

atheist, I practically a parvert. But when our child was born and he refused to have it baptized my slum-boring faith began to rebel. One night I came from the theater, after a grand success, to find my child dead—and unbaptized! That was my last appearance. I became ill; he would not let me return to the stage—and here I am.

"But does he not relent?"

"On the contrary, he is more insistent. I argued at last, finally gave it up, and am now settled down into an obedient, loving wife."

"But your soul, Alice."

"Never at peace, Josie, and that is why I am going back to the stage. My voice is better than ever, and it will give me something to think about. But I detain you. I will ask my husband, though I fear he will refuse."

She ascended the stairs slowly, thinking deeply and formulating her argument. Dr. Johnson was reading when she entered his study, but quickly laid aside his book, as if to conceal it.

"Oh, it's you, Alice. You startled me."

"And now I will startle you still more. Mrs. Dillon, my old convent companion—you remember our charming hostess at Naples—comes to press me to sing."

"Sing where, Alice?"

"At St. Jerome's church."

"Roman Catholic, of course."

"Yes."

"You know, dear, I do not approve of such things. How can you desire to mingle with such people?"

"You are so proud, Herbert, and this is the season of humility."

"Of humility?"

"Yes, it is the season of the Babe of Bethlehem." She wondered at her boldness as she spoke. "It is Christmas, when all differences should be forgotten. Herbert, may I not ask a small favor from you now?"

"For this one, Alice, yes. I see you are still sighing for Egypt. You may tell Mrs. Dillon yes."

She could scarcely believe her ears. Was he relenting? Or was it the presence in his house of Mrs. Dillon and the fear that he would seem bigoted? She could not tell. She only knew that hitherto he had railed at God and religion as hypocrites, and now—she could not explain it, but a smile was forced upon her face as she rejoined Mrs. Dillon.

To Alice Johnson it was the most beautiful Christmas morning she had seen for many years. She was in feeling a girl again as she stood waiting for the car to take her to church. It seemed to Dr. Johnson as he came down the stairs that she had never looked so beautiful, so happy, since the gala night at the Metropolitan when a great city gave homage to the American nightingale.

"I wish you a great success this morning, Alice. The revelation will come from the wrong part of the church today."

"Thank you, Herbert, but revelations do not come from sinners."

"I do not so classify you."

"But I do; a Catholic who is false to her conscience can hardly be called a saint."

He laughed, but there was no ring of merriment in the sound.

"These are serious thoughts for a merry Christmas, Alice. But really your voice will astonish them today. I'd like to see your triumph."

"Why not come, then?" she asked, timidly.

"It's against my principles, dear. But here's your car. Good-by."

He stood at the door till the car disappeared down the long driveway. Then he returned to his study, and again took up the book that fascinated him. It was Father Faber's "Bethlehem."

"Whatever Marx told me to read this for, it beats me," he said to himself, "yet I confess I am interested. What should she say if she knew that two atheists like Marx and myself are reading pious literature? Well, it's peculiar." He read on from where he had stopped when his wife came to make her strange request, but his heart was running after a car, bearing to a despoiled temple all that he held dear. In vain he tried to be interested in the book, and after a little while he dropped it, and summoning a servant, asked:

"Has Jones returned from the church yet? Yes? Well, tell him to drive around for me. 'Adeste Fideles'—unconsciously he sang the old hymn as he prepared to go out.

"To St. Jerome's church."—"Yes," he repeated to the man who stood amazed, doubting if he heard aright. "Can't a man go to church if he wants to?" But he was forced to smile when he entered the car, as he recalled the expression on the chauffeur's face.

No one noticed the wealthy Dr. Johnson as he took a seat in the last pew; he did not come to court notice, and besides he would have a better vantage ground to observe the effect of his wife's solo. He sat stolidly while others knelt, an unintentionally cynical smile upon his handsome face at all this apparent mummery and hypocrisy. He smiled as he heard the unusual voice of the priest—poor Father McGee was never noted for his musical attainments—he sneered at the efforts of the small choir to render Gounod's great Mass, he thought the sermon long and tedious, yet he was conscious of little till the offertory, and then he was all attention, for she was singing.

It was the "Holy Night," with the Latin words which old Lustrini had arranged to the beautiful melody. It was her voice, beautifully sweet as

ever, and yet so unlike. There was a sentiment in it, a passion there he had never heard before. He had heard her in opera, on the concert stage, and he had wondered at her talent. Then it was the voice of an artist, but here in the little church it seemed like the voice of an angel, with a joy, a pathos beyond description. A sigh escaped from him as the last notes died away; he was trembling, he knew not why. Her voice had gone down into his soul with a pleading, a touch of heart-break in it that filled him with a dread, a fear lest he had been unjust to her, unjust to himself, unjust to the dead child, in all his pride of life, in his disdain of such common notions as the responsibility of a creature. He smiled at his thoughts, but there was no longer a sneer upon his lips as the bell of the Sanctus sounded, and he knelt with the others to await the great Mystery.

