

MORNING STAR AND CATHOLIC MESSENGER.
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A RECENT VISIT TO ST. BERNARD.

After one has returned from foreign travel, there are some scenes which seem to stand out with special vividness before the mind's eye. Such a one is my recollection of the evening of our arrival at the convent of St. Bernard.

It was very hot in the morning when we left Martigny, and all through the day, as we mounted through the interminable valleys which lead to the famous mountain pass, it had been growing hotter, dustier, and the landscape drearier. At last, as we left the gloomy little village of St. Pierre, the heat of the sun baking down on our heads became almost unbearable, and I asked our guide in despair:

"When would it be cooler? I thought it was to be cool on St. Bernard."

"In half an hour, when we begin to mount the real pass, Madame will feel the wind cool enough," he replied.

And he was right. Hardly had we left the solitary little canteen behind, and passed the great sea of boulders, and begun to ascend the deep narrow ravine, than we felt the keen cutting wind blowing straight in our faces; and before we had reached the two little low roofs of the winter refuges, half-way up, our hands could hardly feel the bridles of the mules.

We mounted up and up among the green and yellow lichen-covered rocks—among the patches of snow, and beneath the high bare mountains, too elevated to have any other covering save snow—and still we saw no signs of the convent. I grew impatient to be told at least about where it was.

"We shall not see the convent till we are close to it," said my guide. "It is quite at the top of the pass, in a sort of basin."

But at last, just as the sun was sending a pale yellow slanting light over all the scene, we turned a corner, and there, at the top of a short steep bit of mule track, stood the well-known building which has such a world-wide celebrity.

Plain, simple, bald almost in appearance, stands the strong pointed building with its rows of tiny windows.

There is not a tree or rock in its immediate vicinity: there it stands alone, flanked on one side by the low roof of the Morgue, and on the other by a high narrow building used as a store-house. It looked strange, weird, unlike anything we had ever seen before, in the pale, cold, yellow light—so silent, so dead, I might almost have said, if there had not been before us the solitary figure of one of the good Fathers, who, returning from his constitutional in his walking costume of shovel-hat and knee-breeches, stood looking back on the guests he saw arriving.

We all felt very stiff and numb on being lifted off our mules, and were glad to hear the bell ring, and be told by our men that it was for the guests to go and be received and conducted to their rooms.

We traversed the long low granite passage and mounted some stone steps, and found ourselves in the presence of a young monk, with a very pleasant face, dressed in a long black gown with a white girdle, and square-topped cap.

He bowed graciously and affably, seemed pleased we could talk French, asked us if we thought many more travelers were coming that night; and then he led the way up stairs, and showed us into a long room with wooden floor, ceiling, and panels, where several beds were ranged along the walls.

"Would that room suit us?" he asked.

"Did we mind being altogether?"

"No."

"That was good. In about half an hour the dinner bell would ring." And then he left us, bowing again.

Very soon a man-servant tapped at the door to say that when we were ready dinner would be served; so we hastened down to the large room which serves as the guests' dining and sitting-room, where we found a blazing log fire and about thirty travelers assembled.

The dinner was a very simple one, but quite sufficient for all purposes of sustenance, marvelously good when one considers the immense distance every article must be carried either by men or mules. We had two dishes of meat and potatoes; afterward came boiled rice and stewed prunes, with nuts for dessert. The *vin ordinaire* was brought in in little barrels, and came, I suspect, from the Italian side of the pass.

I was so fortunate as to be placed at dinner by the side of the young Frere Infirmier, who chatted away with great good-nature, telling all about their winter occupations and amusements, and answering the numerous questions rained upon him from all sides of the table with obliging readiness.

