

him of life, and strip him before he is cold. I do not care, gentlemen, to exhaust too much of your attention by following this subject through the last century with much minuteness; but the facts are too recent in your minds not to show you that the liberty of the press and the liberty of the people sink and rise together; that the liberty of speaking and the liberty of acting have shared exactly the same fate. You must have observed in England that their fate

has been the same in the successive vicissitudes of their late depression; and sorry I am to add that this country has exhibited a melancholy proof of their inseparable destiny, through the various and fitful stages of deterioration, down to the period of their final extinction, when the constitution has given place to the sword, and the only printer in Ireland who dares to speak for the people is now in the dock.

protect me. She had every confidence, mother had, that while she prayed no harm could come to me."

He wrinkled his brows thoughtfully and looked off at the sea. Sunlight glanced on it; here and there under the urge of the wind tiny wavelets changed to a featured foam, shone silver for a moment, then turned again to blue. Blue at the coast and a blue-black off at sea. The sick man looked at it with pleasure.

He had always been loyal to the sea. He loved blue water as St. Francis would have loved it had he not lived instead among the birds and trees and flowers of Assisi. Born on the Atlantic seaboard he had spent his carefree youth near the tonic waters. And now his friends had brought him from the germ-infested interior here to the coast as a last despairing recourse.

Somewhere on that magnificent tinted sea the Admiral Nelson was ploughing her way bringing his mother to Calcutta—and heart-break. The lean fingers contracted and clutched the coverlet. "Oh, Fathers," he whispered, "Mary's got to hurry; . . . if she intends to save."

Neither of the two dared look at the other. One fumbled at the tent-drawings and stole out on tip-toe. The other followed him.

Through the long night they debated, pondering how to avert the tragedy surely coming in a brief few days when mother and son should meet. Expedients proposed by one were rebutted by the other. The fantastic nature of the means proposed showed the utter hopelessness of the case. They fell silent after awhile and each knew that the other was praying.

The restless days that followed brought no enlightenment. Incessant fretting and plotting left them without a sane solution. More and more frequently the sick man turned his brooding eyes inquiringly on them, and, sick with the sense of their own helplessness, they ignored the mute question.

Came then at last the evening of the fateful fifteenth.

The wind from the sea died down at evening and in the still, oppressive heat of the smothering night they lay awake, weakened by the heat, too dispirited even to talk. In the stillness they could hear the rustling of sheets as the leper turned and tossed in a sleep which was only a fiction of rest.

Dawn found them up and waiting. Pains-takingly they made the pitifully inadequate preparations which were possible. They washed the wasted form and the leper suffered the torture without protest. In a last futile gesture they brushed the wrinkles from his covering and folded it neatly about him.

After it all they stood back and appraised their handiwork. The leper looked at them, an anxious question in his eyes. As they surveyed him their hearts sank. The shrunken, twisted limbs were concealed but the immaculate linen of the pillow slip was no whiter than the mask of a face which it framed. Except for the wistful staring eyes the face was the face of one who had been dead for days.

But it was their best and, praying, they left him so.

A Complete Story

MARY'S ANSWER

The leper stirred in his sleep and moaned. The brief, distressed movement gave better play to the strong light that sifted through the canvas roofing above him. It revealed a face marked with brown patches, thinly bordered with white, a characteristic mark of the victim's malady. Lank, lustreless hair sprawled in untidy fringes over the blank white forehead. Lying passively on the coverlet were hands swollen at the joints into discolored modules. The slack-lipped face of the sick man was disfigured into the strange leonine character which is one of leprosy's fantastic touches. "The first-born of death," Job had named leprosy, and the sick man had progressed far on the road to death's reality.

The face of the stricken sleeper contorted and he groaned again in a weedy, broken voice. The two men who stood above the bed looked at each other. The tall dark man nodded to his companion. "Better wake him," he advised, "he's having bad dreams."

The other thrust his hand under the crude cheese-cloth screening and dropped his hand forcefully on the sick man's shoulder. The sleeper stiffened convulsively and gasped; then, as he recognised the anxious faces, he smiled sheepishly. He stretched his arms to their gaunt full length and painfully raised himself on his elbow.

The tall man smiled down at him. "Another nightmare," he accused. "What was it this time?"

The face of the sick man darkened to a troubled frown. "Oh, Father," he said wearily, "you know." His perplexed eyes studied the two friendly faces. "While you were over at the island," he said slowly, "Joe brought me a letter. It was from home—it was from my mother."

He lowered his head for some minutes and studied the pattern of the coverlet. When he looked up again his eyes were misted. "My mother insists on coming to see me," he whispered. "She says she has already bought tickets to New York. Dear God, what shall we do!"

The two men at the bedside looked at each other in mute distress. They loved life, these two, yet either would gladly have given up his robust vigorous health to lay down in the leper's bed of pain to spare that frail, gentle lady, the leper's mother, whose bowed shoulders could never bear the weight of this cross.

"The pity of it! He was the youngest of the three priests, appointed to the infant St. Gabriel's Mission in the Sudan, and in

the full tide of his vibrant, eager young life he had been struck down. So patient the dangerous effort to keep the awful intelligence from the anxious, questioning mother in far-off America, so brave the cheerful equivocating letters he had sent home, and after all . . . failure.

The sick priest toyed with the envelope. "You know," he said, and his voice was so low they had to stoop to hear him, "mother always had a half-morbid fear of sickness. I can see her now, her forehead wrinkled with distress, tying up the little cuts and bruises I got as a child. Even things like that worried her. When she knew I was coming to Africa her chief worry was about my health. She warned me a thousand times to beware of malaria. If she saw me like this—the low voice broke—"it would kill her."

The leper looked steadily into the compassionate faces. The wistful look in the half-blind eyes penetrated the helplessness their faces betrayed.

The tall priest broke from the look. His wavering glance roved about the stark canvas walls, scanty insufficient walls, reinforced with sheets, a discarded cassock and articles of personal wear to shut out the cold, damp winds which stole in at night from the sea.

For the hundredth time the tall priest wondered at the display suspended about the room. Everywhere about the room, either pinned to the walls or hung from the fantastic wainscotting, were pictures of the Madonna. All the exquisite conceptions of Middle Ages' genius were there, cheap prints but well copied and framed. There was Raphael's Madonna and the Madonna of his gifted pupil. There was the tender imagination of the spiritual Da Vinci and the bolder thought of Michael Angelo, and others, many others. Why? He wondered.

The sick man caught his wondering glance and answered it, nodding at the pictures.

"My mother always had an extraordinary devotion to Mary," he said. "She was a convert and attributed her grace of faith to Mary. She told me that before I was born she had my name selected. She was going to call me Mary Bernadette."

He smiled whimsically, a broad boyish smile which wholly redeemed the ugliness of the misshapen face. "Poor mother, I disappointed her. There was never a Mary in our family and only one boy, only myself. When I left she promised that every night she would pray to the Blessed Virgin to

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