

# The Catholic Journal.

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## The Voice on the 'Phone

"Oh, yes," said Father Rex. "I have had many strange experiences in my missionary career! But I do not recall any one which was quite as strange and inexplicable as the message which came to me over the telephone one night about ten years ago."

The group taking tea upon the lawn, the venerable old priest having the central place, ceased their chatter for a moment and metaphorically "closed in" upon the speaker.

"I was seated alone in my room one night," he began, "about the middle of a very hot August. The windows were wide open; it was unusually warm and I was rather tired. August is not the season of missions here in the East, you know—except perhaps an odd one or so at the watering places. But I had been conducting a mission for an old friend of mine" (and Father Rex smiled reminiscently). "He was at one time in one of my classes in the seminary, dear Madam," he said, addressing Mrs. Singleton; "and so when he started out as a young pastor in the suburbs of a certain part of New York, I accepted an invitation to pay him a short visit and incidentally threw in the little mission. It was exclusively for his young men, upon whom, by the way, he was building high hopes."

"The attendance at the exercises had been most encouraging, and so, though tired, I was far from unhappy as I sat alone in my room that sultry August evening. I had the trim little rectory all to myself, as the young pastor had been called away to see a member of his family who was ill in bed."

"Suddenly—it was about eleven o'clock, I think—the telephone bell rang. It was a sharp and decided ring, or so it seemed to me. The instrument happened to be without my door and I answered it at once."

"Father Rex?" came a clear feminine treble.

"I replied in the affirmative. "Please go at once to the Rainey Hospital!"

"That was all, and then the instrument was evidently closed—and quickly."

"Now, the Rainey Hospital was not a Catholic institution, a consideration, which made me hurry into my outdoor garments all the more quickly. My information had been so meagre that I went prepared for everything, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, the holy oils, etc. After a good half hour's drive in the trolley, I alighted at the door of the institution. A night attendant met me, an expression of surprise upon his countenance.

"No one badly sick here tonight, sir," he volunteered. It was a small institution and he evidently knew whereof he spoke.

"But I have been sent for," explained. "Perhaps" At that moment a young interne came forward.

"Good evening, Father! We are all unusually well here tonight. You say you were sent for?"

"I told of the telephone message."

"Strange!" said the doctor, meditatively. "We have only fifteen or sixteen patients in the whole hospital tonight—never had so few—and all, I am happy to say, are on the road to recovery. I made my night round two hours ago."

"Then it must have been a mistake," I said, turning to go, as I did not wish to parley further under the circumstances.

"You may visit the wards if you wish, Father," offered the young physician, a trifle dubious; "but everyone is asleep."

"Your word is quite enough for me," I answered. "I am sorry to have disturbed you. Good-night!"

"But all the way home in the trolley I had a disturbed, distressed feeling that I could not

explain away; I returned the Sacred Host to the Tabernacle, however, in the dim and silent little church, lingering a moment to offer a prayer for— I knew not whom or what—and every poor soul that was slipping out into eternity that night. Soon afterward I regained my room; but, instead of preparing for bed (it was then past midnight), I again donned my cassock and took my place by the window. A feeling of unrest still possessed me—a feeling quite contrary to the mood which fortunately is mine by nature.

"Well, I had not been so seated more than ten minutes when I was again surprised by the ringing of the telephone-bell. This time I was really startled, and it was with a distinctly uncanny feeling that I took down the receiver. Again came the inquiry—(it was the same voice, the same accent):

"Father Rex?"

"I answered in the affirmative.

"Please, Father, go instantly to the Rainey Hospital! You are needed."

"For a moment I was rather non-plussed; then I rang up Central—or rather tried to. Five minutes of prolonged ringing failed to elicit any response in that direction. Central was evidently asleep, or the wire was out of order. What should I do? This message had been more imperative than the previous one, and voice sending it, being very decided in its accents.

"Under the circumstances, it seemed absurd to start out again upon what had turned out to be more or less of a wild goose chase. But a feeling within me that I cannot explain, that I could not reason away, insistently urged me to go. Within five minutes I was again on my way to the hospital. It took me longer to go this time, as I had to walk a great part of the distance, few trolleys running at that hour. My arrival was greeted by the same orderly who this time opened his mouth in amazement.

