

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

By T. W. POOLE, M. D., LINDSAY, ONT.

CHAPTER III.

During the next few days Mr. McCoy's thoughts naturally turned at frequent intervals to the young lady at the manse, his promised bride, whom he esteemed all the more for her love and devotion to her widowed father.

With thoughts of her there came to his mind recollections of their recent conversation, and more than once he found himself making additional explorations of the mysteries of the old prayer-book; the very possession of which seemed to invite his attention to the doctrines of that hated Church.

What an evil reputation it bore among his friends and acquaintances! In all the historical and literary productions with which he was familiar, he found a monster of iniquity it was held up to be. The very honor with which it was associated in his mind served to lead to it a sort of fascination, and to invite him to desire to view it at a nearer distance than he had hitherto had an opportunity of doing.

Was it so ancient? Was it really so wicked? How did it endure the light and intelligence of the nineteenth century? Could it be possible that it was so misnamed because misunderstood or misrepresented?

These were questions which he asked himself, and which he found himself unable to answer satisfactorily. At any rate, it was a curiosity worth investigating. It would be no harm to enquire about it, or even see it, when occasion offered. There could be no danger in that, to him, familiar as he was with his Bible, and rooted in his Protestant principles. Yes, he would look into it, and learn something more definite about the hated and contemptible superstition which had now obliterated itself, for the first time, upon his attention.

He knew that his minister, the Rev. Mr. Dundee, held strong opinions on this subject, and did not fail to express them when occasion required. But he said to himself, at the present time, he would like to hear something on the other side—that is, if there was anything at all to be said on that side—and there must be, or how could so many persons of education and intelligence, in the very highest centres of civilization, be found adhering to it.

It was with these thoughts in his mind that he found himself one evening at the door of the manse. He rang the bell, and had not long to wait, as Jennett, anticipating the tardy movements of her maid-of-all-work, opened the door for him herself and tendered him her usual cordial greeting.

"You seem in a brown study, Mr. McCoy—shall I offer you a penny for your thoughts," she said, as a rippling smile seemed to diffuse itself over her handsome face, lighting it up with a new charm.

"I would give a great more than a penny for your thoughts, sometimes," he said, gallantly. "But tell me now what progress you are making as an amateur papist?"

"I am not in that role at all, she replied, but I am sorry to say I am not making much progress with my mission ary collections."

"That means that you want my subscription I suppose?"

"Well, if you please. It is for our French Canadian Missions," she added, pencil in hand.

"Ah! for the French Canadians."

"Yes."

"They are nearly all Catholics, are they not?"

"Nearly all."

"And hard to convert?"

oldest and largest Church of Christendom?"

"None at all for its errors," she said stoutly.

"Well now, Miss Jennett, if you had the power would you not feel disposed to put down that wicked and corrupt society, even by force?"

"By force of law, with its pains and penalties."

"I think I would."

"That would be persecution, you know," he said, "surely you would not persecute for conscience sake."

Footsteps were now heard approaching, and presently the door opened giving entrance to the Minister and a handsome student friend, whom he introduced as Mr. Peter Portus, a young man who was a promising candidate for the ministry.

After the usual salutations, the young lady said, in an animated tone, "we were talking of popery, father, and Mr. McCoy here, is seeking information regarding it." This she said with a gleam of mischievous mischief in her eye, as she glanced from one to another of the men, to see the effect produced on each.

The Minister looked grave; Mr. Portus smiled, and both looked towards Neil, as if expecting some explanation.

Mr. McCoy, after a deprecatory glance, began half apologetically, "What I mean is that whatever be the true character of the Church of Rome, it is evident that she has now as heretofore, strong and determined opponents—opponents I might say."

"And it occurred to me, just casually you know, that everything we have ever heard or read regarding that Church, has been put forward by its enemies, and I thought I would like to hear what its friends have to say for it."

"What do you need to know about it, but that it is 'the mystery of iniquity' which hastens to its downfall, that it is the scarlet lady of the Revelation, the hater of the pure word of God, long since drunk with the blood of the saints. Even in our country—"

"Oh I am not trying to defend it," broke in McCoy, "I was only saying I would like to know what it has to say for itself."

"That's all right," said Mr. Portus, magnanimously.

