

The Catholic Journal

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"Stella Matutina"

"Well, my poor fellow! it is best to tell you the truth; you have not twenty-four hours to live; and if there is anything you wish to do, or any one you wish to see you had better attend to it at once. Can I—"

"Send for a Catholic priest, and quickly!" then to himself, hoarsely: "only twenty-four hours! My God!" and the dying man, turning his face to the pillow, moaned piteously.

He had been dragged from among the ruins of a burning building just two hours ago; his hands were burned and powerless, his arms paralyzed to the shoulders, and all his body from the waist down was crushed and hopelessly mangled; his face, bruised and scarred, was pitiful to see. He had saved two lives and was rushing in to save another when the walls fell.

A Sister of Mercy, who had been standing beside him while the doctor was speaking, now whispered, kindly: "Be of good courage, my friend. Father Meade will be with you in a moment, and will stay as long as you like. God been has very good to you; you might never come to. It is like a miracle; you must have some good soul praying for you."

A low moan of utter misery was the only reply.

"You are very brave; you saved the lives of two women who only for you would have been burned to death. That was a noble act, and be sure God will not forget it for you."

"O Sister! every word you speak is torture, torture!"

"Here is Father Meade," she said, rising, and giving her place to a saintly looking priest who advanced toward them.

Sitting down, he touched the poor bruised forehead, saying: "My child—"

"Oh, don't be too merciful, Father, till you hear!" broke in the sufferer, with a mournful bitterness: "when you know all you will not call me child;" then with a groan of anguish as a spasm of pain passed through his mangled frame, he cried, "O merciful Christ!" and grew so ghastly that the priest lifting his head gave him a stimulant that had been left beside him, and whispered, soothingly, "My son, don't be distressed; be sure Christ is merciful and loving; try and be calm, and tell me what troubles you, and you will be happy and peaceful!" Then drawing a screen between this and the adjoining bed he put on his stole and bent his head close to the lips of the dying man.

Two hours later, toward dusk, Father Meade was hurrying along the busy street looking neither to the right nor the left till he came to a respectable looking house in a quiet street. After ringing he was admitted and shown into a tastefully furnished parlor, where a lady rose to meet him, with surprise and pleasure.

"Why, Father it is kind of you to call, your time is so precious!"

"Mrs. Burke, I want to speak to you about a very sad case that has just been brought to the city hospital; it is a man who was crushed this morning at the Sletter street fire after heroically saving the lives of two women at the peril of his own; and on going back for a child, supposed to be still in the burning building, the walls suddenly fell in, and on him. The wonder is how he lived at all, but God is truly a God of mercy. I have heard his confession, and have obtained his consent to speak of part of his history. He is a man of about fifty-five years of age, tall and must have been remarkably handsome in his young days, and a perfect giant for strength. He used to be an architect and builder in New York, about twenty-five years ago—prosperous and well-to-do. He had a beautiful young wife and one daughter, an infant. His name was Burke—Brian Burke."

"Stop, stop, Father Meade," exclaimed the lady, springing to her feet; "is it my husband?"

"Hush, my friend! Sit down and be calm till I finish."

Trembling and nervous, with tightly clasped hands, she re-seated herself and listened to the end.

Father Meade resumed: "He was, he says, the proudest, happiest husband and father in the world; there was but one cloud that cast its shadow across his life, and that was—he used to drink, he used to go upon wildsprees, not often, but once in a while, and when in liquor he was it seems, a madman. But I must hurry. One evening he came home, frantically with drink; his wife was sitting in their bedroom rocking her little one to sleep, and singing the 'Ave Maria Stella.' The sound of her sweet voice singing the sacred words seemed to reproach him, and filled with fury, he seized a marble statuette that stood on a bracket near his head and hurled it at her with all his strength. It struck her head, and the blood spouted out over everything.