"Call Dr. Sterns," I said—somewhat imperatively, I fear.

"But he has gone to bed, sir."

"Well get him up, I must see him. This is important."

"Jacob shambled off and presently a very sleepy and if the truth must be told, a very annoyed-looking Dr. Sterns appeared. He apologized and stated my errand—the second summons from the unknown telephone messenger. The doctor rubbed up his hair, tried to rub the sleep out of his eyes and then gave me one sharp professional glance.

"Are you sure you haven't been dreaming, Father?" he said, not without some excuse for his incredulity.

"I was very sure that I had not been dreaming and so stated.

"Well, nothing has happened since you were here before. Of that I am certain. Still, if you wish, I shall call the night nurses and let you interview them personally."

"I thanked him and shortly found myself interviewing the nurses—one from the male, the other from the female ward. Both corroborated the doctor in his previous statement; all the patients were 'doing nicely'; moreover, as it happened, none in the hospital at the time were of my faith; all were Hebrews. Christians were, however, admitted on occasion.

"More mystified than I can quite express, I started home again, walking the entire way this time; for I felt that my nerves needed the steady, which only exercise in the open air could give them. And this time I lingered long in the little church, soothing my spirit in the quiet of its hallowed atmosphere. And I prayed—oh, how I prayed that night!" Father Rex included the group in his benignant glance.

"It seemed as if some one, somewhere, must be in need of my ministrations; and I begged Our Lord to make use of me."

"I had hardly entered my room on my return, when again the telephone rang. This time with what seemed to me a long, sharp clamor. Even after I had taken down the re-

ceiver, the bell kept up its summons for at least a full half-minute, as it frequently does in these nearly midnight hours. Again I answered and, again came the identical question in the clear feminine voice:

"Father Rex?"

"Yes," I replied. "And pray who may you be, madam?"

"For God's sake, go at once to the Rainey Hospital!"

"Again the instrument was clicked to, I stood, I must confess somewhat in the attitude of my friend Jacob—mouth agape and eyes started. This time I never thought of lingering to verify the message or trace it by the vain and useless ringing up of central, I glanced at my watch; it was a little after two o'clock. Without another moment's hesitation, I again hurried out to the church, possessed myself of the Sacred Particle, and once more issued forth. Though I was tired I walked quickly, some unknown force seemed indeed to lend wings to my feet.

"Jacob met me at the door. I pushed past him and myself found Dr. Sterns, who was sleeping on the lounge in the office. I gently awakened him, greatly regretting that I was obliged to do so.

"Ben seeing ghosts again?" "I really could not blame him, but I explained what I had heard again. And now, doctor, I concluded, "humor my whim, and take me all through this hospital from top to bottom. Some one may be here of whom even you do not know."

"Well, search me! ejaculated the youthful interne, not yet fully awake.

"No search the hospital," said "Come, doctor, you and I quickly!"

"Pulling his bathrobe about about him, Dr. Sterns led the way. (I have always had the highest regard for that young man since that night. He might have been so cross, and he was not.)

"Well, Father, here goes! Suppose we start at the top and journey down? It will be easier."

"He led the way to the elevator.

"George," he exclaimed, "the car's up! Never knew Pat to do that before. Always leaves it at this floor. Sorry, Father, but we'll have to foot it."

"Pat did you say?" I remarked, caught by the Celtic cognomen.

"Then all your employes are not Hebrews?" "Pat is the finest fellow we have, and he's Irish, and, of course a Catholic," observed the doctor, nonchalantly. "Got only one fault, Father; takes a little too much once in a while. I suppose that's the trouble tonight. He isn't in, apparently."

