

THE CHRISTIAN'S CHOICE.

Father McCallen's Sermon at the Summer School.

"You shall be converted, and shall see the difference between the just and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not."—(MALACHI III., 18.)

Dear Beloved Brethren.—Since we have been created by God, to know, love, and serve Him here on earth, in order to be happy with Him forever in heaven, it is all important for us to choose rather to take upon ourselves the sweet yoke and light burden of Jesus Christ, than to submit to the galling slavery of Satan here, and its inevitable consequence, eternal misery hereafter. There should be no hesitancy about the choice. For whether we accept the teachings of experience and observation, or those of Faith, we must come to the conclusion, that "one day in the courts of the Lord is above thousands;" and that it is better "to be an object in the house of God than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." (Ps. 83, 11.) Yet comparatively few serve God faithfully, so many seem to prefer the service of the devil.

If we seek the reason, we may find it in the exaggerated view which most people take of the difficulties to be met with in the practice of virtue. Like the messengers sent out by Moses to reconnoitre the land of the Amorrite, and who returned dismayed, saying: "The multitude is great and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to the sky" (Deuteronomy I., 28) so, too many Christians of our day, after having tasted the sweets of a virtuous life, turn back disheartened, because some slight effort must still be made to preserve the precious fruits already acquired. But, just as Moses restored the courage of his people by exclaiming: "Fear not, for the Lord God who is your leader will fight for you" (Deuteronomy I., 30), so may we restore our courage by listening to a greater than Moses, as, with arms outstretched, He says to us: "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you . . . and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (Matthew XI., 28, 29, 30)—or by listening to St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him, who strengtheneth me" (Philippian IV., 13).

It is true, the devil likewise seeks to gain our allegiance by promises of reward; but if we profit by the lessons of experience, or observation, and by the teachings of faith, we cannot refuse to choose "the better part," which I trust will never be taken from us.

That Christian makes a great mistake who believes, or asserts, that the service of God costs more than the service of the devil. Had we no other guide to direct us in our choice than that innate cleverness which makes the people of this country so shrewd in striking a bargain, it would suffice, without considerations of a higher order, to incline us to the service of God, because this service is in every respect the best.

How easily the sinner is beguiled into the opposite service by false promises which are never fulfilled! How willingly he closes his eyes to the price, might I not rather say penalty, of sin! Yes, a price must be paid for the enjoyment of every sinful pleasure. What price? Ask the drunkard the day after his drunken debauch what he has had to pay for the passing gratification of his palate; and if he cannot answer, you may answer for him,—soul ruined, will weakened, vicious habit encouraged, intellect destroyed, talents squandered, time wasted, purse emptied, health shattered, name tainted, reputation lost. These are the price, of what? Of the momentary gratification of a base animal appetite. As Americans, we ought to be ashamed to be caught by one such bad bargain; but, alas! there are thousands of bright, intellectual and otherwise clever men who make such bargains every week of their lives!

Ask the libertine what it costs him to enjoy the husks of his illicit pleasures. He will tell you,—gnawing remorse, loss of grace, of peace, of true happiness—a diseased soul and a diseased, corrupted body. One proof among many. I once was called to see a sick patient in an hospital. Near by lay a man, who bore from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet the evident marks of the criminal life he had led. I do not exaggerate when I say, that from head to foot he was one mass of corruption. I do not ex-

aggerate when I say, that had I to anoint the man, I would not have been able to find one untainted spot to which to apply the sacred oil. Day and night, for five months, he lay there; and at the end of that time, in spite of the constant care of physician and nurse, his putrid body gave out a stench which would have polluted the air of the whole hospital had not the cloths that hung around his bed been saturated with the strongest disinfectant. Men may not always pay as terrible a penalty for sin as that man did, but the loss of innocence is always dear at any price.

So I might go on, if time permitted, over the whole list, experience always proving to the poor sinner how much he has to pay for the little he gets out of the service of the world, the flesh and the devil. The dishonest clerk whose slight pilferings grow day by day, begetting sin in his soul, worry and anxiety in his mind, finally lodging him in a felon's cell; the proud vain woman subjecting herself to a thousand inconveniences to secure a little mite of praise, admiration or honor, left inconsolable, because perhaps there is one who refuses to pay tribute to her pride and vanity, or one other who is more popular than herself; the irate husband or wife whose every victory of self opinion or self will, means loss of peace, concord and mutual love; the disobedient untruthful child paying bitterly through life for his disobedience and his lies; the jealous neighbor neither possessing nor yet taking away what she envies in others, punished more than she punishes—one and all prove, that the vain passing pleasures of sin must be bought at a price—a price which yields no sufficient return for such unprofitable investments.

