

## HOODLUMS' PRIEST

(Continued)

The three men formed the Father Dismas Clark Foundation to run it.

At a breakfast attended by business, labor, and professional men, they raised \$40,000 to buy a run-down school in the midst of St. Louis' slum district. Shenker then wrote a check for another \$40,000—a no-interest loan—for renovations.

Today the house is equipped with modern kitchen, restaurant, library, recreation rooms, dormitories, barbershop, clothing store, and a nondenominational chapel.

Dominating the entrance hall is a magnificent, six-foot painting of St. Dismas. "It was done by one of the 'boys,'" said Father Clark. "He used to write bad checks!"

The house is run on charity. Neither the church nor the state contributes to its support. Although a Catholic priest, Father Clark gets 90 percent of the money and help so urgently needed to run the St. Louis home from Jews. "Jews," he explains, "have



Father Clark inspects dormitory at St. Dismas House.

a great devotion to human rights."

For all his success, Father Clark feels he is walking a tightrope. "We need \$30,000 a year to keep the house going," he said. "On top of that, we have a big mortgage to pay off. And there is not a man who comes here who is not, in a sense, a big problem."

The money shortage may soon be eased. A Hollywood studio will screen the priest's life and work. Ten percent of the profits will go to the foundation.

Father Clark looks far beyond St. Louis. He says fervently, "I will not be satisfied till I see a house such as ours in every large American city.

"We have two-and-a-half million persons in our armed forces, three-and-a-half million in our universities, and five million in prison. Building bigger and better escapeproof prisons will not solve the problem. We've got to get at the cause. That, simply, is what we are trying to do."



*I was just thinking ...*

"Dear God, help me grow old gracefully  
And without bitterness!"

It is a dreary morning and I am tired. I sit at my desk and wonder if the minor achievements of existence are worth the endless struggle. The anonymous verse pasted on a card beside my typewriter rises up before my eyes.

"Teach me to view calmly  
The changes in the fragile mechanism  
Which I have used so long."

There is a kind of miracle in the human body. I subject mine to the constant punishments, the fatigue, the headache, the over-eating, the running and climbing and standing. It is strangely wonderful that I have inhabited this shell all these years and it continues to serve with little complaint. I might profit from its example.

"Deliver me from envy  
Of young people and their happiness."

I suppose I am not yet old enough for that, but the time will come when I will remember, not with joy but in jealousy. Will

I be strong enough to be glad of remembrance, rather than unkind in the loss?

"Make me willing to accept  
Changes and new beliefs."

Perhaps that is most difficult of all. I love my rut, fearful of its variances. My creed is mine. I look askance at another. I would have been a poor pioneer, a weak crusader. I need to love the horizon, not be grateful for its distance.

"Enable me to face without protest  
Life's inevitable afternoon."

Has it come to me, or does it lie ahead? When I must relinquish the spring of my step, the firmness of my skin, can I do so gracefully?

I am tired and weary of the world around me and bored with the endless procession of petty problems. The card on my desk gives me new heart. I wish I could thank the unknown who created it. I find myself not so much tired now as merely resting.

"Then grant me a radiant sunset  
And a night of peace."

*Patty Johnson*

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