

Play by a Priest A Broadway Purifier

Remarkable Scriptural Drama That Built
a Church and in Which Only Women Appear
to Be Tried as "Great White Way" Antiseptic

The Mission Church in Roxbury, Mass., Built from the Proceeds of Father Kenzel's "Pilate's Daughter" Which After 12 Years of Doubt, the Reverend Author Finally Allowed to Become a Professional Production in the Belief That Its Influence for Good Would Be Great.



That section of Broadway known as the Gay White Way—because of its bright lights—is to have some of its insidious poisons attacked by a powerful antiseptic.

Right in the midst of the frivolous music halls and the daring Summer "girl shows," the lobster palaces and the reckless cabarets is shortly to appear the five-act Christian devotional drama called "Pilate's Daughter."

This "passion play," with a new and intensely dramatic construction, written by a Catholic priest, and the profits of whose presentation by amateurs have built a handsome church, will be produced at a Broadway theatre with a cast of professional actors.

The pleasure-seeking thousands who throng Broadway at night are ever eager for new sensations. What could be more sensational than the spectacle of our Saviour's passion and its dramatic sequel presented across the street from the gilded of New York's Summer "girl shows?"

Nobody will think of missing "Pilate's Daughter." Its lesson will percolate nightly into all the Broadway haunts dedicated to the white lights. Nobody will be able to escape it. No new and untried antiseptic could have a better opportunity to demonstrate its virtues.

There is at least one compelling dramatic device in "Pilate's Daughter" calculated to disarm the most cynical Broadway "first-nighter." He will have noticed that the roses purchased of Broadway florists quickly

wonderful facade of granite, with the four crosses in each tower, which are illuminated, send a beacon over the city to all points of the compass. This impressive facade and the great twin towers change the modest little Mission Church into a veritable cathedral, and all of this was made possible solely through the proceeds from Father Kenzel's drama, "Pilate's Daughter," produced by amateurs.

During this season "Pilate's Daughter" will be seen at a Broadway theatre, and a Catholic priest will have become a professional dramatist.

For twelve years theatrical people have sought to secure rights to this scriptural drama in order to produce it professionally, but each year Father Kenzel and his fellows seemed more and more determined to deny that use of it. Not long ago it dawned upon him that inasmuch as thousands of people made pilgrimages to the little Mission Church in Roxbury each year to witness his play, and that hundreds, after witnessing

the crucifixion, was deeply grieved and threw Him a rose as she sat in the balcony of her father's house. This rose struck the hem of Christ's robe, and the little girl felt impelled to go down and rescue it. Although thousands of the mob had trampled this rose into the street, little Claudia was amazed to find it fresh, unsoiled, unruined and fragrant. Upon returning to her mother with the rose she said:

"I have seen the Nazarene, and when He passed from out the palace court, I, from the balcony, did cast this rose beneath His feet. It touched His robe, and see, although a thousand men have trampled on it it is fresher far and lovelier than before."

Claudia's mother, the wife of Pontius Pilate, was amazed and puzzled as to why her daughter, a Roman, should take such interest in Christ, a Jew. Her explanation was simple enough. She, it seems, was one of the children regarding whom Christ said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." When questioned by her mother, Claudia says:

"At play with other children by the walls one day we saw the Nazarene and ran to Him. The men on either side thrust us back, but Christ said: 'Nay, let them come,' and so we did. He laid His hand on each of our heads and said His heavenly kingdom was for such. I love Him, and this rose shall always tell me of His love for little ones."

In this act, Rebecca, a servant in

After the crucifixion the daughter of Pilate has been taken back to Rome, and ten years later, at the age of eighteen, she is one of a party of Christians who go secretly at night in the woods of the Alban Hills, outside of Rome, to bury a child. Claudia has kept the rose all these years, and this rose has remained as fresh as it was the moment she tossed it to the feet of Christ a decade before.

With this miraculous rose Claudia brings the dead child to life. Afra, a Roman sorceress, and Leah, the vengeful daughter of the money changer, seek to kill the Christians.

In the third act is shown the Temple of Vesta and the vestal virgins. One of these virgins discovers that Claudia has been captured and is about to suffer martyrdom, and she also discovers that Claudia is an old-time playmate. This act is followed by a scene in the Mamertine Prison as Claudia, with her rose, performs wonderful miracles, such as bringing water forth from the prison walls.

The last act is in the Emperor's palace before Empress Agrippina, and is one of the most thrilling and melodramatic of scenes wherein the Roman god Jupiter is crumbled to dust by the rose, the vestal virgins are converted to Christianity, the demented Leah restored to sanity and the Empress poisoned by the sorceress, who also mortally wounds Claudia. The climax is the ascension of Claudia, daughter of Pilate, to heaven.

The coming of such a drama to Broadway has been the subject of much lively discussion among churchmen throughout the country, for it is one of the most daring scriptural dramas ever presented in a secular theatre. The cast will be made up of women who have made a success in leading parts in such religious and morality plays as "Everywoman," "The Sign of the Cross," "Ben Hur" and others. Already such actresses as Dorothy Phillips, who was Modesty in "Everywoman," and Florence St. Leonard, who was Iris in "Ben Hur," have been secured.



Leah, a Servant in the House of Pilate, Defies God and Is Rendered Insane by a Thunderbolt.

