

"That's right! I'm so glad!" exclaimed Edith Bland, expeditiously clanking the concession, as she leaped into her saddle. "Get up behind me, Nance, and we'll have a nice canter home."

Forthwith the two were trotting along where the smoothness of the road permitted, elsewhere picking a path among the stones of the bed that would downward to the school. As they proceeded, Edith Bland utilized the intervals of silence to meditate over the wisest course of conduct following their arrival. Taking Nance right into the school-room might seem too much like leading home a culprit. It would be better for Nance to meet the children casually in the supervised recreation period, from which she could drift back into her place among them. However a half-hour remained before such a recess, and the interval must be judiciously passed.

"Have you ever been in the Margaret Howard room?" asked Miss Bland, as she and Nance approached the school-house.

"I don't know. What do we learn there?" asked the child, with combined curiosity and suspicion.

Miss Bland smiled at the question, with its implication as to the use of rooms.

"Nothing in particular," she answered, adding to herself, "and perhaps so much into the room's charmed atmosphere of taste, beauty, elevation, Edith Bland led her little runaway. On one of the tables were a few books, perhaps captivated to a child's imagination."

"Suppose we look at these books," the teacher began, "while we are waiting for recess." As she debated over which might prove most absorbing, a knock called her to the door.

"Sister Adeline says will you come to her room a moment?" asked a young messenger.

"Amuse yourself till I come back—I think you will like some of these books," was Miss Bland's parting word to Nance as she followed the messenger.

She was detained a little longer than she expected, but she hoped that Nance's progress through the illustrated books might be slow enough to keep her occupied and entertained. But apparently the volumes had failed to prove engrossing, for when the teacher returned Nance was not at the table, but down at the end of the room. Sitting almost lost in a deep arm-chair, she was wrapped in contemplation of what learned critics have pronounced the loveliest Madonna ever painted. Edith Bland was surprised and touched; she felt that there was something in the moment, too precious to be interrupted. She sat quietly by the table and waited. After a few minutes Nance slipped from the chair and stood looking upward. As she turned to her teacher, Miss Bland asked:

"Do you like the picture Nancy?"

"It reminds me of my mammy."

For the nonce the child's response gave the questioner a momentary cry of surprise from the copy of an Old World masterpiece to a poor, worn-out mother in a lowly mountain cabin! Yet, after all, were not Nance's words a fresh tribute to the essential spirit which Raphael had captured in his "art's spring birth so dim and dewy?" What immeasurable solace that downward gaze of Infant and Mother had long given to a world whose eternal child-herd continually needs maternal comfort and protection! A grand duke once his devoted owner, always bore the original with him on his travels. Hundreds of pilgrims to the Pitti Palace are constantly paying homage to its charm of simplicity, holiness, maternal tenderness. And now across the world and the centuries a lonely child, longing for her mother, had discerned through the eyes of affection what a renowned painter had striven to say.

While Edith Bland's mind was still engaged with Nance's answer, a tall summoned teacher and pupil else where. The woman drew the child's arm through her own, as they passed toward the door together. On the threshold Nance looked backward, saying:

"Kin I come here again sometimes? That picture kin mebbe keep me from pinin' fer my mammy."

"Indeed you may come back whenever you wish. Just ask me or one of the Sisters," responded Edith Bland, cordially, while through her thoughts flashed the question: Was the problem of Nance as a permanent pupil solved? Was there at hand some special and eloquent means of tempering her loneliness, giving her a sense of home and the tender genius of home—the maternal spirit?

What the many childish companions of the school and a group of skillful, trained, kind-hearted teachers had not accomplished—the affording of compensation for an absent mother—was Margaret Howard's Madonna going to accomplish?