"Suppose I had a bitter enemy," continued Neil, looking steadily at Jennett, would he be a safe person to trust as to my true character? If you really wanted to know the truth about me, would you not do well to let my friends be heard in my behalf?"

"My dear sir, have we not the facts of history?" asked Mr. Portus.

"But who wrote the history? Our English history and literature have been built up under high Protestant auspices, out of material gathered amid the prejudices and antipathies engendered by party struggles and civil wars. It is eminently one-sided, and often unfair and unjust. Muddy the stream at the fountain, and you know the result."

The minister rubbed his hands and looked surprised for a moment. Then he said: "There may be minor errors in history and no doubt there are, but surely there can be no doubt as to the idolatrous character of that Church, or of her persecution of the people of God."

Here he rose, crossed the room to where stood a new book case, with its well-filled shelves, from which he drew, one after another, works entitled, "Romanism Unmasked," "The Papacy Doomed," and "The Pope, the Man of Sin." These he handed to McCoy, remarking that his newly awakened curiosity would speedily be satisfied, adding a fervent "Thank God that persecution is no longer possible in our times."

"That is well, no doubt," said Neil, with a sly glance at Jennett, who understood its meaning.

Turning again to the minister he added, "But really whatever is to be said of the persecuting character of the Church of Rome, this charge comes with a bad grace from us."

"How so?" asked Mr. Dundee.

"Because our own skirts are unmistakably bespattered. Does not our Protestant historian Hallam declare that 'Persecution was the deadly original sin of the Reformed churches.'"

Neil had risen as he spoke, and soon after took his leave, with his usual cordiality of manner, but with a vague consciousness that somehow he had lost ground in the estimation of the minister's household.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. McCoy sat up till a late hour that night, employed in the perusal of the books he had carried home from the manse. The mental pabulum which they supplied, was certainly strong enough, so far as denunciation of the church of Rome was concerned. But it was not an indictment against that ancient institution which he sought for in his present mood. With charges and accusations of this kind he was familiar enough—had listened to them almost in his cradle, and had heard their continued iteration ever since. The charges were patent enough, and bad enough too. What he still asked himself was, what the accused had to say in his defence. Was the response to be a plea of innocence, or an admission of guilt, with an appeal in mitigation of punishment?

How was he to ascertain this? He had never spoken to a Roman Catholic on the subject of religion. Among his customers were several Catholic families, residing in the village and the surrounding country. He abstained from applying to any of them for an answer to his present enquiry. Besides, unfortunately, what he knew of some of them, he thought rather to the discredit of their religion and themselves, than otherwise.

Such were the cogitations with which he at length retired to rest.

During the next few days the subject continued to recur to his mind. In vain he tried to dismiss it, as a matter on which he had no concern, or to drown it, in the tide of other and absorbing occupations. The spectre would not down. "Guilty or not

guilty" he found himself repeating, as though he were addressing the ancient church, arraigned in person before the bar of public justice.

"Guilty or not guilty?"—But there was no response.

Meanwhile Mrs. Maloney's prayer-book lay hidden in the merchant's desk. More than once he had applied himself to its pages, but though impressed with the spirit of devotion which it breathed, he failed to find in it the answer which he sought.

One day while thus employed, he suddenly slipped the book into his pocket, strode away from the desk and telling his clerk that he would return in a couple of hours, passed out of the store.

Half an hour later he tied his horse at the gateway of the Maloney home, and then he surprised Mrs. Maloney and her daughter Mary, in the midst of their domestic occupations. Nevertheless he met with an agreeable reception and was ushered into the best room.

"I have taken the liberty of looking into your prayer book," he said, in returning it to her. "Your religion differs greatly from ours."

"Yes," said Mrs. Maloney, "our's is an old church, while yours is comparatively new. O course we believe our's to be the best" she added, with a matronly smile.

"I would like to know something about your religion," he said, "if you would excuse me for asking."

"Oh certainly," she said, "but Mary is reader with her catechism now than an Mary come here."

The daughter of the house thus summoned from her work, wiped her hands, pulled down her sleeves, smoothed her hair, as best she could with a few hasty touches, and presented herself with some diffidence to their visitor.

