

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

How the Questioning Spirit of a Child Drew Many Hearts to God.

How was it, Doctor, that you first thought about it?

Well, I suppose I had better tell you the whole story. It may interest you. Just twenty years ago, on a bright Sunday morning, I was hurrying along the road home to Tinton, hoping to be in time to hear the sermon at church. My watch told me that I should be too late for the morning prayer. Happening to look across the fields, I was surprised to see little Ally Dutton, our boy-organist, running very fast over the meadows, leaping the fence at a bound, and finally disappearing in the woods. "What could possibly take our organist away during Church time? Surely," thought I, "the minister must be sick." And, being the village doctor, I hurried still faster.

"But what could take our boy-organist in that out-of-the-way direction at such an hour, and in such haste? Is it mischief?" I asked myself. But I banished the thought immediately, for Ally had no such reputation. There must be something wrong, however, for he ran so fast, and Ally is such an old-fashioned lad. "The minister is ill, at any rate," said I to myself, "or Ally would not be absent." Contrary to my expectations, I found the minister preaching as usual. I do not recollect any of the sermon now, except the text. Rev. Mr. Billups, our minister, had a fashion of repeating his text very often, sometimes very appropriately, sometimes not. It was Platte's question to our Lord, "What is Truth?" You will see, after what happened subsequently, that I had another reason for remembering it, besides its frequent repetition.

The sermon ended, the hymn was sung, but the organ was silent. The silence seemed ominous. I cannot tell why; perhaps it was one of those strange presentiments of disaster, but I fancied our boy organist dead. I loved Ally very much, and my heart sank within me as I looked up through the drawn choir curtains, and missed his slight little form, perched up as he was wont to be on a pile of books, so as to bring his hands on a level with the key-board, trailing forth his gay little voluntary as the congregation dispersed after service. I missed his voice in the hymn, too; those clear ringing tones that were far sweeter to me than any notes that musical instruments ever breathed. I was so filled with this presentiment of coming evil that I did not dare to ask anyone as to the cause of his absence. "Pooh!" said I to myself, "there is nothing in it. I saw him just now alive and well enough, if I may judge from the way he cleared those fences and the swiftness of his footsteps as he ran across the meadow." I thought no more of it until a messenger came two or three days afterwards to my office and said: "Will you please, Doctor, come down to the Widow Dutton's? Ally is sick."

"I will go immediately," said I to the messenger, and then to myself, "we shall lose our boy organist!" and so we did, but not as you suppose. I found him in a high fever. "He has been constantly raving all night," said his mother, in answer to my inquiries, "about what he has seen. There has been something preying on his mind lately," she continued. "He has been very sad and nervous, and I fear it will help to make him ill."

In a tone of command, which I find will often elicit a direct answer from patients whose minds are wandering, I said to him: "Ally, answer directly, sir, what did you see?"

With his eyes still staring at the ceiling in a wondering manner, he answered, "God."

I was sorely perplexed what further question to ask, but, thinking to lead him on gradually to some more reasonable answer, as I thought, I asked, "Where?"

"The kneeling people and the priest," he replied, dreamily. "And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn thee.'" And here he burst into tears. Then the remembrance of the last Sunday morning came back to my mind, and I knew what had taken Ally across the fields, and what he had seen. He was so faint and weak, his pulse fluttered so unsteadily that I feared the worst; and the anxious, searching look of the mother read my tell-tale countenance. She began to weep violently.

"Mother!" cried Ally. "Yes, my child," she responded quickly, and bent over him and kissed him.

"Don't cry, mother; God will not let me die till I know what is true, first."

"That is a strange remark," thought I, "for a boy like him to make. What can he mean?"

"My darling Ally," said the widow, "you do know what is true. You always say what is true."

"Why should they say it isn't true, then?" asked Ally.

"What isn't true, my dear?"

"God!" answered the boy, turning his eyes upward to the ceiling again, and looking, as it were, at some object miles away. "And the kneeling people, and the priest. It's true, and no lie. 'This is My body, this is My blood.'" And he joined his hot and feverish hands together, as if in prayer.

"Don't trouble about this," said I to the weeping mother. "I know what it is. He has been down to Mike Maloney's, in the Brook Woods, and seen the Catholic Mass. Don't refer to it again just now. I will give him some composing medicine. But I

wish," I added, "that this had not happened. It only tends to weaken him."

