

MARCH 24, 1917

"Not in ghosts as they are commonly imagined; those shadowy white things that point, and stare, and hover" came floating back in the thin, sweet tones; "but in the spirits of the departed—it may be long dead, or newly called from earth—who are permitted to borrow for a little while the semblance in which they lived and loved, and return for one last look at a beloved home, or come for one dear glimpse of what might, but for the Infinite Eternal Will, have been a home. You believe in them, do you not?"

Looking upwards from the hall, the butler saw the slight figure of Sir Vivian's bride traverse the first landing and pass out of view, followed by the portly figure of the housekeeper; and in that moment came the grind of wheels upon the avenue, a loud knock at the hall door, and a sharp peal at the bell. Two liveried servants appearing in haste admitted the master of the house, and at the first glimpse of Sir Vivian's ghastly face, and torn and disordered garments, Cradell cried out in alarm.

"Sir Vivian—Sir! It's worse than what my lady said. You've been hurt! Shall I send for the doctor?"

"He is with us!" came the hoarse reply, and Cradell, peering into the sad, gathering darkness, saw a strange carriage drawn up before the door, whose lamps threw a yellow reflection on the clouds of steam rising from the flanks of a pair of jaded horses. They were busy about the door, something was being lifted out. What? asked the old servants shaking lips, dumbly, as he turned to his master.

"Gad, sir, don't look like that!" he begged. "Think if her ladyship were to see you! She—"

"If her ladyship were to see me!" repeated Sir Vivian. He laughed. "Cradell—are you mad, or am I?"

"Neither of us, sir, I hope," said Cradell. Then a light broke upon him and he cried: "Good gracious, Sir Vivian, is it possible that you don't know—my lady is here?"

"I know it." An awful agony was expressed in Sir Vivian's face. "I know it too well!" Great drops stood upon his forehead, he turned aside, clenching his hands and fighting for self command.

"She came, half an hour ago," began the butler; "me and Mrs. Ansdley were quite took back. Mrs. Ansdley is upstairs with her now."

"Man, man!" cried Sir Vivian, "do you know what you are saying?" He turned his streaming face upon the frightened butler and gripped him by the arm.

"Lady Hu—my wife, is dead! There was an accident—she was killed instantaneously, with little pain, thank God! They said so at the hospital. . . . She is outside—there!" He pointed a shaking hand towards the partly open hall-door, through which a pale line of moonlight came stealing as the careful, measured tread of men carrying a precious burden, crumpling her fine lace gown, crumpling her skirt, carried half an hour ago. You are raving or I am d-d-irious!"

"It's heaven's truth, Sir Vivian. And there is proof. . . . and here is Mrs. Ansdley to confirm it!"

Both men looked up at the portly figure in its rustling black silken robes hurried down the great staircase.

"Sir Vivian! Oh, welcome home, Sir Vivian, a thousand times!" The housekeeper's face was very pale, her hands worked nervously, crumpling her fine lace gown. "But something dreadful has happened! It's written in your face!" she cried, "and God forgive a sinful woman, but I am beginning to believe that I have spoken with a spirit!"

"Cradell tells me that—" Sir Vivian made an upward gesture. "It's true!" cried Mrs. Ansdley. "Her ladyship—if 'twas her ladyship—explained that you were delayed. Some one was killed in the railway accident—"

"Some one was killed!"

"And you were coming on after you seen to the wounded. . . . She—she would not eat, or drink, or rest; she wished—all she wished was to see the house, and I obeyed, and we went through room after room until—there was a ring at the hall door bell, and a knocking, and I turned to speak to my lady as we stood together in the painted chamber—and she was gone! Oh! Sir Vivian, what does it all mean?" cried Mrs. Ansdley.

"It means—that!"

As the hall-door opened to admit the bearers with their precious burden, and as the men laid that cold, lovely, smiling image of Death reverently on the settle, the bloodhound wakened from his slumber, and rising, uttered a long, plaintive howl.

"Welcome home, my wife!" said Sir Vivian. "Leave us together!"

"It was the same face!" Mrs. Ansdley whispered, as her old comrade led her away.—The Good Work.

WHO ARE REAL CATHOLICS?

