

The married life of Saint Rita did not come up to the expectations of her parents. The dissipated Ferdinand, was not easily converted. Of a fiery nature, he was forever in the bitter strifes and feuds which waxed strong in his day, and which were too often perpetuated with increasing virulence from generation to generation. Upon her and the home she graced by her virtues she looked with indifference while his heart was allured by the ill-fated delights that are found in debauchery and riot. For eighteen long years did the blessed Rita suffer and pray for the conversion of her husband. She never spoke bitterly nor ill of him. "Bear in mind," she would say, "that the wife who speaks ill of her husband is not less at fault than is he whose evil ways have given grounds for the accusation."

But at length the tears and prayers of the wife won the gift of repentance for Ferdinand. Divine grace flooded his soul and he determined to spend the remainder of his life in doing penance for the outrages he had committed against God and his family. But the debt of divine justice was to be paid. The dagger of an assassin, who had nourished resentment from strifes of former days cut short the career of the unfortunate Ferdinand in the first fervor of his repentance. And here a new sorrow was given to Rita. Her two sons, did not follow the noble example of their mother and forgive the assassin. They determined to avenge their father's murder. Her prayers and entreaties seemed to have no effect upon them. They would avenge the blood of their father. And Rita prayed the prayer of a saint for them:

"Oh God," she sobbed, "if these children, with which Thou hast blessed me in the days of my sorrow shall avenge a father's murder by defiling their own souls with blood, deign to take them to Thy own keeping, ere the crime be enacted."

And the prayer of the heart-broken widow was heard. The two sons were snatched away from this life: "Taken away lest wickedness should alter their understanding, or deceit beguile their souls."

And now again her soul turned towards the Augustinian convent. But her widowhood and the fact that she was thirty-five years of age stood a barrier in her way. She took herself to prayer, and then she proceeded to the Convent of the Augustinian Nuns at Cascia. Politely, but firmly she was refused admittance. Again she turned to prayer and penance in order that she might attain what, humanly speaking, seemed impossible. One night shortly after her disappointing visit to the good Sisters in Cascia she was interrupted in her prayers by the sound of a voice of inexpressible sweetness.

"Rita, Rita!" said the voice. "Thy prayers have been received with favor. God grants thee the fruition of thy desires."

Before her astonished eyes appeared St. John the Baptist, followed immediately by St. Augustine and St. Nicholas of Tolentino, the three special advocates of her devotion. They guided her to the Augustinian convent, and without loosening bolt or bar admitted her into the sacred cloister of Cascia.

This time the Nuns did not refuse her. Her life in the convent was one uninterupted prayer, and she was devoted to the passion of Our Lord, especially. The wearing of His crown of thorns, was the subject of her daily contemplation. She died in the cloister of Cascia in the seventy-sixth year of her age, on the 22nd day of May, the day that the Church has set aside as the feast of St. Rita of Cascia.

A distinguished ecclesiastic now residing in this country had the privilege recently of examining her body in an official capacity. He declares that the body, though cadaverous in appearance, is still in a perfect state of preservation, possessing all the outlines of youth. The Augustinian Manual gives a very complete sketch of her life, and will surely spread devotion to this newly canonized saint.—New World.

A MOST WONDERFUL STORY

No name in modern history is surrounded by so touching and mysterious a halo of the supernatural as is that of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans. The most audacious scoffers at religion have stood in awe in contemplating the purity, devotion and intensity of religious zeal revealed in the character of this peasant's child, who was called by Divine Providence to undo the mischiefs caused by a foolish queen. Joan of Arc was remarkable from childhood for her physical energy and a peculiarly sensitive temperament, and was most exemplary in her conduct toward her humble, but pious parents.

As she grew to womanhood she became inclined to solace, and spent much of her time in solitude and prayer. At this time the English had extended their conquests by intrigue and invasion over a great part of France, and the young King Henry VI. of England had been declared king of France, while the young Maid of Orleans was yet only eleven years old. She became conscious, even at this tender age, of supernatural visitations, and in prayer and meditation for several years she became filled with the presence of her wonderful destiny. There was an old tradition current that the calamities which would be-

fall France through the follies of a woman would be removed through the instrumentality of a woman.

