

THE SEAL OF THE CONFSSIONAL.

About thirty years ago Father Kobylowitz was parish priest at Aratow, a small hamlet in the neighborhood of Kiev in Russia. Late one evening he threw on his cloak and so wrapped himself up that his appearance was completely disguised. He was about to leave the house in great haste, when his housekeeper said: "Is your reverence going out again? Where shall you be, in case you shall be wanted?" "I shall soon be back," answered the priest as he moved towards the door; "you must not let anyone know that I am out."

"One moment, Father, I see your gun is not in its usual place," cried the woman anxiously, and I cannot find it anywhere." "My gun is on it, it will soon be found," said the priest as he hurried out. It was pitch dark, but he looked young and strong as he started on his mission of charity.

In a small back room of the presbytery lay the priest's mother, infirm and aged. She turned to the housekeeper when she entered the room, and said, "I feel so miserable I think something dreadful must be about to happen." "Yes," said the housekeeper, "and his reverence was as strange just now, I was quite surprised. He must be going on an unusual expedition."

"Very likely there is some poor soul for him to help home from among the Russian soldiers," replied the priest's mother. "You know how cruelly they persecute us Catholics. If you have finished your work, we will say the sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary for my soul." In the meanwhile, the priest penetrated into the dark forest, where he got into a carriage that was waiting him in a piece of concealment. After a drive of about five miles, they stopped at the entrance of a large house, which was in the vicinity of a village of some importance. The priest entered, and was escorted into a large, well-lighted room, where the windows were carefully closed, and covered with curtains.

An impressive scene was before him. All the requisites for baptism were prepared. The father, brothers and sisters of the newborn infant knelt devoutly in prayer. The priest at once quietly fulfilled the functions of his holy office, then gave his blessing to the mother and turned to go. "A thousand thanks, Reverend Father," whispered the gentleman, who was, apparently, a Russian of high rank; "you have rendered me an inestimable service." "Ah," said the priest, "I only we are not betrayed."

"There is no fear," answered the Russian, "I have taken a solemn oath of secrecy, and the night is very dark. Do you, Father, I beseech you to keep my confidence. You know my position is at stake as well as my livelihood. If the Government were to find out that I am a Catholic, I should be terribly punished. I implore you to keep silence; remember my six children." "I promise you never to speak of it," said the priest; "it is a matter of course that I should be silent, under every possible circumstance. I give you my word as a priest."

"I disapproved of the marriage, for I felt sure my niece would not be happy with him; and that had proved to be the case. To each of them I pointed out their faults, with a hope of doing good." "You deny, then, that you murdered Pietrow?" "I did not murder him." "Where were you at the time of his death?" "The priest turned pale. It was the very hour he had been called to administer the sacrament of Baptism. "I—I was—I cannot tell you," he said at last. "Were you in your own house?" "No." "Did anyone accompany you?" "No." "Is it usual for you to go home at that hour?" "No, only when my duties oblige me." "However, that did not happen in this instance. Ours more, I ask you, where were you at the time of the murder? Bring forward a witness to prove that you were then somewhere else, and you will be free."

The priest's only reply was: "I am innocent, but if it is God's will I am ready to suffer, though I am not guilty." "You are the murderer," cried the officer, "you and no one else. Take away the prisoner." A few hours later Father Kobylowitz's prison door was opened and the organist entered. The priest looked up in amazement. What did this mean? It was through this man he had been sentenced as guilty. In every imaginable way he had set afoot a suppliant against the priest, trying to prejudice the authorities against him. And now the man came crying in and threw himself weeping at the priest's feet. "Reverend Father," he exclaimed, "wringing his hands, 'help me to gain peace; hear my confession.'"

In about half an hour, the prison door was again opened. The organist came out, pale and agitated. No sooner, however, had he got outside the prison when he looked up at the closely barred window with an air of mocking triumph, muttering: "Now his lips are closed—now I am safe." The priest knelt in his cell with his face buried in his hands. Very fervently he prayed, saying: "Not my will but Thine be done. Give grace for what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." In about six weeks, the trial took place. Father Kobylowitz refused to say where he had been at that fatal hour, and refused also to utter a suppliant against anyone. Still, he in vain pleaded his own innocence. Everything seemed to point to his guilt; therefore, after a short deliberation, he was sentenced to hard labor for life, in the mines of Siberia.

