

ments lay across one of the stools. A bare place indeed to welcome the coming of the Child of Bethlehem, the Life-Bringer—as bare as was the manger which held His tiny form!

Father Maurice, the missionary, awaited his penitents in the inner room. They came out of it a little shamefaced; some of them. His own countenance was overcast, saddened. When all the confessions had been heard the priest emerged and proceeded to don his vestments. He turned—a splendid figure, his ascetic features, once, indeed, strikingly handsome, now worn by sleepless nights and fatiguing days. He gazed silently at the forty or fifty souls kneeling before him. Faulty, impulsive, headstrong, passionate, but still his people, through the bond of faith uniting him and them.

'My brethren,' he said, in a low, tired voice, 'before beginning Mass in honor of Him who brought peace upon this earth, I want you, each of you, to search your souls. Oh, try, at least try, to welcome Him with some faint reflection of that joy that was Mary's and Joseph's. Children of the Peace-Bringer, how have you set out this day to welcome Him who brings you peace?'

He turned to the altar, Barney Delaney, who served him, beside him. There were many there to whom the words seemed as so many darts of flame. *Introubo ad altare Dei*, he began, as the cabin door swung inward, and two figures, swathed in furs and great coat, entered, kneeling at the farthest extremity of the room. The Mass proceeded. No music, no burst of choral ecstasy, no pomp, no ceremony—nothing to denote the majesty of the Guest about to visit them. At the communion all but the two late comers presented themselves to receive.

The Mass was over, the prayers said, the candles extinguished. The man and woman arose and advanced somewhat hurriedly toward the priest. He looked up with surprise into Michael Jordan's face, listened to him a moment, and then nodded in assent. Michael Jordan turned toward the men, who stared at him wonderingly, and his keen eyes surveyed them.

'I am old Mr. Michael's son,' he said abruptly. 'I have not been here in eight years—fully that. By happy chance I have escaped the hands of those who would injure me. I have never injured you, and you hold in your memory a grievance I deplore. To-night my sister told me a sad and pitiful story. I don't know how you have been hurt by my father; but none has suffered more than Barney Delaney. I ask you, Barney Delaney,' he turned to him, 'to forgive me and mine any injury we have done you. I am not defending my father, nor am I criticising him. He has been a good father, a good man—I respect and revere him. You love the mountains—you are sons and daughters of the mountains; you would stifle in the cities. There is that much difference between his belief and yours as lies between mountain and city. But you must know that not all the Jordans are bitter against that which they do not comprehend.'

He held out his hand. Not for an instant did Barney Delaney hesitate. It was a glorious chance to put into practice the lesson Father Maurice had just preached—the lesson of love and humility. He placed his toil-worn fingers in those shapely brown ones and their eyes met. A murmur went through the room. Father Maurice, stood by, glad with a great gladness. He knew that now he need dread no further act of violence, for these men respected bravery, and old Mr. Michael's son had shown himself a brave man indeed.

'Is there no one—not one—to follow Delaney's example?' he asked.

Again the murmur and again the stir, then one sturdy fellow after the other advanced toward Michael Jordan. He shook hands with all, and wished each in turn a merry Christmas.

'Father,' said the young man, when the cabin began to empty, 'I don't know what I believe or why I believe it, only I am certain of one thing—that the Child of Bethlehem came down this night into your hands.' He hesitated. 'I'm not sentimentally inclined, my sister can vouch for that, but I would like to do something to show my gratitude for one resolution that I have been enabled to make—to look into the claims of the Catholic faith, and if I can accept them; to ask it to accept me.'

'I will leave that to Barney Delaney here,' said Father Maurice with a smile; 'it is not my doing. Under God, it is Barney Delaney's.'

'No,' said Barney huskily, 'tis a sign from heaven; 'tis a sign that God forgives me the black heart I had when Noreen died; 'tis a sign that I can go to my darling with clean hands—'

His voice broke. He turned aside. And now Helen Jordan looked at the priest with shining eyes.