Neil, who had seen her before as "a slip of a girl," almost failed to realize his ideal of her in the maidenly figure and handsome oval face now before him. It occurred to him that she was quite as handsome as Jennett, only of a different style of beauty. It was true, that, perhaps, just now her hands were a trifle red, but if so it was with commendable work, which had given her a healthy vigorous frame, and a pair of rosy cheeks in which beauty and modesty seemed harmoniously blended.

While these thoughts rapidly passed through his mind, he was not aware that his look had become almost a stare, until he met her timid glance and saw the charming confusion of her manner.

All at once he became aware of the awkwardness of the situation into which he had thrust himself, and would have ignored the object of his visit altogether if it had been possible to do so. Since he could not retreat from the subject, he must go on with it now, and so he began, hesitatingly and apologetically.

"I am sure you must think it very strange of me but I would like to know if your religion is as bad as we Presbyterians think it to be," and he glanced enquiringly from daughter to mother as he spoke.

"It is not bad at all," said the elder lady, with a pleasant smile. "It is holy, Catholic and Apostolic."

"Excuse me," said Neil, "I see you have a picture, I suppose of the Virgin Mary. Do you worship these objects?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Maloney.

"Don't you pray to the Virgin and the saints, and worship them?"

"We honor them," said Mary. "We ask them to pray for us; but we offer true worship to God alone, and look to him only, for grace and mercy."

"I have often heard that you kneel before the cross, and before pictures and images, and pray to them, thus, as it were, putting them in the place of God."

"We do not kneel to them, or pray to them, or worship them in any way; that would be absurd. They are merely helps to our prayers and devotions, by the pious thoughts they suggest; thus assisting the mind. We kneel to God alone."

"I do not wish to doubt you, Mrs. Maloney, I am sure. But I have always understood that these were objects of worship, and were prayed to, as we Protestants pray to God."

"It is no wonder you thought our religion very bad," said Mrs. Maloney, laughing pleasantly.

Here Mary produced a copy of the catechism, and handed it to their visitor, open at a particular page, from which he read:

Question.—What else is forbidden by the first commandment? Answer.—To give to any creature the honor due to God alone. Question.—May we then pray to the crucifix or to the images or relics of the saints? Answer.—By no means; for they have neither life, nor sense, nor power to hear or help us."

"That is very conclusive," said Mr. McCoy. "Could you lend me this little book?" he asked, of Mary.

"Oh, you can keep it altogether."

"I will lend you Dr. Challoner's Catholic Christian Instructor which may interest you. Here it is."

"Thank you. Is there anything in it about indulgences?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, that is all explained."

"Because," said Mr. McCoy, "only yesterday I saw in one of our popular Protestant Commentaries on the Bible, the assertion that indulgences were simply licenses to commit sin, with the price to be paid graduated in proportion to its enormity—so much for theft, so much for perjury, or murder and so on for all the rest."

"Oh, Mr. McCoy, such a statement as to the nature of indulgences is a gross and shameful falsehood. An indulgence, so far from being a license to commit sin, has no reference at all to sins to be committed, but to past sins, after they have been confessed and repented of. It is a remission of certain canonical penalties, or other temporal punishments, due to sin after the guilt has already been forgiven in the sacrament of penance. How can your people be so untruthful?"

"There is something terribly wrong somewhere," said he.

"So there is," said Mrs. Maloney,

with warmth. "The Church has always been vilified and misrepresented. What a shame that Protestants are kept in such ignorance!"

"Why that is precisely what we charge your priests with doing to their people," said Neil, laughing.

"Well Mr. McCoy, you are a man of sense and education. I just read and in form yourself as to what our Church really teaches. Is there nothing too hard for Protestants to believe about us?"

"Here," said Mary, "is 'The Faith of Our Fathers,' which may help you," as she handed him the book.

"And may God be His mercy enlighten you," added the mother piously.

"There is no nothing else I wanted to ask you," said Neil, musingly. "Oh, yes, I have it now. The Scripture says there is but one mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. Pardon me, but you seem to have many mediators."

