



THE DEATH OF A NOVICE

Whenever death chooses one among a company it numbs those whom it does not kill. When we see even an old and venerable man, full of years and good works, bowing to the beckoning hand of death, we are unable to recognize the propriety of death coming at just that particular time. The present is never the suitable time for death; death's career suits only the future. A few days, a few months or a few years hence, and death might make its arrival very properly; but not now; it is too soon, it is out of time. Death never observes the proprieties of time, even when it takes those who are leaning almost into its arms.

But when death suddenly and inexplicably embraces a young man who has passed beyond childhood and youth into the productive period of young manhood, all the world stands aghast at the ruthlessness and temerity of death. And when that young man is a young religious, the sum of horror and dismay is doubled. So much potential good cut short! God's own workman summoned from his appointed task ere it was scarce begun! Life, hopes and the greatest possession on earth—a religious vocation—torn down and annulled because human life has surrendered to human death!

Even the aged who have seen more than one tragedy consummated in this vale of tears appreciate that the death of a novice is a sorrow of which they know none more bitter. Their faces lined with the wrinkles of past sorrows and past trials, with the cares and exaction of a long life and the advance

imprints of death, are marked with new creases as they view the dissolution and end of a beautiful something which had just begun. The old who stand within whispershot of death weep with sympathetic dread when they note that younger ears are more acute and have caught, alas too bitterly, the awful word which old as well as young fear to hear—which even Christ respected.

The death of a novice sends a tremor through the whole community life of a novitiate. The novices feel the shock of death almost as much as the immediate relatives of the deceased; and they feel it in a more peculiar manner than any one else can feel it.

Outside the usual conditions of loss which are common to all cases of death, the novices feel the shock of similarity. Between the parents and brothers of the deceased and the deceased himself, there is some difference of age, some cause or circumstance to make the death of their own not quite so pertinent and applicable to themselves. But to the novices, the dead is one with them: one habit, one life, one age and one ambition. The similarity is as perfect as it can be among men. He has died, and they have lived. What reason has directed the Providence of God to make this distinction between apparent equals? What can they expect for themselves? What lesson should this fearful proposition teach them?

No novice can escape these thoughts and, indeed, no one would wish to; but the pondering on these unfathomable mysteries of Divine Providence brings a new serious-

ness into a life whose very diversions are already serious. The thoughts of the novices are weighty thoughts when one of their number lies dead in their midst. They realize that death is really nothing more than the logical culmination of their religious life which begins with a death to the world in spirit and which should end with a death to the world in body. The bodily death to the world is nothing more than the completion of that sacrifice which man begins and which God completes and accepts by calling His own to Himself. Death is the complete attainment of religious life.

Yet there is no desolation or despair among the novices because they have witnessed the departure of one of their number and realize that their own day is but a little way from them. Their companion's death and its promise of their own death leads to another conclusion than that of despair or bootless grief. It leads to prayer.

From the very moment the body is brought to the convent, one steady voice of prayer goes up in the now plaintive, now triumphant, psalms of David. All through the day and all through the night two novices read the Psalter over the body of their brother. Each one of the novices in the house in which the deceased had lived at the time of his death says the Psalter for the repose of his' soul. All the other novices in the different houses of the Province say the Penitential Psalms. The novices know, too, that each priest in the house in which the dead novice was assigned says three Masses and every other priest in the Province says one Mass for the deceased. These thoughts keenly touch the minds of the novices. From the startling first effect of the news of their brother's death, the minds and hearts of the novices pass into sorrow and insecurity but only to emerge surely and permanently into religious consolation.

DOMESTIC ADVENTURE

Some time this summer five priests and one lay brother from the Dominican House of Studies will set out for our Chinese mission field in Kienning-Fu. These six Dominicans represent this year's contribution of the Dominican House of Studies to an ideal, a difficult ideal, distant both in point of miles and of attainment. To this apostolic ideal the House of Studies is devoting a high percentage of its output for this year, and doing it gladly and generously.

But the House of Studies can give only what it owns; and though it offers untold wealth in the bodies and souls of young men and chrism-ed priests, it must look elsewhere for that generosity which will prevent the sacrifices of itself and of its young subjects from being impossible or useless. Like all human undertakings the departure of the Dominican mission band for China depends to a great extent on human means. It needs religious articles, dollars, creature comforts, medicinal supplies and machinery.

For the purpose of enlisting the support of heroic souls who cannot personally satisfy their inclinations to do the big romantic things for Christ in China, the Rosary Foreign Mission Society has proposed a plan whereby those who must stay at home can aid those who go. The intention of this society is to furnish systematic encouragement for people desiring to help the foreign missions.

A unit of the Rosary Foreign Mission Society is made up of fifteen members in honor of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. These members may be of three kinds: honor members who offer one dollar a year or ten cents a month; regular members who contribute twenty-five cents a year; and finally associate members who donate religious articles or help under some other form. Each unit has its particular promoter who en-

courages and supervises its activities and keeps in touch with the headquarters of the missions at 839 Lexington Ave., New York City.

