

have to do tomorrow? Would you mind telling me?"

He rubbed his hand over his ear with a gesture he had when he was troubled, and before he could answer Alice spoke again, entreatingly this time: "Do come, John, please! Take a day off for once—I've never asked you before, and—and—you don't know what it means to me!"

John looked a little surprised at the repressed earnestness in her tone. "Why, my dear, of course, I'll go with you! You have been the most patient little wife in the world with an engrossed man," he hastened to tell her, "and you deserve a concession if any one does. But I'm afraid," beginning to smile ruefully, "it will only be half a concession at that. What time do you want to go?"

"I want to call for you at the office at ten o'clock. Can't you be ready by then?"

John Lennon did some rapid thinking. "Yes, I believe I can manage that," he replied slowly, but Alice could not help but note that he was very quiet the rest of the evening. Still, she was happy. At least, this is a first Thursday that he would spend with her!

When she awoke in the morning there was no sign of her husband, and going down stairs she was informed by the maid that he had eaten a hasty breakfast long ago and was gone. Had he taken the car?

"Yes, but he said to tell you it would be back right away in case you need it," Annie told her.

Alice's heart sunk like lead, and the old misery of suspicion that she had been repressing for the past month took such a sharp and sudden hold of her that to her own horror she burst into a passion of tears.

"Why, Mrs. Lennon, dear," cried Annie in consternation, "isn't it well you are this morning?"

"Alice tried to check her tears. 'Oh, yes, Annie, I'm perfectly well,' she managed between sobs. 'At least, I don't know what makes me cry like this—!'

"Well, well, well," Annie murmured soothingly. "Wait till I give you a cup of coffee—there, now! Because, she went on inconsequently as her mistress took the cup obediently, 'if believe you're a wee bit disappointed because himself went away so airy, wasn't it all to give you a nice day that he got up and hurried off like that? He says to me: 'Annie, he says, 'hurry up and give me a bite, he says, 'because I have to go off sky-larking today with the missus and I have a power of work to do before I go,' he says, smiling at me like he always does, ma'am."

Alice choked on the coffee. "Of course, I know he has a lot to do, Annie," catching at the skirts of her dignity. But maybe I was a little disappointed," she added humbly.

"Of course, ma'am. Why would not you be and you expect to find him here t'asin' you like he always does? Ah, it's himself is the fine man, Mrs. Lennon. There is not many like him in this town, nor any other town from what I hear tell. A grand man entirely, that thinks the sun rises and sets in yourself, so he does."

Mrs. Lennon gave a tremendous laugh. It was an amusing situation, wasn't it, when your maid had to reassure you of your husband's devotion? Still, her words were strangely comforting.

"Annie, you make me ashamed," she said frankly. "It was silly of me to cry. Sometime," smiling up mischievously at the faithful girl. "I'm going to tell Mr. Lennon what a loyal friend you are."

"Oh, ma'am," protested Annie, embarrassed, "sure I meant no harm!"

"You did me a lot of good," her mistress assured her sincerely; and later as she went up stairs to make her bed she was thinking of Annie with a feeling of warm gratitude. "It's curious," she mused, "how a few words at the right moment show up one's foolishness. I'm going to put that absurd stuff out of my mind altogether."

She stooped to pick up a folded paper from the floor, and in a moment saw that it was a note to her husband.

"Dear Mr. Lennon," she read, "Your mother would have me write to you to tell you that if you are too busy to come this Thursday that Friday will do just as well. She's been worrying lately for fear your promise always to spend part of the first Thursday of the month with her too much of a tax on your time, and she said I must tell you just to come whenever you can spare a little while. But if you knew how she looks forward to the day, Mr. Lennon, and I think I ought to tell you, too, that she has not been so well the last week."

Alice stared at the crumpled characters unbelievably. His mother? John's mother? That's what the letter said—and yet, she understood—hadn't he told her—that he was alone in the world. Why, what on earth did it all mean? Well, anyway, that was evidently where he went on the first Thursday. She ought to be glad, and relieved, to know that. But, strangely enough, what she was experiencing at that moment was neither relief nor gladness, only a hurt bewilderment and a curious poignant pain. Gradually, however, as she pondered the matter, reading over the letter again and again, a hint of the truth dawned upon her. He had often told her of his

humble home in the mountains, of the rude and primitive customs and, yes, she remembered, of how hard his mother had to work. She had always admired the tenderness with which he spoke of his mother. And yet—why had he hidden her here now, away from his friends, and from his wife? Was it because he was ashamed of her? Oh, no, that! Never that! He couldn't be so ignoble? Why, then, unless he thought that she, his wife, would be ashamed of the mother whose sacrifices had helped to make him what he was! Could he think that of her, knowing her as he did? Did she show up so poor and mean in his sight? Oh, it was unspeakable that men could be so blind, so foolish, so mistaken! She'd show him, though, she'd show him that she wasn't so little as he thought her. But—suddenly the question flared before her—how?

