
These Two Hearts

A STORY OF BROTHER COLUMBA O'NEILL, C.S.C.



By
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Imprimi potest

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Provincial

Nihil obstat

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BROTHER COLUMBA O'NEILL, C.S.C.
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BROTHER ERNEST RYAN, C.S.C.

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CHAPTER I

DARKNESS was closing in. On either side of the tracks where the mining-cottages huddled, as if to keep each other warm, little yellow lights began to flicker here and there through coal-dust covered windows. They threw sickly shadows on heaps of blue-black snow.

Winter had come early to Mackeysburg, Pennsylvania, in the year 1848. Already, and it was only the fourth of November, the ground had been covered with snow for more than a week. But snow in a mining town means one thing to the settlers—more dirt. Almost as the flakes fell they were blackened with smoke and the coal-dust that grinds its way into everything.

A stranger strolling down the tracks would have difficulty in distinguishing one little cottage from another in ordinary daylight, but to the village doctor in those days, each one was distinct even in the gathering gloom.

At the moment, and in spite of the early cold, several people were making their way hurriedly, their collars drawn high against the wind.

One little knot was quite unusual. It consisted of a tall, elderly man, bundled well against the cold, carrying a black satchel, and accompanied by two rather small children. They walked along quietly.

Suddenly a voice broke the gloomy silence.

THESE TWO HEARTS

"Hello, Doctor! Don't tell me someone's sick in the village this evening."

The tall man with the two children jerked up his head, a head which had been too heavy with thought to hold up to the weather.

"Hello, George," he cried as he recognized the man who had called to him. "Well, yes," he continued, slowly; "but nothing too serious. Another baby coming for the O'Neills."

With that the doctor drew his head into the warmth of his muffler and trudged on. Not another word came from the other man. Such things as weddings, births and deaths were taken for granted in the humdrum of a mining town.

"Here's our house, Doctor," said one of the O'Neill children in a thin treble.

"Yes, dear, I know," replied the doctor, without lifting his eyes from the ground.

A coaloil lamp on a stand in a front window cast a sickly glare in and out of the little cottage. The lamp had been put there to welcome the doctor. It served to emphasize, in a way, the grime on the outside and the cheerful cleanliness on the inside.

"Come right in, Doctor," greeted Michael O'Neill. "We are waiting for you. Thank God you were free to come."

"You're not worrying, my son," crooned the doctor, placing his satchel on the table, and removing his muffler and overcoat.

"No, Doctor. God has always been good to us."

An hour later the four O'Neill children were gazing star-eyed at their new little brother from his bundle of warm blankets.

At the door of the cottage the doctor was talking earnestly to Michael O'Neill.

"I didn't tell Ellen about it, but the little fellow has club-feet. You can tell her later, if you want to; but she'll find it out soon enough. There's nothing we can do about it."

THESE TWO HEARTS

The doctor was trying his best to break the news as gently as possible. He hated to cast a shadow on the sunny scene, but he felt he was doing nothing but his duty.

"I'll come again in the morning, Mike. Ellen is doing well."

With that the doctor stepped out into the dark of a November night. No electric lights, not even the moon cast gentle light for his feet.

Mike O'Neill stood a long moment in deep thought. A clubfooted child. He had seen but one in his life. He glanced up for a moment to where the picture of the Sacred Heart looked down from its place of honor on the parlor wall. He would let nature take its course. God knew what was best.

Two days later everything was back to normal in the little cottage. Michael O'Neill was swinging his pick into the black bowels of the earth hundreds of feet below the ground. But he was anxious for the day to be over. It was his first day at work since the little boy had arrived, and the first that the baby's care had fallen entirely upon its mother. No doubt by now she had discovered those odd-looking little feet that had troubled Mike for the past two days. What would she think? What would she say?

Michael O'Neill hurried home that night.

"I have a name for the little man," the mother crooned as her husband entered her room.

"Already?"

"We'll call him John."

"John. After whom?"

"The Beloved Disciple: because . . ."

There was a tear in her eye as she looked up.

"Because I'll love him *more* than the others."

"Then you . . . you . . . know?"

"Yes, Michael: I know."

CHAPTER II

CHUBBY John O'Neill found it very difficult to learn to walk. Mother spent hours with him every day until another little O'Neill arrived, and then the older children helped him.

"Slow, slow," they called to him as they placed him on his feet against the wall, and then stood a few paces away with arms outstretched toward him.

Already it was evident in the attitude of the children that they had captured some of their mother's special affection for the little crippled brother.

"Slow, slow," he would gurgle at them, make a desperate effort, and fall to the floor. But he would not stay there. Little John would back up, place his hands on the wall, and force himself upon his feet.

It was a long and trying ordeal, but the day came when John O'Neill could walk. Under his mother's careful guidance he developed a gait, that, considering everything, was fairly graceful.

It is too much to say that John O'Neill did not mind his awkward walk. He did mind it just as any other child of his age would have done. He minded it especially when several of the boys got together to play their games, or to go on long hikes for berries and hickory-nuts. He minded it,

THESE TWO HEARTS

too, when he could not keep up with the boys and their dogs when they went rabbit hunting.

"Will I ever be able to go fast like the other fellows, Mother?"

"You might beat them all yet, my son. So many, many things can happen."

She was silent for a moment, with that long, long look she so often had in her blue eyes.

"John, dear, there are so many ways of being ahead. I wouldn't worry, if I were you."

She was careful always not to discourage him. She knew he was different from the other children; at least he seemed much more thoughtful than they.

But John did learn to run. He learned to do many things that normal boys do, though he did retain his more thoughtful disposition.

At school he was quiet, worked hard on his lessons, such as were taught under trying mining town conditions; but for some time now he had felt he should be at work to help support the family. More than once he had broached the subject to his mother, but she had told him to be patient.

"There are many years ahead. You will only be a boy once in your life. We can get along at present."

One day when his father seemed more tired than usual after his long hours in the pit, John sat on a bench beside him.

"Don't you think I could get a job with you in the mine, Dad?"

There was a moment of tense silence. Most miners seriously object to their sons taking up the work.

"If there were anything else for you to do, John, I'd refuse; but I know there isn't. I'll see the boss and he might be able to get you something to do, at least during vacation."

And so, a few days later, John went along with his father down into the mines, into those long, dark, damp, stuffy tun-

THESE TWO HEARTS

nels that seemed to lead everywhere. He was a really frightened John O'Neill, but he had to hide his fear. There were many other boys of his age down there, some even younger than he. It would not do to let them see that he was afraid. He had enough handicaps as it was.

When they finally reached their level, John was separated from his father and sent with other boys to sort shale from the coal. It was hard, heavy work. There was no time for idling around either. Good American pennies were not given to those who did not earn them.

At the end of that first day John's fingers were so sore he could scarcely touch anything without pain. He tried his best to conceal his feeling, especially from his mother who had worried about him all that day. But scarcely was the frugal evening meal over before the lad fell sound asleep, exhausted.

"Carry him to bed, Mike. He won't even wake up when you handle him."

"I was the same way the first day I went into the mines. How long ago it seems."

Day after day young John went this endless round. For a few minutes of a summer morning he saw the golden sun and then down he went into the living night of the mine. Evening brought him a fleeting glance of the ruddy sun in the west, and then the night of sleep blackened out his consciousness.

Just how long John worked in the mines we do not know. But long before he gave up the work, he and his parents knew that he could not long continue at it.

One day he rather surprised his mother.

"Mom, I've got enough of the mines. I'm going to learn the shoemaker's trade."

"Oh, that's good news. I'm so glad to hear it: the other work was far too much for you."

And so it was that John O'Neill, a real foot-sufferer, be-

THESE TWO HEARTS

gan his apprenticeship with the village shoemaker.

From that very first day in the shop, John enjoyed his work. It seemed to put new life into him. There were many things to learn; many things to do. That made for interest. Even the ten-hour day seemed very short to him. The master marvelled at the speed and efficiency of his apprentice, and before long would have been able to double his own income had not a calamity struck the nation.

CHAPTER III

ON December 20, 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union. She was followed in quick succession by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. On February 4, of the following year, representatives of the States met at Montgomery, Alabama, adopted a temporary constitution, and even chose a provisional President and Vice-President. A little more than a month later the temporary constitution was supplanted by a final one, and was adopted by the Confederate Congress in February of 1862.

