

A Sacrament of the Night

BY MADGE C. JENISON

IT was a just estimate of Mr. Taneyhill, made by the girl who taught dancing at the settlement, that he was one of those people you wanted to call up by telephone whenever you heard a good story or anything pleasant happened to you. People called him Monsieur Sunshine, and he was the most popular man in the house. All the residents liked him. He never shirked; he was never cross; he always had something to tell you; he was always enjoying himself. He had no favorites; or rather, everybody was his favorite. He expected every one to like him, and he was more surprised than annoyed at any one who did not.

If he enjoyed other people, he revelled in himself. One of him liked to act like a shockingly bad little boy and scandalize people, and then another of him would lean its elbows on the fence and call both the little boy and the man who was taken in, fools. Occasionally, it is true, he grew tired of being complex.

"I am seventeen men," he would say. "I wish I could be a little ten-by-eight flat like Johnson for a while. He knows just where to lay his hands on things in himself." But this was a passing mood; commonly Monsieur Sunshine's existence was a play in which he was both actor and audience.

He had called himself a socialist when he came to the settlement. After a time he settled down to anarchy. It was too complicated being a socialist, he said; he couldn't tell which kind of a socialist he was; he decided in favor of no government at all. He rose up, indeed, and smote all established things. He expressed himself as being not at all sure of heaven; he did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, or the sonnet form; and he had his own ideas of the holy ordinance of matrimony. He had left college because he held it an out-

rage to be asked to do a thing because Shakespeare had done it. When he really believed and when his violence was the relish of a new rôle, it was not always possible to tell. It would seem that an iconoclast so wholesale as he must come to a kind of seriousness and intensity; but it was in this that Mr. Taneyhill was most rare and alluring. His problems sat lightly upon him, and he skipped from crag to crag of the precarious intellectual life of the settlement with gay feet. He thought, but, as it seemed, always with flippancy. He liked to say that all he wanted out of life was to come into some money and go after a good time.

There is no zest in saying a thing like that to any one who agrees with you; nor, on the other hand, in being unconventional with any one as red-shirted as yourself. So, the more Pharisaic his listener was, the more horrific Mr. Taneyhill became. Dr. Sarah Pomatier had a niece who came to dinner twice a week and conducted some evening clubs. She had been very carefully reared and took herself rather heavily, and Mr. Taneyhill had brought her several times to the state of the fretful porcupine where each particular hair stood on end. She was an elegant, contained girl—"probably cud-chewing," Mr. Taneyhill said of her the first time he saw her,—and he drew her by the irresistible force of the unknown. We found him one night sitting on the bridge with her discussing free love in a ladylike manner. He used to insist after that occasion that she crossed herself whenever he went by.

It was he who told us that his family had scarcely known what to do with him when he left college. They felt vaguely that he was in a diseased condition, but worth saving; and they took him to California for the winter. The winter was not a success, since he was unable

to persuade his sister to smoke, his mother to take her servants out of uniforms, or his father to turn over two street-railways to the municipality. One of the things to which he pinned his faith was the good of trying to make something beautiful; and so he came to Stratford House to spend an artsful and craftsful winter, hoping perhaps incidentally to get his bearings and grow up into a real man. You would think that a man of twenty should have passed beyond bookbinding and settled down to something more momentous. Dr. Pomatier's niece said as much to him.

"You would think so," said Taneyhill, as if he were reflecting deeply.

I think he admired Miss Pomatier for her scorn of him; they agreed perfectly in that. The pungency of it braeced something in him that was lax. There are some people whom, even though they ruffle you, you cannot help establishing as criterions of your conduct. At first it had seemed to him that through it all, they were friends; but there grew up between them a coldness. Taneyhill accepted this unique situation with interest, and with something as near to dismay as he could come about anything of the kind.

"If I were the sort of man who calls for the *Intermezzo*, and *The Reveries of a Bachelor* were my favorite book, we'd get along nicely," he explained.

Taneyhill had not been many months at the settlement before the community as a community came to the next stage beyond liking him and became interested in him. The detachment with which he studied himself—that alone would have caused him to be regarded with attention. About Christmas-time, when Mr. Cornell, the probation officer, went abroad suddenly, and the city officials asked him to put some one in his own place, no one was greatly surprised that he asked Mr. Taneyhill to take the appointment for six months. It is the mission of wise people in the settlements to help the fortunate to help the miserable; and again to help the miserable to help the fortunate. It seems a far-fetched need, that of a heavy heart, yet how is it that this perpetual summer of the soul, this lightness of

spiritual touch, brings a man to waste and desert places? Mr. Taneyhill accepted the appointment at once and without question as if he had awaited it; as if he had himself felt the approach of some spiritual disease from which this experience was to rescue him. It was pleasant to think of all that volatile gayety coming into the seats of crime, and it was believed that there lay in this boy, moreover, a sane wisdom which would guide him to serve others well.