Edith Bland had a deep sense of gratification as her intuitions gave her an affirmative answer. And now, with her own imaginative strain and her increasing hopes for the mountain people under benign influences, her fancy leaped forward to Nance's future. Because of the child's evident gift of feeling and her quaint maturity, what power for good might she not become among her own people? If now she could be persuaded to stay and take an education in books, in wise methods of living, in the principles of religion, might she not some day go forth among her own, fostering their good traits, helping them to slough off bad qualities, enamoring them of better

standards, purer ideals? Thus fulfilling a high destiny of noble womanhood, how far might she not realize Margaret Howard's ardent dreams for the dwellers in a land of heaven climbing peaks and beautiful valleys? And if Raphael's picture was to be a decisive influence in persuading Nance to remain, had not the Madonna gained a new and fruitful sphere of special patronage as Mother Most Amiable, Mother Most Admirable to a little mountain girl and her kinsmen and neighbors?

A FLOWER OF ERIN

LIFE SKETCH OF REVEREND BROTHER BRENDAN

OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

1875-1902

By B. S. S.

It was a fine September day in 1890, just after the summer holidays, when a boy of about fifteen, alone and carrying a large traveling bag, boarded a train at the town of Athlery, in the west of Ireland. His bright blue eyes and open countenance revealed an innocent and noble soul, while his somewhat depressed yet resolute air and slightly trembling lip, betokened an inward struggle that was being bravely fought and won. It was evident that he was leaving home for college for the first time. His father had bade him goodbye a moment before, and yet there seemed some great purpose in the lad's mind that overcame even the natural affection of flesh and blood.

There was one other occupant in the compartment into which our traveler stepped. He was a venerable old gentleman who seemed to be once grasp the situation and, in a kind, sympathetic way, he approached the boy, who had timidly and silently taken his seat. "I'm so delighted to have the pleasure of your company, Thomas," the old man began. "You know, I'm an old friend of your family, and as you seem to be traveling alone, I shall be most happy to keep you company. You love St. Joseph very much, don't you? I thought so. Well, well! I forgot to ask where you are going. You look as if you were going some distance. To Castletown? to the Brothers' Training College? Why, I am going that way myself. I know that house well and all the Brothers that live there, and I shall be most happy to show you the way."

Our young traveler, who was greatly surprised at being known to the stranger, answered all the questions as well as he could, and was soon quite at ease with his genial companion. In such company the time passed very quickly and agreeably and the boy soon found himself at his destination, where two Christian Brothers were at the station to welcome him. Before he had time to thank his traveling companion and inquire his name, the old gentleman had disappeared, saying, as he parted: "Good luck, Thomas, we shall meet each other again soon." As she shall see, he kept his promise.

Thomas Joseph Keane—to give our little traveler his full name—came of one of those many good old Irish families of deep faith and ardent piety, and who had known the brunt of cruel persecution. In such a home it was regarded as the greatest blessing and privilege to have one or more of the children consecrated to God's holy service in the priesthood or the religious life, and already three of the daughters and one of the sons had taken up that noble vocation.

At the knees of his pious mother, Thomas learned to love and praise God, and was duly invested with the livery of Mary long before his infant lips could lip her praise. His father used to call him "the little saint," and his teacher bore testimony to his innocence and piety at school in these words: "We loved Thomas for his innocence, his meekness, and his application to study; he was kind to everyone, and a good sport. He never teased his playmates, and was always at the head of his class, especially in Catechism."

God was working in the heart of this child in His own mysterious way, and the first signs of a religious vocation soon began to manifest themselves. Just previous to the incident related above, young Thomas had shown an inclination to enter the religious life, and though his good parents had delayed their consent for a while to put his intention to the test, they were too appreciative of so great a grace for their child to refuse to give this fifth child to God. He had determined to become a Brother of the Christian Schools, and so had applied for admission to the Brothers' Training College at Castletown, Mountsrath, Queen's Co. "I shall go to Castletown, even if I have to walk there, because I believe such to be God's will," he had said decidedly. In fact, steadfast resolve to carry out whatever he believed to be God's holy will was ever the keynote of his life.

