

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## NOT EVER THUS.

(From Sunday School Times.)

The pregnant words, "I was not ever thus," may mean no more than a man's natural reflection that he is growing older. But they are also the simplest language of conversion. It is not the mark of a great conversion that it makes one garrulous about it. Part of its beauty and power is the way it relieves one of the necessity of talking about himself as much as before. The new accent with which a new soul speaks of everything else tells the story.

We probably know all too little of the intensity with which men long for the power to say just this: "I was not ever thus." And though we live in an age of apparently low expectancy in the matter of spiritual change, it is yet safer to believe that all around us men are longing for their birthright of becoming different. Below the surface of conventional life lies a tremendous covetousness of the best gifts. What seems like utter acquiescence in worldliness is often a calm and hidden despair of finding what the inmost soul never ceases to desire. Scoff as men may, nothing is more poignantly real to them than the fact that some one whom they know has shaken off the entail of hopeless spiritual monotony and gone over to live in the other side of his being. Years ago we looked for this transition as something that would surely come. But we seem instead to have struck a law of settledness as if the unseen powers resented change to such an extent that only here and there could some heroic soul wrest the blessing from their hands. Like Moab, men settle upon their lees, their taste remaineth in them, and their scent is not changed. They are not poured from vessel to vessel, leaving something of the muddy lees behind, and flashing clearer and more perfect at every change of life's movement. The saddest confession one can make is that he was ever thus; that, though his life began with clear and eager and holy hopes of divinely promised changes, it finds the sins of years ago still rampant and powerful.

But still with splendid and justifying confirmation of the best we have ever hoped there are lives enough that are still able to sing with meaning the words, "I was not ever thus." Perhaps our trouble is something like that of Elijah in the wilderness, when he had fallen out of companionship with the seven thousand others who believed just as he did. We need to keep a steady and deliberate communion with those who have found transformation, and also to take our longing for it back into the region where it was born. The prevailing interest of the Scriptures is in what God may do in man rather than in what man may do for himself, and back there we dwell in an atmosphere where spiritual wonders are to be expected. Plans for ourselves, devotion to the art of living and the ethics of life, never can raise such warming hopes as those that come around us instinctively and acclimate themselves in the soul when we stand again in that current of God's spirit which streams through the Scriptures.

Happily the great convert has ever felt that he has obtained something which others would demand if they only knew what it meant to him. The joy of it all is not in any marvellousness of its manner, nor in one's having a story to tell to the world, but in the difference it makes to him who receives it. To Newman it came as a sense of mission in

the world he had never felt before. "I have a work to do in England," was the way he kept putting it to himself. With all the pain and dread of what that mission would bring upon him, there was that deep satisfaction of knowing that his life had been seized and directed to a certain end. Each of us has a work to do in home or factory or office or neighborhood or self, and the moment we are convinced of it is a moment of satisfaction and rest. We can endure turmoil if we know that God has a purpose in sending us into it.

If in Newman's change there was not wanting any element of charm or romance, let not that mislead us. It will be enough for many if they find that after a life of impatience they are now strangely able to wait; for others, that some values in their life have suddenly fallen so that they have seen other values rise to their long lost place. Splendid indifferences which make one ask: "what has come over me?" take their place in life as heralds of still finer enthusiasms for which these indifferences have made room. What would once have seemed an utter breakdown in our ambitions now seems like the first real touch of success.

But the greatest change that can ever happen is that by which a man passes from egotism to love. It is not hate which is love's opposite, but the slow and consuming egotism which all so quietly leaves a life without a neighbor and without a God, without reason for being, and finally without any understanding of what has occurred. John took it for his province to unmake the egotist with the gospel of Christ. The touch of surprise lies like a dawn over the New Testament. "I was not ever thus" is what John is always saying as he thinks that he of all men should ever have come to love the brethren. And we wonder now and then at our own coarseness which has turned Paul into the hardest of dogmatists and forgotten the childlike surprise that never left him.

Life is gloriously at the mercy of such things, though we can never tell when they will come. The thing for us to do is to let the tune get running in the mind and all along the heart. For once that it comes as on the Damascus road, it comes a thousand times through some "chance" word of a friend or even through a silence where we should have expected speech. Some "accident" sets us in a different angle toward life. A word out of the Bible, heard a thousand times before, suddenly glows with significance and makes its appeal; or quite as often some word whose meaning we do not grasp will follow us and recur to us, we cannot see why, until at length we turn to lay hold on what has so unmistakably laid hold on us, and so we close in with a new experience. We are not as safe against such things as we think.

"Just when we're safest, there's a sunset touch.

A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death.

A chorus-ending from Euripides—  
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears

As old and new at once as Nature's self

To rap and knock and enter in our soul."

Those to whom the great transition has come are united in saying that no effort of theirs ever fully accounted for its coming. But to do nothing about it only sets us in a more hopeless attitude toward it. Struggle always serves to convince us of the royal way it takes

when it comes. The wind bloweth where it listeth. We live over toward the encouraging side of this truth when we have learned how surely and steadfastly the spirit listeth toward every man who longs for his power. Effort toward anything begets affinity, and best of all, "affinity has a trick of turning into identity." Some day the touch of change is there, and the one who holds on and really finds it looks back upon all his efforts as little enough in comparison with what he has found. And we never feel so natural as when we have been changed.

## EASTER AWAKENING.

The apostles had no hint of Easter on Good Friday, as they gathered at the rock-hewn tomb to lay away the body of their Lord. It looked, indeed, as if His work was done,—His career closed. They might carry away the memory of His words, striving to keep them ever fresh in their affection; but He Himself was gone; gone out of their lives, gone to the death, gone into the grave, for all that sight and sense could say unto them. But, happy fact, He rose from the dead! And the church has kept Easter ever since. It keeps it in recognition of the Living Christ, of the Christ who can say, "I am the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

The rising again of Christ from the dead is one of the most certain facts of human history. This certainty rests not so much upon the contemporary accounts of the resurrection, though these do practically demonstrate to us the truth of the great event, but better still, it is authenticated to us by the life of the Church, through all the ages of her history. The spiritual springtime is as real as the natural. The constant quickening of emotion in Christ's disciples, the unceasing renewal of Christian affections, the freshening up of Christian relationships, the growth of the Kingdom, these form a ceaseless evidence for the living Christ—that "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

The rising again from the dead is one of the most happy facts in human history. It is the supremely happy fact to each believing soul. The living Christ is the source of the soul's life. It is also the supremely happy fact to the whole Church. The living Christ is the source of the Church's life. Have you grown disheartened and discouraged because of the coldness, the "deadness" as you call it, of the Church? Then God speaks to you by the great parable of the Eastertide and calls upon you to believe that life is mightier than death and that the Living One will never cease to work His miracles of renewal.

There is a legend that when Jesus arose from His grave and walked out of Joseph's garden, white lilies blossomed in His footsteps, so that wherever He went bloom and beauty sprang up. The legend faintly illustrates what was true of Him all His life long. Wherever He went blessings followed—the sick were healed, the discouraged were cheered, the sorrowing were comforted. And since He has gone from our sight He is no less in the world, for the Easter awakening is everywhere, the new life springs up wherever the Easter message is heard, and new hope is born in all hearts.—Selected.

Ten out of fourteen counties in Michigan have gone 'dry.'