His final words were: "God's will be done. After the sorrow and suffering of this life there will be peace in Heaven, where I shall find full satisfaction and everlasting reward. Until then, I will, with God's help, persevere in pain and shame." Very soon after this, the Vicar General of the diocese visited the priest's cell, and communicated to him, from the bishop, the major excommunication of a priest convicted of murder, degrading him from his priestly functions. "I kiss my Bishop's hand in full submission," said the priest; but terrible was his anguish; "he does not know—God's will—here he knelt down, and fell fainting to the floor.

A little later on, he heard of his mother's death. It was a great consolation, for he murmured: "Now she will know all. She will know I am innocent, and she will know the cause of this trouble." A few weeks a procession of prisoners started on foot for Siberia. They were chained two and two together, and the former parish priest of Aratow was amongst them. Once only did he look back from a hill that overlooked his village home, but a blow from the lance of a Cossack drove him on.

Twenty years have passed away. Another priest had long been in charge of the parish of Aratow. The organist still lives there, but he crept about with a sickly, restless air. His wife is the niece of Father Kobylowitz, widow of the murdered peasant, Pietrow; they had been married soon after that event. Constantly was she seen in the church praying and shedding bitter tears. In the neighboring town things seemed much amiss at the residence of a Russian official. Long ago, a priest, almost forgotten now, had baptized his infant daughter in the darkness and hush of night. Now, fearful screams issue from a room kept carefully locked. Mingled with these sounds could be heard a woman's voice muttering to herself about a baptism—a Catholic priest—the true faith. "Poor, poor mamma!" sighed a fair, innocent-looking girl in the bloom of early youth—the very one baptized to many years ago by the priest Kobylowitz. "It is settled, papa, is it not, that when Johanna is older I may go into a convent? I will then offer my life to God for my dear mamma's recovery, and that you may be happy once more." The gray, sad-looking officer had already given his consent to his daughter's wishes. Too well he knew what his cowardly silence had caused Father Kobylowitz's misfortune, and had led to the loss of his wife's reason. A priest, who had recently been appointed to the parish of Aratow, was summoned late one evening to the death-bed of the organist. After he had administered the last sacraments, he opened the door and called into the room the officials and authorities of the place, who had already assembled in readiness. The dying man had confessed before them all that he had shot the peasant Pietrow, so that he might marry his widow; that he had contrived to throw suspicion on the priest; and that he had made his confession to him in order to insure his silence regarding any discoveries he might make, knowing he would die rather than violate the seal of the confessional. "I have now avowed my crime; may God have mercy upon me," he cried, and very soon after expired.

late! The priest Kobylowitz has been dead four years. He died in the mines. Probably the hand which killed him. It is very sad; he was so gentle, and so constantly occupied in prayer." Heaven had gained one martyr, and the Church another glorious witness to the holy and inviolable sacrament of confession.

CHRISTIAN FUNERAL AND BURIAL.

The Christian family will avoid ostentatious and unseemly display at funerals. The custom of the Church, sanctioned and prescribed by her Ritual, is to bring the body to the church without pomp or parade, and to have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up for the repose of the departed soul. The spirit of the Church protests against the abuse of conducting the remains of the departed to the church and to the cemetery, with a long and pompous procession of hacks, which practices induces an unnecessary and sometimes ruinous expense, opens the way to many serious abuses and scandals, and is certainly of no relief or advantage whatsoever to the departed soul. The money thus needlessly spent would be much better applied to the often destitute survivors, especially the orphans of the deceased. As soon as God has summoned a soul out of this world, let the sacred remains be dressed plainly but neatly, and placed in a fitting but not extravagant coffin, and then carried to a convenient room. Let the relatives and friends view it there, and pray for the departed. In the hands of the corpse of the Christian, there should always be the sign of the redemption—the crucifix. At the head, place a crucifix between burning wax candles. Allow no noise or unseemly conduct in the room, for it is a sanctuary.

