

Visitors Criticism, CIO Convention

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*Summary: Collection of little stories: visitors, helping Tamar with homework, praying to St. Joseph for money, reading *Pelle the Conqueror*, and attending a CIO convention. Affirms her “faith in the tremendous spiritual capacities of man.” (DDLW #336).*

DAY AFTER DAY

We are having so many visitors this month that we sleep in shifts. For a while we put up four of them in one of the Bowery hotels but even that was too expensive,—thirty cents a night each. The place was clean, they said, but noisy. Our visitors are Bob Walsh, head of the **Catholic Worker** activities in England, John Cogley, editor of the Chicago Catholic Worker, Martin Paul, also Chicago; Ray Nagle and Larry Heeney and Mike Strasser, all from Milwaukee; Dave Dunne and Anna Echele from St. Louis. The last two were on the farm, not here in town more than a week.

Last night I read the third book of a series about Therese Neumann, the German mystic, by a German writer. There was a rumor going the rounds that she has been confined recently to a concentration camp because she stated that Hitler was possessed by the devil. The book I read was most impressive, increasing the joy and thanksgiving and awe in one’s heart at the thought of Christ’s gift of Himself to us in Holy Communion.

Homework

Tamar is going to school on Mott street this year. I am making no speaking trips and welcome this opportunity we have to be together There is Mass together in the morning, a brief lunch at noon, and after school there is often time for a walk down to the park or the river or the library. It makes us both very happy. I check over her homework at night and find I have a hard time doing it myself. What is solstice, for instance? Use the words “analysis” and “allotment” in sentences. The only sentences I could think of were provocative. “An analysis of Fascism shows that it is anti-Catholic,” was one. “Has Mussolini given allotments to the widows of the men who were killed in Ethiopia?” But I am afraid those sentences would not sound like Tamar.

Criticism

There was a peculiarly delicate work of mercy to be performed today and this evening I was thinking conversationally with St. Joseph: "That work was performed for you, St. Joseph. I have 'given away an onion.' Please won't you concentrate on our very bad plight right now and nudge somebody so that they will remember to send us some money for our bills?" But I was ashamed at this give and take idea and did not pursue the conversation.

Undoubtedly he is helping us, as he sees fit. I shall keep asking him for help every day, knowing that it will come. I do not need to boast and say, "That was a specially hard job. You must repay me."

David Gordon was in the other day telling us with his peculiar Hebrew intensity how we all deserved to go to hell, me especially, and accusing us of self glorification, pride and self love. Although I do not find many points of agreement with him in his other attitudes, I must admit that we are apt to have such sins hidden deep within us. Criticism never comes a bit amiss. If it is unjust, then we probably deserve it on some other count and are not getting it.

"Pelle"

Looking over *Pelle the Conqueror* again, I still find it the best proletarian novel I have ever read. Anderson-Nexo has become a Communist, they say, but this novel was written back in 1910 or thereabouts and is about the cooperative movement in Denmark. That does not make it sound very interesting, but the thousand pages of the life of Pelle, taking him through his childhood on the farm, his apprenticeship in town, his labor organizing in Copenhagen, and finally his building up of a cooperative group are the best reading I have seen for some time. The book teems with characters, and the description of life in the "Ark," a huge ramshackle tenement, reminds me very much of life on Mott Street.

Whenever I see books of James Farrell mentioned, I think we ought to read Pelle. The contrast between Studs Lonergan and Pelle is like that of darkness and daylight.

Which reminds me again of Gordon's criticism that we exalt the proletariat. If we thought that man is such as Farrell describes him, we would indeed feel pretty hopeless. But the thought of Pelle, glowing with hope, with the desire for sacrifice, his great heart burning with love for his fellows, is an encouragement.

We believe man to be "little less than the angels." But we also know that he is capable of falling lower than the lowest beast. It is because we have faith in the tremendous spiritual capacities of man that we are doing this work.

C.I.O.

Attended the CIO state convention at the Center Hotel, the first to be held. Such conventions are always different in New York to those held in any other city. With all the rush of union activity today, there is little cohesion and the meeting gave all the appearance of being what most meetings are, disorganized rather than organized strength. Michael Quill was there, seemingly much disturbed by the accusation before the Dies Committee that he was a member of the Communist party. He showed his disturbance like a child. Although I am not sympathetic with his way of rabble-rousing at strike meetings (the crowd loves him) I do think that he has done a good job of organizing the transit workers, a job which needed to be done. I heard him speak at the Hippodrome once and he spoke of the barricades and the clenched fist and the crowd roared its joy. Brophy and Bridges are quieter speakers by far and do not get such plaudits, but they are far more effective. Of my own knowledge I do not know whether or not Quill is a Communist (the credibility of witnesses may be doubted) but I do know that he is a force for either good or evil and in those things he is doing well he should be helped.

Also as Peter Favre, the great Jesuit, said: "It is necessary that one who desires to be serviceable to heretics of this present age should hold them in great affection and love them very truly, putting out of his heart all thoughts and feelings that tend to their discredit. The next thing he must do is to win their good will and love by friendly intercourse and converse on matters about which there is no difference between us, taking care to avoid all controversial subjects that lead to bickering and mutual recrimination. The things that unite us ought to be the first ground of our approach, not the things that keep us apart." M. H. Fabri *Monuments*, P. 400.

After the meeting I had supper with John Brophy and we talked for an hour and a half of the labor movement and the Church, of Berdyaev's books, "Christianity and Class War," and the "End of Our Time," of the new Brophy residence in Washington near the Catholic University and of how pleasant it was to be with one's children instead of just week-ending with them.