At last the Maid, when but seventeen years old, managed to secure an audience with the Governor of the Province and his promise to get for her, if possible, an audience with the Dauphin Charles. In the following February she set out on her perilous journey to the royal court. Charles at first refused to see her, but after three days he granted her an audience. The stories of her being inspired by Heaven to deliver France from her enemies were received with incredulity at the court, and in order to cover her with confusion when she was brought into the royal chamber, Charles, disguised, was in the crowd of attaches, and Joan was asked to point him out, which she promptly did.

Accordingly, she was permitted to set forth with an army of about ten thousand, designed for the relief of Orleans. At the head of the army Joan rode, clad in a coat of mail and carrying a white standard embroidered with lilies, and having on one side the image of God seated on the clouds and holding the world in His hand, and on the other a representation of the Annunciation. She succeeded in entering Orleans on the 29th April, 1429, and after an extraordinary display of valor and intrepidity, she forced the English to raise the siege and retire with precipitation. The French army pursued the English, and the latter were entirely defeated at Patay, with a loss of nearly five thousand men, while the French lost but few. From this event Joan was called the Maid of Orleans.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

NARRATIVE OF A RECENT CONVERSION

A NON-CATHOLIC PICKS UP A STRAY LEAF FROM A CATHOLIC PRIMER—HE READS AND IS IMPRESSED, AND PRESERVES FOR REFERENCE

Catholics, as a rule, think very little of their greatest possession, the faith. And yet it is God's greatest gift, though frequently abused. As a rule, those who come into its possession, late in life, as in the case of converts, appreciate it at its full worth, and converts, too, have a better knowledge of our holy religion than the vast majority who receive this priceless legacy from their parents.

Were the history of the conversions that take place in this country, in a single year, to be written, the same would make a remarkable volume and it might be found, in many cases, that God made use of some very simple processes in bestowing the gift of faith. This observation is made on the strength of a case just reported by a subscriber, a priest in New Jersey. The pious reader, after perusing the article, will marvel at the simplicity of the instrument made use of by Almighty God in this particular instance.

In a city in President Wilson's State, resides a middle-aged man, Alexander Buchanan, a native of England, with no relatives in this country, so far as is known. Recently, while seeking employment, Mr. Buchanan was struck by a street car near Dayton, N. J., and hurled from a bridge, fifty feet high. When picked up he was very badly injured. He was unconscious and among other injuries, it was found, that one foot was frightfully mangled, one arm broken in three places. He was taken to St. Peter's hospital, New Brunswick, N. J., an institution in charge of Sisters of Charity, where he later regained consciousness.

Soon after regaining the use of his faculties, the injured man stated that while he was not a Catholic he did desire that a priest be brought to him, and the priest who gives the information on which the history is based, was sent for. He writes: "On reaching the injured man's bedside I found him well disposed to become a Catholic. I baptized him and at the request of the surgeon who was to amputate his foot, I prepared him for death, administering the last rights of the Church."

What was the mysterious power that brought about this conversion? What was the agency employed by Almighty God in giving the simple-minded, hard-working, middle-aged English gentleman, the priceless gift? A leaf from a primer or first lesson book, prepared for the use of children in Catholic schools. Written in lead pencil on the leaf is the probable name of the owner, Miss Kate Duffin.

The leaf is illustrated and shows a priest engaged in the celebration of the Mass. At the base of the illustration are the following statements:

1. This is a priest.
2. We need his aid.
3. All the day's we live.
4. And at the hour of death.

From this point we will allow the priest, who furnishes the information, to continue the narrative:

"On visiting the hospital the next day one of the Sisters handed me a leaf from a Catholic primer, which I enclose. The Sister had found this in the man's clothing when trying to secure some means of identification for the purpose of communicating with relatives. This gave me an insight into matters supernatural, justified by a subsequent statement from the injured Mr. Buchanan.

"He had regained considerable strength at this time, and when I called to see him that day I showed him the well-preserved primer leaf.