The church suffers not a little in the estimation of many good people for the lack of discrimination between those who are and those who are not Catholics. Who are Catholics? is by no means a superfluous question. There are many so-called Catholics who have no real claim to the name. No one is entitled to the name of Catholic unless he be practical Catholic. The Church is a living organism, and she bestows Catholic life upon those only who are in communion with her, and her means of conveying this life is the sacraments.

These are the only channels of her life, which is grace. Many a recreant enjoys the name of Catholic, and his misdeeds are immediately placed to the account of the Church. "This is your Catholic!" is remarked by infidel and Protestant. But the fact is that man is not a Catholic, nor does he in any sense represent Catholicity. He is no more Catholic than the sneerer himself. It is unfair and unjust to the Church to class such a man Catholic, and then attribute his failings to the faith which he never practices.—Our Sunday Visitor.

THE PROTESTANT AND THE POPE

"If the Pope be the Vicar of Christ on earth then all men, Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Pagan, have the right to go to him in distress. By the same token he may not refuse a single one who so approaches him."

These words were a Protestant's passport to the Pope. George Barr Baker, his heart breaking with sympathy for the starving children in the war country, decided to appeal to some one "to whose voice the whole civilized world will listen with respect" for help. Without credentials he presented himself at the Vatican, obtained his audience, and the help he desired. Mr. Baker's story as it appeared in the March American is partially printed below:

We met in San Francisco, a dozen of us, early in last September, to discuss the tragedy of Belgium. More than a million children starving to death—adolecent boys and girls, falling before tuberculosis, rickets, and other fearful diseases of mind and body because the Commission for Relief could not give them enough food—was the fact we faced. Its horrors simply dazed us: it left us agast.

"I believe if we can interest American school children," I said, "we may ring down the curtain on this tragedy. There are more than twenty million children in our schools. If they could be made to realize that a million boys and girls in Belgium and northern France are slowly starving, they would save their pennies, and get other pennies to go with them, that this ghastly thing might end."

"Let each school, juvenile league, or other band of young folk take the responsibility of providing an extra meal a day to one village, or commune, and the burden would be slight. We have got to get another \$1,000,000 a month. If only a third of the children of America would give a cent every other day, it would be enough."

"How will you reach the children?" asked a man beside me.

"That is the question," I said. "In an emergency such as this we must appeal to someone in a high position who has many avenues of publicity—one to whose voice the whole civilized world will listen with respect. It must be someone who has not spoken before and in vain, or—and suddenly an inspiration struck me. "I know the one man who fits the need!" I exclaimed.

"Who is it?"

"It is the Pope. I shall see him." They smiled incredulously; they shook their heads. "Too many others have tried and failed," they said. "The Pope is in a unique position; he has political and religious consequences to consider. Undoubtedly he is already throwing his entire influence to plans of his own Church. You a non-Catholic might not even be able to get an audience with him."

"I shall see the Pope!" I repeated. In the next few days I decided definitely to ask for no credentials among the Commission's friends among the Catholic clergy, the Government or the Pappal nobility. I knew this was not the way; it had failed too often. A lone hand seemed the only one to play.

On October 9 I landed in Rome. A friend had cabled ahead to Signor Salvatore Cortesi, an Italian gentleman who had married an American woman, asking him to get in touch with me. The next day Signor Cortesi called. Fate was kind. In his youth, when Benedict XV. was only a priest, Signor Cortesi had mission; he became enthusiastic, and told me the best method to approach the Vatican.

The next day I asked for an audience with Benedict XV.

"What are your credentials?" was the challenge.

"My credentials," I replied, "are more than a million children who face starvation and death."

After a short delay the Vatican spoke again.

"By what right do you, a non-Catholic, presume to approach His Holiness?"

"If the Pope be the Vicar of Christ on earth," I replied, "then all men, Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Pagan, have the right to go to him in distress. By the same token he may not refuse a single one who so approaches him."

After a few days the message came that my reply had pleased the Vatican. I was asked to formulate my request and furnish documents to support my claims. I tendered records of physicians and scientists, and the audits by international accounts of the Commission's expenditures—audits which showed that the Commission was handling millions of dollars at an operating expense of less than 1%. Only a man trained in business organization can understand what that means.