In the meantime Abraham Lincoln had been inaugurated as President of the United States and took a firm stand for the Union. Then came the firing on Fort Sumter and the tragic Civil War had begun.

News traveled slowly in those days, but it was not too long before the miners in Mackeysburg, Pennsylvania, had heard that after a shelling from fifty cannon for a period of thirty-four hours, the North had been forced to surrender the Fort to the Confederacy. They had scarcely recovered from the shock when about a week later came the call to arms. Mr. Lincoln had asked for seventy-five thousand vol-

THESE TWO HEARTS

unteers, and from all walks of life men hurried to the defense of the Stars and Stripes.

Mackeysburg, small as it was, sent its quota at the call from the President. There was a grand rush for strong new shoes to be made, and the master and his apprentice worked long hours to oblige the new soldiers.

Then two strange events occurred which forever changed the lives of the two cobblers. The master felt he was shirking his duty if he did not volunteer. If the North were to be successful in her great struggle to preserve the Union she must have men to fight for her. The army must be well shod, and to that end the cobbler must be with the men.

John O'Neill, of course, was too young to volunteer for the Union Army: another call had been sounding in his ears. For some time now he had felt himself called to serve God in a more intimate manner, though just how he did not know.

With the closing of the cobbler's shop, however, came a temporary end to his musings. All talk was that of the war: all thought was of the broken homes and the graves growing in numbers on field and hillside.

Whether John's father enlisted or not we do not know, but we soon find the young cobbler, carrying full shoemaker's equipment, setting out on a long journey; for just where it is difficult to say.

In each new village the cobbler visited the church where he spent some time in quiet prayer, and then went about finding orders for shoes.

In those days when our great country was only sparsely settled, farmers often lived miles apart. A trip to the nearest village frequently meant quite a journey, one that could be made only at rare intervals. People depended upon itinerant pedlars, tinkers, and cobblers for many of the things they needed.

John O'Neil knew about these pedlars, and he knew

THESE TWO HEARTS

that they drove hard bargains and often amassed considerable wealth. But he was not so interested in the latter aspects of their lives. He wanted to be able to make enough money to be self-supporting: he was energetic enough for that. He knew, too, that he could exercise charity toward the poor through the application of his trade. He could even do a little evangelizing when occasion arose; but most probably he felt that during his travels God would make clear to him what sort of vocation He wished him to follow.

It would be very interesting for us to know the route the young cobbler took when he set out from his Pennsylvania home to fend for himself. His life as a miner, and his rubbing of shoulders with the trade in the cobbler's shop, helped to steel him for the long lonely tramp across his own State, and from thence either into Virginia or Ohio, we do not know. When we have an exact record of his wanderings he is already in Colorado.

Along the way he had spent many a night in a hay loft or out under the stars, and some, of course, in friendly homes. When he came upon a farm where the arrival of a shoemaker was looked forward to, he would be brought in and treated cordially. Often he would spend a month in a home making shoes out of fine home-cured hides which had been set aside especially for that purpose.

When we hear of John O'Neill again he has, in spite of his awkward gait, made his way across the prairies and on to California. Most of that long trek was made on foot and alone. What a pity that he has not left us more information about it. But John was always one who spoke little about himself.

In the meantime the destruction and carnage of the Civil War had come to an end. The cold steel of the assassin's bullet had pierced the brain of Abraham Lincoln and he had been laid to rest amid the flower of his nation. Reconstruction, which he had so ardently desired, and so urgently

THESE TWO HEARTS

asked for in his Second Inaugural, was being carried forward resolutely. The United States was pushing onward toward her rightful place in the great family of nations.

Somewhere along that vast journey from Mackeysburg to California John came upon another itinerant cobbler, carrying his own tools and making his way home. John never told, so far as we know, the name of the shoemaker or where he met him; but he was wonderfully impressed with the kind of work the stranger could do.

"Where did you learn your trade, my friend?" asked the tall, reddish-haired cobbler from Mackeysburg.

"In a little school back in Indiana. They call the place Notre Dame."

"Don't tell me they teach such things in a school! I learned mine right in the home of a shoemaker in Pennsylvania."

"Yes, they teach shoemaking, blacksmithing, tailoring, carpentering and many other trades at Notre Dame. Of course they teach regular school subjects, too."

"Who runs this school? I never heard of the place before."

"It is run by the Congregation of Holy Cross, originally a French Community, consisting of priests and Brothers. Notre Dame was opened over thirty years ago."

"You say it is conducted by priests and Brothers. What do you mean by Brothers?"

"They are men who have consecrated their lives to God through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; but never intend to become priests. They wear a religious habit and share everything in the Order in common with the priests. I had never heard of anything like it either until I went to Notre Dame. Believe me, there are some wonderful men among the Brothers there. We all loved Brother Benoit who was the Senior Prefect. Then there was Brother Cyprian, a real saint. They say it was due to his prayers

THESE TWO HEARTS

that a lily blossomed long before it should have just so Saint Joseph could have one on his altar for his feast. And I knew Brother Vincent, another grand old man. He came over with the first Brothers who came from France. And there were others you would love to meet."

"I am sure I would," said John, and it was evident that he was keenly interested. "And do all of the Brothers at Notre Dame teach school?"

"Oh, no: not all of them. Brother Lawrence had charge of the farm there. Brother Augustus was the tailor. And there were others I didn't get to meet because of their work."

A strange light seemed to come into John O'Neill's eyes, and a strange feeling of peace flooded his soul. Could it be that it was to Notre Dame God was calling him? Would he, with his misshapen feet be admitted into the Brotherhood that had produced these wonderful men?

CHAPTER IV

THE Brothers of Holy Cross, about whom the two cobblers had been speaking, were originally called the Brothers of St. Joseph. They had been founded by Father James Francis Dujarie, the parish priest of Ruille, France, in 1820.

This zealous priest had already founded the Sisters of Providence in 1807. His second undertaking was to organize a society of Brothers whose members, while normally living in community life, could go individually, if necessary, to do teaching in smaller parishes and in rural areas. His bishop, Msgr. Claude Madeleine de la Myre, highly approved of his project in the summer of 1820, and by November, five young men had entered. Only two of the original group persevered until death.

This Community, like nearly all others, had its trials. "During the year 1828 the volcano of the French Revolution belched forth the residuum of its filthy lava, and the effects of this eruption upon the faith and morals of France in 1829 may be judged by the havoc it wrought among the Brothers of Saint Joseph at Ruille. Vocations became rare and defections numerous. The tide of self-sacrifice which had brought to Ruille in less than a decade of years some three hundred young men, went out in 1829 to return no more

THESE TWO HEARTS

laden with its wonted amount of precious treasures.”

In 1835 the venerable Father Dujarie, “worn out by years and infirmities, informed his Bishop that he was no longer able to govern and guide the Brothers of Saint Joseph. He offered to resign his charge into his Lordship’s hands, that he in turn might entrust the heroic band to some worthy priest. Msgr. Bouvier and the Brothers were unanimous in their choice of Father Moreau. Recognizing the finger of God in this selection, and feeling strongly attracted toward the devoted little community, whose admirable vocation he thoroughly appreciated, Father Moreau did not hesitate to accept the new charge.”

Father Basil Moreau was a professor in the Grand Seminary in the city of Mans, a very zealous priest who, along with his teaching, found time to give retreats and missions. In 1835 he gathered together six young ecclesiastics, and with the authorization of Bishop Bouvier founded the Auxiliary Priests of Mans. The year 1835, then, finds Father Moreau governing both the priests and Brothers, though they were not organically united until March 1, 1837. At that time the new Community was known as The Association of Holy Cross.

The splendid work by the Brothers in the education field was appreciated from the very beginning. “As early as 1836, Father Moreau had been approached by the prefect of the department of the Sarthe on behalf of the Ministry of Marine and Colonies with regard to a foundation of teaching Brothers in the French possessions of Martinique and Guadeloupe.” In 1839 a request came from Bishop Dupuch of Algiers for Brothers for the schools in his diocese, and the following year the first missionaries went to Africa.