After dinner we all gathered round the fire, and then the Chanoine, Clavandier, or Bursar, whose duty is to receive guests and attend to all active management of the convent, went round among the company entreating some one to sing. Unhappily no one was able or willing to oblige him. In vain he showed us the piano sent by the Prince of Wales, and which the Fathers had themselves carried up from the canteen on poles; in vain he entreated and besought, saying that it was their greatest delight and pleasure to hear a little music; no one could be prevailed upon. Then, at last, with great good-nature, he cried:

"I believe it is a good example that is needed most, after all; and he sat down himself and sang a simple little thing about a beggar-girl, with a long plaintive refrain. After that cups of tea were handed round, and then we gathered about him; and he told us pitiful stories of how this last winter a poor man, his wife, and her baby was lost in the snow on the very path we had come. It was early in the year, and the snow did not seem very deep when they left the canteen, anxious to secure a bed and supper for nothing, if possible, at the hospitable convent. But it was too late in the day; the dark came quickly on, a bewildering wind was blowing, and the poor woman soon sank down unable to proceed; her husband tried to push on for assistance,

but lost his way, and was found in the morning lying dead at the foot of some rocks; the woman's child had sunk into the fatal snow-sleep. They were in the Morgue close by, crumbling into dusty decay. Later in the year some Italian workmen leaving Switzerland likewise perished in a snow-drift, and many more would inevitably lose their lives every year if it was not for the exertion of the good Fathers.

Every morning in winter the novices and the dogs go down to the refuge to see if there may not be some poor creatures who have crawled in there, and to survey the road and state of the poles which stand up through the snow as a guide to the best track.

The dogs go first, and are sometimes so buried in snow that only their tails and noses are visible. They find the best track, and also scent out travelers; but it is a mistake to suppose that they dig them out, or carry them back to the convent. They never go alone, and indeed the only days when nobody ventures outside of the convent are those when the stinging wind is so high that the dogs do not care to face it; then the novices are excused.

Sometimes the snow mounts up to fifteen feet round the house, and a door has to be used in the second story; and their hands not infrequently freeze in the chapel before breakfast, in spite of double windows and warmed passages. Their cells cannot be warmed, but the doors of the Brothers are left open during the night, and the winter refectory and other parts of the establishment were, they told us, quite warm and comfortable.

The good Clavandier would not allow that they find the winter long or dreary. They have their studies, their religious exercises, their music always, besides attending to the poor travelers; and when it is fine and bright they make excursions, and now and then indulge in their favorite winter pastime of sledging down the mountains close at hand, when the sides are quite smooth with one white covering of snow.

"I wish you could see us, then," said he, laughing; "we are just like a parcel of school-boys, screaming, tumbling, racing over one another, to get up the steep, and then flying down again faster than the wind. Ah, if you could see us then you would not ask if we are dull in winter."

And then, when the poor people arrive, we have so much to do. They arrive exhausted, often frost-bitten, or with toes and fingers frozen stiff, and we have to doctor them. The infirmier understands a bit about surgery, and we attend to them ourselves up here, excepting amputation; that we have not permission for."

"And why, since there is so much danger, do people attempt this way at all in winter?"

"Ah, madame," the Clavandier replied, "it is only the very poorest, those to whom even one night's shelter and food gratis is an object, who do attempt this pass. For the poor Italian peasants, who go into Switzerland in the spring to seek work, and return in autumn to spend the winter in their homes, this is far the shortest route. Some do go over the Simplon, it is true, and, therefore, we have there also a refuge for the poor pedestrians. They are mostly a very low, lawless set; and, I assure you, it is not from the poor that we receive the most gratitude."

But I must not repeat all our conversation, it would be far too long; but everything he told us was most interesting, and it is impossible not to feel the deepest admiration for the devoted lives of these admirable men in winter, and the simple, unaffected way in which they speak of it.

It appears that only mountaineers can bear the cold; and that, with one exception, the order are now all natives of the Vallais. They have three houses; one at Martigny, one on the Simplon, and the Maison Mere, on the St. Bernard. The superior lives at Martigny, though he comes up on great occasions, and it is at this latter establishment that the sick and aged are domiciled. But the post which is sought most for is that of the greatest danger and usefulness on the great St. Bernard. During the summer they have, of course, an immense deal of company, and in conversing with the Clavandier one sees at once that he is a man who has mixed with some of the best society in Europe; and, as the natural result, he is one of the most liberal-minded, large, hearted, and intelligent men it has ever been my lot to converse with.

