

A Love Story from the African Missions.

We quote the following beautiful true story from the current issue of the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith:

When the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Castres came to open our girls' school in 1894, their first pupil was a little Pahouine about twelve years old, who came from the village of Foula, near by. Her father was dead, and so, according to the prevailing custom, she belonged to her uncle, Esong Ayong, an obstinate pagan. He followed the custom so closely to the letter that for several years he had already promised her, for value received, to a man named Nzong. Under the name of Medard, Nzong had been brought up and baptized at the Mission but he had practically been an apostate for a number of years.

The little girl lived with the sisters and was very docile and pious. When she was baptized under the name of Flavia, the Mother Superior stood sponsor for her.

As she grew up, her uncle demanded an exorbitant payment for her in consideration of the instruction and care which she had received from us. Medard, from time to time, brought him the required goods, guns, sacks of salt, bars of soap, pots, etc., always avoiding a payment in full, in true Pahouin fashion.

In the meantime Flavia continued living with the Sisters; when, at the end of the year 1897, she understood how she was to be disposed of, she suffered cruelly from the injury done to her liberty and Christian feeling. After Medard's first visit to her, she told the Sisters that she could never marry such a man. Her firm resolution gave rise to much trouble.

The Mission decided to stand by her and give her every moral assistance to protect her rights. The enemies in line were her guardian, whose pride was wounded that a woman, worth no more than a goat among the Pahouins, should dare to resist him; Flavia's mother, the old Nzama; the repulsed suitor, who made costly fetiches to gain his purpose; and finally, the loud-mouthed crowd of old pagans in the neighborhood.

In this locality personal matters are public affairs, and the council of the village met every day to decide upon them. For weeks and weeks the young girl suffered annoyances from her uncle, curses from her mother and temptations of all kinds. She persisted in her course, positive in her resolution that she would never leave the Sisters but for a Christian husband.

In the meantime, Charles Elyong, a young Christian who had withstood repeated temptations against his faith, came to the village. Having heard of Flavia, he asked her hand in marriage. They met and were mutually pleased. Knowing Charles to be rich and the son of a chief, Esong Ayong, Flavia's mother and the members of the council agreed that he should marry her. Nothing remained to be done but for him to deliver the merchandise equal in value to what had been given by Medard, who was to be repaid by Esong Ayong.

This arrangement was too simple to be final. While Charles was making his first payments, Medard, far from being discouraged by the robbery of his once prospective father-in-law, renewed his charge, outbidding his rival. After new gifts of all kinds of wares, the uncle's heart wavered lamentably. Without retracting his word to Charles, he renewed his promise to Medard and used every means to break Flavia's will.

The unfortunate experience of the young girl can well be imagined; at all times she was obliged to receive her family's hated visits, to suffer the threats of her uncle, the curses of her mother and the inhuman annoyances of the pagans who took part against her.

At other times she was called to the village, filial obedience requiring that she should spend her afternoon leisure with her relatives. She often ran home across the banana fields to escape her persecutors, and entrenched herself within the Mission until after their next attack.

Flavia spent her time between work and prayer, begging her companions to join their petitions to hers that Heaven might grant her prayer. Here, in fine, was a nature firm as a rock in well doing and rich in strength, refreshed by persecution.

On October 30, 1900, the administrator of the district came to the Mission for the feast of All Saints. Medard had succeeded in accompanying him as interpreter. Lacking all sense of shame, he complained to the Superior of the shabby treatment which he had received, of the unjust accusations of his fiancée.

The Father accordingly arranged another interview between him and her before himself, the Sisters, and the inevitable family. Flavia denied his assertions successively, disclosed his lies, and repeated that she never wanted to see him again. Esong Ayong, enraged, threatened to shoot her at the first opportunity. "Go," said she to him, "get your gun and cease tormenting me."

The interview had taken place at noon. In the evening, about seven o'clock, while the Fathers were making their visit to the Blessed Sacrament, steps were heard in the Sisters' yard. Some one had been seen prying about the dormitories, and the poor children were crying for fear. Medard had gained access to the yard and was meditating seduction. That was his ruin.

