

On a Picture of St. Agnes.

It is but a simple picture, just above my table resting.
Childlike face captured in longing to the promise of the skies.
With a somewhat near to sadness the sweet lips and forehead cresting.
And a look of Heaven dwelling in the beautiful dark eyes.
It is but a simple picture, yet it tells a haloed story.
Brighter, purer for the record sin's revolving eyes show.
Speaking to my thoughts—all human—with its own unshadowed glory
Of a heart that loved and suffered fifteen hundred years ago.

Not as we love, blindly stretching forth our hands in weak endeavor
To hold fast what God has branded with the brittle stamp of clay;
Not as we, unwilling, suffer, moaning childishly forever
The defeat of an ambition born and buried in a day;
But as they love whom His brightness has encompassed with its shining,
Who have waited through the noontide in the shadow of the Cross,
Sharing in His crucifixion with prophetic gift divine
In earth's short-lived compensations Heaven's irreparable loss.

Daughter of a race of heroes, stranger to the touch of sorrow,
Free as snowflakes in their falling from the tainted breath of sin;
Her young life had reached its fulness, each day promise of to-morrow.
If the golden days of Heaven had not yearned to take her in,
If the dove had not descended where the haughty eagle flaunted
Its black wings above the threshold of her proud, patrician home,
Those pale lips had never spoken, clear, defiant, and undaunted,
Their own doom of death and torture in the halls of pagan Rome.

"Tear that white robe from her shoulders!"
Tyrant mandates know not pity:
She drops, clothed in her own tresses—could these garments be more fair?
Lo! downfallen from its fastenings, before all that mighty city.
She stands mantled and enshrouded in the glory of her hair;
Then, as swiftly as the sword-flash streams the life-blood hotly gushing,
The red current overflowing bathes her whiteness in its own.

Maidens, cease your tender weeping, all your anguish soiled be hushing,
Pain is but a dream forever, and the martyr's soul is free!

Fifteen hundred years have followed on by one and sad procession
Since the sun set over Tiber on that barbarous holiday;
Fifteen hundred waves of passage in the tide of retrogression
Flowing to the shore eternal from the world it wearies away.
Creatures of one poor moulding, seeking ever an ideal,
Weaving all a soul's best promise into dull and senseless shreds,
Could our thoughts but seek the treasure, might our hands but clasp the real,
What were death, pain, or torture, fifteen hundred thousand times?

O thou beautiful St. Agnes! when my heart grows sick and weary,
Tiring of the toil and struggle, throbbing at the touch of pain,
There is never hope so hopeless, there is never day so dreary,
But the face returned to Heaven can enliven it again!

For mine eyes are not so blinded that they cannot see the shining
Of illimitable brightness in the pathway of the Cross,
And my soul is not so narrow that its faith is fast dividing
In earth's short-lived compensations Heaven's irreparable loss.
—MARY E. MANN, in Gleanings.

ONLY A FLOWER.

Since leaving the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Miss Marie L. and her mother, who had become a widow, lived in an old mansion on the borders of the Loire. Near by was a sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin Most Pure. From the garden of fresh flowers that always adorned the beautiful white statue, it was easy to see that there was at least one heart in the district tenderly devoted to Mary. The young girl, in fact, passed her time between her home and the chapel, where from time to time a priest came to say Mass, and where she always found it sweet to be. Her happiness would have been complete in the midst of those whom she loved, were it not that there was one heart dead to her, a heart full of affection for her, but into which the poisonous breath of infidelity had made its way, a heart that did not believe. And nevertheless, wept, was, in many respects, an excellent young man; he took a pleasure in doing all that she asked of him; could she not prevail upon him to take some steps that would reconcile him to God? This was the question that she asked herself one evening just before the opening of the Month of May, as she knelt in her favorite sanctuary which she had been decorating. All at once her countenance brightened up with hope; she blessed herself and came out, she soon found her brother and, taking him aside, said: "Henry, you often complain of my sadness; do you want to see me always cheerful? You love me, I know; now, I want you to give me a proof of your love."

"All right, Marie: whatever you ask you shall have, unless you talk of confession or things of that kind."

"I want you to promise me, and to promise seriously, that every day during the coming month you will bring a flower, just one flower, to the altar of the Blessed Virgin."

The young man knitted his brow; he was on the point of refusing, but when he looked into his sister's face and saw her pleading look, he answered:
"Very well, I will do it for your sake; but it is a mere childishness, a foolish caprice. Don't say anything about it, at least," and with these words he walked off.

