully seductive, and through this means committed a grave offense.

Now in my old age I wish to do some good with that talent I used for evil purposes in order to redeem myself from condemnation.

These mysterious words of the stranger were not all clear to the lay brother, whose curiosity, being keenly awakened, prompted him to ask other questions.

The pilgrim continued: "I have mourned in the depths of my soul for the fault committed. The more I tried to beg the mercy of God, the more difficult it was to find words to express my repentance, until one day I accidentally cast my eyes upon the pages of a holy book and read a cry of genuine contrition a psalm of David which begins with these words: 'Have mercy upon me, O my God.' Since that moment my sole thought has been to compose music lofty and sublime enough to interpret the Prophet King's cry of grief. I have not accomplished it, but if I could express what I feel in my heart and what I hear indistinctly in my head I am sure that I could compose a miserere so marvellously beautiful and so different from any other that when the archangels hear it their eyes will fill with tears and they will cry to the Lord to have mercy and that He will show it to this poor creature."

The pilgrim stopped a moment, then heaving a deep sigh began to speak again. The lay brother, dependent of the Abbey and two or three shepherds who sat before the fire listened to him in profound silence.

"After searching through Germany, Italy and the greater part of this classical country for religious music I have not heard one miserere which inspires me, and I can truly say I have heard all."

"All?" exclaimed the chief shepherd. "Have you heard the Miserere of the Mountain?"

"The Miserere of the Mountain?" exclaimed the pilgrim with amazement. "What miserere is that?"

"I did not say," murmured the shepherd, and then continued in a mysterious manner. "The miserere is heard only by those who prove in the night after game among the crags and rocky hills which form this valley. It is a very old story but strange as it may appear to you, it is true."

"In the most rugged part of the mountains which enclose this valley in which you have found our abbey, a monastery was built many years ago by a gentleman who would not leave this money to his son, disinheriting him at the time of his death on account of the many evil deeds he had committed."

"Up to this time all had gone well, but the son, who was the very skin of the devil, if not the devil himself, hearing that his property had been left to the church, collected a number of his evil companions and on the night of Holy Thursday when the monks were singing the Miserere, set fire to the monastery, sacked the church and murdered every monk who was there. The bandits and their leader disappeared, no one knows where, to this day. The monastery was reduced to ashes and there remains only the ruined church

over the hollow rock from whence flows the cascade down the crags and past the walls of this abbey. The people of that country were shocked at such an atrocious act. Fathers, sons and grandsons whisper the tale in the long nights of watching. But what keeps it so vividly in the minds of the people is that upon the anniversary of that night lights are seen burning in the shattered windows, and a strange music, terrible and mournful, is heard between the gusts of wind. It is the lamentations of the monks who died unconfessed and who for that reason cannot present themselves before the throne of God cleansed from all sin. Their souls have come from Purgatory to implore the mercy of God by singing the Miserere."

"And you say this music is still to be heard," exclaimed the pilgrim excitedly.

"In less than three hours it will not fail to begin, because this is the night of Holy Thursday and the clock has just struck eight."

"And how far is the monastery from here?"

"About a league and a half. But what are you going to do? Where will you go such a night as this? Has God forsaken you?" were the exclamations of different members of the group as they beheld the pilgrim rise from his chair, grasp his staff and dash toward the door.

"Where am I going?" he cried, pausing as he reached the door. "I am going to hear that marvelous music, the true Miserere, the Miserere of those who return to the world after death, those who know what it is to die in sin."

So saying he vanished from the sight of the astonished lay brother and the no less amazed shepherds.

The wind howled and slammed the doors as if a powerful hand wished to tear them from their hinges, the rain fell in torrents, and now and then the lightning lit up all the horizon for an instant.

"He is mad!" the lay brother exclaimed after a moment of amazement had passed.

"He is mad!" repeated the shepherds, gathering more closely around the fire.

II.

After more than an hour's walking the pilgrim who was considered mad arrived at the place where the ruined monastery presented a gloomy but imposing appearance. The rain had ceased, the clouds floated in dark heaped between which gleamed at times furtive rays of doubtful and pallid light, and the wind lashing the strong buttresses shrieked through the strong buttresses shrieked through the deserted cloisters.

Nothing strange or supernatural appeared, and to one who had slept more than one night out of doors or in a deserted house or ruined castle the various noises were not unusual.

Drops of water filtered through the broken arches and fell upon the pavement like the ticking of a great clock; the cry of the owl who had taken refuge under the stone nimbus of an image, or in a hollow of the wall; the noise of reptiles awakened from their lethargy by the tempest that put out their heads from the holes in which they slept or crawled among the plants and briars that grew at the foot of the altar between the slabs that formed the pavement of the church.