The misdemeanor of trespassing is punishable by law; so the Mission entered complaint and Medard returned to Ningue-Ningue with manacles on his wrists to spend two months in the prison of Libreville.

The city council of Foula presented a sight of complete disorder. Their first act was one of angry folly. Esong Ayong played his last trump by taking Flavia away from the Sisters.

The poor girl was forced to live in the village, where she was compelled to work with the other women, though she dared not eat with them for fear of poison. She succeeded in returning to the Sisters every night to sleep. So much did she suffer during this time that she said to one of her friends: "If I were a pagan I would drown myself."

However, the family were not so angry but that they might become a prey to avarice; and, as Medard's cause seemed to be sufficiently hopeless, they bethought themselves of Charles.

Negotiations were opened with him. He left the Mission one evening during November, while the Fathers were absent, and carried new offerings to Esong Ayong, who was always ready to receive more. No one was advised of the issue of his errand and the next morning nothing was seen of Charles, his boat, or Flavia.

Great consternation prevailed at the Mission. Only one thing was known positively. Before leaving Flavia had sent a message to the Sisters by one of her friends saying that "she felt herself obliged to flee from her village, where there was no security for her and where she could not save her purity and be assured of making a Christian marriage."

Having left his bride-elect with his old father Esone at Mekonangha on the other side of the river, Charles returned to the Mission. This he had a perfect right to do; but no sooner was his presence known than we were besieged by a furious mob, ready to kill and devour him. One old, white-headed pagan persisted in exciting the others to lay hold of their guns, which they had concealed in our own banana fields.

"Do not do that," said the Father Superior to them; "Charles is our guest and the muskets of the Mission speak more potently than the blunderbusses of Esong Ayong." At these words the crowd dispersed with threats of death.

Charles retired to rest in the children's school-room; about ten o'clock in the evening the Father Superior, accompanied by a Brother, went with him to his boat, never leaving the shore until he was out of sight; the pagans had been prowling about and might have seized him had he not been under our protection.

Suffering greater and greater humiliation, the wrath of Esong Ayong was not appeased. In December, 1900, he crossed the river to regain possession of his adopted daughter. The missionary was not a witness to any of the ensuing scenes, but he understood that Flavia was subjected to new trials. She continued to hold fast to her resolution that she did not want a marriage which would interfere with her religion, and otherwise maintained a rigid silence. At the end of several days' heated discussion, her uncle left with anger in his heart.

Flavia was as good a child as her mother was a wicked parent, and when she saw her relative's boat

pulling for the shore, she ran a short distance to a bend in the river, so as to bid her mother a last farewell. Seeing that she was alone on a jutting rock, Esong Ayong and his men made an attempt to seize her. Screaming at the top of her voice, she resisted them until the men of Mekonangha came to her aid. One instant more and she would have been gagged and in the hands of her enemies.

Esone, the chief of the district, took her by the hand as a sign of his protection, and the boat with her relatives disappeared amid demonstrations of diabolical hatred. Undoubtedly there were final quarrels and stormy scenes; but Medard behind the bars could do nothing, and Charles was prepared to lay down the required sum for his wife. As usual, interest silenced hatred.

On December 27, the Father Superior and myself went to Mekonangha; John Ono, the chief of Donghilla, had been chosen judge to control the question of payment, and accompanied us. Nzama also went with us; she was still a little sulky, but quite a different creature from the vixen that two days before had been swearing before our doors to get possession of her daughter.

On December 28 we celebrated Mass in the hut of Felix, the catechist of the post. The birds of the neighboring forest furnished the music. Charles and Flavia received their Christmas Communion and a few moments afterwards the nuptial benediction. They are now living good Christian lives. By her desire for a Christian union Flavia proved herself to be a woman of strong principles.

As for the people of Foula, Esong Ayong and the rest are now rejoicing; Medard, who was to have been Flavia's husband, has been stricken with a severe illness. When Charles paid her a visit at Easter Nzama was so happy to see him that she cooked him a fine dinner.

