

AUNT HILDA'S PORTFOLIO.

Written for the CARMELITE REVIEW by
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LOVE AND LOVERS.



WHAT have you to say, Ethna?" inquired Aunt Hilda, whilst by her eyes she endeavored to infuse into the trembling girl the heroism that inflamed her own heart.

"Please speak for me, Aunt Hilda, I have talked over all this until I am worn out. One week ago to-day we began this agony."

"A week?" it seems to me that years have passed in those seven days," said Mr. Stuart.

Seeing that Ethna was really unable to speak, Aunt Hilda made reply to Mr. Stuart's question.

"I suppose Ethna is aware that by so doing she would offer an insult to that church through which she has received the greatest blessings of her life. Ethna knows also that the Catholic church requires from the non-Catholic party who desires to contract marriage with one of her children the promise that any off-shoot from such union shall be baptized and reared in the faith of which she is the custodian."

"That promise I could never give; no child of mine shall ever be a Catholic."

"Can you tell me the foundation of your prejudice against the Catholic faith, Mr. Stuart?"

"I think she is the most arbitrary body on the face of the earth; she lays claim to being the only church, and that all outsiders are to be lost. I know that God speaks to my heart in my chamber; I have my conscience that tells me what I should or what I must not do; I have paid very little attention to the history of religions, I have been too busy in preparing to make

my way in the world, but I know right from wrong."

"It appears to me, dear friend, that you claim for yourself the infallibility that our Divine Redeemer promised to His church, and the claim to which attribute incenses you."

"Can you think it right to compel this young girl through her love for you to abandon the faith in which she was reared and to which she owes the exquisite, but to you inexplicable charm that you acknowledge has captivated you. Do you not think that your attitude savors of tyranny?"

"Ethna does not doubt my love. She knows I dare not offend my father."

"Since you have both come to me I suppose I am free to give my opinion?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Acton. I shall be very thankful for it."

"I speak in full sympathy for the suffering of both of you and to prevent greater wretchedness in the future. That there can be neither love, nor joy, nor peace, in a marriage between a practical Catholic and a non-Catholic I am firmly convinced. How can love remain where there is permanent disunion, the one condemning all that the other holds sacred? Religion enters into every question in life. The Catholic is called on to protest against the false principles that the world presents, whether in art, in history, in morals, in politics, or in science. Our Lord foretold it when he said, 'The life of man is warfare.' This that you call love is possibly an ebullition of passion on the one side and of sentiment on the other. What is love? I shall define it by its qualities, the first of which is unselfishness; true love seeks ever the greater good of the beloved object. True love delights in sacrifice. There are many counterfeits among them, love of pleasure, love of power, love of love, and love of self."

"I assure you, Mrs. Acton, that I have every reason to hope that I can offer Ethna a comfortable home. My people are well to do and I know they will welcome my wife among them."

"A Catholic wife, Mr. Stuart?"

"I know that when Ethna sees the kind of people the Catholics of Blankshire are she will not wish to place herself among them."

"Marriage in the Catholic church, Mr.