



REMINISCENCES OF A CONVERT.

Written for the Review.

After having read the other day with much interest one of the bi-monthly publications of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which contained a thrilling account of the martyrdoms of several Catholic missionaries, the ranks of whom are so largely recruited from the devoted sons of France or the French parts of Canada, my thoughts turned to what I had heard and known about missionaries when I was a Protestant child in England.

I remembered certain stories about what had occurred in my own family and, as I pondered, instead of tears filling my eyes at the recollection of dreadful sufferings, I found myself continuing to smile until at last—like good Mother Hubbard's dog of world-wide renown,—I was actually laughing!

It being a wholesome and pleasant thing for people to appreciate what calls forth legitimate merriment, if the good readers of the NORTHWEST REVIEW should feel disposed to share my mirth, I will explain what called it forth, trusting to their kind indulgence, if, in order to make the incidents clear, I have to enter into some domestic details which shall, however, be as brief as possible.

Many years ago an aunt of mine married a clergyman of the Church of England who—it was said—was going to preach the Gospel to the heathen in the Madras Presidency of India.

Having spent his early manhood in that country he spoke three or four of its languages with fluency, which naturally fitted him particularly well for the task he desired to undertake, as far as the matter of being readily understood by his hearers was concerned.

My uncle had considerable natural abilities and good qualities. He was very generous, and remarkably attractive in society. Certain little habits of his early life would hardly have been compatible with severe training for the missionary career. He once told me that he had always worn silk stockings until he was twenty and that it was only at that relatively mature age that he had acquired the art of putting them on for himself!

I remember that in England he used to refuse copper money when offered him as change, not from manifest haughtiness, but because he thought it had probably passed through the hands of very low class people. At last, however, he and his wife found themselves settled at some distance from Madras with a nice church and a very fairly numerous congregation of Protestant converts. Time passed and after a few years the family numbered three children.

Ever since the departure from England my dear mother and her sister had carried on a constant interchange of letters which afforded the greatest pleasure on both sides.

One morning, however, Louisa's fondly expected epistle filled the soul of my poor mother with the utmost distress, she

read it, and reveal it to be sure she understood aright—yes indeed—the words, which almost froze the blood in her veins, were actually there, "we have a Roman Catholic nurse for our dear children." What! the family of the chief, the especially authorized representative of Protestantism, in what should have been its pristine purity, for many miles around, to have admitted into its very bosom an avowed Papist, what could it mean?

If her sister's right principles were giving way on whom indeed was there longer any dependence to be placed on earth?

And how soon children learn! Though naturally it takes years to lay a sound Protestant foundation of truth in a child's mind and heart, what is there that a Roman Catholic cannot in a very few days accomplish when his end is to add another member to his Church?

Happily pen and ink were there to aid my dear mother and save her from becoming well nigh distracted. She placed herself at her writing table and penned a long, affectionate, but decidedly expostulatory letter to my aunt Louisa, strengthening, as she believed, her remonstrances with various texts chosen out of the book of the Revelation of St. John, explained by Dr. Cumming (a very popular writer at that time among ultra evangelical members of the Church of England), who said that he had good reason to know that they were particularly intended by Almighty God to be pointedly uncomplimentary to members of the Catholic Church. Finally the letter was consigned to the Royal mail bags, and my mother sighed when she reflected how long a time must elapse before it could be borne across the wide ocean and arrive at its distant destination.

A reply could not be looked for before the expiration of several weeks and when it came, what would it be?

Was all well in spite of the unaccountable announcement in Louisa's last letter, or had her dear sister's Protestantism been undermined by some treacherous influence, if it were not indeed already wholly wrecked. To increase her fears my mother suddenly remembered having heard of a small Catholic mission about twenty miles from where her brother-in-law's light was shining before the world.

If there was a mission, there must, she thought, often, if not always, be the presence of a priest, a genuine, unmarried Catholic priest, who doubtless went about not,—unfortunately,—roaring, but,—on the contrary—quite silently seeking whom he might pervert.

My mother nearly began a letter of sympathy to a broken hearted husband, because being gifted with a quick and vivid imagination she soon pictured that dear Louisa might already have taken leave of her family and disappeared forever, shorn and veiled, into some inaccessible convent. At last it came, the thin envelope with the Indian stamp, the manifold post marks, with curious names of places, and the well known hand writing. She was to learn the truth! With trembling hand, and almost gasping breath she tore open the cover, gave one penetrating glance—then came the sigh of intense relief—and she whispered, "thank God."

My beloved Sister,—Your dear

affectionate letter so full of precious warnings has just been brought me, and though it is late, I cannot go to bed without writing to relieve your very natural anxiety.

No wonder you ask how it can possibly be that with the large number of native converts which we have the happiness of seeing around us here, we have not chosen one among them to tend our sweet little ones, and the answer I am obliged to give is very sad, to be candid, there is not one, my dear Helen, whom we dare trust. We tried some girls out of our schools, of whom dear Henry thought very highly, but they proved in the end so dangerous for children that we resolved never to run such a risk again.

One of their great failings is, that even after conversion, these native Christians never seem able to understand properly what truth means. Under these distressing circumstances we have been,—very reluctantly—obliged to accept the services of the poor Roman Catholic whom I named. She is completely ignorant, not being able to read having been brought up entirely in the darkness of Popery. Still, unaccountable as it seems, she is a very model of conscientious devotion, and it is an immense comfort to me when we leave home for a few days at a time, to be able to rest satisfied that Monica will treat our dear children just as if I were looking on. It is truly humiliating to have to make such admissions about those to whom the Word of God is an open book, while on the other hand we see a deluded soul, who has never even been taught the necessity of examining the Scriptures for herself, so admirable in all except her idolatry. I need scarcely tell you how persistently we have endeavored to open the poor thing's eyes to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

And my heart has often ached when I have seen the faithful creature, sitting on the ground near the children asleep, watching so tenderly lest a mosquito should get through their curtains, and holding in her hand a string of beads with which she says her prayers, alas! the "vain repetition" so condemned in the Bible.

