

THE CALL

"Here you are at last, mother!" cries Paul Mackay as he embraced a tall, well-tailored lady at the college station.

"Oh, Paul," sighed Mrs. Mackay as her son released her, "I was so afraid you'd do something rash before I could get here."

"Rash, mother? What do you mean?"

"Your letters, Paul, have given me chills. The idea of you intending to give up the great career before you to hide yourself in an old monastery! It is preposterous! I simply won't let you go!" And Paul, who knew his mother, realized after a glance at her determined face that she meant what she said.

"Mother, I'm surprised to hear you talk like this. I know you have expressed the same sentiments in all your letters since I first wrote you of joining the Dominicans next fall. But I couldn't imagine a good Catholic mother like you not giving in, finally, in God's favor. Do you realize, mother, that God has called me and no one has a right to hold me back from answering that call?"

"Child, that is ridiculous! Why, you haven't had a chance yet to know what the world is. You've been here with the Fathers all your life, practically. You've become so attached to them and so full of their spirit that you've closed your eyes to everything else. See something of life; then, decide what you want to do."

"Mother, let me ask you one question and then let us have done with this matter for the present, as we are almost to the college. What would you say if I were to tell you I wanted to go over to Europe now, during this war, just for the adventure and to satisfy my curiosity as to the refined mode of butchering in vogue there? I might say, for instance, that I have known nothing but dull, monotonous peace here. I want some excitement. In my search for it I might take to the trenches. At any rate, I'd have the excitement of not knowing just when a submarine would send me heavenward, or a Zeppelin somewhere else. How would you like that?"

"You'd be a fool, Paul. Why, I wouldn't hear of you doing such a thing!" And Mrs. Mackay was no little bit exasperated.

"All right," smiled Paul in answer, as they went up the college steps. "I'll hand you over to some friends of mine now, until after the exercises."

In about an hour the commencement exercises of St. Thomas' College began. During them Mrs. Mackay, oblivious of all around her, gave herself up to her pet dreams now so near realization. Since his birth Paul, her only boy, had been the center of her affections and ambitions. She had always planned a brilliant career at the bar for him. This had been especially so since the death, some years previous, of his father who had attained distinction in his profession.

Until a month ago she had not had the slightest misgiving but that Paul would thoroughly enter into her plans. But since his letter, containing the shocking news of his anticipated departure for the Dominican novitiate, had come, she was more determined than ever that her wishes would be fulfilled. She would drive the idea of the religious life out of his foolish young head. He was hers, her only boy—and she was going to keep him!

"Are you ready, mother?" inquired a voice at her side.

"Yes, Paul," she answered in surprise. She had dreamed all through the brief exercises.

"Let us have lunch at once, so that we can catch that flyer for home. I don't remember ever having been so anxious to get home at this year."

"You haven't been a bit more anxious to get there than I've been to have you there. Paul, dear, find a nice quiet table when we get to the hotel. I want to have you all to myself. I don't know why, but I feel like having a good cry."

"Ha, ha!" Paul laughed as his mother brushed away a tear. "The excitement is too much for you, I guess, mother; though I've never known you to have been weepy before. But women are women, I suppose."

Soon they reached the hotel. And having lunched, started at once for the railroad station. They had not been there long when in puffed the flyer, whistling and wheezing as it came to a stop.

The Mackays had chairs in the observation car. Several times, after the train had gotten under way, Paul tried to leave his mother for a quiet smoke in the smoking-car. But she kept asking him to wait a while, she wanted to talk with him. At

last, he succeeded in breaking away. In the smoking-car, however, the mute appeal in his mother's eyes as he had left her haunted him so that he rose to return to her.

He had just risen when there came a terrible, grinding crash—and blackness. * * *

"Oh!" moaned Paul as he regained consciousness. His hand impulsively clutched his left side. But he felt his hand gently withdrawn. And opening his eyes he saw on his left a nurse in immaculate uniform. Still dazed, his eyes wandered to the foot of the bed where stood one of St. Vincent's ministering angels. Gradually he was beginning to realize the situation. His eyes moved again, and at his right he saw—

"Why, Father, how do you do?" Paul said enthusiastically as he tried to extend his hand in greeting. "How did you get here?"

"I happened to be nearby when the call for volunteers came. And you were the first one I came across when we were trying to extricate the injured from the debris. How do you feel, Paul, boy?" asked his Dominican confidant.

"Very weak, Father. And my side—oh.—Father, am I going to die?" Paul asked with startling abruptness.

"Well, Paul, I think you ought to know that the doctors give you only a few hours more to live."

"Thank you, Father," Paul said quietly. Then, suddenly, as though ashamed of his forgetfulness, he asked: "Where is mother?"

"She was shaken up badly, but received no serious injuries. She is here in the hospital, too."

"Does she know I'm going to die?"

"No, Paul." The priest found it hard to go on. "The doctors think it would be imprudent to tell her just how serious you are. She clamors to come to you. But the shock of seeing you as you are would prove too much for her weakened condition, I'm afraid."

"Very well, Father. Fix me up now, will you please?"

"Paul, I've been considering since I first knew you would regain consciousness whether or not you would like to die a Dominican as long as you can not live as one."

"Can I really, Father?" And Paul's face lit up with joyful expectation.

"I'll receive you as a tertiary, if you wish."

"Oh, do, Father, please!"

The last sacraments having been administered and Paul having been made a Dominican, he asked for a rosary. One was given to him. Then he desired to be left alone.

"But, Paul, haven't you a message for your mother?" inquired his confessor as he prepared to leave.

"Oh, yes, Father!" he smiled. "Tell her God calls and I must answer."

—Clement Donovan, O. P.

TO THE CHRIST-CHILD

Little Babe in manger sleeping
Wake and see our tear-filled eyes.
Thou art author of our weeping,
Thou, the God of Paradise!

For we weep that thou so holy,
Creator Omnipotent,
Thus shouldst deign to be so lowly,
Naked, cold and impotent.

Yet we weep for pure rejoicing.
Hast thou not Redemption's power?
Grateful adoration voicing,
Angels join us in this hour.

Humble shepherds represent us
Worshipping the Saviour's birth;
Glorifying God who sent us
Peace to right-willed men on earth.

—Bartholomew Reilly, O. P.