

God and duty. It was to him what going forward to the penitent bench has been to many Methodists, what immersion has been to many Baptists, what taking the tambourine and marching in the street has been to many a Salvation Army lass ;—it was the act in which he laid down his last lingering prejudice, satisfied absolutely the claim of his own conscience and entered into peace with God. Beyond that, other experiences awaited him through which he passed into a sublime faith in the crucified Christ as “the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him.” Out of his faith joy sprang, and the worldly gaiety of his early days was transformed into an abiding “joy in the Holy Ghost,” in which was strikingly fulfilled that lofty promise of the Saviour, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Just below Assisi there was a little church, known as St. Damian’s, which was falling into ruinous decay. While praying here Francis had a vision of the Saviour in his Passion, so vivid and absorbing that it moved his whole being, sent him weeping and crying out along the public highway, and so impressed his heart that he could never after think of the Passion without an inclination to burst into sobs and tears.

This ruined church he felt himself called to put in repair. In pursuit of his purpose he selected a quantity of rich stuffs from his father’s warehouse, loaded them on a horse, rode to a fair in a distant city and there disposed of both goods and horse. Returning to St. Damian’s he offered the money received from the sale to the priest of the church, and begged permission to stay with him and rebuild the edifice. More careful than the convert, the priest refused to accept the gift until it should be ap-

proved by the young man’s father. Francis on his side declined to carry the purse any further and between them it was thrown on the dusty window ledge. There for the time it was allowed to stay, while Francis domiciled himself with the poor and humble priest.

To give up his promising son to the Church, and especially in the capacity of a menial, was a surrender Pietro Bernardone would not voluntarily make. Pica, the little mother, Francis soon won to his own views, but the father was obdurate. When persuasion failed he tried force upon his son and kept him for weeks bound and imprisoned. Released by his mother, Francis only returned to the little church where his duty seemed to lie.

The contest ended in a scene which has kindled the imagination and fired the devotion of thousands. Francis was arraigned before the bishop. His father pressed for judgment. The decision was given that being of mature age Francis was entitled to choose his own manner of life, but the property he possessed should be restored to his father. The young convert’s resolution was taken instantly. The fat purse from the window ledge of St. Damian’s had been given up already. He now retired for a moment, to return again naked, carrying his clothes and purse in his hands. Laying everything at his father’s feet, in the presence of the court, he cried,

“Hear me and understand, up to this date I have called Pietro Bernardone father, henceforth I will say in all truth, ‘Our Father who art in heaven,’ in whom I have put my hopes and my treasure.”

“There was,” says his biographer, “a moment of astonished silence. The bystanders were moved to tears. The bishop drew the naked young man to his breast