"Here is what another Catholic author says on that point," said Mary, reading from a little book, entitled "Questions and Objections Concerning Catholic Doctrine and Practices."—"Christ is our only great and primary Mediator with the Father; but secondary mediators or intercessors offer no insult to Christ. When we pray for one another we are secondary mediators or intercessors. If Catholics prayed to the saints expecting mercy and salvation from them, then it would be an insult to Christ. But they do not. They only ask the saints to pray for them, the glorified saints in heaven more powerful than those of sinners on earth."

"But have they any regard for us?" he asked.

"Charity outlives Faith and Hope," said Mary, and never ceases—not even in heaven. We are taught that the rich man Dives prayed even in hell, though in that case his prayer was unavailing."

"But can they hear us?"

Mary laughed. "I did not think you Protestants were so nearly being pagans" she said. "Don't you read your bible, Mr. McCoy? Do not the angels of God rejoice upon the conversion of a sinner? If so it must be known. God can easily arrange all that. Think of the wonders of the telegraph and the telephone even here; and what are these to the resources of intelligence available in heaven?"

"I am afraid you are right," said he.

"Alas!" echoed the two women in a breath.

"You know I am a Presbyterian," said Neil. "I do not want to think that you may be right. I wish to remain what I am, you see I had a wish to enquire into your religion, but I do not want you to convert me."

"We shall! We shall! With God's help!" And Mary, clapping her hands, oh Mr. McCoy we will pray for you, we will say a novena for you, won't we mother?"

Mrs. Maloney checked the impetuosity of her daughter, and Mr. McCoy rose, playfully feigning haste to escape from such dangerous quarters.

"I was going past, you know—over to Hopson, and thought I would just drop in with your prayer-book on the way."

"I am very much obliged to you," Mrs. Maloney.

"I am taking away more than I brought, though," he added, as he took his leave.

It was a busy day on the farm, and for some time the mother and daughter seemed too intent on making up for the time they had lost, to have much to say, but the thoughts of both were busy with their late visitor. And when they spoke of him at last, it was in brief words. But for many days thereafter the pious aspirations of these two women went up at frequent intervals to heaven for the conversion of Neil McCoy.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE RICH MISS BANNERMAN.

I once spent a very pleasant six months in Australia, and while there came into possession of the facts related in the following story. They were told me by the Superior of the Convent, where I was privileged to live as a boarder during my stay. It was her wish that I should give it to the public after a reasonable period of time, when she should have passed to a better life; as she was then stricken with a mortal disease.

"I presume you never heard of her," she said, "but the rich Miss Bannerman was one of the toast of many of the Scotch capital. Her father had left her an immense fortune, which she spent lavishly both in amusement and, I must acknowledge, in good works; for she had a kind, if undisciplined heart. She had received her education from the best masters, and was considered beautiful by fascinating connoisseurs in those often ill named attributes."

"She was fond of pleasure, and constantly flitted from place to place in search of it, spending much time at the famous resorts of France, England and Germany. She did not lack suitors, but no one had ever yet touched her heart. One morning at Ems she passed on the promenade two young men in the garb of ecclesiastical students. One of them, an ordinary looking individual, glanced at her respectfully, but admiringly. The other did not look in her direction. She thought him the handsomest man she had ever seen. About her own age, tall, distinguished-looking, with a face of remarkable intelligence. The thought that impressed itself most forcibly on her Presbyterian mind was:

"What a pity that such a man should bury himself in the—Catholic priests!"

She was a willful and impulsive person, who never denied herself anything she was asked; and then and there she resolved that she would become acquainted with that young man, and that, if she could prevent it, he should not become a Catholic priest. She knew nothing of our holy faith, but she did not care to be deceived in it. I shall not here relate what arts

she used to compass her purpose, but she did meet the young student as she had resolved, and so wound herself unaimedly with her womanly, though unobtrusively, that she fell as a deserter to her charm, and soon she was with him; at least, that is what they both thought at the time. His companion warned him, but to no purpose. He was a young German; of great talent and some means of his own. His preceptors at the seminary reasoned with him, but all in vain. Finally they let him go, persuaded that if anyone had been granted a vocation and lost it, he was the man.