It is solemn business watching the disintegration of attributes in the nature of a man. After a few months the light temper in Mr. Taneyhill seemed to grow frail; then shrivel up and give way. Sometimes he came home with eyes like those of a man who has been too much in the sun. Instead of sallying forth in splendid raiment to keep up a train of social engagements, he would sit all evening wound up in a chair in the living-room, smoking innumerable cigarettes and listening silently to any easy-going talk that was going forward; some panting pain seemed in these times to grow quiet in him. It was apparent from his occasional outbursts of vehement speech—for he grew more and more quiet—that the impulse to make merry was silenced for the time by the desire to understand that with which he did battle. It had come upon him suddenly, the fulness of the world's agony; and whereas he had been satisfied hitherto with an economic solution of poverty, he began to see that there must be some reason, some use, in things so universal as misery and the rebellion against it. "What good, O Lord, what good can come?" This was his cry. Those who had been active in putting him into the position of probation officer, watched him gravely; they had wanted to temper his heart, not crucify it.

The shadows about his eyes grew deeper. He began to read omnivorously. There was always a book in his pocket. He used to lie at full length on the couch in the living-room with his chin in his hands, and read poetry, and ask us what we thought of it. Mr. Cornell was detained in England, and Mr. Taneyhill continued in the appointment of probation officer. They said at the county jail that he was a better man in the

place than Mr. Cornell had been. A few judges began to turn over to him, on probation, older criminals. He had a way of saying, "See here, what are you fellows going to do now?" and looking a man squarely between the eyes, which gave him influence. Sometimes he said ugly, heartless things; this was the most surprising part of the reincarnation of Monsieur Sunshine—the extremities of a nature swinging free.

It was one night in early June that Mrs. Slupsky sent for him. He was called to the telephone from dinner. It was plain how much he must have dreaded this summons and dwelt upon it, for when the maid spoke to him he sat stock-still, seeming to stiffen, and looked at his plate. He came back to the table slowly, glancing from one to another of those near him with desperate, glittering eyes.

"Adelia Slupsky has sent for me," he said.

The silence settled quickly about the table. Slupsky's had been one of the cases about which Mr. Taneyhill had talked most. There had been little that was good to tell of Slupsky, except of his love for his wife and of a hearty generosity that accords well with love. He had come back to Taneyhill's notice again and again; now the tawdry, fluctuating story was to draw hideously to its end. It had been part of the settlement talk for months. Taneyhill tried to help the Slupskys in the trial, but a jury does not consider evidence that a man has good moments and that a woman loves him, when the evidence of murder is clear. Every one had known for a month that the man was to hang; but coming in upon the chattering dinner hour—this remembrancer of disgraceful death—it fell upon the heart with horror. Mr. Taneyhill stood there gripping the back of his chair blindly, his teeth clenched; he really looked as if he were going to faint away. Miss Pomatier, seeing him so unsteady, leaned her elbows on the table, watching him.

"I'll go with you if you will let me," she said. It was the first time she had spoken so kindly to him in many months.

There is nothing hazardous, or even out of the common at a settlement, in spending the night with a stricken wom-

an; yet every one felt more or less dimly, the presence of a tremendous crescendo of circumstance, as if the witnessing of tragedy had become in itself a deeper tragedy. A man has one support for all crucial instances. Mr. Cleves brought him a glass of wine. Miss Clarke helped him into his coat, talking to him quietly by the doorway. He went off somewhat more calmly.

He went along the streets through the warm, noisy night, wondering passionately why fate had chosen him at this time for this purpose. What can a great denial give to a faltering soul to grasp? He found Mrs. Slupsky not alone. It is to those who have impressed us with a sense of power that we turn in times of need. Mrs. Slupsky had seen her husband for a few moments at six o'clock. The parting had been a broken, halting one, closely watched by officers, lest she should provide him with some means of cheating justice. On his part it had gone through with a dogged calm, which was the best virtue the poor man could muster to help her then; on hers, with tears, and trembling clasping of hands, and touching of lips. In the blind return home, her mind could see only two people besides her husband; they made up her failing world. She had caught at these two remaining things where everything else seemed drifting off into eternal and shoreless seas, and had telephoned from a drug-store she passed to ask these two people to come.

