

A CHRISTIAN'S REVENGE.

BY J. C. H.

Some years ago business of a legal nature called me to B.—It was a good ten hours ride by rail from the city where I lived, and the prospect of so long and tiresome a journey was not pleasant. However, with an air of "grin and bear it," I boarded the train, making a bee line for the smoker, pulled out a good cigar from a supply I had secured to while away dull time; bought a morning paper; and sat back in my seat determined to make the best of it. After an hour's reading I put down my paper and looked around me for some friendly face. All strangers. "Just my luck," thought I. "Here I'll have to hump along this way for the rest of the day without so much as a 'How'd'ye do' from anyone."

We got a cab at the depot, which took us to the hotel and after taking supper, we went to our respective rooms, which were directly opposite on the same floor. For the first few days I was quite busy, and Mr. Norman made a tour of the city, "seeing the sights," as he remarked to me. We spent our evenings together, in either his or my room, reading or talking on various subjects. Mr. Norman was a bright, intelligent talker, well posted on the topics of the day as well as in legal matters. I enjoyed his conversation very much, especially after a harassing day in court. In our evenings thus spent he seemed also to take pleasure and we soon became fast friends. I could not but notice sometimes while he was engaged in reading some paper or magazine, and I similarly employed, that he would put aside the paper and appear lost in thought. Then he underwent that peculiar emotion I had witnessed on the train. One evening when he saw I noticed his agitation, I walked over to him and said gently, "My friend you seem to be suffering. Can I do anything for you?" The answer I got was a despairing shake of the head. "Trust me, John," I continued. "If there is aught I can do for you, only name it." He slowly raised his head and said, "This is too much, that you should be so friendly to me, and I believe you mean it; but if you do not wish to increase my suffering, I beg of you never mention this subject again. You will lessen my grief by appearing not to notice my strange actions; then we shall be friends. Oh, God! how long must I suffer?" He rose from his chair and staggered from the room leaving me puzzled and sad. "Poor fellow," thought I, "I would that I could help him."

I had my doubts as to the soundness of my friend's nightly rest, for, some mornings he would appear at breakfast haggard and careworn, like a man to whom "nature's soft nurse" had been a stranger. On entering his room one evening, I found him stretched on a sofa, his face buried in the pillow, his hands clenched in his hair the very picture of abject misery and despair. It was some time before I could soothe him or persuade him to arise. I felt deeply moved at the sight of this man, who a few days previous was but a stranger to me. He seemed as a brother in trouble, who needed a brother's consolation. I thought a walk in the city along the busy streets might be some distraction for him, so I gently prevailed upon him to accompany me for a stroll. The streets were still thronged with people but my friend appeared not to notice anything; he suffered himself to be led wheresoever I would. We had been walking about thirty minutes, and during the whole time he did not speak a single word. I considered in my mind what I could do for him or where I could take him to draw his thoughts from himself. I could think of no expedient. Just then the lighted cathedral loomed up before us, the bells were ringing and people were entering the edifice. Directly the thought flashed across my mind to go into church, where the singing and sermon might arouse him from his lethargic despondency. We entered, and I selected a seat in a dark corner in the rear of the church. Not until the preacher ascended the pulpit did it occur to me that I might have made a mistake acting in this way, for I had not learned what religion Mr. Norman professed, although he knew I was a Catholic. Would he leave when he realized where he was? Would he be displeased? While these thoughts were rushing through my mind the priest began his sermon. It was Wednesday of Passion Week and the subject of the sermon was the sacrament of penance, its foundation and the unlimited power of the sacred tribunal. The preacher was a man of medium height though slightly stooped, his hair showing the silvery signs of age. The force and junction he put into his every word transformed him into another St. John Chrysostom. Never will I forget that sermon; it penetrated my soul and made me thank God that I belonged to the Catholic Church, the Church of Christ, alone authorized to administer the consoling sacraments instituted by our Divine Lord. "The Sacrament of Penance," said the preacher, "is like the precious blood of Christ Himself: It is powerful and omnipotent. There is no sin of any kind, however deep, dark, black as midnight and often committed, nothing so inveterate, nothing which in the sight of God is so hateful, or in the soul of man so deadly, that there cannot be absolution for it in this sacrament of the merciful love of God. And what is asked of the sinner? Sorrow for having offended God, self-accusation in the way pointed out, and steadfast resolution to sin no more." Thus the zealous priest impassionately showed to the sinner the way of redemption. "Come as you are, though your sins are as black as night, and as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. Come! do not put it off, and oh! what joy and peace will you experience when your load of sin is lifted from you? You will receive that peace which the world cannot give—the peace of God; the friendship of God. Cast yourself at the feet of the now merciful Judge. On the last day He will be only a just Judge. He knows all your sorrows and troubles, and He will help you if you only show your good will." Finally the preacher ended his glowing appeal to the sinner with these words of Our Lord. "There is joy in Heaven over one