"With one piercing scream she fell, her infant in her arms. He picked up the broken statuette and dashed it at her where she lay, and then flung the child out of the window, expecting it to be dashed to pieces on the pavement below. Then, understanding what he had done, coward-like, he fled he knew not whither. Reaching wharf, he found a schooner just sailing out; he begged a passage, and exchanged clothes with a sailor, who was glad to get back on shore. As soon as he had fully recovered from his intoxication, he began to realize the enormity of his crime, and from that hour was a victim of remorse and despair.

As luck would have it he escaped arrest. But I must leave the rest for another time. He has suffered a just retribution—has been a wanderer upon the face of the earth for all these years. Arriving here a week ago, he engaged board in the house that was just burned down. He is dying.

"I have told him I was going to bring his wife to him—that he had not killed her—that she would forgive. He could not believe me till I told him the story you told me long ago when you gave your only child to the service of God as a sister of Mercy. Behold, now, my child, the reward of your life of patient suffering and faithful prayers. Can you come at once?"

"Immediately," she answered, leaving the room and returning with her bonnet and shawl.

"I will go on and prepare him to receive you. Follow as quickly as possible. God bless you, my child, and give strength for the trial!"

Very pale, but with a strange, glad light in her eyes, Mrs. Burke followed, and reached the hospital almost as soon as the priest. Presently a young and sweet-faced Sister came to the reception room, and, after kissing Mrs. Burke, said: "Come, mother dear with me." And mounting the long stairs they entered the ward where the dying man lay waiting, with his face turned toward the door, and his large, mournful eyes watching every one that entered, with a wistful, eager longing. His wife was beside him in an instant, her arms city hospital; it is a man who was crushed this morning at the Sletter street fire after heroically saving the lives of two women at the peril of his own; and on going back for a child, supposed to be still in the burning building, the walls suddenly fell in, and on him. The wonder is how he lived at all, but God is truly a God of mercy. I have heard his confession, and have obtained his consent to speak of part of his history. He is a man of about fifty-five years of age, tall and must have been remarkably handsome in his young days, and a perfect giant for strength. He used to be an architect and builder in New York, about twenty-five years ago—prosperous and well-to-do. He had a beautiful young wife and one daughter, an infant. His name was Burke—Brian Burke."

"Oh, Brian, my husband! my poor, dear husband!"

There is a joy that, coming suddenly, is harder to bear than any grief. The dying man's lips quivered; his poor bruised chest heaved convulsively; he tried to speak; at last his voice came to him, weak and uncertain. "Mary, my angel wife, I thought all these years—that—that—I had—killed you!"

Trying to smile through her tears, she answered: "It was only a dreadful dream—dearest, forget it." Then, turning to the kneeling Sister beside her, she said: "Brian, this is our daughter—this is your little Stella."

His child's sweet face bent toward him, and gave him, indeed, a kiss of peace, still weeping bitterly. God bless you, father, she said, "and give you strength and patience to bear such awful suffering! Oh, father!" and leaning her head against the bed, she sobbed piteously.

He looked at them both, with a thousand emotions swelling his already bursting heart, and murmured: "Wife and child, mine!" Then, looking at his wife, he asked, "Mary, am I dreaming now?"

"No, dear, it is all real, and we will never leave you; and bending her quivering lips close to his ear—"I shall think the time so long till God lets me come to you in heaven?"

"Heaven!" he sighed, "not yet, my Mary, but after a while, perhaps—I can't seem to believe it." Then sadly, "I cannot lift my hand to bless you, love, nor strike you, either. Say once more it is all forgiven."

"Long, long ago, I prayed for you always, and so did Stella. We thought you were drowned; the clothes you wore and your watch and some papers, were found upon a poor drowned man; but something told me it was not you."

Just then Sister Margaret came to the little recess, where the long parted family were so strangely reunited, to prepare an altar, and the sick man for the last sad rite. When all was ready Father Meade came in and administered the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction with all the solemnity and peace with which Holy Church glorifies and soothes the death-beds of her children. None present, the good priest himself not expected, had dry eyes.