He insisted on showing us to our rooms, and it certainly did seem, as some one in the *Travelers' Book* had remarked, "very odd to have a gentleman take you to your bed-room and light your chamber candle." But it was no use protesting—he would come himself and see that we had all we wanted.

O, how cold it was! The floor striking like ice through the soles of our boots. We were glad to jump into the bed heaped with coverlets as fast as possible. But the convent of St. Bernard, with all its charms, is not a place to sleep in much or long. First, it is in Switzerland, consequently there are fleas; secondly, there is a sort of exciting effect in the air hostile to sleep; thirdly, one is first of all so afraid of not hearing the bell for mass in the morning, and afterward so puzzled by the many bells that one does hear, that sleep is out of the question.

We found, on going into the chapel about six next morning, that the Fathers were reciting the Hours. It was cold enough then in the middle of summer, and what it must be in winter in that chapel, with the snow drifts lying right up against the high, narrow windows, it is difficult to imagine.

At half-past six high mass was celebrated, and we were glad to observe how very well all the guests behaved. Nearly all were present, besides a few peasant-women, who knelt devoutly in the background, telling their beads. Sometimes as many as five hundred pilgrims arrive in one day, and all are fed and lodged in the convent, and allowed even, if they wish it, to remain three days. The only living things which are not entertained at this hospitable abode are the mules, which must bring their own hay, as the monks have considerable difficulty in providing enough fodder for their own mules, forty in number.

As soon as mass was over the bell rang

and we all passed into the saloon, where a breakfast of coffee, bread, butter, and honey was being served. Then commenced the bustle of starting for those travelers who had a long journey before them, while the good Clavandier bustled about with photographs, relics, and rosaries, which he sells for the benefit of the house. Most people, too, wish to see the establishment; and such he conducts to the interesting library, where we noticed many portraits of familiar faces, and many books of scientific research and travel, all sent as grateful remembrances of visits to St. Bernard. Then we went down stairs to the chapel, where there are fine carvings and interesting pictures and relics, and saw the large, low, vaulted peasants' rooms, which, it must be confessed, looked nasty, and smelt close and disagreeable; then out on to the little plot of mossy grass which is the apology for a garden, and there at last were introduced the splendid dogs, who are only second in interest to the monks themselves. There were seven of them at the time of our visit—enormous fellows, varying from plain tan and plain white to many varieties of the two colors blended. They were perfectly amiable, and delighted in being noticed, rubbing and rearing up against one with rather violent demonstrations of affection.

Some people went to see the Morgue, or dead-house, a very disagreeable and sad sight; others took their guides and went to seek for traces of the Temple of Jupiter and the Roman road, and peep over the steep side of the mountain down into Italy.

By the time we got back the mules were ready; and, not having forgotten to leave an offering to the poor-box at least equal to what we should have paid at an hotel, we bade adieu with many thanks and much, we hope, reciprocal kind feeling, to our admirable hosts. Long may they have the health, strength, means, and will to continue their blessed work of Christian charity and mercy amid the snows!

It is one thing to read about a place and another to see it for one self. We had often heard of the convent and good monks of St. Bernard, but felt that we had never before realized the actual life of the place and its everyday continuance; now we can hardly hear the wind howling and see the snow falling, from our comfortable home, without thinking of those devoted men up on that wild mountain, engaged in their continual round of good works and prayer.

In conclusion, we say to every one, "Go and see for yourself the reality of that fine history of St. Bernard and his lasting work. You cannot fail to return deeply interested; let us hope, also, impressed by the example of these holy men."

HOW REDMOND O'HANLON MET HIS MATCH.

"Never heard of Redmond O'Hanlon? Sure, there never was such a great highwayman. Your Dick Turpin and Claude Duval wasn't a patch upon him."

My companion was riding with me on a jaunty-car in the neighborhood of Dublin. He was an entertaining and very intelligent and well-informed specimen of the native character, and I desired to draw him out. He was nothing loth; so, in reply to a remark in that direction, he continued:

"Of course, then, you don't know how he met his match? I'll tell it to you."

