

chanced to be wanting, were surely clouded by misunderstandings and suspicions and other occasions for testing their loyalty to God and their generosity in His service. In reading of the constancy and spiritual buoyancy which the saints showed in the face of the greatest afflictions, we instinctively compare and contrast their lives with ours, their trials with our trials, their thoughts and aspirations with ours, and the net result is a gain for us and a gain for the cause of piety; for the reward is always in proportion to the intensity and duration of the combat. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

It is well to bear in mind, however, that we are to distinguish carefully between certain extraordinary favors that the saints may have enjoyed and what they themselves accomplished in the way of living lives of sublime virtue, self-effacement and toil; for to be made the vehicle for the communication of revelations, or the recipient of supernatural visions, or the subject of ecstasies, is not itself any indication of high sanctity or nearness to God. The reason for this cautious distinction is to be found in the fact that the Almighty may use such instruments as He pleases in making extraordinary manifestations of His power. Judas, the betrayer, may well have wrought miracles, not, indeed, in proof of his sanctity which he did not possess, but in proof of the divine origin of the message of which he was the unworthy exponent. As for visions, we read in the twenty-second chapter of the book of Numbers that Balaam's ass saw the angel with a drawn sword blocking the path before the rider saw him; and if Balaam's eyes were also opened to the threatening apparition, we are to remember that he was a wicked man bent upon a wicked errand, for he was on his way to curse the people of God. But, laying aside all question of moral depravity, it is a notorious fact that many virtuous but sentimental people have fancied that they were the favored recipients of heavenly visitations, visions, and revelations when all these supposed celestial boons were the result or consequence of disturbed bodily health or overwrought nerves. If we ever need the discreet advice of a skilled spiritual director it is when we fancy that we see things and hear things that persons of average intelligence in similar circumstances of time and place could neither see nor hear. As it would be imprudent to pray absolutely for any particular temporal favor, such as wealth, or distinguished social position, or important office, so it would be far more imprudent to pray for, or even hanker after, the exceptional graces that Almighty God has at times bestowed upon His chosen servants. All that the Saints did as Saints is for our edification; but not all that they did is to be blindly essayed in everyday life by those readers who find themselves in very different surroundings with very different calls upon their time and strength. A holy hermit, for instance, may well spend days at weeks in silence, for he has no duty to converse charitably with his fellow-man, since he is living by himself; but, if a wife and mother were to set about imitating to the letter the taciturnity of the hermit, she would lay herself open to a charge of being wanting in good sense. What must be the feelings of a fond husband who has to sit face to face with a mummy?

The Saints led laborious lives; they practised the virtues that their state demanded of them; they lived in time, but they worked for eternity. In this respect, we cannot go far astray in imitating them. St. Frances of Rome sanctified herself in the state of widowhood, but I need not become a widow in order to reproduce in my life the spirit of penance and humility which was so resplendent in hers.

If Spiritual Reading is to be a helpful exercise for our progress in piety, it is hardly necessary to remark that it is not to be undertaken for the gratification of a spirit of curiosity nor to increase our store of varied erudition, for we should thereby defeat the aim and purpose of what is in itself a useful and easy means of perfecting ourselves in the Divine sight. That it may be truly helpful, it should be performed faithfully in a spirit of piety and devotion, for there is a special malediction for him that does the work of God negligently, and the beautifying of our immortal souls by acts of religion is surely the work of God; we are but co-operators. Spiritual reading, rightly performed, makes our co-operation far more effective. This is an all-sufficient reason, though others are not wanting, why it should be recommended to the prayers of the League.

HENRY J. SWIFT, S. J.

"ESCAPED NUNS"

As to "escaped nuns"—so favorite a theme for ultra-Protestant anti-Catholic bigots—the Catholic Herald (England) observes that: "The superior of a convent has no difficulty in 'escaping' at any time she wishes to do so. Any one can see nuns constantly walking about the streets of London, who need not go back to their convents if they do not wish to do so. There is no such thing as an 'escaped nun.' There have been nuns who broke their vows and left the Church, but alleged 'escapes' are merely advertised to draw money from the pockets of credulous dupes, or fanatical bigots. If a nun wants to leave her

convent she has only got to do so the same as any daughter would leave her father's household." That is the short and the long of it, and the truth of the matter. There are no "escaped nuns." Any nun who wants to can "escape" any time she pleases, without let or hindrance. She has only to open the door and walk out and not return—which last part of the program, it may be safely assumed, would be all the better for the convent.—Freeman's Journal.