Dr. Johnson paced up and down the vestibule of the church after the congregation had dispersed. He had been oblivious of the glances of the happy throng that had passed him as he sat in the last pew, wondering at his own heart and all that had transpired there within the last hour. He was waiting for her, as impatient to see her as if they had been separated for years. Yet she did not come. She had not gone home, for the car was still outside. He would go for her and surprise her. He ascended the dark stairway quietly. Yes, she was there. She was kneeling with her head bowed on her hands, and—! It smote his heart to see it she was weeping.

"Alice."

The woman started at the half-whispered sound, and looked in astonishment at her husband, who came nearer and took her trembling hand in his.

"Alice!" There was an inexpressible tenderness in his voice. "You are weeping—why?" "For all the past, Herbert, for the peace of Christ. He has brought me here today. He demands my heart. You won't take away this peace from me?"

"God forbid, Alice, for that peace is mine, too. Do not question me. I can't explain it. I only know that I was blind and now I see. Come, let us thank Him for it."

And, united indeed, a man and a woman knelt in the place where but a few moments before a woman had sung like an angel.—The Monitor.

GROPING IN THE DARK

The Fortnightly Review of November 15, after giving a short sketch of an international congress of philosophy recently held at Oxford and stated, with the London Universe, that a great progress was noticeable among the scholars from the atheism and materialism of twenty years ago to views more in conformity with religion, dismissed the subject with this remark: "It is a pity that sincere men should thus grope in the dark, but it is a matter of thanksgiving that they are even groping."

This groping in the dark, characteristic of non-Catholic philosophy on a growing scale ever since the Reformation, is owing to the extinction of some very important lights. The first light extinguished was the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, the second the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture.

But what has the denial of the Church and of the Bible to do with the fate of philosophy? Is not philosophy a science of the natural order depending on the light of reason alone? It is true, indeed, that philosophy is concerned with truth of the natural order and expects us to accept none of its conclusions on faith, but at the same time its subject matter is both beyond the horizon of the senses and happens to coincide, to a large extent, with the domain of knowledge that appears in full splendor in the light of Revelation. Those philosophers, therefore, who shut out the light of Revelation are like men who attempt to decipher a difficult manuscript in the light of the moon while they might have the use of the light of the sun. Is it astonishing that, under such untoward circumstances, they are making mistakes or are hesitating when no mistakes or no hesitations have no misgivings at all?

Besides, if these modern philosophers merely ignored the light of Revelation their plight would be bad enough. For is it not a pitiful handicap to be compelled to work in the twilight when you might have at your disposal the flashing light of day? But the real tragedy of the situation lies in this that these philosophers have a positive distrust of the teachings of Revelation and perversely believe that they must find the truth in a different direction. Hence they are worse off than the old pagan philosophers who had an open mind for all truth and no antagonism against a divine revelation to lead them on a false track in their researches. And, as a matter of fact, we find much more sense and much less nonsense in Plato and Aristotle than in the average modern philosopher.

However, it is gratifying to notice that these philosophers are beginning to realize the bankruptcy of their philosophy. May we not, perhaps, discern in their former aberrations and their gradual return to the truth the working of that Divine Providence which St. Paul unveils before our astonished eyes in his Epistle to the Romans? God left both the unbelieving Gentiles and unbelieving Jews to themselves that in their voluntary estrangement from

God they might find out, by sad experience, their proper insufficiency, and thus become disposed the more sincerely to return to their God.—S. in The Guardian.

A DESIRE

Oh, to have dwelt in Bethlehem
When the star of the Lord shone
To have sheltered the holy wander-
ers
On that blessed Christmas night;
To have kissed the tender wayworn
feet
Of the Mother undefiled,
And, with reverent wonder and deep
delight,
To have tended the Holy Child!

Hush! such a glory was not for
thee;
But that care may still be thine;
For are there not little ones still to
aid
For the sake of the Child divine?
Are there no wandering Pilgrims
now,
To thy heart and thy home to take?
And are there no mothers whose
weary hearts
You can comfort for Mary's sake?
O to have knelt at Jesus' feet,
And to have learnt this heavenly
lore!

To have listened the gentle lessons
He taught
On the mountain, and sea, and
shore!
While the rich and the mighty knew
Him not,
To have meekly done His will—
Hush! for the worldly reject Him
yet,
You can serve and love Him still.
Time cannot silence His mighty
words,
And though ages have fled away,
His gentle accents of love divine
Speak to your soul today.