In 1839, also, Father Celestine de la Hailandiere, then vicar-general to Bishop Simon Bruté of Vincennes, Indiana, made a personal appeal to Father Moreau for some Brothers. Before a final answer was given, Bishop Bruté died and

THESE TWO HEARTS

Father de la Hailandiere received notification that he was to succeed to the vacant See. He was consecrated on August 18, 1839, and a week later was with Father Moreau begging for teachers for his schools.

Nothing would have pleased Father Moreau more than to have been able to send the men on at once, but due to some difficulties in getting money for transportation, it was not until August 8, 1841, that the first missionaries set sail for America. The group consisted of Father Edward Sorin, only 27 years old, who was to be Superior; Brother Vincent Pieau, 44, Brother Anselm Caillot, 15, and Brother Gatian Monsimer, 14, who were to be teachers; Brother Joachim Andre, 33, a tailor; Brother Marie Patois, later known as Brother Francis Xavier Patois, 21, a carpenter; and Brother Lawrence Menage, 25, a farmer. It took thirty-nine days to make the crossing to New York, and they docked, symbolically enough, on the eve of the feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross.

The first three days in America were spent in the home of Mr. Samuel Byerley who, at the request of Bishop Hailandiere, met the missionaries at the dock. The fourth was spent in the palace of His Excellency, John Dubois, Bishop of New York. The following day they went by boat up the Hudson, and thence to Buffalo by way of the old Erie Canal, a journey of seven and a half days. They crossed Lake Erie to Toledo by steamship, a journey of three days. From Toledo they went by boat to Miami and from thence to Napoleon. The next leg was overland by wagon to Defiance, where they went by water to Fort Wayne. Two days later they were in Logansport. The last lap to Vincennes covered a week. It took the poor missionaries exactly twenty-four days to make the trip from New York to Vincennes.

Just three days later the little Community took up its residence in St. Peter's, a small village twenty-seven miles from Vincennes. The town boasted of fifty Catholic fam-

THESE TWO HEARTS

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THESE TWO HEARTS

ings: a chapel which had been erected by Father Badin in 1834, a house in which his interpreter had lived, and a shack standing near the chapel. But all began to work as soon as possible, and the work begun by them has never ceased. Even today some of the buildings are of the brick made by hand by the pioneer Brothers of Holy Cross.

But the Notre Dame to which John O'Neill came on July 9, 1874, bore no resemblance to the one we are accustomed to. Perhaps the only building on the grounds today, already in existence when he arrived, is what we call the Mission House. Brother Charles and his men were busy building the present church, but it was not to be completed until six or seven years later.

The Main Building at the time must have been an imposing, if not an inspiring one. It had a front spread of 160 feet, a depth of 80 feet, and was six stories high. It, too, had a dome and a statue of Our Lady. This building housed all of the students from the minimis to the seniors in college, and contained the classrooms, study halls, refectories, and the private rooms of the faculty members.

Rev. Edward Sorin, the first president of Notre Dame, was still alive, a moderately sized man who wore his hair rather long, but kept a clean-shaven face. He was active in everything that went on, but for the past seven years had left the running of the University to others.

At the time John O'Neill arrived on the campus Father Auguste Lemonnier, a nephew of Father Sorin, was president. He was, however, a sick man and was not destined to live through the year 1874.

The St. Joseph's Manual Labor School, that part of Notre Dame which had first attracted young O'Neill's attention to the place, was located about where Dillon Hall now stands. At that time St. Joseph's had about fifty apprentices, a good indication of the value of the courses offered by the Brothers.

THESE TWO HEARTS

But John was not particularly interested in any part of the school. He had come to Notre Dame to ask permission to join the Brothers of Holy Cross. He would go at once to the one who would be able to grant him that request.

CHAPTER V

IT was a sultry afternoon that July 9, 1874. In the little village of South Bend not many were astir. And so John O'Neill walked along hoping he would meet someone who could tell him how to get to Notre Dame College.

Under a tree in the shade before a cottage he saw a boy lying.

"Could you tell me, lad, how I can get to Notre Dame College?"

The boy sat up, unafraid, and looked at the tall reddish-haired man with the heavy satchel.

"You'd better ask my mom."

And just as the boy was in the act of getting up, a woman's voice broke in upon the hot silence.

"What does he want, Johnny?"

"That's my mom," said the boy to the stranger. And then to the mother, "He wants to know how to get to Notre Dame College."

After a rather long discussion which, in spite of its length, was none too clear, John continued on his way. In his tired condition the thing he remembered best was that the College was still more than two miles away. When he finally got on to the road, which led to the school, he found it was not much more than a wagon trail.

THESE TWO HEARTS

It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon when John O'Neill got his first glimpse of the statue of Our Lady standing upon the dome over the Main Building. He stopped a moment, enthralled by the sight. He looked down at his deformed feet and then back to Our Lady. Would she see to it that his poor feet would not hinder him from becoming a religious, the desire of his heart ever since he was fourteen?

Again he went forward, more confident now. A few yards ahead of him on his left was a cemetery. He tipped his hat as he passed and breathed a prayer for the Poor Souls. Next to God's Acre was a neatly kept garden, its long rows showing signs of recent cultivation. How quiet everything was: not a bird sang in the motionless trees.

Suddenly a black-clad monk issued from a building ahead and walked toward a tall edifice which now dominated everything. John shuffled along faster to catch up with the monk who, hearing the footsteps, stopped abruptly and turned around.

"Father, I'm a stranger here!"

"Welcome! I'm Brother Francis Xavier."

John O'Neill seemed to lose a step in his forward stride. He had not suspected this black-habited man with the Roman collar to be a Brother.

"I'm John O'Neill, Brother, and I have come to see if I can become a Brother."

"Then I will take you to see our Superior, Father Sorin. Will you please come with me?"

Within a few minutes the young cobbler found himself in the presence of the Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross. The thought startled him at first and he felt a bit nervous, but it was not long before he felt at ease, even under the rather piercing eyes of this great man.

"And how did you happen to hear of our Congregation?" asked the priest.

"From a graduate of your Manual Labor School,

THESE TWO HEARTS

Father," replied the cobbler.

"It is well! It is well!" nodded Father Sorin.

"And do you think you could use a poor man like me, Father? I have wanted to serve God in a better way for a long time."

"And you have come to the right place, my son. Come, we will walk around the lake to the novitiate. Our postulants live in the same house with the novices."

Father Sorin reached for his biretta, and a moment later the two were on their way. It was while they walked and chatted that John told Father he was a shoemaker, that he felt he could make himself useful, and above all that he would like to learn to love Our Lady and the Sacred Heart more and more and thus assure his eternal salvation.

Father Sorin was deeply impressed with the frankness and sincerity of the young man and not once did he say anything about his deformity, nor even give an indication that he had noticed it.

At the novitiate John was introduced to the Master of Novices, Father Louage. This good priest made him feel right at home by turning him over to the care of one of the novices.

That evening, because of the presence of the Superior General who stayed for supper, the novices were permitted to talk during the meal, and before it was over the new postulant felt he was one of the family. Into his soul had come the peace he had so long sought. Everyone was extremely kind to him, and from the beautiful picture on the wall in front of him the benign eyes of the Sacred Heart seemed to look right into his soul.

In the chapel that evening John was given a place from which he could look directly toward a lovely statue of the Sacred Heart, and while his attention was primarily centered upon the tabernacle, from time to time his eyes strayed over to the statue.

THESE TWO HEARTS

Day after day of wonderful peace followed. On September 1, Father Louage called John to the office and told him he had been accepted by the Council and that the date for the reception of the Habit would be September 8.

This was indeed a happy day for John O'Neill. The desire of his heart was another step toward accomplishment. He and his companions made the Retreat required before reception and prepared themselves for the great day when they would put off the attire of the world and assume the livery of the servants of God in Holy Cross.

September 8 is the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and a very fitting day for the reception of the Habit. September 8, 1874, was a grand day for the Brothers of Holy Cross for it marked the birth into their ranks of a Brother who during his life time was to bring glory and distinction to their Community. And, indeed, it was a wonderful day in the life of John O'Neill for it set him apart from the world to a special work for God.

The clothing ceremonies and the prayers accompanying them are very indicative of that separation. When the postulants enter the sanctuary the officiating minister blesses candles, using this prayer: "Lord God, Father Almighty, true light and fountain of all light, pour forth Thy blessing upon these candles, and as Thou didst lighten up the way of Moses going out of the land of Egypt, so guide Thy servants, who for love of Thy name, now abandon the world, that they may merit eternal life through Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Each postulant is then given a candle with the admonition: "Receive this light: let it shine in your hands, as the symbol of the good works of which you should give the example, and of the unceasing praises you should render to a God who has been so merciful toward you."

