

Standing beside the Paschal Candle, the deacon chants that grand song of triumph, the 'Exsultet,' a eucharistic prayer composed probably by St. Augustine (fifth century). The prayer itself, apart from the inspiring music to which it is sung, is very beautiful. It speaks of the victory of Christ our King in rising from the dead, the joy of Mother Church, the symbolism of the candle itself, the night of the first Pasch when the children of Israel went forth from Egypt, and (note the striking expressions) of the 'happy fault' of our forefather Adam 'which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer.' The deacon stops three times during the singing to fix in the candle the five grains of incense (already blessed along with the fire), which may be taken to represent the five Sacred Wounds in our Saviour's glorified Body. The candle itself is lit from the newly blessed taper.

The Prophecies.—The celebrant now reads the Prophecies, extracts from the prophetic and other books of the Old Testament referring to the Messias. It may be, as some think, that in early days these passages were read exclusively for the benefit of the catechumens, in order to let them see how God dealt with His people under the Old Law, and how privileged they themselves were under the New, or perhaps they were read, along with psalms and prayers, simply with the idea of opening the minds of the assembled worshippers to the new creation introduced by the Resurrection.

The Blessing of the Font.—The ministers next proceed to the baptistry for the blessing of the font. The celebrant says a prayer of thanksgiving and invocation, which is taken up with the idea of the new spiritual creation that is effected by the baptismal waters. 'In this laver of regeneration, indeed, the world is to be renewed, the Spirit of God is once more to be borne upon the waters, they are to be separated from all earthly taint of evil, they are to be a four-fold river of life, spreading from paradise to the four quarters of the globe, converted by God's power from bitterness to sweetness, welling up from the rock to give drink to the thirsty people, recalling finally the miracles of the Saviour, and drawing their efficacy from the stream of His sacred side.' The lighted Paschal candle is plunged three times into the baptismal waters—a representation of the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan, and an image of the sacramental power thereby given to the water. The celebrant pours the oil of catechumens and chrism over the waters to consecrate them and to signify their richness, and he breathes upon the waters to symbolise the descent of the Holy Ghost upon our Lord and us in Baptism. In the primitive Church the solemn Baptism of the catechumens followed this ceremony.

The Mass.—The procession returns to the sanctuary, the litanies are sung (they were once the accompaniment of the procession, now they are its conclusion), and the Mass begins. In the early ages the Mass would begin only as the dawn of Easter Sunday was breaking, and naturally would give expression to the Church's joy at the thought of the coming Resurrection. That is why even in the Mass which we now celebrate so early on Saturday morning, the bells are rung at the 'Gloria,' the organ is sounded, and the Alleluias are once more heard. At the end of Mass Vespers are said, because according to the original custom, they had not been said when the long service of the vigil commenced.

The Storyteller

THE SICK CALL

(By ALICE DEASE.)

The moaning of the wind and the glow of a bright turf fire combined to make Father Healy's cheerless parlor a very haven of warmth and comfort, and to-night—for once—the priest was not alone. It was unmistakable that the man who sat opposite to him was his brother, but, nevertheless, it was years since the two had met; for whilst the priest's life had been

bounded by the stone walls of his west-country parish, the doctor had held practices in various corners of the globe. The world had used him hard enough, for, though not yet an old man, he had been left without wife or child, as alone, but a thousand times more lonely, than the brother who was his host to-night.

Now and again the rain came driving fiercely against the windows, but between the showers it was comparatively quiet, for the house lay in a hollow and was sheltered from the full force of the Atlantic gales. It was in one of these lulls that the priest, whose ears were accustomed to the sounds about him, checked his companion's speech with a gesture, and after listening for a moment turned to him with a sharp, short sigh.

'A sick call,' he said, 'and from that side; it's bound to be from one of the islands. Well, God help the man who had to come for me this night!'

The housekeeper, less on the alert, only heard the summons when the messenger's knock came on the kitchen door, and even then no sound of any voice but hers came to tell the inmates of the parlor who it was who needed the ministrations of the priest at such an hour.

Father Healy had said, 'God help the man who had to come over from the island on such a night,' but now he found it was no man who sought him, but a slip of a girl, a mere child of no more than fourteen or fifteen, with hair straight and dark, and jacket and petticoat, of thick homespun though they were, clinging to her, drenched and dripping from a mingling of the spray and rain.

'Tis the girl over from Pat Dinny's we have,' announced Honor, 'an' I partly guess by her that the old man's done for this turn. Bad luck to him for that same this night,' she went on, half to herself, for long experience had taught her the uselessness of any expostulation with the priest on the subject of ill-timed sick calls. 'Never a foot would he come next or nigh you, an' him able, yet he needs must choose a night of the likes to go die!' She did not expect to be heeded, and even as she grumbled she was getting ready the priest's things whilst he was busy with his own preparations.

'Bid the child take an air of the fire,' he said, as he turned to leave the room.

'The fire!' exclaimed the housekeeper. 'Didn't she quit out of it ever since I came in to you? 'Tis down on the shore she'll be now, minding the curragh over the turn of the tide.'

'Surely that child never came over all alone from the island?' cried the doctor, who had looked out only that afternoon across the grey, angry water of the bay to where half a dozen desolate-looking huts were huddled together on the sheltered side of Inisghila.

'And who would come with her, only herself,' replied the housekeeper, 'when there's ne'er another on the island but Pat himself—an' him dyin'?'

'Who's minding him, then, while the girl is over here?' asked the doctor sharply.

'Just himself an' God Almighty,' said the housekeeper.

With a quick movement the doctor rose from his chair, and when his brother came into the room a moment later he found that he, too, was preparing for a night's journey.

'You!' cried the priest; 'you needn't come. He'll be beyond you, or the child would never have come on such a night. Besides, there's no one but herself, and she couldn't row a curragh with the two of us in it.'

'She can pilot,' replied the doctor, 'and I'll row. I haven't forgotten the trick of it,' he said, seeing that his brother was about to demur again. 'Besides, the canoes in Canada have kept my hand in.'

'It's a pretty wild night,' said the priest. 'There's danger—not much, maybe, for that girl knows the bay better than most. Still, there's some.'

'Come along, and don't waste time,' was all the answer that the warning brought, and then they went out into the night together. The priest led the way over what to him was such familiar ground.

Inisghila lay at the mouth of the bay, a bare, desolate rock, which, in spite of the houses discernible