

[From a Correspondent of the London Tablet.]

REASONS FOR BECOMING A CATHOLIC.

SIR—The following document, though not modern, will, I hope, be useful to our Anglican friends, many of whom seem eager to peruse the *TABLET*. The document contains the "Reasons" given by the Duchess of York for joining Rome, in the time of Charles II. From its perusal your readers will see that almost the same motives which converted this illustrious lady do, in our days, also, produce the like blessed effect amongst many. But her motives were misrepresented or ridiculed, just the same as those of modern converts are now. Stillingfleet, who was then the great champion of the Anglican church, undertook to prove "that she had no right to leave the Church wherein she was born," &c. Is not this exactly the argument which is used now to prevent people "from straggling towards Rome?" But Dryden, himself also a convert, replied to Stillingfleet in a very able pamphlet, showing that her adversary, "not being able to answer plain matter of fact, endeavored to evade it by suppositions, circumstances, and conjectures; not being satisfied unless he question the integrity of her proceedings and the truth of her plain relations."

The following are the words of the Duchess: "It is so reasonable to expect that a person always bred up in the Church of England, and as well instructed in the doctrine of it as the best divines and her capacity could make her, should be liable to many censures for leaving that Church and making herself a member of the Roman Catholic Church, to which, I confess, I was one of the greatest enemies it ever had. But I rather choose to satisfy my friends by this paper than to have the trouble to answer all the questions that may be daily asked me. And first, I do protest, in the presence of Almighty God, that no person, man or woman, directly or indirectly, ever said anything to me since I came into England, or used the least endeavour to make me change my religion.—It is a blessing I wholly owe to Almighty God, and I hope the hearing of a prayer I daily made Him ever since I was in France and Flanders, where, seeing much of the devotion of the Catholics (though I had very little myself), I made it my continual request to Almighty God that if I were not, I might, before I died, be in the true religion.

I did not in the least doubt but that I was so, and never had any scruple till November last, when reading a book called 'The History of the Reformation,' by Dr. Heylin, which I had heard very much commended, and have been told if ever I had any doubt of my religion *that* would settle me; instead of which, I found it the description of the horridest sacrileges in the world, and could find no reason why we left the Church but for 'Three, the most abominable ones that were ever heard of among Christians. First, Henry VIII. renounces the Pope's authority because he would not give him leave to part with his wife and marry another in her lifetime. Secondly, Edward VI. was a child and governed by his uncle, who made his estate out of church lands; and then Queen Elizabeth, who being no lawful heiress to the Crown, could have no other way to keep it but by renouncing a Church that could never suffer so unlawful a thing to be done by one of her children. I confess, I cannot think the Holy Ghost could ever be in such counsels; and it is very strange that if the bishops had no design (as they say) but restoring to us the doctrines of the primitive Church, they could never think upon it till Henry VIII. made the breach upon so unlawful a pretence. These scruples being raised, I began to consider of the difference between the Catholics and us, and examined them as well as I could by Holy Scripture, which though I do not pretend to be able to understand, yet there are some things I found so easy that I cannot but wonder I had been so long without finding them out: as the real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the infallibility of the Church, Confession, and Praying for the Dead. After this, I spoke severally to two of the Bishops (Sheldon and Morley) we have in England, who both told me 'there were many things in the Romish Church which were very much to be wished we had kept: as Confession, which was no doubt commanded by God; that praying for the dead was one of the ancient things in Christianity; that, for their parts, they did it daily, though they would not own it.' And afterwards, pressing one of them very much upon the other points, he told me 'that if he had been a Catholic, he would not change his religion, but that being of another Church (wherein he was sure were all things necessary for salvation), he thought