Next the *Veni Creator* is sung, begging the Holy Spirit to enlighten those who are about to take upon themselves

THESE TWO HEARTS

the yoke of Christ. When it is finished the officiating minister says: "My son, what do you desire?" To this the postulant responds, "Reverend Father, I ask from you the Habit of this Congregation, and the favor of being allowed to undergo my probation in the exercises of the Novitiate."

The habits are then blessed, and given to the postulants with these words: "Receive this habit, the symbol of the new man, which you must put on through your death to the world, and your union with Jesus Christ." They then retire to the sacristy to vest themselves in their religious attire.

When the novices return, dressed in their Habits, they are sprinkled with holy water while the priest says: "Hearken, O Lord, to our entreaties, and deign to bless and sanctify, these thy servants, renouncing the way of the world; and whom, relying upon Thy Holy Name and the intercession of St. Joseph, we clothe with this holy habit that in it they may serve Thee faithfully, remain constant, live soberly, piously and justly, awaiting a blessed immortality and Thy coming, who livest and reignest one God, world without end. Amen."

When this service was over that September 8, in 1874, John O'Neill was known as Brother Columba. He then began that year of intensive training known as the novitiate. During that time he was thoroughly informed of all of his obligations and privileges, and given plenty of chances to practice the virtues of his new life. During that period, too, the Master of Novices had time to observe his aspirant, to correct him when necessary, and to assure himself as to whether or not he should be allowed to remain in the Congregation.

During that year spent in the house of the novitiate Brother Columba laid deep the foundations of the virtues for which he later became famous: faith, humility, charity. Those who met him casually would have noticed nothing unusual about him: those who lived with him appreciated

THESE TWO HEARTS

his sterling virtues. There were very few of either class at that time, but there would come a day when he would be known and loved by thousands, many of whom he would never meet.

CHAPTER VI

FROM the time Brother Columba left the novitiate until August 15, 1876, he worked in the Community shoeshop and soon proved that he was an accomplished shoemaker. But no job, whether it were simply a bit of sewing or the making of a new pair of shoes, was given less than his best consideration. He knew that small things were very important and so he did them well.

Notre Dame has had several great fires during her century of existence, and in these many important records have been lost. What we do have, however, show that on August 15, 1876, the great feast of Our Lady's Assumption, he consecrated himself irrevocably to God by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. These vows constitute the essence of the Religious Life: they are made by those generous souls who want to follow Christ more closely than do ordinary Christians. They are made by God's heroes, and their observance demands constant sacrifice.

In the Congregation of Holy Cross a fourth vow is taken by those who feel themselves called to the work of the foreign missions. It is demanded of no one, but Brother Columba wanted to place himself at the complete disposal of

THESE TWO HEARTS

the Superior General and so he took the foreign mission vow. The dignity and solemnity of the vows are understandable from the wording of the formula in use in the Congregation:

"I, John O'Neill, Brother Columba, unworthy though I am, but nevertheless relying on the Divine Mercy and earnestly desiring to devote myself to the Adorable Trinity, make forever to Almighty God the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, according to the sense of the Rules and Constitutions of this Congregation, and the vow to go anywhere in the world the Superior General pleases to send me, in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, of her worthy spouse, St. Joseph, and of all the heavenly court."

On that August day when Brother Columba put his signature to his vows he was one of the happiest men on earth. He had finally attained the great desire of his heart. He immediately volunteered to go to India on our foreign missions, and also to go to Molokai to help Father Damien in his magnificent work among the lepers. Nothing was too heroic for this generous soul. For the time being, however, he had to content himself with mending Community shoes at Notre Dame. Perhaps for his ardent soul more heroism was required for that than for going to India or Molokai.

Less than a month after his Profession, Brother Columba was sent with Brother Peter and Brother Raymond to take charge of St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum at Lafayette, Indiana. There were sixty boys in the asylum at the time, and that number gradually increased during the nine years Brother spent there, until in 1885 there were one hundred-fifteen.

In the summer of 1885, Brother Columba was given an Obedience to return to Notre Dame and take up his duties in the Community shoeshop. The shop was located in the central part of a sprawling building commonly referred to as The Shops. The building stood about where Dillon Hall

THESE TWO HEARTS

now stands: it housed the tin, electric, plumbing, and carpenter shops, and the undertaking establishment. Several laymen were employed in the cobbler shop besides the Brothers, for the ever-growing manual labor department of the college required more help than the Community could give.

Brother Columba continued to practice his trade in the same place for the next seven years. At that time Father Sorin was a sick man and had to spend most of his days in his room. For some reason, unknown to us at present, he appointed Brother Columba as his private nurse. The Sisters of the Holy Cross, of course, lavished every care upon Father Sorin, but he still depended upon Brother Columba.

Brother watched over the aging priest with utmost devotion. He knew Father Sorin had worked hard and long in God's service and was entitled to the little comforts he could give him. Brother Columba was never far beyond the sick man's call for the next two years. As Father's malady progressed he became more and more helpless, until on October 31, 1893, the aged Founder peacefully passed to his reward.

After the death of Father Sorin, Father William Corby, the Provincial, a Civil War chaplain, and twice president of Notre Dame, gave Brother Columba an Obedience to return to the cobbler shop and shoe store, a position which he retained for more than a quarter of a century. From time to time the location of the shop was changed, but no matter what progress or necessity demanded, the pleasant, obliging, fervent Brother Columba was always there and always the same.

One day his Provincial Superior decided that Brother should go to Chicago to the then famous surgeon, Doctor Senn, who had rightfully won renown for his skill. Brother yielded at once to Obedience though he cared not a fig whether he limped or not. He dreaded the expense to his Community most of all. But he went, and so successful was the operation that it seemed almost a miracle. Instead of

THESE TWO HEARTS

his former awkward shuffle, Brother had now but the slightest of limps.

Returned to his post, Brother worked harder and longer than ever. He was determined to make up for the expense incurred. And those who knew him best knew that he prayed longer and more ardently also.

Then one day Brother came into his shop with a new statue of the Sacred Heart in his hand. It was a gift of a friend, something that Brother had wanted for a long time. The statue was given a place of honor in the shop, and from time to time Brother's eyes lifted from his work to where the eyes of the statue looked down upon him.

Some time later Brother showed up with a box of vigil lights, and from that day on, the first thing he did on his arrival in the morning was to light the candle before the statue. It was not long before word spread around about the shrine, and with like speed commentators split into two camps, those for and against the innovation. Little did the good Brother dream, when he set up his little shrine, that it would even be noticed, to say nothing about having a controversy arise over it. But it did not bother him: he had the permission of his Superior and that was all he needed.

One day, not long thereafter, Brother Columba came to the shop with a package of material from which to fashion badges of the Sacred Heart.

"There are times when I'm not busy," he told one of his helpers, "and I intend to use them making Sacred Heart badges. They will be more substantial than what can be bought, and they will cost less. I want to be able to give them to those who ask for them, or who will use them."

The man listened with a raised eyebrow, but he made no comment. Brother was in charge of the shop; he was the boss: let him do what he wanted.

Soon, however, in spite of Brother's stiff and calloused fingers, the quantity of finished badges was increasing, and

THESE TWO HEARTS

that in spite of the number he was giving away each day.

Once again opposition arose: once again two camps were clearly defined.

"Why should anyone get upset over the fact that I give out little badges of the Sacred Heart?" he inquired of a friend when the news of the opposition got back to him.

"I'd not worry my head about it, Brother. Good things are often hindered by both ignorance and malice."

"Oh, I'm not worried about it at all. The material was donated to me, and I have permission to use it for that purpose. It is odd, however, how much talk it is causing."

"It's advertising, Brother. I'm only hoping you'll be able to keep up with the demand."

And that was the real job. Brother Columba continued to spend only his free time on making the badges, but one student told another about how he got his, and so the number wanting them constantly increased.