"The engagement was short, but as the days went by she felt a nameless dissatisfaction, though she still loved him; she did not doubt his affection for her, yet there seemed an insuperable barrier between them, due to the religion from which she could not at that time, and was persuaded never would be able to, make him averse one inch. She dreaded the future, when their ideals, one by one, must inevitably grow as far apart as their ideas; for she did not, for a single moment, conceive that time would still any change in her own beliefs. Still, she loved him, or fancied she did, and took a certain pride, moreover, in the consciousness that she had wrested him from the grasp of errors she regarded as monstrous and diabolical. On his side she saw no hesitation, no regrets; she believed him to be perfectly happy and content."

"The morning of the marriage day came. They stood before the priest to pronounce their vows, for he would not, for an instant, consider her desire to be married by a minister. This fact it was that had caused her to think seriously of the future. As they stood there, before the clergyman could speak, he turned to her and said: 'Eileen, I do not believe I was ever in love with you, and I shall never be a priest, and a priest I shall yet be, if I can. After what has gone before, I believe I am being punished because since my earliest youth I have decried Peter, and have said hundreds of times that I would never deny my Lord. I have denied Him—I am Peter, but from this time I hope to be Paul. Will you release me, Eileen?' I was not meant to be married man."

"And what did she reply as the poor girl?" I inquired breathlessly.

"The Superior smiled as she said: 'The veil fell from her eyes, the shackles from her heart; and in the same moment she answered, with the greatest calmness: 'George, I agree with you perfectly and entirely. You were meant for a priest, and I have only been a temptation. Pity that for even a time it should have overcome you. Go your way and God bless you.'"

"The clergyman stood amazed."

"She turned about in her bridal finery before the assembled guests, and walked calmly down the room and up the stairs. The affair was the talk of the town till a new sensation made it forgotten. He went to a monastery, made a long retreat, and after a time of probation was admitted as a novice. He became a holy and hard-working priest, a wonderful missionary, and held many high offices in the order. His name was known throughout three continents as a savior of souls. He died last year in Germany."

"And the lady, what of her?" I asked.

"When she found time to examine her thoughts carefully, she came to the conclusion that a religion and a calling which could take a man from his bride at the altar must have more claims to sanctity than she had imagined—that a faith which could appeal to so clever a man must have some foundation in truth. She read, weighed, sifted, prayed, and at the end of two years became a Catholic—and a nun."

"She brought her large fortune into the Church, and has been permitted to do a great deal of good with it. For though it she has been enabled to see sick and healed and consoled, the poor relieved, the prisoner comforted, the children instructed."

"And where is she now? Do you know her?"

"She is here, talking to you; telling you her own story, that some day when she is no more, you will tell it to others as one of thousands of evidences that God moves in most mysterious ways for the furtherance of His all-wise designs in the salvation of souls."

"And the priest? Did he ever know her?"

"We met once. It was very odd."

"Were you both not greatly embarrassed?"

"Not at all. I was about to leave England, and was travelling with three Sisters from Liverpool. At the railway station two Benedictines were ahead of us, awaiting their train. In one of them I recognized my old time friend. I was undecided whether to speak to him or not, when Providence ordained it that we should have a few words with each other. His companion, a priest with whom I had slight acquaintance, brought him forward, saying that we were the four Sisters who were going to found a House of our Order in Australia."

"We have met before, Father," I said, quite compositely. "I was Miss Bannerman."

"What did he do?"

"He extended both hands, saying in the heartiest way: 'You a nun! You a nun! and how long?'"

"I told him."

"Thank God thank God," he said, "Oh, there have been many prayers said, but I did not know." And then the whistle blew and he went away laughing. And that was all."

"I don't know what is this stone that life has laid on you—if doubt, or sin, or sorrow—I only know that, in an hour which you dream not, invisible hands will roll it back, and some morning when you set forth sorrowfully to visit your tomb, you will find that your soul, too, had risen, and that you will hear glad voices singing alleluias for your resurrection day.—Anna C. Minogue, 'The Garden Bench,' in the Rosary."

THE ONLY WAY.

NOT THE EASIEST BUT THE MOST BLESSED.

It is a splendid thing, at the end of life, to be as certain of having done the right thing all along as you were confident of intention to do it at the beginning. Seldom is life's review as satisfactory as its prospect was inspiring. Long before its end we begin to see ways in which we might have done better, and to us all there must often come the grave question: What are the things most worth striving for in life? Is it a heedless life that never asks: Am I seeking the prizes really worth the gaining?

