



THE SOWERS OF TRUTH.

A Convert's Stinging Words to Catholics.

The Many Things We Do Not Do— What Zeal Have We?— What Care For Others?— Wiseman's Case.

Providence Visitor.

The beautiful parable of the sower and his seed is perennially suggestive. The sublime significance of its application to human conduct is often realized by many of us, no matter how limited or meagre is the experience which our daily life may seem to furnish. We may frequently contemplate with a quiet glow of legitimate satisfaction, or with a harrowing sense of deserved remorse, the plentiful or unworthy harvest which we have reaped from a deliberate or random sowing of looks, words and deeds.

How often the heart is made to pulsate in holy fear or disquieting anguish, when a serious meditation is enforced upon us by the public or private calamities brought about by a wilful, recklessness of individual sowing!

It is this appalling thought of the unknown prospects ever awaiting the imprudent sower, unable to foresee the eventual lodging-place of his precious seed, which stays the eager hand and arrests the impetuous arm of many an enthusiastic worker in the Lord's vineyard. The critical bystanders, observing the hesitation with lazy exultation, perchance may render the unjust verdict of timidity or guiltier cowardice. How little are they aware of the fiercely-contested struggle which has preceded in the earnest soul, alone amidst the desert places of his conscience, while gathering up the shrinking remnants of his moral courage in order to come forth to the sowing of his seed!

But alas! for many of us, alarmed and discouraged by the uncertainty of the harvest, we are deterred from even the attempt at sowing! Yet, have we not the comforting assurance of the Divine Sower that some of the seed fell upon the good ground and brought forth the hundred-fold of fruit?

It is an excellent practice for all of us occasionally to call ourselves strictly to task in a rigorous examination as to the manner of our sowing; to ask ourselves candidly: "What am I doing with this self of mine, in the fulness of robust health, strength, talents, possibilities, opportunities and the like, that could be set down as an earnest effort on my part to spread the good tidings of Catholic faith amongst those other precious sheep which, unfortunately, are not of the fold?" Or, putting it boldly as a home thrust: "What are we individually doing for non-Catholics?"

You may imagine the consternation and dismay which fell with the suddenness of a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky upon his enthusiastic sympathetic audience of representative Catholics last August, up at the Champlain Assembly, when Henry Austin Adams, himself a zealous convert, asserted with all the outspoken candor for which he is justly admired,

that his own absorbing dread in forwarding the great work of conversions to the Church, was lest his converts might meet and mingle with Catholics.

Of course it hurt, it stung bitterly, it aggravated into righteous indignation. But on sober, sensible, secondary and cooler reflection, it was considered to have been the best antidote to a complacent self-contentment that many of those present had ever received. Assertions like these are homeopathic in their method. They certainly start a train of self-examination, thorough and earnest, beneficial and curative.

In all humility, one is forced to acknowledge that there is not much in the exterior lives of many of us, lukewarm and indifferent Catholics, likely to exert a magnetic influence on even a most kindly disposed proselyte.

How many of us ever give the matter of conversions even a passing thought?

How great is the number of those with ample leisure at their disposal, who are willing to arise early at a petty personal sacrifice and to breast the matutinal ozone in order to assist at a daily mass as a holocaust in God's sight for this important matter of conversions?

How numerous is the class who endeavor to conquer the demon of spiritual sloth by frequent, fervent communions for the same laudable intention?

How long is the list of constant subscribers to the excellent Catholic magazines and worthy newspapers, which for so many of us appear month after month, and week upon week in vain, but which are actually received with genuine welcome by many well-wishing non-Catholics? No doubt it is considered as an evidence of superior intelligence to sneer at the efforts of the Catholic press, but thank God it is not the fashion to do likewise over the sea. The keenest intellects of our Catholic brethren in European countries count it their greatest honor to be permitted to expend their noblest efforts to help along the worthy cause of spreading Catholic truth.

How many drain their well-filled purses in the cause of the propagation of faith, by secret donations to the body of earnest, zealous missionaries, fired with heroism and consumed with ardor, who have consecrated their lives to this work of procuring new members for the militant Church of Christ?