As we have seen, Thomas Keane was admitted to the Training College at the age of fifteen, and so rapid was his progress and so edifying his conduct that, after a few months, he was chosen to accompany a number of his older companions who were transferred to the Mother House at Paris to complete their studies. The party left Ireland on February 27, 1891, and, on the way, spent a few days in London. While out seeing some of the sights of the city, Thomas and one of his companions lost their way and were soon walking farther and farther away from the Brothers' College. As they had

no money about them, they could not hire a cab. In this quandary, the pious youths turned to God for guidance and, pausing in their walk, offered up a fervent prayer. Scarcely had they done so, when Thomas noticed approaching them the old gentleman who had accompanied him on his lonely journey to Castletown and who had treated him so kindly. Thomas hastened to greet his old friend and explained their difficulty. The gentleman at once halted a cab, put the boys into it, took his seat beside them, and gave the driver the address of the Brothers' house. They soon arrived at their destination and again, before they had time to thank him, their mysterious friend and guide had disappeared. Thomas, who was not easily given to the illusions of an ardent imagination, always believed that St. Joseph himself had twice visibly protected him. He afterwards related these incidents to an aunt of his who was a religious, and begged her to keep it an absolute secret; but, after his death, the good nun believed herself free to reveal what she loved to call the "Story of St. Joseph," and one of the Brothers took it down from her own lips.

The young students arrived safely in Paris, and Thomas was soon a general favorite among his companions in the French capital. "He was a fine type of the Irish race," writes one of them, "tall, robust, and with somewhat ruddy features. His limpid, crystalline, blue eyes sparkled with the innocence of a child and brightened up a countenance that might have been detached from one of Fra Angelico's canvasses." He enjoyed himself thoroughly both at his studies and his recreations, and the walks the students took through the pretty country around Paris especially delighted him. But he never lost sight of his dear native land. "Yes," he would say, when some particular beauty of the landscape was pointed out to him, "it is indeed beautiful, but my dear old Ireland is more beautiful still."

Young Keane's remarkable piety, assiduity and pleasant disposition seemed to indicate an unmistakable vocation, and, on May 3, 1892, after a fervent retreat, he was, to his great delight, admitted to receive the holy habit of St. De La Salle. The ceremony was presided over by the Superior General himself, the saintly Brother Joseph, and at his hands the young Irish postulant received the religious livery and the name of Brother Brendan. "I was so happy," he wrote afterwards, "that I could have kissed my habit twenty times, and I begged of Our Lord that I might die rather than ever abandon it."

Brother Brendan then entered upon his novitiate, and now his admirable qualities of mind and heart shone out with a new lustre and impressed all with whom he came in contact. He had a great devotion to our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and when some one asked him if he did not feel lonely at a distance from his own country, the holy youth exclaimed: "Oh, no! How can I be? Our Lord is always near." When returning from the Holy Table, his countenance seemed lighted up with a supernatural light, and during his thanks giving his loving and pure soul seemed to melt away in adoration, thanksgiving, and love in the Sacred Heart of his Dear Master. So great, in fact, was Brother Brendan's reputation for sanctity, that he was commonly spoken of as "Our Irish John Berchmans."

In proportion to his piety and fervor, his love for his vocation grew apace. In writing a Christmas letter to his sister, a nun in the West Indies, he said, "Your little Brother is as healthy and as happy as he can ever hope to be on this earth. My dearest sister, I need not say that we should be daily thankful to God for His infinite goodness towards us in calling us, without any merit on our part, to be His privileged children." When his term of religious and scholastic training was completed, Brother Brendan was appointed to a professorship in the Training College at Paris, where he had formerly been a student. Here again, his sanctity, simplicity of heart, and joyous disposition soon won all hearts and the young Irish professor was greatly revered and loved by his admiring students.