He recognized it at once and, by way of explanation of God's mercy to him, said: 'I picked that little piece of paper up on the street yesterday, and after reading the printed matter at the bottom of the page, folded it up neatly and placed it in my pocket. When the car struck me, the first thought that came to me was the result of the printed words on the page: This is a priest. We need his aid all the days we live, and at the hour of death. The interval between the instant of injury and that of unconsciousness was very brief, but I had remembered the words. This remembrance was the only thing in my mind before I became unconscious. It was the first thought that came into my mind when consciousness returned, and, believing it to be an indication of the will of God, I acted accordingly. The results have been truly wonderful. I am suffering pain, but I am calmly resigned. The doctors say that I will recover. Be this as it may, my mind is at peace. I feel that I have had given to me a treasure that is worth a life of suffering. If I survive these injuries I will do my best to prove that God's gift is appreciated by one of the least of His children.'

ENGLISH CATHOLIC LITERATURE

By Willard Ward

Half a century ago Cardinal Newman, as Rector of the Catholic University of Ireland, delivered some lectures on English Catholic literature. They contained incidental suggestions full of insight. But I venture to characterize them as on the whole rather provoking. Dr. Newman's chief contentions were indeed most just ones—that English Catholic literature ought not to be polemical or in the disparaging sense of the term "sectarian," that to engage in it is not to undertake a clerical or directly missionary work; and, moreover, that no English Catholic literature can take the place of our existing classical English literature which is not Catholic. The literature of the country must reflect the character of its inhabitants, their vices as well as their virtues. It cannot be Bowdlerized or made simply religious without destroying this representative character. "Man's work," Newman wrote, "will savor of man, in his elements and powers, excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin. Such, too, will be his literature. It will have the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the rankness of the natural man."

So much is indisputable. Equally indisputable is Dr. Newman's further contention that on the neutral terrain of pure science there can be no Catholic literature to create, "There is no crying demand, no imperative necessity," he writes, "for our acquisition of a Catholic Euclid or a Catholic Newton." Pure science is treated similarly by Catholics and non-Catholics.

When, however, the reader presses on to ask what Catholic literature may be, and not merely what it cannot and ought not to be, he gets practically no answer at all from Newman's pages. And this is why I venture to call these lectures somewhat provoking. So far as anything positive is suggested in them it is that Catholics have no particular field to cultivate in their literature, and have only to write on general subjects in a way in which it is natural to a Catholic to write.

With this view, I am not abjectly to concur, and perhaps Newman himself would have made it evident had he pursued the subject further that he did not mean it without reservation. I propose here to throw out some suggestions on which possibly a supplement to Newman's lectures of a more positive description might be based. There are certain alternatives which Newman does not appear clearly to contemplate. Granted that a sectarian or polemical character or tone would be destructive to the idea of an English Catholic literature, that such characteristics being rather to professed work of apologetic than to literature, does it follow that Catholic literature has no special field? Is specialism necessarily coincident with sectarianism? And may not a Catholic have the qualities of a specialist in matters connected with his religion? Is he not likely to know much more about such matters than others know? Again, granted that the classical literature of a country in its full length and breadth cannot be religious or even innocent, but must reflect the sinfulness as well as the virtues of human nature in that country, are there not many individual works of genuine literature which deal with aspects of that nature and not with the whole of it? And is there not a religious aspect? Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is a work of prose; Wordsworth's "Ode on Immortality" a work of poetry; both of them are profoundly religious. Yet, who will deny to either of them a place among our classics? The writers of the romantic school in Germany and France, such men as La Motte Fouque, Tieck, Novalis, Chateaubriand, contributed to the classical literature of their countries, yet they were all engaged in depicting in one way or another the Christian and chivalric ideal of life which had so greatly lost its influence in the eighteenth century. They dealt with one aspect, one way of viewing of them they were classical writers. Because the whole literature of a country cannot be made up of such work, is that any reason for denying

that it may include them? I claim, then, that the writings of Catholics may, like those works of Bunyan and Wordsworth, perfectly well occupy a special field of English classical literature, a field marked out for them by the subjects on which as Catholics they very naturally have unusual facilities for becoming specialists, and that it is perfectly possible for them to do this and yet to avoid the sectarianism which prevents books from taking their place in general literature for general readers. Particular aspects of life can be given most truly and without sectarian bias or polemical aim by those who are especially familiar with them.

