

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS. Easter Sunday.

THE JOY OF PENANCE. I wish all of you, my brethren, the joys of this day. It is the day of our Lord's victory over death and hell.

It seems to me that this feast is a great day for sinners — meaning, of course, repentant sinners. For look at the facts? Who is the saint of the Resurrection by excellence? Certainly dear Mary Magdalen, the type of all the penitent.

See, then, my brethren, the reward of the love which is in true sorrow for sin: it is given a singular kind of pre-eminence; it is selected above that of innocence and placed on guard at the post of honor to receive the first public greeting from the Immortal King of Glory, triumphant over sin for ever.

I say again that sinners need encouragement. In truth, there is no shame so deadly as that which conscious guilt brings to the human soul.

In the Spring. Nearly everybody needs a good medicine. The impurities which have accumulated in the blood during the cold months must be expelled.

Ask for Mirard's and take no other. The impurities which have accumulated in the blood during the cold months must be expelled.

OUR WESTERN WAITS. BY FRANCIS J. FINN, S. J.

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK. All saw that Willie had something of importance to communicate; besides, the sleigh was his, so they listened.

Willie narrated briefly the story of Harry Conway; he spoke in simple boy language, but the effect was better than that of many a glowing oration.

"All right. Get up!" and Willie cracked his whip. "Now, boys, let's tune up."

Brightly their voices broke upon the air; and as they dashed on thus gayly, leaving in their wake a following of sweet sounds, men and women, smiling and waving their hands, came hurrying out of doors, and in the pretty ways which fall upon people instinctively at Christmas-time, sent the chorists off in an added exhilaration of youthful spirits.

Willie struck his tuning fork, put it to his ear, then, humming for a moment, gave each voice its proper note.

"Hats off!" said Willie. Every hat was doffed. "Ready—charge!" Without further ado the boys flew up the steps, ascended the staircase, and crowded into Mr. Gibson's room.

"Present hats!" continued the leader. At the word twenty smiling lads hemmed in the puzzled, delighted old gentleman, each trying to get his hat into the most prominent place.

"Now," continued Willie, "before you put anything in, listen to our story." And Willie repeated Harry Conway's tale.

The old gentleman was touched, and acted as old gentlemen do when they are touched: he blew his nose, and made pretence of having something in his eye.

"I'm proud of every one of you," he said warmly; "and I'm glad you came to me first—flattered, too. Hold your hats higher."

There is such a thing as killing by kindness, now, I propose this to you. With the four or five dollars I've given you, suppose you buy a lot of nice things for Harry and his sisters, as a Christmas gift.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Gibson," said Willie; "you're so thoughtful! I'd have surely made a mess of it if it hadn't been for you."

"Now, my little friends, I'll give you another hint. In twenty minutes the way-train will be in from Chicago, and all your people who do business in the city and a great many mammae who have gone shopping will return on it; they come home early, as it's Christmas eve. Suppose you get yourself in position just around the corner on Adams street, near the station. I'll go with you myself. You do the singing; I'll act as manager."

"Thank you, sir!" "Oh, Mr. Gibson!"—these and other expressions of

thanks might have gone on indefinitely had not Willie ordered all out. Mr. Gibson was presently with them in coat and muffler, and in a trice the impossible was done—that is, all did squeeze into the sleigh, packed together like so many sardines, and jingled along merrily to the tune of their sleighing chorus.

As the depot was at a considerable distance from Mr. Gibson's house, the enthusiastic youngsters enlisted the ride with the songs they had intended for him from the start. From the mournful calm of the "Holly and Ivy" they went on to,

"Onward, then, the angels sped, the shepherds on ward went; God was in His manger bed, in worship low they bent: In the morning see ye mind, my masters one and all, At the Star Him to find, who lay within the stall."

"Look, look!" cried Willie, as, music in hand, all stood watching the train streaming into the depot; "what a crowd!"

"It's too late to back out," remarked silver-voice; "but let's take something we know well."

As the crowd drew nearer and resolved itself into smiling papas, mammae, uncles, sisters, and friends, with here and there a strange though not unkindly face, they plucked up heart of grace, and into the sweetness of the words throwing the sweetness of their voices, and that indescribable gift of the child-soul, that dear gift of God's, which the mother, gazing into the eyes of her little one, catches in its fulness, they poured forth the glad song of Noel.

