

At the Eleventh Hour

Continued from last week.

For a time Mrs. Dunn filed in the void by private devotions, but little by little these shrank and finally ceased altogether. They failed to satisfy her religious thirst. She slipped from her like a handball of sand. More than once she wished to start for the priest's house; but what would she do there? Her respect was of Protestantism, lay in its lack of a strong and definite continuity. She believed the season. Here was but one of the tens of thousands of a man back that float into the sea. She thought to drift there, but she could not. Nothing of the sort changed with her. The flowers which she devoted all her spare time blossomed and faded, while with each winter her step was less elastic, her eye duller.

"Mrs. Dunn, are you real well?"

Mrs. Brownell had watched for an hour next day until her neighbor should leave the house and take her morning walk to the village post-office.

"As well as usual, thank you."

"I'm so glad to hear that. My daughter and I were saying yesterday that we thought you looked tired."

On her way downtown two others stopped to inquire about her health. Mrs. Dunn looked in the glass on her return. The mirror returned the colorless image she had grown to expect, a little paler, perhaps, more lines about the eyes, but no great difference.

"What if I should be sick here, alone!" The thought went through her mind many times during the day. Back of it was another thought, only half-formed. "If I should die alone—what then?"

Mrs. Dunn would not entertain the suggestion. Was she not through with religion forever?

Whether it was a psychological reaction from Mrs. Brownell's tireless efforts in spreading the report that Mrs. Dunn had been "looking real peaked of late, and the constant queries of the villagers that followed it, or the result of years of constant strain, Mrs. Dunn found herself steadily losing strength. Mrs. Brownell heard the outcome one morning when word came about that Mrs. Dunn had collapsed in the street and had been carried home.

The village doctor's automobile was standing in front of the door at half-past ten. Mrs. Brownell decided that she would ask the physician himself just how his patient was.

"I'm afraid her condition is very serious," the doctor replied in response to Mrs. Brownell's questions. "Mrs. Dunn does not appear to have any recuperative power. Of course, her age has something to do with it, but she does not respond to treatment as a woman ought to in her general state of health."

"Is it as bad as that? Can we help in any way?"

"She will not need constant care—at present, at least—but one of the neighbors ought to drop in every afternoon and see that things are going right. I am sending her a nurse."

The nurse arrived, secured from a hospital in a nearby city, but Mrs. Dunn did not improve. Neighbors who paid visits returned with sallow faces, bringing the news that the patient seemed very ill indeed. She appeared to take no interest in life, to care nothing as to whether she lived or not.

"Would you mind sitting with Mrs. Dunn for a couple of hours this afternoon?" The nurse asked this of Mrs. Brownell a few days later. "I have an errand I must attend to and she is resting quietly."

"I would be glad to."

Mrs. Brownell would be delighted. Worrying the sick with well-meant but lugubrious talks on death and the uncertainty of any being saved, and harrowing the feelings of survivors by lengthy and dismal calls of condolence, were dear to her. A whole afternoon with a gravely sick woman! Such an opportunity did not come often. Mrs. Brownell had no intention of being cruel. Death was an anomaly

The Message Of The Christmas.

The Christ Child's Song of Joy And What It Means.

Its Effects for the Individual and Society.

The ringing of the chimes, the singing of sweet songs, the glow of love on happy faces, the laughter of little children—all of these enter into our picture of our Christmas festival. It is a time of joy. Within the breast of almost every man there is a more generous bearing of the heart, a realization of a better self than is often evidenced to the world in the course of daily life. We awake for a time at least to an understanding of our duty to our neighbor; the world for a day feels a little more of that peace of which the angels sang. It is the message which the Christ Child brings that we thus hear, sometimes faintly, sometimes in full force—the message of true peace and joy.

We usually do not stop to analyze the meaning of this message. As a rule we accept it as a mere matter of course. We often forget to hear its wider appeal—its significance for the individual and society. In the world about us today pessimism is enthroned. Men have lost the secret of the possession of real lasting joy. They seek it in vain in the pursuit of pleasures that nauseate and sicken; that corrode the heart and poison the mind. They have forgotten the way to the attainment of peace. Hatred and a vague disquietude prevail among them. They know no longer whether they are bound in the journey of life, and try to find their consolation in a dark despair. The spirit of the age, "scientific" as it calls itself, has confined itself to the detailed, material things of the present life, and has thereby banished hope. "Modern culture," Bishop Keppeler well says, "is fundamentally worldly, and of this present life; its culture of technical science; its culture of the intellect. Hence it is incapable of satisfying or comforting man, and is empty of joy. True culture is essentially inner, a culture of heart and soul." (Morning English Translation, p. 201.)

