

Complete Story.

## The Alms of Monsieur L'Abbe.

BY JOHN J. A'BECKET.

The Rev. Father Francis, after three years of missionary labour in the lonely wilds of Alaska, had been bidden by his superior to return to civilisation and exploit the needs of the Inuit, those untutored Eskimo for whose good he had been consuming his vital force.

Not infrequently does it befall those who penetrate to the remotest loneliness of this frozen North, with its icy sterility, its achingly silent stretches of tundra, and its goading desolation, to dissipate their reason there. The mind succumbs to the exhausting isolation of the Arctic.

Father Francis returned to more congenial conditions with his mental faculties unimpaired and his heart as hotly jealous to labour for the good of his rude Alaskans by lecturing in the East as he had been to toil for them in their own barren habitat.

One morning, after a very successful lecture the evening before, he was yet more heartened over the financial success of his venture by a postal money-order from France, which he found in his mail. It had been forwarded from Washington, which he had visited some weeks before. It was from Marseilles, whence the good Abbe Francois Xavier Brunel sent to Father Francis the noble donation of thirty-nine hundred francs for the Alaska mission.

Seven hundred and eighty dollars was a pretty windfall. The accompanying letter from the beneficent abbe of the warm South was a most fitting concomitant of such holy prodigality:

"I have read with abundant edification, my reverend father," the letter ran, "of your labours in Alaska. I have been moved to send you my modest alms for the benefit of these helpless sons of the frozen North, esteeming it a privilege to co-operate in so noble a spiritual work, and, despite my unworthiness, to become thereby a participant in its reward."

Certainly a very consoling letter, charming and thoroughly French in style. Gallic asceticism does not eschew academic elegance in its periods. Father Francis smiled at the "modest alms," but this minimizing touch accorded with the magnanimity of a French priest who contributed so goodly a sum to a mission not in charge of French missionaries. Probably this generous abbe was even more open-handed to the missions cultivated by the priestly sons of France.

He sent the order to the postal authorities in Washington, asking them to convert it into one payable at a New York Office. He promptly received in reply an order for thirty-six cents, with a note that the transfer from a foreign to a domestic order involved an expenditure of three cents.

Thirty-six cents!

For a moment Father Francis stared in blank amazement at this ridiculous sum. What could it mean? Of course, there was evidently a grotesque mistake somewhere. But how had they hit on thirty-six cents? Why cents? Why thirty-six? They said they had docked three cents, so they must have read it thirty-nine. Suddenly the good priest burst into a long, hearty laugh. It had dawned on him. The order from the abbe read "trente-neuf cents." Thirty-nine hundred (francs understood, of course). But these delightfully droll people in Washington had read it as "thirty-nine cents," had subtracted three cents and sent him thirty-six.

It was a most amusing misapprehension, but annoying, too. Father Francis looked at the order in this new light and acted as a "devil's advocate," against his own view of it, to see if there could be anything said for their side. A French abbe, especially one in the South of France, would not be likely to even know the English word "cents." But if he had used that word in English he would have put the "trente-neuf" in English, too. Again, had this good abbe intended to send such a feather-weight donation several thousand miles away to the scattered Eskimo of an enormous country like Alaska, he would at least have bought a two-franc money-order, which would have been forty cents.

The more he reasoned it out, the more Father Francis felt convinced that the Washington postal authorities had made a comical blunder. But as it was a misunderstanding that deprived his Inuit of seven hundred and seventy-nine dollars and sixty-one cents, it could hardly be termed slight.

He returned the order to the authorities, setting forth these reasons for declining to accept a version of the abbe's postal-order in such painful accordance with the "modest alms" of that worthy's letter. The order was returned to him unchanged, the post-office people contending that they had read it correctly and adding that the difference in moneys between the two countries made the two-franc piece, or forty cents, in France, shrink to thirty-nine cents in America.

Father Francis shook his head sadly over such perversity, but perceived that he had no choice except to write to the Abbe Brunel and tell him how tangled up his contribution was. He felt that the warm-hearted man would have much simple merriment over the opera-bouffe complication and would promptly write, securing to the Inuit their imperilled hundreds.