Why Sympathy Is the Best of Tonics

SOME years ago there appeared in the newspapers an open letter in which a suffering woman asked aid in securing a law to permit invalids pronounced incurable after a medical consultation to be painlessly put to death. Naturally, the letter attracted attention and reawakened the old question whether or not physicians are ever justified in shortening life.

It is of interest to note that the

writer of the letter now rejoices at the non-fulfillment of her wish. She has lived to experience now much life may hold even in the face of bodily helplessness.

She tells of having received thousands of letters from all over the world containing messages of sympathy and approbation for her daring attempt to secure a modification of present-day laws protective of life. Some of these invalids, she says, have since written her of their cure, and of their gladness that conservatism and old-fashioned legislation had intervened between themselves and their impatience. One of these correspondents, who was sure that hope was dead for her and who eagerly desired the "final" at the end of the chapter, has written of her complete recovery and how much more life now means to her.

This correspondence has proved, as might well be expected, a stimulant and a tonic to the invalid. She feels not only that her contact with others has given them a renewed interest in life, but also that even her mistaken suggestion of a revolutionary change in law has not been without its good effect, since it has drawn together in bonds of deep human sympathy many invalids.

Physicians who have commented on this woman's case agree that nothing is more stimulating and genuinely tonic to sufferers, especially those with chronic ailments, than the feeling that in spite of their own helplessness they themselves can still be helpful to others. Nothing disturbs a certain class of patients so much as to be constantly in contact with those who are in good health and strength and whom they can scarcely help but envy. To be brought into touch with those for whom they themselves can feel is a precious source of consolation and uplift.

Pity is a luxury to be enjoyed, but not human being likes to be pitied or to feel that he is an object of pity. To be conscious of some advantage in one's situation over that of others is of itself an alleviation for many sicknesses.



Afra, the Sorceress in the Temple of Vesta, Tells the Vestal Virgins of the Capture and Imprisonment of the Saviour.

it became good church members, it would be better to allow the play a wider production. It seemed to Father Kenzel that if the play could have such a wonderful influence for good in one small community it would certainly exert a greater influence for good in a large sphere, and so he finally consented to professional production.

It is a play remarkable in many ways. In the first place the cast will consist of about one hundred women—there is not one man in this cast. The leading characters in "Pilate's Daughter" are: Claudia Procles, wife of Pontius Pilate; Claudia, Pilate's daughter, about eight years old (Act I); Claudia, Pilate's daughter, ten years later (Acts II, III, IV, and V); Livia and Maxima, Roman ladies; Leah and Rebecca, servants in Pilate's house; Iris, Appia and Legia, other servants; three ghosts; Afra, a Roman sorceress; Rubia, Servia and Stella, vestal virgins; Faustina, Tullia, Antonia, Syra and Nemis, Christian women; Agrippina, wife of Tiberius Claudius Drusus Caesar, Empress of Rome; Rufilla, slave of the Empress; servants, Christians, vestals and dancers.

Father Kenzel's story is that little Claudia, the daughter of Pontius Pilate, seeing the Nazarene led to

the house of Pilate, is most impressive when she describes how she was one of the multitude who listened to Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and she was one who ate of the miraculous bread and fishes which He multiplied for the feeding of that multitude. The wife of Pontius Pilate has a feeling that her husband should not condemn Christ to death. As the mobs shout "Crucify Him!" outside, she says:

"Strange feelings surge within my soul. Deep-mourning doubts, and anxious fears, if it be true that God hath taken flesh and dwells within the Nazarene, then Pilate judges God and God will be avenged. Fatal day that Rome did ornament our house with power of life and death; more fatal still that conspirators do wring the final judgment from the lips that call me wife."

Among the servants in Pilate's house is Leah, daughter of the money changer, who was scourged by Christ and driven from the Temple. Naturally, she rejoices at the crucifixion and she mocks at Him. When chided by the wife of Pilate and asked whether she has no fear lest mercy be transformed to justice, she curses Him and defies Him, whereupon she is rendered insane by a thunderbolt. The skies grow dark, the lightning flashes, Leah seeks to kill Claudia, but the little girl holds out the miraculous rose and Leah's hand is withered. Finally, at the moment of the crucifixion there is terror in every heart, and utter darkness prevails. Those in the house of Pilate, crouching in fear, behold a vision of Christ on the cross.

Afra, the Sorceress, Pleads with Empress Agrippina to Destroy the Christians.



Rubia, a Vestal Virgin, Meets in Prison Her Christian Playmate Claudia.

wither and fade. But in this religious play he will see a rose which never loses its freshness, which not even trampling feet can soil or harm in any way—because when Pilate's compassionate little daughter threw this rose at the Divine Figure condemned in her father's court it touched the body of the Saviour.

This legend, whose origin it is difficult to determine, was the inspiration which, nearly fourteen years ago, converted the Rev. Francis L. Kenzel into a dramatist. He was a member of the Order of Redemptorists connected with the Mission Church in Roxbury, Mass., a suburb of Boston. Father Kenzel was deeply impressed with the narrative of the rose, and from that he worked out a plot for scriptural drama. He asked permission of his superiors to write such a drama, and after due consideration it was somewhat reluctantly given. The result, "Pilate's Daughter," year after year the play