

HER CONVERSION.

It makes a charming picture undoubtedly of course, one cannot, as an artist fall to be struck with the ritual of the Romanish church, and, as a matter of fact, if one believed in Revelation there is no other possible church for a sensible person to belong to.

The speaker was Miss Clara Wynne, an artist by profession, she was essentially a product of the latter end of the nineteenth century. In no other era could she have flourished as she was certainly doing at present. The child of well-to-do people of the upper middle class who had, however, no very strong religious convictions, she had been highly educated as far as her mind went, but her soul had been subjected to a spiritual starvation, which rendered her her becoming what she termed a "free-thinker."

Her companion was a man who towered above her in height, and was proportionately built. He was not particularly handsome, but had a pleasing face and a manly, erect carriage. His eyes were affianced lover. Ernest Ward, the son and heir of a country gentleman of large fortune, and his worshipped Clara with all the strength of his mind and body. He loved her with an intensity of love that does not fall to every one's share, and treated her with a reverential tenderness that even she, with all her advanced ideas of woman's equality with the sterner sex, could not but accept as the recognition of her feminine frailty.

In theory she repudiated the idea of receiving those small attentions that delicate courtesy which a woman's mind delights in paying to mankind, but she had better pleased had Ernest met her upon more equal terms, but we doubt nevertheless, whether she would have obtained the satisfaction she fondly imagined from such a course of procedure.

The betrothal had just left the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Farm street, London, where Ernest had been assisting at benediction and Clara had been feasting her aesthetic sense on the beauties of the ceremony. They were going to Clara's studio to view her latest picture intended for the Royal Academy Exhibition. Ernest was looking troubled, as well he might, for the following reasons:—

Twelve months previously he had become engaged to Clara Wynne, and now in the meantime he had, during a tour abroad, become convinced of the claims of the Catholic religion to be the only true one. To be convinced with him was a near preliminary to being reformed in church, and so to-day, the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, found him in real truth a sincere Catholic, but his thoughts were now for Clara, but his prayers and efforts for her conversion even to Christianity had been so far unavailing.

The studio was reached, and Ernest gently divested Clara of her hat and jacket, she submitting with a very good grace for one of her vaunted opinions. She had chosen "The Death of St. Agnes" as her subject, and well had he talented his hand some few weeks.

"Isn't she lovely?" she cried, drawing aside the curtain which hid her now finished work, and Ernest gazed at it long and rapturously. "What inspiration prompted you to choose that subject?" he asked, at length. "If you were a Catholic in heart and soul as well as being the little genius you are, it could not have been done better."

to be brought up Catholics. "I could not possibly promise such a thing. I have been very liberal; you know I believe in entire liberty of conscience and creed, and so how could I allow my children to have their minds biased and their souls trammelled with you so-called religious teachings?" No, Ernest, my children should be absolutely free on that point. If when they grow up they choose to conform to any religious belief, I should not prevent them so doing, but I must positively decline to allow what you call religious principles to be dinned into them from their infancy."

Ernest listened to this with a face which was ghastly in its pallor. It meant only one thing to him and that was a parting forever from the one woman he had ever loved or ever could love.

"You will think it over, Clara, my darling," he begged, "because as long as you are in your present frame of mind was—"

"We can never be more than what we are to each other," she interrupted, rising and looking at him coldly. "Listen, Clara," he said, taking hold of her small wrist, and trying to draw her down to him. "Can not you see what it means to me?"

"It means a lot to you in imagination, doubtless," she replied, scornfully, drawing away her hand. "Here you bring me quite a superfluous case, and make all this fuss about it. But I have stated my opinion, and am not likely to alter them in any way."

Slowly she took the diamond ring from her finger, and held it out to Ernest, but the hand that offered it trembled a little. "Take it," she said. "Our engagement is at an end. You are free!"

"I cannot take it, Clara. Don't look at me like that, dearest. Keep it at least till to-morrow."

She turned and deposited it on a small table, saying softly:—"It is all the same to me."