Presently I noticed him playing with his fingers on the coverlet, as if he were playing the organ, and, thinking to take advantage of this, I said, "Ally, my boy, get well soon, now, and let us have a grand voluntary on the organ—one of your very best."

"For God, for Mass, for the kneeling people and the priest," he murmured, still playing his imaginary organ.

"O, never mind the Mass," said I, "that is nothing to you."

Turning his eyes suddenly on me, he cried, "O, Doctor! it seems everything to me; I can never forget it. How could anyone ever forget they had seen Mass? Could you?"

"That I can't say, Ally," I replied, "for I never saw it."

"Never saw it? Why, I've seen it." "Often?" I asked.

"Well—I saw it—one Sunday, anyway," answered Ally, with the air of one who had never been anywhere else all his life.

"What was it like, Ally, dear?" "Like heaven, mother, if the angels had only been there."

"Angels!" said I contemptuously. "Pretty place to find angels in Mike Maloney's shanty! Why, it's like a stable!"

Again Ally's eyes went up to the ceiling, and, while his fingers nervously played an invisible organ on the coverlet, he began to sing so plaintively and sadly that it quite unmanned me:

And His shelter was a stable, And His cradle was a stall, With the poor and mean and lowly Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

The widow and I stood watching and listening long after he had ceased singing. In a few moments a lucid interval occurred, and, noticing me, he said: "Doctor, why can't we have Mass in our church? Oh! I wouldn't like to play the organ for it always until I died!"

"We couldn't have Mass, Ally," I replied, "because it is only Catholic priests who can say Mass."

"Is it? I know I'd like to play the organ forever and ever for the Mass; but I'd rather be a priest. Oh! a thousand times rather!" And his pale face lighted up with an unearthly glow.

Seeing I could not divert his mind from the subject, and fearing to continue a conversation that so excited him, I quietly gave directions to his mother and left. I had little hope of Ally's recovery, but his words made a deep impression on my mind. "God will not let me die till I know what is true first." "What truth can he mean?" thought I. "Can he imagine that he does not know the true religion? What can have made him think that our Episcopal Church is not true? What strange fancies will get into some children's heads! I should be sorry to lose Ally, but I'd rather see him die, I think, than to grow up a Roman Catholic. Ugh! and a priest, too, perhaps, who knows? God forbid!"

Revolving these disagreeable thoughts in my head as I went down the street, I met Mr. Billups, our minister. We shook hands, or rather I shook Mr. Billups' hand, while he shook his head, a manner of his that gave him a general doubting air, somewhat puzzling to strangers.

"Mr. Billups," I said, "did you know that Ally Dutton is ill?"

"No, I did not hear it," he replied, emphasizing the *did* and still shaking his head.

"Yes, and very ill," I added. "If his mind becomes calmer than it is, I think it might do good just to drop in and see him. I fear he has been under some bad influence lately."

"You astonish me, not to say grieve me," rejoined Mr. Billups. "Ally was always a good, pious boy, and one of our head boys in the Sunday school."

"I mean," said I, "that he has been reading or hearing something about Catholics and their Mass, and other things; and it really has made a deep impression on his mind, which ought to be effaced; that is, if he recovers, which I think is doubtful."

"Of course, of course, which ought to be effaced," repeated he. "Not a doubt about it. I remember now Mrs. White, his Sunday school teacher, telling me that he had asked her in class what the sixth chapter of St. John meant. I hope he has not been reading that chapter of the Bible too attentively; for it is calculated to make a deep, very deep impression, I am sorry to say, in regard to the Popish Mass doctrine; indeed, a most alarming impression upon the mind, especially of a boy like Ally."

"Well, if you see him," said I, not much relishing this opinion about the Bible being in favor of Catholic doctrine, "you can easily bring the subject up, and easily explain its true meaning to him."

"Yes! oh, yes! easily explain its true meaning to him," again repeated Mr. Billups after me; yet looking rather puzzled as I thought, and doubtful of success; but perhaps it was only his manner that gave me that impression.

"Would to-morrow do, think you, Doctor?" he continued, after a pause. "I am quite busy now."

