

going my way, will you let me ride with you?"

"Sure, get up here with me. I am taking Father Ramon around on his sick calls."

"With the Blessed Sacrament?" The little fellow's eyes opened wider in his questioning.

"Yes. Here comes Father now. Get up quick!"

But Sam stayed on the curb. Off came his cap. He was an altar boy, and he knew what to do. Chris was rather amazed, and more so as Sam opened the car door, saying a low, "Good morning, Father." And after he had shut it he climbed up beside Chris. But his cap remained off.

"Better put your cap on, Sam; kind of chilly this morning."

"I—don't think I could, Chris."

Somehow Chris felt a blush rising in his cheeks; then, rather shamefacedly, he pulled off his jaunty chauffeur's cap. Nor did he put it on again until Sam had left, and then slowly, as though half-apologizing.

They drove to wealthy homes, to hospitals, and when in a poor section stopped at a house noted for its shiftlessness. True, eight children had come to this house in twelve years, and that would naturally keep the mother rather busy.

But the more idle, with comfortable incomes, easily criticized her for her untidiness and thought she should do better. Chris knew all about her—knew now that she was ill—and with sudden pity in his heart saw Father Ramon go up the path. As the door opened, Chris could see a slender boy meet their Royal Guest with a lighted taper. Interested, he peered further into the room. A group of little figures in wretched unpatched clothing were kneeling within.

Somehow Chris felt he must not watch any more.

"She may be untidy, and the kids dirty and ragged, but there is one thing she has not neglected, anyway," he murmured.

Then, as if in answer to his tribute, came clear childish voices, singing: "Oh, Lord, I am not worthy." Swiftly followed forgotten thoughts of his own First Communion day, of his mother and her patiently-taught lessons. To his surprise Chris felt a lump in his throat. The sweet tones continued through the hymn and almost until the priest came out of the door. Father Ramon's face showed a nearly seraphic smile. Chris, filled with reverence, stifled an exclamation that he himself must be "growing dippy." Somehow he knew slang had no part in such scenes, though he did not reason it out.

Their final call was made at a hospital on the outskirts of the city. A frown came on Chris' face as he turned into the road he had travelled last night.

The frown deepened with thoughts of Mary, but this time his displeasure was not for Mary. He had been a beast, he told himself, to act as he did last night! You'd think he was a saint, he continued to reproach himself. It would serve him right if Mary never spoke to him again. There his heart throbbed. Even if she were—Poor little girl! What if he did find her in the dance hall—had she not pleaded her innocence? Thoughts raced through his head with a swiftness that no speedometer could register.

Father Ramon went in the hospital; farther on was the roadside inn. Suddenly someone appeared on the opposite curb. Chris, rather absorbed, looked up casually. It was a figure in a long blue cape—a dejected figure, hatless, and with soiled white slippers. Another swift glance and Chris gasped: "Mary!"

The sad face looked at him. There was no appeal for mercy, no anger. It was a despairingly broken look, and she went on without a word.

Something seemed to snap in the young man. She must not go like that! Indeed, she must not go at all! He leaped down from his seat, ran over and grasped her hand. She made no effort to get away. She was more lifeless than alive.

"Mary, forgive me! You must forgive me! Where are you going? Let me take you home." The words were all jumbled together. His hold tightened as he gazed down at her.

"I stayed at the hospital all night. I was going home." The voice even was hollow and the face expressionless. He dropped her hand, grasped her arm and shook her a little.

"Mary! Mary, look at me a little like you used to. I don't deserve it, but—O Lord!" He stopped. It was his voice in which there was desperation this time.

"You think me bad," she said slowly, in the same strange voice. She drew away, her sad eyes looking beyond and away from him.

"I don't think you bad, and if you were, there is so much good in you, you must come away from this life and never go back." Was there still a little doubt?

No reply, and there was too much agony for tears. Chris took her hand again.

"Mary, I love you." "Even were I—bad?" Her lips pressed firmly together, gasped the last word, and her eyes sternly demanded his answer.

