

COL. RICHARD M. JOHNSTON.

The Genial Southern Catholic Talks About Himself.

"My first entry into politics was as a Democrat against a Knownothing," says Col. Johnston, as reported by Walter Lecky in The Reading Circle Review. "I was made president of Mercer University; that appointment carried with it a house and a salary of \$8,000 a year. Finding my faith in the tenets of the Baptist Church weakening, I could not loyally accept this offer." It was during this interesting period that he married the one who has been the sweetest part of his life.

The refusal of the presidency of his own college must have caused the ambitious young lawyer no ordinary pang of sorrow. He was not the man to live at the sacrifice of truth and sincerity. "Shortly after," he continued, "I was made professor of English Literature in Georgia University. I held that until the beginning of the war; then I started my school at Rocky. More scholars came than I could receive—I had six hundred applicants, although the board and tuition were four hundred and fifty dollars.

"At Rocky I lost my daughter Lucy, a girl of fifteen. It was a great blow to my wife, who could no longer bear to live amid scenes that were constantly reminding her of Lucy and other days. After the war I went to Baltimore, carrying with me forty pupils from Georgia. A great many more desired to come, but I had no accommodation for them. It was strange how so many of them wished to come." There was a halt, and for a moment the sunny-hearted old romancer watched the twisting smoke. "Strange," I muttered, "not strange when such a man was their teacher, a gentleman who lived justly and considerately among men and humbly before God." "I followed my dear wife in the Catholic Church in 1875." "By what mental process," I asked, "did you successfully scale the encircling gloom?" "Let me tell you that in my own way," said the Colonel. "My grandfather, the Rev. Thomas Johnston, was a leading Episcopal minister, who came from Dumfries, in Scotland, to wage war with the dissenters. His oldest son went to Georgia, but dying early, his son Malcolm, my father, was brought up in the Baptist Church and became one of its ministers and a strong partizan. I was brought up strictly in my father's faith. I imbibed the usual prejudices against the Catholic Church.

"There were few Catholics in Georgia, in fact, I was thirty when I saw for the first time a Catholic priest. That impression was not a favorable one. The poor church, the squeaky organ and the few worshippers but confirmed my early prejudice. It was not until the Knownothing campaign, in 1855, that my prejudice suffered a blow. In that campaign it was necessary to offset the violent diatribes of my opponent against the Catholic Church. For this purpose I was forced to consult Catholic books. Now, it happened that the most cultured woman in Georgia was a member of that Church. She was a Miss Casey of Sparta, afterwards Mrs. Bird, a life-long friend of my wife. To her I went, saying, 'Miss Casey, give me something to fight these scoundrels with.' She put in my hands the works of Bishop England. These works not only furnished me with arguments against Knownothingism, but dispelled much of my early prejudice.

"Under the signature of 'Valdes,' furnished with arguments drawn from Bishop England, I was able to show how absurd were all the current opinions of Catholicity. It was, however, at a later period of my life, that I more fully studied the Catholic religion. My wife was the leader. She had procured books from good Father Lyman. Before returning these books she passed them to me, with an injunction to read them. I was glad to do so, ever in quest of the truth. It was soon evident that my wife was convinced of the falsity of her position and the truth of the Catholic Church. I put no hindrance in her way. I told her that if she were convinced, she was bound to make the step, no matter how much pain and anguish I might feel. A few days after I was invited to a dinner at Mr. Abell's. There I met Father Lyman. After dinner I told him that Frances had a message for him. He came, instructed her, and in January, 1875, she was received into the Church. "That parting was hard, but it was in the line of duty, and I could not but

submit. I continued to read. Bishop Ives' 'Trials of a Mind' made a deep impression. This was followed by Milner's 'End of Controversy' and the masterly answer of Newman to Gladstone. The life of the Cure d'Ars produced a lasting effect. As an antidote I read the works of Land and Hooker. They were no longer convincing. I was filled with agony and depression. I could not banish from my mind the thought that 'these Catholic writers have got the argument.' While reading Balmes I was convinced that my wife had followed the true path. I remember well that day. I sat in my garden beneath the shade of a chestnut. I had read only sixty lines when a calmness came to my mind. The journey was almost done. I had come to the edge of the encircling gloom and could see, beyond, the land of truth. I closed the book and walking into the house greeted my wife with the happiest salutation of my life, 'I am going with you, my dear.' In July, '75, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, I found that peace which I had long sought and prayed for, in the bosom of the Catholic Church."

