

The Blind Little Girl of Bilis

(Hamlet within the missionary sphere of Baguio)



IT IS true to say that upon this earth love is nurtured on sorrow, and that the most perfect definition of the word love is "Chant of Sorrow."

Tinaya lived with her old mother at Bilis, but she had never seen the azure-tinted peaks, nor the green hills (sometimes overcast by clouds, at other times lighted up by the dazzling tropical sun), nor the immense table-lands streaming with purple and gold at sunset, nor the vast ocean with its silver-colored water, ever in mysterious and continual motion.

Poor Tinaya was blind!

Whilst her more fortunate companions were enjoying themselves dancing Igorote dances under waving banana trees, little Tinaya lingered in the depth of her extreme solitude.

Whenever she heard people talking of the beauties of nature she instinctively opened her eyes full wide to contemplate the light, the sky and nature in all its grandeur and charm, but alas! it was night, endless night to her.

And again when she heard the voice of her old mother and loved ones, she stretched forth her hands in powerless gesture—if she could only see them with her heart!... Oh, she alone knew how sad it was to love and not to be able to see!...

It seemed at times to this poor

child that she was so isolated, so lonely on earth, that day succeeded day in utter sadness, bereft of delight in everything, that all her miserable existence passed by without joy, without hope, and that one day she too would die without ever realizing and satisfying her heart's desire....

But a day came when "Apo Padi" (the Father) passed that way and stopped at Tinaya's house.

How she listened with open ears, and for the first time in her life, to things so new to her, and spoken in such genial, kind, compassionate encouraging, lifegiving, sincere and truthful words by God's minister! Tears filled the eyes and a thrill of joy went through the heart of this wild little Igorote girl.

The Father went away, but not for long, for he soon returned to speak to her again of those great Catholic truths which she had not forgotten. A third time he will come back to tell her about "Apo Dios", Whose Heart is more tender than that of the best of mothers, and Who is looking at her from Heaven, Who knows her sufferings, and Whose ardent and sole desire is to adopt her as His child. Then the Father reminds her of Jesus Christ Who died on the cross for love of us, and Who is longing to come and dwell in her heart.

Why did nobody ever speak to her about the truths of our holy Religion? Of this Father Who is in

Heaven, Who sees all, Who pities all, Who loves, comforts and consoles us in all our trials? Oh, when she becomes a Christian our good God will come to her with the same immense tenderness as made Him die for us on the cross. Then she will converse with Him and He will respond to all her queries, she will tell Him how sad it is to be blind, and He will understand because He knows all our human frailties...., she will add that she has such little pleasure on earth, and He will enrich her soul with untold happiness, of which she has hitherto known nothing, and of which the Gospel says: Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath the mind of man ever conceived what joys God has prepared for those who love Him"... And God will be hers for ever!... When her mother and companions are in the fields at work, she will not be alone, no, no, God will be ever near His little child to encourage and console her. The soul that has God needs nothing, for she has Heaven on earth! This blind little girl whose soul was enamoured of God, encircled almost by the halo of ever increasing delight at the more complete knowledge of her future happy life, will, no doubt, long for with all her strength and with a faithful, trustful heart will sigh after Baptism.

If ever a heart burned with a desire of receiving the Sacrament of Regeneration, it was surely the heart of Tinaya. When the saving waters of Baptism flowed on her

forehead she was in a kneeling attitude with hands crossed and trembling on her breast, her lips moved in uninterrupted prayer, which the Father did not understand, but which must have gone straight to the throne of God.

And just as from the hillsides glistening with dewy diamonds at sunrise, arises a soft haze which mounts to the sky, so from Tinaya's shining soul the first incense of prayer ascends to the mercy seat of the Most High. God had entered the soul of this blind little Igorote girl, God was henceforth to be the guest of this simple and pure heart, God was to speak to her, to keep her company, to console her, to be all in all to her, never again to leave her destitute of His presence!

Now she is called Marcelina. Every day she says the Rosary on the set of beads given her by the Father. This rosary is a family souvenir which was given to him on the day of his departure from Europe, but he deprived himself of what he prized so much in response to a mysterious voice speaking within his soul, and gave his precious rosary to his first conquest at Bilis: the dear little girl.

Every day Marcelina says the fifteen mysteries on this very same rosary for the conversion of her fellow country men. As the days go by her soul is becoming more beautiful and peaceful, because her best friend is Jesus, Who alone can fully satisfy the hitherto infinite void which she felt in the depths of her

heart.

Lately the Father happened to call at her house to speak her in a gentle tone on perseverance, the love of Jesus, and of Heaven which will one day be her palace and her reward, and as he was giving his parting

blessing she took hold of his hand saying with a trembling voice: "A-po Padi, I have only one desire . . . take me once to Baguio, to the grand church, that I may feel that I am for once in our dear Lord's house."

Who Found America ?

While Columbus is usually credited with the discovery of America, it is certain that Cabot, sailing out of Bristol, beat him to the mainland, and it has also been claimed that the Norsemen, sailing via Greenland, had reached the American coast some centuries before that.

A new theory, to the effect that it was the Irish who discovered America, has now, however, been advanced by Father Divine, a Canadian antiquarian, and Monsignor Evers of New York.

According to Father Divine, maps recently discovered in the Vatican show that the whole coast of North Ameri-

ca, from Nova Scotia to Florida, was known as Ireland the Great in the year 1000.

Monsignor Evers, also basing himself on Vatican records, ascribes the discovery of the New World to Saint Brendan, the navigator, an Irish Bishop of the ninth century, who, he says, passed down the New England Coast as far as Delaware in the course of a missionary voyage.

Supporters of the new theory also point to the similarity of the famous Round Tower at Newport to the ancient towers in Ireland.

My Good Right Hand

I fell into grief and began to complain ;
I looked for a friend, but I sought him in vain :
Companions were shy and acquaintances were cold,
They gave me good counsel, but dreaded their gold.

"Let them go"! I exclaimed. "I've a friend at my side
To lift me and aid me whatever betide ;
To trust to the world is to build on the sand ;—
I'll trust but in Heaven and my good right hand.

My courage revived in my fortune's despite,
And my hand was as strong as my spirit was light ;
It raised me from sorrow, it saved me from pain,
It fed me and clad me again and again.

The friends who had left me came back every one,
And darkest advisers looked bright as the sun :
I need them no more, as they all understand,—
I thank thee, I trust thee ; my good right hand.