He held her hand tight in both of his and nearly crushed it, but she did not wince.

"God knows I do, and I want you to be my wife, today—this minute!"

She relaxed a little, then pressed her hand to her throat, as if she were growing a little faint.

"You think me bad," she repeated still in the dull tone.

Chris at last fully realized her agony. He bowed his head. "No, no," he protested, now entirely convinced. "Mary, forgive me. Oh! can't you?" Slowly he bent his knee in the road.

Mary looked down on him with unseeing eyes. He said nothing further, but his arms slipped from her. The motion distracted her.

With an effort she rather had died than have been doubted. Perhaps you, or any man, cannot understand, she shuddered with a little moan, "what it means to a girl to be thought—not good. Maybe it is a little worse when she has been careless with temptation. It shows us how near and yet how far we are from evil."

Then she realized his posture and urged him to stand up. He stood dejectedly, his arms hanging before him.

"Can you forgive me?" he asked again.

"Yes, Chris, I do." He went on despairingly: "I will love you always, but I suppose you would not marry me now?"

Mary touched Chris' arm and compelled him to look at her. "It was terrible too, you to think of me as you did, for you loved me. And for me to have you think it—that was worse than to have you love me, and I cannot do less."

Still no word from him, but a convulsive grasp on her arm.

"I love you so, Chris." "And—you will marry me?" he almost whispered.

"Yes." A smile came to his face. Chris put his arm around her and held her close to him, but did not kiss her. He felt too reverent and humble, and she did not miss it, as she was pressed in his big protecting arms.

A few moments later Father Ramon stood unnoticed beside them. He knew something unusual had happened—not an ordinary love scene.

"Well, children?" he asked gently.

Chris took off his forgotten cap, but kept one arm about the girl.

"Don't we want to go to confession, dear?" he asked her. She nodded silently.

"We'll go right back to the church," answered Father Ramon as he opened the taxi door.

An hour later and the penitents were still in the church. Chris admitted to himself that he was "prayed out," but, the blue-cloaked figure still knelt before the Tabernacle. Presently Father Ramon returned to the church, touched the girl gently on the shoulder and bade her and Chris follow him. In the sacristy he said:

"You must come to the rectory for luncheon now, and tomorrow morning at seven o'clock Mass you will receive our Blessed Lord."

"And Father," shyly added Chris, in a day, or a week or two or so—that is when Mary names the date you will marry us?" Then turning to the girl, "You would want Father Ramon to marry us?"

She answered, her eyes full of gratitude, "Oh, yes, if Father will!"

Not so long after this a reckless chauffeur risked the lives of the several idlers of a drowsy village. His horn played a jolly roar which struck terror to their hearts, as they dodged around about the taxi wheels, escaping with only enough breath to threaten revenge. But finally, in high good humor, the driver whirled into the quiet yard of a farmhouse. It was an unpretentious place on ground lying lower than the State road, but the barns and healthy acreage gave it a prosperous look. On the little side porch sat the family. A motherly woman was the first to jump up as the taxi came to a standstill in the yard. She was followed by a middle-aged man and several children. They made a grand rush towards the car, as Chris helped Mary from it, and in half a minute the girl was clasped in her mother's arms. There was a moment of silence, the first moment, but in the noise and chatter of gaiety that followed there was no lull.

It was altogether a glorious evening. Half the village came to welcome the city girl returned, and to view Chris and his wonderful taxi, whose speed would be the talk of the town for weeks. But at last Chris, the girl and her mother were left alone. The mother was looking at her keenly, even anxiously.

"Mary," she began.

Her daughter understood the unspoken question and answered dreamily, with a half-smile, "Neither so good nor," she hesitated—"thank God, so bad, mother."

"Yes, dear," encouraged her mother.

"Perhaps great Saint Mary Magdalen saved me. Anyway, I will try to be like her."

There were tears in the two women's eyes. This was all too sad for Chris Murphy, so putting an arm about them both he quickly finished with an attempt at gaiety:

"Then, by the grace of God, mother, she'll be one St. Mary Magdalen Murphy!"

