

stopped smoothing and patting the crumpled cheque, and actually reached over to touch her hand, with sudden strange timidity.

'Bless you child!' he said softly. Then, looking at her with a queer little embarrassed twist of his brows, he added, 'I guess we hav'n't understood each other but—I think we shall yet.'

'The Youth's Companion.'

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

Passing between the long lines of cots in a Western Hospital, I was strangely attracted by the intelligent countenance of one of the patients, a man of middle age, I had been on sick call, and was about to depart, as in my practice, I scanned the faces of the occupants of the cots in an endeavor to locate some sufferer who stood in need of my services, but who, as sometimes happens, had not the grace or the courage to ask for them. Directing a nurse's attention to the stranger, I inquired as to his identity.

'He is a Protestant preacher, sir,' was the reply. 'He has come down pretty low when he has to be taken to a ward in a City Hospital.'

'Where does he belong?' I asked.

'Oh, somewhere out West. But he has some new friends. They bring him magazines and books.'

I went to the stranger, and saluted him pleasantly. 'I suppose you know I am a Catholic priest,' said I. 'But I always like to say a friendly word to those who are suffering, even if they are not Catholics.'

'I am not a Catholic,' said he.

'Oh, I know that,' said I. 'But we are both ministers of the Gospel, and in that way we are not strangers.'

He drifted at once to other topics, spoke fluently and well of the events of the day, and showed such an intelligent grasp of affairs in general and particular, that I felt my interest in him growing, and I said so.

'It isn't often I meet a man like you in a hospital ward. I have been very agreeably surprised, and I sincerely hope you will soon recover. May I call to see you again?'

'If you wish,' said he. 'I have not many friends. Life is made up of many bitter things. Such, at least, has been my life. But pray for me.'

I left, but as I pressed his hand I said, 'I trust in God. He is our best friend and never forsakes us. You know that. Good bye.'

I went again and again to the hospital, but my friend seemed worse each time. He was seized with dreadful shivering fits. He trembled from head to foot. The very bed shook. It was distressing to look at him. I could not get him out of my mind. One day going to see him, I met a man at the hospital gate.

'You seem interested in Mr. P—,' said he.

'The Protestant minister' said I. 'Yes, a most intelligent man. I feel quite sorry he grows worse.' 'Protestant minister' he ejaculated. 'Why, he's only a renegade Catholic who went West, lived wild and turned to preaching, eventually for a living. He thinks nobody knows him here, but in his younger days he was a fairly good Catholic. He hasn't long to live, poor fellow, I go there to see a friend of mine, and he knows I know him.'

I didn't say a word, but hurried to the ward. The poor man was in one of the terrible nervous fits, shaking as if he had an uncontrollable chill. The perspiration was standing out on his forehead and rolling on the pillow. The shadow of death was on his face.

I sat down on the chair, close to him, and taking his clammy hand, I said:

'My friend, you are going to die, and you know I am a Catholic priest. You are a Catholic, and I want you to make your confession. I will help you all I can,' and I took my stole out of my pocket.

He looked at me with a despairing look, and then he turned his face away.

'What,' said I, 'you are going to refuse this last grace?'

'Father,' said he, 'there is no salvation for me. I have been a traitor of the deepest dye. I have disgraced my family. I have broken my mother's heart. I have left the Church of my childhood and railed against it in public and in private. I have been blacker than Judas, because I have betrayed all that I loved with greater knowledge and with bitter malice—and just then another one of those uncontrollable chills

seized hold of him, and, lest he should injure himself, some of the orderlies came over and held him down.

When he became quiet, I spoke calmly and soothingly to him. His frank acknowledgment had all the effect of confession to his soul. It broke all the rigid barriers of pride and despair. It was enough. I saw my opportunity, and I availed myself of it, with all the tact I possessed, with the result that he poured out his soul in a flood of humble and unreserved self-accusation. It was like the rushing of many waters, and when it was gone it left his soul purified from all stains and in peace. A sweet, holy calm seemed to possess him, and he lay there as a baby sleeping. While I administered unto him the sacred Unction, great tears rolled down his cheeks. When I was through and was placing my stole and oil-stock in my pocket, he opened wide his eyes and in a look of ineffable joy and confidence, he said: 'God is good. No truer word did you ever utter, Father, than when you said He was our best friend.'

I warmly pressed his hand and turned to go. As I looked around I saw the large, burly Negro orderly, who with difficulty held the sick man's feet a half hour before, leaning on his mop, silently and reverently watching the whole proceeding, for it was in the open ward. I came away, promising to return next day; and on my way home marvelled at the goodness and mercy of God who had sought out this wandering sheep and brought him back to the pastures he had deserted. I went back early next morning, but the weary stranger had gone to his rest, the prodigal had found his Father. Death had come in the night. As I glanced at the empty bed, I saw a crippled merry-hearted Irishman beckon me to his corner. 'Father, ye did a good work for that poor fellow,' said he. 'He died in peace and quietness, and, I think, happy and thankful to the Almighty, but the black man ye saw moppin' the floor said it was the powerful little cotton plasters ye put on his hands and feet that quieted him down and gave him the happy death, an' maybe father dear, you'll have his soul on the strength of them same "plasters." True to the sunny isle you came from, Patrick,' thought I, 'mingling a joke with the keenest suffering.'—The Missionary

The Archbishop of Melbourne

His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, who left for Europe on April 28, delivered a valedictory address in St. Patrick's Cathedral on the previous Sunday evening. In the course of his address, his Grace said:—

It is now just 21 years ago since I received the pallium from Leo XIII. I promised then that every tenth year I would visit Rome, and give an explicit statement of the religious affairs of my diocese. And now you will ask what account I shall give the Holy Father this time. Shall I not be justified in saying that in no country in the world is there a livelier faith or a more devoted loyalty towards the Holy See than here? I think so. And now as to the evidence of that faith. St. James tells us that faith without works is dead. Well, concrete examples of our work are in evidence all around us. Since my last visit, three magnificent churches have been built in the Archdiocese—at West Melbourne, at North Melbourne, and at Carlton; and yet another is being built at Malvern, which will be an ornament to that suburb, and another proof of that lively faith of priests and people, to which I have just referred. Then we have the new convent at Abbotsford, where those who have unhappily fallen into sin, degradation, or error may find reclamation and peace. At Broadmeadows, children, who have known not care of an earthly mother, are tended with a love and devotion by their spiritual mothers, that the natural love of a parent for its offspring could not exceed. At Northcote, again, there is a noble institution for those who have fallen on evil days. No questions are asked as to creed, there is no interference with their religion. Here they may live in peace, and they may prepare for death in a way which leaves no doubt as to their salvation. But great and splendid as these results are, as an evidence of faith, there is something that I may tell the Holy Father, which I think he will regard as finer than all these put together. I refer to the sacrifices that the faithful in the Archdiocese, in the State, and throughout the whole country, indeed, have made in the cause of religious education. Some general help has been proffered us from the outside but we have not sought it. We have borne our burden alone. Our schools have multiplied enormously throughout the Commonwealth.