After a few low words of consolation and hope to him who lay so quietly waiting the last summons, Father Meade withdrew. Slowly the tears of the dying gathered and fell from between the closed lids, and were lovingly wiped away. And so for an hour, then he spoke "Stella, little one!"

"What is it, father?"

"What is your name in religion?"

"Stella—Sister Stella, just the same."

He smiled and nodded pleased. "Stella—Matutina—Morning Star." Then to his wife, "I have heard you singing that 'Ave Marie Stella ever since'—slowly—in India, in London, in San Francisco—I have got the scapular—you made me still—"

Then his eyes closed, and Sister Margaret went on with the prayers for the dying.

"Mary!"

"Yes, Brian."

"It is getting darker," then so low they could scarcely hear: "It will soon be morning."

His wife whispered in his ear: "You will soon be with God, dearest. Pray if you hear me, say 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph!'"

"Jesus"—only the lips were moving now—"me—"

The rest was never spoken in this world. With one long sigh, as if of infinite relief, the light of earth went out forever for him, and his soul freed from the burden of the poor mutilated and crushed body, sped swiftly upward to the judgment seat of God, "whose mercy is above all His works."

"And who shall say but that the ever faithful Mother who guided the poor shipwrecked wanderer so safely into port at last, where he could not only make his peace with God, but also with her whom he had wronged most on earth, did not guide him unto the kingdom of eternal peace, for is she not also the 'Gate of Heaven'?"

These were Father Meade's thoughts as in the early morning he walked down the hospital steps, on his way to his residence to take an hour's sleep before saying mass for the repose of the soul of Brian Burke, whose looking upward and eastward toward the slowly creeping dawn, far above the sleeping world of sin and sorrow, bright against the widening daybreak, he saw the sweet symbol of our sinless Mother, the Morning Star, Francisca in the Ave Maria.

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The New Blessed Sacrament Church
Corner Stone Will Be Laid Sunday Afternoon at 4 O'Clock

Rev. Thos. E. Connors, Rector.

Shubert Theater

Bert Lytell, the Rochester stock favorite, and now a co-star with Evelyn Vaughan, comes to the Sam S. Shubert Theater for an engagement of one week only in "Rilly," a farce of football and false teeth, a vehicle which proved to be their most successful attraction in a recent remarkable stock engagement in Albany, N. Y. In the company supporting Mr. Lytell, Miss Ives Buck and Mr. Alfred Hudson will be especially well remembered here.

Parsons

Mr. and Mrs. Weiss of 27 Mt. Vernon Ave. have returned from a trip through Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Manassas and Troy where they have been visiting friends.

The Good Time Coming

Joe King is a Chinese laundryman with a cheerful though somewhat unworldly philosophy. After having had his time and lack of business he added malignity. "Dimmy" arrived in the city, very busy. "Here" that "All the poor people get so many dollars and then all poor people die." Argument.

Carried to Extremes

"We're simply mad on the subject of noise and sterility or there's every thing in the house."

"How does she get along with her family?"

"Oh, even her relations are strained."

Star Stories

Detached Candidate: You encouraged me to run for office. You know you did. You said you thought I would make a bad alternative.

Tracy Henchman: Will the returns seem to show that I was right. Harry Saw Thomas.

A Recluse

"Why do you?"

"Well, what?"

"What is the difference between you and your own flesh and blood and how do you get on?"

Origin of "Whisperer"—but it is the literary work of a distinguished writer. He was the first to use the word "whisperer" in his own sense. It is a word which has become familiar to the general public through the use of the word in the "Whisperer" column of the "Catholic Journal." The word was first used in the "Whisperer" column of the "Catholic Journal" in 1888. It was then used in the "Whisperer" column of the "Catholic Journal" in 1888. It was then used in the "Whisperer" column of the "Catholic Journal" in 1888.

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