DREARY DECEMBER.

The following beautiful paragraph appeared in last week's issue of The Earth. It is by "L." in the contribution "The Passing Show":

Saddest of all months, December is the decrepit old man, who, pale and bloodless with age, with thin white locks that blow pitifully in the merciless gale, with withered heart which has been the sepulchre of many darling hopes, falters on that weary road of which the end is now in view. Listen: the gale shrieks and whistles—that hissing, sinister whistle which tells the poor that it is all in vain, they would keep out snow and wind with the paper stripes across chink and crevice—the naked pines on the mountain shiver in the cutting blast, and below in the valley, the snow makes white coverlets for those who, clasped forever to the bosom of mother earth, sleep well in that dreamless sleep which is broken no more by the poignant memory of grief and loss. Fine as powder, the snow banks itself against doorstep and window, whirles in passionate eddies in the street, surges against railings, and breaks as the waves break the shore. It covers up all noisome things; and the pure, white flowers of God as they kiss the cheek, recall the morning of purity and innocence. And yet welcomed by the careless and the happy, every snowflake is a grief to the poor and desolate. Lighter than eider down, softer than the kiss of mother or wife, it falls upon the heart of the bereaved like clouds upon a coffin. For amid the vast silence which falls upon the earth with the falling snow, one hears a rustling of the wings of the angel of death. I had a flower once, which grew strong and beautiful, O lovingly I tended it; with pride I watched it bloom in grace and sweetness. I grudged that the air should stir its leaves. For every caress, for every touch of care, my flower repaid me with richer blooms. Friends praised the gracious thing; offered homage and love, envied me my possession. And as my flower grew its tendrils twined themselves about my heart, so that it became a part of my very self. A day came—My God—a day came, when the wind and the snow and the desolation smote my flower. Love nor care nor tears availed; and I buried my flower amid the first snow storm of the winter. That is why I like the snowflakes to kiss my cheeks, fondly hoping that God, who transplanted my flower to his garden, might let her, in the touch of the snowflake, send me a message. That is why, too, December days seem to me the saddest in the year.

THE CHILDREN'S ENEMY.

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Judge: You are acquitted. Prisoner to the jury: Very sorry, gentlemen, to have given you all this trouble for nothing.

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THE MEDAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

Nearly a quarter of a century before the definition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady appeared to one of the daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, and ordered her to see that a medal be struck in honor of her Immaculate Conception. The supernatural origin of the medal is recognized by the following Decree of the Congregation of Rites, establishing a solemn feast commemorative of it:

The Very Reverend the Superior-General of the Congregation of Missions of Saint Vincent de Paul has humbly supplicated His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. that he would regard with favor the extraordinary propagation among the Christian faithful of the holy Medal called that of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God; that he would also view with favor the growth of filial piety as well as the superabundant blessings, both spiritual and temporal, resulting from the use of it in Christian society, as is credibly witnessed to. Therefore he petitions his Holiness to intrust the investigation of this matter to the Congregation of Rites, in order that the authentic documents which establish the supernatural origin of so wonderful an event being examined, the Congregation, subject to him, may be allowed to celebrate a solemn festival, with proper Mass and office, as a double of the second class, in honor of the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, of the "Miraculous Medal." This petition was presented by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, and promoter of the cause, at an ordinary meeting of the aforesaid Congregation, held in the Vatican on the day named below. The Most Eminent and Reverend Fathers appointed guardians of the Sacred Rites having examined all particulars carefully, and having heard his Eminence Cardinal Caprera, "promoter" of the holy faith, decreed that the favor be granted both as to the office and the Mass: "Pro gratia et quoad officium et Missam ad Eum Ponentem et Promotorem fidei. Die 10 Julii, 1894." Wherefore I, the undersigned Cardinal, with his Eminence the promoter of the faith, having submitted, in accordance with the decree, a suitable Mass and office, his Holiness, on the report which I have given, deigns to approve and authorize a festival, under the title of "The Immaculate Virgin Mary of the Miraculous Medal," to be celebrated every year by the priests of the Congregation of the Mission under the rite of a double of the second class, and under the rite of a double major by the Ordinaries of places, and by religious communities who may have asked this privilege.

Given July 23, 1894.
(Signed) O. Card. ALOISI MASELLA, S.R.C. Pref.

Aloisius Tripepi, Secretarius.

A great deal has been said as to the slowness of the turtle's movements, but all we can say is, he generally arrives in time for soup.

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