"Ally is very low at this moment. I do not know what made me say it, but Ally's words came suddenly to my mind again, and I added confidently: 'He will be better to-morrow.'"

I bade Mr. Billups good morning, not at all satisfied. "The sixth chapter of St. John!" The sixth chapter of St. John! I went on, repeating to myself. I have never read that chapter with any thought of the doctrines of Catholics; and yet, to judge from what the minister said, it might trouble the

mind even of a child. As I waited in the parlor of a sick lady whom I went to visit before returning home, I could not refrain from turning over the leaves of a large family Bible on the centre table and finding the chapter in question. I had not time, however, to read many verses before I was summoned to the sick chamber.

Attention to my professional duties drove the subject from my mind during the rest of the day, and I retired to rest, considerably exhausted and fatigued.

"Now for a good sleep," said I to myself, "and a quick one, for I shouldn't wonder if I were called up to Ally again before morning." But I could not sleep. Tossing to and fro in my bed, I began to question myself about the cause of my sleeplessness. I soon found it. The thought of Ally had revived the memory of that sixth chapter of St. John. "Well," said I, "I will remove the cause by just getting up and reading it, and there will be an end of it." So I got up, lighted my lamp, got out my Bible, and there, half-dressed, read the troublesome chapter. As I reflected upon what I was doing, I felt more like a thief, a midnight robber, or some designing villain laying plans for a murder, than as an honest Christian reading his bible. For was I not allowing myself to do what was calculated to make a deep, not to say an alarming, impression on my mind that the Catholic religion was true and the Protestant religion false?

Not without vanity I say it, few people knew their bible better than I did, and, although I must have read that identical chapter many times, it seemed to me that I had never read it before. I thank God for that midnight perusal of my bible.

One thing I then and there determined for reasons of my own, namely to be on hand at Mrs. Dutton's when the minister called; and there I was. Ally was a good deal better and brighter. After some commonplace remarks, Mr. Billups said to Ally: "You are fond of reading your bible, are you not, my dear child; and would you not like me to read a little of the Word to you?"

"Oh! yes, sir," answered the boy eagerly. "I will read for you, then," continued Mr. Billups, producing a bible from his pocket, "a most beautiful and instructive passage from St. John's gospel, commencing at the sixth chapter." He read the chapter, but quite differently from the manner in which I had read it, slowly and distinctly, where I had read rather quickly, that is, from the beginning to the fiftieth verse; and quickly from that verse to the end.

"That's very beautiful and very strange," said Ally pensively, as the minister paused at the end of the chapter. "But, Mr. Billups, is it all, all true?"

"The bible, my dear Ally ought to know, is all true," replied Mr. Billups. "And did Jesus give His flesh and blood as He said He would?" asked Ally.

"Yes, my child," replied Mr. Billups. "He certainly made all His promises good."

"I wish I knew where," said Ally, inquiringly; "I asked Mrs. White, and she said she didn't know where and that I asked too many questions."

"When He died on the cross and shed His blood for our salvation," said the minister, solemnly, closing the book and looking at me as if he would say: "There's an end of the whole matter: you see how easily I have explained it to him. Ally did not, however, seem so easily satisfied.

"But where can we get it to eat and drink?" asked he. "Jesus said we must eat and drink it."

Mr. Billups again glanced at me with a look which I interpreted to mean, "I fear he has been reading this too attentively," and then said: "You partake of it by faith, my child, but do not really eat it."

"I must believe I eat it, and don't eat it after all," said the child explanatorily.

"Yes—no—not precisely," replied Mr. Billups, with some confusion of manner, and coughing two or three little short coughs in his hand. "We eat the communion bread and drink the communion wine, and then we believe we partake, by faith, of the body and blood of the Saviour."

"But don't eat His flesh nor drink His blood?" asked Ally.

"Not at all, not at all," replied Mr. Billups, decidedly.

"Then I can't see what the bible means," said Ally, scratching his head in a disappointed manner. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you cannot have life in you."

"My dear, dear child," cried Mr. Billups, quite distractedly, "what can you have been reading to put this into your head?"

"Only the bible, sir," replied Ally, simply, "what you have read just now, and the story of the last supper; and I heard Pompey Simpson say it was all true."

