

The superintendent, to whom the inquiry had been addressed, promptly answered:

"An Irishman named McGrath."

"By George!" exclaimed the younger of the two visitors, "he would make an ideal Hercules or a statue of some avenging god."

"Can you put a stop to this tumult?" asked the man who had spoken first of the superintendent.

The latter, who was not a little mortified that such an occurrence should have disturbed at such an inopportune moment that perfect order which he boasted of being able to keep in the foundry, sharply rang a bell.

The effect was magical. There was an almost instantaneous silence. The men who had been scrambling over one another, shouting and gesticulating, turned their eyes from the still militant Dan to the three men who were standing in the center of the room.

"What does this all mean?" cried the angry voice of the superintendent.

Immediately Ike Whitley broke three or four of his friends into a more or less coherent explanation of what had taken place. Dan uttered no word in defense nor in accusation.

The superintendent, catching at the explanation offered and taking no account of the provocation that McGrath had received, was only anxious to show the visitors how rigorous was the discipline he maintained. He announced in a voice that was heard through all the room that McGrath was dismissed; that he would be paid what was due him at the office and might take his hat and go.

In that instant, while confused murmurs arose among the various groups, Dan realized all that such an announcement meant to him. He had been married but a few years before leaving Ireland, whence he had emigrated with the hope of bettering his fortunes. Only the other day he had been able to send the passage money which would bring out his wife and two little ones. He had even taken a tiny house, nestling in the shadow of the hill and over looking the Lehigh.

"And I don't think," the superintendent went on, still virtuously indignant and eager to show his zeal for good order, "that there is a single employer of labor in the whole of the Lehigh Valley who will engage a man that has behaved as you have done and shown himself a quarrelsome bully."

Dan, who had been at first dazed, had by this time rallied his forces. He told himself that he would have been less than a man if he had acted other than he had done, and he spoke out now with a courage and resolution that were only equal to that which he had displayed a moment before.

"Mr. Randall, sir," he said, addressing the superintendent, in a tone that though respectful, was firm, "you're meddling in your rights to discharge me if you think I've done what's wrong, but I can't let you blacken my character. Of what led to this fight I'll not say a word. Let every man speak for himself, if he will say, and every man here, if he wants to speak the truth, can bear me out, that in the months I have been in your employ I have been neither a bully nor quarrelsome."

There was a murmur from several voices.

"That's right, Dan. That's true, anyhow."

When the superintendent rang the bell again for silence, and as a sign that the subject was closed, the younger of the two directors, inquired:

"What has been his record?"

The superintendent hesitated, yet after all he was fair enough as man go, and he spoke the exact truth:

"His record has been good. I believe this is his first offense."

"Which makes it necessary to discharge him," said the elder visitor, who had been standing by with frowning brow and a face black as thunder.

"Yes," agreed the superintendent; "for with men such as these discipline must be maintained."

"It must," assented the other; "let me speak to this fellow."

As he said the last words aloud Dan's opponents were gleeful, for they had had experience, on divers occasions as to how this particular director could speak. They hoped that the big Irish "Papist" was going to catch it.

At the summons to come forward, Dan stepped out. His blackened face glowed with perspiration and the muscles in his powerful arms and shoulders where they were uncovered as he made necessary by the great heat, stood out like whipcord.

"I would like to know, my man," the director began in his big, threatening voice, "how you feel now about your late conduct?"

Dan looking the speaker straight in the face, responded instantly:

"If it had to happen over again, I'd do the selfsame thing."

"You would, would you?" roared the director. "You have no regret for your part in that disgraceful scene, of which I was the witness from start to finish?"

"If you witnessed it sir," said Dan, "you'll know that the quarrel was not of my making."

"Perhaps suggested the younger director, 'if you were to say that you are sorry for what has occurred—'

"I'll never say that, sir," exclaimed Dan glancing for a moment towards that quarter, where he seemed to discover a lurking sympathy.