'Perhaps it is a sign,' she said; 'a sign I have been praying for. I have not been satisfied to come to God alone—I wanted a companion. He will come, too, this

brother of mine; he will come. And before we go—your blessing, Father?'

The following Christmas eve old Mr. Michael's son travelled that way again. Erected close by the cabin in the valley was a pretty little chapel—his gift as a memorial of Nora Delaney. He and his sister Helen were baptised, and received the body and blood of the Child of Bethlehem at the midnight Mass. And the next day he was united to the gentle woman he loved, before the altar which faith had raised, their union sanctified by the blessing of the Church, in the presence of all the children of the Church in that region.

Was it their prayer which brought about the miracle—or the prayers of the new-made wife—or the prayers of the son and daughter—or of the priest—or of Barney Delaney? Rather, let us be content to think with Father Maurice that it was through the prayers of Nora Delaney herself, bright spirit, that the seeming impossible took place.

For old Mr. Michael himself knelt in the first pew.—*Benziger's Magazine.*

THE VOICE OF FAITH

Pere Julien glanced thoughtfully over his congregation; every one was present, from Raoul Debalon, his next-door neighbor, to Pierre Rouge and his parents, whose rice farm was fully three miles across the prairie. The bright weather had brought them all out, some on foot, some in rude carts and dilapidated buggies; others on little wild creole ponies, for which the countryside is famous. Mere Guimauve, in her flowing sacque and snowy sun-bonnet, dozed peacefully in her place; Brigitte, little Jean's pretty wife, was hushing her baby softly, and Pierre Lasson, with his head on his hand, stared between his fingers at Joyeuse, the blacksmith's daughter, who affected not to see him.

The priest's glance rested on them tenderly. He loved them all; they were very dear to him. He knew their weaknesses (for they were but human), but he also knew their underlying goodness and worth.

'My children,' he said, 'it distresses me very much to tell you that unless something can be done, unless the money can be raised to pay the 200-dollar mortgage on our church, we shall have to appeal to outside assistance. Now, it has always been our pride to be self-supporting, and it hurts me that at this late hour we need ask for help, readily as it will be given. How much better if we can bear our burdens alone.'

A ripple went over the congregation. Adolph Rimon, the richest man in Fosseville, stared ostentatiously through the window, determined not to have it thought that the demand was especially directed to him, and Madame Guimauve, stricken with sudden fear, clutched nervously at the handkerchief that held her little savings.

'Now, my friends,' continued the priest, aware of their uneasiness, 'I do not mean to ask you to give anything more; you have been very liberal, and I am not one to ride the willing horse to death, but we must have the money before next month. The man who holds the note has said it. Therefore, I propose to choose Sunday week as a day of special prayer. I shall set it apart for that purpose. The good Lord, who knows our needs, will not fail us. If we ask with faith it will be given unto us.'

The congregation slowly dispersed. They were simple people with an abiding faith in the efficacy of prayer, but hitherto they had asked for other things, for rain, for bright weather, for the recovery of a sick person, never for actual money. With all their confidence in Pere Julien they felt a little doubtful as to the result of his appeal.

Hiram Granger, the big oil man whose wells and derricks lay to the west of Fosseville, had strayed into the church that morning, and his expression during Pere Julien's address would have interested a student of human nature. Wonder, contempt, admiration in turn swept across his face. That any sane person could believe as the priest did puzzled him greatly. He looked from the pastor to the people, and in some of the sun-browned, listening faces saw the same faith reflected that illumined Pere Julien's countenance, but on others he read the doubt that had full possession of his own soul.

When he stepped out into the sunlight he found himself thinking of the little white church on the hillside where he had worshipped as a boy. He saw again the grey-haired preacher, the handful of earnest followers. He saw his mother, hollow-cheeked and thin; his father, worn with much toil. Yet they had been happy, these two; they had loved each other and found contentment amidst surroundings cruelly hard to the man remembering. But, after all, they had known happiness. Money, the loadstone of the present generation; had not been so all-powerful then, and perhaps—