

## AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING.

BY LUCY CAMPBELL.



DON'T say anything more, if you please, Nora, about that subject. I can never get over certain things I know about the Catholic Church."

"Tell me, Margaret, what you know about a church which you say you have never entered," said a quiet voice.

"Why, everybody knows that Catholics say prayers to pictures and images and a lot of stuff to the Virgin Mary, and what do sensible people want to say the same thing over and over for, I'd like to know. And oh! there are just loads of things. I have read about them often. I don't want to hear any more. I couldn't bear to read one of their books."

This talk between two girls was at twilight, in a warm corner in the deserted study hall of a large school.

Nora Morton and Margaret Sloane were cousins and fast friends. Nora was an orphan and had no other home than with her aunt.

It would be hard to find two girls more unlike in every way.

One gentle and thoughtful, the other eager and impulsive, and given to airing her opinions freely. Both were Protestants and knew no other faith.

It is hard to say what had started this serious talk; perhaps an unopened book on Margaret's lap; perhaps something said by the little Mexican child Dolores, who had just left them, and who had a strong attachment for Nora.

Directly the bell rang for study hour, then came evening prayers and the early bed time, so talk of all kind ceased.

The next morning a sister told Nora that her cousin was too ill to come to recitations, but they did not think it anything serious.

Dolores was standing near and heard the message, and coming up, she said to Nora in her broken way:

"Come, Nona nia, we will say a prayer to Our Mother to make Rita well again."

"Our Mother, Dolores!"

"Yes, yes, Our Blessed Mother, you know. She loves all her children and our dear Lord gives her all she asks of Him."

Nora was touched by the child's beautiful faith. She let Dolores lead her to a little oratory near by, where there was an altar of the Blessed Virgin, and here the child poured forth her simple earnest prayer to the only Mother she had ever known.

Nora felt the influence of the quiet sanctuary, but her prayer was strangely mingled with curiosity and pity, for everything was new and strange. Too just to condemn what she did not understand, she still felt that Dolores was only a sort of pagan. She was not uneasy about Margaret, and did not once think of her needing special prayers. If she had felt so, her distress would have been great. It was Dolores' way to pray for everything. They were not many minutes in the oratory, but the child seemed satisfied and happy, as she took her friend's hand and pressed it, saying, "Feel good, Nora, now? Me do."

The morning seemed long without Margaret, and at noon Nora asked to see her. Sister Claire seemed somewhat doubtful about admitting her, and she at once felt her first anxiety.

Margaret was restless and feverish and the few minutes spent in the infirmary were soon over. Nora left feeling sad and lonely. She found it hard to fix her attention on her studies. She was the older by two years and there was a feeling of responsibility for her young cousin. Their home was in Southern Texas. Mrs. Sloane herself had been educated in this same school and knew that her girls, though far from home, would be cared for in every way.

When school was over she wanted to go at once to stay with Margaret, but they told her it would not be best, as she was much worse.

Then Nora broke down and suddenly realized how unlike herself Margaret had