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The Catholic Journal

—THE LEADING DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER—

Twenty-first Year, No. 32. Rochester, N. Y., Friday May 6, 1910. $1.00 ...

A Sister's Love.

The sunshine came brightly one morning into a great hospital ward in the city of St. Louis. Weary sufferers raised their heads from their pillows, and eyes dim with pain grew bright, as they watched it glide the white beds. It crept over little tables, where here and there a vase of flowers bloomed, and over the pillows, where sufferers, too ill to note it, lay silent with closed eyes.

There were beds, too, with screens around them, which meant the long, last journey was at hand, but the sunshine glided them, too, though the occupants noted it not! Nurses in pure white uniforms glided noiselessly here and there, and the doctors went gravely from bed to bed, giving hope and comfort to many hearts. But the sunshine flooded it all and made the sad scene less sad, less painful.

There were nuns there, too, with chastened faces and tender touch, with gentle voices and kind eyes, and the weary faces smiled when they stood at their bedsides. There was one of them now standing at the pillow of a pale, sweet-faced invalid, wiping the sweat of agony from her forehead and holding a little crucifix to her willing lips every now and then.

She was not dying unless you call such agony for fifteen years a constant death. These were but paroxysms of torture from her crippled spine, which came and went and left her helpless.

"Poor Bessie," said the nun; "it is so hard to see you suffer and not be able to relieve you, unless you want the hypodermic?"

"No, Sister, no! Am I not expiating for poor Charlie! Poor boy! If he only knew!" said the invalid, whose face was resuming its normal expression, now that the convulsion was over.

"Yes, if he only knew," murmured the nun, compassionately; and she held a restorative to the white lips of the patient, smoothed her pillows, and bathed her forehead and wrists.

"Sister," said Bessie, "I suffered this way nearly all night, and something seemed to say, 'Take courage, God will not forsake your brother,' and I bore it all, and offered it all to my Saviour on the cross for poor Charlie."

"Blessed are they who suffer and hope Bessie," said the Sister, softly. "You have been with us for fifteen years, and your one thought has been of that unworthy reckless brother. His conversion will surely be your reward. God will not let such faith and patience go unrewarded."

"Don't call him unworthy and reckless, sister. He never meant to be either. When he was a little curly-headed fellow he used to get into every kind of mischief, but he always came to me, and I can see his black eyes yet flashing with temper, and hear him saying. 'Bess, you're the only friend a poor kid has. If they don't stop naggin' me, I'll run off, but I'll never forget you, Bessie.' They were hard on him, Sister—father and mother were—and he did run off, and once in a while he would write a letter on the sly and tell me where to answer, and I used to beg him not to forget his prayers at least and to go to Mass, but then I got this fall and was crippled, and he never wrote but once after—only once in fifteen years—and he said he didn't believe in religion any more; that church and praying were for women, and he'd leave me to do his share, and then, Sister, I promised God I would suffer all the agony of this awful back and never murmur if He would bring Charlie around, and since I have been in this blessed place it has been easier, and he is never a minute out of my mind."

"How many rosaries do you say a day for him Bessie, besides all the suffering?"

"Well, Sister, as I have nothing else to do I say the fifteen decades twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon and a few other little prayers between the pains."

"God bless you dear," said the nun; "keep on suffering and praying, and put me in your prayers, too, Bessie, for I need them."

"Is it you?" said Bessie, with an incredulous look. "Never a prayer do you need. Taking care of all us, and of the like of me, from year's end to year's end. You'll go right up, Sister," and she tried to motion with her twisted hand and arm towards the blue sky.

The nun laughed softly; then straightening the covers and giving a pressure to the hand that held the worn rosary she went on her round of duty.

Poor Bessie had indeed suffered and prayed for fifteen years, and offered it all for Charlie, her wild and only brother who had drifted from the Church and was somewhere in the wide world—Bessie knew not where—but the marvelous faith of the poor cripple was so vivid that everyone was interested in her, and her piety, patience and resignation made everyone love her.

She had a remarkably sweet face and a soft, winning voice, and the doctors and nurses who succeeded each other year after year looked on her as a prodgy, and did everything skill and science could suggest, even though unavailing, to help her condition. But she never murmured when they told her after an unsuccessful operation or an agonizing examination that nothing could be done. She only smiled and said, "I don't mind; I'll suffer for poor Charlie."

Those fifteen years of torture were an apostolate for one single soul. A daily sermon was preached from that hospital cot, which was a silent but powerful incentive to many a discouraged heart to keep on and weary not. The Sisters felt Bessie's good influence in the hospital, and because she was incurable and without money or friends, they took tender care of her, and she loved them with all her soul.

One day the superior of the hospital came to me with a paper in her hand. "Father Alexander," she said, "I wonder if this could be Bessie's brother? It is a Pittsburg paper that has found its way somehow to St. Louis, and here is an account of an accident case—a man whose name is given as Charles Horton. He was taken to Southside Hospital. The name struck me—Charles Horton! Would it be worth while to inquire?"

