

The Better Thing.

It is better to lose with a conscience clean
Than win by a trick unfair;
It is better to fail and to know
You've been, than to succeed and to know
You've been square,
Than to claim the joy of a far-off goal
And the cheers of the standers-by,
And to know down deep in your inmost soul
A cheat you must live and die.

Who wins by trick may take the prize,
And at first he may think it sweet,
But many a day in the future lies
When he'll wish he had met defeat;
For the man who lost shall be glad at heart
And walk with his head up high,
While his conqueror knows he must play the part
Of a cheat and a living lie.

The prize seems fair when the fight is on,
But save it is truly won
You will hate the thing when the crowds are gone,
For it stands for a false deed done.
And it's better you never should reach your goal
Than ever success to buy
At the price of knowing down in your soul
That your glory is all a lie.

Simplicity.

The more crowded and artificial the world becomes, obviously the more difficult is the practice of simplicity; for it is the reflection of the immutable and spotless truth of God Himself. Scripture reveals to us in quite startling language the intensity of God's hatred of a lie. But there are hundred of things which do not amount to lies, yet which are contrary to the beautiful perfection of simplicity.

There is a speech and a silence, there are looks, manners, permissions, concealments, dubious smiles, pretended inadvertences, unworthy conventions, and intentional distractions which grieve the Holy Spirit and make sad ravages of an interior soul, though they are far short of absolute falsehoods.

Of one thing I am quite clear, that many persons aiming at perfection practicing mental prayer, and performing bodily mortifications, come to a dead standstill because of their want of scruple about insincerities far short of untruth. Diplomacy of manner, way of speech, circuitous routes for courtesy sake, giving things the wrong names, and being silent when silence is really speech, these things are undoing men's sanctity and causing saints to break in the mould and frustrating beautiful purposes of grace every day.

What Have You Done?

You who have perfect health, what return have you made to God or to your sick, poor or heavily burdened neighbor?

You who are rich in this world's goods, what return have you made to those in poverty and distress?

You who are free from all disease, inherited or acquired, what return have you made for your sound constitution?

You who have children of your own for whom you tenderly care, what return have you made for the security and well-being to those little ones who are helpless, homeless, parentless?

What have you ever done for the poor, the sick, the aged, and the infirm, for the destitute of every age?

And, above all, what have you done to spread the Faith of which you are so rightfully proud?

In doing something for the missions, you will be doing something for yourself.

Some Roads to Rome in America.*

Edited by Georgina Pell Curtis.

AN ARMY OFFICER
(Late in command in the Philippines.)
CONCLUDED.

I was then only sixteen. I would have been denied my father's permission to enter the Catholic Church, had I asked it, as he was very bitter in his belief that my mother's conversion had ruined her life and broken up the family's happiness. But while I had learned sufficient to shake my faith in any Protestant sect, my attachment to the Catholic Church was not such as to prompt me to insist upon joining it. I realized that it would cost some effort to comply with its discipline and live up to the Faith conscientiously, and I failed to appreciate what a help its Sacraments would prove in such effort. While I continued to use my Catholic prayerbook and occasionally visited a Catholic church, my faith was being lulled to sleep by the growth of doubts concerning the Divine origin of any religion.

Interest in school and later in business suppressed in me any immediate purpose to determine the validity of the claims of my sect, just as the good seed of the parable was choked by thorns. I attended all churches, especially those where eloquent sermons could be heard; sometimes an Episcopal church with my father or sisters, but more frequently any new sect of which I read in the papers.

I think no church escaped my visit, excepting, perhaps, the Christian Scientists, of whom at that time little was heard. Doubtless had I postponed my submission to the Catholic Church a few years longer, I might have attended a greater variety, as the sects seem to multiply in a prolific manner. However, the multiplicity of faiths and practices almost destroyed my confidence in any. Even within the Episcopal church I found in one or two cities, congregations which I believe my late grandfather would hardly have recognized as orthodox fellow communicants.

One Sunday afternoon, I attended with my sisters, a vesper service at one of the High churches of an eastern city. My father would not go, as he was still loyal to the Low church, the old-fashioned strictly Protestant branch of the church. The pastor of this High church was known as Father.

On his altar was a handsome marble statue of the Blessed Virgin, and after the vespers was recited a litany, including supplications to the Blessed Virgin and some of the saints. The congregation bowed the knee in passing the altar, or entering a pew, and used the Sign of the Cross. Incense was also used in the ceremony. Attendance there was a fashionable fad of such Episcopalians as yearned for the forms at least, of the Catholic Church. Preaching was replaced by prayer, and many a Low churchman who came to scoff, remained to pray.

The church itself was known as that of St. Mary the Virgin. I had heard that Father called his morning service the mass, and that, upon application, he would listen to individual confessions, but I did not learn that he considered such a practice an indispensable preparation for communion.

During this period I gained much information from reading the Lives of the Saints, and stories of conversions to the Faith. I acquired, however, an idea that it was easier to die for the Faith as did the martyrs, than to live in it with the opposition of one's family as had my mother. This did not make it easy to announce my desires.