O to have soled the weeping one
Whom the righteous dared despise!
To have tenderly bound up her scat-
tered hair,
And have dried her tearful eyes!
Hush! there are broken hearts to
soothe,
And penitent fears to dry,
While Magdalen prays for you and
them,
From her home in the starry sky.
O to have followed the mournful
way
Of those faithful few forlorn!
And grace, beyond even an angel's
hope,
The Cross for our Lord have borne!
To have shared in His tender
mother's grief,
To have wept at Mary's side, as
to
have lived as a child in her home,
and then
In her loving care have died!

Hush! and with reverent sorrow
still,
Mary's great anguish share;
And learn, for the sake of her Son
divine,
Thy cross, like His, to bear.
The sorrows that weigh on thy soul
unite
With those which thy Lord has
borne,
And Mary will comfort thy dying
hour.
Nor leave thy soul forlorn.
O to have seen what we now adore
And, though veiled to faithless sight,
To have known, in the form that
Jesus wore,
The Lord of Life and Light!
Hush! for He dwells among us still,
And a grace can yet be thine,
Which the scoffer and doubter can
never know—
The Presence of the Divine.
Jesus is with His children yet,
For His word can never deceive;
Go where His lowly altar rises
And worship and believe.

THE AGNOSTICISM OF THE PIOUS

The little ironies of life puzzle the simple minded and give great food to the humorous; but the open and logical contradictions often make the sensitive despair, especially when one finds one's self accepting these contradictions as part of one's temperament and being greatly surprised when they are pointed out. A robust pious, for example, seems to be an American trait. You find piety among men in other countries of course; but I do not think there is any country in the world where you would find a gentleman of great business experience, standing high in what are called "financial circles," not an "intellectual by any means or a "contemplative," telling you that he could not go to the opera on one night a week because he always spent the hour from nine to ten in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in his parish church in New York!

In France, a man who would say a thing like this would be set down as a bigot; but this man made his excuse as a matter of course and everybody at the table, half of them were non-Catholics, accepted it as a matter which was his own reasonable and legitimate business. In Italy, only a very pious and distinguished noble would have dared do it, and it would have been there set down by the other guests as a suitable expression of a fading traditionalist. In Austria, it might have been done by a very distinguished person, but even there, it would have been looked on as a breach of taste, and rather an unnecessary parading of private devotion. In the United States, the gentleman explained his occupation as a matter of course. It must be admitted that, for one-half of the

guests at the table an announcement that one of them could not go to the opera because he wanted to get up early and chat with the top of a Turkish Mosque would have excited no more interest. Somebody might have asked whether the Mosque was on Fifth Avenue or not, and wonder might have been expressed that the Turks had been so extravagant as to build a house of worship during the present reign of high prices for bricks and mortar!

The gentleman who made this assertion was not one of a small group; he represented much more than a small group of men, who have grown accustomed to take their religion in a public vehicle, or to bleed themselves ostentatiously at a public banquet; but when it comes to announcing part of their daily routine, which means the spending of a certain time in meditation, they do not see the necessity of concealment. It is simply a matter of course with them that at least an hour every day should be given to self-examination and thanksgiving.

All the disciples of the New Thought recommend this practice; the late Mr. Emerson believed it necessary to the interior life. The Rev. Dr. W. T. Manning of Trinity Church, New York, constantly tells the men of business in the downtown districts that the old church is open to them, and looks with approbation on the stream of people who go into St. Peter's in Barclay Street during the noon hour. "And nobody present at this dinner seemed to think that our really pious friend had made any very great sacrifice in declining to open 'Faith' at the Metropolitan, to spend his hour in complete quiet and adoration."

But we Catholics have, as a rule, neither the frankness, the simplicity nor the experience in the world of our friend. For instance, we all believe in the intercession of the Saints, and each of us no doubt has a Saint to whom he has a special inclination. That this special inclination is tinged with a certain indifference is due very largely to the fact that he has been led to believe, through a lack of knowledge of the real value of his Saint, that he does not really sympathize with the present condition. There is an "honest doubt,"—a quality of agnosticism,—as to whether St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, or St. Peter really understands modern conditions.

To be frank, one feels a better understanding with Abraham Lincoln or perhaps Alexander Hamilton or, if you are really a good Democrat, Andrew Jackson. Of course, you cannot depend on the celestial assistance of these patriots. There is no Dante to tell you, even in a posthumous sense, just where they are. If you know well the Epistles of St. Paul, you cannot but have a feeling that he is very much down to date; but then St. Paul was so evidently ecclesiastical, he might sympathize with your desire to be a Bishop, and so, you cannot help feeling that, if you are a married man, he merely tolerates you. Of course, this is all wrong, it is not agnostic; but it is somewhat agnostic. I have always found St. Paul to be a very good friend in need; and if you are going to trust a Saint at all you must remember that he has the documents before him, the real documents, and that he knows more than you do.