Unless circumstances should render it necessary do not later the remains until the third day. Have either a low or plain High Mass of Requiem. Let the altar be fittingly draped in black—but with no unbecoming devices. The Church does not approve of displays of floral offerings in the church; they may be placed on the coffin. The chief and other expenses should be defrayed by the relatives. It is the duty of the faithful to be buried in the Catholic cemetery. The Church does not permit interment in non-Catholic grounds. The laws of the Church are strict in this matter. Catholics should visit the graves of their deceased relatives and friends, and offer up prayers for the repose of their souls. They should not neglect these graves, but keep them in good order, and not suffer them to be overgrown with weeds. Each grave should have a Christian headstone, or monument, with at least a cross on it. The Church sets apart a Requiem Mass for the third, seventh, thirtieth, and anniversary days, dating either from the day of death or burial, and which may be said for the deceased. Fail not, at least on one or all of these days, to bring consolation and relief to, perhaps, their suffering souls.

WHAT IT MEANS.

THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FAMILIAR MONOGRAM I. H. S.

We clip the following from one of our Australian exchanges: "The meaning of the letters I. H. S. J. That question has often been answered; but to refresh the memory of our readers it may be as well to give the precise meaning of the letters I. H. S. In the monogram means (at least that its letters are the initials of) Jesus Hominum Salvator—Jesus, the Saviour of men—others that they are the initials of 'I have suffered.' The truth, however, is that the first three letters of our Saviour's sacred name in Greek—'IHOU'—and that sacred name in Latin—'Iesus'—were the sacred device on the Christian tombs during the days of persecution. They are yet to be seen inscribed in many places in the Roman catacombs. The interpretation 'Jesus, the Saviour of men,' originated with St. Bernardine of Vienna in 1443, and happened in this way: The saint had occasion to reprove a certain man for selling cards with dangerous devices stamped on them. The man said that he could not earn a living in any other way, but that if St. Bernardine would suggest anything, the cards with the dangerous devices would be abandoned. Thereupon the saint recommended the letters I. H. S., saying that they stood for Jesus Hominum Salvator—Jesus, the Saviour of men." They were once adopted and their success was complete."

A BARREL OF WHISKY.

A barrel of headaches, of heartaches, of woe; A barrel of curses, a barrel of blows; A barrel of tears from a world weary wife; A barrel of sorrow, a barrel of strife; A barrel of all unavailing regret; A barrel of care and a barrel of debt; A barrel of crime and a barrel of pain; A barrel of hope ever blasted and vain; A barrel of falsehood, a barrel of lies; That falls from the maniac's lips as he dies; A barrel of agony, heavy and dull; A barrel of poison—of this nearly full; A barrel of liquid damnation that fires The brain of the fool who believes it in-epires; A barrel of poverty, rags and blight; A barrel of terrors that grow with the night; A barrel of hunger, a barrel of groans; A barrel of orphans' most pitiful moans; A barrel of serpents that hiss as they pass From the head on the liquor that glows in the glass.

A. Maybee, Merchant, Warkworth, writes: I have sold some hundreds of bottles of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil, and it is pronounced by the public "one of the best medicines they have ever used." It has done wonders in healing and relieving pain in sore throats, etc., and is worthy of the greatest confidence. Holloway's Corn Cure destroys all kinds of corns and warts, root and branch. Who then would endure them with such a cheap and effectual remedy within reach?

LITTLE CHILDREN.

BY EMMA HOWARD WIGHT.

"Suffer little children to come unto Me, and suffer them to be baptized, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." When Jesus Christ laid His hand on the head of a little child and spoke those words, He sanctified childhood, and showed how dear little children were to Him. He also conveyed in these words a warning—a warning to parents to whom are entrusted the white, undefiled soul of a child to guard and to cherish the whiteness of that budding soul, and to plant in it seeds which will bring forth pure and holy fruit. What is sweeter on earth than a little innocent child? Little prattling lips, which speak no words of evil, which helping prayer go straight to God's throne; bright, laughing eyes which mirror no guilty thoughts, which are blind to all evil, which have never prayed in vain for pardon, which look out upon the world, reading nothing of its vice, seeing only its beauty; little ears deaf to the voices of sin, to the whisperings of evil, to the moan of this sorrowful world; little dimpled hands held out in childhood's trust and love, unstained, undefiled, in prayer, pure as angels; little feet which have never trodden paths of evil, running lightly amongst flowers, and in sunshine of life; little heart, which has never staid with sin or known sorrow's part.

