

COUSINS AND CONVERTS.

"The Beautiful American Nun."

Some weeks ago an American Catholic paper published an extract from the *Personal Reminiscences* of a Protestant gentleman, Judge Crittenden, in which he told the story of the Beautiful American Nun," and the deep impression it had made upon many minds in Vermont, where the Allen family lived. In a recent number of the *American Catholic Quarterly*, Dr. Richard L. Clarke contributes an article on "Our Converts," in which he briefly narrates the wonderful incident, and tells more of the striking conversions which followed Fanny Allen's reception into the Church.

Fanny Allen, the youngest daughter of Vermont's Revolutionary hero, General Ethan Allen, was born on February 10, 1784. While still receiving her education at the hands of a devoted step-father, she was led by an unknown impulse to a temple of religion, of which she knew almost nothing. From that moment, in her heart, she became a Catholic in faith. It was her own secret. She received baptism at the age of twenty-two, at the hands of the Rev. Daniel Barber, afterwards an eminent convert, but at this time a Protestant minister. She soon afterwards, with her parents' consent, went to Montreal, to study French, and a pupil in a Convent School.

Her conversion was sudden; it took place at the gate of the sanctuary-railing in the Convent chapel, where a Sister had sent her to place a vase of flowers before the Blessed Sacrament. Her steps were mysteriously arrested at the gate; three times she attempted to fulfil her mission, and three times she was stopped by an inscrutable impulse. Was she, without an open profession of faith, unworthy to approach the Holy of Holies? She fell upon her knees and adored Christ in the Eucharist. Retiring to an obscure corner of the church, she wept, and when her voice returned to her, she exclaimed: "After this I must give myself to my Saviour." The tidings of her conversion produced intense sensation in her family and she was brought home where the allurements of society, and all the means to which her parents could resort, were used to change her purpose; but in the end her mother accompanied her again on a second visit to the Convent at Montreal. But she took time even then, and had recourse to prayer before making a selection among the many admirable Religious Orders in Montreal. Finally, she entered the Hotel Dieu. She was professed in 1810, her parents attending among the course of people attracted to the chapel. Her parents frequently visited her. Her Convent life was a model of the true Religious. Her physician, an American Protestant, was so impressed by her heroic death, that he himself joined the Church. She died on December 10, 1819. We shall soon see cause for wonder at the many conversions which followed hers in Vermont.

First, there was the conversion of the Barber family. The Rev. Daniel Barber had served two terms as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. He belonged to a large, intellectual, and influential family. Born in Connecticut in 1756, he was reared in the strictest school of Congregationalism. In search of Apostolic succession, he joined the Episcopal Church, and at the age of thirty he was a minister therein, which was about the year 1786. During thirty-two years of Episcopal ministry he was in spirit Catholic; but little was known in Vermont of the Catholic Church. He would make the sign of the Cross, and he deemed nothing unworthy of a Christian which honored Christ. He was present at the Religious profession of Fanny Allen, at Montreal, in 1810,

and was deeply impressed by her heroic faith. In 1812 he visited Bishop Cheverus at Boston—the Bishop Cheverus who was once at our own Tottenham. Many difficulties presented themselves to his mind, and he communicated to his son—the Rev. Virgil Horace Barber, then an Episcopal minister in Northern New York—his doubts, and lent him the books on Catholic doctrine which he was reading. In 1810 Virgil Horace Barber met Father Benedict Joseph Fenwick at New York, and feeling greatly disturbed, communicated to him his doubts and difficulties. He was already married and had a large family. He was a man of fine education and culture. He and his wife, under the instruction and kind advice of Father Fenwick, but under circumstances of appalling sacrifice, became Catholics, and all their children followed.

Daniel Barber, his father, though yet not wholly converted or over his scruples, was at all times honest in his convictions, and he earnestly desired to know the truth and to embrace it. Such was his scrupulosity in changing his religion a second time, and such his desire for study and light, that not only did his son, Virgil Horace, and all his family precede him in entering the Church, but so also did his own wife and other relatives in Vermont. Finally, he, who had led so many others to investigate and embrace the truth saw its full effulgence himself, and in November, 1818, he resigned his parish, and delivered a farewell address to his congregation. He then went to visit his friends in the South, and while there he was received into the Church at Georgetown, where his son, Virgil Horace, who had joined the Society of Jesus, was making his novitiate.