Irishmen, as a rule, swear by St. Patrick; there are some of them who seem to think, though they do not confess it, that they ought to have been made Pope; but, it is remarkable that they seldom pray to him. St. Anthony is much more popular than St. Patrick, as a helper and a confessor, and this neglect of the great Irish Saint by the Irish as a person of understanding is probably due to an unexpressed belief that he knows too much about them! An Italian Saint is likely to overlook the character of who the Celtic might not approve, while St. Patrick might doubt is not peculiar to the Irish in their relations to the Saints.

The Welsh pretend to have a great respect for St. David and the Scots will permit no stone to be cast on the benevolence of St. Andrew; but it is notorious that, since the unfortunate appearance of John Knox, they prefer to look at both these patron Saints from a purely academic point of view. In their hearts they distrust these Saints thoroughly, while they claim them, because they were "Romanists"; the English in their relations with St. George are the most blatant agnostics; they are worse than that, they use the symbol of their great and potent Saint merely for spectacular purposes. St. George and St. Andrew and St. David have with the English, the Welsh and the Scots become merely symbolical, fairy princes, though during one of the battles of the World War some G. S. soldiers testified that St. George was more than this.

It is a sign of a kind of agnosticism to look on the word "pious" as applied to a man as a deadly insult;

one may call a man a liar under certain circumstances, and he will not resent it so quickly as if you called him "pious" in public; and yet Virgil and other Latins had a great respect for the term. It ought to be for the honest believer a title of honor and it has probably degenerated in male public opinion because it has come to represent the ideas of people who are devoted to the luxuries of religion, who sometimes consider its necessities, such as the keeping of the fifty-two Sundays, as rather ordinary and common compared with a series of celebrations in honor of the latest and most fashionable cult, for culte, like that of the Infant of Prague, admirable as they are, come and go; but there is no doubt that their multiplication tends to make piety seem rather less robust and manly. Now, the devotion to St. Joseph, who certainly knew something of the difficulties of the world, is something more than a mere luxury of religion; it implies a manly contemplation of all the essential virtues of modern life. It is not especially attractive to the ascetic, who has the tastes of a recluse, or to the esthetic, who prefers a Saint who wore Gothic vestments. We Catholics, I fancy, are all really pious at heart, and it does seem strange and illogical to be ashamed of being pious. This shame denotes doubt and even agnostic indifference. It is perhaps a protest against the ostentatious show of religion which used to be a kind of cant among the deacons of our separated brethren, a kind of cant which existed among some of our own people about the Court of Louis XIV., which Moliere satirized so acidly in "Tartuffe."

Our Saints are either capable of helping us or not; as there is no doubt that they are capable and willing, let us not dilute our piety with a tinge of illogical agnosticism, but rather win their favor by our childlike confidence in them.—Maurice Francis Egan in America.

NON-CATHOLIC PRAISES WORTH OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

A high tribute to the worth of Catholic priests is paid by a recent non-Catholic visitor to some of the scenes of devastation on the western battle front of the great War. He paid a visit to one of the military cemeteries of the region, and came into close contact with the Catholic clergy, and has written a remarkable tribute to Catholic priests and Catholicism in general.

Writing on "A Village in Flanders" in The Tablet of England, the observer says, in part:

"They are wonderful, those priests. I am not a Catholic, but I know no other branch of Christianity that is so Christian. I spent nine months in close contact with Catholics, and no sect of any religion I have come across so ministers to every imaginable everyday need of humanity. It is all blended into the everyday life, and I have seen no attempt to proselytize beyond their wonderful example."

The writer tells how hospitably he was received and treated by a Catholic clergyman in a devastated part of the war zone, in spite of the very few facilities the Curé had beyond the bare necessities of life.—The Pilot.

GREAT REPUBLIC UNDERSTANDS IRELAND

"But there is another nation that understands Ireland, and has proved that she understands Ireland; whose statesmen have always spoken words of bright encouragement, of tender sympathy, and of manly hope to Ireland in her darkest days; and that nation is the United States of America. . . . In that future, which we cannot see today, but which lies before us, America will be to the whole world what Rome was in the ancient days, what England was but a few years ago: the storehouse of the world, the great ruler—the Pacific ruler—of the destinies of the

whole world, the great manufacturing power, dispensing from out her mighty bosom all the necessities and all the luxuries of life to the whole world around her.—Father Tom Burke, 1872.

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