

Naturally, I was surprised, — I was puzzled. The question trembled upon my lips. "Miss Charity" anticipated it with the answer.

"I *want* to do it ; but I simply cannot. No ! no !" she hastened to reassure me, reading my unexpressed opinion that her husband (a non-Catholic) had suddenly put a stop to her good work ; "no one has made any objections. It's just myself. Perhaps after awhile, when —I—am—"

She paused, awkwardly. Then, unable to resist my apparent disappointment, she resumed impulsively :

"Come ! I will tell you. I had determined it should be a secret always. But I cannot bear that you should misjudge my motive. It is just this : I am not worthy to do such holy work. I had not thought of it before. But to-day—to-day, when I was proudly regarding the linens I had just finished, I thought of my school days in the convent ; of the linen room, where the nuns made the altar linens, and where they were so carefully and skillfully laundered every week as a sacred duty. At first I used to beg leave to help, because I loved the work and I was always happy to be about the sanctuary. Then after a time I grew to be really useful. But I was good and pious in those days ; now it is so different. I cannot do it. It seems like a sacrilege for me to handle the holy linens when I never go to Mass."

I was much affected. I tried to reason with her, to encourage her, to suggest that she start in again and be a practical Catholic so that she would be worthy to continue the work she had so generously begun.

It was useless. The habit of missing Mass was too strong, she declared. So I left, thoroughly disheartened, even though she promised to contribute weekly the cost of the linens.

A few months passed. "Miss Charity" did not refer to the incident. I knew her too well, however, not to observe that she was unhappy.

We were preparing for a great feast — the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, and, being the parish of the "Most Blessed Sacrament," we were to celebrate this festal day in