STORY OF A CONVERSION

ILLNESS AND THREATENING POVERTY BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

Note: The following interesting story was written to a Nun, and was forwarded to us. We give it verbatim, with only a touch here and there in the interest of continuity and clearness.—The Editors.

Yes, dear Child, certainly I'll tell you of my conversion! You remember, of course, that I married a Catholic, but not a practical one. I refused to sign any contract, for, while I was a Catholic, I knew nothing of the religion. We lived in a country town where a priest seldom came. After a few years we moved to a nearby city where I attended the Episcopal Church, and at times my children attended the Sunday school.

During these years we never discussed religion. When I asked my husband to help me make those children go to Sunday school he gave me an astonished stare—nothing more. There was something lacking, however, in our lives. I felt the need of more religion, and was not satisfied entirely where I was going. Have you ever wished that you were living on earth in Our Lord's time, and could follow after Him with the multitudes down the road, adding your voice in praise, and at last draw near, perhaps touch His garment? Well, frequently I did wish all this, and would look down the street and imagine the whole scene.

This was my state of mind, when after twelve years, my husband's health began to fail, and at last came a day when he was unable to go to work. The doctor came and examined him thoroughly. He had been prescribing from time to time, but now new symptoms were developing. Soon after the doctor left, violent pains set in. He returned, then left again only to be summoned in a few moments. We called in the best physicians in the city, and they remained the rest of the day working over my husband. A trained nurse came and took charge. I had plenty of time to think of many things.

His sister arrived after a few hours, and was up at day light the next morning to go to Mass, confession and Holy Communion. I had to wait several days for Sunday to arrive in order to attend church service, and sent word to my minister asking that he please pray for my husband's life to be spared. Somehow it was not done, neither did the minister, nor any Episcopal neighbor come or telephone—only a sick man, but to me he was my all, and this the crisis of my life!

Meanwhile the priest was telephoning, asking news, and if he could come over. And he was a perfect stranger! I refused to let him come because my husband, knowing that his sister was in the house, would lose hope of his recovery, and would give up. I wished to give him every chance. The doctor and the nurse promised that if he began to fail they would inform me, for I meant then to call the priest. (Great idea, mine, to wait until a man is half dead to make his confession, but I knew no better then.)

The sister-in-law hurried out to Mass every morning at day-light. I watched this practical application of her faith—it was something new. I visited the sick room, of course, every little while. Sometimes my husband knew me, and sometimes he did not. On one of these visits I thought: "Suppose he should die in a few hours, and stand before his Maker to be judged? He has been a good man as far as human laws were concerned. Suppose now that more than this was required? Then what? When to my knowledge, had he ever said any prayers, or gone to church? I had made a good wife in the eyes of the world, but had I not neglected something? Suppose that some day I should have to account for that something?"

Right then I promised that if he lived I would do all in my power to get him to return to his Church. I telephoned one of my husband's good friends to help me with my plan, for I knew that to succeed I must have help, and surround him with everything Catholic. The friend, an elderly, kind man, said that of course he would help. "I will have a Mass offered for him to-morrow, and God will bless you and yours, madam, for this—even the trying!"

The sister was up at day-light to go to that Mass. Then she had a Mass said for him. This practical asking for our need was making an impression on me, and so now I said: "May I now have a Mass? What do you do?" She explained: "During the Mass the priest prays for you, and you promise to do something, or mention some sacrifice you will make, and you give a small sum of money to the poor." Well, I did. I sent my little offering, and promised to become a Catholic! "They cannot accept it," said the young friend who was to take my offering. "You can promise to look into the religion, for

any promise you make you will be expected to keep, and you know that you can keep that one." Fair enough! What more could any one ask?