All the while she was dressing and all the way down town the same question haunted her, and out of the maze of her troubled reflections evolved the one determination—not to force her husband's confidence. He had chosen not to tell her—now, but some day, she told herself, he would justify his own character, and her belief in him, by taking her to see his mother. Why she believed this she could not have explained, but the belief brought with it a blessed peace and happiness that she had been missing these many days.

And after all, she did not have to wait long. Just before the anniversary of their marriage he asked casually: "What are your plans to celebrate this great day, my dear?"

Well, nothing definite. Have you any suggestions? Something in the way he spoke made Alice's heart beat with an odd premonition.

John Lennon was looking down absently and his answer came slowly. "Yes," he said at last, "I want to take you to see some one very dear to me—some one—"

He stopped, dazzled at the look of pure and perfect joy that flashed into his wife's face. Oh, I know, John! she cried radiantly, "you're going to take me to see your mother?" And she flung herself into his arms.

"It wasn't because I was ashamed of my mother," he explained later with his direct simplicity. "But I couldn't bear to subject her to the supercilious regard of your friends. For she's only a little, plain old woman, dear, ignorant of most of the things that you consider so important, wedded to her humble, homely ways. But," his voice deepened to infinite tenderness, "no mother in all the world, no matter how learned or cultivated, could match her in devotion or love or tenderness. And then," he raised his wife's chin and smiled appealingly into her wet eyes, "how shall I tell you that I doubted my Alice, just a little—"

"Oh, John, how could you?" reproachfully. "Because I was a poor sort of a coward, I think, and I hadn't yet gauged the depths of my wife's nature. I—thought that I could not bear it—if you should look askance at my mother and her humble ways—"

Alice smiled up at him forgivingly. "I understand," she told him softly. "Just as I couldn't bear it, if you hadn't told me of your own accord. But you might have known that I would love her because she is your mother, John."

She never told her husband of the anonymous telephone message, for in her heart she knew, and the knowledge was salutary, that had it not been for it and for the doubts and misery it engendered, she might not have been quite so ready to accept and love the plain little woman who came to be known as John Lennon's mother.

THE CHURCH AND WOMAN

The Catholic Church always has exalted woman. In its devotion to Mary Immaculate, the Church raised the Mother of Christ to the greatest height of glorification upon which any human being ever has been placed. And through Christian devotion to Mary, womanhood itself was dignified and ennobled throughout the world. The chattering of paganism became the pedestaled model of goodness in the new order.

In writing to the National Catholic Welfare Council News Service, after women in the United States had received the right to vote, on the historical attitude of the Church towards woman, Archbishop Cerretti, now the Papal Nuncio to France, said:

"The interest of the Catholic Church for woman has been manifested since the beginning of history. The Church esteemed woman so much that it called her to participate in its liturgical life, first in her severe and dignified office of the deaconess and then in the monastic orders in which the highest ideals of social and religious life were manifested and realized. When Christianity obtained freedom after Constantine, a legion of venerable women surrounded the Fathers of the Church."

"Let us remember Paul and the noble widows and virgins that followed him and those who aided St. Jerome in his Bethlehem labors,

which constitute one of the great glories of the Church."

In the middle ages not only did St. Benedict and his sons preserve in their cloisters the relics and culture of the ancient civilization throughout the period of the barbaric invasions, but also the spiritual daughters of his sister, St. Scholastica, vitally aided his great enterprise, and especially aided the development of mystic theology."

Moreover, the Supreme Pontiff himself, at many critical moments, gladly consented to listen to woman's voice in the person of saints and holy virgins who, divinely inspired, dared give him counsels that influenced the supreme direction of the Church. A great instance of this was seen when Gregory XI., obeying St. Catherine of Siena, carried back to Rome from Avignon the seat of the Roman Pontificate."

Archbishop Cerretti said further that, no less in the present day than in former times, the authorities of the Church appreciated how much woman can do for civilization and religion.

Pope Benedict XV., thoroughly familiar with the great aid given by St. Scholastica to St. Benedict, his namesake, in the preservation of the relics and culture of the ancient civilization during the period when these were endangered by the barbaric invasion of the centers of learning in Europe, was keenly alive to the importance of woman in our present civilization. With firm faith in the ability and the good disposition of women to meet the new and great responsibilities with which they were confronted through the granting of suffrage in many countries, His Holiness was at the same time deeply concerned about the danger to women which he saw in certain phases of the Feminist movement. He wished to safeguard woman against these dangers. One of his latest allocutions contained a recommendation to the members of the Apostleship of Prayer that they be mindful during the month of December of the intention of the League, which he himself had blessed, namely, The Activity of Women in Public Life."