"I don't rightly know," he proceeded, "in which county in Ireland Redmond O'Hanlon performed his pranks, because he's claimed as a native of every one of them. Even Homer's birthplace hasn't given rise to half as many disputes as his. But all accounts concur in representing him as a fine, strapping, gentlemanly fellow, and a devoted admirer of the ladies—in deed, it'd be very hard to find the Irishman that isn't—and, moreover, a great friend to the poor; as you'll admit when I tell you that his demands for cash were only made on persons who could well afford to meet them, and that he particularly delighted in forcing contributions from those who had the reputation of being hard and griping to their tinants."

"There was one rich landlord of this class that Redmond never lost an opportunity of taxing—for that was the polite name he gave to his own robberies. Once every quarter, this gentleman or one of his servants—sometimes more than one—used to take a journey of six or seven miles to collect his rints, and, as regular as clockwork, there was Redmond O'Hanlon, with some stout companions, if necessary, to stop the collector, and receive the money from him as he returned home. Every means was taken to elude him, but to no purpose; for Redmond had spies every where, and always received early intelligence of any journeys that were to be undertaken. So one quarter-day, when the gentleman's servants asked him about going after the rints, he swore at O'Hanlon, and said he didn't see the use of collecting money to hand over to him, and that for the future he wouldn't collect it at all, but'd let the tinants have the benefit of it."

"Now, this gentleman had on his estate a boy called 'Jerry the Fool,' who had the run of the house and made fun for the family. Jerry was known to have a very great idea of his own shrewdness; and when he heard what the master said, he immediately asked to be allowed to go after the rints for once, as he said he knew he should be able to bring them safe home. Of course he was only laughed at; but when he represented that, at all events, no harm could come from trying, as he couldn't do worse than those who had gone before him, the master agreed to humor him."

"As soon as Jerry had got permission, he made such preparations as he thought necessary, selected the worse horse he could find in the stable—an old hack, half blind and more than three-quarters lame—and started on his journey. Nothing remarkable occurred as he was going. He collected a considerable sum of money, carefully disposed it about his person, and was quietly jogging home in the evening on the old hack, when, just as he entered a long lane with high hedges on each side, a tall, fine-looking man, on a handsome roan mare, rode up to him."

"God save you, my man!" says the gentleman.

"God save your honor kindly!" replied Jerry.

"What's your name, my man?" says the gentleman.

"Jerry the Fool, and ain't ashamed of it," says he. "What's yours?"

"The gentleman took no notice of this question; and after a little while: 'That's a fine animal you're riding, Jerry,' says he. 'Faith, I'm glad your honor likes it,' says Jerry; 'but it ain't myself that'd care about taking a lease of his life. But, bedad, he'll serve my turn, any way; for I've only been to the village beyond to collect the master's rints.'

"Surely, he hasn't been such a fool as to thrust you with that job?" says the gentleman.

"Arrah, why not?" asked Jerry, in a tone of great surprise.

"Why, don't you know Redmond O'Hanlon's on this road?"

"Redmond O'Hanlon, is it?" says Jerry. "Ugh! That for Redmond O'Hanlon!" says he, snapping his fingers. 'Faix, Jerry the Fool's a match for a dozen of the likes of him any day in the week, and Sunday into the bargain!'

"The stranger laughed, and they rode on in silence till they came to a very lonely part of the lane, when he threw a brace of pistols, and told Jerry to hand over all the money he had about him, or he'd thry if he had any brains by sending a couple of bullets through his head."

"Meala murher! You don't mane to say your honor's Redmond O'Hanlon?" says Jerry.

"I do, indeed," says the gentleman. 'So hand over, my man, and look sharp about it.' 'But, faix, it's kilt entirely by the master! I'll be if I go home without the rints.'

"What's that to me?" says O'Hanlon.

"At all events," says Jerry, "I must bounce that I had a murdering fight for it. Perhaps your honor won't mind firing a shot through my old beaver." O'Hanlon did so. 'And now another through the breast of my coat, and God bless you.' This was fired. 'Now just one in the skirts, and good luck to your honor!'

