

A VICTORY OF OUR LADY

Sister Gabriella, the Superior of St. Michael's Hospital, turned un- easily on the high office stool which stood in front of her desk, put her hand to her forehead, opened her mouth slightly as if to speak, and then remained silent, blushing a lit- tle, and looked at the young Protest- ant resident physician. Dr. Warner had been in the hospital for three months, and in that time had revis- ed his former Presbyterian prejudices against Catholics so far as to place Sister Gabriella and her community at the head of the list of "sensible wo- men." He stared amazedly at her manifest strange confusion, for which nothing in the surroundings gave rea- son. The office was as quiet as a churchyard, everything in its place, the little maid who tended the door slipped silently to and fro, the pic- tures of various benefactors of the institution gazed down benignantly from the walls, the busts of Galen and Aesculapius stared fixedly from carved eyelids. The only changed thing in the room was the varying color and lack of crisp decision in the Sister Superior.

Finally Dr. Warner gave voice to his surprise. "Sister, what is the matter?" Sister Gabriella showed some re- luctance at his taking the initiative. She drew a large pack of letters from a pigeon hole of the desk and held them towards him. "What do you think of these?" she asked.

The letters all looked exactly alike on the outside, being addressed in a clear, round, feminine hand to Private Harry Martin, Ohio Volunteers. Dr. Warner shook his head. "That boy will never read them; he is go- ing to die." His nurse has not gone below 120, and he seems to have no constitution. I do not see how he ever passed the entrance examina- tions.

"I am afraid he cannot live," said Sister Gabriella, "and so I think some one ought to read these letters. Perhaps his mother is breaking her heart over him, or— with again that delicate blush— some one else." "It is not his mother," said the doctor. "The women of the last gen- eration did not write that sort of hand. Perhaps his sister, or maybe a nearer yet and a dearer one." Then, somewhat quizzically, he ad- ded, "I really think you ought to read them, Sister."

"Please do it," answered Sister Gabriella, quite embarrassed at the idea of reading to the doctor of love letters. "Open the last ones first and see if there is anything we really ought to answer."

Dr. Warner cut open the latest let- ter and turned to the signature. It was not from the young soldier's sis- ter, evidently, for it read, "Yours lovingly, always, Jessie Turner." He glanced hastily over the pages and then said, "I think you are right, Sister, and we ought to answer this. The young lady is evidently a trained nurse, for she says: 'They say no news is good news, but, Harry, I cannot think why you let all my let- ters go unanswered when you know how anxious I am about you. I hear that your regiment is scattered about among different hospitals and camps, and that numbers of the men have ty- phoid fever. I cannot go to the new case that Dr. Young has for me till I know that you are all right. Do get some one to write for you, to tell me how and where you are.'"

Sister Gabriella's air of hesitation dropped from her like a cloak, and she was at once her own capable self. "We will telegraph at once to the young lady, and since the major is urging us to take some more sol- diers, perhaps the girl would like to come here, and while she is looking after Martin, Miss Harris can take a few new ones." She bent over her desk again to write out the telegram, while Dr. Warner looked approvingly at her fine head, whose outlines were not marred by the stiff cor- sette which makes so many look wan and gaily.

Dr. Warner had a bald head in spite of his manifest lack of years. He had also a clever, inquisitive face and an abrupt manner which some- times jarred the nerves of the pa- tients, as much as his preconceived opinions as to the management of Catholic hospitals had jarred the Sisters. These prejudices had been dispelled, during his three months of residence, and the atmosphere of re- ligious calm was a matter of great satisfaction to him, especially when he contrasted it with the bustling confusion of some of the other hospi- tals he sometimes visited. At St. Michael's there were no flighty young probationers hanging over the stair always flirting with the doctors, as he had often seen them at the Aesculapian Hospital. Even the sud- den incursion of the poor fever-stricken soldiers from the camps had scarcely disturbed the smooth routine of the place.

A day or so after the telegram had been sent to Miss Turner, Dr. War- ner stopped in the office for the notes of a case in which he was specially interested, and found the little doorkeeper ushering in a young girl, whose bright brown eyes stared about her with a mixture of anx- iety and fear.

She was a lovely creature, even while unlovely worry twisted the delicate lines of her brow and lips. Her hair was not tousled into an untidy mass resembling a fur floor rug, which fashion decreed to be the proper thing that summer of the Spanish war, but its natural beauty escaped from confining pins in little rings around her pretty ears and throat. She was slight yet not fragile, and was much more refined and intellec- tual than the majority of her pro- fessional sisters. Dr. Warner felt surprise that so dainty a creature had chosen the hard profession of nursing, for he at once concluded that it must be Miss Turner, since she eagerly asked how Martin was. "Very ill," said Dr. Warner grave- ly, "and you must be courageous. You will be of no use if you show so much nervousness."