Ah, childhood, so sweet, so pure, so fleeting who would not reason these with all the joys of after years? Does it not seem cruel that the parents of the most outgrown innocents learn to sorrow and to sin? What more sorrowful reflection than to look upon a hardened sinner, steeped in crime and vice, and to know he was once a pure, innocent little child. What greater anguish can there be for the parents of an erring son than to think of him as an innocent, shuddering child, natural for parents to grieve when their little ones are taken from them by death, to long with untold anguish for the clasp of little arms, for the sound of a baby prattling voice, and the patter of little feet. But, if they wish to ease this pain, let them look around into homes where an erring son or daughter has brought sorrow and shame, whose parents' hearts are breaking, and they will see divine mercy in what, in their despair, they called cruelty. From them also has been lifted an awful responsibility. For God gave into their keeping a soul white and unstained, and for that soul they are responsible. What will their reckoning with Him be if that soul comes back to Him defiled, lost? What will they answer when he shall say to them: "I entrusted to you one of My little ones whom I gave to you pure as the angels about My throne, how have you returned this charge to Me? I entrusted to you a jewel whose value was above the wealth of all the world; can you give it back to Me flawed and spotted? I gave you a sacred trust; have you been faithful to it? I placed before you a duty; have you performed it? Ah, you parents who mourn little children, think of this awful question. The little soul entrusted to you has gone back to God as He gave it; the little heart will never know sin's stain or sorrow's pang. I kiss the little lips as cold but responsive beneath your caresses, but they smile in heaven; that the bright eyes are closed on earth forever, but they look on God's face above; that the ears are deaf to your loving and anguished cries, but they are listening to a heavenly welcome; that the dimpled form is cold and still, but the little soul is safe with Him who said 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

To you, of this world's poor especially, though you may do your duty to your children as far as in your power lies, thank God, though it be with aching heart and tearful eyes, when He, in His mercy, takes your little ones to Himself, who does not pity little children of poverty? Thrust into a world which has no welcome for them, drawing in sorrow with the very milk from their mother's breast, suffering cold and hunger before they can flap the wings of vice, driven to crime by suffering, seeing only the darkest and bitterest side of life, no-thing to please the eye or elevate the soul. Ah, pity the little children of poverty—what chance have they? I do not turn away in impatience and scorn, when, in the streets, some little white face is lifted impudently to yours, a little thin hand held out for charity. Jesus loved them, these poor little children born to suffering, and who should pity them because of one little child born also to poverty and suffering. And it is He who asks our charity in the end voice of the little beggar, and when we turn away we turn away from Him. Therefore, pity the little children of the poor. Think of their sufferings suffering so bitter, so keen, that even the poor mother's heart almost rejects with death-bite some one pushes her little ones away from poverty, away from woe and misery, away from vice and ruin, safe with Him who said "Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me."

It is said that the Emperor of Austria has advised the Pope not to leave Rome, but to rely on the friendly intentions of King Humbert, and that Crispien has informed the Vatican officials that if the Pope leave Rome he cannot take with him the Papal treasures or the Vatican art objects.

Safe and Reliable. I highly recommend Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry for curing cholera, cholera morbus, colic, cramps, diarrhoea, dysentery and all summer complaints. It is safe and reliable for children and other persons.

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NATIONAL PILLS are a mild purgative, acting on the Stomach, Liver and Bowels, removing all obstructions.

THE SECRET REASON WHY.

BY MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

Among educated Americans there exists a condition of mind which leads them to say "I have great respect for the Catholic Church. If I ever join any Church, it shall be the Catholic Church." But it leads them no further for various reasons, and the reasons are seldom expressed by them in words.

There is no doubt that the American mind is becoming more and more tolerant—more sympathetic—to the claims of the Church. Fifty years ago there was no more ignorant or narrow-minded creature on the face of the earth than the average American. If the records can be believed, he was without traditions, without cultivation, without experience; his common sense was his one saving quality. But since 1876 the average American has steadily improved in quality. Foreign travel, and humanizing influence of peace, have made him more broad-minded than the average citizen of any other country.