"But I've discharged both my pistols, and don't want the trouble of loading them again for you."

"Faix, I should dearly like a shot through the skirts," says Jerry; 'it'd show I fought desperate. Are you sure your honor hasn't got another pistol in your pocket that you wouldn't mind firin' for a poor boy's sake?'

"Confound you!" says O'Hanlon, 'to be sure I am. Hand over the money immediately, you spalpeen, or I'll bate you to a jelly with my horsewhip!'

"Well, I suppose," says Jerry, after a good deal of fumbling, 'considering the trouble I've had in getting these rints, your honor won't mind the little bother of going over the hedge after them?' And he threw over a sack apparently well filled with coin.

"Half laughing, half angry, the highwayman—first aiming at Jerry with his horsewhip, which he avoided by ducking—dismounted, and climbed over the hedge; and no sooner had he disappeared, than Jerry slipped off the old hack and mounted O'Hanlon's horse."

"Bad seran to you, Redmond O'Hanlon!" he bawled. 'Didn't I tell you Jerry the Fool was a match for a dozen of yez? It's a sack full of brass buttons you've gone over the hedge after, you thief of the world!'

And touching the roan mare with the spur, he galloped off, singing at the top of his voice the old Irish melody: 'Go to the devil and shake yourself!'

"It would be absurd of O'Hanlon to think of pursuing him on the old hack, and Jerry had taken care to make him discharge his pistols. He could only, therefore, swear a volley of oaths, and walk away, leaving the old hack to find his way home alone. And ever afterward, if you wished to provoke Redmond O'Hanlon, you had only to ask him when was the last time he'd seen Jerry the Fool?"

THE FORGED WILL.

BY DAVID O'CALLANAN.

Jerome Gaythorn was seated at his desk; he held a paper in his hands, which he appeared to read with considerable eagerness. He was an old man, and whatever hair was on his bald head was as white as the driven snow; but his eye was dark and piercing, and his firm chin indicated a vigor of character that there was no mistaking. Opposite him sat his client, watching him anxiously. On his right stood a stout, elderly clerk, looking on, with an expression on his face something like amusement.

"What do you think of it, Mr. Gaythorn?" said the client.

"It seems perfectly fair and accurate," he answered.

"But, Mr. Marly, why did I not hear of this before?"

As the old man spoke he fixed a curious, inquiring glance upon the gentleman who sat opposite.

"My brother left it in his desk," was the reply, "and I only found it there to-day."

"How strange this thing is," said the aged lawyer, "that the eccentric man should have disinherited his own daughter."

"Don't you know the facts?" said Mr. Marly.

"What facts?"

"That his wife was a gay, pleasure-seeking woman, and that he doubted her honor to the last."

"I know nothing of the kind," said the lawyer; "Charles was my client for twenty years, and he never whispered a word against his wife's honor. Why he should have made such a will as this and left his child penniless, I am at a loss to understand."

"But I have spoken to you the truth," replied the other.

"Truth or no truth," said Mr. Gaythorn, "here is the will, and that is the end of it. But how that man got that thought into his head about his wife is to me quite inconceivable; for a truer and better woman I never knew. What do you mean to do for the girl?"

"I will provide for her some way," Mr. Marly replied, with a very benevolent look. "I will get her the post of nursery governess, or something that way; but she has no claim on me, as I do not believe her to be the child of my dear brother."

"Good heavens!" said the old man, "if Eleanor Marly was a false wife, then there is no truth in woman."

"The facts are as I have told you. She was not true to the man who loved her as tenderly as husband ever loved wife."

"Then Providence pity us!" the old man responded. "I am glad I have lived a bachelor. If she was false, I can have no faith in woman evermore. However, leave the will with me, and I shall have it duly registered."

A lady and gentleman were seated on a lounge in an humble room. The girl was fair and bright, with dove-like eyes and fair, curling tresses. The gentleman was tall, vigorous, and manly-looking. They were conversing in low and almost whispered tones, for her head leaned upon his shoulder, and an arm encircled her slender waist.