Unfortunately, under the stress of work and of his own intense enthusiasm for it, his health became impaired, and it was judged advisable for him to return to his native land, where it was hoped he might soon thoroughly regain his health and strength. So, in the summer of 1898 Brother Brendan saw once more the green hills of his beloved Erin. Two years later, his health being improved, he was appointed Director of the Brothers' Training College at Castletown. While the young Director ever preserved his characteristic humility and shrank from prominence, yet he gloried in the mission that was now his of training young men for the great field open to the Brothers of the Irish Province.

At last, however, the holy Brother's health again began to decline and, after some months of suffering endured with heroic patience, he received the Last Sacraments on September 20, 1902. Throughout his sickness, his union with God was continual and, in thought, his soul seemed to be already in Heaven. "I never should have thought," he said one day, "that it was so sweet to die." His great consolation was the daily reception of his beloved Lord in Holy Communion and his crucifix was constantly in his hands. His sufferings were intense but he never lost

his calm cheerfulness. "I am doing my penance," he would cheerfully say. In honor of the Divine Child to whom he had a special devotion, he requested to be laid upon some straw in the corner of his room, that he might die in a condition similar to that of Jesus in Bethlehem, but his unusual request was not granted. On the night of Friday, October 10th, he grew gradually weaker, but kept his full presence of mind to the last. With his Brothers in religion praying around him, and the chaplain beside him renewing the holy absolution, the dying Brother repeated his favorite prayer to Mary:

"Mother of grace, O Mary blest! To thee, sweet fount of love, we fly; Shield us through life, and take us hence, To thy dear bosom when we die."

These were his last words. Shortly after, he peacefully expired. So died this saintly son of Erin, and one of the brightest and sweetest flowers in the rich garland of saintly and devoted apostles of youth that the Land of St. Patrick has given to the great family of Saint John Baptist De La Salle.

"Brendan Hall," the recently established residence of the Christian Brothers in London, Ontario, is, perhaps, the first to be named after this worthy son of the Institute of St. De La Salle, Brother Brendan.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR FEBRUARY

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDECT XV.

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

More than once in past years has this General Intention been presented to members of the League throughout the world; but it would seem that, as time goes on, the need of insisting on the importance of religious training of children in school-years is being constantly felt. The Intention is meant for the world-wide League, and will be discussed in various nations according to prevailing conditions; we have only to look at it as it affects ourselves. In certain sections of Canada we have little to complain of. We have our Catholic schools, convents and colleges, where our children are taught by devoted men and women who make teaching their life-work, and who instill into youthful minds and hearts all that is required to form loyal citizens and staunch Catholics. Assuredly a noble work; those engaged in it, the Scriptures tell us, will shine like stars for eternity.

In other sections other conditions prevail. Erroneous ideas of liberty of carrying them out on the part of our law givers, oblige Catholic children to frequent non-sectarian schools—another name for non-Catholic—where no religious instruction is given except a few scraps of comments on the Bible, and where no rules of human conduct are inculcated which may not be found in the writings of well-meaning pagans of old. There are men in power here in Canada who think that this is simply sufficient, and that whatever other religious training children need should be given them in their homes or in Sunday schools.

Catholics cannot be satisfied with this. They are well aware that in the formation of character—nothing can take the place of the sanctions of morality and right living based upon religion systematically taught. They are aware that a sound knowledge of God and His laws are most effective incentives to virtue and stronger deterrents from vice than more ideals of honor, the social conscience, penal laws, etc. Catholics are also well aware, for they have had a long experience, that atmosphere is something that cannot be overlooked, and that schooling under the immediate influence of religion, all day long, enjoys the advantage of a unity of spirit, a great central aim, that unites teachers and pupils in a bond second only to family ties.