Before my husband was out of the house I presented myself at the Rectory for instructions. The dear, kind priest gave me several books. May God bless him! He gave me the "Catechism," "Question Box" and the "Faith of Our Fathers," the latter by Cardinal Gibbons. "Take your time—plenty of time—odd moments to spare while doing your home duties," he said. "Go into the Church for a few moments before going home." I did, and I guess what I prayed for! I wished now to carry out my plan to become a Catholic myself, and I prayed that if there was anything in the faith that I would not like that it be kept from me. "Oh, that everlasting prejudice!"

My husband continued to improve, and I read every moment the "Faith of Our Fathers," and to study the "Catechism." That is a grand book, the "Faith of Our Fathers." It makes everything so plain. I found a little leaflet that is a fine companion to High Mass. One overwhelming thing that I discovered was that they believed the Communion was truly our dear Lord's Body! This helps one to understand the open churches, the devotions, the lives given to serve Him, the martyrs going to their death—everything in fact.

My husband's health required that we move back to the country, so my study was more or less hampered. I thought that after a while I might pass some sort of an examination to see if I understood perfectly, and believed truly. I loved the faith by this time, regardless of my husband. If he had died I would still have considered it my greatest privilege to continue my studies, and some day be received.

At last came the day for my baptism, and the next morning I made my first Holy Communion. I offered my Communion that my husband might return to his Church, and that he might be made well. In just two hours he went to confession, the first time in twenty years!

Now, thanks be to God, my prayers are answered, and I pray every day that we may lead such a life as may allow us to draw a little nearer until the end—be worthy of so great a blessing.

It is a constant marvel to me how it came about that I, of all people, should have been allowed to belong to this Divine Faith. Yes, that is what it is—divine! Could there be any flaw in it then? No, none whatever!

I believe that the prayers of Catholics are answered, that God loves them, and gives them strength and help. They pray more, perhaps ask for more, and then hurry around to earn it by kind deeds and kind words. One works harder when it is to please a loving Father.

You ask why so many afflictions, so much misery, poverty, etc. My dear, my husband's illness, and the fear of poverty were the greatest blessings life has ever had for me, for through them I came to believe in the One True Faith.

THE STORY OF FATHER TOM BURKE

It was the Irish Famine of 1847, says Father Eaton in his brochure on Father Burke, O. P., one of the greatest preachers of modern times, that thrust his young life into the world towards the priesthood as the best means of helping the poor and the oppressed. Young Burke was only seventeen in those days, but here in his own vivid language is what he had to say of the terrible calamity that laid Ireland low in 1847:

"I have seen strong men lie down in the streets and with ashlen lips mrmur a last cry for food, and faint away and die. I have seen the dead mother as she lay by the wayside. I have seen the living infant trying to draw sustenance from its infant life from the mother who was dead. If I were to live a thousand years, never could I banish them from my memory or shut them out from my eyes—no, nor their dire effects. The storm at length passed away, bearing on its wings millions of Irish victims and leaving Ireland stunned by the greatness of her ruin. There seemed no hope for the nation. Ruined homesteads, abandoned villages, impoverished towns, workhouses filled to overflowing, prisons crowded with political prisoners, hospitals unable to hold victims of cholera which came in the wake of war and famine; trade and commerce destroyed, industry paralyzed, a population wasted by disease and privation scarcely able to realize life after such awful contact with death, and crushed by separation from so many loved hearts."

Accordingly, it was in 1847 that the future orator entered the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans, as a postulante receiving minor orders from Leo XII, then Bishop of Perugia in 1849. It is interesting to note his opinion of St. Thomas whose "Summa" he then first read. "When reading it one's faith seems lost in vision so clearly does every point stand out." In Rome he met Cardinal Wiseman, a good judge of characters, but somewhat hard towards his juniors. "Young Burke" he said "has a wondrous power of inspiring love. He will be a great priest some day." In 1850 Father Burke was appointed vice-chief of the Order's house at Strand; he reached England from Rome with a bare allowance of

cash to cover the expenses of the journey; having, however, found the means to get by rail to Stroud and after walking several miles to the Priory, he was nearly arrested as a tramp.

In 1853 he was ordained and, for the first time, began to preach. At the outset he gave no promise, was very nervous and in every way bore out Cicero's statement, namely, that the real orator is a nervous person. He used to write out his sermons carefully and took great pains in revising them, discarding them before others, asking their advice and—taking it. He was recalled to Ireland by Dr. Russell, head of the Irish Dominicans, and was given the task of developing a novitiate at Tallaght, a place of great historical interest.