Sister Mary Basil had come first. Taneyhill found her there. She greeted him with the downcast eyes with which a nun meets men. The woman on the bed engrossed them both too entirely to make it possible that there should be any sense of personality between them, even if the obliteration of personality which comes with the abandonment of personal will to the Church, and which makes of a nun and a priest a symbol, had been a thing less real. The poor girl had employed a kind of strength on the cars and the street. It had often seemed to Taneyhill that she had never made up her mind to the reality of the outcome. Now her grief was terrible to behold. Her marriage was less than two years old; the room in which they were, still bore a bridal



Drawn by Lucius W. Hitchcock

HE ADMIRER MISS POMATIER FOR HER SCORN OF HIM

and festival look, with its lace curtains, an unspeakable varnished table, a gold chair, and a ruffled bedspread with great pink roses. Mrs. Slupsky had been a dressmaker. She was a dainty, slender girl, too frail to meet terrible things. She lay there trembling and weeping. Her mind in trial took a sharpness; the long train of reasoning—futile and barren—by which she had braced her hope, exhibited itself. She cried out, as she could find words, upon God's justice. She had never done anything wrong—not very wrong—not to be hanged for. Adolph was a great deal better man than his father—every one said that. His father had done awful things—worse than to kill a man like Berdrovsky, who had always hated him and tried to cheat him. It was worse to hate for many black years, was it not, than to hate for one single moment, though in that moment hate consumed you and made you strike to kill. She spoke, too, of their wooing; even in her agony she remembered the keenness of her triumph over Katherine Murphy. Bright nights of dreams came back to her, and all the train of simple events which made up her romance. Sister Mary Basil let her talk on, answering her gravely and trying to turn her mind from these "wayward earthly things" to other thoughts of peace. Somewhere along this man's life the Church had thrown her gentle, inflexible arms about him—this was the comfort Sister Mary Basil had to offer, meaning so much to them both. Taneyhill watched her dumbly.

Sometimes there were long intervals in which Mrs. Slupsky wept and was silent. These were the most terrible. Taneyhill felt as if she were sinking spiritually. This silent bleeding of the spirit was terrifying, as if her soul must die gasping. As the night wore on, they prepared something for her to eat. Before the toast and poached egg and cup of tea went to Adelia, the nun put a sleeping-potion into the cup. Mrs. Slupsky had not eaten all day. They sat on each side of the bed and urged her to eat that she might have strength to meet the next day and the days that were to come. Soon she fell asleep. The nun dozed in a chair beside the sleeper, her hands upon her beads, her

face turned toward the crucifix which she had hung from the foot of the bed opposite Mrs. Slupsky.

Taneyhill sat looking from one to the other, considering them with a mind on fire. It seemed to him that both of them were of vital import—that all the scene was being stamped into him, as is a scene of love. Even this woman so set aside, as he had thought, from the vital things of life—had not she, too, tasted deeply where he had forever stood looking on? It came to him that he had been far from the two things of great influence, suffering and God, to which they had drawn near. The nun's face, with its heavy-lidded, long-established repose—the face of an unshaken soul to which everything is sure; akin to the face of death; and, as it came to him in a flash of insight, like the face of the dead in this too, as if she had seen something very beautiful;—he dwelt upon it with devouring eyes. What had her life been but a constant association with a blameless life of pain? Was not the crucifix, the symbol of victory to which as she slept she pressed her lips, and meekly bowed before it with the delicate dawn,—was it not, too, the incarnation of agony? "The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"—the whole symbolism of the Christian church lay in that, that there is but a step between God and pain. There came into his mind quite simply, word by word, almost as if some one had pronounced them with solemnity at his elbow, the words of a soul in great agony which he had read a few weeks before: "The love of God is the only explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world. Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art?"

It seemed to him in that hour that suffering is a blessed thing, that by it the heart always grows richer. This life of the ideal which he chased—even that came to perfection through suffering. He thought of the nations—the Russians, the Poles—who are doing the great things in art, Do they not know well to weep tears of bitter flavor? His mind turned to all the questions which had assailed him in the past months—all the rebellion against the law, the state, the punishment of crime, the conditions of

labor, against all the conditions of life which exist among those with whom the realities of his own life had been. And he answered himself that tragedy is never mean, but only meanly borne; that it drapes a man in purple, though he knows it not. It seemed to him then that the unhappy poor, the criminal, the condemned, are those who have the most profit from life, who come to the finest response, who live with the most wealth. And those who dwell in the houses of princes, only as birth or death or unhappy love, only as pain and grief touch them, do they prosper.