"Then dismissed you are from this employment," repeated the elder director.

His bushy white eyebrows worked themselves up and down as he stood glowering at the Irishman, who met his gaze firmly, while his fellow working man regarded the scene with mingled feelings.

The few Catholics who had shamefacedly gathered around Dan and on account of the coming of the visitors had been unable to show their sympathy, were full of sorrow and indignation at the unjust treatment to which McGrath had been subjected. Many others were moved to blundering regret and admiration, while the friends and supporters of Ike Whitley, who were the lowest and most degraded of the lot, were triumphant and only restrained by the presence of the superintendent and the visitors from breaking into laughter and jibes.

"And now that you are dismissed from these works, McGrath," repeated the old man who had constituted himself chief spokesman, "there are a few remarks that I would like to make to this assembly."

He turned his menacing glance from one to the other of the groups before him and his voice had the same angry tone:

"In the first place, I would suggest to the superintendent that the fellow who was really responsible for this scene, the unspeskable, foul-mouthed ruffian, to whom I listened with disgust, should be dismissed as well as his opponent. In the second place, I should like to shake hands with you, McGrath."

Dan, amazed and bewildered by this turn of affairs, involuntarily wiped his grimy hand before placing it in that which was outstretched.

But the director said: "No, no! Never mind about the grime, McGrath. That comes from honest work. It's the other sort of dirt that I'm afraid of. In the third place, McGrath, since you are dismissed from here, I want to offer you a position as foreman in the L. V. and D. Milling Company which has just become vacant by death. I think you will find the work easier and the wages higher."

The superintendent, mortified and confused, stood sheepishly near, while Ike Whitley, from whose side his partisans began to slink away, was the very picture of shame, humiliation and baffled malice.

The little knot of Catholics were jubilant, and incidentally had got a lesson which would last them their lives, and a considerable number of others, it must be said to the credit of human nature, were pleased at Dan's good fortune.

But the big voices began to speak again, asking Dan if he were willing to accept the offer.

"Am, sir, and with my best thanks to you. And," he hesitated, and then went on awkwardly, "if I had a word to say at all, it would be to ask the Whitley here might be kept on. He wasn't scared to know the malice of what he was sayin', and maybe he's been punished enough."

After some demur on the part of the director, this request was granted, but the man of many millions, who had certain theories of his own, had still a few words to say.

"You workers here present may take it from me," he said, "that if I demand like McGrath who are most in demand, they have got hold of a vital principle that keeps them alive. They are the real force of the nation, a social force and an economic one, too. For they have their brain and brawn for the country, instead of wasting it on intemperance and worse, as so many of you do."

Having finished his discourse and instructed McGrath where to apply, with a curt farewell to the superintendent, the old man took his colleague's arm and hurried from the place.

Then from the ranks of the Catholics arose a cheer for McGrath, that was caught up not only by the majority of those present, but that went out and beyond the foundry, to be heard in the streets of the little town, echoing and re-echoing through the hills where they stood guardian of the twin streams that benefitted all the landscape.—Anna T. Sadler, in The Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

CHILDREN AT MASS

Attention at Holy Mass is so vital a part of Catholic life that the proper use of these precious minutes should be inculcated from the very beginning of the use of reason. It is most regrettable that many men and women waste the opportunities of grace offered by the weekly Mass on Sundays. One finds such not using prayer-books at Mass; not even praying.

It is a facile conclusion that such men and women were once children without prayer books at Mass. The root of the evil, therefore, seems to be lack of insistence on the part of parents that their children be furnished with prayer books suited to their years.