"It certainly would was my reply. I thought a minute and said, "Suppose you write to the Sisters at Pittsburg. They visit the hospitals. They would make inquiries. If good is to be effected we must go about it quietly."

Her letter went that day, giving an account of Bessie and asking the superior to ascertain if the man had a sister, and what his sentiments were. But nothing was to be said to Bessie till information was obtained.

Nearly two weeks elapsed. We were giving up hope, and were glad Bessie knew nothing about it, when the superior came to me with a thick letter in her hand. I knew by her face there was news.

"Here is the reply to that letter, Father Alexander we must tell Bessie at once: I will do so while you read the letter, it is quite a document."

She departed, and I learned that the Sisters in Pittsburg had gone to the Southside Hospital, a non-Catholic institution, and were received very kindly. They found that a man by the name of Charles Horton was there. When told two Sisters of Mercy wanted to see him, he was extremely unwilling, and only after being urged consented to have them enter his room.

He was weak and miserable, and evidently not far from the end. He was barely civil, and declared he was not a Catholic, and seemed so ill at ease that it was distressing to talk to him. Finally the Sister spoke of the letter from St. Louis and asked him if he had not a sister there. Instantly his face changed, and eagerly he held out his hand.

"Yes, oh, yes, I have; how do you know it; is she well?"

"She is praying for you every day; she is searching the world for one word about you; she loves you as much today as when you were a curly-headed little fellow telling her your troubles."

The hard face softened more.

"Yes," he said, "that's Bessie just like her. How she would hurry here if she knew."

"But she cannot come. Don't you know that she hurt her back fifteen years ago, and is crippled ever since? Don't you know that she cannot move out of her bed, but suffers terrible agony of the nerves and muscles? And don't you know she lies there, sweet and patient, offering it all for 'Charlie,' begging the Lord to bring him back to the Church of his boyhood?"

"She suffers that way?" said the man. "God help me! She was the most innocent girl that ever lived, and you say that she has been suffering fifteen years for me? O, Bessie, my little sister!" said the poor fellow, tears rushing to his eyes.

The nun soothed him.

"Because she loves you so much she begged God not to let her die but to increase her pains, to expiate your faults, and to bring you back to the Church."

"Faults!" he cried, "Sister, they are crimes!" Crimes for twenty years. I have led a wild life. I have never thought of God except to curse His name, but I feel as if my heart was broken. Can I see a priest?"

"Indeed you can," said the nun; "and oh, how, you should thank this dear sister for the grace. Be comforted, and we will send a priest at once. Let me place this Sacred Heart badge on your poor heart and we will go home to our convent and all the Sisters will pray for you and we will write to Bessie.

He held the Sister's hand as she rose to go after a fervent prayer at his bedside. Then promising to return next day, the Sisters left. Before leaving the hospital they called up to telephone one of the Fathers of a neighboring monastery, who promised to go at once to the patient.

Late that evening the telephone rang. The Father, who had gone to the hospital, wished to tell the Sister that poor Charlie was a most sincere penitent. He had made his confession, received the sacraments, and was waiting serene and happy for death. He begged the Father to ask the nuns to return. There was joy in heaven and earth that night for the sinner's return to God.

Early next morning the Sister went to the hospital. Charlie was still living, but fast approaching the dark river whence those who embark never return. He smiled faintly and laid his hand on the face of the little badge of the Sacred Heart, and then whispered: "Tell Bessie it was her prayers. Tell her I felt sure she was praying for me and tell her I die happy, a penitent Catholic."

The Sister gave him her crucifix; he looked at it, and held it tightly. After the prayers of the dying were said the Sisters returned home to pray.

At noon the message came from the priest: I was with him and gave him the last absolution. He was conscious and said to me: 'It was Bessie's prayers; tell her I died happy.'"

I found myself absorbed in the closely written pages of this letter, and when the superior came into the room I did not hear her.

"Father Alexander, Bessie knows all. I told her what was in that letter, and she was as radiant as an angel; won't you go to her Father? She wept with joy and excitement, but she is calm now."

I went to Bessie's bedside. It was true. Her face was angelic, her soft, dark eyes were full of heavenly light, and her delicate face was rosy with joy. I never saw a face more beautiful—she more of heaven than of earth.

"Oh, Father Alexander!" she cried; "God has been so good to me. Charlie has come back, and we will both be home together, Father," she said solemnly, "I have nothing more to do now. I hope I'll go home soon. Bring our Lord to me and anoint me."

I was startled, but I would not show it. I said:

"You are excited, Bessie; you must await God's will. He has indeed been good to you. Won't you stay with us and offer your thanksgiving to Him?"

"I cannot," she said; "my mission is ended. My heart longs to see my Lord and tell Him my gratitude."

"Well, then, Bessie, tomorrow morning I will bring our Lord to you and if you are worse I will anoint you."

"Thank you, Father," she said simply.

I went on my round of duty, but try as I would I could not keep my mind from Bessie. She was dying, her sufferings that night were excruciating. She bore them with sweetness, almost with joy. Now and then she would say with a sigh. "Will morning soon be here? Our Lord is coming."