In those days Brother Columba used his badges only as a means of spreading knowledge of and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a devotion which he had himself practiced for years, and which he knew from his reading in the Life of the now St. Margaret Mary that the Sacred Heart wanted spread throughout the world. No thought had ever entered Brother Columba's mind about using them as an instrument to inspire faith for the cure of physical maladies. He simply gave them to the students who came into his little shop and asked that they wear them around their necks or carry them in their pockets.

At that time Notre Dame was not known as the "City of the Blessed Sacrament." Devotion to the Sacred Heart was seldom mentioned, and the marvelous practice of hundreds of boys and young men going daily to Holy Communion was not even dreamed of.

Brother Columba did not set himself up as a prophet, an innovator or reformer. Not at all. He only went about

THESE TWO HEARTS

in his own quiet way to do what he could to get others to share his love and devotion for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Nothing more than that had ever entered his mind.

But there would soon come a time when much of this would be changed. Sooner, certainly, than anyone could have dreamed.

CHAPTER VII

IN one of those frequent changes due to growth or necessity, Brother Columba's shop was moved from its old location in The Shops to a room on the first floor in the front of Washington Hall. The change meant very little to him, but it was at this time that friends donated some money to enable him to enlarge his sphere of religious influence.

For years Brother Columba, besides his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had a filial devotion to Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Heart. While he lived at Notre Dame, Our Lady's City, that devotion increased, and now that he was able, he produced hundreds of little pictures of the Immaculate Heart and gave them to all who came into the shop. In return he asked the recipient to say the little prayer printed on the reverse side of the picture. Students asked for copies to send to their parents, their former teachers and friends. How many hundreds of such little pictures Brother gave away will never be known. Who will be able to estimate the good accomplished in this way!

It seems that the distribution of the little pictures of the Immaculate Heart did not add much to the opposition corner, but there was another devotion Brother began to advocate that really seemed an innovation to some, and that was the rosary of the Blessed Sacrament.

THESE TWO HEARTS

Just where Brother Columba acquired his first pair of Blessed Sacrament beads is not known to this writer. It would be interesting to know. But suddenly he appeared, not with one pair of beads, but with dozens of them, and he handed them out just as freely as he did his badges of the Sacred Heart and pictures of the Immaculate Heart.

Brother was careful always to explain the use of the badge or the rosary before giving the object to the person who asked for it. He wanted to be sure the individual would realize the value that could come to him from use of the sacramentals.

One day a man well known to Brother Columba came into his store to talk to him. Brother asked him if he had a rosary of the Blessed Sacrament.

"I never heard of such a thing," the man replied.

Brother then stooped down and pulled a pair of beads from under the counter.

"Here they are," he said, eyeing his friend very intently.

Then Brother began an explanation of the method of using the rosary. He was very thorough in his instruction, but he seemed more intent on observing his visitor than upon the beads he held in his hands.

Suddenly another person entered the room. Almost instantly Brother held out the beads to the newcomer.

"Here, you take these;" he said without another look at the first visitor, "he won't say them anyway."

Whether or not Brother Columba was given an insight into the man's mind is not known, but a little later on the fellow left the Church, married outside her pale, and from then on was never known to have gone to the sacraments.

At another time two young Brothers called at the shoe-shop for new shoes. Brother Columba waited on them as usual. When they got what they wanted and were leaving, Brother called the older one back and remarked dryly: "Your friend will not comb his hair gray in the Commu-

THESE TWO HEARTS

nity." The young Brother did not mention the statement to his companion, and, in fact, gave it very little thought at the time. A few months later, however, the novice had gone home.

It was about this time in our story—1910—that word began to spread around that Brother Columba was working 'miracles'. In conformity with the decrees of various Popes, and especially with those of Urban VIII, we hereby declare that we are giving to the use of such words as cures, miracles, etc., only their purely natural meaning. We are only repeating such events as they were told or have come down to us in writing. We submit now and hereafter to the infallible Church which alone has the right to pronounce on such matters. There are still many of our Community members alive who often visited Brother Columba at this time and they all agree that he spoke of 'cures' having taken place both in his shop and elsewhere.

We know, too, that his correspondence through the months began to increase rapidly. People wrote in to him asking for badges, for him to pray for them, and even for him to cure them.

One of the Brothers who worked in the postoffice told the writer that Brother Columba often got from twenty to thirty letters a day.

We know that Brother Columba wrote many letters in response to those he received. It will be remembered that Brother did not have much of a formal education, and the letters of his we have at our disposal at this time certainly prove that he knew very little of spelling, punctuation and grammatical construction. But these things did not bother him: he wrote what his heart dictated regardless of grammar.

One day this lack of education was forcibly brought home to him. He was working in his store when in came the President of the University. Brother spoke to him very

THESE TWO HEARTS

pleasantly as was his custom, but he couldn't help noticing that the President was not in his best mood.

"Brother," he began slowly, "you write a lot of letters, don't you?"

"Yes, Father. I do."

"And you write them on University stationery."

"Yes, Father. On one of those tablets," and Brother reached for a pad of writing paper with the University name printed in blue ink on each page. It was common, ordinary writing paper, the kind sold in the University bookstore and used by all of the students on the campus.

"Well, Brother," the priest continued, at a little slower speed, picking his words carefully, "I think I will send you a couple of students as secretaries to take care of your correspondence for you. I think it would be much better that way. You can expect them tomorrow or the next day."

With that the President withdrew, leaving Brother Columba a bit perplexed over the affair. What did he want with secretaries? He couldn't dictate letters. He didn't want young students sitting around typing his letters for him. Well, something must be done about it. Brother got up, locked his shop and made a quick call on the Provincial.

The Provincial was a big man in every way. No matter who came into his office, he seemed ready for anything, and so when Brother Columba came in he greeted him warmly.

Since Brother had but one reason for his visit he fell to it at once.

"The President says he's going to send me two secretaries to write my letters for me. I don't want any one writing my letters!"

"Two secretaries!" ejaculated the Provincial. "Who's sending you the secretaries?"

"The President. I don't want them, Father. I have to write just whatever comes to my heart. I can't dictate my letters."

THESE TWO HEARTS

Father Provincial looked at Brother a moment in silence, and then he said: "Don't worry your head about it, Brother. You just go right ahead and write the way you want. And if the President bothers you again, you just say that I said if you could spell and punctuate as well as some of the important people around here, you wouldn't be working miracles."

With that Brother Columba went back to his shop a satisfied, happy man. Whether or not the President ever said anything further on this subject is not known, but we do know Brother continued to write his own letters on the regular stationery.

And from what we can learn, he had more and more letters to write. People from South Bend and surrounding villages and towns came to the campus to see the "Miracle man." Again the pros and cons showed themselves. Some brought forth the argument that the campus was being overrun with outsiders; that there was danger to the health of the students and to the Community from sick people constantly coming to tell their woes to the cobbler. A stop should be put to this at once. Several went to the President about it and finally influenced him to tell Brother Columba it would have to stop. But the President made the mistake of assuming that he was Brother's Superior, which he was not. Had he been, he would have been obeyed at once, for Brother Columba was always obedient. As it was, Brother merely reminded him that he had not only the permission of his local Superior, but also that of his Provincial. The President withdrew at once, realizing that he had overstepped his authority; but none the less not converted to Brother's way of doing things.

For the time being, however, Brother Columba continued his work and prayers. His confidence in the Sacred Heart was strong enough for him to know that all would work out according to God's plan.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM this point in our story, October 9, 1912, we do not have to rely entirely upon the word of those who, like this writer, knew Brother Columba personally, for we have at our disposal a long series of letters in Brother's own handwriting. And no doubt there are many other letters in the possession of Brother's friends and clients. The letters mentioned were written to a clerical friend in Iowa and cover a period of ten years. Most of them are replies to letters from the priest, and since we do not have his letters to Brother, the meaning of some of the response remarks in Brother's letters are not always evident.

In the first letter Brother gives us an idea of his method of approach: "I will pray for the sick girl also. You give her a badge to wear and tell her to say, 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, cure me,' five times a day for a while. Let's offer her cure through the Blessed Virgin's heart."

It is evident Brother is on safe ground when he goes to Jesus through Mary. In this he is following the practice of the saints. It is also clear that he expects the cure since he states plainly, "Let's offer her cure through the Blessed Virgin's Heart."