One cannot help feeling sorry for the little folk in such strange surroundings, if left without any guidance. It is impossible for the Sisters in charge to control every distracted child, and indeed, those so checked become in

turn new objects of distraction to others. Any one who has noticed the wandering eyes, the bored look, the inclination to play and talk at the children's Mass, will realize that the remedy is to be found in those little prayer books provided with pictures, so that a child may easily follow the priest. Such books contain simple prayers, which the child may read and which will never be forgotten. These prayer books are inexpensive and would mean so much to the children now, and indeed later when they are adults. To impress upon a child the use of the rosary beads may also be a help, but as it requires unusual concentration for a child, it is not so apt to be helpful as the prayer book.

Catholic parents should take it to heart to see that the child, to whom they will earnestly impart lessons of worldly thrift, be not allowed to grow up wasteful of the beautiful gifts and graces offered to the soul during Holy Mass.—Catholic Standard and Times.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR APRIL

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

REACTION AGAINST MODERN PAGANISM

Paganism, in its original sense, means the worship of false divinities, such as was practised in ancient times or is practised in lands where Christianity has not yet been introduced. In a modified sense the term may still be used in Christian countries. It is needed not precisely to express the worship of false gods, but rather to describe a system of living very much in vogue nowadays among Christians, a system more or less similar to that indulged in by the ancient pagans. The term neatly defines the state of those who, although surrounded by Christian influences and claiming to be followers of Christ, disregard the teachings of His Gospel, make little of Christian practices, and, after the fashion of the pagans of old, allow their lives to be ruled by avarice, pride and sensuality.

This new form of paganism takes its rise in the vicious instincts of the human race, for it had no place in the programme outlined by the Divine Founder of Christianity. God in His goodness endowed man with gifts of nature and grace; He promulgated laws to guide them in the paths of virtue; He instituted sacraments to strengthen them in their struggles; He proclaimed the Beatitudes to encourage them; He gave them the example of His poverty, His humility and abnegation to guide them; He told them that the way of the cross is the surest way to Him, and He promised heaven as a reward of their perseverance. God was truly generous, but He resolved not to force His gifts on men, nor did He deprive men of their liberty. And still He impressed upon them what the misuse of His gifts and their liberty would entail, giving them plainly to understand that while He created them without their co-operation, He would not save them without it.

Unhappily, men fail to appreciate the gifts of God; and they abuse their liberty. Prone as they are to follow the line of least resistance, the allurements of vice and sin have too often a greater attraction for them than the call to practise virtue. The outcome is that millions drift into a mental and moral attitude which differs little from actual paganism.

It will suffice to look over the world to see that there is a spirit abroad which has little of Christianity about it. Judging from conditions in society today, it would seem that God is getting further away from us. But it is not God who is receding; it is we ourselves who are forgetting His laws and our obligations to Him, and are consequently drifting into fatal indifference towards the only things that matter. In proportion to the heavenly soul loses a taste for the things of God, His inspirations and graces rapidly diminish in the human soul, while worldliness, with its greed for wealth and honors and pleasures, takes their place.

The worship of wealth is one form of modern paganism which is rife in our age. And yet the Scripture tells us that "there is not a more wicked thing than to love money: for such a one setteth his own soul to sale." Our Lord warns men that they cannot serve God and Mammon, while His life on earth, with its lessons of poverty and abnegation, was given to turn them from the love of money and to teach them to be content with enough. And yet we see multitudes of His followers, trying to pay homage to God and Mammon. What are thousands of our own people doing, but loving money and working hard to hoard it for its own sake? Money-getting would seem to be the only topic that occupies their minds, the one central thought that holds their attention. Think of the superhuman energy expended by them in vast corporations, syndicates, monopolies, etc., organized solely for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Witness the countless numbers toiling year after year in order to augment their dividends; to do, in other words, precisely what the inspired writer tells them is a wicked thing. Are not those people putting their pagan ideals against the positive will of God? And what answer will they make when they stand before Him to give an account of their short but ill spent lives?