A picture of Catholic life in fiction can very rarely be adequately given by one who has no belief in Catholic ideals. The same is true of biography, and in a less degree, perhaps, of certain chapters of history. There are no doubt partial exceptions. Some writers of the romantic school who were never actually Catholics had an imaginative sympathy with Catholic ideals which a believer in the Catholic Church could not surpass. And there are other instances where justice of mind and ethical sympathy have enabled non-Catholic writers to treat with striking success themes that are especially suitable to Catholic writers.

Mr. Cotter Morrison's admirable "Life of St. Bernard" is the work of a positivist. Ranke's "History of the Popes" could hardly have been more justly or truthfully written by a Catholic, granted the limitations of the work as to its scope. Mrs. Oliphant wrote an extraordinarily sympathetic "Life of Montalembert." In fiction, too, Sir Walter Scott was a classical writer who contributed much, in spite of some prejudice and some inadequacy of knowledge, to the revival of interest in Catholic ideals which the England of the eighteenth century had almost forgotten. And Carlyle's "Abbot Samson" left little to be desired in point of knowledge and sympathy. But these are, as I have said, exceptions. As a rule only a Catholic has the necessary knowledge and sympathy to treat such themes quite satisfactorily.

From these exceptions, however, one very important lesson may be learned which affects the theme of the present paper. Cotter Morrison, Ranke, Scott and Carlyle commanded general attention because, while their work had much of that specialist quality and that imaginative sympathy for which in such subjects one looks as a rule to Catholic writers and not to outsiders, they were naturally from their position and antecedents entirely free from the sectarian tone and sectarian judgments. It is this quality which is fatal to the claim of any work to take its place in classical literature. And doubtless it was a keen sense of the danger of Catholic literature developing in this direction which made Newman so inclined to discourage among his devotees writings which aimed at "providing the occasion" in a controversial sense, at combatively upholding religious or Catholic interests. To be sectarian means that you see things only from one standpoint and do not appreciate any other. At best such a view is very inadequate. And human nature being what it is, bias and ignorance generally help to make a sectarian view quite false as well as inadequate.

A Catholic literature can take its place in the general literature of the country only if, while its writers are specialists in knowledge, they have sufficient general education and knowledge of other points of view than the Catholic to enable them to present a picture of life which the general reader recognizes as plausible and conceivably true.

It is obvious truthfulness to fact which has in the past made certain Catholic books a power and in some instances even classical. When Macaulay shed many tears over Manzoni's great novel, the "Promessi Sposi," he bore testimony to its convincing power as a true picture of the Catholic religion. The writer gave the facts truthfully as he saw them. So, too, in the field of history Lingard has won his place as a classic from his scrupulous truthfulness. And both these writers had that familiarity with the temper of the general reading public and that sympathy with men belonging to schools of thought widely different from their own which enabled them to depict the Catholic point of view, in the one case in fiction, in the other in history, without irritating by unfairness those whose views were different, and in such a way as to command great attention and respect. Neither of them was polemical, neither sectarian. Yet both realized, vividly, as an outsider could not realize them, the aims and ideals which explain the action of a Catholic whether in actual history or in an imagined drama of the novelist.—Truth.

A GOOD DEED

It must be remembered that any one who procures the celebration of a Mass which would not otherwise be celebrated, does not benefit alone his own soul or the soul for whom the Mass is offered or that of the priest who offers it, but the whole Church of God in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. This is a good deed which rejoices God and the saints and the angels as well as the living and the dead, and it is no wonder if the prayers and interests of such a person are assisted by the intercessions of all heaven.—Rev. H. J. Coleridge, S. J.