It is this true culture which the Christ Child brings, a culture which should extend throughout the globe, to teach men hope and peace and the real joy; to cause the man writhing under the pain and darkness of his physical labors to see the sign above him in which he shall conquer and find peace—for time by reason of eternity; to teach every human heart that there is something beyond the bitterness and unequal routine of suffering and struggle. With this spirit suffused man and man. There would be more suffering of the difficulties in adjusting social conditions and a greater readiness to co-operate in such adjustment. And it must not be forgotten that the Christ has also brought the basic ideas which will make this adjustment the better. He has proclaimed the dignity of the worker, of the weak and unfortunate. He has insisted on the stability and unity of the family, so necessary for a proper social status. He has emphasized the necessity of self-reliance as the real basis for a wider betterment for general conditions. He has laid down those principles, which will make the conduct of life possible. By reason of all these things has he given us reason to exclaim: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"

We can all catch this spirit of the Christmas; we can all rejoice not merely for the day but for the entire year. A living close to the cross is essential for in that sign of contradiction comes happiness and peace; both to the individual and society. A greater concern for the welfare of our fellows and for a real endeavor in bettering those conditions which deserve such bettering, in the spirit of Christian charity and justice, will make us forget our own difficulties the easier, and thus lead us

The Message Of The Christmas.

to rest. Peace and joy, joy and peace!—these are the things the world needs so badly today, not merely in those countries where war is raging, but in the homes and in the streets of countries not engaged in conflict. "Success to the crusade of joy! Of trouble and misery and distress, there will always be enough upon the earth; let us take care that there shall always be enough of joy as well. True joy, which is spiritual and supernatural, seems to have lost its value in the world of today; let us prize it above everything else. Hundreds are busy burdening themselves and others with cares and troubles, with sins and crimes; let us arise against them thousands who will daily think of creating joy for others." "On every side hell offers its intoxicating cup; let us offer the manna of true joy." From Christ we learn the less in which will enable us to do this. He is the teacher of joy. At this festival of His we can learn in a practical way—in the relations of our daily lives, as employers, as landlords, as workmen—these things of which He tells us.

C. B. of C. V.

Catholic News Notes

Domestic.

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At Bancroft, Iowa, the handsome \$76,000 church of St. John was dedicated by the Bishop of Sioux City.

Mother Rosia, Superior of the Convent of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, was injured in her leg, while rescuing a Chinese boy from under the wheels of an automobile, in San Francisco.

More than ten new churches and schools await dedication in the diocese of Great Falls, Mont.

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The death has occurred at The Square, Macroom, of Mrs. Eliza Murphy, a lady of a most charitable disposition.

The death has occurred, in his 79th year, of Martin Riordan, ex-chairman of Middleton R. D. C., and one of the leading Nationalists of East Cork.

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Foreign Mission News

Special correspondence by The Propagation of the Faith Society, 313 Lexington Ave., New York City.

What The Lepers Are Doing For Our Society.

We are accustomed to look upon lepers as objects of profound pity and deserving of all our charity. Often we make sacrifices that may enable their nurses to ease their sad condition. But we must not think that these poor creatures are devoid of interest in the outer world or that they are lacking in fine feeling. An example of their generosity has just been offered by Fr. Maxime, M. S. H., who states that during the past year the Catholic lepers of Molokai, have contributed the sum of \$686.25 to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. We know not by what heroic means they gathered together this goodly amount, but we feel sure that most pleasing in the sight of the Christ Child, is this gift from the despised one of whom He was the first friend.

Snakes.

The European missionary has many demands made on his courage during the first months of his stay in India. Though he has nothing to fear from the natives, he has much to dread from the jungle denizens, most terrifying of which are the serpents. A Benedictine priest sent to Ceylon writes about the country as follows:

"I realized that I was near the jungle the first time I heard the howls of numerous jackals which made me quiver with something like fear. Every night about ten o'clock when the pack scatters and again at three when it gathers together, the animals give shrill yells, much like the whoop of Indians.

"But what I feared most, of course, was the snakes. There is a tradition among the missionaries that St. Xavier obtained from God the special favor that missionaries might ever be immune from the deadly effects of snake bites; and, as a matter of fact, there is not a single record to the contrary. This is certainly a great privilege when we consider that about thirty thousand people annually lose their lives in India in this way. But yet, I was never tempted to become too intimate with them. My dread of them at first was almost an obsession. I looked for them under chairs, table, bed, and many times it was no useless search either.

"The different varieties are almost without number. Everybody knows the cobra, so charmed with music; the terrible 'Polangar' (Indian viper) attacking even unprovoked; the green snake twisting around the trunk of a tree ready to spring at its victim's eyes; and, worst of all, the 'Miminnas,' the smallest but most deadly of vipers, which after biting runs swiftly away as its victim's corpse will not fall on it, as the Indians say.

"Once my companion on retiring began to unfold the blanket on his bed when, to his infinite horror, he found a 'Miminnas' lying among its folds. He had had no difficulty in killing it, but thinking it wiser to look for other undesirable bed-fellows, found a second 'Miminnas'! I can give you my word that he, for several nights, did not have any desire to sleep."

"Ask and you shall receive." Encouraged by this divine advice, Fr. Joseph Gerenton, O. F. M., of Chefcoo, East Shantung, puts forth a humble request—namely, that he may receive assistance in erecting a couple of suitable buildings near the small chapel that the post now possesses.

At present there is no presbytery, and the priest must eat, sleep, teach school and hear confessions all within the space of the tiny house of worship. For the modest sum of two hundred and fifty dollars he could build a house for himself and a school for the children.

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News From Ireland

Armitage.

Susan V. Boyd, aged 6 Cupar street, Belfast, has died at the Royal Victoria hospital, as the result of a revolver wound, accidentally inflicted by her brother, James, aged 8.

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