"Pompey Simpson," returned Mr. Billups, "is a negro, and I am sorry," he continued, turning to me, "I should say both grieved and shocked, to add, Doctor, one of those misguided beings, groping in the darkness of Roman idolatry, whose numbers are increasing to an alarming extent in our country. Have nothing to do with Pompey Simpson, my dear," again addressing Ally, "for who knows you might be led away to become a Romanist?" An event which Mr. Billups had intimated at that moment to be too deplorable to be expressed. "Yes, one of those emissaries of giant Pope, described so truthfully in 'Pilgrim's Progress,' as

your remember. Do not go near them, Ally, for my sake, for your mother's sake, for the sake of the church of your baptism, or they will make you like unto them, an idolatrous worshipper of the Host; which, as you have never seen it, I will tell you is only a piece of bread. You see what ignorant, de-luded people the Catholics must be; just to think of it—to worship a piece of bread!"

"But the Catholic is the old Church and the first one, Pompey said," rejoined Ally, "and the old Church ought to know. Besides I—saw it myself." "Saw it yourself!" exclaimed Mr. Billups, his hair fairly standing upright with horror. "My organist dare to enter a popish Mass-house!" and he frowned very severely at the widow.

"It was only Mike Maloney's," said Ally, deprecatingly. "And the priest in his beautiful robes, and the people all kneeling around didn't look mistaken, sir, and I felt so sure that God was there," continued the child trembling, "that I'm all the time thinking about it. Somehow I can't drive it out of my mind."

"Your son, madam," said the minister, turning to Ally's mother, must drive this out of his mind. It would be a fearful calamity to lose a son, madam, whom you have reared, and I may add, in behalf of the vestry of our church, an organist whose salary we have paid, fall into the toils of the man of sin. It would be well to curb the inquiring mind of your son, madam, and restrain his wandering footsteps; because if he is permitted to worship at a foreign altar, he can no longer occupy the position of—in short—perform on the organ of our church. Good morning!" And he rose abruptly and left the house.

All this nettled me. I had hoped he could easily explain the doubts in the boy's mind, not to mention my own, and it exasperated me to see him have recourse to such base means to silence those doubts, instead of using kindly Christian counsel and teaching. To deprive Ally of his situation, and the widow of the support which his salary gave, would be, I knew, to inflict a heavy loss upon them. Unwilling to depart and leave the widow and her son without some comfort, and yet not knowing what to say, I went to the window and looked out, flattening my nose against the glass in a most uncomfortable state of mind, and presenting a spectacle to the passers-by which must have impressed them with the conviction of my being subject to temporary fits of derangement. As I stood there, I heard Ally say to his mother:

"Don't cry, mother: I won't be a Catholic if it isn't true. But it's better to know what's true than to play the organ or get a salary, if it's ever so big, isn't it mother?"

I assented to this sentiment so strongly that I nearly put my nose through the window pane, an action which elicited a strong stare from my supposed impudence from the two Misses Stockup, daughters of the Honorable Washington Stockup, who happened to be passing the house at that moment.

"So it is, my dear," answered the widow. "But I'm afraid you are only fancying something to be true that is not true."

"Doctor!" said Ally, appealing to me, "isn't it true? Oh! it must be true!"

"I can't say I believe it," I replied, "but I'm very much afraid it is."

"Afraid!" exclaimed Ally. "What makes you afraid?"

"Poor Ally! he could little comprehend how much it would cost him or me to say we believed it to be true. Excusing myself with all sorts of bungling remarks, I left the house, my mind torn by many conflicting doubts and emotions. Ally slowly recovered. In the meantime, a new organist, a poor man with a dreadful asthma, as I recollect, had taken his place. Deprived of the aid which his salary had afforded them, the widow and Ally found it hard to live.

The minister, it seems, related to his wife what had taken place at Ally's sick-bed, and it soon got noised about that both Ally and his mother were going to turn Catholics. They soon left the village, and I did not hear of them until several years after. As for myself, it was not long before I took Ally's way across the fields to Mike Maloney's shanty; and now you know how I first came to think of it.

"What became of Ally?"