Two minutes later Ernest was gone, and Clara had thrown herself on one of the big rugs on the floor, a heap of sobbing humanity. The next morning's post brought back his ring to Ernest Ward.

The Royal Academy Exhibition was over, and Clara Wynne's name was in everyone's mouth. She had been congratulated on her extraordinary success until she was tired of hearing about it. Her own youth and beauty, in combination with her talent, were freely discussed in the public press, but praise or adverse criticism were alike thrown away upon her. She felt that all was vanity and affliction of spirit, and to as one could she turn for comfort.

Ernest was gone, she knew not whether, and her heart was filled with bitterness against him. She tried hard to find solace in her work, but though she had her moments of forgetfulness, she could not obtain any permanent relief.

"I have nothing to live for," she would cry out sometimes, and then she would dash down a brush and sweep away her last recollections.

Then again she would resume her work with a feverish energy. She was determined that her fame should spread to all quarters of the globe.

"He will hear of it," she would say to herself. "He will see that I am quite independent of him."

It was during this time that she turned out some of her best work, and Ernest heard of it, as she had thought. Two years had winged their way into eternity when one day Clara received a letter from a distinguished Catholic nobleman, asking her to undertake the work of painting the walls of a convent chapel with certain subjects which he would choose.

Clara, who was somewhat run down in health, thought that a few months' sojourn in Devonshire would do her good, so she accepted the commission. Never would she forget the impression which her first contact with the nuns and convent made upon her. It was towards the close of autumn, and the trees and hedges displayed a glorious wealth of crimson foliage; as she neared the convent, which lay at some distance from the town, a sweet-toned bell rang out upon the peaceful air—it was the compline bell, she was told.

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that this religion, which is practiced as a custom, was not in, at least well founded. Among the pictures which were to adorn the walls, she left to the last that of a full length figure of our Lord showing His Divine Heart, with the inscription written below. "It is all love and mercy." This Clara felt to be her masterpiece, and she threw her whole heart and soul into the work. She was irresistibly drawn towards it, and the words which he was to paint beneath it constantly recurred to her mind.

"It is all love and mercy!" One evening Clara had put the finishing touches to her work, and, standing before it, she sighed deeply and critically. The mother piety came up gently to her side, and said softly:—"It is beautiful. What must the reality be?"

"I gave a start. The reality! Yes, there was a reality somewhere, surely there was more than the emptiness and weariness which at times weighed upon her so heavily. She turned suddenly and, clasping the wondering nun in close embrace, said in piteous tones:—"How happy you must believe in Him. I believe nothing. Oh, do help me—help me to believe, too."

"Dear child, He will help you Himself. He is all love and mercy," said the nun. "Come here and tell Him all."

Clara, who had burst into tears, suffered herself to be led before the tabernacle, where, sinking down on her knees, she prayed as some one has prayed before:—"God, if there be a God, help me to believe."

And there in the still shadow of the sanctuary, with only the light of the little crimson lamp shining upon her, she bowed her beautiful head in very submission. Not many weeks later the artistic world was all a-r with the news of Miss Wynne's "going over to Rome."

Knowing as they all did what her opinions were, surprise was the order of the day. "However," remarked one, spitefully, "the sentiment was echoed by many; there is a very potent factor to be considered—Ernest Ward."

Ernest read the news. He was in Africa, and the paper he saw was nearly a month old. Without losing a day he started on his return to England.

Clara had given him up. For months she had heard nothing of him. She thought he was lost to her, but it was an immense relief to her to think that some day he would know of her newly-found happiness.

One day she had been out, and returning found a small parcel directed to her in a hand that set all the pulses of her heart throbbing wildly. With eager, trembling fingers she opened it. Something dropped out and fell upon the ground.

It was her engagement ring, and in the covering she found Ernest's card. She did not send it back this time. The next day a well-known step, minus perhaps, some of its former confidence, was heard coming up to her studio.

"Ernest!" "My dearest Clara!" "You are here," she said, for words would not come. A picture of the Sacred Heart occupies a prominent position in the house of Mr. Ernest Ward and his wife—Catholics.