Every purposeful life gains some prize; the puzzling question is as to which are the most desirable—the permanently valuable. Popular opinion points to riches and honors; but experience warns of the price to be paid for them. . . . It is certain that you cannot pursue that prize with single-minded purpose without the sacrifice of almost every desirable thing.

Then, cries conscience, choose character; make that your end. But a man stops to count the cost. While it is not true that one cannot be rich both in character and in cash, the instances are sufficiently few to make them look more like exceptions than rules. They who seek character regard adversity and prosperity, ignominy and honors but as incidents on the way, the goal alone is to them essential. Who will show us the right way?

A concrete answer comes from one of the world's wisest and best. Paul, mighty in manhood, died poor and in prison; but he died endorsing the course that had such an end. In review he saw that the way had been right. He might have taken many other ways. So potent a personality would have found prosperity in any of them. But he deliberately chose the way of service for spiritual things; he accepted the hardships, loss, privations, prisons, and death, and rejected the possibilities of easy wealth and fame. At the end, having tasted all the bitterness of the way, he commends it to his young friend Timothy. The path of service for humanity, the fight against sin and wrong, the stewardship of faith and truth and right, these, says he, are the worth while things in life.

But was Paul right? Is any life patterned after his Master's, any life that counts the inner joys, the glories of service, the rewards of character as supreme, and so misses the treasures for which the many strive, a success? Let history answer. Is it fame we seek; there were a thousand famous, mighty, successful men in imperial Rome when Paul, from his prison, wrote these words. Well might they have despised the poor prisoner had they even heard of him. Yet who to-day remembers the name of one of these great ones? And who is there has not heard of and honored that poor, condemned prisoner? even much more is all this true concerning the lowly Man of Nazareth.

Let our heart answer. Is it riches we seek; what is all prosperity without peace of heart? Can money ever buy comfort, content in, or sympathy? Money is to be measured by its earning power, the interest accruing in happiness and usefulness. The worth of the things you hold in your hand depends on the riches of your heart. Think you not this world would be the better place and life the wealthier for us all if all were seeking the things unseen, truth and right and holiness, love and service, seeking to see their good and to serve their fellows? That would not mean a race of mystics; it would mean more manhood, less mammon; more wealth and fewer fortunes. Deep in all our hearts we know this is the best way; its toilsome path alone gives peace; its intangible prizes alone are permanent; its supreme reward is character, the soul, the one asset we can carry from this world and the one legacy, which it is safe to leave to others.—Catholic Columbian.

PRIDE OF INTELLECT.

There is food for reflection in the following words of the unfortunate Renan, which we find in the concluding portion of an admirable article in the London Tablet entitled "The Eve of Priesthood: Laocairde — Renan."

Who that is fated to read the writings of unbelievers has not experienced the loss to his soul of these sweet enjoyments which the apostate reformatory? Had I stayed in Brittany, I should ever have remained a stranger to that vanity which the world has loved and encouraged. I mean a measure of defences in evoking a jingle of words and ideas. At Paris this pleased them; and, perchance to my misfortune, I was constrained to continue it. . . . I see around me pure and simple men, in whom Christianity is sufficient to produce virtue and honor. Ah, God save them from ever having aroused in them that wretched faculty, that fatal spirit of criticism, which so imperiously demands satisfaction; and which, when satisfied, leaves the soul so few sweet enjoyments! Would to God it lay with me to stifle it! . . . Have I, therefore, lost all hope of returning to Catholicism? Ah, such a thought would be too cruel for me! No, I no longer hope to return by any rational process; but I have often been on the verge of a complete revolt from a guide which at times I mistrusted. The regret of my life is to have chosen for my studies a line of research which will never be quieted, and which always endures through enticing questionings as to a reality forever vanished."

Alas that one who all his life, he tells us, had in the depths of his heart the echo of church bells, calling him to the sacred offices, should have written so much to cause apostrophe light in the hearts of others!—Ave Maria.

This very perfection, which many persons fear so much lest it should be sad and constraining, is only perfection in so far as it increases our goodwill. Now, in proportion as we advance, and do more for God the weariness and constraint we felt in the beginning grow less and less; for we are not wearied and constrained in doing the things we love to do.—Laocairde.