Two weeks had passed, and every evening the young man, faithful to his promise, came with his little flower. One evening Marie, urged by pious curiosity, hid herself in a corner of the chapel about the time for her brother's visit. The girl's heart beat almost audibly. "He thinks himself alone," she thought to herself as he entered. "How is he going to act?" He took off his hat, placed a fresh rose-bud on the altar, bowed, and went out. "Something is already gained," thought Marie. "O Blessed Mother, finish thy work!"

Days succeeded days, and still nothing unusual occurred; but Henry, in his turn, had grown sad, and whilst the girl's countenance beamed with hope, her brother's had become thoughtful and downcast. The last evening of the Month of May had come. Miss L., in a corner of the sanctuary, was offering up fervent prayers to the Blessed Virgin. The door opened. "My brother!" she said, below her breath. "How pale he looks! What a beautiful bouquet he has! O Mary! speak to him! May he know thee, may he love thee! He kneels." The young man had thrown himself with his face to

the ground, and sobbed aloud. He remained long prostrated, his sighs from time to time breaking the silence that reigned in the chapel. Marie rose at last, and passed near her brother, who was startled, and followed her out.

"You were there!" he cried, throwing his arms around her neck. "You know all then! O blessed be the flower that you persuaded me to bring every day! How well you know this divine Mother! I am conquered, Marie. You may tell every one that I believe, that I love."

It was a touching spectacle that witnessed a month afterwards in the little sanctuary where this miracle of grace had been performed. Marie knelt at the altar to receive the Bread of Angels, and beside her a young man whose face was bathed in tears. And when the family met in the evening in the shadow of the ancient hedge that bordered the park, the young man came and knelt at his mother's feet; his sister knelt beside him; they both bent down their heads to receive their mother's blessing. She blessed them and pressed them to her heart, whilst her noble countenance was bathed in tears, and raising her eyes to heaven to ask of God strength for the sacrifice: "Go, my children," she said, "since it is the will of God, but pray to Him to support and console those you leave behind."

Next day a carriage rolled out through the avenue, away from the mansion; it soon disappeared in the oak-woods, and drew up towards noon at the novitiate of a religious order. A young man stepped out, extended his hand to an aged and a young lady who accompanied him, and, pointing toward heaven, he disappeared through the entrance door. The carriage rolled on for an hour more, and drew up before the Convent of Carmel. The young lady stepped down, held her mother in a long embrace, and, pale with emotion, pulled the door-bell. The door opened, and then closed behind her. The carriage moved slowly away. The work of grace was done.

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Free Thought Very Brave Until it Really Thinks of Death.

[From the New Zealand Tablet.]

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THE SECRET OF UNBELIEF.

A BUSINESS MAN'S VIEW OF INFIDELITY
—ATHEISTS ARE MEN WHO DO NOT WANT TO REFORM THEIR LIVES.

[From the Journal of Commerce.]
We do not think it wise to attack infidels who deny the existence of a personal God, with labored argument. Nothing gratifies such men as inglorious more than the replies to their blasphemies made by Dr. Talmage and other well-meaning clergymen. We notice that Professor Mitchell, of Brooklyn, has challenged infidels to a discussion of the questions concerning the Divine existence, the creation of the world, the inspiration of the Scriptures, &c., the meeting to take place in Washington. We are glad that Ingels declined the debate, and we think the cause of truth has gained by the failure of the two champions to meet in wordy combat.

It is fashionable to laugh at Tupper, but he uttered in his "Proverbial Philosophy" many things well worth remembering, and not the least of these is the line we have often quoted: "Some errors never would have thriven, had it not been for learned refutation." Heresies in religion for the most part are born of the heart and not in the brain. Atheists deny the existence of God because such a Presence is a standing rebuke to human selfishness. This has been the source of idolatry in all the ages. The thought of a true God was an unwelcome guest in a sinful heart; and so men sought to fashion a deity whom they could worship without reforming their life. THE DIVINE EXISTENCE IS NOT QUESTIONED because it is unreasonable, but because it is disquieting, an ever present protest against whatever the conscience disapproves. This is why no man is ever reasoned out of his infidelity. Atheism, like prejudice, never came through the reason, and therefore cannot be affected by logic. Paul had a deep insight into human nature, and saw that men rebelled against the true Divinity not because His eternal power and Godhead were not everywhere manifest, but because they were unwilling to admit His claim upon their heart and life. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge," and embraced idolatry or blank Atheism to escape the upbraiding of a hidden monitor that

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