"God, God, support us all," he whispered.

The little Adelia moved in her rigid sleep; her hands clasped together; her slight features convulsed. She had lived more in these two years than he in all his days. And the nun in her coif and bands—the pure brows, the peacefully closed eyes, the quiet lips bore witness to him of something perfected which Adelia but blindly knew. Indeed, it seemed to him as he strained his eyes from one to another of these two women, both infinitely below him in intelligence, that they had between them, and that he through them, had borne witness to the ultimate things of human experience.

He leaned upon his hand, trying to prepare himself for the time when Mrs. Slupsky should awaken. His eyes fell upon the prayer-book on the table. He had gone to books; here was what some men had said in their most poignant hours. He turned it over, drawing nearer to a prayer before; he had but listened, with an artist's ear; the stately language had given him pleasure. Now the words of these old monks and martyrs touched him with suggestion; these symbols of emotions so distantly known became sensate things, beating with life. The justice of God! the mercy of God! Well, surely in either case there must be some fortunate issue for this unhappy girl. These set prayers were ways given to the heart to find utterance in dumb hours of agony. Joy can find words, but grief goes speechless and is mutely borne. Through the night he read and thought, turning from time to time to the two women before him.

About four o'clock Adelia awakened. She started up with a gasping breath, a new birth into a life of grief, and stretched out her hands to him with one of the quick girlish gestures which made it plain why Slupsky had loved her so well as almost to change into another man. Sister Mary Basil did not waken. Taneyhill drew up his chair beside the girl's bed; great depths of a tender heart spoke in his attitude and gesture. He took her hand and began to talk of a plan which he had for her. All the sweetness and strength of the boy and the man came to his aid. She was to go to a new scene; he knew some people, the Martins, in their home in the mountains, who needed some sewing. There would be the sky, and children, and the songs of birds, and banks of fragrant flowers tossing in the wind. He spoke of the weeks he had spent there the summer before, of the walks upon the silent heath, and drives into the gusty, ravishing twilight; of the wide fireplace about which they sat, of the long piazza looking off across the indeterminate splendor of the valley. He talked on of two little golden-haired girls who pressed up close beside you as you sat before the fire and laid their slim, tender hands upon yours and, as it seemed, upon your unquiet heart. The girl's face grew almost happy. She stirred restlessly as if she were wrong to be at peace. After she came back they would find a new room for her—another place. Would she care to take with her, one of his boys who needed watching? He wanted her help.

She lay staring at the pane of glass and at the morning light breaking in the east.

"It must come soon," she said, quietly, and took her watch from under her pillow. It was less than an hour before her husband was to die. Taneyhill's heart grew sick within him. Husband!—that word alone, he thought, bespoke a lifetime of emotion. She could probably see vividly enough the scene through which he moved; the working-girl reads these things in the morning papers. She began to tremble, face to face with the pang of death. But Taneyhill's sense of impotence of the night before was gone. He spoke to her with calm-

ness. Sister Mary Basil awakened. She made a cup of tea and bade Adelia drink it. The kettle sang upon the little stove with the gentle murmur of home. The tears rolled down the girl's cheeks heavily; as she awoke to the full sense of her agony she was shaken by silent, convulsing sobs.

"Mother of Jesus!" she cried out once. It was like the gasping of a soul that dies. Taneyhill thought dully that she would become a woman without a soul, a dead woman alive. Sister Mary Basil took her prayer-book and stood at the head of the bed, reading the prayers. It is always a ceremony, this support of the Catholic Church for its suffering children. She did not look at the girl. She seemed to have become the priest, the exhorter, not the comforter. She seemed to call for courage, not to give it. Taneyhill kept his seat beside the girl's bed, crushing her hands between his. The nun's eyes fell from the prayer-book to Adelia. She thrust the book toward Taneyhill and threw herself on her knees beside the bed, folding the shaken body in her arms as she had tried to fold the shaken soul in the arms of the Church. Taneyhill marked the place with his finger and read on in the beautiful old prayer. All the longing of the boy to succor, to support another, breathed itself into the stately medieval words.

"Renew in him, O most loving Father, whatsoever hath been corrupted by human frailty.—Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee.—I commend thee to Almighty God and commit thee to Him whose creature thou art. Lamb of God, we beseech Thee to hear us. Grant us Thy peace."