"Oh, it is not that," cried the girl. "I have always felt that he would die! But to have him in this dread- ful place!" She gave a little gasp- ing sob and looked at him with a heart-broken gaze. "What do you mean?" exclaimed Dr. Warner. "Oh, I am so afraid of Catholics," she said, her eyes running round the room as if fearing to find instruments of torture; nor did the very matter- of-fact appearance of the office seem to reassure her.

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"How foolish you are!" said the doctor, with wholesome sternness. "Are you really a trained nurse, or so behind the rest of the world, with old-fashioned prejudices? This is a first-class hospital, with all the best modern appliances, and the Sisters are lovely women, who have taken every care of your friend. Now go and find the head nurse and overcome your terrors, so that you may be of some use."

Jessie Turner took the doctor's lit- tle scolding as a tonic, and when she had changed her travelling gown and was shown into the ward where Mar- tin lay still delirious, she went calm- ly to the head of the bed, read the record of the case, and began her new duties without showing any undue emotion.

Martin was most of the time in a low, muttering delirium, and at no time appeared to recognize Miss Tur- ner, hence she could only attend to him as a nurse, and thus had time to look after the other cases near her own "special." There was a golden-haired lad who made all the sentimental lady visitors recall the old verses about "somebody's dar- ling." He was the pet of all the nurses, yet never seemed to appre- ciate any one's attentions so much as Jessie's. Then there was on the other side of Martin's cot a young Irish- man, one of the irrepresible kind. He was ill enough to have the ice cap on his head all the time, and suffered from a low, teasing fever, yet never complained. Jessie said to him one day: "I think you are one of the sort angels are made of," and he an- swered, "Oh, no, nurse, but the next time you go to the jeweler's, please take me crown and get a few more diamonds put in it!" Jessie laugh- ed and filled the ice-cap at once.

One day Martin came to conscious- ness, but without recognizing Jessie. He lay with a sick man's fretful frown on his thin face, and she asked him gently, "What is the matter?" He spoke freely: "Every bed in this ward has a big hanging to it except mine. What are they for, and why haven't I one?"

"They were brought here one day by some of the ladies. You were ill to say whether you wanted one or not. I am taking care of all your letters and other things for you." Jessie did not explain that, like so many of the poor soldiers who were brought to the hospitals that sum- mer, all of his little possessions, his watch, sleeve-buttons and pocket-book, had been stolen from him. He did not seem satisfied, but I, brooding, with a sick man's unreasonable- ness, on the want of a little calico bag, so that Jessie overcame her dread of the Sisters and went down to the of- fice.

Dr. Warner had explained to Sister Gabriella Jessie's great dread of Catholics, which the Sister could un- derstand, as she had herself, come from a town in northern Ohio, one of the most bigoted districts in the country. Therefore she received her kindly, listening with an amused smile to her account of Martin's fretting for a bag to hang on his cot. "It is just a sick notion," she said, "but he must be humored." Then seeing a tired look on the girl's face, she added: "Tell Miss Harris to take your place for an hour or two, so that you may take a walk in the fresh air, away from the sight of sick people."

Jessie thanked her timidly, and as it was Sunday morning she thought she would show the Catholic nurses that she had not been influenced in any way by their religion, by going to her own church and finding that there was one within a short dis- tance, took her way thither.

She had grown up in a little coun- try town, and had scarcely left it ex- cept during the busy period of her training for nursing. Hence she had few opportunities to hear a service in a wealthy Eastern church, and was not prepared for the beauty of the building and the elaborateness of the services. There was a fine quartet choir, with a soprano of surpassing sweetness, who sang Handel's "Come Unto Me" like an angel of the heav- enly host. The choir was hidden be- hind a screen of palms, so that their frivolous conversation and irreverent joking was not perceived by the con- gregation. Yet Jessie did not feel her heart lifted up by the service, though she struggled with her inattention. There was coldness and worldliness in the air, the rustle of silk linings, the delicate tinkling of jeweled chains and bracelets, the waving of feathery plumes, all of which distracted her. The complacency of the worshippers irritated her, and she asked herself, "Is this the church of the poor, of the Carpenter's Son?" Then she found fault with her own critical spirit, and as she had not held any conversation with any one on religious matters since she went to St. Michael's she attributed her sudden dis- taste for her own religion to some malice influence that seemed like witchcraft.

Another week slipped by, and no change occurred in the condition of Private Harry Martin. Others of his comrades had rallied to promis- ing convalescence, but no improve- ment was noticed in him. Jessie grew miserably unhappy, and one night as she heard sounds of lovely music coming from the chapel, she slipped in, with a latent expectation of fortifying her lagging Protestan- tism with a sight of the "idolatrious musicians," as she had been wont to call them, ceremonies of the Church. She sat bolt upright in the back seat never kneeling, looking on with re- bellious feeling against the strange attraction she felt, especially when the air became misty with incense and the white cornettes of the Sis- ters looked like snowy butterflies floating in a haze of golden light.