All those strange, mysterious noises of the country, of the solitude and of the night, came perceptibly to the ear of the pilgrim, who, seated on the broken statue which had fallen from a tomb, anxiously waited for the moment when he should hear the marvellous music he longed for. Some time passed and he saw and heard nothing but the same confused murmurs.

"They have deceived me," he thought, but at that instant he heard a new sound, a very peculiar one for such a place, like that of a

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great clock that is just going, to strike the hour. He could distinctly hear the noise of revolving wheels, of strings lengthening, of machinery moving deliberately to set in motion slowly and evenly eleven strokes sounded on the air, and yet one could not find bell, clock or tower in that ruined church.

The vibrations were still agitating the air when the dossels of granite which canopied the sculptures, the marble steps of the altars, the open work parapets of the choir, the festoons of trefoil on the cornices of the dark buttresses of the walls, the pavement, the arches, and the entire church began to be illuminated, without torch, candle or lamp being in sight. It appeared like a skeleton whose yellow bones shed a phosphoric gas which blazed and smoked in the darkness. Everything appeared to be animated, but with that galvanic motion which parodies life, instantaneous movement more horrible than the inertia of the corpse, which moves with its unknown strength. Stones united themselves to stones, the broken fragments of the altar which before were scattered about rose intact as if they had just received the last touch of the chisel, and simultaneously with the altar rose the ruined chapels, the capitals of pillars and the broken arches, which, crossing and winding capriciously, formed with their columns a labyrinth of porphyry.

The church having been rebuilt, there could be heard a chord which might be confounded with the wind, but which was a union of voices distant and solemn, that appeared to come from the depths of the earth and little by little became more distinct. The brave pilgrim began to feel afraid but his desire for the marvellous overcame his fear, and leaving the tomb on which he had been resting, he leaned over the abyss where the torrent was leaping over the rocks and beheld what made his hair rise.

Miserably clad in the linings of their habits, the cows full of holes under the folds of which the dark cavities of the eyes contrasted strongly with the fleshless mandibles and white teeth, he saw the skeletons of those who were thrown over the precipice come out of the water and climb up the rocks with their long, bony fingers to the top of the wall, saying in a low sepulchral voice but with an expression of the deepest sorrow the first verse of that psalm of David, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord."

When the monks reached the peristyle of the church they arranged themselves in two rows and continued to intone one verses of the psalm. The music suited the compass of their voices, the roll of the distant thunder coming nearer as the tempest subsided, the shrieking of the wind in the hollow of the mountain, the monotonous noise of the cataract as it fell over the rocks, the filtering drops of water, the cry of the hidden owl, and the hiss of uneasy serpents.

All this was in the music and more which cannot be explained or scarcely conceived, something which seemed like an echo of an organ accompanying the awful hymn of contrition with notes and chords as terrible as the words. The music went on, and the musician, absorbed and terrified, believed himself to be on the side of the real world living in their fantastic region of dreams in which everything is clothed in strange and phenomenal forms.

A sudden jolt threw him out of that stupor which had clogged all his faculties; his nerves responded to the impulse of a strong emotion, his teeth chattered and he was seized with a trembling he could not control, the chill penetrating to the marrow of his bones. At that instant the monks sang those frightful words of the Miserere, "And in sin did my mother conceive me." The sound of this verse echoed slowly from arch to arch, seeming like a wail of sorrow from all humanity conscious of its manifold sins, all outcries from all condemned souls, all the howls of desperation, all the blasphemies of the impious, a monstrous concert worthily interpreting the feelings of those who were conceived in sin and who lived in iniquity. The singing went on, now deep and sad, now like the rays of the sun when they break through the dark clouds of a tempest. Then one flash of lightning succeeded another until by a sudden transformation the church was bathed in a flood of celestial light, the bones of the monks were again clothed in flesh and bright aureoles shown about their heads.

The roof disappeared and the sky seemed like an ocean of light for the recompense of the just. Angels, archangels and all the heavenly hierarchy joined in this verse, which rose to the throne of God like a gigantic cloud of precious incense.

"Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which were humbled shall rejoice."

At this moment the dazzling brightness blinded the pilgrim, his temples throbbled violently, and, falling senseless to the earth, he heard nothing more.

III.

On the following day the peaceful monks of the Abbey to whom the lay brother had given an account of the strange visitor of the previous night were informed of the arrival of the pilgrim at the cloister door. He was not a pilgrim, and as if he beside himself.

"If you hear the conclusion of the Miserere?" the lay brother inquired of him with a glance of tolerance at the rest of the company.

