months, but was still unhappy. Finally he went to Rome, where so many wretched of the human race have gone for peace. While there he attended a course of Lenten sermons and became a convert. He was rich, and had nothing to occupy his time, and concluded to study medicine. He went to Paris, entered a medical school there, and surprised his professors by His wonderful advancement. His only object in life now was to become an expert in diseases of the brain. When he graduated the faculty predicted for him a brilliant future. He practiced a few years in Paris, and then returned to America to take charge of all the cases of brain trouble in the asylum to which Ethel had recently been taken.

Passing through the public wards a few days after he had entered upon his duties, his attention was drawn to the sweet but pitifully thin features of a young woman patient. Where had he seen that face before? He was strangely moved. Sad memories crowded upon him, amongst them a dread suspicion that almost caused his heart to stop beating. 'How foolish! It is not possible,' he murmured. But his inquiries brought a prompt confirmation of his fears. It was indeed Ethel Blandford. For eight years, they told him, had she been afflicted, and her case seemed hopeless. What a change. But his was 'the love that never dies.' In his eyes she was the beautiful Ethel of former years, and he made a vow to devote his skill to the apparently hopeless task of restoring her reason.

He did not try to make himself known to her, although he asked her many questions, that he might determine whether or not there was any hope that reason would again resume its throne within her mind. At first there was scarcely a gleam of hope, but within a few weeks he concluded that there was one chance in a thousand of her recovering. She was removed to a private room and received special attention. After a long battle skill and love triumphed, and, to the surprise of even Dr. Marshall, she recognised him and asked him to see her home. Within another month she was pronounced permanently cured, and the old priest was asked to come for her.

The following Christmas a sealed envelope was handed to Ethel. It was from New York, and contained, fastened to a white sheet of paper, the leaf of oak geranium that she had given Frank Marshall years before. The return mail took to him the feathery fragments of a half-blown rose.—'Catholic Standard and Times.'

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Herbert Durant was lonely, although it was Christmas Eve and the street in front of his luxurious home was filled with evidences of joyousness. As he sat in his study, an unopened book on his lap, there came to his ears a faint echo of the hustle and bustle of the merry crowd passing with loads of good things for the great feast. He could not read. In spite of himself, his thoughts went back several decades to his childhood, when his good Catholic parents notwithstanding their poverty, were so busy preparing to celebrate the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem. In imagination he saw the forms of those who gave him life and laid the foundation of his future success.

'Were it not,' he said to himself, 'for the thoughts that, unwelcome, come from days long passed, I would say the street is filled with silly fools, who endure the discomfort of crowded stores and the cold for an absurd idea. Why this waste of time and money to celebrate a certain day? One day is as good as another, unless there is a decline in stocks. And yet so many make a fuss, that is the right word, over Christmas. 'It has no place in the calendar of sciences, and is only the invention of designing monks. It is true I was taught to reverence the day, but a few years at college dispelled the illusion my poor old parents created for me. Christmas, like Santa Claus, could not stand the light of reason, and when I was, a man it disappeared just as effectually as old Santa did with the coming of long breeches. Still, I am sad to-night, and feel that disaster of some kind is not far off. The house lacks something money cannot purchase. I am lonely.—It may be that I made a mistake when I gave up Clara because her father's fortune went with so many others on that Black Friday. I was then only beginning my financial career, and, of course, could not form an alliance with the daughter of a bankrupt. Money came, but not happiness.'

The soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of the butler, carrying a silver tray, on which was a visiting card.

'James,' said the master, as he took the card, 'I am not at home to-night.'

The butler bowed, and was about to leave the room when he was told to remain. Mr. Durant examined the card, and was surprised to see that it contained the name of George Deberg, one of the leaders of the Stock Exchange.

'Show the gentleman into the reception room,' he ordered; 'and tell him I will join him within a few minutes.'

'Deberg,' murmured Durant, has repulsed all my advances, and seemed determined to know me only as a broker. I tried to cultivate him, or rather become acquainted with him socially, for he is worth knowing, but failed. What has brought him here to-night, of all others? Certainly not business, for no man would invade a private home on Christmas Eve to talk business. Well, I shall see him and solve the riddle.'

Durant greeted his visitor cordially, while trying to conceal his surprise at seeing him.

'I am indeed happy,' he said, 'to see you at last in my house. An old bachelor is lonely at this season.'

Mr. Deberg took the extended hand rather coolly, saying: 'I imagine that some bachelors enjoy their lonely lives when they have such inviting homes which they insist upon retaining for their sole and exclusive use.'

'You forget, my friend, that a lonely life is a necessity with some of us. Not every one can secure a partner for the journey of life. We should have the sympathy, not the censure, of those who, like yourself, have won prizes.'

Deberg looked straight at his host as he replied, and there was a suggestion of contempt in his tone: 'Some men secure money by reprehensible methods; others win the love of noble women only to abandon them when fortune takes wing. But few find no response to their love. To which class do you belong?'

Had the winter's sky reverberated with peals of thunder, Durant would not have been more surprised, and he remained silent while his companion continued:

'I see that you do not wish to be placed in either of these classes, but do not forget that we are not estimated so much by our words as we are by our lives.'

Durant had at last obtained control of his emotions, and replied with the indifferent air he so often assumed in Wall street.:

'I suppose I must be placed in the third class, among the few whose love stirs no responsive chord in the heart of the loved. So I should have your sympathy, should I not?'

'Certainly you should, and I sympathise with you so much that I shall withdraw the curtain that you may see pictures of the past. 'It may enable you to enter with a proper spirit on the celebration of Christmas. First, we see the picture of a noble youth, faithful to all his duties as a son and Christian. Then we have the gay young man who has forgotten his old parents and his religion. Next the successful man of business, who, after winning the love of a noble girl, forgets his words of affection as soon as her father's fortune vanishes. Do you care to study these pictures? I have not come here to find fault with you, but to point out your mistake, that I may help you, help you undo, as far as possible, a great wrong. You have not forgotten Clara Walsh. She is dying, and has expressed a wish to see you before she is separated from you by the river we cross but once. Will you go with me to see her?'

At the mention of a name he had not heard spoken for twenty years the color left Durant's face. He had tried to forget, and thought he had succeeded. Yet the tidings that she was dying made his heart beat more quickly than it had for a score of years. When his astonishment gave place to sober judgment, he said in a sad voice:

'Then she is still living? I thought, as I had not heard from her for years, that she was dead.'

'Yes, she is living, but the physicians say there is no hope for her. She is at my house, and has been governess for my children and companion to my wife since the death of her poor father. Will you come to her?'

Durant forgot that he was the stoic, who no longer believed life could bestow happiness, or that there was any use in seeking it unless it could be found in the acquisition of money. In an instant he recalled the days he had spent in the company of Clara Walsh, and he again felt that it would be a joy to see her, though on her death-bed.

'I will go,' he said, 'at the risk of opening old wounds in her heart and in mine.'

(To be concluded next week.)