

FIVE-MINUTE'S SERMON. Seventh Sunday After Pentecost.

BAD ASSOCIATIONS. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. —Matt. 7, 15.

The false prophets, of whom our Saviour warns us to-day, are the seducers, scandalizers, who approach us in the clothing of sheep, of hypocritical dissimulation, who obtrude themselves as well meaning friends, but in reality, have in view only the destruction of our soul.

To associate with such persons, is clearly to dedicate one's soul to perdition. Truly, it was not necessary for our Saviour to warn us, for reason and the experience of life convince us, that whatever our company is, such also are we. Or is it possible to associate every day with an outcast, without becoming gradually accustomed to his faults, to love them by degrees, to adopt them finally and to become a reprobate oneself?

Put a few grains of salt into a glass of sweetened water, and what will happen? Will the salty fluid become sweet, or rather, will not the sweet water become salty? Among a hundred sound apples, place only one that is decayed; will the latter again become fresh, or will it bring corruption to all the good ones?

Place one diseased sheep among a flock of healthy ones, will the sick sheep become well, or will the whole flock become infected? See how nature teaches us by the most impressive examples, what will certainly be our portion in the spiritual life, if, despising the admonition of our Redeemer, we associate with false prophets in sheep's clothing.

We will fare, as says the wise man: "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it, and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride." Eccl. 13, 1. In the saddest manner, we shall experience the warning sentence of the royal psalmist: "With the perverse thou wilt be perverted." Ps. 17, 27. Justly, therefore, does St. Paul say: "Know you not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump?" 1 Cor. 5, 6.

Oh! what profound truth is in this saying! Oh, what mischief and destruction may not be caused by one villain! One Lucifer sufficed to transform millions of good and holy angels into devils. One impious domestic is capable of ruining a whole family, one immoral child is able to infect a whole school and to poison the hearts of all the children. So great is the power of bad example, so deplorable our innate weakness and inclination to evil.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

To the Little Ones.

'E'en stronger than a father's love, That loves deep and true, The Sacred Heart in heaven feels, Dear little ones, for you.

More tender than a mother's love, The sweetest earth'er knew, The Sacred Heart in heaven feels, Dear little ones, for you.

Then strong and tender be the love, Which shines through all you do, For that dear Heart which suffered so, Dear little ones, for you.

THE LITTLE MESSENGERS.

A Story of St. Anthony of Padua.

BY SYLVIA HUNTING, IN AVE MARIA.

I.

Patty and Annie were two little girls of five and seven, who lived in the suburbs of a large city,—so near that they could hear its busy hum from morning till night; and yet so far that they might as well have been, for all their acquaintance with it, a hundred miles away. I say so far, because the house in which they lived was built on what the extension of the city had left of a high hill, once covered with beautiful forest-trees, which had in earlier days been a favorite resort of city folks when they wished to take a day's outing.

These woods had once belonged to the grandfather of the little girls; but, as the city kept creeping up and up, he had sold the greater part of the ground, reserving only that portion surrounding his residence—an old-fashioned, square house, with a hall in the middle, and large, airy rooms on either side.

This property consisted of about five acres, two of which—nearest the house—were laid out in flower and vegetable gardens; with a beautiful soft green lawn on the table land behind the house, and numbers of great trees still growing luxuriantly on three sides of the boundaries of the land yet remaining in the family. But the making of a broad avenue, and the cutting necessary to accomplish this, had left that part of the property facing the street many feet above the sidewalk. A stone wall had been built, over which ivy grew in profusion; and instead of having constructed a long flight of straight, steep steps, Mr. Wilson, their grandfather, had had them arranged in several series, so that one went up easily by a sort of winding pathway.

The family, being accustomed to the ascent, found it easy enough; but not so strangers, who invariably complained of the steps; wondering, too, how they ever managed it in winter when the ground was frozen and slippery, especially after a fall of snow and sleet. Another subject of constant wonderment among visitors was that the children, who were all small, did not tumble, head-foremost, down the steep, grassy incline which sloped from the plateau to the street. But they never did; and if they had, no doubt the Providence, which guarded them so well from other evils, would also have preserved them from hurt.

The principal charm of this delightful residence was that, being cut off, as it were, from the world below, they knew little of it and cared less—finding all the pleasure and amusement they could desire in the large, beautiful garden and fringe of shady woods that bounded it.

As I said before, Patty and Annie were aged respectively five and seven, yet they had never been farther alone than the foot of the long steps. On Sundays they went to church with their father and mother, and occasionally for a walk with them in the evening. Sometimes they accompanied their nurse to the notion shop on the avenue, but this was about the extent of their acquaintance with Broad avenue thoroughfare.