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THE BLACK-ROBE VOYAGEUR

MRS. NORA TYNAN O'MAHONY, IN MIS- SIONARY RECORD

More like a book of stirring adventure than any record of pious missionary labors is the story of Father Lacombe's life amongst the Indian tribes of North America. His historian, Miss Katherine Hughes, brings to her work a loving interest and an untiring zeal which, together with her literary style and the book's many charming descriptive passages, render it of no ordinary attraction and merit. In fact, I venture to say that there is hardly a schoolboy (though of a class often least likely to care for "pious reading" who once he takes up the book, will be satisfied to lay it down without reading to the very end this alluring and fascinating record of Father Lacombe's noble achievements and adventures in the missionary field.

Albert Lacombe, "the most remarkable priest Western America has ever seen," to quote Archbishop Ireland, was the eldest son of a simple French Canadian farmer, living near Quebec, and was born on February 28, 1827. Originally intended to follow in his father's footsteps as a farmer, he was taught to take up early the work of the farm and the fields, and went back in what we may suppose to have been other- wise the idle period of each spring, with his father into the cabin in the maple woods to make maple and sugar sufficient to last the household for an entire year. One gets a pleasant glimpse of the kindly old man, who "enjoyed his pipe, his jokes and tricks—for he was full of quaint humor—his old camarades, and his occasional coup of boisson blanc—the mint juice of the north. But he was not a hunter; he did not even keep a gun in the house, and during the Papineau Rising of 1837 he remained unexcited, placidly loyal.

Like the majority of the Quebec inhabitants, he drew an exceeding delight from his pipe and home-grown tobacco; yet each year before mid- night of Mardi Gras, the eve of Lent, he would place his pipe with all solemnity of a rite upon the mantel, "where it remained sleeping," says his son, "without tobacco, smoke or fire until the feast of Easter. The pipe, too, kept the fast."

Albert resembled his father more than his mother, who is described for us as being, like her husband, "of a cheerful domestic nature, pious, thrifty and industrious." She was a brunette of trim, strong physique, and very active. It is likely, however, that her son, who from his childhood got the nickname of "the little Indian," from his brown skin and flashing dark eyes, took after his mother at least as regarded his complexion. Here again the schoolboy's interest will be roused, for, over a hundred years before, a lovely French girl, an ancestress of Madame Lacombe, was carried into captivity and married by an Indian Chief, to whom she bore two sons. She was subsequently stolen away by a voyageur uncle who went in search of her, and restored with her boys to her own people, and one of these boys was the direct ancestor of Albert Lacombe.

Perhaps thus—who knows?—it may have been through some deep-rooted reason of heredity and kinship—"of deep calling to deep"—that Albert Lacombe had almost from his earliest years a longing to give up farming, to become a holy priest, and in time, with God's help, to preach the gospel of Christ to the pagan Indian tribes. It was the kindly old cure of his parish, Monsieur de Viat, who seeing the lad's trend of mind, at first helped him to this great end, by sending him to college and paying his way.

The Bishop and priests liked him well, and would fain have kept him in their midst, doing good work in a quiet way, but as soon as he was ordained and ready he felt "No, that is not for me! I would not live quietly like that for all the world. I must go out and work. I must save my soul in my own way." Soon the longed-for and we must believe, predestined opportunity offered and Father Lacombe set out for the Indian Mission of Pembina on the Red River in the Pays d'en Haut. But it was not till some little time later that, feeling strongly within himself, the necessity of belonging to

a religious order, he became one of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate.

From the time of his setting out on the mission to the Indians, the story of his travels becomes one of increasing interest and adventure, the latter not always, to be sure, of the most pleasant or agreeable kind. But the Indians seemed to have taken to him from the very beginning and during that first apprenticeship years of his labors in the forest mission of Pembina, he devoted every moment of possible leisure to the mastering of the Indian language.

We find him setting off as chaplain to his picturesque Indian flock, numbering over one thousand men, women and children, as well as hundreds of fine ponies for buffalo runners, cart horses, oxen, and innumerable dogs, on one of the great annual Buffalo hunts in the Prairies, which supplied the Indians for the year with meat which, eaten fresh, or dried, or pounded in wooden bowls, mixed with hot grease and dried berries, formed the pemmican, or manna of the Canadian prairies. During these hunts, in addition to saying Mass, daily at dawn, and teaching the children catechism, and instructing the women and aged people left in camp while the men hunted, Father Lacombe had also to be the father of the party, physician, counsellor, and the unquestioned arbiter of all quarrels and disputes amongst the men.

