

but for strong help from on High seemed to threaten the Pope's life by its crushing weight. Only the other day he said in a private audience, "Pray for me constantly that I may have strength to endure my life—it is on a cross on Calvary." And yet when one was with the Holy Father alone that look of distressed anxiety changed to an expression of fatherly sweetness, whilst the different emotions that chased each other across his fine countenance revealed the beautiful blend of beautiful virtues that went to make up a character the most Christ-like the preacher had yet met with. The Pope, it was said, was no diplomatist. It was true he was no professional diplomatist, but he was a man of infinite resource and tact—a man who knew his own mind, which when made up on any matter of importance was as fearless as it was resolute. The quiet but firm step, the soft but strong hands, the sweet but clear voice, the kind but keen eyes, the easy but dignified manner, all served to portray a man of dauntless resolution. An infidel Italian paper had not missed the mark when it said of the Pope that he was a politician of the first order, a real statesman, who had known marvellously well how to strengthen the clerical party in Venice, how to help as well as to influence the City Councils; there was no resisting the Patriarch. It was said that the Pope wanted to come to terms with the Quirinal, whatever that might mean. They might be sure the Holy Father would come to no terms that might in any way compromise his unique position. He would always assert his absolute independence, so that no terms whatever could be even considered—that did not undertake to restore to him at least territory enough to give him an independence and a sovereignty sufficiently clearly defined to cause him to be regarded and recognised by all the Powers of Europe as the Sovereign Pontiff. Father Vaughan said the Holy Father had proclaimed to the whole world what was his supreme aim and purpose as Christ's Vicar on earth. "We have declared that our object shall be to restore all things in Christ, and since Christ is the Truth, the teaching and proclaiming of the truth must be the first duty to be undertaken by us." And again: "the interests of God shall be our interests, and for these we are resolved to spend all our strength and our very life." The Holy Father's one and only motto was "to renew all things in Christ." That God would deign and give to His Vicar, Pope Pius X, strength to carry out his lofty and holy mission was the prayer that the children of the Catholic Church were asked to offer daily before the Throne of Grace. God had been indulgent to the Church. He had chosen one to be their Father whom to know was to love—a man after His own heart—one full of goodness and kindness and of human sympathy—one who was so entirely absorbed in Christ and in the interests of Christ that he might be said to have no other interests but "to renew all things in Christ", that so Christ might be all and in all. "Preach, preach," were his last words to me, "Christ; to bring souls to know and love Jesus Christ and His beautiful Mother is the mission of the preacher, and what sublimer vocation can there be? Go; when you return take to England the Child and the Mother, and make them better known and better loved throughout the length and breadth of your island home—once called the Isle of Saints—England."—Catholic Times, Jan. 20.

#### THE OLD SINNER

Said Father Henry: "One fine morning in May I took a ramble through the suburbs of the Southern town of X—, accompanied by the zealous young pastor of the church in which I was then preaching a mission. We were walking through what might be called the garden district of the town, with its quaint wooden cottages, whose gateways and pillared verandahs are trellised with tropical vines and its dormer windows framed in with roses, when a strange sight attracted my attention. At the entrance of a grotto which was situated at the end of a long shady avenue of magnolia trees stood a venerable looking old man. He was tall, thin and straight as an arrow. He might be ninety years of age, and his long, flowing beard was as white as the snow of Mount Blanc. The grotto, which was wholly artificial, was set off with all charming rudeness of grave and rugged stones, imitating in miniature the craggy cliffs and deep ridges and yawning chasms of the Pyrenees. 'Who's that old man?' I asked of my companion.

'Oh, that's the old sinner,' he replied with a shrug of the shoulders.

"The old sinner!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; that's what my parishioners call him. He is an eccentric old Frenchman who came here about sixty years ago. He built that grotto himself, and has lived there the life of a hermit ever since he came here. He spends his whole time gardening, and goes nowhere except to the market early in the morning to get his daily provisions.

"Is he a Catholic?"

"Well, he was baptized one; but he has not set his foot in church once since he came here. His religion consists in a kind of pantheistic worship of the beauties of nature. He is especially fond of violets."

"Have you ever tried to get around him?"

"Only once. I did all I could to inspire him with the fear of the Lord. I spoke to him of judgement, of death and of hell, but all to no purpose. Not only would he not listen to me, but he went so far as to insult me in the most shameless manner."

"Why did you not try kindness?"

"Kindness with an old sinner like that? I do not believe in kindness in such cases. Just think—"

"My dear friend, you do not believe in kindness, and old sinners, as a rule, do not believe in severity. Why, it is just because a man is a great sinner that you should be kind and indulgent towards him. And tell me, who was kinder to sinners than our Lord Himself? Believe me, sermons on the mercy of God have converted more people than the most vivid and terrifying discourses on hell. Such, at least, has been my experience during my thirty years of missionary life. To-morrow I must have an interview with the old man."