Now turn for a moment to contemplate the other side of the picture; for the rewards of a virtuous life cannot be purchased unless a price is paid therefor.

A sober man, especially a total abstainer, who, for his own security, love of neighbor, and desire of honoring Christ's Sacred Thirst, abstains from all intoxicating drink, must place upon himself certain restraints; must forego certain companies; put up with the raileries of well meaning but unworthy friends; and if he has been previously a victim of drink, must engage in passing conflict with returning craving for liquor. But in a short time these efforts will cost him nothing. These sacrifices will scarcely attract his attention. Meanwhile what does he receive in return? Let us take an illustration from among many. One evening, about a year ago, a young man waited on me, and said he wished to renew his pledge. "Eleven months ago," he continued, "I came to you shattered in health, out of pocket, burdened with sin, an object of such disgust to my friends, that I have seen them turn out of my way to avoid meeting me. I have kept my pledge now for about eleven months. I want to renew it, for it is a good thing. Look at me, father, I am no longer the same man. I am in the best of health, my purse is well filled, I commit less sin, I enjoy the esteem of devoted friends. I'll try the pledge for another year." Now, this last sentence was the only one that saddened me during the entire conversation, and I have heard it so often. "I'll try it for another year." Why not for life? O, victims of drink, how is it possible for you, after tasting the bitter fruits of intemperance, and the wholesome fruit of sobriety; after the punishment that always follows excessive indulgence, and the peace, prosperity and happiness which are the reward of sobriety; how is it possible for you to waver for one moment in making these rewards perpetual by a life pledge of total abstinence?

No matter what virtue we practise, no matter at what pain and sacrifice it is purchased, the reward is always greater than the price. Tell me, has anyone ever overcome sloth on Sunday morning, and assisted at Holy Mass, who has regretted the effort made to fulfil this precept of God's church? Has anyone ever told the truth, obeyed legitimate authority, bestowed an alms, forgiven an injury, kept back an angry retort, practised kindness and charity; and, as he laid his head on his pillow at night to rest, not felt the holier, the nobler, the happier for the good thus accomplished? Has anyone ever come out of those terrible conflicts with the demon of lust, and co-operating with divine grace, put the enemy of his innocence to flight, who has not enjoyed in consequence the most profound peace and happiness?

And yet, in spite of these lessons

taught by experience or observation, Christians hesitate about the choice between the service of God and the service of His enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil. How ashamed ought we not to be of the slight efforts we make to persevere in a life of virtue! See what will power the children of this world bring to the acquisition of wealth, honor and pleasure. What labor, what toil, what sacrifice, are willingly undergone to secure that which must be purchased at so great a price; that which can be enjoyed for so short a period; that which is far more easily lost than gained! With the aid of Divine grace, we need make no such effort to secure the rewards of a virtuous life—peace of soul, friendship of God, increased merits, happiness here, and never ending happiness hereafter.

Why are we, the children of light, so weak of will, so little generous in faithful allegiance to our good God, that we so soon grow weary of even this slight effort; so soon dismayed by the obstacles in our path; so soon tired of the restraints of the sweet yoke of Christ; and so soon exhausted by His light burden, as to desert His standard and return to the old time slavery of a sinful life?

Why should we, I repeat, the children of light, with the super-abundance of God's grace ever at our disposal, prove less strong of will or less generous in God's service than the children of the world in the service of the demon? We serve a Master who never deceives nor makes a promise which He does not fulfill. They serve a tyrant who promises liberty and makes them slaves; promises light and joy and leads them to darkness and misery; promises satiety and leaves their souls so empty of all true happiness and such a prey to gnawing remorse, that they cry out, "peace, peace"—but "there is no peace for the wicked." Augustin tried both services, the service of the demon and the service of God. He rebelled against truth; he sought satiety in the gratification of the basest passions, but only to find out that the human heart created for God can never be satisfied with anything less than God. "Thou hast made our hearts for Thee, O Lord, and till they rest and repose in Thee they shall never know peace." And Solomon, who possessed every joy, every pleasure, every honor the world could give, made the same experiment: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes I., 2.)