Such were the sentiments of gratitude to God of Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Horace Barber, for the grace of conversion, that each desired to make an entire sacrifice of their lives to Religion; but how could husband and wife be separated, and be received into the Ecclesiastical and Religious state? They consulted their friend, Father Fenwick, of the Society of Jesus, and he informed them that by their mutual consent and by the permission of the Sovereign Pontiff, this could be done; and he cited the case of Lord and Lady Warner, in England, who became converts, and, after making provision for their children, Lord Warner was received into the Society of Jesus, while she took the veil in a Convent on the Continent. It would be extremely interesting to relate the details of this remarkable history, but time and space are not sufficient. The requisite permission and arrangements having been made, the Rev. Virgil Horace Barber was received into the Society of Jesus, made his novitiate at Georgetown College, and after completing his studies, partly in Rome, was ordained a priest in the Society of Jesus in 1822. With the permission of his Superiors in the Society, he was sent to Claremont, the home of the Barbers, to serve as a missionary priest, where he built a church, and announced, with fervor and effect, the truths he had himself embraced. His wife, Mrs. Jorusha Barber, became a Visitation Nun, under the religious name of Sister Mary St. Augustin, at Georgetown Convent. All the children of Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Horace Barber became members of Religious Orders. Their oldest child, Mary Barber, became an Ursuline Nun at Quebec, under the religious name of Sister Mary Benedicta. Mary Abigail Barber also became an Ursuline Nun in the same Convent at Quebec. Susan Barber became an Ursuline Nun in the Convent of that Order at Three Rivers, Canada. Josephine Barber became a Visitation Nun in the Convent of that Order at Mobile, Alabama. The only son of Mr. and Mrs. Barber

became a Jesuit priest, and few students of Georgetown College have not heard of the saintly life of the good and learned Rev. Samuel Barber, S.J. The mother and four daughters remained faithful and devout Nuns to the last, and edified their respective Sisterhoods by their sanctity, their religious obedience, and their angelic virtues.

The Rev. Virgil Horace and the Rev. Samuel Barber were preceptors of Dr. Clarke at Georgetown College, from 1814 to 1818, the former as catechist and teacher of Christian Doctrine, and the latter as Professor of Classics. Both were learned men, but both were even more devout than learned: "I shall never forget the edification I experienced at seeing Father Virgil Horace Barber going to Confession to his own son, whom he always called Father Samuel." The conversion of the Barber family led to the conversion of Mrs. Tyler, sister of the older Barber; also of his nephew, William Tyler, who afterwards became first Bishop of Hartford; and to the conversion of Mr. Kewley, Mr. Ironside, Mr. Colvin White, and several other ministers. In its widespread consequences and fruits, in leading to conversions, the conversion of the Barber family had almost the features of a "movement."—*London Weekly Register*.

Put God in Your Will.

While in the enjoyment of your faculties and when the light of reason guides your actions, ere the shadow of death begins to darken your understanding, make your will. In this record of your wishes name all who are entitled to be remembered. Take time for reflection and ask yourself who should be your heirs in justice as related to or dependent on you, in gratitude because of their participation in assisting you to accumulate and save what you possess. When you have reflected you will decide that God who has endowed you with the qualities that enabled you to be what you are, to possess what you have and who has blessed your efforts, is entitled to be remembered in your will. If you ask how can you give anything to God, your heart and reason if enlightened by religion will tell you that the fatherly protection that cared for you is extended to those who are in need, making them heirs of God to receive what is given to Him. Whosoever shall give them the least gift, even a cup of cold water in Christ's name because they belong to Him, shall give to God and shall be rewarded for this charity in the next life. And if you remember God, through those who are dear to him, they will benefit by your charity and you will have changed your earthly possessions into heavenly treasure and transferred it to a bank in which it will draw interest a hundred fold. Gratitude to God and your own interest should induce you to put your Heavenly Father's name in your will and the best way to do this so that there may be no doubt of your intention and that you may receive merit for your action is to make your will in time when influenced by reason and charitable motives and not by fear.—*Scranton Record*.

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