A right concept of human life and its responsibilities must be possessed in order to know what is the purpose of education, and this is where the Catholic system shows its superiority. Our children are taught that the space between the cradle and the grave is but an insignificant segment of the arch of the soul's existence, that the few years given to man here below must not be consumed in a fever of money getting or in seeking high places of honor. It is absolutely necessary that children, who are the men and women of the next generation, be made to feel what a calamity their lives would be if they failed to fulfill the purpose of their creation. God first and last and always, God the beginning and the end of all things, from Whom all things come and to Whom all things must be returned, must be impressed upon children's minds and hearts in a way that they shall never forget it, but make it a principle active in their lives. This is the primary reason for the existence of Catholic schools, and it is their glory that, while they do not neglect the secular side of education, while they diligently prepare children for the struggles of coming years, they also impress true ideals of life upon their receptive minds, a circumstance which gives them the advantage far out of the reach of peculiarly secularized education.

Needless to say, such teaching cannot be had in schools where the supernatural is put in the second plane. Catholics have long realized this, and this also is the candid opinion of non-Catholics who are lucky enough to declare openly what so many of them are convinced of inwardly. One of them, within the past few months, voiced a stern indictment against Godless and so-called non-sectarian schools in these words: "Educators of all shades of religious belief lament the hampering restrictions which permit the child to be taught geography, but not the God who made this earth; botany, but not about the God who clothed the flower; physiology, but not about the God who built the man; astronomy, but not about the God who guides the stars; history, but not about the Divine Providence who guides human affairs; human laws, but not the Divine commands for human conduct. This does not mean that they do not obtain incidentally some knowledge of God, but that the basic propositions respecting His existence, His power, His justice, His love, His mercy, His commandments, the immortality of the human soul, the future state and the relation which conduct and faith bear to it, the obligation to pray and the efficacy of prayer and sources of spiritual enlightenment, are not definitely and designedly taught in the varying degrees of simplicity or profundity as required by the age and the mental development of the pupils."

Happily the Protestant sects that can surmount their prejudices long enough to look at conditions staring them in the face, are beginning to see more clearly the Catholic point of view. The report, lately issued, of the recent ill-fated Inter-Church Movement, which represented thirty Protestant denominations, has this to say: "If you would point to the weakest spot in the Protestant churches, you would put your finger on an army of twenty-seven million children and youth in our land (United States) who are growing up in spiritual illiteracy, and sixteen other million American Protestant children whose religious instruction is limited to a brief hour once a week, often sandwiched in between a delayed preaching service and a Sunday dinner. . . . Unless a programme of religious education can be created, there is danger that the Public Schools will become naturalistic and materialistic in theory and practice, and that the direction of social development will be determined by secular influences within the State rather than by the spiritual forces represented by the Church. . . . The religious education of all the children of all the people demands an adequate denominational organization and programme, and unless the fundamental need of religious education be met, the solution of the present situation is hopeless."

The old selfishness that in order to make a nation safe for Democracy the coming generation of all religious creeds and ideals should be educated side by side, is getting a few hard knocks nowadays. Fair-minded non-Catholics are beginning to realize that it is far more important to teach children how to live than how to make a living. But unhappily while they would like to adopt Catholic methods they have not the courage of their convictions. Many of them start denominational schools where, in addition to ordinary secular learning, their own peculiar tenets could be taught; but the fact that any move in this direction would strengthen the Catholic position is sufficient to make them hesitate.

Needless to say, if our separated brethren have not the courage to overcome their weakness and prejudice in this matter of religious training in schools, their attitude at least is an ample vindication of the Catholic standpoint, and should greatly strengthen all Catholics in their uncompromising determination to protect and defend their system, not merely as a religious but as a patriotic duty. This attitude of Protestants should also show the latter how illigal they are and how unjust, where they are the majority, in penalizing Catholics by double taxation for the support of non-sectarian schools as well as their own. But it should not weaken Catholics in the discharge of their responsibilities. Where Catholic schools are established they should be kept in a high state of efficiency. No effort should be spared, no sacrifice should be considered too great that may be necessary to raise up generations of men and women of whom the Church may be proud. It is this constant struggle for the possession of the minds and hearts of our little ones that has placed the Church in the commanding position she occupies today. It is not for us to break the tradition.