The benefits which the society offers to members are of course purely spiritual. Every day a Mass is said for the living and deceased members; all through the year the members partake of the merits of the thousands of Masses, prayers and spiritual exercises of all the subjects of St. Joseph's Province. And as an inspiration to the Chinese, the names of all their benefactors will be inscribed on the altars in our mission in China.

This new Dominican organization has the fundamental attractiveness necessary to make it successful. The Rosary Foreign Mission Society should succeed because it presents an heroic ideal of sacrifice and dauntless adventure in the peaceful Crusade for the recovery of souls.

THE EVERLASTING BOY

Not long ago the street car repair men were laying new rails in our neighborhood. When the new rails were in place one squad of laborers withdrew and another came on the scene with electric emery wheels to smooth the junctures of the rails. These emery wheels rotated at a very high rate of speed, and, consequently, when they were applied to the steel rails they struck off a long stream of brilliant sparks.

In the afternoon when the grammar schools dismissed their pupils, little groups of children began to come in sight of the workmen and their mystic fountain of fire. The little girls glanced and passed on, for they were other cares and joys; but the little boys forgot all mother's admonitions about coming home direct from school, and stood in silent awe beneath the magic spell of sparks. They asked no more than to be permitted to gaze at the never-changing, but never-monotonous flow of noisy sparks. The fulness of their joy could be gauged by their

rapt silence; their sympathy by their earnest concentration.

As I observed these young boys watching so intently the sparks which flew from the emery wheel, I could not help but remember the lines of Longfellow:

"And children coming home from school

Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly

Like chaff from a threshing-floor."

And I felt that these twentieth century Southern boys were brothers of those nineteenth century New Englanders who tarried to see the Village Blacksmith ply his trade; and I realized again that the world might change its face all it cared, but the heart of a boy would—thank God—ever be the same. I thought, too, that mothers should appreciate the affinity between fire and the sparkling life of a boy; and when they did, although they might be severe with their sons for taking matches or playing with fire, they never could be impatient. For a larger vision would see that the ardor and glory of youth should not be unnecessarily dimmed; for at best, the lives of these little boys, which were still so warm from Nature's Workshop, would be extinguished almost as soon as those beautiful sparks which dazzled for a moment and then disappeared, we knew not whither.

Perhaps, too, the eye of the philosopher might find deeper thoughts in the identity of interests between the boy of today standing before the electric emery wheel and the boy of almost a century ago watching the now nearly obsolete blacksmith. Industrial methods have undergone a complete change between the time when the young Longfellow loitered by the solitary smithy's in his dusty native village and this year of nineteen twenty-

four when our modern boy stands on an asphalt street to watch a few employees of an immense corporation operate a machine which is whirling at the rate of thousands of revolutions per minute. The things which men make are quite different today from what they were ten decades ago; but the human, the boyish, nature which God makes is just the same. And, perhaps, this immutability of the species amidst the variety of its surroundings may suggest to some minds the immortality of the individual among the changing conditions which begin with birth and pass through life into a state no man can observe.

THE NEW REVELATION

Quite recently the Rev. W. S. Crandall of the Boulevard M. E. Church of Binghamton, N. Y., preached a sermon on divorce. Immediately after his sermon he discovered that nearly half of his choir of thirty members had been divorced at least once and Deacon Fred Woodburn had gone through that experience three times. The choir and the Deacon withdrew in high dudgeon over the sermon; but when the preacher expressed his regrets all of the choir except the choir-leader, Ray Hartley, and Deacon Woodburn returned.

No doubt the choir members who forced the Rev. Crandall to abandon his position on divorce were self-complacent while the distracted minister wriggled through his explanation. Assuredly more than one glance of confident and unholy triumph shot about the church during his sermon of apology. All in all the energetic and self-justified parishioners of the Boulevard Church thought they did a grand and very splendid thing in bringing pressure, perhaps pecuniary, on their pastor to make him prove recreant

to his own convictions and the loyalty he owes to truth, morality and his God. They thought they did something big. But they did not.

The office of the priest or minister is to present the truth, the everlasting and immutable truth; to give it in principle and in theory and to give it in particular and practical application. If the words of the speaker be true, he has done well; if they are in conflict with the lives of his parishioners, he has done better, because his words were necessary. What the real preacher speaks is not his but the truth of God. "Let a man so account of us," says St. Paul, "as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." A priest or minister has no power over divine truth except to distribute and apply it. He has no right of dominion over it to change it, to mutilate it, to apologize for it or to suppress it in order to flatter the feelings of men.

When the truth of God, announced from the pulpit, is in conflict with the lives of individuals and communities, and a change must be made that change must be in the lives of the individuals and the community. The whole purpose of announcing the truth from a pulpit is to give the faithful an opportunity of measuring their conduct with God's reliable standard. If people come to church with the intention of extracting a religion out of the lives they lead, and not of fashioning their lives in conformity with the principles of religion, then the whole nature of a preaching and teaching church has been swept away. Then sinners dictate religion and religion can not convert sinners; then churches should be overhauled, placing pulpits where the pews now are and one lone pew where the pulpit now stands.