The quest for honors is another form of paganism which, strange to say, is rampant among our own people in this age. Oblivious of their own nothingness and moved by a spirit of pride, they are looking for honors and distinctions. There are thousands in this world who imagine that their end in life has been attained when they have succeeded in reaching a pedestal where they may be seen above the heads of their neighbors; and they plan and scheme, often in an unworthy way, to attain this end. And yet they also are losing precious time, for their efforts are denounced as vanity in the Sacred Scriptures. "When I turn myself to all the work which my hands have wrought," writes Ecclesiastes, "and to the labors wherein I have labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind and that nothing was lasting under the sun." The words and the examples of the lowly Saviour is lost on those neo-pagan seekers after honors. He who was meek and humble of heart, who came to serve, not to be served, is refused a hearing by those whom Lucifer has saturated with pride. Humility is a virtue they ignore, a word that is not found in their dictionary; and thus they strut through life, parasitoid like the Pharisees of old, that they are better than their fellow men. Surely they are not imbued with the spirit of the Founder of Christianity.

The craving for pleasure is another form of paganism which has secured a firm grip on our age. How many millions of our own people—dare we call them Catholics?—are pleasure-seeking however, not the loftier intellectual pleasures which raise men's souls to higher things and ultimately to God, but rather the vile pleasures which appeal to the senses and lower those who enjoy them to the level of the brute. "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," is the principle which rules the lives of those millions who, regardless of any supernatural element in their makeup or of any responsibility to a Higher Power, rush madly into pleasure and wallow at will in the mire of passion and sin. The pagans of old had their amusements, their arenas, their gladiators; our modern pagans must also have their amusements, and in order to meet the appeal of their sensual instincts, theatres and shows and dance halls and other dens of vice must be provided for them, where souls, even Catholic souls, are contaminated as well by the actual spectacle of sin as by the law suggestion of it.

This last form of paganism, the vilest of all, must have a strong hold on society when its members give themselves over so completely to pleasure that at last they fail to respond to the stings of conscience. Where has the human conscience any chance of fair play amid the luxury of the masses, as we know it today, or amid the sinful refinements openly indulged in, the degradations of married life, the immodest fashions in dress, the frequentation of shameless and demoralizing theatres and moving picture shows, the reading of immoral books and magazines, and the hundred other occasions of corruption and sin?

The divorce evil is another form of paganism which is working havoc throughout the world, and which if the legislation with which we are threatened lets down the barriers. Happily, the Catholic Church will have nothing to do with this nasty thing. Her stern laws are too well known, and her children, even the most indifferent, know that they must submit to them. But were it otherwise, and were divorce permitted amongst us, one may well ask, are there not many Catholics who would look to this method to settle their family troubles? This, at least, should be an unwholesome tendency and demonstrated that the yoke of the Gospel rests heavily on many a neck.

Paganism is not dead; it lives and thrives openly amongst us, and, sad to say, many Catholics are not immune. We may perceive this in watching the lives and in studying the ideals cultivated by those around us. Virtue for its own sake is little understood and rarely practised in many a modern home. Outside the privileged souls who have not lost their grip on things eternal, where do we find our people nowadays cultivating humility, patience, meekness, charity, justice, and the other Christian virtues? Catholics should remember that they have obligations to their souls. Those who claim membership in God's true Church should have higher ideals and should give examples of holy living to their less fortunate neighbors. Instead of being satisfied with no virtue, or even with mediocrity in virtue, they should, by the eloquence of their words and by the power of their example, be the leaders of others.

Nothing less is expected from them; otherwise the gift of the true faith was made to them in vain. They are fully aware that God had given them ways and means for carrying out His work and that some day He will ask them how they used them.

From these reflections we now know why the Church insists so strongly on religious instruction. It does not satisfy to cram one's mind with knowledge, the heart must also be moved to practise virtue. It was not learning alone, but the practice of Christian virtues that undermined ancient paganism; it is the practice of Christian virtues that will undermine the modern imitation.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

Virtue vanishes when one wishes to parade it.—E. Cornilhe.

In all lands, good hearts are true brothers.—Florin.

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