When Willie and silver-voice, two hours later, drew up at Mrs. Conway's, they rivalled the postman himself in the matter of packages, as they toiled up the steps. The postman remarked this as he followed them to the door and handed Mrs. Conway a letter.

Willie and silver-voice were soon seated beside Harry, and were prattling away in all the glow of warm feelings, when Mrs. Conway entered the room with the letter.

"I've brought more than \$20 to lend Harry; and now I might as well throw it away!" "If you don't know what to do with it, Willie," suggested Mrs. Conway, "you might help on some of the very poor people in the village."

Indeed, it was a happy day. But to Willie the Christmas that followed was far happier. For during the 365 days that lay between cardinal relations sprang up between the Simms and Conway families; and when it came out in a conversation one day that Mrs. Conway and Mrs. Simms were New Englanders, and when both began raking up old records, you can guess how it all ended. They were fifth cousins or something. It's always that way out West. Let two New Englanders get to comparing notes, and in five minutes they'll establish an impediment to their intermarriage which no casuistry may distinguish away.

Christmas, when it came again, was, as I said, particularly joyful to Willie, not because they all made the musical rounds again, and brought down the earnest blessings of God's poor upon themselves. That was joyful indeed; these little lads were still closely united, though Willie had become a fervent Catholic. Their union lasts to this day, and it is three years since Willie's conversion. Willie and Harry love these small Episcopalians, and knowing that it is possible for outsiders to belong to the soul of the true Church, earnestly hold that all their little friends are Catholics too.

But that first Christmas after his conversion! Then came the happiest moment of his life, when, standing beside Harry, his fellow-singer in the Catholic choir, in his golden voice, celestial for the fervor that informed it, he sang *Venite Adoremus*, while his loved father and mother advanced to the altar railing to receive for the first time Him, sweet Babe of Bethlehem, who had descended from the skies and become our God Incarnate.

THE LILIES' EASTER OFFERING.

Mary B. O'Sullivan in Donahoe's Magazine. The lilies slept in the warm brown earth, awaiting the Resurrection. The star of Bethlehem had heralded the Christ-child's birth; the snow-drop, emblem of purity, bloomed in fragile beauty for the Presentation; and the rose of Jericho exhaled its fragrant homage under the Saviour's feet and drooped at the foot of the cross.

"Gather me first!" commanded a regal blossom. "My place is next to the Presence, as befits the impartial lily, the emblem of majesty."

"Not so," said the angel, in gentle reproach. "Pride of position would be a uselessly offering to One who was poor and lowly. What place seek you, little lilies of the valley?"

"Let us lie at His feet, dear angel," pleaded the tiny flowers, lifting their fragrant chalice. "He placed us here in the shade where we were sheltered and happy. Let us lie at His feet, an offering of love."

"Once they were white," lamented the lily. "When He walked in the garden all flowers bowed low, I alone refusing Him reverence. His sorrowful gaze sank into my heart, and the blush of shame forever crimsoned my lustrous blossoms. Pride rebuked has taught to offer."

"Offer Him repentance," whispered the angel. "A contrite heart makes joy in heaven."

"My ways are lowly," said the orange lily. "I grow in humble gardens and brighten dreary places: I bend my head to the storm and open my heart to the sunshine, and all the time I am happy. A contented spirit is all I can offer."

"Consecrated beauty," murmured the angel, "lustrous purity, contentment, repentance, humility, love—" "And prayer," breathed the annunciation lilies. "When the angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, the Angelus sung in our hearts foretold the joys of Easter."

"Your offering is worthy, O lilies!" exulted the angel. "Prayer brings peace to weary hearts and strengthens faltering souls; it shall rise on the fragrance of incense and flowers."

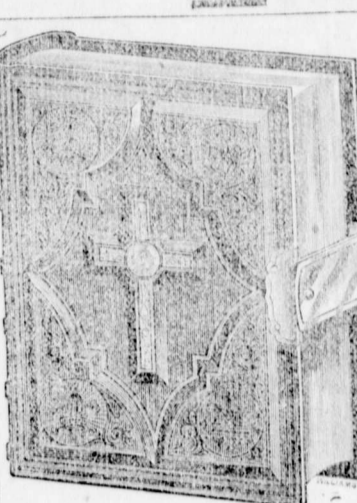
"Great is our joy," murmured the blossoms; "rising with Him for the paschal feast, exalted are we, the lowly lilies."

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