Those who never retract their opinions love themselves more than they love truth.—Joubert.

DIVORCE IN DISFAVOR

Anthony M. Benedik, D.D., in America

Within the past few months events have transpired to indicate that the evils with which divorce is threatening to overwhelm our country have finally aroused the attention of those in positions of authority, ecclesiastical and civil, throughout the land. The danger signal has long been posted, but unheeded; at last its insistent appeal seems to have struck home.

To relate instances, the Rev. Evan Dhu Cameron, having resigned his pulpit in the Baptist Church of Henryetta, Oklahoma, to become head of the "Anti-Divorce League," which he founded, states that he has been flooded with offers of financial and personal assistance from nearly every State in the Union. At present the League is making a State-wide campaign in Oklahoma, but contemplates moving its headquarters to New York.

Dr. Cameron thinks that the greatest crime of the day is the divorce evil and that by national legislation only can it be stopped.

Next, Judge Brough of the Common Pleas Court in Toledo, Ohio, has issued a statement that, owing to the laxity of modern divorce laws, we have in the United States today practically a trial marriage system, for on his court docket during this year there have been filed no fewer than twenty-five divorce cases by persons just married during the year 1920.

And considerable publicity has been given to the venture of the Rev. Charles Carver of Christ Episcopal Church, New Haven, Connecticut. Father Carver, as his parishioners call him, engaged a company of professional actors to present "The Divorce Question" in the Hyperion Theater of that city, himself in the leading role of the priest. And his purpose, he plainly states, is to save the nation from the ruin which threatens it.

My belief is," he says, "that if our parents are not to have control of our moral instruction and teach our children that marriage is a sacrament and not a contract (sic) or thing to be terminated at individual caprice, then the Church must undertake the teaching plainly and firmly from the pulpit in order to save the nation from ruin."

Dr. John Roach Stratton, considerably in the spotlight of late, gives his opinion thus:

"Divorce, upon the flimsy grounds of today, is immoral, cowardly and hideous. It is at once a dishonorable and a dastardly thing. It is a crime against the human race; further, it is folly. If we treated all other contracts as lightly as we treat the marriage vow the bonds of civilized society would speedily be relaxed and unspeakable wreck and ruin would fall upon the race."

And resolutions have been introduced in the Pennsylvania State legislature by Representative Dewey of Toaga, and in the Ohio House by Representative Robins of Ross, to quell the evil. The Pennsylvania bill would authorize the Governor of the State to appoint a committee of five members, two to be lawyers, two ministers, and one a woman versed in welfare work, to investigate the question. The free and easy severance of the marriage ties, this resolution recites, is a menace and threatens to make us a nation of disintegrated and irresponsible citizens.

Dr. Furse, the Anglican Bishop of St. Albans, England, has just issued a pastoral letter to all his subjects who contemplate marriage, to impart to them a full understanding of the marriage contract, emphasizing the indissolubility of marriage, "except by death." He feels that the prevalence of divorce is due to a lack of this understanding, and declares that under no circumstances whatever should divorced persons be allowed to remarry, for the very fact that they have secured a divorce and wish to marry again proves that they pay no heed to the solemn obligations which the marriage contract places upon them.

"It is a mere sham and mockery, he continues, for such people to take a vow in such words as 'till death do us part.' The relation of parenthood which results from marriage is necessarily one which cannot be undone. No act of Parliament can possibly make a father or a mother cease to be the parents of their children, and this fact in itself ought to show that the relation of husband and wife is equally unalterable."

It is scarce polite, to say the least, to assume the "I-told-you-so" attitude, but the fact that most of those whom we have quoted would apply the wrong remedy causes us to call attention again to the history of the question. The Catholic Church has spoken always and in unflattering tones against divorce; and, therefore, for it the peril does not exist. And the State can only save itself by assuming a like attitude and allowing no divorce that permits remarriage. The proposed cures, such as that suggested by the Ohio legislator, of forbidding divorced persons to remarry within the six months following the granting of their decree, would prove futile. Such cures are mostly untried experiments, and here we are dealing with a question of principle, whether or not Christ had authority to say that man had no right to sunder the pair whom God had joined in holy wedlock. A provision of greater wisdom is that which empowers the judge to defer handing down his decree for ninety

days after the hearing, with a view to allowing the parties involved to reconcile their differences. Likewise the suggestion of Judge Brough possesses merit, namely, that a divorce should be granted only after the separation of the parties for a period of five or seven years.