In due course, a thin letter floated over the Atlantic. With a smile of anticipation the Alaskan missionary tore it open quickly and read it. The elegant diction of the epistle did not prevent the clearest elucidation of the point at issue. This benefactor of foreign missions, with much fervour and rhetorical affluence, wrote that the world goods at his command were few, but that, happily, the good God regarded very little the sum bestowed in His name, since the intention and spirit of the donor were the precious thing. Hence he (Monsieur l'Abbe), when there were a few francs in the Sunday collection more than usual, was wont to gratify his predilection for foreign missions by sending some measure of such surplus to help plant the cross in remote and unconverted regions of the earth, albeit that his offering, as in this case of Father Francis and Alaska, could be totted up in "sous."

There was not so much oily, sweethearted laughter in the air as the hard-working priest of Alaska mastered the Abbe Brunel's scheme of charities. The theology of the French cleric's position was unassailable. One could not but accord his alms the eulogy due to "the widow's mite." So Father Francis after a light, valetudinary sign to his Inuit's vanished hundreds, rallied quickly, thank to a keen sense of humour of the most supporting quality, and proceeded to diagnose the abbe's alms.

The forty cents which that worthy had consecrated to Alaska, in France, had shrunk to thirty-nine cents in the United States. The conversion of the foreign into a domestic money-order had reduced it to thirty-six cents. Postage on two letters to Washington trimmed this to thirty-two cents. Five cents on the letter to the abbe brought it down to twenty-seven. To take the order into New York from Jersey City, where Father Francis was, meant a five-cent fare to the ferry, a three-cent passage to the Hudson, and another five-cent fare to the post-office. The return trip involved a like disbursement. Total, twenty-six cents, which subtracted from the twenty-seven cents, left the abbe benefactor to the Alaska mission to the extent of one cent.

To have saved the car fare by walking, would have involved an expenditure of time, which, even at Father Francis' modest valuation, was too precious to justify its outlay for such a result.

How to expend the Abbe's cent, so as to do the most good to the mission might prove matter for thought. One way to avoid any mental strain on the subject would be to consider it merged in the ten thousand dollars deriving to the Alaska mission from Father Francis' lectures. But since the alms of the Abbe had formed the subject of an international correspondence, it seemed fitting that one cent's worth of something definite should go to the frozen North as the result of this benevolent contribution from the tropical

South. It preserved its dignity better.

When the time arrived for his return to a living death in the grim cheerlessness of his mission, Father Francis set his face courageously toward the Pole, albeit with the conviction that his next departure from Alaska would be not for the United States but for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Three months after his return, the distribution of prizes took place at the school of the Sisters of Saint Anne at Kozzyrevsky, on the bank of the Yukon, where was the Mission of the Holy Cross. Father Francis was to confer the awards.

The Inuit boys and girls of the school had so faithfully responded to the efforts of the Sisters in their behalf that among the foremost, who were entitled to prizes, there was a difference of only a few marks, four or five having almost attained the absolute maximum of two thousand.

A small boy, Ermonok, was the first winner. Ermonok, a little moon-faced Esquimaux maiden, was the second. Human nature is the same the world over. This diminutive girl-student of the Yukon felt as aggrieved at failing to win the first prize as an aspirant to a "fauteuil" in the French Academy could do over his failure to be selected to the Forty Immortals. Ermonok was bathed in tears of mortified ambition, but little Erlok should have outstripped her in the race.

It is Inuit etiquette in taking a present to turn the back on the donor, thrust out the hand behind and grasp the proffered gift. In more civilised centres the back is not turned on a benefactor till the offering is secured.

Another artless feature exhibited by the small fur-clad prize-winners was to retreat with their right hand, clutching the reward of merit, held straight out from the body.

Father Francis was glad that the primitive etiquette of the Inuit caused the winners to back up for their awards. For although his warm heart pitied poor little Ermonok, heart-broken over her failure to win the first prize, he could not for the life of him prevent his benign lips from relaxing into a smile when he perceived that, with no provision on any one's part of its special fitness, the prize destined for the artlessly weeping little maid was a small red, cotton handkerchief!

The sweet smile on the priest's lips was intensified by the irresistibly comic appearance cut by Ermonok's chunky little figure as she retreated, muffled in her parki, or native tunic, with its flaring hood made of skins of the wild goose.

Hardly had he recovered his normal gentle gravity, when Father Francis descried on one of the back seats another child who proved a yet more potent tax on his sympathy. She was a smaller girl than Ermonok but was fathoms deeper in tearful anguish. He asked the Sister the reason for this little one's tears.