It would take many more pages, I fear, than the Missionary Record could afford to give me, for the recounting of half the noble and wonderful things in this history, as Father Lacombe, having accomplished marvels in every mission to which he was sent, passes on ever zealously and untiringly to fresh fields and pastures new, building churches, founding stations, and in time bringing all the benefits of religion and civilization into every place wherein he set his foot.

His early training in matters of the farm proved of immense benefit also, for no sooner had he taken up his habitation in any spot, however wild and primeval, than gardens and well-tilled fields sprang up about it as if by magic, like oases in the desert; all this being not only the work of his own hands, but that of his Indian flock, whom he readily trained in the arts of agriculture. And when terrible plagues of illness and epidemics attacked the neighbouring wild tribes of Crees and other Indians, they sent for Father Lacombe as the one great medicine man, who had the power to cure them. To this tribe he was known in their own tongue by a name meaning "The man-of-the-Beautiful-Soul," while to the various Blackfeet tribes he was "The man-of-the-good Heart."

Schoolboys again would be delighted with the account of Fort Edmonton, the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company in the far west, "like some baronial stronghold in the feudal ages of the old world, with the liege's hall and retainers' cottages all safely enclosed within high palisades surmounted by guns" for protection against attacks from the wild natives of that forest region. Very amusing, too, are some of the good priest's argumentative encounters with a few of the Indians whom he sought to convert from the heathenish errors of their ways. One convert, a man of middle age, strongly objected to marrying the mother of his children, not because he did not want to marry her, for he loved her dearly, and would not have parted with her, but because the thought of marrying for ever disturbed him sorely. "Stop, Father, that's all very fine for you to say those words, for you will not have the trouble with her . . . It she

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gives me so much trouble all these years when she knows I can put her away at any time—what will she do when she knows I cannot put her away?" So the poor man argued quaintly. But he married her submissively all the same.

One wishes again to tell much more of this interesting work. But perhaps I may return to it another time.

The publishers of The Blackrobe Voyageur are Moffatt, Yard & Co., New York.

A CHAPEL IN A TREE

There are famous shrines dedicated to the Mother of God, but few more ancient or curious than the Chapel of Our Lady of Peace, in Abouville, Normandy. An oak under which the Druids offered their heathen rites paying actually divine honors to it; a tree consecrated by the earliest apostles of Gaul to Jesus and Mary; a tree beneath whose shade William marshalled his Norman host before he led them to the conquest of England; a tree under which the returning warriors of the first Crusade, told to wondering crowds the story of their strange adventures in the Morning Land; a tree which time hallowed to form a crypt for a chapel in honor of Mary till it still stands, revered by all hearts as their dearest monument.

This venerable tree, the last of the chapel trees, is thirty-five feet round the trunk, and in spite of its centuries, each spring still robes it in green. The statue of Mary has dedicated to her, so when ages ago time hollowed it out, the people lined the hollowed trunk with white marble, and set up within this crypt an altar surmounted by a beautiful Madonna. In this tree-shrine Mass is performed. A flight of stairs leads up to it; and above, amidst its still brilliant foliage towers an iron cross.

The people cling to this chapel so devotedly that when, during the French Revolution, the envoys of the infidel government were sent to seize and destroy it the people flew to arms and presented so bold a defiance that the government was forced to withdraw. This was the only place where the old faith was openly practised during the reign of terror.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

DAILY MASS

Says the Catholic Bulletin: "Have you ever enjoyed the luxury of going to Mass every day? If not, try it for a while. Do not say that it involves too much self-sacrifice. What do you possess that is worth having which has not been purchased at the cost of labor and self-denial? The number who present themselves in person before the Tabernacle each morning would be greatly increased if those who could go would only exert a little more will-power in opposition to the inertia of human nature which craves for ease and self-indulgence. The effort would repay them a thousand-fold in more abundant graces and blessings."

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