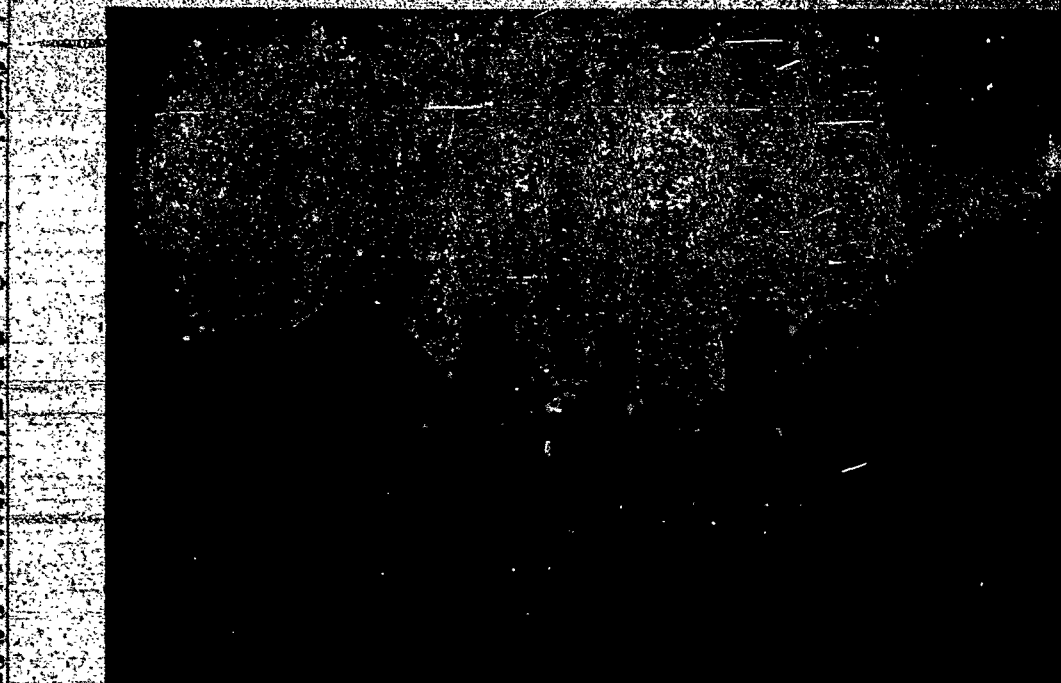
"A strange sensation came over me. I stood quite still by the open elevator shaft. Dr. Sterns paused halfway to the stairs. He looked at me in perplexity. I returned his glance, equally mystified. And then, breaking faintly on that midnight silence, we both heard an unmistakable groan.

"For an instant the doctor looked wildly around; then he dashed to the nearest stairway, and down I followed on his heels and there all crushed and mangled by the force of the fall lay Pat, the missing elevator man. He had evidently stepped into the open shaft and down to what promised to be his death in a few more minutes. Dr. Sterns rushed back to his office for the necessities, touching off bells for nurses on the way. Pat was still conscious, I bent above him.

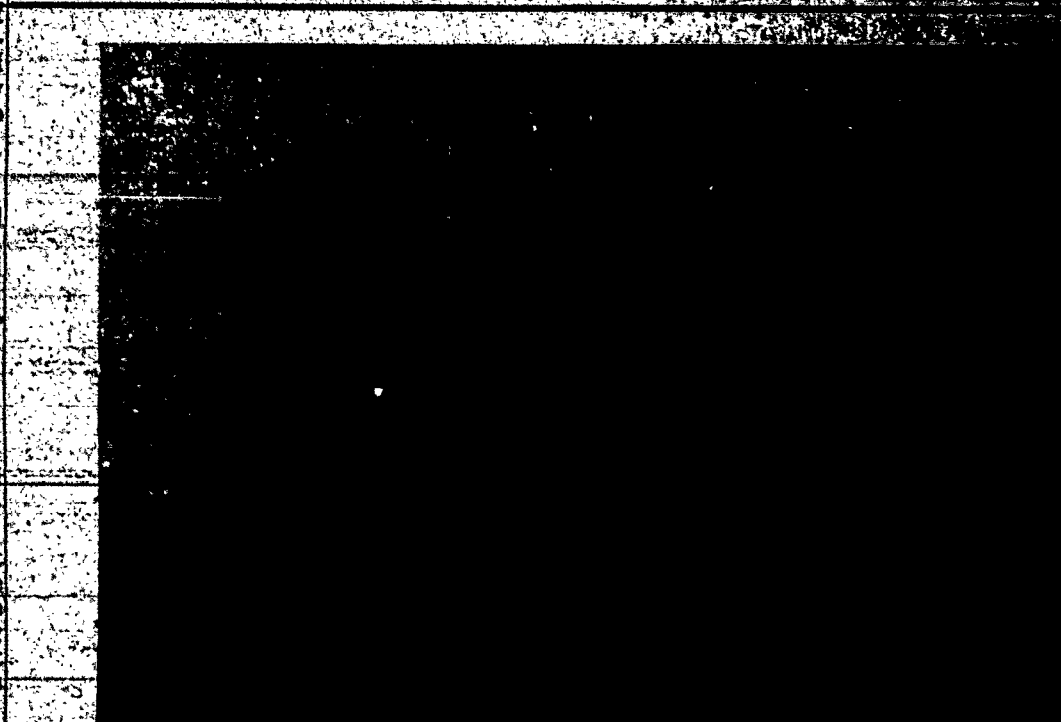
"Thank God—for this, Father! he breathed, "I was making your mission, and didn't touch a drop—all through it—till tonight. And then—oh—"