"Take care what you do. I am sure he will insult you and perhaps do physical harm. He has already threatened to give a sound thrashing to any priest who should dare invade his premises."

"Never mind, we shall see."

"The next day I said Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart, asking Him in return to help me and give me grace to touch the heart of 'the old sinner.' At 4 p.m. I set out on my difficult mission.

"Where are you going?" asked the parish priest, as he met me at the door of the presbytery.

"Fishing," I replied smiling. "I'm tired of catching minnows in your church; I am now going to fish for a whale."

"Ah, going to see the old sinner. Take care the whale does not swallow you up. What kind of bait are you going to use?"

"Kindness."

"Well, I wish you luck."

"Thank you. Pray for success."

"When I reached the old man's place he was in the garden, watering his flowers. I stood at the gate and watched him intently. He had his back turned to me. After three or four minutes he turned round and saw me. He gave a start, as if he had seen a rattlesnake at his feet. His eyes flashed and his lips quivered.

"Whom are you staring at?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"At you," I replied calmly.

"Well, you had better go about your business. I don't want to see priests here you understand."

"Well, if you don't want to see priests, for my part I want and I like to see men like you."

"Am I such a curiosity, then? What do you find in me that should make you stop and stare at me in that way?"

"Your beard, my good man. I have travelled a great deal, and have seen many beautiful beards before, but never have I seen one to compare with yours."

"This compliment seemed to please the old man and disperse the dark cloud of anger that had fallen upon him the very instant he had caught sight of my soutane.

"Well now," he said, as his voice softened and assumed a tone of playfulness, "I know you are poking fun at me."

"Not at all my dear friend. I mean what I say. Please excuse my candor and sincerity."

"Well now, I rather like your frankness," he said, as he came up to the gate and gave me his hand cordially. "Hitherto my idea of priests was always associated with deceit, coldness and severity. The mere sight of a cassock used to stir up my bile. I see I was mistaken. Won't you please step into my garden and have a look at my flowers?"

"Most willingly."

"And we walked into the garden chatting like old friends. This was doing pretty well; much better, in fact, than I had anticipated.

"Do you like my garden?" he asked,

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as we stopped before a large and beautiful bed of violets.

"Like it!" I exclaimed; "and who would not like it?" It is simply lovely. And what beautiful violets you have here!"

"Yes, I think they are beautiful. I give most of my time to them, for I am very fond of violets. Won't you accept a little bouquet of them?"

"Certainly, I will place them before my little statue of the Sacred Heart. I am sure He will appreciate them. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose so," he muttered, with the French characteristic shrug of his shoulders. We walked further on and came to a moss-grown stone table that stood in the middle of the garden.

"Won't you sit down and have a glass of wine with me?" he asked, as he moved an armchair towards me.

"By all means," I answered, "but on one condition."

"What is it?" he asked, with a look of apprehension.

"That you will take this chair, and I that camp-stool. You know that I am a mere strapping by your side. A tout seigneur tout honneur."

"It would be impossible to describe the look of surprise on the old man's face; he seemed simply bewildered, but the surprise was by no means of a disagreeable kind. He muttered some excuses but I insisted.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed "What a big fool I have been all these years. Pray excuse me until I get that bottle of Bordeaux." And he left me muttering to himself all the while, "What a big fool I have been! Que j'ai ete bete!"

"Shortly after his departure he returned, carrying in his arms a tray on which were two tumblers, a bottle of Bordeaux and a plate of cakes. We sat down, and there, among the leaves, gently stirred by a soft whispering breeze, and the warm air laden with the sweet perfume of roses and violets, and over our heads the bright blue sky of the sunny south, we chattered together and sipped our wine. We spoke of flowers, then of French politics, and finally the conversation drifted into religious matters. The old man rehearsed the principal events of his life. He told me how, at the age of thirteen, he had enlisted as a drummer-boy in the army of the great man, 'le grand homme,' as he called Napoleon Bonaparte. He related to me how he had fallen in with some, wicked, impious and dissolute soldiers, and how he had, one day, been induced to take a most solemn oath never to enter a church. "I am now eighty-four years of age," he said at the end of his story, "and I have kept my promise. Seventy years without prayers and without sacraments!" However I showed no surprise at his narrative. In my turn I related to him some of my missionary experiences. I dwelt at length on the mercy and the goodness of God.

"Tell me frankly," he said at last, moving his chair towards me and placing a trembling hand on my knee, "do you believe that all sins can be forgiven?"

"Yes, all," I replied, "with the exception of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which you certainly have not committed. The mercy of God is infinite. Ever ready and eager to enter, it stands at the door of the sinners' heart."

"But what about His anger?" he asked.

"God's anger is terrible," I replied and nothing can resist it save His mercy. God's arms are always open to receive the repentant sinner, and His bountiful hands are ever ready to shower upon

Continued on page 7.

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### "Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened, but one of the merry little companions of the woeful little maid who has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures, suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities of childhood. It is called

### "Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been playing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

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