The day on which my story opens was Patty's birthday. She was just seven, and her father had given her an exquisite little ring set with garnets, which had delighted her more than any present she had ever received. For Patty had a pretty, symmetrical little hand, and the ring looked well upon it. And that Patty was aware of this became evident at once; so much so that her perhaps over-scrupulous father had some misgivings as to whether he had not laid the foundation stone of vanity in her mind and heart by this welcome and beautiful gift. But Patty's mother did not share in these fears. She knew it was but natural that the child should be a little taken out of herself by the lovely ring; and knew also that, after the first fever of admiration and the first joy of possession should subside, the ring would become as much a matter of course as her other belongings—quite an everyday affair, the same as the pretty frocks and aprons the children loved to put on when they were fresh and new.

"Well," replied their mother, smiling at the enthusiasm of the children, "I think I shall. Get your best white sunbonnets; and take each other's hand, so that you will be more safe, and not likely to be separated as you go along the avenue. You are such little things that you might get lost in the crowd."

The children ran off, and soon returned with their pretty white sunbonnets on top of their soft brown curls; and the mother looked after them wistfully as they went down the steps together, hand in hand—Annie with the other hand in her apron pocket, tightly holding the nickel watch which was to pay for the thread. She had begged to carry it, and Patty had been willing; partly, I suspect, because it left the hand free on which she wore the bright new golden bracelet with its rich, dark stones. And I do not think one would be far wrong who should think that she held that little hand somewhat conspicuously in the public eye, as she trotted along with her sister to do her mother's errand.

Fifteen minutes passed—twenty-five—the clock struck the half hour—but the little ones did not appear. More than once the mother went to the front of the house, from which, through a bend in the Avenue, she could see a long distance; but there were no little white sunbonnets in view. At length, becoming very uneasy, she called Maggie from the laundry and dispatched her in search of the children. Another anxious quarter of an hour, and she could see them coming slowly along, Maggie between them; but it was not until they reached the top of the steps that she saw they had both been crying.

"Children," she began in alarm, "what has happened?"

"For answer they began to cry again; and Patty, throwing herself into her mother's arms, sobbed forth:

"O mamma, mamma, my lovely ring is lost, my ring is gone, my ring is stolen! O my ring, my ring, my ring!"

"I found them at the corner, mamma," explained Maggie, "crying with a crowd around them, and a policeman just getting ready to fetch them home. I think it's a shame if two sweet, innocent little children like them can't go to the store in broad daylight, and the streets full of people, without being robbed. Stop crying, Patty dear, and tell your mamma how it happened."

But it took some time to soothe and compose the children sufficiently to enable them to tell their story. As nearly as I can remember—and I have not forgotten it even after all these years,—this is how they related it:

"Mamma," began Patty, seated on her mother's knee, close to her breast, as befitted the bereaved one; while Annie sat on the step of the porch, just at her feet,—mamma, it was this way. When we got to the foot of the steps, a girl was sitting there. She was ragged, but she was big—I think maybe ten,—and I knew my clothes would not fit her. She had a basket, and it was dirty, and there was a dirty rag in it. Her face was dirty too—"

"She had a brown face," remarked Annie. "I think she was a mulatto girl."

"Yes, I think she was," said Patty. "I thought she had ugly eyes," said Annie. "They were black, and they snapped like this"—smiting the action to the word. "She looked at Patty's ring."

Patty resumed: "We stood there and looked at her for a minute, and then I whispered to Annie: 'Don't let's stare at her: she might feel bad.' I knew our clothes wouldn't fit her, mamma; so we couldn't give her any—"

"And she said," interrupted Annie,—"Patty said: 'Let's ask her if she doesn't want to go up and get something to eat from Julia.'"

"Then I did," continued Patty; "but she said: 'Where you uns goin'?'—that's what she said. And then we told her we were going to the store for some thread, and she said: 'I guess I'll go along, 'cause you're so little I kin take care of you.'"

"I thought that was real kind of her; but yet she looked so funny, and I didn't like to say no."

"But I said no, mamma," put in Annie. "I said: 'You needn't come with us. We know the way ourselves, and we are in a hurry. Come, Patty!'"

"Then she picked up her dirty basket," said Patty, "and came fast as she could. When we got a little ways up the Avenue she said: 'How much money have you got?' I said: 'A nickel.' 'Let me carry it. Some one may take it from you,' she said."

"And then I said," interposed Annie: "They can't,—it's tight in my apron pocket, and I'm holding it with my hand." But she begged and begged, but I wouldn't even let her touch it."

"Then," added Patty, "she began to say: 'What a pretty ring! Ain't that a new ring?' And I told her papa gave it to me for my birthday this morning. Then she said: 'Take it off and let me fit it on your finger,—it's as thin as yours, and thinner. Let's see if it ain't.' But I wouldn't, and then she didn't ask me any more. So she just walked on, kind of a little behind us, till we came to the hallway that goes into Lincoln Plaza, and she opened her eyes so big and said: 'Come in here a minute. I want to leave my basket.' But we wouldn't go."

Here Patty burst into tears once more, and Annie joined her. But their mother succeeded in learning that the girl had actually dragged them into the hallway; and, after snatching the ring from Patty's finger and the nickel

from Annie's pocket, had run away and left them terrified and sobbing. It was thus that Maggie found them. They had just been accosted by a policeman, who was about to fetch them home when she met them.