All this had taken about ten days. The Vatican checked up my state-

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ments and put my letter to the Pope in proper official form. At the beginning of the fifth week of continued labor in Rome I received a communication to present myself with Signor Cortesi in the presence of His Holiness at 10.45 a. m. on October 31.

We walked through what seemed to me the most magnificent palace in all the world. Rich room after rich room, vast chambers adorned with the art treasures of the centuries, unfolded into one another until finally we came to a little door. It opened into the private library of Pope Benedict XV.

The door swung back into a high room, rather narrow for its length, and sparsely furnished. At the far end, on a great chair slightly raised from the floor, sat the most remarkable man I have ever seen.

Clad all in white he was, even to the white skull cap on his majestic head. From a face as white and clear as parchment looked out eyes sunken and sad, yet gleaming with a spiritual voltage that startled me.

I made a bow and started forward but immediately the Figure left the throne and came toward me, meeting me before I had taken six steps. After the regular formalities, he took hold of my arm graciously and led me back to the throne, drawing up a chair for me beside it.

"We can never thank you enough," I began, only to stop at the sound of a voice, silver-clear and resonant, which said slowly and gravely: "My son, never thank Us."

In the conversation that followed Benedict XV. always referred to himself as Us or We. I spoke in English; he in French; we had no difficulty in understanding each other.

"During two miserable years," the voice went on, "We have prayed for guidance and We have sought diligently a way in which We could show Our love for Our people and help them practically. On all sides We have been besieged with requests for action—impossible requests for the most part, because all these people are Our people. . . . Our children are murdering one another."

"There was a sorrowful vibration in the Pope's voice. "We are compelled to witness horrible fratricide, and devastating war, death unparalleled."

"Even some of Our own clergy have failed to see why We could not take one side against the other. They have all come to Us as politicians, until now—" and Benedict XV. bent his head with a smile that illumined his face, a smile magnetically fascinating—"until now you, a non-Catholic, have come to Us a lone crusader from that far America and approach Us spiritually. For this We thank you. We thank you always."

He hesitated a moment, his eyes lifted toward the high ceiling.

"And further, We thank you," he went on at last, "that you have presented to Us a practical plan of service, a plan in which there is no politics—only love."

"We appreciate this so strongly that, although the present demands on Us are very great—Our people have been stricken terribly by War—We shall still prove Our sympathy in a practical way by opening the list of your new form of contribution with a gift of ten thousand lire (\$1,930). This We are sending to His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons in Baltimore, and We are writing him a letter commanding him to place the matter before the bishops and priests and congregations in America. Further, We are going to promise Our Apostolic Benediction to all people, of whatever race or creed, who will join in this so noble and necessary undertaking."

Now that the immediate purpose of my mission had been met, Benedict XV., began questioning me about America. I told him of my country, of its freedom of thought, of its religious tolerance, of the spiritual-ity, too often concealed, that lies in the hearts of its people.

"They must be a dear people," he broke in at last, "that you have prescribed here. Our tasks are numberless. We have neither the time nor the strength to learn as much as We would like to know about your Americans, but We always hear concerning them the most charming things."

At last I rose to go. Benedict XV. walked along with us almost to the little door, which opened automatically. Then, suddenly, he made a

sign, and the door closed. He led me to a desk at the opposite end of the room and bade me be seated again.

"Tell me some more about your America," he said.

We talked for several minutes. Now he seemed more the simple, kindly priest than the potentate, yet I could not get away from the tremendous intellectual grasp with which he seized all subjects, or the reserve force that resided so evidently within him. His face is not so full as it appears in the photograph which he autographed for me at that desk—the photograph which accompanies this narrative. Nor does the likeness do justice to his hands, thin and strong and beautiful.

After a little he rose to accompany us to the door. It opened and we passed through. I took out my watch. It told me that we had been in the Pope's presence for an hour, less two minutes—a longer audience than had ever before been granted to a Protestant.

As we passed back, the art-laden walls of the Vatican were blank to me. I could see only the sad, peaceful, powerful face of Benedict XV. Try as I might, I was not able to remember a single detail of the Papal library—its walls, its ceilings, its furnishings. I had not the remotest idea of the sort of chair which I had sat in. So dominant had been the personality of the man!

