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Perfect Through Suffering.

God never would send you the darkness
If He felt you could bear the light;
But you would not cling to His guiding hand
If the way were always bright,
And you would not care to walk by faith
Could you always walk by sight.

'Tis true He has many an anguish
For your sorrowful heart to bear,
And many a cruel thorn-crown
For your tired head to wear;
He knows how few would reach heaven at all
If pain did not guide them there.

So He sends you the blinding darkness,
And the furnace of seven-fold heat;
'Tis the only way, believe me,
To keep you close to his feet,
For 'tis always so easy to wander
When our lives are glad and sweet.

Then nestle your hand in Father's,
And sing, if you can, as you go;
Your song may cheer some one behind you
Whose courage is sinking low;
And, well, if your lips do quiver,
God will love you better so.

Romanism in Italy.

REV. PRICE HUGHES, the well-known London minister, spent some time lately in Italy recruiting his strength, and while there he made a study of Italian questions, and of the condition of the church there. To an interviewer he expressed himself in the following terms, which taken with the article by Rev. Dr. Robertson of Venice recently published in the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, will prove interesting reading:—Of Catholicism as it exists in Italy it is difficult to give an adequate idea to an Englishman. In all ages the best Italians have been Catholics, but not Papists. The old antagonism to the Papacy, which is an ecclesiastical excrescence, is latent still, and might break out at any moment. Englishmen who have never had special opportunities of examining the actual condition of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy are so misled and deceived by the influences of a totally different kind of Catholicism in this country, that it is almost impossible to bring home to them the real character of Romanism at headquarters. While as a matter of fact Romanism has little power, either in England or in the United States, what there is of it in English-speaking lands is of an immeasurably higher type than Romanism in Italy. No English Catholic, I should think, would sanction much that is done openly and everywhere in Italy. The grossest superstitions are still practised. Twice a year in Naples the blood of St. Januarius is liquefied; and one of the latest things I saw in Rome was the "bambino" in the great Franciscan church, a little doll, with a carriage and pair of its own, which is supposed to have healing powers. I have seen that great church crowded by peasants and others who were simply worshipping a wooden idol.

"Romanism has blighted Italy, as it has every other country in which it prevails. As Mr. Benjamin

Kidd shows, Roman Catholic countries are going down, down, and Protestant countries up, up, up. If you want to know what any religion is, you should go to its chief seat and centre. Go to Rome, visit the churches, witness the services. The educated classes in Italy are alienated from the Roman Church. You seldom see well dressed persons in an Italian church except English and American visitors. The congregations consist almost exclusively of the poorest of the poor, many of whom are attached to the Church by benefit and other societies, which are, no doubt, a great boon in poverty-stricken Italy. The Roman Catholic priests try to persuade Italians that all Protestants are Unitarians, and that no one becomes a Protestant in Italy except for money. But if those interested in the charities connected with the Roman Church in Italy were withdrawn, their places of worship would be almost deserted except by tourists."

Later on, when speaking of the pictures in Italy, Mr. Hughes said that there was an enormous infusion of the old pagan religion in Romanism. They have taken the shape of their churches, their lighted tapers, their incense, their popular holidays, their nunneries, and the costumes of their nuns from the old religion which they superseded. Even the Pope calls himself Pontifex Maximus, the official title of the high priest of the old pagan religion of Rome. Julius Cæsar was at one time Pontifex Maximus—the head of the classical religion, a religion that had nothing to do with morals, a religion which consisted in certain ceremonies which the gods required. So it is in Italy now. Religious performances and exercises have very little connection with personal conduct. It is a positive proverb that you may be a very good Catholic and a very bad Christian. Some of the most devout attendants at spectacular services are men of notoriously evil character, and nothing is more shocking to a devout Protestant than the absence of real reverence in public worship. The sacristans and other officials who cannot pass an altar without bowing are guilty of improprieties which would be impossible here.

This led Mr. Price Hughes to say that he did not see how it could be otherwise, for there is no preaching in Italy. During the whole of his visit he only heard one sermon, and that was on New Year's Day, a long theological discourse on original sin, and the fact that there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church. In Florence he was told that notwithstanding the scores of churches, sermons are preached in only two, and that only at Easter. There is no attempt to teach the people. They are simply amused with lighted candles and incense, pretty vestments, and elaborate ceremonials. The ordinary Italian has no conception of Christ except as a healthy little babe or a corpse. The living loving Christ is practically unknown. The real object of their devotion is the Madonna.