Differences in the arrangement of the pews, produced by the increase, and also with spiritual torpor, she slipped from the chapel, determining to go more often to her own church. The next Sunday she inquired the way to a smaller and plainer church, as she thought perhaps the other one was too fashionable to suit her taste. Though the sermon was long and the music poor, the plain little gray stucco church was similar to her own in Ohio; therefore the following week she started out to find it again. She thought she knew just where to find it, and asked no directions, but walked on in a dreamy mood, when seeing before her a plain gray stucco building, apparently exactly like the one she had visited before, she went in, though vaguely conscious of some difference in the arrangement of the stairs, and then was struck with amazement. Dazzled with a glow of light and color, she sank into a seat and gazed bewildered around her. She was in a Catholic church, and saw that the congregation was nearly all composed of colored peo- ple. In the left-hand corner shone so brilliantly a glory that the eye was irresistibly drawn there away from the bright and attractive high altar. Hundreds of candles burned before the wide marble side altar, which was covered with flow- ers and palms, arranged with excel- lent taste. Above all stood a gra- cious figure, crowned, dignified, hold- ing by the hand a lovely child, who, smiling confidently like a little prince, overlooked his toy astonished to go away, and let one person after another enter the pew, unconsciously moving up to let them enter. So she found herself inclosed so that it would have been awkward for her to leave.

The sermon began in a pleasant voice with an unfamiliar accent that attracted her. She listened with an unwillingly to an account of the origin of the devotion of Our Lady of Victory. The name appealed to the fancy of a soldier's sweetheart. So, too, the gracious gentleness of the statue was more attractive to a young girl than the melancholy im- age of the Mother of Sorrows.

Our Lady of Victory! That was a name of inspiration. Dramatically she listened to the words of the sermon; through a mist of incomprehension she gathered that all the little ta- blets surrounding the shrine were plac- ed there by grateful hearts in sign of some favor which they attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Victory. Vaguely groping amid warring ideas, she suddenly prayed, "O Lady of Victory, if you had any such power, save poor Harry!" Then, terrified lest she had offered an idol- atrous prayer, she added: "Please, our Lord, if it is wicked to pray to the Virgin, don't let that prayer have any effect!"

Such a contradiction may seem very absurd to the settled mind of the "old Catholic," but is not un- common in the misty half-light of the rising of faith in the heart of one brought up in darkness.

When Jessie returned to the hospi- tal Martin had come to consciousness and Dr. Warner said to her, his sharp little face smiling, "Well, your sol- dier boy may get well after all." Jessie paid a little as she asked, "Was there any hope before?" "Not till this morning," answered the doctor, "but he has taken a sud- den turn. There is plenty of hope now." Then he hurried on his rounds, leaving her to strange thoughts.

Those who know nothing of the strange sweet ways that the Holy Ghost has of leading human souls cannot understand them when de- scribed in detail. Those who are fa- miliar with them can imagine the re- mainder of the story. Private Harry Martin steadily improved, recovering his formerly bright and reasonable spirit, and was finally discharged to return to the position in his native town from which the war had called him. But before he went, Jessie had held many quiet talks with him, and both had begun regular instruc- tions to be received into the Church. Jessie stayed at St. Michael's till Martin should have his home ready.

She received the doctrines of the Church with the docility so notice- able in the Blessed Virgin's converts and when she finally went away to her new little Catholic home, one of her most cherished possessions was a pretty statue of Our Lady of Vic- tory for the little shrine, where she desired always to lay all the joys and sorrows of her coming life.—From "Wanted a Situation, and Other Stor- ies," by Isabel Nixon Whitely. Pub- lished by B. Herder, St. Louis, Mo.

THE HOLY SEE AND MUSIC IN CHURCHES

A Proposed Petition

Writes a correspondent of the Lon- don Tablet: In reference to the proposed peti- tion to the Holy See on the question of "Church Music," I beg to inclose you for publication a document giv- ing the principal points upon which concessions are sought, and I shall be glad to receive the names at once of anyone and everyone desirous of giv- ing it their sympathy and support.

I would therefore suggest that every- one wishing to sign send to me at the address below full name, address, rank or profession, etc., on a post- card, which will entail, I think, the least amount of trouble. No Catholic whatever is precluded from taking part, and I urgently request their speedy assistance. Thanking you in anticipation, Yours respectfully, JOSEPH SHORT, 51 Bloomsbury St., Birmingham, April 12.

The Petition will declare: "That in seeking certain concessions the sole object in view is the promotion and advancement of the Church's interests in England, any other motive being in every sense unworthy of the true, earnest Catholic."