"But we will draw the curtain. I quickly heard the poor fellow's confession, administered holy communion, and even had time to anoint him, the doctor working with me by that time.

"His injuries were so serious, his end so near, that he could not be moved farther than to a cot hastily rigged up a few feet from where he lay. They let me sit beside him. Between ministrations of doctors and nurses he



Holy Sepulchre Entrance Where the Beautiful Ceremony of Blessing the Graves



All Saints' Church

of doctors and nurses he breathed into my ear: "Father, 'tis Eily I have to thank for this. She's been—saying a Hail Mary—every night—on her bed—knees—that I would never die—without the—bless— And—sure I'm not God—bless—her—poor Eily! And a tear dropped upon my hand which he held in his."

"She is your sister, perhaps?"

"My sweetheart—Father, she—she was—coming all—the way from Donegal—to—marry me—within the—month. And now—oh, sure—A particularly bad

spasm of pain seized him; he grasped my hand tightly. "O Father, darling, wife, has—poor—little—sweetheart! Sure I wasn't—half good enough for—her—my—colleen bawn. God—God bless her!"

"Doctors and nurses had done their utmost, but without avail. Awed, they stood aside, while with one soft moan, the soul of poor Patrick passed out into eternity.

"From letters discovered among the dead man's effects, it was found that the girl to whom he referred was one Eileen O'Rourke, whose home was in a picturesque glen in wild Donegal. I wrote to the girl next day. The answer to my letter came from her parish priest, Eily O'Rourke had died quite suddenly on the night of the 15th of August—the night of Pat's death. She had been to Holy Communion that morning, the great feast of Lady Day in good old Ireland; and Father Kelly was sure she had died as she had lived—one of God's little saints if there ever was one.

"Who had telephoned to me that night? I have never found out to this day." Marion J. Brunows in the Ave Maria.

## News From Ireland

**Atrocious Death**—A young laborer named Mellroy was killed last night in a fall from a high building in Dublin. The death took place at the residence of Hugh O'Hanlon, a well-known Dublin politician.

**Circulars Issued**—A circular has been issued by the secretary of the Finance Committee of the Government of Kildare and Louth, directing the clergy of the diocese to urge upon them to use their influence to dissuade farmers from giving drink at threshings.

**Public Opinion**—A number of public opinion polls are working out in favor of the establishment of a pork market. A sum of over £100 has already been raised to defray the expenses of starting the market.

**Dead Body**—The dead body of a young boy named Walker O'Callaghan, whose mysterious disappearance some time ago caused a sensation in Kilkenny, was found in the white rocks, Duggan's, on August 18th.

**Maurice Shea**—a well-known steeple chaser, rider and game hurler, was drowned while bathing at Rathcoursey, Ballincormack, near Cork Harbor on August 18th.

**Magill's Shop, 15 East Ave.** Children's readers, 4 to 8 years, 98; gingham dresses with bloomers, 4 to 10 years, 98; bloomers, 6 to 10 years, 98.