"Poor little Mummylee!" replied the Sister regretfully. "She fell just one mark below the number necessary for a prize. I am afraid the disappointment may discourage her, for she really worked very hard."

Father Francis looked at the diminutive Niobe, watering her blasted hope with fruitless tears. It seemed to him a case where slightly tempered justice would be a worthier virtue than the Spartan rigour of exactly righteous compensation. A thought struck him that brought a twinkle to his soft blue eyes.

"How much does one of those handkerchiefs cost, Sister?" he asked softly.

"Oh, not more than a cent, really. We buy the material and make them ourselves."

One cent! The unapplied alms of the Abbe Brunel came like a flash to Father Francis' mind.

"Get me one, Sister. I will give you the cent for it," he said with decision.

Then he told the children that, thanks to a kind benefactor of the mission, far, far away in a land where it was always sunshine, and by a sea that was blue and smiling, an extra prize was to be bestowed on this occasion, and that it would be awarded to Mummylee for her exceptionally good record in behaviour and scholarship.

When it was brought home to Mummylee's shattered mind that after all she was to receive a prize, her disk of tear-washed countenance was brighter

from beaming happiness than from its exotic ebullience. With a tread as light as air, which approved her name of Mummylee, "pretty Dancer," she tripped forward breathlessly, backed up for her prize and proudly retreated with the "Abbe Brunel Special Reward" fluttering from her tiny brown hand, like the banner of a triumphant procession of the Commune.

"I am not sure," Father Francis thought; still with the humorous twinkle in his clear eye and a pathetic smile playing on his lips, "that it would be good to have it known how long an arm so small an alms can have. There might be a depressing excess of nickel contributions to the foreign missions."

## A GISBORNE GENTLE- MAN'S GRATITUDE TO BILE BEANS.

HEARTBURN AND INDIGESTION,  
A COMPLETE CURE.

"Sour stomach," or heartburn, is the name for acid dyspepsia, and because it is a common every-day trouble with many people they have come to look upon it as of little consequence, not knowing that it affects the general health. Nevertheless, the most serious diseases have their beginning from this very condition. It is caused in the first place by weakness of the stomach, which, instead of promptly digesting and disposing of the food, allows it to lie on the stomach for hours fermenting, causing gas, sour pendency, dullness, etc. This condition of the stomach cannot continue very long without deranging the nervous system, the heart, the kidneys, liver or lungs. Whichever is weakest will break down first. The blood becomes thin and impure, and circulation poor, simply because it is replenished from this mass of fermenting half digested food. It was heartburn that Mr Thomas, of Gisborne, N.Z., suffered from, together with indigestion, and his letter dated 10th February, 1900, gives convincing evidence of the value of Bile Beans for Biliousness. Mr Thomas says:—"For many years past I have suffered very much from indigestion and heartburn, and have tried nearly all the patent medicines before the public purporting to cure such like complaints. I never found any of them approach the efficacy of Bile Beans. I might state that since I was recommended to take your medicine I have been completely cured of heartburn and indigestion. I strongly recommend people suffering from those complaints to try them without delay, as I feel positive they will never regret it. I am a painter by occupation, and a resident of Gisborne, N.Z., of twenty-two years' standing."

Bile Beans act on the bowels in a gentle, natural way, and the patient is not weakened in any manner by the process. The enormous success of this preparation the world over is the best possible proof of its great worth. Millions use Bile Beans annually, and thousands say they are an undoubted specific for biliousness, indigestion, constipation, bad blood, pimples, piles, costiveness, and for a general toning up of the system. Obtainable at all chemist and storekeepers, 13½ per box, or direct from the Australian depot, Bile Beans Manufacturing Co., 39, Pitt-st., Sydney, on receipt of price.

SEASON 1899-1900.

INVITATION CIRCULARS  
"AT HOME" CARDS  
BALL PROGRAMMES  
WEDDING CARDS AND INVITES  
CONCERT AND OTHER TICKETS  
PROGRAMMES ON PAPER  
FANCY PAPER  
CALLING CARDS

ALL THE LATEST STYLES.

MANAGER, "GRAPHIC" OFFICE.

DRAPERS, GROCERS, and others are notified that we are specialists in the printing of Counter Books, Handbills and Price Lists. When ordering remember the "STAR" PRINTING WORKS.

IN MEMORIAM CARDS—These are the Latest Styles, and in great variety to be had at the "STAR" PRINTING WORKS.