His appearance is described at this time as being "very ascetic, his tall, graceful and attenuated figure, his stern rigid face shaded by the cowl over his head, the deep, sonorous voice all presenting the living image of a vigorous and saintly Dominican." His preaching soon attracted attention here, and he was named "Savonarola." It was in 1859 that he preached a sermon that may be said to have attracted universal attention, namely, that one which is entitled "Music in Catholic Worship." Scholars and connoisseurs from all parts studied this discourse, and Father Burke's name as a great preacher was instantly established.

Between 1859 and 1864, his time was mainly taken up in giving retreats in Ireland, Italy, England and Scotland. It was in 1869 that at the Glasnevin cemetery, on the removal of O'Connell's remains to their final resting place, the great preacher delivered an oration to some fifty thousand spectators—one of his very greatest efforts. He was present at the Vatican Council of 1870, and while in Rome attracted great notice by his preaching. As an example of the busy life he was leading in these days it may be cited that in 1871 he gave twenty-one retreats and preached one hundred and seventy-two sermons; as each retreat lasted seven days, his aggregate amounted to seven hundred and sixty sermons for that one year.

It was in 1872 that he visited America, which Father Eaton describes as the most busy and glorious period of his life. He purposely selected a vessel with a large number of steerage passengers, preached to them many times during the voyage. At the Church of St. Paul in 1872 he preached the Lenten discourses, the building being filled to overflowing; "while men and women of all conditions and grades waited as long as five or six hours for the opening of the doors, laborers went direct from their work carrying their dinner cans merchants and business men hurried from their offices to the church, and in many places the police had to control the traffic before he could make his way to the sacred edifice."

At Boston he had one "congregation" of forty thousand, and also vast audiences at Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland and New Orleans, so large being the crowds that he was forced to address them from the church steps. The duel with Mr. Froude, the English historian, took place at this time, and lectures were delivered at the Academy of Music, New York, to audiences of five thousand persons at a time, the series numbering five, in which, says Father Eaton, Froude's justification of the occupation of Ireland by England, as well as of the alien administration, met with a full refutation from the eloquent Dominican. So great and so frequent were the ovations paid to Father Burke, indeed, that the General of the Dominicans, fearing for the humility of his subject, ordered him to return to Ireland.

Father Burke gave in America some four hundred lectures, the proceeds amounting to over \$400,000, and this sum went to the releasing of churches and convents from debt. On his return to Ireland he was received with great and public acclamation by the town officials, the clergy and the people of Queenstown. The world, says Father Eaton, may talk of Father Burke as the triumphant orator, the brilliant conversationalist; but those who knew him best remember the saintly priest. He was the example of his own teaching and as an English Bishop said, was the Dominican friar first and before all, Cardinal Cullen said of him, "the gentle meek and humble priest remained throughout all his triumphs and learning in him awakened no intellectual pride."

Cardinal Manning, a strict judge said of him: "He had the grandest talent a man can possess, namely, that of popularizing theology. His was the eloquence of a great soul filled with God, not the eloquence of study or self-manifestation." Although he had attained to high rank in the hierarchy, he successfully sought to oppose all attempts at advancing him. In 1880, despite his failing health, he preached his famous sermon on "St. Ignatius and the Jesuits" at Farm St. London, and returning to Tallaght, of which he was Prior died there in 1883.—Freeman's Journal.

Infinite love is suffering too—yea, in the fullness of knowledge it suffers, it yearns, it mourns; and that is a blind self-seeking which wants to be freed from the sorrow with which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. Surely it is not true blessedness to be free from sorrow, while there is sorrow and sin in the world; sorrow is then a part of love, and love does not seek to throw it off.—George Eliot.