In a letter of November 16, he writes: "I will make a

THESE TWO HEARTS

novena for the two intentions. Some get it and some don't. I am getting quite a few asthma cases cured. One dying in Indiana Harbor, given up by the doctor. Woman writes what a wonderful cure you worked in me. I am getting letters from all over. Still I never put a line in a paper . . . I have no expenses of any kind worth talking about. When I want money I get it if I pray for it."

After signing that letter, Brother added a postscript: "I have a girl on crutches in Detroit. I told (her) to send the crutches. Don't laugh."

There are certain things about the above letter common to all those we have. First of all, it is noteworthy that Brother is constantly praying; secondly, he shows a child-like candor in talking about the cures: thirdly, he is astonished that people should hear about him since nothing appears in the papers: and, lastly, his perfect confidence in the Sacred Heart. "When I want money I get it if I pray for it." "I told her to send the crutches." Then, too, there are certain expressions he regularly uses: "Some get *it*," By the *it* he means a cure. Another common expression is, "Don't laugh." And before his signature, as a complimentary close, he quaintly writes, "Kind love." One is reminded of the simplicity of St. Francis of Assisi.

The last letter we have of 1912, dated November 20, runs as follows:

"Dear Father:

"I received your welcome letter. Send in all your afflicted people. It's no trouble to me. I have sixty novenas sometimes. I had two cures Sunday. One, a running sore. It's healed. One, inclined to consumption, coughed so much: a young lady. As soon as she put on the badge, the cough left her. I got one Monday: a young man, married in Ireland. He has not drank since August.

"I was asked to visit a lady in the hospital. Seems no hope. She was operated on. She told me they propped

THESE TWO HEARTS

(her) up in bed at night and in the morning she was drowned with pus to the back of her neck. She is home and well now and at her work. She said after I left the pus stopped running, and the doctors could not understand it. If they said their prayers they would.

"I get people to their duty—twelve years away; and children baptized. So you see I have quite a job. I answered three letters: I don't say much to them. I have a little time between times in shoe store."

In that letter we have the first indication that Brother went off the campus to call on people who were not able to come to see him. Through the years that followed Brother made many trips, some of them far from home; but always at the request or permission of his Superiors. Frequently people came for him and took him to the hospitals or homes of their sick ones. Such things did not seem to disturb Brother in the least. When Obedience permitted or requested him to go, he went as would a child to a party.

In that letter also we have the first mention of the vast spiritual work he tried to do for those who were even more in need of it than they were of physical alleviation.

To print one letter after the other, and to make comments on them would perhaps be too tiring for the reader, interesting though the letters are. From here and there, however, a quotation will be given whenever it will throw a new sidelight on Brother's character or on his work.

In a letter dated January 17, 1913, we read: "I was over to St. Mary's, a girl's school, one mile from here. Lately they had several cures there. While I was there ten Sisters came to me for cures. (They) went to their knees to me to make the Sign of the Cross on them with the badge. Would not that kill you? Never looked for that. God honors me and humbles me at the same time."

On August 12, of that year a new note enters his letters: "A paralyzed girl was brought here, and a boy consumptive

THESE TWO HEARTS

of the one family. Protestants. The two are getting cured. Protestants nearly all get it." Brother admired the great faith shown by these people.

It is very interesting to note, in reading through Brother's letters of 1914, that he makes no mention of the terrible war going on in Europe. All of his attention is given to his work, his prayers and to the poor people who come to him or to whom he is sent by his Superiors.

In a letter of October 30, 1914, we read: "I had to get out (of) bed to go to a crazy man. It took two men to hold him. You never heard such swearing. I thought the devil was there. The priest and doctor were there. I blessed him with the badge and sat down and prayed. He went to sleep and woke up in (the) morning cured."

But not all of Brother's letters to the priest are taken up entirely with cures. Some of them are very human, such as the one of November 4, 1914. "Everything went Democrat in this State and county and township. Quite a few Catholics on the ticket. We lost fifty-two head of steers with foot and mouth disease. Cattle we bought to kill." Such notes are short, however, and he returns again to his devotion to the Sacred Heart. "I did not forget about your Colored people . . . If I go again to Keokuk I will go to their church and teach them the devotion to the Sacred Heart and give them badges and pictures . . . I won't say anything about conversion . . . Let the Sacred Heart do the rest."

For quite some time now Brother Columba had been hoping for a special shrine for the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame. The first mention of it in the letters we have is in one dated November 11. In that letter he says: "I prayed to have a miracle that people could see . . . I never done that before. My object was to get a shrine. People must see something." He was not destined to have his dream of a large, separate shrine realized.

THESE TWO HEARTS

As the months went by the number of people who came to the campus increased steadily. Each mail that arrived brought its quota of letters. The number of trips Brother was obliged to make through Obedience made it necessary for him to turn most of the work of the shop over to others. Almost every day he heard of a number of cures.

On October 12, 1915, he writes to his priest-friend: "I had two lockjaw cases. Protestants — both cured. One a man, the other a woman. I made (the) Sign of the Cross on their mouth with the badge. The man's mouth opened immediately: the woman's in two days. Both are perfectly cured." He ends the letter by telling the priest: "Pray to Mary's Heart. That (is) how I got so many favors. I made 25,000 badges of (the) Immaculate Heart before I did anything with the Sacred Heart."

We have but four of Brother Columba's letters for the year 1916. In the one dated December 5, we read: "Lady was forty years in bed. After the novena she got up and is around working." He also notes: "They are fixing the Log Chapel up so I can be there Sundays."

But Brother didn't get to use the Log Chapel, for shortly after he wrote the letter he came down with influenza. An epidemic of the disease spread over the country during World War I. Notre Dame did not escape the scourge, and young and old alike were stricken. In spite of the fact that Brother Columba was in his late sixties he felt he had to do his share to help the sick. With his vitality overtaxed he became a victim to the disease and soon his life was despaired of. The Community redoubled its prayers, and friends from all parts of the country stormed heaven for his recovery. He survived the disease, but his former robust health never returned.

On January 20, he wrote: "I am fine again. Not so strong, but look about (the) same. They thought I was going to die as I was old and (it) was a dreadful sickness. I

THESE TWO HEARTS

guess the prayers saved me. It will teach me to have some feeling for others."

Just so soon as Brother was able to get around he went back to work. Visitors came every day, and from his letters we learn that he again made trips to various places to see people who were too infirm to come to him. In his letter of April 30, we read: "Don't like to go too often, still I hardly ever miss the cure when I go out." In the same letter he adds: "Next Sunday I will open my visits in the Log Chapel. It is fixed up fine."

The letters of this year all tell of jewelry and precious stones people are sending in. Brother intends to have the gold melted and made into beautiful chalices which can be studded with gems. He notes, too, that money is being sent for the erection of a suitable shrine for the Sacred Heart.

There is but one letter in our file for the year 1918. In it Brother says he spent twenty-four days in Joliet, Illinois. "One to two hundred a day. All classes came, and Negroes get so many cures instantly when I blessed them . . . Hundreds were cured . . . Coming all the time from near towns and Chicago."

While Brother Columba was on this stay in Peoria, a local Protestant minister, the Rev. Carl F. Bruhn, wrote the following article for the *Joliet Evening Herald-News*:

"Is the age of miracles past? If wonderful cures were performed by Jesus nineteen centuries ago, and if He is, as Christians believe, the ever-living and all-powerful One, can not the same physical cures be accomplished today as the gospels record in the days of His flesh?"

"There are some in every age who have believed that the answer to these questions should be an emphatic Yes. There are many in Joliet today who believe they can testify as eyewitnesses that they have seen these things within the last few days.

"Brother Columba, who lives at Notre Dame Univer-

THESE TWO HEARTS

sity, has been in Joliet for some time coming here in the first instance to seek relief for Miss Agnes McFadden, who was suffering from neuritis after an operation. Great crowds have gathered every evening at the home of Mrs. Ann Delaney, where Brother Columba is making his home while in Joliet. Many instances of remarkable cures are said to have been performed in answer to prayer by this simple man with a child-like faith.

"To a reporter of the *Herald-News*, Brother Columba said that the power was not in himself, that he did not understand how or why he could do these things and not others, or why some seemed to be helped and some were not. He said that he was visiting in the city in the interest of the sick and afflicted and would remain so long as he could help. He seeks no publicity nor personal recompense for his work.