sinner doing penance more than over ninety-nine just." I was so interested that I forgot the presence of my companion, but when I turned I saw him leaning forward with his face buried in his hands; he looked up for a moment and I perceived the signs of anguish on his face had left. During the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which followed the sermon, he knelt with the rest, but not raising his head. The people were leaving except those who remained near the confessional boxes. I touched my friend on the arm and asked him if he was ready to return to the hotel. Without looking up he answered in a steady voice. "Leave me here. I will return later." The tone of his voice told me it would be better for me to go. Upon my arrival at the hotel I was presented with a telegram that called me home immediately. My father was very sick. I just had time to leave a few lines of explanation with the clerk for Mr. Norman, pack my valise and get to the depot in time for the 10:50 p. m. express. In the note I left for my friend I gave the reason for my hurried departure, and as my business in B— was about finished and consequently as I would not return again for some time, I invited Mr. Norman to pay me a visit at his earliest convenience. About a week or ten days after I arrived home I received a letter from Mr. Norman. It ran thus: Dear Friend: I am now on my deathbed in St. Vincent's hospital, B— and if I am not asking too much of you, I would like very much to see you again. Once you told me you would do anything in your power to help me; now you can do something by coming to me before I leave this world of sorrow. "J. T. NORMAN."

I took the first train for B— and on arrival there a cabson brought me to the hospital. When the Sister who came to the door learned whom I wished to see she said, "I am so glad you have come, as Mr. Norman has been calling for you incessantly, and we feared you would be too late." "Is there no hope then?" I asked. "No, it would be useless to say otherwise. Internal hemorrhage has set in and the doctor says he won't last the day out." "This is indeed sad. I left him about a week ago apparently in very good health. How could he become so sick in so short a time? I can't understand it." "Oh, have you not heard how he was hurt? I thought you knew all about it. One night last week, returning from the cathedral, he was thinking of the sermon he heard and unconsciously stepped before an electric car, which struck him and then crushed him in a frightful manner. He was taken up for dead and brought here in the ambulance. For several days he hovered between life and death, until a few days ago he regained consciousness; then we showed him your letter; it must have been yours, for he called for pen and paper and immediately wrote you the letter which brought you here. Since then he has been continually asking if you have come. Will you go to him now?" I was taken to one of the best rooms, and the Sister went in first to prepare my friend for the interview. She came out soon, and with her a priest, and she said to me, "You may go in now, he expects you." It was a small but tastily and comfortably furnished room. On the bed, with his eyes fastened eagerly upon the door, was Mr. Norman, the dews of death already upon his placid face. As I approached the bed a smile lit up his features and he said in a voice low and weak. "You have come. I knew you would. I felt it; yet I feared. I am dying, but death has no terrors for me now. I have a last request to make of you and if you grant it I shall die happy. He gasped a moment and then asked for a little brandy to strengthen him. Holding my hand he said, looking at me, with an expression in his eyes so full of pleading that it amounted almost to anguish. "Can you forgive me for a great injury I have done you. Do not answer too soon, as I may ask too much." "Oh, John, it grieves me to see you thus. I know of nothing in which you have ever offended me, but rest assured, whatever your ask is already granted. Do not tire yourself by talking too much." "You had a brother named Mark. I knew him well and often heard him speak of you. He was shot; he was murdered and I am the murderer. Ah, I thought I would ask too much!" as I involuntarily started up. "My punishment is to die without your pardon, but I can't blame you." The memory of my brother rushed back to me like a dream. I saw him again, the pride of his mother's heart, the hope of the family, and here was the man who cut him off in the prime of life, and for no cause but a petty jealousy. I wept like a child. But the recollection of my surroundings and the man lying there pleading for pardon; a pardon that would make light his sorrowful death. All this aroused me, and, looking, I saw my friend also weeping. "Oh," he sobbed, "if you knew how I suffered for my crime you would have pity on me. Since that day my life has been a dreary, wretched existence. The face of your brother haunted me day and night. I could never banish the memory of that deed. I wandered over the earth a fugitive, another Cain. I was reported dead, and the search for me ceased. I changed my name and settled down in Chicago,

