

famous scenes from notable novels, wherein much was made of the Catholic ritual of the sick room.

All speculation ended with his reception into the household of the faith. Seth Morton was not given to explanations about his conduct, and no one asked for them on this occasion—not even Monsignor, who knew that the story would come out in good time. And it did, one moonlight night the next summer, as they sat gazing upon the silvery surface of the bay after dinner. In some way Seth had begun to talk of his recent illness, and this was his account of the path which his soul had travelled.

‘What I suffered then and later only God, Who has made us capable of suffering, could tell. The details would fill a volume, and be of interest only to men who escaped death like myself. I never believed until then that one man could suffer so much, and often I asked myself, why should there be suffering so bitter and long without relief? After a while two things disgusted me: that which bred suffering. I knew you called it sin, which is the parent of death; but at that time I just cursed the thing. The other was the foolishness of the orators and mouthers who compare sickness and death to the decay of the leaves and the falling of the flowers. I cursed these people also, for I was once their partisan. I really believed once that sickness and death were as meaningless as autumn’s decay. How men can fool themselves with words!

‘When I was able to get about again I saw the reality of life, and fearful reality of death. I knew that I must pass through the same experience again, and in my dread I began to look about for protection and strength. I saw your care of the sick. Did you know that I watched you? There was another thought in my mind at the time. When health returned, my sickness looked like a wretched dream. It began to fade from my mind and heart. I watched you and your sick with a double purpose: to see what you did to strengthen them, and to make sure that the terrors of my sickness were proper to every man, not merely peculiar to me, not merely a dream.

‘I learned that each human being actually walked through that black tunnel which all but engulfed me. I sat through Joe Richard’s dying, you remember? He looked as indifferent as a child, and he said nothing, but to me he told the story of his dying—my own story of shame, humiliation, pain, and darkness. But with a difference. Where I fell desolate, he found courage, resignation, patience; where I sank in the darkness, he saw light of some kind which brought him peace, often a smile to his face. I saw on him the effect of the Last Sacraments. Joe became another man, consoled his wife, and looked at his children without anguish, as if the parting were to be for a little while. He made me think of a sturdy sea-captain setting out to sea, amid the wailing of the women, quite sure of his successful return.

‘Then I read your ritual, and the prayers of the Church for her dying children brought back all that I had suffered. The words had a meaning for me which they could not have for a healthy person. I felt that wonderful compassion, and still more wonderful understanding, which she feels and has for the agonising. She alone understands what it means to sicken and die, and she alone has the power to soothe and sustain in the last hour. She does things. Do you recall, Monsignor, your story of the colored man in the hospital?

‘He saw the priest administering Extreme Unction to Catholic patients, and he asked the priest to do as much for him. The priest undertook a brief examination of his previous convictions and present condition, which to the sufferer seemed too long. ‘Parson, excuse me,’ said he, ‘but I belong to a religion which done more talking than the auctioneers. Is you giving me the same talk game? I’ve had enough o’ talk. Now I want somethin’ done for me. Jest like what you done for that fellow over there.’ The doctors talked to me, the nurses talked, my friends talked, you yourself talked—all assuring me that my cure was only a question of time. You remember how I took the game of talk!’

Monsignor smiled and waved his hand. Seth fell silent for a minute.

‘Anyway, I settled a few questions for myself,’ he continued. ‘The chatter about falling leaves and fading roses is the meanest chatter going, in relation to sickness and death. Every man in dying suffers a mysterious and complex anguish, for which there is no name adequate; for which there is no ointment, except Extreme Unction. Strange that the bombastic can get away with that stuff every time, in a world which has a good number of invalids, who must laugh right out in meeting at the comparison. Beautiful the Church is to me in everything now, but most beautiful in that single point: her care of the sick and the dying. In a world so harsh to helplessness, and to what it can not understand, her tender service to the dying is enough to prove her divinity. And to think, Monsignor, that all this came to me through your figure of the little door!’
—*Ave Maria.*

WEDDING BELLS

MOYE—CONRICK.

A very quiet wedding took place at St. Anne’s Church, Wellington South, on February 18, when Mr. John P. Moyer, eldest son of Mr. Thomas Moyer, of Totara, Ross, was united in the bonds of Matrimony to Miss Kate Conrick, daughter of the late Mr. John Conrick, of Wellington. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Father Walshe, Lower Hutt, a very old friend of the family. The newly-married couple were born on the West Coast of the South Island, and are well known there. They received numerous messages of congratulation from all parts of the Dominion. The bridegroom was for many years a well-known resident of Denniston, and a prominent member of the Hibernian Society. The presents were numerous and valuable, including a dinner service from the Very Rev. Dean Regnault, of St. Mary of the Angels’, Boulcott street, where the bride had been housekeeper for many years. Their future home will be in Wellington.

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