"Among the cures said to be accomplished in Joliet might be mentioned the restoring of speech to Bessie Egan, who has been speechless for four years as a result of scarlet fever. Elizabeth Delaney, who lost the sight of one eye nineteen years ago, says that she can see better than she has done for years. A girl of thirteen who was deaf, regained her hearing, and the neuritis of Miss McFadden was greatly relieved.

"Brother Columba says that he has cured people who were insane, the blind and deaf and speechless, many afflicted with cancers, and others with rabies and lockjaw. He says that thirteen hundred cures have been the result of correspondence with those who could not come personally. During the day he is being taken to various homes to minister to the sick who cannot come to see him.

"When asked if faith was a necessary condition on the part of the individual seeking relief, the healer said:

"No one can expect to be cured if he is neglecting his duty. The Lord can heal these people, but is not likely to do it. To cure the body is no real blessing unless the soul

THESE TWO HEARTS

is cured also. Some pious people are not cured, and it seems as if the Lord cannot make saints out of some people unless He knocks out the props from under them.'

"He makes no distinction between Catholic and Protestant so far as healing is concerned. When asked the method of cure, he said:

'This is not Christian Science, but prayer to the Sacred Heart of our Lord.'

"The badge of the Sacred Heart is given to the sufferer and a special prayer is to be repeated. Protestants are told to pray in their own way.

"Epileptics, tubercular sufferers and afflicted people of every kind are being brought to the Delaney home or are visited by Brother Columba. The number of cures in Joliet thus far is said to be more than twenty. No record of names is being kept, as there is no attempt to advertise except as those who are helped tell their friends and others.

"Brother Columba is an unlearned man so far as books are concerned. He is a cobbler by trade and works as a shoemaker when not ministering to the sick, his hands showing the results of daily toil. He has a genial face and a ready Irish wit, with an answer or a proverb for every question. He seems to be absolutely sincere and has none of the marks of the religious imposter. No money is asked for his services."

The next letter is dated May 16, 1919. "I am on the go often. In Decatur ten days. Eight days in Chicago: four in Joliet . . . Many cures and good ones." And the last letter of that year, dated September 17, reads: "They are commencing to build a seminary . . . and the shrine (is to) take up one wing. I don't like the plan, but I have to say nothing. So long as the cures keep up, that's all I care."

In May of the following year Brother admits: "I am not well since I got the flu." But he went to the store whenever

THESE TWO HEARTS

he was at Notre Dame. People flocked to him, and he spent much time in answering letters.

In January of 1921 he wrote: "I am pretty well, but not like I was. I have a cough . . . The shrine is nearly finished . . . I am glad I lived to see so much done." But it is easy to tell by the brevity of the letters that Brother is not well. "I am . . . working against the stream." On November 12, he wrote: "We must be resigned to God's ways."

There are but five letters in our file for the year 1922. They are all brief, a good indication of the amount of work Brother Columba was trying to do, and of his failing energy. Of his health he says: "I am pretty well, but I have a cough." "Am short winded." "Later on I may get well." His other interests are: helping the afflicted, his prayers, a reputed stigmatic novice in a community of Sisters in New York, and the shrine.

Of the novice he wrote: "She knew of me somehow. (She is) "interested in me and the devotion. She covers the Sacred Heart badges with celluloid. She sent me one." On the subject of the shrine there is a new note: "The General and (the) Provincial want the Shrine of the Sacred Heart (to be) in the back part of our Sacred Heart Church."

The last written sentence we have is typical of good Brother Columba: "Give Mack this dollar and let him get a square meal."

CHAPTER IX

THE year 1923, the last Brother Columba was to spend on this earth, found him a thin, frail man with a bad cough. The asthmatic condition brought on as an aftermath of the serious attack of influenza he had suffered in 1917 gradually became worse, and at times his shortness of breath made it impossible for him to leave his room. When he was feeling well enough, after the weather got warm, he sat out on a bench in the sun. There his clients found him, and despite his weakened condition he received them all, listened to their woes, consoled them as best he could, blessed them with a badge of the Sacred Heart and encouraged them to pray hard for themselves.

Letters kept pouring in, but it was now necessary for Brother to accept the good services of some of the seminarians, living in Moreau Hall, who gladly wrote the answers Brother Columba dictated to them.

The summer of 1923 was hot even for summers in Indiana. With his advanced asthmatic condition, Brother found it very difficult to get around. He would sit out in front of the East Annex when he could. It was there he was sitting when the late Brother Isidore took the picture of him which appeared on his obituary cards and which is now familiar

THESE TWO HEARTS

to all his friends. There came the priests, Brothers and Sisters from the Summer School to talk to him between classes.

With the late summer Brother Columba showed some improvement. By the time the campus became alive with the students for the fall term, he was hoping to be able to take a more active part in his work. But those who knew him best realized that he was not nearly so strong as he imagined he was. His Superiors watched over him carefully to prevent him from over-taxing his strength.

Father Charles O'Donnell, C.S.C., had been elected Provincial of the United States Province in 1920, and while he had always been a great admirer and personal friend of Brother Columba through the years, since he had become Provincial he had called upon him regularly. Now that Brother was not able to leave the immediate environs of the Community House, the Provincial's anxiety for his comfort was increased.

By early October Brother was no longer able to leave his bed. Visitors continued to call and felt somewhat chagrined that they were not admitted into the Brother's private room. They had come so much to depend upon him for help and consolation that they could not imagine there were monastery regulations to be observed.

From his sickbed Brother Columba sent up a continuous prayer to the Sacred Heart for all his friends and clients. He suggested answers to the stacks of letters which came every day, until finally his physician would no longer allow him to exert himself in that way.

By the middle of November all were aware of the fact that Brother Columba had not much longer to live. He was calm and peaceful. He never once asked for anything unusual and at times pleaded with his attendants not to overwork themselves for him. He who had been untiring in the alleviation of the suffering of others was more than grateful

THESE TWO HEARTS

for the least attention shown him, fearing constantly to be a burden.

Brother's strong robust body was now nothing more than a skeleton covered with skin. He even looked a small man. His labored breath came in short uneven jerks. Save for a slight flush on his cheeks, his pale face and hands were scarcely discernible from the linen of his bed. During the day the good Sisters of the Holy Cross who had charge of the Community infirmary gave him constant tender care. At night our Brothers from the Community House and from Dujarie took turns in staying with him.

As soon as the doctor thought it advisable the Last Sacraments were administered. Brother received them with the greatest devotion and was very happy. Father O'Donnell left an order that he personally should be summoned at once as soon as Brother showed signs of dying.

News of the gravity of Brother Columba's condition spread rapidly from one to another. Those who had been helped by him encouraged their friends to pray for his recovery. The Community did nothing to attract attention for it was feared that the news might bring a disturbance to the campus.

The night of November 19, was an especially trying one for the sufferer. His extreme weakness and asthmatic condition made it almost impossible for him to breathe. Yet he was calm and perfectly resigned.

When the first streaks of the gray dawn quivered in the east death was near. Father Provincial was sent for and hurried to Brother's room. He gave the humble servant of the Sacred Heart a final absolution, recited the prayers for the dying, and heard the last weak sigh as Brother's beautiful soul went to meet his great Friend.

It was seven thirty-five, Tuesday morning, November 20, 1923.

Father Charles O'Donnell remained silently upon his

THESE TWO HEARTS

knees, his head in his hands. He was making great requests of his departed friend, and among them one in particular.

An old friend of his, long since bed-ridden, entirely blind, and quite deaf, had not been to the Sacraments for a long time. Father was deeply grieved over this. He had tried every means in his power to get the man to go to Confession and Communion. Now he would plead with Brother Columba. He asked as a special favor, as a sign that Brother and his work had been pleasing to God, that this old friend of his would resume attendance on the Sacraments. And no doubt there were many other petitions sent to Brother, but this one Father O'Donnell revealed.

The Saturday following Brother Columba's death the old man said to one of his friends: "Isn't this Saturday?"

"Yes. Why?" was said loud enough for him to hear.

"I want to go to Confession today and I would like Communion brought to me tomorrow."

Father O'Donnell had his answer. For him nothing more was necessary.

CHAPTER X

ON Wednesday the remains of Brother Columba, dressed in the habit of the Brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross, were laid in state in the Community House parlor. No notice had appeared in the South Bend paper, but already the news had spread far and wide, and hundreds came to pray and to touch articles to the withered hands to be taken home as relics.