"Well, I'll tell you. One day I happened to be in the city of Newark. It was the festival of Corpus Christi, and crowds were flocking to St. Patrick's cathedral to assist at the grand ceremonies that were to take place. At the gospel the preacher ascended the pulpit, and what was my surprise to recognize in the person of the youthful priest, my dear boy-organist, Ally Dutton. He took for his text, the words, 'This is My body, this is My blood,' and preached a powerful and eloquent sermon. After the services were concluded, I went to the presbytery to call on him, but he did not recognize me, so I said:

"Allow me, reverend sir, to thank you for your beautiful sermon. This doctrine of the Real Presence which you Catholics hold is a wonderful and very consoling doctrine; and what is more, I am afraid it is true."

"Afraid!" answered Ally smiling. "That reminds me of an old friend who once said the same thing, but he was not long overcoming his fears."

"And the dear old friend is sorry now," added I, looking at him closely, "that it was even so long as it was."

"Doctor!"

"Ally!"

As I knelt to crave the blessing of

our quondam boy-organist, now a priest of the holy Catholic Church, he caught me in his arms and enfolded me in a warm embrace.—Prize story, by Carrie Wilson Malstrom, in Catholic Columbian.

"Oh Bairnies Cuddle Doon." The bairnies cuddle doon at night Wi' muckle faucht an' din; Oh, try an' sleep, ye waukrife rogues, Your father's comin' in; They never heed a word I speak, I try to gie a frown; But aye I hap them up an' say, "Oh bairnies, cuddle doon!"

Wee Jamie, wi' the curly head, He aye sleeps next the wa', Bangs up and cries, "I want a piece!" The rascal starts them a', I rin an' fetch them pieces, drinks, They stop a wee the soon', Then draw the blankets up an' cry, "Noo, weanies, cuddle doon!"

But ere five minutes gang, wee Rab "Gries out fra' neath the class; "Nither, mak' Tam gie o'we at ance, He's killin' wi' his tae. The mischief's in that Tam for tricks, He'd bother half the ton; But aye I hap them up an' say, "Oh bairnies, cuddle doon!"

At length they hear their father's fit, An' as he steels the door, They turn their faces to the wa', While Tam pretends to snore. "Hae a' the weans been gude?" he asks, As he pits aff his shoon, "The bairnies, John, are in their beds, An' lang since cuddled doon."

An' just before we bed ourselves, We look at our we lambs; Tam has his arm round wee Rab's neck, An' Rab his arm round Tam's, I lift wee Jamie up the bed, An' as I straik each croon, I whisper till my heart fills up, "Oh bairnies, cuddle doon!"

The bairnies cuddle doon at night, Wi' mirth that's dear to me; But soon the big war's cark an' care He'll gude them to the sea. Yet come what may to lika ane, May He who rules aboon, Aye whisper, though their paws be bauld, "Oh bairnies, cuddle doon!"

Missions to Protestants. Writing of men who oppose the preaching of missions to Protestants, Father Lentz says:

"What kind of an idea of the Catholic Church can these men have? Do they regard her as a close corporation from which all but those claiming an inherited membership are excluded? Surely, if so, hers is not then the mission that she has always claimed to have received from Christ Himself, the evangelizing and civilizing of the world. We do not read in the gospel, at least explicitly, that Christ ordered the people to go to the apostles, but we do read that he said to the latter, 'Go ye into the whole world; preach the gospel to every creature.' Are the Catholics of this country, then, alone to be excluded? Non-Catholics may not be disobeying God in not coming to the Church to hear her teaching, but we are absolutely failing in our duty and in charity, as well as disobeying God's explicit command, in not carrying to them the saving gift of faith, which alone brings joy, peace and life everlasting."

Sixty millions of souls are at our door. Shall we never cross the threshold to seek their conversion?

The Conquests of Obstacles. When God wants to educate a man, He does not send him to school to the Graces, but to the Necessities. Many a man has never found himself until he has lost his all. Adversity stripped him only to discover him. Obstacles, hardships, are the chisel and mallet which shape the strong life into beauty. The rough ledge on the hillside compels the drill, of the blasting powder which disturbs its peace of centuries; it is not pleasant to be rent with powder, to be hammered and squared by the quarry men; but look again; behold the magnificent statue, the monument, chiseled into grace and beauty, telling its grand story of valor in the public square for centuries. The statue would have slept in the quarries of affliction, the chiseling of obstacles, and the sandpapering of a thousand annoyances.—Orison Swett Marden.

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