"Yes, I heard it," replied the musician.

"And how did you like it?"

"I am going to write it. Give me a chalice in your hands," he said to the abbot. "An acedim and bread and I shall leave you each an immortal work of art. A Miserere which shall blot out my sins in the sight

of God and make my memory as well as that of the Abbey eternal."

The monks begged the abbot to grant his request, for they were curious to see what he would do. Although the good abbot really believed the man to be insane, he consented, and the musician began his labors, working night and day with feverish anxiety.

In the midst of his work he would appear to listen for something which he imagined he heard: with dilated eyes he would spring from his chair, exclaiming, "Yes, yes, that is it; no doubt about it," and continue to write notes, making those persons wonder much who secretly observed him.

Having composed the music for about half the psalm, which seemed to be all that he had heard upon the mountain, he appeared unable to go on. He wrote and erased, but in vain. It was not the same music, and he became sleepless, lost his appetite and finally died of a fever without completing the Miserere, which the monks preserve to this day in the archives of the Abbey.

When the old man finished his story I again examined the manuscript, which lay open upon the table. The last words written for the music were, "And in sin my mother conceived me," and I would have given words to have read the music. Who knows if the poor sorrowing one really heard it?

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As the Mother of God

Appeared at Lourdes to a Keen and Spiritual Minded Observer.

(Catholic Universe.)

A very strong and impressive piece of writing, reasonable, penetrating, yet the fervent expression of intense feeling and conviction, is the summing up his impression of Lourdes with which Father Hugh Benson concludes his remarkable chapters on that famous shrine in one of the latest numbers of the Ave Maria. He describes the end of his three-days visit, the strange sadness with which he left the shrine. "I felt," he says, "that it was such a home of the soul as I never visited before of course it is a home, for it is the Mother that makes the home."

This impression of the actual presence of the Mother of God was Father Benson's strongest feeling at Lourdes.

"Judging by the intensity of faith and love and resignation that is evident at Lourdes, and indeed by the numbers of those present," he writes, "it would seem as if Mary, driven from the towns with her Divine Son, has chosen Lourdes as her earthly home, and draws her children after her. I do not think this is fanciful. That which is beyond time and space must communicate with us in these terms; and we can only speak of these things in the same terms. Huysmans expresses the same thing in other words. Even if Bernadette were deceived, he says, at any rate these pilgrims are not; even if Mary had not come in 1858 to the banks of the Gave, she has certainly come there since, drawn by the thousands of souls that have gone to seek her there."

This, then, is the last thing I can say about Lourdes. It is quite useless as evidence—indeed it would be almost impertinent to dare to offer further evidence in its support. I may as well hand it in as my contribution. It is this: the Lourdes is soaked, saturated and kindled by the all but sensible presence of the Mother of God. I am quite aware of all that can be said about subjectivity and auto-suggestion, and the rest; but there comes a point in all arguments when nothing is worth anything except an assertion of a personal conviction. Such, then, is mine.

A MUTILATED CHRISTIANITY.

First, it was borne in upon me what a mutilated Christianity that is which practically takes no account of Mary. This fragmentary, lopsided faith was that in which I myself had been brought up, and which to-day still is the faith of the majority of my fellow-countrymen. The Mother of God, the Second Eve, the Immaculate Maiden Mother, who, like Eve at the Tree of Death, stood by the Tree of Life, in popular non-Catholic theology is banished, with the rest of those who have passed away, to a position of complete insignificance. This arrangement, I had become accustomed to believe, was that of Primitive Christianity and of the Christianity of all sensible men: Romanism had added the simple Gospel, and had treated the Mother of God with an honor which she would have been the first to deprecate.

"Well, I think that at Lourdes the startling contrast between facts and human inventions was, in this respect, first made vivid to my imagination. I understood how puzzling it must be for 'old Catholics,' to whom Mary was as real and active as her Divine Son, to understand the sincerity of those to whom she is no more than a phantom, and who yet profess to call themselves Christians. Why, at Lourdes, Mary is seen to stand, at all outward eyes, in exactly that position in which at Nazareth, at Carra, in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Catechisms, and in the whole history of Christendom, the lovers of her Son have always seen her—a Mother of God and man, tender, authoritative, silent and effective."

LOURDES' GREATEST MIRACLE.

"I said, strangely enough, it is not

TO LOVERS OF ST. ANTHONY of Padua.

Dear Reader,—Be patient with me for telling you again how much I need your help. How can I help it? or what else can I do?

For without that help this Mission must cease to exist, and the poor Catholics already here remain without a Church.

I am still obliged to say Mass and give Benediction in a Mean Upper-Room.