The main points are as follows: 1. That the extension of the Sacred Compositions (Masses, etc.) by Hay- den, Mozart, Weber, Cherubini and Gounod, which is earnestly petitioned for, is not desired for the purpose of excluding, retarding or in any way discouraging the use of Plain Chant in this or any other country; but primarily on the grounds of expedi- ency, the peculiar circumstances in which hundreds of parish churches in England especially are situated rendering it absolutely impossible for the strictly defined laws laid down in the Motu Proprio to be duly and properly observed.

2. That the total exclusion of fe- males will entail widespread distress, very large numbers of women actually depending for their livelihood upon their positions as organists, and, what is equally important, that wo- men singers are indispensable in the majority of Church choirs in England to the carrying out of the musical services in a manner compatible with the dignity of High Mass or Missa Cantata.

3. That His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin appeals strongly to support this view in relation to the females engaged in the choirs of his diocese. In England the position is still more urgent.

4. That the musical services in the country are, generally speaking, more staid, solid and devotional than obtain on the Continent, and any state- ments to the contrary emanate simply from a few discontents, who appear to place personal dislike to a particular class of music above the higher and holier interests of the Church.

5. That the Bishops of the various dioceses are much better able to judge of the charges than such per- sons, and may be safely left to deal with cases of excessive musical zeal, which is not by any means confined to the advocates of the use of fig- ured music.

6. That thousands of those outside the fold are attracted to the churches by the grandeur, solemnity and beau- ty of the masses of the great masters and thereby are enabled to hear the doctrines of the Church propounded, which otherwise would not have gained their ears. Organists and choir-masters throughout the length and breadth of the land testify to the fact that figured music has been at least the stepping stone to numer- ous conversions.

7. That the common attitude to- wards Plain Chant and kindred mu- sic may be judged from the fact that a large amount of compulsion is always needed to make it in any way generally adopted, and that when left to the sole recommendation of its own merits it instantly falls into disuse.

THE PIPER AND THE PUCA

Translated literally from the Irish of the Leabhar Sgeulaigeachta. In the old times, there was a half fool living in Dunmore, in the Coun- ty Galway, and although he was excessively fond of music, he was unable to learn more than one tune, and that was the "Black Rogue."

He used to get a good deal of money from the gentlemen, for the used to get sport out of him. One night the piper was coming home from a house where there had been a dance and he half drunk. When he came to a little bridge that was up by his mother's house, he squeezed the pipes on, and began playing the "Black Rogue" (an rogaire cubh). The Puca came behind him and flung him up on his own back. There were long horns on the Puca, and the piper got a good grip of them, and then he said:

"Destruction on you, you nasty beast, let me home. I have a ten- penny piece in my pocket for my mother, and she wants snuff." "Never mind your mother," said Puca, "but keep your hold. If you fall you will break your neck—and your pipes." Then the Puca said to him, "Play up for me the 'Shan Van Vocht' (an t-seann-bhean, bhoct)."

"I don't know it," said the piper. "Never mind whether you do or you don't," said the Puca. "Play up, and I'll make you know." The piper put wind in the bag, and he played such music as made him- self wonder. "Upon my word, you're a fine mu- sic-master," says the piper then; "but tell me where you're for bringing me." "There's a great feast in the house of Banshee, on the top of Croagh Patrick to-night," says the Puca, "and I'm for bringing you there to play music, and take my word, you'll get the price of your trouble." "By my word, you'll save me a journey, then," says the piper, "for Father William put a journey to Croagh Patrick on me, because I stole the white gander from him last Mar- tinmas."

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Often, without knowing any par- ticular cause, we feel special influ- ences, such as the nearness of God and the Holy angels. Sometimes, when watching before the Blessed Sacra- ment, or at other times when engag- ed in ordinary duties, there comes on us a flush, a scene of peace, as though the world were removed a million miles away from us. All disturbing thoughts have vanished; the air is full of a kind balm, and we wonder if it may not be that an angel has been by our side and drop- ped the dewy fragrance from his wings before he passed back to Hea- ven.

What has a most direct effect upon the soul is its mental food. A steady diet of newspaper reading varied only with French fiction, will pro- duce a very different character to that of the man who takes up only what is of good report. Yet, speak- ing generally, there is nothing in which a reader has more personal li- berty than in the choice of his read- ing. Those who have never had the opportunity of choosing their envi- ronment of place but live just where the providence of God has brought them, have no need to fear the pos- sible hurtful influence of town or city. There is no immunity from temptation in rural life. The struggle between good and evil is as fierce among the beauties of nature as in the splendors of the street; yet men are sometimes honest enough to own that a perverted taste led them to give up the simple, homely life of the country for the sake of increasing their opportunities of pleasure—op- portunities that soon prove them- selves to be only proximate occa- sions of sin.