Since it is woman's civic activities which are most emphasized by the new prophets of woman's place and function in the world, Pope Benedict laid particular stress on the fact that united prayers and good works of the associates in the Apostleship of Prayer should be offered in aid of the development of Catholic woman of right understanding of the true role of woman in civil society. This right understanding was defined by His Holiness in his allocution to the Italian Catholic Feminine Union in which he said:

"The changed conditions of the times have made it possible to attribute to woman, functions and rights which the preceding age did not concede her. But no change in human opinion, and no novelty of things or events can ever withdraw the woman, conscious of her mission from her natural center, which is the family. At the domestic fireside she is queen, and yet, even when she finds herself far from the domestic hearth, she must direct neither, not only the affection of a mother, but also the solicitude of a wise ruler, in the same way that a sovereign, who finds himself outside the territory of his own Realm does not neglect its interest, but keeps it always uppermost in his thoughts, the object of his greatest care. With reason, therefore, can it be said that the changed conditions of the times have broadened the field of woman's activity. An apostolate in the midst of the world has succeeded to that more intimate and restricted action which formerly woman exercised within the domestic walls; but the apostolate must be carried on in a way to show that woman, outside as well as inside the home, does not forget that she is in duty bound even today to dedicate her chief care to her family."

Pope Benedict's statement that woman's chief care, even today, should be the family gave the impression to some that the Pope did not view with favor women entering into the political arena. This view was shown to be wholly unjustified through a letter which the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, wrote to the Marquessa Unzueta Val, President of the Spanish Women's League, shortly after the allocution had appeared. In this letter Cardinal Gasparri said:

"There are some who concluded from a recent Encyclical of the Pope that the activity of Christian women's organizations should be exclusively directed into religious channels. I am authorized to state that this was not the intention of the Holy Father."

"His Holiness referred to the duty of preserving the sanctity of the Christian home, and to the practical exercise of religion in view of the endeavors of enemies to destroy the faith of the people and to corrupt their morals. But since these very enemies attempt to realize their aims under cover of industrial, cultural, and educational organizations, it behooves every one who desires the welfare of the people to enter the political arena and to unfurl the flag of Christ in order that the light of His divine teaching and the flame of charity may extend not only amongst the few but throughout the world. Therefore, the Holy Father desires not only that the Women's League should continue its social activities, but should do its utmost, under the

guidance of the Hierarchy and use every means to imbue all women with the spirit of true Christianity and with the clear understanding of social problems."

In commenting upon this letter America said:

"This letter should dispel the last lingering doubt that may still have remained in some minds. Modern conditions have made it the imperative duty of Catholic women, no less than of Catholic men, to unfurl the flag of Christ in the political arena. It is here that great battles for good or evil are to be fought in the future and woman must take her conscientious part, without the least sacrificing of her obligations as wife and mother."

It is most desirable not only for the benefit of the country but for the good repute of the Church in America as a progressive institution that Catholic women should meet their new suffrage responsibility intelligently and should show themselves as well, if not better, fitted than any others of their sex to aid in the solution of the many great social problems which now confront the citizenship of the United States. To be so fitted they must be fully informed about these problems; they must understand them. The information for such understanding can best be secured through their association with the National Council of Catholic Women.—N. C. W. C.

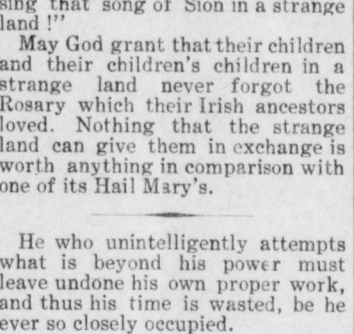
THE "HAIL MARY"

The following beautiful words occur in a book by the late Canon Sheehan, which is perhaps not so widely known as some of his other works. It is a collection of his early essays and addresses. The words form the Rosary of the recitation of the Rosary by a number of exiles from Erin on board a liner to New York:

"And what are they chanting? Not the 'La ci darem' of an Italian maestro of yesterday, but a certain canticle that was composed by an archangel some nineteen centuries ago, and his audience was a woman, but blessed above all and among all. And the chorus was another canticle, composed by a chorus of 100,000 voices fourteen centuries ago, and on the streets of the Asiatic city, where the gates of the Cathedral were thrown open, and mired prelates came forth, and the people anticipated the decision of their pastors, and proclaimed the woman of Nazareth to be the Mother of God. And these two canticles go on and are repeated in the musical murmur of human voices, until they conclude with the great hymn of praise to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, who are and have been and for ever shall be! The canticle of the Rosary is familiar to these poor exiles. They learned it at their mothers' knees—they sang it in the lonely white-washed chapel on the Irish hills—they will carry it in their hearts and on their lips, and like the children of Israel by the waters of Babylon, they will sing that song of Sion in a strange land."

May God grant that their children and their children's children in a strange land never forgot the Rosary which their Irish ancestors loved. Nothing that the strange land can give them in exchange is worth anything in comparison with one of its Hail Mary's.

He who unintelligently attempts what is beyond his power must leave undone his own proper work, and thus his time is wasted, he never so closely occupied.



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