"He said he would keep a sharp lookout for the girl, mamma," said Maggie; "for she was nothing but a common thief, and ought to be put in the House of Refuge. But he said she was a sharp one, and wouldn't come around that corner for a spell. He didn't remember ever to have seen one that looked like the children described her. Poor little lambs! they'll never forget this fright."

When papa came home the sad story was again related, to his great sympathy and indignation. He saw the friendly policeman, who promised to report to him if the thief was found; and the promise of a new ring—which Patty stipulated, should be "exactly like the other"—did much to alleviate the sorrow of the bereaved child. But the effects of the nervous terror and shock remained, and it was a long time before those two little ones again dared to venture forth upon the streets alone. Their first experience had been too bitter to be soon forgotten.

More than a week had passed since the adventure of Patty and Annie, and no word had been received of the stolen ring. The friendly policeman had reported to the father of the children that, although he had been on the lookout for the girl, he had not seen any one answering her description. His theory was that she had strayed long down town, and had strayed off of her usual begging route that day, as those of her class—professional beggars—sometimes do. Having possessed herself of the ring, it was not likely that she would soon again make her appearance in the vicinity, where she might be recognized and arrested. This theory seemed probable.

Patty's godfather, a pious priest, lived in a neighboring parish, and occasionally visited the family. He was very fond of the little girl, and she returned his affection. After papa and mamma, she thought there was no one like her godfather. On the occasion of his next visit Patty related the story of her loss, her lips quivering, tears in her innocent eyes. When she had finished he said:

CONCLUDED IN NEXT ISSUE.

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

Mr. Daredevil and Mr. Darenot.

There are two types of young men whose peculiarities and short-comings I wish to consider to-day. The first I call Mr. Daredevil, because he is not afraid to attempt anything, no matter how foolhardy. His discretion does not keep pace with his courage, and he is constantly getting into scrapes through his want of reflection. Now courage is a very desirable quality in this world, but it may be used to one's own disadvantage, and that of one's neighbor. It needs to be tempered with that saving common sense in part which Tennyson attributed in verse to the success of the Duke of Wellington, as a man and a soldier. To be sure, a hero may lead a patriot's hope, through motives of fanaticism, as Warren did at Bunker Hill, but usually there is no need of rashly rushing into danger. The foolhardy man is rarely a success, for he pursues the wildest schemes on the spur of the moment. True, he sometimes triumphs, but his failures outnumber his victories in the long run.

He is the one who is always ready to enter into the craziest speculations, like young Mr. Lester, whose gigantic manipulations of the verge of starvation, made an exhibition of nerve as he displayed his well high criminal. There could be but one end to such a career—disaster. He was a plunger, and he plunged once too often, as men of his kind inevitably do. And Mr. Daredevil rarely belies his name. He takes a devilish joy in getting men into difficulties either by fair means or foul—usually the latter. He may not start out to be a scoundrel, but that is the character he establishes for himself in the end. His schemes lead him into positions from which he thinks he can not extricate himself without breaking the law. Hence we have so many embezzlements by bank officials who have taken desperate chances in the stock market.

Mr. Daredevil is not to be imitated. Neither is Mr. Darenot. The latter has no confidence in himself at all, and without self-confidence no one can hope to succeed. If a young fellow is always doubting his ability to do a thing he will never make a worthy attempt, and will be an obstruction in the community in which he lives, a dead log who might as well be out of existence as in it, for all the good he accomplishes. There is a great difference between over confidence and a manly estimate of one's own powers. The young man who has too poor an opinion of himself is apt to degenerate into a loafer, and from a loafer into something worse—a thing that is despised by the world, which has no use for a man who has not a decent self-respect. Now, mind you, I am not decrying true humility, which makes a man recognize his littleness before God, but simply that jelly-fish inertia and cowardice which causes a young fellow, whose blood is naturally sluggish, to refuse to make an effort. Courage may be acquired by even those who are born timid. Many a young soldier has gone into his first fight trembling with fear, who afterwards turned out a hero. A becoming trust in God will make a man brave under the most adverse

circumstances. Without this reliance on a Higher Power he is apt to drift into that state of mind which ends in suicide—and suicide, to vary a saying of Daniel Webster, is to acknowledge defeat. Mr. Darenot folds his hands and drifts, and he is, consequently, always running against snags. He is a burden to himself and everyone else who is associated with him, and he not infrequently adds drinking to the other evils which result from the failure to acquire self-confidence in the battle of life.

What would be thought of the soldier who would sit down on a battlefield, hoping by this means to avoid direct shots and stray bullets? He would probably be drummed out of the regiment without delay. And the fellow who would act rashly in opposition to military orders, thus needlessly imperiling the lives of his fellows, would, no doubt, meet with a similar fate. So when you are seeking for models of right conduct do not select either Mr. Daredevil or Mr. Darenot. Mr. Golden Mean is the one you must choose as an example. This type does not slop over or fall short through cowardice.—Benedict Bell, in Sacred Heart Review.

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