"I cannot believe it," she said; "father was always so kind and tender to me that I cannot conceive he could be so cruel as to leave me penniless."

"As it is so, love," the gentleman answered, "there is no help for it. With me you shall have home and shelter; and hand in hand we shall face the battle of life together."

"But is it not most unjust," she said, "that in the beginning of your career I should hamper you as a penniless girl?"

"Darling," was the response, "you will be a help to me, not an impediment. Your love shall encourage me to struggle on, and with you by my side I am sure to succeed."

She nestled closer to him, and said: "If you will it, dear, I cannot refuse to be your wife."

How tenderly he embraced her! How passionately the kiss he imprinted on her lips! And so they talked, the moments stealing blissfully away, until at last the gentleman remarked, pointing across the room:

"What a quaint old desk that is on yonder table!"

"It was my father's," she answered. "It is full of letters and papers of little interest; but there is a secret drawer in it which I in vain have tried to open."

"Let me try," he responded; "perhaps the old man secreted something there, Lizzy."

They rose and walked across to the desk. "Perhaps," she said, "you are wise, and will discover the trick of opening it."

He opened the desk and examined it closely, but could find no means of opening the drawer—when suddenly a thought struck him, and he said:

"I have seen something of this kind before; I am positive the spring is under the ink-bottle."

He took the bottle up and pressed his thumb upon a minute brass knob that lay beneath it, when instantly a secret drawer shot out, revealing a folded paper, which he seized at once, opened, and hastily scanned.

"Your inheritance, Lizzy, is safe," he said; "for this is your father's will, duly signed and witnessed. The date shows that the eccentric old man must have written it the day before he was stricken down so suddenly. Put on your bonnet and come at once to Gaythorn's."

The aged lawyer and his client were still in conversation, when the door of his office was suddenly opened, and a lady and gentleman entered, in a somewhat excited manner. The client started to his feet. Old Gaythorn, holding the document in his hand, merely looked round inquiringly and said:

"What is it, Miss Marly? What is it, Mr. Flood?"

"This," said the gentleman, drawing his fair companion forward and putting a paper in the old man's hand. It was eagerly opened and as eagerly read.

"I thought so," Gaythorn exclaimed; "I knew the man could not be so unnatural a father. Mr. Marly, you have committed a forgery. This paper you have given me is worthless, except for your own ruin. Here is the true will of my dead friend. You have attempted to defraud this orphan child. She may punish you if she likes. I will leave you in her hands."

"No," the girl answered, "let him go his way. I will not bring my father's brother to shame and disgrace, deeply as he attempted to wrong me."

"Then, sir, you had better leave," said the old man. Marly seized his hat and shrunk in humiliation from the room.

"I suppose it is all right between you two young people," said Mr. Gaythorn, with a quizzical smile. "You are a lucky fellow, Flood; for she is a good girl—and, too, she has a very pretty property."

"I quite agree with you in your estimate of my good fortune," replied the young man. "I feel happy in the possession of her affection; and, as to the property, I am not hypocrite enough to pretend that it does not add somewhat to my prospective felicity."

We leave our readers to fancy the sequel to this true story. Of course, there was a wedding and all its attendant train of festivities, touring through the honeymoon, and at length settling down comfortably for the remainder of their lives; but whether in a cottage near a wood, or castle on a hill, history saith not; either would answer; so, the sympathizing reader may take his choice.

A ROW BETWEEN A BAPTIST MINISTER AND HIS LANDLORD.—A scuffle between the Rev. Mr. Ashley, pastor of the Baptist Church at Colchester, Conn., and C. B. Holmes, one of his parishioners, occurred a short time since, during which the former had his watch broken, and the latter lost part of his hair and whiskers. The fight was the result of a disagreement about a board bill which Holmes presented to his pastor.

Whenever we find our temper ruffled toward a parent, a wife, a sister, or a brother, we should pause and think that in a few months or years they will be in the spirit land, watching over us; or, perchance, we shall be there, watching over those left behind.