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I was then twenty-one, and was impressed with the responsibility incurred and the necessity of announcing my choice. But I hesitated to hurt my father's feelings by such an action.

About this time I was very desirous of securing an appointment to the Army, and I had forwarded my application, which, for lack of influential friends, I felt little confidence of getting. Fully convinced that no other Church offered claims of Apostolic origin to be compared with those of the Catholic Church, I had determined that some day before my death I should become a Catholic; but I wanted to postpone such a step as long as seemed safe. In my anxiety to secure the appointment referred to, I made a vow that if God should see fit to grant me the boon I asked, and for which I had so little reason to hope, I would apply for admission to the Church before joining my regiment.

Although such appointments were then very rare, as few vacancies existed and several hundred applications had been filed, I was to my great surprise and pleasure nominated, and after examination, appointed. So I felt obliged to keep my promise and believed that God had decided it was time to take the step I had hoped to postpone indefinitely.

We were spending the summer at a coast resort, and one Sunday I walked to the nearest town and after hearing Mass at a little church, asked the pastor, to whom I was a stranger, to receive me into the Church. Of course he declined, questioning my seriousness and my acquaintance with its faith and discipline. But he invited me to dine with him, and devoted the afternoon to questioning me on the catechism and doctrine of the Church. He was satisfied with my answers, and promised to hear my general confession, and admit me to Baptism and Communion the following Sunday.

I announced my intention to my father, and invited him to be present at my Baptism. He declined, tried to dissuade me from such an act, and pleaded with me to remain loyal to my grandfather's religion. But I had gone too far to halt, and realized that my conviction of the Divine origin of the Church would render any further delay sinful, as well as a violation of my vow. While my good father, ignorant of the truth, might be saved in the church in which he had been born and lived, I should be judged by the light given me and could never be forgiven for declining its guidance.

So, on the following Sunday, I walked to the little church very early, made my first confession, received conditional Baptism, (an acolyte whom I have never since seen, being my sponsor), and received for the first time the Body and Blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, of which Father's instruction had given me such an inspiration. I had not then a single acquaintance in the Catholic Church, but while such was usually an indispensable requisite for admission to a Protestant congregation, I found no difficulty in worshipping at a Catholic chapel or church, absolutely a stranger to all about me.

I believe such isolation tended to render even more beneficial and salutary the graces bestowed on me by the Sacraments. I could meditate as well in a crowded cathedral as in a vacant chapel. The little red light before the altar drew my thoughts to my Lord alone in the tabernacle, and my loneliness served to render communion of thought and desire with Him more consoling.

For several years my frontier life kept me where a bishop seldom visited, so it was some time before

I was confirmed. Although at my Baptism I was thoroughly convinced of the historical claims of the Church, and understood sufficiently of her doctrine to warrant my admission, I did not then understand or appreciate all the beautiful devotions permitted and encouraged as a stimulus to zeal. But none of the questions which deter some Protestants from entry into the Church ever embarrassed me. Once convinced that I had found the Church founded by our Lord, I was ready to accept without question anything taught by His representatives having His authority. I believed in the Divine origin of the Church, and as far the rest was ready to cry, "Help Thou my unbelief."

Since my Confirmation, years of happy participation in the Sacraments and devotional exercises of the Church, a pious Catholic wife, the training of virtuous children, and God's miraculous assistance in many crises, have convinced me that my life would have been idle and useless had I resisted the prompting of my conscience when called to leave the religious affiliation of all my family and friends.

The peace and consolation I have found should have been purchased at the expense of trials and persecution. But I have no such merit. The step that seemed so momentous caused no pain. My father was soon reconciled to my decision and my only sorrow has been that my example has been fruitless, and none of my family has followed me into that haven of rest from doubt and anxiety which God's one true Church has proved to be.

Surely His promise has been kept. His way is easy and His burden light.

Soldier Priests and Seminarians

No sooner was the first glimmer of peace appearing on the horizon than the Church began to take measures to remedy one of the greatest evils the war has inflicted on her discipline. The Church does not dip her hands in blood, but nevertheless iniquitous civil laws have obliged hundreds of her ministers to take up arms and face the dangers of the battlefield as fighters, not chaplains.

It is inevitable that the clerics thus drawn away from the ministry, the seminary, or the cloister, and made to take their place in the ranks and fight like ordinary soldiers, have not all preserved the spirit of their vocation in all its integrity. Amidst the din of arms and the daily dangers of military life even religious hearts become soiled with the dust of the world.

Irregularities and impediments have been contracted by these cleric soldiers, and now that they are to return from the war their own good, the salvation of the faithful and the utility of the Church demand that their Ordinaries should attend to their state.

In view of this fact the Holy Father, while he deplores together with all the Bishops of the Catholic world, the deep wound inflicted on ecclesiastical discipline by forcing clerics into military service—a measure which has deprived so many parishes of their pastors and so many seminaries of their students—seeing that peace is now in sight and these clerics are soon to return, has, with the holy purpose of renewing the ecclesiastical spirit in them and repairing the damages they have incurred, after consultation with several Archbishops of the belligerent nations, and with the advice of a Special Committee of Cardinals, issued a decree on the matter. The decree comes through the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. As its provisions are calculated

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