HALL CAINE'S BOOK

FATHER VAUGHAN'S CRITICISM

Speaking on Sunday evening, Sept. 29, at St. Mary's, Douglas, Isle of Man, on the inner life of the Catholic Church, Father B. Vaughan referred by special request to Mr. Hall Caine's latest novel. He said he thought it was a pity Mr. Hall Caine did not confine his writings to scenes and situations connected with the Isle of Man, about which he had expert knowledge, and where he was at home. Unfortunately, when he made excursions into the realms of the Catholic Church the Laird of Geesba Castle seemed to be off his bearings in a foreign land. It was quite curious to come across a man professing to be the intimate friend "of the foremost of the Catholic clergy" exhibiting such startling ignorance of Catholic doctrine and Catholic practices. Fancy a Pope wasting time talking platitudes and sermonizing a simple girl on her first visit to him. And how unlikely that he should be afraid of being overwhelmed and of fainting in his presence. Continuing, Father Vaughan said that Mr. Caine had presented them with almost a caricature of a Pope, he was not fortunate in his portraits of cardinals and bishops. His pictures were out of drawing and untrue to life. The bishop who so often appeared on the scene had no single trait or characteristic of an Irish prelate. Instead of being a sound theologian and a man of common sense, the novelist made him out to be weak in theology and weaker still in the sense. Mr. Caine's bishop droned out platitudes and indulged in preaching at Mary O'Neill as persistently as the Holy Father himself.

Then there were priests brought upon the stage. Of Father Giovanni, and of his kissing girls under the mistletoe, and running off with a nun, Father Vaughan said that the only thing he could say was that he did not see what purpose such scandals served. Perhaps they might help the sale of the book; they certainly did not help to prove Mr. Caine's contention that he was a friend and admirer of Catholics. Then there was Father Dan, who was made to surpass both Pope and prelates in preaching rim-garole piety to Mary O'Neill. Like the rest of the clergy, Father Dan, instead of helping the girl, quoted catechism to her, neglected his duty. Small blame to that vulgar Lord Raa for treating him as a noddle.

NUNS AND NUNNERIES

Father Vaughan said there was some excuse for the Prophet of Douglas not knowing much about Popes and Prelates, but there was none for his altogether absurd misrepresentation of nuns and their ways. He did not seem even to know the difference between "cloistered nuns" and "sisters not enclosed." What in the name of religious propriety was a reverend mother of an enclosed order doing in the Ploagh Inn? Surely there was no place for her to stay at, even supposing she was such an unmitigated fool as to try and drive the unfortunate fallen girl Mary into the convent.

Father Vaughan said the scene between the reverend mother and the sick girl was grotesque, ridiculous, and altogether impossible. Such sanctimonious and unctuous scenes as were described by Mr. Caine had no place among Catholics. Nuns did not go to a sickroom singing benediction services and crying out "Ora Pro Nobis." Mr. Caine's scenes with nuns were too impossible even to be humorous. Ought he not to know that convents were not founded to be reformatories for the fallen nor refuges for imbeciles? Nunneries were set up for women who wanted to consecrate their lives to the service of God and their neighbor. The Almighty had excellent taste, said the speaker, and when He gave to a girl a vocation to religious life His choice usually fell on the brightest, sweetest, and most capable girl in the family. Father Vaughan wanted to know how Sister Mildred of the Little Sisters of the Poor came to be "fixed up," of all places, in Piccadilly. He always thought the Little Sisters lived in community only. He feared Mr. Caine was no more reliable an authority about religious congregations and their ways of life than he was about the Catholic services of Holy week or about the ritual of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. When Mr. Caine wanted "copy" he started a Benediction service, or intoned the "De Profundis," or sang both first and second vespers, followed by "Laudate Dominum" and closing, of course, with the "De Profundis." Quite marvellous was the author's devotion to the psalm "Out of the Depths." He opened his first and closed his last chapter with it, informing the public, through Mary O'Neill, that the most beautiful of the services of our Church began with it. Here Father Vaughan paused and exclaimed, I wonder what service it is! Mary O'Neill, Father Vaughan contended, was neither an Irish Catholic nor a Manx Non-conformist, but an output of the two—a contrivance of Mr. Caine's own creative genius. Outside the novelist's latest story there never lived such a queer embodiment of virtue and vice, of cant and hysteria, as Mary. Truth to tell, said Father Vaughan, Mr. Caine like Miss Corelli, had yet to learn his limitations. His portraits of priests and nuns done for his last book no more resemble the real thing than did a German oleograph an Italian master.