Since the parlor was very small and the crowd so much larger than could handle itself unguided, it was necessary to have several members of the Community on hand at all times to keep order and the crowd moving. The throng continued through the day and until late that night. Early the next morning the line formed again. At a quarter to eight it was necessary to refuse admission to any more so the casket could be closed and the remains taken to the University Chapel of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for the Requiem Mass and burial service.

Friends and clients lined either side of the road as the hearse bore the remains to the church. The body of the church was packed with people before the casket arrived. Many cried openly as if Brother had been father or mother to them.

THESE TWO HEARTS

The High Mass was sung by Father Joseph Gallagher, C.S.C., then Superior of the Community House. As a rule no sermon is preached at the funeral of one of our Members, but the Provincial, Father Charles O'Donnell, felt impelled to preach. He mounted the pulpit amidst a heavy silence. His face was set with the solemnity of the moment. After a brief pause, during which Father seemed to look far beyond his audience, he began to speak in his rich, clear voice:

"Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

"I am sure that if the dead could speak, it is something happy he would say. He was so wise and so sincere, his humanity was so broad, his piety was so plain and practical,—it is difficult to see how even the great change which death is could much alter the man we know. With all his wisdom and his years, he was but a simple, good child, and he fell asleep a tired child, in the arms of God. It must be that if he could tell us something of what he knows further than we know, it would be a glad word and sure that all is well, that our faith and hope are fulfilled, and charity faileth not. In his own bright and original way he would say this, from a vantage which must be close to the Sacred Heart.

"What a wonderful thing, my friends, this funeral is! To the eyes of the world we gather merely about the mortal remains of an old man whose life was of no great moment, no special service to his fellowman. His, no distinction of birth, or wealth, or education, as the world sees it. He wrote nothing, he invented nothing, he contributed nothing to the progress of mankind. He was a shoemaker by day, and sometimes a nurse by night. Yet his name was known to thousands, many of whom came in the course of a year to visit him; the notice of his death is carried by the public press throughout the land, and the religious family of which he was a member unites to give him all the honor within

THESE TWO HEARTS

our power to bestow. For the past two days the faithful in a constant stream have approached his bier and touched their rosaries and medals to his hands, or stood in rapt devotion, looking at his plain and peaceful face.

“What is the secret of this distinction, what is the heart of this mystery? Is it our sentiment and credulity, or was there rather something in him and his life to awaken and warrant this high regard? The answer is not a new one, as the terms of the problem itself are familiar in the history of God’s men. There is a distinction that is moral and spiritual. It is the highest of all distinctions and it is attainable by the lowliest, nay, it is reached only by those who have learned of Christ to be meek and humble of heart. And such a one was our Brother Columba, and of such is the kingdom of heaven.

“His story, of which the world would make so little, is a story of divine romance. A club-footed child, the son of poor parents, he received scant schooling, working at an early age in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. The doors of opportunity were closed to him, all but one. His parents at the outset of his career, could give him only one key, but it was the key to the kingdom of heaven; it was the faith that St. Patrick brought to Ireland, and St. Columba nourished, and that thousands of the Irish race kept when all else was lost. And with that inheritance the young lad in the coal mines of Pennsylvania was rich. Whatever his social or physical disabilities, he could move along the best of the ages, and his crippled feet need not stumble on the road to heaven.

“It was early evident, that was the road he must travel. From the age of fourteen, he said himself, he felt a special call to serve God in religion. But not till twelve years later were his footsteps guided, through strange and devious ways, guided he believed by the direction of the Blessed Virgin, to Notre Dame and Holy Cross. And here for nearly fifty

THESE TWO HEARTS

years he had no doubts he had come where God wanted him to be. He offered himself to go on the foreign missions, he offered himself to go to Molokai to assist Father Damien among the lepers. Superiors assigned him to work in the shoeshop as the Community cobbler. And there he remained and worked till in the course of time and the providence of God the cobbler's shop itself became a shrine. The humble shoemaker had somehow learned to mend immortal souls.

"The process of his learning is not all mystery. Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart, said One whose words were all that mattered to the Brother shoemaker. St. Joseph, his special patron, lived and died a carpenter. The son of God Himself sanctified manual labor by laboring. High purpose, great intention can accompany simple action, and lo! the story is told. Who shall fathom the depth of his union with God in those hours of common work, far away from the false values of the world? What lessons he learned from the Divine Master that gave a sanction and a power to his own example and his words when later the world made a pathway to his door! The day came when the obscurity of this hidden life was brought to an end, and the simple working Brother shed a lustre all his own on surroundings that were by many other claims distinguished.

"If he did not actually initiate at Notre Dame, he strongly and actively promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart, a devotion which thirty-three years ago had not the general favor it has now. His efforts were crowned with a peculiar success. He lived to see, as he said only a few days ago on his deathbed, he lived to see all Notre Dame a shrine of the Sacred Heart. The Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart were never separated in his own devotion. He made with his own hands and distributed thirty thousand badges of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Great works are sometimes very simple in the mode of their realization. It

THESE TWO HEARTS

somehow came to him that the badge of the Sacred Heart could be the vehicle of the devotion itself. It is interesting to note in the life of St. Margaret Mary, to whom this special devotion was first revealed as an apostolate, that from the very start her great concern was for an image that could be put in circulation, and it is interesting to note further that the earliest clients of the Sacred Heart, at Paray-le-Monial, two hundred and fifty years ago, carried about their person little images of the Sacred Heart.

"It is not my purpose to discuss in detail Brother Columba's Apostolate of devotion to the Sacred Heart. It was his life. Within the past year he said, with the humorous simplicity which kept him so sane and human, 'I'll be dying one of these days, and maybe they'll be putting something about me in *THE SCHOLASTIC*. You can tell them to say there was an old shoemaker at Notre Dame, and he had a devotion to the Sacred Heart, and there seem to have been some cures.' In those few words he wrote his autobiography. *Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart*. Some may think it timidity, some may regard it as the characteristic conservatism of religious and ecclesiastical authority that there was never an official investigation of these apparently supernatural results. Be that as it may, the good he did cannot be undone, nor his life unlived, nor the glory of the servants of God perish, nor the works of God come to naught. A thousand years with Him are as a day, and He will not suffer His holy ones to see corruption.

"The body of our beloved Brother Columba will be laid to rest in our little Community cemetery, a body worn by toil and by secret suffering and by long nightly vigils nursing the sick. His soul, we trust already face to face with God. And we are minded as we lay him down to well-earned rest of that great company of simple hardworking religious who like himself desired only the last and lowest place. He goes to join Brother Alfred, the bricklayer, who raised the walls

THESE TWO HEARTS

of this very church, and Brother Neil and Brother Augustus who went from their tailor's bench to Paradise, and Brother Charles the good carpenter who built for himself an anchorhold in heaven, and Brother Augustine, the excellent baker, upon whose death the venerable Father Sorin wrote one of his most charming and beautiful circular letters. Spiritually and materially they have been pillars of our Community life. They are the true mediaevalists in a modern day which has lost that sense of eternity, the soul of the ages of faith. We cannot but mourn their passing and pray God to raise up others in their stead. Praise and appreciation of them is no reflection on priests and Brothers whose labor has been that of teaching and prefecting and directing the work of others. Simply, this latter kind of work has full human recognition. But the lowly religious at his workbench, happy though he is in the peace of his hidden life, seldom finds, as he seldom seeks, rewards that are short of eternal beatitude.

"And this is the reward we ask for our beloved dead this morning. Our words are carried on the winds away. All is vanity except to love God and serve Him only. Opinions of men are changing fashions, fame does not long survive, even the reputation of holiness may grow dim and drift into oblivion. God alone endures, and the immortal spirit of man. Over this good and holy religious are said the prayers that are offered for all departed Christians, be they saint or sinner. The rest is with God. There is only one future for us all, not a future of time, for that is nothing; but the future that is eternity. Toward that we are hurrying. God grant we may learn from this humble and noble life to give their proper value to all the things that concern us till the things concerning us have reached their end. Have they reached their end or rather only a more glorious beginning in the death of Brother Columba? We do not know. We do know we leave him safe in the keeping of the Sacred