Now, this supernatural order is a thing whose very existence is absolutely hidden from the natural knowledge of man. By his natural faculties alone he never could even come to know that there is such a thing, much less to know anything about its details. And yet this knowledge is of supreme importance to him. Whence, then, is it to come? Only from the author of both the supernatural and the natural. Only the voice of God speaking directly to man could make known those things which are of first and highest concern to him. The secrets thus manifested constitute the deposit of revealed truth, and the knowledge and understanding of them are the most necessary things in the life of man. To communicate this knowledge and to perfect this understanding is the work of religion and of the teachers of religion. Why Protestants are Protestants. The common definition of a Protestant is that of one who "protests" against the Catholic Church, but in most cases that is false in fact. It is really remarkable how large a number of those who are genuine Protestants, that is, who go regularly to a Protestant church and partake of the sacraments there, are destitute of any real animosity against the Catholic Church. The strength of the A. P. A. and all similar anti-Catholic movements is made up mostly of infidels and of non-church-going Protestants. There is, on the other hand, among many devout Protestants an admiration, almost an affection, for the Catholic religion. Of course they prefer their own form of religion. It is largely a matter of habit with them what sect they belong to. They are Christians by baptism and desire, but they naturally follow that sect in which they have been trained by their parents, or have come best acquainted with, or accustom to, through the circumstances in which they have lived. It is a monstrous fallacy, therefore, to pretend that Protestants are Protestants because of a deliberate purpose to protest against the Catholic Church. The better sort of intelligent and virtuous American Protestants would themselves strenuously protest against any such definition. Most Baptists are Baptists because their parents, or other associates, were of that sect, and so of the other denominations generally. That fact carries along with it the refutation of the ancient pious theory that Protestants having the "open Bible" read it through until they get from it the inspiration what form of religion to choose. The fact that all the Protestant sects maintain Sunday-schools to train up the children in the same way of thinking as their parents is to the same effect. In other words, the maintenance of sectarianism by our separated brethren is, as the Holy Father says, the result rather of inheritance than of any serious desire to be cut off from the unity of the Catholic faith.—Philadelphia Standard. The speakers were the Rev. A. C. Wall, D. D., of Schuectady; Rev. E. B. Loomis, D. D., of Canajoharie, class of '63, Methodist; Rev. W. Scott, class of '68, Principal of the Connecticut Literary Institute, Baptist; Thomas E. Bliss, Denver, Col., class of '48, Presbyterian; William D. Maxon, D. D., Pittsburg, Pa., class of '78, Episcopal; and Rev. Fred. Z. Rooker, D. D., class of '81, secretary to Archbishop Sotelli, Catholic. Father Rooker spoke as follows: "You have asked me to give the view which the Catholic Church takes of the subject of 'Religion and Education.' It is not a difficult thing to do, for the position of the Catholic Church in that matter is definitely and clearly formulated, and within her fold there is no chance for a diversity of opinion about it. Her teaching in this regard is the logical outcome of the great fundamental principles which permeate by their influence her whole system—principles about which or about the evident and necessary deductions from which she admits no discussion. "Let me then briefly expose to you these principles, and I am sure that you will agree with me that the stand taken by the Church regarding the relation of religion to education is but a necessary conclusion. In the first place, the Church recognizes two distinct orders in creation—the natural order and the supernatural order—the order of nature and the order of grace. To her the supernatural order is just as real, and, for rational creatures, far more important than the natural. In her doctrine there is no place for the theory that man was created to work out as best he may a natural destiny, or by the use and perfection of his natural faculties, to progress through grades of evolution to a better and fuller knowledge of himself and the universe, and, consequently, to a better and fuller existence as a more perfected and highly developed element of that universe. "No, the Catholic Church sees in man a creature made for one end only, and that end a supernatural one. At the moment of his creation he was placed in a supernatural state, and to that state he was restored by the work of the redemption. The one and only perfection to which he can attain is a perfection in and of the supernatural order. If he does not attain that he must forever remain imperfect. Do what he will with his natural faculties, develop them as he may in the natural order and by natural means, there can be nothing for him to hope for. You can see, then, how all important it is for him to get into this supernatural order and work and live and develop in it. Unless he does so, it were better for him never to have been born.



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