THE MARRIAGE PROBLEM

The speaker said it did not, after all, much matter about Mr. Caine's mistake regarding persons and their

ways. But he was concerned to find a man writing about the marriage tie in the Catholic Church without taking the trouble to master its meaning. Besides, before giving a case to illustrate the hardships which indissolubility might involve, the writer first of all should have made sure that there was no doubt it was a genuine case, with no direct impediment to invalidate the marriage. It was a mistake for Mr. Caine to imply that nuns ought to instruct girls about the rights and duties of married life, but it was a greater mistake still for him to have soiled his book with the scene of a man demanding his marital right coarsely, grossly.

Father Vaughan said the faults committed by Mr. Caine in "The Woman Thou Gavest Me" were not the faults of technique only, but faults betraying ignorance of the fundamental principles of the Catholic Church. It was difficult to find excuses for them. If the author did not care to consult any one of his many friends foremost in the Church, he might, at any rate have questioned someone of the children going to Saint Mary's Catholic School, Douglas. Any one of them, of the upper standards, could have put him right where he had gone hopelessly wrong. In writing about the Catholic Church Mr. Hall Caine was as impossible as Miss Marie Corelli writing about the human soul. The one wanted to patronize the historic Church, the other to enlighten the British Association.

As for Mr. Hall Caine's position in the literary world, Father Vaughan said it was not his province to estimate that. Already he had won his own unique place here, and the present volume would undoubtedly hold him to it. It was an exponent of Catholic belief that the writer came within the speaker's purview. When he found Catholic pearls had been stolen and dropped in the gutter for the man in the street to pick up and play marbles with, he felt that, as a Catholic priest, he was justified in rising up and crying out "Stop Thief!"

Father Vaughan said never in any part of the world had he come across a group of such rapid, inane, and deadly dull nincompoops as the group of Catholics created for Mr. Hall Caine's latest novel. When he put the book down after perusing it he felt he had been following a love story got up for a picture-drame. The title of the book ought to have been "The Woman Thou Gavest Me Not."

THE LAST-MINUTE CATHOLIC

The man who waits until the last minute to make his peace with God, usually waits too long. When the last minute comes, his enfeebled mind and will are generally too far gone to conceive or carry out a thought of contrition. "As a man lives, so does he die." Nevertheless there are exceptions. God in His mercy does occasionally grant to a dying sinner time to repent. A recent case is reported from France which has a pathetic side. M. Abadie, the mayor of Theil, on his deathbed bethought him of his scandalous, un-Catholic life, and in the presence of witnesses made the following retraction to the pastor: "Monsieur le Cure, I know my situation from the religious point of view. Divorced, and re-married civilly, I have lived in flagrant opposition to the holy laws of the Church. But, all the while, despite my error, I remained a Christian in belief. I am not an atheist; I wish to die as a

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Christian, a penitent Christian. And if, despite my promise to repair the past in any measure possible, it is not considered proper, to bring my body into the church after my death, I pray my brother here present to put a cross on my coffin, and have me pass at least before the door of my church.

In view of this attempt to repair the past, the wish of this particular last minute Catholic was more than fulfilled. He was buried with the rites of the Catholic Church which he had so long scandalized, but back to which, as to a mother, God's grace had led him before he died.—Sacred Heart Review.

"THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"

"As it was with Christ, so it is today with the Church," said Cardinal O'Connell speaking at a recent meeting of the Federation of Catholic societies of Boston. "His enemies poisoned the minds of the people; they vilified Him, they misrepresented Him, they distorted His every word, they misconstrued His every act. He gave His strength to doing good—and the malice of His enemies so lied about Him, so maligned Him that in the end they killed Him. If they had only examined facts for themselves, if they had only believed what they saw, Christ would have brought them peace and eternal happiness."

"The people, however, are ever the same. They often allow themselves to be the victims of the malice, the envy and the jealousy of others; they know that they, who blind them with false words and embittered them with lies."

"Christ's prayer revealed it all when He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The prayer of the Church for those who in ignorance assail her is the same—they know not what they do. But we must make them know what they do if only to save them from themselves and from those who are animated not by ignorance, but by designing malice."

"Federation is making the Church better and more widely known to Catholics, that they may glory in her glory—to the rest that they may love her and respect her even if they do not embrace her."

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