Oh! Helen, why have we the light and she NOT?

We have tried in vain to explain that true religion consists in simply laying hold of the righteousness of Christ; her benighted mind cannot grasp the comforting thought that faith is everything, and that good works are not necessary for salvation.

These few lines will, I hope quite relieve your anxious heart. Believe me, we both feel as you do.

Ever yours,
LOUISA.

Here I must pass over many years, during which my Aunt Louisa died, and I, by the unmerited mercy of Almighty God, received the grace to become a member of the One Holy Universal Church.

It wounds me to have to write how much my beloved mother mourned over my conversion, she often said that it was the only occasion on which I had ever crossed her wishes. This testimony leaves me at least the consolation of knowing that she must have felt to the last that she was dearer to me than

anyone or anything else on earth—except God.

To return, however, to my story, I had but recently become a Catholic when my uncle arrived in England from India. He had just been made Bishop and my mother entreated him to call on me and endeavor to shake my resolve.

He complied, and the interview opened in a very solemn manner. Between certain formal general remarks which were intended to lead in time to opening a conversation on the real subject of our thoughts, I was exerting my poor brains to the utmost to remember as clearly as possible the most conclusive arguments proving the authority of the Church, as I had delighted to learn them from the masterly pages of the works of Cardinal Wiseman, and I expected, as my uncle had recently written a commentary on the four gospels, that he would test my intelligence to the utmost.

However, the unexpected is said generally to happen and it certainly did in this case, for after some perhaps natural reproaches that I, the wife of a clergyman of the Church of England, should,—he was too polite, I think, to say—have given the enemy cause to blaspheme, but he meant it,—he cried out, in a tone between regret and encouragement: "But, my dear niece, if you wanted to change your religion, why did you not choose one that would have pleased your mother?"

Again years passed, and I must now invite my patient readers to picture a snug drawing room in England where I was sitting one afternoon with my cousin some months after the death of her father, the above mentioned Bishop.

We talked, over our tea, about various things—of her father's second marriage, and about the cut of an elaborate flowing purple cloth morning robe, which he took back to India in order to feel duly episcopal in the privacy of his home, and which his daughter had told me had cost many hours of mental anguish to a distinguished London tailor, and his subordinates, as it was to be made according to the Bishop's special taste and somewhat varying directions. At last the sorely perplexed tradesman had sent a representative to wait on the Bishop to request with all becoming deference that, if it were possible, he might be permitted, if but one glance, at some garment in some way like what would be fortunate enough to meet with his Lordship's approbation, as, notwithstanding many years of experience in various forms of ecclesiastical and other costumes, he had never had the advantage of contemplating any human covering of such ample dimensions as seemed to be desired.

When—to own the truth we had made sufficiently merry over the robe, the conversation changed to another topic, at last, my cousin, who is a woman of what are called very broad views in matters of religion, remarked carelessly "Oh, my father held all those natives together by his personal influence, he had been with them for years, he ruled them like a little Pope, he was kind, and exceedingly liberal.

"I am told by those who can judge, and I expect myself, that now they will gradually fall away more or less,—but, by the

way, of course, M., you have heard about my father's monument?"

"No; have his people raised a monument to his memory?"

She laughed: "My father was convinced that they would most certainly wish to do so, and it grieved him to fancy the poor natives denying themselves even perhaps in food to raise money in his honour

"After some consideration he came to the conclusion that the only sure way of obviating the difficulty would be for him to set aside a certain sum of money in his will to be applied to erecting a monument for himself, and this he did."

Whether the good Bishop was as considerate to those on whom the onerous task would have to fall of composing his epitaph as he was to those who, he presumed, would starve to erect him a monument, and whether he therefore duly prepared some suitable remarks on himself, I never heard, but if his daughter's surmises were correct, many of his friends and admirers shared, as to the constancy, or rather inconstancy, of many of the converts on whom he had loyally spent some forty years of the best labour he knew how to give, one asks oneself with sadness what was probably the actual number of souls added to the Kingdom of Heaven through his instrumentality.

"He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."

A GREAT SUCCESS.

CATHOLIC CLUB'S CARD PARTY
MOST SUCCESSFUL EVER
HELD IN THE CITY.

The Catholic Club held last night in Friendship hall the most successful card party ever held in the city. It was something of an experiment to carry out a progressive pedro party on such a large scale, but notwithstanding, the attendance far exceeded the expectations of the committee. The arrangements were so perfect that the affair passed off without a hitch. At the close of the evening's play it was found that the ladies' prize had been won by Mrs. P. Marion, whilst the second was taken by Mrs. Ross. W. Maloney carried off the gentleman's prize. Following the cards a light supper was served and the entertainment was then brought to a pleasant close with a choice programme of vocal and instrumental music in which the following took part: Mr. Morley, H. Brownrigg, D. Cameron, Bruce Eggo and Miss Holroyd. The company dispersed in the small hours of the morning with hearty thanks to president Deegan and the executive committee of the club who had arranged the affair. Before leaving "Soldiers of the Queen" and the national anthem were heartily sung by all present.—Morning Telegram, Feb. 22.

Monsignor Ritchot is suffering from an attack of la grippe, but is rather better than he was last Friday.

General debility and a "run down" state calls for a general tonic to the system. Such is the D. & L. Emulsion. Builds you up, increases your weight, gives health. Made by Davis & Lawrence Co., Ltd.