I have related a true story. It has a happy ending, but how many others have concluded differently. Many, many women bear the burden of years of servitude.

We missionaries fight single-handed against this horrible pagan crime. The government has as yet no thought of instituting a reform, for others besides the blacks support the custom. Nevertheless, Jesus has said: "From the beginning it was not so." Upon His word we hope to re-establish the normal union between man and woman, giving the latter her liberty and true position.

Curative Forces in Nature.

Dr. Berthenson has a curious article on a by-path of medical lore. The most enlightened of modern scientists are not disposed to reject without examination even the most astonishing popular remedies for human ills; for they know, better than any of us, how limited our knowledge is of the marvellous forces of nature. The tendency of modern medicine is, on the whole, in favor of what may be called preventive hygiene. Although in our day a number of specific preparations for specific diseases have been discovered, yet on the whole the use of drugs has diminished, and has given place more and more to treatment, the object of which is to prevent rather than to cure disease. The value of air and sun has been known ever since the days of Aristotle, but only now in our day have they been recognized as an ordinary prescription of the physician. Pliny the Younger tells us of a Roman citizen who derived great benefit from sun baths, and the houses of wealthy Romans seem to have been often built with a view to enjoying this remedy. A Danish scientist discovered that babies grow more rapidly at the seasons of the year when light and warmth are most intense, and another learned man found out that the light of the sun accelerated the process of digestion in the case of young children. On the hygienic value of air it is scarcely necessary nowadays to dilate. It may be sufficient to say that the combination of air and light is generally fatal to the existence of the most dangerous microbes, and it is significant that in all the states of Western Europe the death-rate is markedly higher in towns than in villages or hamlets. Dr. Berthenson concludes by a detailed description of the benefits of sea-air and sea-bathing in the treatment of certain pulmonary and skin diseases.

"Well," said Wymat, as he vainly tried to get into a number 12 shoe with the aid of four shoe horns, "the clerk that sold me those shoes was right. I should have worn the box."

PIUS X. TO THE CZAR.

Pius X. is the only sovereign of the world who has sent a protest, no matter how mild, to the Russian Czar, because of the recent bloodshed in Russia and Poland. His protest took the form of a personal letter to the Czar, advising him to consider the wishes of his people for liberty and to remember his own wishes for peace, as expressed by him when he summoned the peace conference at The Hague. The letter was sent by special messenger, and is already in the Czar's hands.

Some think the letter may cause diplomatic troubles, as the Pope is known by the Russians to be in sympathy with Polish Catholics, and he has already had some difficulty in the matter with Germany and Austria. But Pius X. considers it his duty to seek the welfare of the Catholics in Poland, and diplomatic considerations will not prevent his uttering his convictions.

New Translation of A Kempis

Sir Francis Cruise, one of the most eminent physicians of Ireland, has rendered a splendid service to the cause of Christian literature. In the midst of a busy life he has found time to devote to the study of "The Imitation of Christ" and of the author of that immortal work. The Irish Catholic layman has become an authority on the subject and in his writings he has vindicated the claims of Thomas a Kempis to the authorship of "The Imitation." Eight years ago he wrote a learned and exhaustive "Life of Thomas a Kempis" which was soon translated into French and German. In gratitude for his services the people of Kempen, in Germany, the birthplace of Thomas, named a street in his honor.

Several monograms and sketches on his favorite subject have come from the pen of Sir Francis. Now he has concluded the more ambitious task of translating "The Imitation" into idiomatic English. With the exception of the Sacred Scriptures no book has ever enjoyed greater popularity than "The Imitation." Fontenelle, a famous Frenchman, did not overstep the truth when he said that it was the most beautiful book that ever came from the hand of man. It has been translated into over fifty languages and it would be impossible to enumerate the number of editions it has passed through.

All our English versions are based on a translation made at Douai at the beginning of the seventeenth century by a Jesuit, Rev. Anthony Hoskins. Bishop Challoner, whose translation is the one in general use amongst Catholics followed Hoskins. Challoner's English is now antiquated, and the arrangement of the books is not according to the plan of the author. Thomas a Kempis intended that the book on Holy Communion should precede that on Interior Consolation. Such is the logical order, but for Centuries the other order has been followed.