The paralyzing effects of a wholesale system of education, which holds prizes only for mediocrity, has not yet succeeded in dulling him. It helps to make him indifferent to all forms of religion, and it adds to his natural keenness in certain directions; he is more capable of judging of men than of creeds; and his belief that a straight line is the shortest distance from one point to another makes him pitiless in his criticism of modern Protestantism. If he goes to Europe, he is not so easily scandalized as his Catholic brother by the religious familiarity of the Italians or the apparent frivolity of the French. He generally comes back with a good opinion of the Pope and a wholesale contempt for his imitators, and a considerable amount of sympathy for priests, who seem to be the only sane and conservative men among people who are constantly in revolt for the sake of revolution.

But the broader he becomes the less likely is he to become a member of the Church. And if he would have the honesty to analyze his opinions—or, rather, feelings—he would find that he has not better "reasons" for neglecting to investigate the claims of the Church than two which we find among sinners given in the London Tablet. He is not really a Protestant because "people should always stick to the religion in which they were born," and because "it is so convenient to believe only as much or as little as one likes." He forgets that, according to his last reason, St. Paul, St. Denis—all the Jews, all the Greeks, all the Romans, would have a stiff Christianity from the beginning—if that were possible—by remaining in the religion "in which they were born." As for the other reason, it is too silly to think of for a moment.

As for the indices, they get below the surface of religious matters earlier in life than their fathers, husbands and brothers. And many—who do not know some among his acquaintances—seem to stand on the very threshold of the Church. Their reasons for not passing it are, too, seldom acknowledged; but they may be found clearly expressed in the list given by the Tablet, which introduces its bit of "mind-reading," with this preamble: "The following list was picked up the other day in manuscript in the neighborhood of the offices of a well-known firm of Protestant publishers. Whether it was to have been submitted to the firm with a view to subsequent publication, or whether it came out of the firm's waste paper basket it is impossible to surmise."

The reasons, slightly changed for our American locale are these: "Because it is so respectable. Because it is so nice not to be obliged to go to church on Sunday unless one likes; and at any rate to be able to go comfortably in the afternoon, instead of having to bundle off at some ungodly hour in the morning to Mass, as Catholics have to do. Because I could not give up dear old 'Hymns Ancient and Modern.' Because I should not like to be obliged to go to confession. Because the Irish are so horrid. Because Catholics put artificial flowers on the altar. Because I hate fish. Because if I were a Catholic I should have to subscribe to such a lot of things. Because the Catholic service involves so much kneeling down, instead of sitting with one's nose in one's knees, which is far more comfortable and better for one's clothes. Because the priests abroad look so silly. Because Gilblas said 'it moves.' Because Lattimer said something (I forget exactly what) about putting dirt on a candle. Because if I 'went out' there would be such an awful row at home."

Of course the offering of this list to one's nominally Protestant acquaintance of the fair sex might give offence. But if they could be induced to examine their conscience with this list before them, it is possible they would look for better reasons and not find them.—Ave Maria.

ST. SYMPHORIAN, MARTYR.

About the year 180 there was a great procession of the heathen goddess Cybele at Antun in France. Amongst the crowd was one who refused to pay the ordinary marks of worship. He was therefore dragged before the magistrate and accused of sacrilege and sedition.

When asked his name and condition, he replied, "My name is Symphorian; I am a Christian." He came of a noble and Christian family. He was still young and so innocent that he was said to converse with the holy angels.

The Christians of Antun were few, and little known, and the judge could not believe that the youth was serious in his purpose. He caused the laws enforcing heathen worship to be read, and looked for a speedy compliance. Symphorian replied that he must obey the laws of the King of Kings. "Give me a hammer," he said, "all I will break you in pieces." He was scourged and thrown into a dungeon. Some days later, this son of light came forth from the darkness of his prison, haggard and worn but full of joy. He despised the riches and honors offered to him, as he had despised torments. He died by the sword, and went to the court of the Heavenly King. Little more than a century later the Roman empire bowed before the faith of Christ. Many miracles spread the glory of St. Symphorian and of Christ, the King of Saluta.



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