It was Sunday morning. There was no mistake now. Bessie was dying. I went to her bedside. Her face was white as marble, and her pinched features told how she had suffered during the night. A table was ready, and some of the nuns and more of the patients knelt there, while I gave her Holy Viaticum and anointed her. When I was leaving her she tried to clasp her poor little twisted hands together and whispered, "Come back, Father; it won't be long now." I went back as soon as I could. She was sinking rapidly, but the pinched features [illegible] disappeared and her face glowed as it did when the news of her brothers' confession first reached her. Everyone was impressed by the beauty of her countenance, and yet death was there. "I read the solemn prayers of the Church so majestic and so consoling. As I paused I heard her say: "Only fifteen years; so short a time for such a reward."

In an instant that long stretch of days and nights came before me, with their torture and their weariness, and I felt something rising in my throat which threatened to choke my utterance: "Only" fifteen years. Only!"

She was dying now, and as her eyes closed, and as the last faint gasps succeeded each other, the silence was intense. Suddenly her eyes opened wide and a beautiful smile passed over her face. It faded into marble white. I raised my hand in absolution and then, as if it were so ordained, it seemed as if every church bell in the city began to ring. Sweet, loud and strong the Sunday chimes pealed forth. The effect was electrical. It was like a paean of triumph.

Bessie was dead! Her apostolate for one single soul was over. Sister and brother were with God.

I shall never forget the beauty of that death-bed.—Rev. Richard W. Alexander, in The Missionary.

Manchester N. Y.

Mrs. Elizabeth McNally a highly respected resident of this village died at her home on April 16 age 62 years. Mrs. McNally was a resident of this village for seventeen years and had a large number of friends. She was a very active member of the Catholic church.

The funeral was held from St. Dominick's church, Shortsville at 10 o'clock, April 19, at 10 o'clock. Solemn requiem high mass, was celebrated by Rev. Father Ryan, with Rev. William Byrne of Ithaca as deacon; Rev. Father McArdle as sub-deacon; Rev. F. J. O'Hanlon rector in the sanctuary. Interment was at St. Agnes cemetery, Clifton Springs. Mrs. McNally is survived by two sons and three daughters—Mrs. Thomas Boardman, Mrs. John Burns, and Miss Mary McNally, John and Patrick McNally all of this village and a number of grandchildren.

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Towards the middle of April the Catholic University of Buenos Aires will be inaugurated by the opening of the faculty of law. Great difficulties had to be overcome, but they were [illegible]

News From Ireland

Antrim.

Joseph Devlin, M.P., was presented with a gold watch and chain and an illuminated address at Belfast on March 29 by the National Board of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Cork.

Rev. W. Willis, P.P., Ballindangan, in a recent letter to the Cork Examiner, inclosing £20 for the Irish Party Fund, says that no one had given Mr. O'Brien's policy stronger support than he did until he saw that five-sixths of the nation sternly set their face against it. Under the circumstances he gave back his allegiance to those alone whom he thought had the best right to it. He is convinced of the hopelessness of the task of converting many Unionists to Home Rule by conciliation.

Derry.

After a period of upwards of fifty years spent in the public service, about two-thirds of which was in the Irish prison service, Laurence Power, chief warden in Derry Prison, has just retired to private life.

Donegal.

Rev. Hugh McMenamin, P.P., Buncrana, in a communication on the fishing industry of Northwest Donegal, states that [illegible] herring alone during the [illegible] [illegible] large quantity of [illegible] species of the [illegible] mackerel was got, which [illegible] readily bought up at remunerative prices. During the [illegible] winter herring [illegible] [illegible] in the winter [illegible] crans were landed, doubling the best previous record.

Down.

Rev. R. J. [illegible] of the "Catch-My-Pal" [illegible] movement [illegible] demonstration at [illegible] on Easter Monday [illegible] warm tribute to the work of [illegible] Catholic clergy in promoting [illegible] cause, and particularly to Father [illegible] Rooney, the parish priest [illegible] Banbridge.

Fermanagh.

Rev. P. J. Culliana, [illegible] Blacklion, has just been presented with a [illegible] by the people of [illegible] toucher, Dumbartonshire, [illegible] land, among whom he [illegible] for a period of [illegible] years [illegible] sisted of two [illegible] ated address, a [illegible] silver tea and coffee [illegible] check for a substantial [illegible]

[illegible]

That the priests and people of Athy are in full sympathy with the work being done by the Irish Party under Mr. [illegible] ership is evidenced by the [illegible] scription of [illegible] to the Parliamentary fund.

[illegible]

James C. [illegible] building of the new [illegible] institution in [illegible] of £2 per week.

[illegible]

[illegible] daughter of [illegible] Main Street [illegible] ed by Father [illegible] best man being Mr. [illegible] the bridesmaid Miss [illegible] Both Mr. Flynn and his spouse were very popular in [illegible]

Died.—[illegible]

[illegible]