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To those who have not helped I would say,—For the sake of the Cause give something, if only a "little." It is easier and more pleasant to give than to beg. Speed the glad hour when I need no longer plead for a permanent Home for the Blessed Sacrament.

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Yours faithfully in Christ,
F. W. KEATING,
Bishop of Northampton.

at all the ordinary and conventional character of a merely tender mother that reveals itself at Lourdes—one who is simply desirous of relieving pain and giving what is asked. There comes upon one instead the sense of a tremendous personage—regina coeli, as well as "consolatrix Afflictorum"—one who says "No" as well as "Yes," and with the same serenity; yet with the "No" gives strength to receive it. I have heard it said that the greatest miracle of all at Lourdes is the peace and resignation, even the happiness, of those who, after expectation, have been wrought to the highest, go disappointed away, as sick as they came. Certainly that is an amazing fact. The tears of the young man in the piscine were the only tears I saw at Lourdes.

"Mary, then, has appeared to me in a new light since I have visited Lourdes. I shall in future not only hate to offend her, but fear it also. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of that Mother who allows the broken sufferer to crawl across France to her feet, and to crawl back again. She is one of the Maries of Chartres, that reveals herself here, dark, mighty, dominant, and all but inexorable; not the Mary of an ecclesiastical shop, who dwells amid scutes and tuberoses. She is "Scdes Sapientiae, Turris Eburnea, Virgo Parturix," strong and tall and glorious, pierced by seven swords, yet serene as she looks to her Son.

"Yet, at the same time, the tenderness of her great heart shows itself at Lourdes almost beyond bearing. She is so great and so loving! It affects those to whom one speaks—the quiet doctors, even those who, through some confusion of mind or some sin, find it hard to believe; the strong brancardiers, who carry their quivering burdens with such infinite care; the very sick themselves, coming back from the piscines in agony, yet with the faces of those who come down from the altar after Holy Communion. The whole place is alive with Mary and the love of God—from the inadequate statue at the

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Grotto to the brazen garlands in the square, even as far as the illuminated castle and the rockets that burst and bang against the steady stars. If I were sick of some deadly disease, and it were revealed to me that I must die; yet none the less I should go to Lourdes; for if I should not be healed by Mary, I could at least learn how to suffer as a Christian ought. God has chosen this place. He only knows why, as He, too, alone chooses which man shall suffer and which be glad. He has chosen this place to show His power; and therefore has sent His Mother there, that we may look through her to Him.

"Is this, then, all subjectivity and romantic dreaming? Well, but there are the miracles!"

PLAYING THE

"O dear! I wish you ways seeing something criticize." I heard a to her mother a short remark awakened a as to whether the people are not more than to praise. Good the young seems to be a matter of course, no special comment, while in conduct or manner

Oh, I'm sorry old world, To be fiddled and whistled and whistled Unless I'm ash 60, These giants the go.

If I'm hungry, from my naps, I am soon taken lap, And trotted and to and fro, And then I'm to crow.

When the nurse carriage, by You would think peacefully But no, as she through the She joggles the up and down.

If I wriggle and for relief, She still seems belied, But changes her I am rushed, Till for sheer l wailing is h

Oftentimes my as a chip, And of fresh, co for a slip. Not a draught d don't think A baby can eve drink.

Our wants are thing is sure, If grown people bias endure, They'd very soon each tone, And when we are leave us alone —Francis P. Ca SOME THINGS— US

The woodpecker little trip-hammer The jaws of the are natural sciss The framework the skeleton of a The squirrel car mouth, and the plane. The gnat fashion shape of a lifeboat them without a pieces. A porcupine's by ribs in the sur iron masts of a strongthens. The diving-bell spider. It constr under the water, c air between its leg its submarine chan ble, displacing the until its abode co airy room surround Child's Home.

We had some fur our house, Tillie T nest. She came day, dressed in a She was an entir of us. She did n like any one who been among us. W of her at first and warm welcome. B to like her and en What do you supp lady? No. A litt tell you. She wa She was only six caught in Texas, a her landlady's daug She wore her name on a silver necklac Poor little thing! young to leave her first she cried like a left alone. The la to her own room at tered her up in a tin night she would get bowl of milk for the Tillie would sit up paws around the bo steady. Then she s wanted. After this down again and such she fell asleep. Sh ming noise all the w ed like the buzzing of When she grew old delight in standing shed door and attra boys to the fence. I tired of walking on h holding a stick in I would go behind the in the laughing fa ren. Tillie enjoyed jump of water on a warm splashing it all over little girls were care their dresses close at they passed her in the was very affectionate wanted to give them wet paws.—Faith Wy