Catholics know what they should do. If they do it not, let it be because for the moment they are unable to bear the expense, or because they are hampered by the views and the prejudices of majority whose ideals of liberty are founded on freedom for everybody except for people who do not think as they do. This is one phase of the struggle which Catholic parents and Catholic educators must meet in their journey through life. But in battling for the sound religious training of children they are doing God's work, and they may rely on the prayers of God's Church and its members for their ultimate success.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

Live joyfully, and be generous!—St. Francis de Sales.

INDIFFERENTISM

For many years there has been in this country a widespread and growing tendency to assume a happy-go-lucky attitude towards religious creeds. A great many people seem to regard religion with a sort of patronizing benevolence as a rather good influence in life; but their idea of religion is only a loose, indefinite, oh-just-go-right-along-and-do-the-best-you-can notion of religious duty and moral conduct. They repudiate dogmas as trammelling freedom of thought; and they ridicule the very suggestion of a definite, positive creed. "We want deeds, not creeds," they will indignantly tell you, as if any deed worth noting were ever done without first being believed by the doer as worthy of accomplishment in accordance with his fixed principles. These folk are simply religious anarchists, although they may be unconscious of this disagreeable fact. There were not many of them in the good old days, when the sturdy Lutherans, the stern Presbyterians, the strict Methodists, the dyed-in-the-wool Baptists, and the other similar Protestant sects still held tenaciously to whatever of Christian doctrine they had carried with them on breaking from Rome, and leaving the Old Mother Church; but the principles of private interpretation and the attacks of the so-called higher critics have played such havoc with sectarian Christianity, that the number of indifferentists in religion has become legion.

Now, it is farthest from our minds to offend, even in the least, against charity in our discussion of religious indifference. This question, however, is of paramount importance; and it were well to understand what it involves.

Every Christian believes that Christ is the Son of God. The Holy Scriptures tell us that He founded a church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi, 18); "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii, 18, 19, 20). It is the wish of our Divine Lord that there be only one church: "I am the good shepherd; and I know mine, and mine know Me. . . . And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John x, 14 and 16). "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. . . . And not for them only. . . . I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me. That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one, I in them, and Thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23).

Moreover, it stands to reason that it can not be contrary to the will of God for men to regard one church as good as another, since some of the tenets of the several churches contradict corresponding doctrines of the others, and only one contradictory can be true. Again, indifference or contempt for a definite, positive religious creed must be displeasing to God, because the express commission of our Divine Lord is: "Teach all nations. . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Therefore, religious indifference in a great evil, a grievous sin. There is one true church, recognizable by the infallible marks: Unity, Holiness, Catholicity and Apostolicity. It was founded by Christ Himself, Who placed St. Peter, the Apostle, at its head; and the successors of St. Peter have ruled it to the present day, when Benedict XV reigns at Rome as the Vicar of Christ.—Catholic Telegram.

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Man defines happiness according to their humor. They miss it because they go in search of it. Saul went out to find his father's asses and stumbled upon a kingdom. Happiness is more a means than an end. It is most frequently met with when least sought. The Stock Yards are primarily means to furnish America with meat, but they are enabled to do this only because of the many and valuable by-products that they are able to gather in the marketing of meat. If men sought less for happiness and more for duty, contradictory as it may seem, there could be more happiness. Limiting one's needs is one sure road to the desirable end. The ancient philosophers, who had divested themselves of earthly possessions, confessed themselves to be happy. Men like Socrates and Diogenes gave up all of the things that so frequently enslave. Of course, it is easier to give up what you have than what you are, and it is giving up what we are that is the firmest insurance for happiness. Most of us carry a load about with us that is not ballast but dead weight. In a storm, in order to right the ship, many things are thrown overboard, in order that the ship may ride the waves. The first step to happiness, therefore, is throwing away those evil habits that weigh us down in our journey towards eternity.—New World.

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