How enormous is the list of those who have set their hearts and souls firmly and bravely against the triple alliance of the world, the flesh, and devil in their determination to lead lives which may with strict honesty be classed as truly Catholic?

Until we can in deed and in truth say that to the best of our ability we are at least endeavoring to accomplish some of the conditions proposed in this heroic catechism of requisites to prove actual value of the stewardship, then and not until then may we arise in virtuous rebellion to controvert the assertion of Mr. Adams.

It is in rebukes like these, hurled with refreshing frankness, at our quiescent self-complacency, that we are by grace aroused from apathy to set to work about the Father's business.

It was the simple bluntness of Father Ignatius Spencer, in the fervor of his missionary enthusiasm, that awakened the great Wiseman, up to this time liv-

ing aimlessly at Rome, satisfied with the mere acquisition of vast and versatile intellectual attainments, to a sense of to what better use a man might put such talents in the spiritual welfare of England.

With a courage borne of the pristine fervor of asceticism, Father Spencer told Wiseman that it would better become him to apply his mind to more practical themes than the collection of Syrian manuscripts, the planning out of geological treatises and the heaping up of stores of antiquarian lore. It was the first seed sown in Wiseman's fertile soul, destined to take such splendid root and to develop into the absorbing life interest in the future career of the great Cardinal.

Many of us foolishly fancy that converts, worthy of the name, are drawn into the net of Peter by sheer force of intellect, that it is from the intellectual phase of things that we are to work miracles of conversion. Error emphatic!

Was it lack of intellectual force that caused the apostasy of De Lamennais, Renan and hosts of other brilliant French minds, and produced the zeal of a Lardaire, a Montalambert?

Was it lack of interest that urged the triumphant conversion of a New-man, a Brownson, or that deterred a Pusey from the same course?

No, intellect plays but a small role in the matter of serious conversion. It is the superb simplicity of an unflinching faith and a beautiful humility which wrests, as it were, from Almighty God, the gift of belief, and this is the work of earnest, persistent prayer and prayer alone. The sooner we settle our minds on this score, the safer and surer will be our onward course.

It is one of the first principles of philosophy that all knowledge in the mind has its rise in the senses. Is it not equally true of religious knowledge?

The early Christians conquered their pagan persecutors by the sanctity and purity of their disinterested and devoted lives, a rebuke to the sensuality of paganism stronger by far in its influence than the most cunningly arranged and artistically delivered argument from an intellectual standpoint would have been. The non-Catholic of to-day finds the most alluring persuasion of the undying truth of Catholic doctrine in the lives of self-abnegation and utter unworldliness portrayed by the true priest, the saintly religious and devout Catholic layman.

Here then is the way, the truth and the life, that we imitate the Master in his method of winning souls by taking up the cross, denying ourselves and following Him. In this sign shall we conquer.

E. L. Virgin.

BOTH EQUALLY ABSURD.

The Gasket.

In the local news column of the last week's *Casket* favorable mention was made of a lecture on "Evolution and Ethics" by the Rev. Dr. Sexton, a Presbyterian divine whose writings and lectures against infidelity are somewhat widely known. The lecture merited the commendation it received, inasmuch as it expressed the fallacy of all attempts to account for morality by means of the modern fad—evolution. It was shown that the laws of morality are absolute

and immutable, and depend not on any harmony with our surroundings, which is the cardinal principle of the theory of evolution. So far, the lecturer showed is man's moral nature from being in harmony with his surroundings, that it is shocked beyond measure at the evil which it sees the world filled.

The lecture on the whole, was excellent; but a question-box was one of its features, and in answering one of the queries the lecturer struck a note that is at least as completely out of harmony with the truths maintained in his discourse as is the moral nature of man with the conditions that surrounds him on earth. He had, in the course of his lecture, remarked upon the absurdity of the proposition that each man has as much right to have his own moral code as he has to determine his own religious belief. One of the questions asked, therefore,—quoting from memory—was:

"You say truly that it is absurd that each man should have his own moral code: but you imply that it is not absurd that each man should construct his own system of religious belief. Is not the distinction between truth and error as absolute as that between right and wrong?"