VATICAN DOCUMENTS PHOTOGRAPHER. According to the "Times," Sir Benjamin Stone, M.P., the President of the Photographic Association, has profited by his recent visit to the Vatican to obtain some most interesting photographs of documents in the Vatican Archives. Among them is a photographic reproduction of Henry VIII's famous reply to Martin Luther in defence of the Seven Sacraments. This treatise was sent by special ambassadors for presentation to Pope Leo X., the author having appended in his own handwriting, a famous greeting that "Henry, King of the English, sends this work and witness of faith and friendship to Leo X.; and, on receipt of it, the Pope conferred on Henry VIII, the complimentary title of 'Defender of the Faith,' a dignity conferred in 1534 by the Pope conferred by Clement VII's photograph which may attract even greater notice, however, is one reproducing the text of a letter in French, written in the King's own hand, by Henry VIII, to Anne Boleyn. This is signed with the initials 'H. V.' and in which the letters 'H. V.' appear in a round which is inscribed 'H. No other seeks Rex.'"

1850-1898. Known over the world as a staple remedy in boxes only. AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF JOHN MITCHELL'S.

Mr. J. F. Howells, M.P., has received from a friend a hitherto unpublished letter of John Mitchell's, written when the "Islander" was editor from his island prison to America. It was addressed to Mr. John Howells, who is a brother of an M.H.S.'s "Jail Journal" by the initials J. H., and described as the son of a worthy English settler of those parts, an experienced headman who knows every nook and corner of the island, and who had undertaken to take me to the "shortest and object of my path to a worthy friend." Mr. Howells is now an old man, being generally at Glenorchy, Tasmania. He still proudly displays the silver-mounted revolver presented to him by the Irish Directory of New York, and in 1850 in recognition of his services to Mitchell. The following is the letter:—

My dear Howells—You are I am still in the hands of the Law, and have been sentenced to a term of years in the house of correction for my share in the house of a worthy friend, Tasmanian in those parts. I have been great difficulty and delay in procuring a vessel; but at last I believe that is arranged, and this night, at ten o'clock, I start for the coast, escorted by half a dozen horsemen, amongst whom will be at least one of your countrymen, the P.M. Spent the first night in W. P. house, and it is impossible to tell you all the exertions and friendships of the good people I am amongst here. If I get clear off my feet, I start off immediately, but I did not want to start on my perilous journey without writing to tell you how I have spent so far. I will never forget our Irish lads together, and whatever may become of me, I will always be grateful for your kind services. Remember me warmly to your good father and mother and to your wife. You will all hear from me if ever I have the good luck to reach America, for I shall not soon forget the Shannon."

THE "UNITY" CONFERENCE. The London correspondent of the Dublin Freeman telegraphed his paper on March 28th as follows:—"The meeting of the Irish Parliamentary Party to consider the Home Rule proposal for a conference between the different sections preliminary to the Unity Conference on the 4th April was held at 15, The members present were:—Sir Thomas Esmond, Messrs. T. Dillon, T. P. O'Connor, D. Sullivan, F. O'Connor, O'Connor, Fox, J. F. X. O'Brien, Donelan, McDermott, Jameson, James O'Connor, Burke, Keane, Abraham, Kilbride, T. J. Farrell, MacEaskey, Flynn, T. Curran, O'Malley, MacDonnell, T. H. Curran, O'Leary, Hogan, Molloy, and Dr. Haughey."

Sir Thomas Esmond occupied the chair. The chairman having read the communication sent by Mr. Patrick O'Brien, M.P., on behalf of Mr. E. J. Redmond and his colleagues. It was proposed by Mr. Arthur O'Connor:—"That this meeting welcomes the communication now read from Mr. P. O'Brien and his colleagues in the National representation of Ireland, and agrees to appoint a committee to confer with them for the attainment of the objects indicated."

The following amendment was proposed by Mr. Edward Blake:—"That this meeting gratefully welcomes the communication now read from Mr. P. O'Brien and his colleagues in the National representation of Ireland, and agrees to appoint a committee to confer with them for the attainment of the objects indicated."

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