I have said that God does not deceive His servants by concealing from them that though His yoke is sweet, it is still a yoke; and though His burden is light it still remains a burden. "Son, when thou comest into the service of God prepare thy soul for temptation. Join thyself to God and endure that thy life may be increased in the latter end." (Ecclesiasticus II., 1, 3) Such was ever the teaching of the Divine Master when He walked on earth. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." (Matthew XI., 12) "If any man will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew XVI., 24) "How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life!" (Matthew VII., 14)

But if He does not conceal from us the price of our service, neither does He conceal its rewards. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake; rejoice and be exceedingly glad because your reward is very great in heaven." "Well done good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew xxv., 23.) How consoling these teachings of Faith! It is Eternal Truth who speaks! The mother may forget her child, but He will not forget those who trust in Him! He is the great King of Heaven and earth, powerful enough, to put to flight every enemy of our soul; rich enough, to satisfy every longing of our heart; devoted enough, to stand by us in every conflict, pour out upon us his abundant effusions, and lead us each and every day to a victory, and to the rewards of . . . —peace, joy, happiness

here below; peace, joy, happiness eternal in heaven. Why then not make our choice, and make it well? Satan is our enemy, and his associates, the world and the flesh, are leagued with him for our destruction. God is our best friend—good, amiable, perfect, and therefore worthy of our love for his own sake; exceedingly good, merciful and forgiving to us, and therefore worthy of our grateful service forever. "You shall be converted and shall see the difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Make the choice, brethren, and persevere in it to the end. Having thus chosen "the better part," it shall not be taken from you.

IRISH TOPICS

The scrutiny for the Swinford and Brackloon Divisions of Swinford Union was held on July 9, resulting as follows: Meelick—Staunton, 164; Davitt, 60. Swinford—James Durkan, 48; Price, 16; John W. Mulligan, 1.

At Monaghan, on July 4, an evicted tenant named James Quinn summoned Robert Gillespie, who has taken his farm, for presenting a revolver at him. The case was dismissed, and counter charges against Quinn were adjourned.

James H. Hegarty, of Derry City, son of the late James Hegarty, of Diamond, was successful at the recent Pharmaceutical License Examination of Ireland. Mr. Hegarty, who served his apprenticeship with P. J. Lyons, of Belfast, is now a qualified chemist.

The municipal election for councillor for the South Ward, of Cork, made vacant by the death of J. Fitzgibbon, Redmondite, took place on July 12. The candidates were, T. Coughlan, Nationalist; D. J. Lucy, Redmondite; and L. Scully, Unionist. The result of the poll was as follows:—Lucy, 104; Coughlan, 82; Scully, 48.

It is rumored that a Catholic Institute for soldiers is about to be established at the Curragh Camp. The piece of ground has, we understand, been granted by the War Office, and a committee of representatives from the various corps, etc., formed to carry out the suggestions. An appeal for funds will shortly be issued, and Major-General Lord R. D. Kerr, C.B., will contribute £50.

Justice Johnson opened the Commission for Tyrone at Omagh, on July 10. Addressing the grand jury, he said: "The Crown business is exceedingly light. There are only five cases, of which one was adjourned from last assizes, and in which a bill has already been found. The other four are of the ordinary character—larceny, wounded, etc."

The Rev. Aidan Kennedy, of Leighlin Bridge, is dead. He was engaged assisting at the Mission opened by the Passionist Fathers, but when returning from the conference in Borris, he contracted a chill, which developed into pneumonia, and notwithstanding all that medical skill could do to arrest the progress of the malady, he passed peacefully away.

A meeting of the Bornacoola Branch of the Federation was held on July 1, M. Canning, President, in the chair. An acknowledgment for £5 to the Central Branch was read. The chairman and members of the committee instructed the secretary to apply to the Central office for a grant for Mrs. Rogers and her four children of this parish, evicted. The next meeting was announced for July 29.

Addressing the grand jury at the Sligo Assizes, on July 7, Justice O'Brien said one single case expressed the quota of criminal business which they had to deal with, and it bore testimony to the state of uniform tranquillity that existed within the county. He had great reason to congratulate them on the state of public tranquillity and the absence of crime, which was attended by an extraordinary indication of prosperity.

P. J. McDonald, on behalf of the National Federation, has visited a large number of parishes in North and South Meath. Mr. McDonald was most warmly received by both priest and people. In Trim he was accorded an enthusiastic reception. At Navan, under the presidency of the respected Administrator, the Very Rev. P. McNamee, a goodly sum was subscribed for the Irish Parliamentary Fund. At Crossakel a new branch of the National Federation was formed.