I knew that a load had been lifted from me. The grisly night that had shrouded the children of Belgium seemed broken and rolling away. I said so, exultantly, to Signor Cortesi. He smiled and rubbed his hands happily. From some far-off tower a bell struck the hour. Then the guard saluted, and the gates of the Vatican closed behind us.

At the time of my writing it is too early to gauge the full effect of the Pope's letter to Cardinal Gibbons—a letter in which Benedict XV. expressed his belief that "the happy children of America without distinction of faith or of class, will vie, in their innocent pride, with each other to be able to extend to their little brothers and sisters of the Belgian nation, even though across the immense ocean, the helping hand and the offerings of that charity which knows no distance."—Chicago New World.

THE FUN OF FAITH

Faith laughs. Distrust scowls. In the case of Robert Hugh Benson, faith made every common hour "fun." In the case of Frank Bullen, who wrote a charming autobiography called "With Christ at Sea," faith caused a tragic moment to be a gloriously happy one. The "Life of Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson," written by C. C. Martindale, S. J., has this paragraph:

"There was in Monsignor Benson an instinct which made him regard even religion somehow as a game or a sport. . . . Outrageous as this may sound, I am sure of it. But he who has found sweetness and truth in the formulae he uses about God, . . . and suddenly catches sight of the splendors on which they stand . . . may burst into a joyous laugh—a laugh, for he sees how enormously inadequate they are. . . . a joyous laugh for they are already so good, and promise what is so much better. In moments of this abrupt realization that 'God's in His Heaven' . . . Hugh would literally break into a laugh and hug himself, and cry out to his friends: 'Oh, my dear, isn't it all tremendous? Isn't it all sport? Isn't it all huge fun?'"

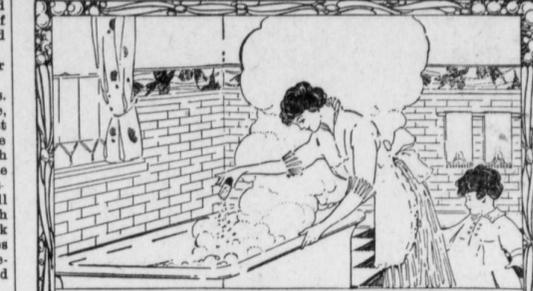
A couple of days after going through an acute religious experience, on shipboard, Frank Bullen writes how an accident that might have caused him death, meant nothing but keen joy to him:

"It was blowing stiffly," he writes, "and we were carrying a press of canvas to get north out of the bad weather. Shortly after flying jib and I hauled down, I was astride the boom to turl it, was sitting astride the boom when suddenly it gave way with me. The sail slipped through my fingers, and I fell backwards, hanging head downwards over the seething tumult of shining foam under the ship's bows, suspended by one foot. But I felt only exultation in my certainty of eternal life. Although death was divided from me by a hair's breadth and I was acutely conscious of the fact, it gave me no sensation of joy. I suppose I could have hung there no longer than five seconds, but in the time I lived a whole age of delight. But my body asserted itself, and with a desperate gymnastic effort I regained the boom. How I lurled the sail I don't know, but I sang at the utmost pitch of my voice praises to God that went pealing out over the dark waste of waters."

If we would have the world a happier place, let's pray for an increase of its faith.—New World.

A BARBER'S PRAYERS

Here is the story of a most unusual conversion to the Catholic faith. Several years ago a Denver barber, a very good Catholic, was called to a stranger's house to shave the man who was near death. When the barber was leaving, the woman of the house, wife of the sick man, came after him and hesitatingly asked him if he could pray. The barber answered in the affirmative, and went back with the woman to the sick man's side. Taking out his rosary, the barber knelt beside the bed, recited the beads, then said a number of other prayers. The sick



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man and his wife scarcely said a word, but kept their eyes fastened on the praying visitor. When the barber was going, the woman was so affected that she could scarcely speak. A few weeks ago, a man and woman who said they were from a Pacific coast city called on the barber. It turned out that they were friends of the man for whom he had prayed. They said that the man had not forgotten what the barber had done, and had told them that they must be sure to look him up when they came to Denver. The man is now in his full health again, and both he and his wife have received into the Catholic Church. The barber may not have been altogether responsible for the conversion, there is no doubt but that they helped.—The Missionary.

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