The lecturer's answer, which was very brief, was as follows:

"Yes, of course; but we have to consider the effect upon society. A man's religious belief is a matter between himself and his Maker; his moral code is a matter between him and society."

Now we do Dr. Sexton the justice of saying that we are quite certain that the last of these propositions does not at all represent his deliberate opinion, but was uttered hastily and without reflection, in the effort to escape from a corner. It is, one might say, almost diametrically opposed to the position which his lecture was intended to establish, *viz.*, that the distinction between right and wrong depends, not upon the will of society, nor upon any other human or cosmic force, but upon the will of the Supreme Law-Giver alone. Now to say that a man's moral code is a matter between himself and society is only another way of saying that he is answerable only to society for his acts, and that society has the right to construct his moral code and to alter it where and when it chooses,—making that moral in China which is immoral in London, and that right in the nineteenth century which was wrong in the eighteenth.

Dr. Sexton would never have stated such a palpable absurdity in this form. As a matter of fact, he referred to this very theory only to dismiss it as manifestly absurd. And yet, confronted with a difficulty, he took refuge in this very same proposition in another form—a proposition involving the absurdity that if a man got away from society into a desert, there would no longer be for him any distinction between right and wrong.

No; society has of course an interest, in a man's moral code; but society has no power to construct that code or alter it one single iota. Right is right and wrong is wrong, because the former is in conformity with, and the latter is opposed to, the will of God, the Supreme Law-

Giver. This rule is the same for all rational creatures. Neither man nor angel can alter it; the distinction between right and wrong is absolute and immutable; and therefore, it is absurd, as the lecturer stated, to say that each man has the right to have his own moral code.

And every whit as absurd is it to say that each man has the right to construct his own system of religious belief. For just as the end of a moral code is the observance of right and the avoidance of wrong, two things which are eternally and immutably distinct; so the end of a system of religious belief is the attainment of truth and the avoidance of error, two things which are just as eternally and as immutably distinct and opposed to each other. A man can no more make error truth by believing it than he can make wrong right by doing it. As Almighty God gave him a will which he is bound to conform to right, so did he give him an intellect which he is equally bound to conform to truth. As Almighty God, for his safer guidance, revealed to him the right, so did He, for his greater enlightenment, reveal to him the truth. Man has no more right to reject the one than he has to reject the other. He may say that he cannot know with certainty what is the revealed truth; but waiving the truth or falsity of this assertion (which, in point of fact, is false, as involving the absurdity that God's revelation to man was in vain), it is clear that whatever difficulty there is in the matter applies with equal force to the distinguishing between right and wrong; so that if this alleged difficulty gave him the right to follow his own notions in the former case, it would do so equally in the latter.

But this is another question. We are not now dealing with how man is to know the truth, or how he is to know the right: we are treating of his peremptory obligation to accept the one and to follow the other when he does know them, and honestly and seriously to endeavor to know each; and we say, and believe we have shown, that that obligation is just as peremptory in the one case as in the other. Therefore, if it be absurd, as it is, to say that each man may follow his own moral code, it is equally absurd to say that each man may construct his own system of religious belief.

A New Boarding-House For Small Boys.

The Sisters of Charity of St. Boniface, yielding to repeated requests from various quarters, have determined to undertake the management of a boarding-house for boys between the ages of six and twelve. Special halls will be set apart for them, where, under the care and supervision of the Grey Nuns, they will be prepared for their First Communion, while attending either the Preparatory Department of St. Boniface College or the classes of Provencher Academy. This establishment will be known as "Le Jardin de l'Enfance" (Kindergarten).

The results already attained in similar institutions of the Order give every reason to hope that this arrangement will fill a long felt want.

Board and lodging will cost six dollars a month. For the boys who attend Provencher Academy there will be an additional charge of fifty cents a month. Bedding, mending and washing will be extra. The Sisters are willing to attend to these extras on terms to be arranged with them. The boys who attend the Preparatory Department of St. Boniface College will have to pay the tuition fees of the College.

Applications should be made to THE SISTER SUPERIOR, GREY NUNS' MOTHER HOUSE, ST. BONIFACE.