Sometimes it seems as if men and women must meet suffering in solitude; but in the bitterest pain, that which divides each human being from every other breaks asunder, and they draw near, and comfort, and lean upon each other. Taneyhill knew this to be so. Adelia grew calm, and in the hour when her husband went out into the darkness of death she experienced some joy—a kind of awful ecstasy which is not given to all who have lived. She lay passive and silent; her white lips moved with

the ancient prayers. Presently she turned her eyes toward him with a wan smile of triumph, as if she had passed through a deep place clinging upon his arm. He answered her look, wide-eyed and intent. The nun pressed the girl closer to her. The room was full of silence, and for the first time in his life it seemed to Taneyhill as if the benediction of God had been spoken over him. Shortly Adelia fell asleep. She had no morbid consciousness of ceremonies and functions yet to come. Without teaching she knew the meaning of the cry of Jesus' death—"It is finished."

Taneyhill made some arrangements with Sister Mary Basil which were to be carried out later in the day, and left them. He walked along slowly toward the settlement. Afterward he often tried to remember something he had seen, or some one he had met on this walk. He must have met people; Halsted Street is full of life at seven o'clock in the morning. His mind had taken a numbness. He did not think; he was consumed by a simple and single feeling. His heart sang as the sons of the morning; strangely enough—and even the strangeness of it did not appear to him, so unharassed was he by the customary subtlety of his thoughts—strangely enough, he was but glad—glad for his parents who had made him what he was; who had given him a place in the world; had so taught him and provided for him as to save him from crime; for the conventional life against which he had rebelled so vigorously—that had formed him, too. One after another the influences under which he had lived, rose before him; lastly, Sister Mary Basil of the Sacred Heart, and Adelia Slupsky, wife of the murderer, through whom he had learned new things in the passing night.

Settlement residents have none of those virtues which from their kinship, may be called from the one which heads the catalogue, the early-rising virtues. No one was yet abroad at the house; the living-room was empty. He paused a moment, wondering vaguely if he could sleep before he went to the office. As he stood looking at the clock, he saw on the corner of the mantelpiece a glass of milk and a plate of crackers, put

there apparently for some late comer, possibly for himself. The cream had gathered thickly on top of the glass; it had stood there all night. But Taneyhill did not touch it; he stood frowning at a little volume of Swinburne which lay beside this kindly feast. It was one of the books which he had bound during his first winter at the settlement; in that far-distant time it had expressed his deepest emotion. Even now in his detachment he was touched by its beauty. He took it up and turned it over, remembering the pleasure he had taken in the design and tooling. The book had disappeared mysteriously one night after he had been exhibiting it, and pointing out to all who would give him audience its exceeding excellencies. He had often wondered whether it had disappeared; now he wondered whence it had come.

It fell open like a book much used; he saw that it was cruelly marked. He remembered to have marked it, but not like this. He leaned upon the mantelpiece, turning over the pages and delighting with an old delight. On the fly-leaf were two lines and a date of a few months before. Taneyhill read them over twice, and then he stood there holding the book in his hand and looking at the floor, motionless.

"Oh, dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell,

With me it is not, Is it with thee, well?"
And as he stood thus, he heard a noise at the door, and looking up, saw Miss

Pomatier. She paused in the doorway; he was especially conscious as he looked at her of the eternal Zeus-like calm which seemed always to envelop her.

"Ah, Monsieur Sunshine, you have come," she began, but went no farther. Her eyes fell upon the book in his hand. There passed over her face a flash of feeling. It took fire. Her eyes met his bravely, but with a look of sickened pride. She seemed about to speak; then she walked to the window and sat down upon the couch, looking out silently into the bricked court. Taneyhill knew well that the truth was one of her detestable fetishes. He stood looking at her; he was very tired; his elbow, resting on the mantelpiece, trembled.

It was only a moment until Dr. Pomatier came briskly in. She patted him on the shoulder; asked him, without waiting to be answered, if he would have breakfast with them; whether he was going to the country that afternoon; if anybody had told him that Prince Schlitlofkin had come,—bracing him with a stream of pleasant talk. His white face made her think that the Slupsky episode must have been bad.

Miss Pomatier stood up stately and tall, her face as white as Taneyhill's own; she would see Anna, she said, about the coffee. Dr. Pomatier drew up a chair for Taneyhill and pushed him into it.

"Don't be too kind to me," faltered Taneyhill, like the big boy he was. "I can't stand it. I've had too much."

Beauty

BY MARGARET RIDGELY PARTRIDGE

THERE'S a bloom that's blown over the meadow,
There's a star-light drawn down from the skies,
There's a lyric of love in the throat of the dove,
There's the song of the swan ere he dies.

In the God-gifted heart of the Poet
There is beauty akin to all these,
When his soul is in tune to the laughter of June,
Or the deep cadenced voice of the seas.