Sir Francis Cruise, in his new translation, has not only corrected the antiquated English of Bishop Challoner, but he has rearranged the books according to the intention of Thomas a Kempis. His translation is pronounced the most correct yet made. It has been published by the Catholic Truth Society of San Francisco at the popular price of 25 cents. It is bound in artistic cloth and sells at cost price. The Truth Society wishes to give it the widest circulation possible, as it should be in the hands of every Christian.

WANTED-CHARITY.

If, as Swift was wont to say, censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent, it would clearly be futile to expect that so exalted a personage as the Pope should escape such payment. One may be pardoned, nevertheless, for deploring that, in the case of the Holy Father, the collector of this special sort of tax should often be a self-styled "good Catholic." Without unduly, we hope, distrustful the honesty of newspaper letter-writers, we are inclined to question the genuineness and goodness of the Catholicity that is continually flooding the columns of the secular press with carping criticisms of ecclesiastical action and ecclesiastical personages, from "Peter's pence" to the Vatican's attitude toward France, and from the parish priest to the sovereign Pontiff. Fault-finding is a perennially easy proceeding; grumbling requires neither brains nor manners; but it is a radically contemptible act to publish in vague general terms insinuations against the honesty or honor of prelate or priest.

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St. Patrick's Society

The banquet given Patrick's night by the Society Windsor Hotel was largely by the members of the Society representatives of kindred and numerous other guests.

Amongst those at table with him were Sir Kingston, Sir Thomas Sherrington, Judge Curran, Hon. Rodolphe, Father Kavanagh, Cloran, Dr. Guerin, Mr. G. Ford, Alderman Bumbury, Wilson-Smith and a number of others.

The vice-chairmen were Mr. Curran, W. P. Kearney, F. namee and T. T. Tansy.

After full justice had been done to the menu, the chairman proposed the health of the King.

Following the loyal toasts toast of the evening, "Ireland Proposed by the Hon. Rodolphe, it was responded to by G. E. Drummond, Father M. and Judge Curran.

In rising to propose to the Hon. Mr. Lemieux remarked history of Ireland was a history of oppression, but the same had not blotted out the patriotism and the love of which was exhibited by every man. To-day by their side the Empire—to Great Britain and claims their gratitude; demands Home Rule, not more.

Continuing, he justified this ground that it was not an action, but rather a restoration which Ireland had once possessed and wants a parliament on Green. A number of speakers were quoted. The Union was a mockery. The only glory in the history of Ireland only time when Ireland madmen, was during the period of its parliament, between the years 1714 and 1796.

Personally speaking as a subject his great aim was to see colonies prosper. To see forge ahead and yet still retain present relations to Great Britain was this possible, he when every year there were thousands of Irishmen coming to Canada and to the republic to the their hearts filled with rancor the old land.

In Canada, in spite of the national arguments which might adduced from the presence of race, as well as two religious rule had proved a success. The Hon. General traced the growth of Canadian colonial privileges. In 1839, Durham had impressed upon the British Premier that Canada must have home rule. In 1867, a great man and a great statesman, John A. Macdonald, gave Confederation.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Lemieux, "I see a statue of Sir John Macdonald is erected upon Parliament Hill, that of Sir George is also there, but gentlemen fall to see the statue of D'Arcy. One there beside them, and D'Arcy was one of the authors of Confederation."

In continuing, Mr. Lemieux, referring to the Canadian Confederation, stated that it was "as a human fabric could be for a British Colony."

He did not believe in Imperialism for Canada. He thought that distance would prove an insurmountable barrier. He believed in Imperial Parliament for Wales, Ireland, England and Scotland, but local parliament to manage education in these countries, to enact civil laws. Should Great Britain give Home Rule to Ireland, it would be a great saving to her; it would benefit her in many ways. She would have a considerable amount of money to her at the present day.