Meanwhile, the divorce merry-go-round goes gayly on. The annual report of County Clerk Mulrevey, published during July, states that in San Francisco marriage is a lottery, with the odds one to two that the payment of the two dollars marriage license fee will be followed by six dollars for filing suit for divorce. The courts in England are being kept so busy that the Lord Chancellor has had to come to the rescue and help to hear the suits. The regular divorce courts cannot hold all the cases; the court labeled "Commission on Rail and Waterways" is engaged in hearing divorce pleas, as well as that court which ordinarily hears admiralty suits.

In the State of Washington a law was recently passed which is described by one of the State legislators as

"the most liberal divorce law now in force in any English-speaking community in the world; it provides a ready way by which married people may, without embarrassment, scandal, publicity or disclosure of marital troubles obtain a divorce almost automatically."

According to this law, which went into effect on June 1, a divorce may be granted in all cases where the parties concerned have lived apart for five consecutive years prior to the date of application for divorce. A year's residence in the State is also required. It is prophesied that Olympia will seize the somewhat questionable laurels from Reno's brow.

Finally, the story of Carolyn and William McClain of Chicago is instructive. Carolyn appeared before Judge Sabath for a divorce, complaining that on last December 4, when William came home, she ran to kiss him. He offered his lips, but neglected to remove his cigar.

"Might it not have been accidental?" asked the judge.

"No," she protested, "because he burned me once before. When we were married only a year he stuck a lighted cigarette against my foot."

What is it Kipling says? A million surplus Maggies are willing to bear the yoke.

And a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke!

And what God had joined together the vice weed rent asunder. For the decree was granted. The case may prove an argument for the Anti-Tobacco League. As such we do not here consider it; but given the contempt in which we hold that natural contract between man and woman which God saw fit to raise to the dignity of a Sacrament, that by faithful cooperation in the duties incumbent upon them, through it the wedded pair might show themselves His faithful servants in the charges He gives to them.

STARTLING STATISTICS

Statistics compiled recently by the Save-a-Life League show that suicides in the United States during twelve months numbered 6,171, an increase of 1,000 over the figures for the preceding year.

Lamentable as are these figures as a whole, they become particularly distressing when the column devoted to the suicides of children is studied. Here the totals jump from 77 to 707. In other words, while the increase among people of all ages—including children—was 2 1/2 per cent, that among the girl's and boys of the nation was nearly 50 per cent.

More distressing still are the records of these youthful suicides as disclosed from day to day in the newspapers, and reasons given by those of tender years for killing themselves. A girl of fifteen inhaled gas because "life isn't worth while without a good time. By a good time I mean having the attention of young men"; a boy only five years old refuses to accept a reprimand for truancy and drowns himself in a lake; another girl of fourteen who is scolded for taking a rowboat without permission, says "I won't stand for this," and kills herself with a revolver; and still another takes strychnine because she is not permitted to see a certain play.

The note of revolt, of contemptuous disregard of parental authority, sounds throughout the whole miserable chronicle.

And yet, it is easy to trace these awful effects to their causes. When parents ignore their obligations, when every flimsy excuse is advanced to obtain divorce without thought of either God or children, what other result can be expected?

In the Catholic school and in the parents are inculcated as corollaries of love and respect for God. When the child repeats the Pater Noster he first comprehends God as the Father who made the greatest of sacrifices and compelled love and obedience, by taking thought of the earthy parent whose many denials and tokens of love have merited love and obedience in return.

With God absent from the home there can be no proper recognition of authority in the household. And

instances is appalling, but, horrible as is the conclusion, it is not illogical.

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