

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Third Sunday in Lent.

HALF-HEARTED CHRISTIANS.

He that is not with me is against me (Gospel of the Day.)

These words, my dear brethren, like many others spoken of our Blessed Lord, may be interpreted in various ways. They may be understood to mean that he who is not with Christ, by being united to His true flock, who does not belong to the one Church which He has founded, is injuring the cause of Christ, is persecuting and hampering His enemies, or, in other words, that Protestants and heretics in general, zealous Christians though they may seem to be, are really hurting Christianity about as much as they help it, if not more. And it is plain enough to us that this is true. If there had never been any heresies and schisms in the Church, we cannot doubt that there would have been now few nations not Christian.

But this, true though it may be, seems to have little practical bearing for us. We are not heretics or schismatics, and I hope that we have no inclination to be so. Still we must remember that bad Catholics do about as much harm to the work of Christ and His Church in the world as heretics. In fact, there would never have been any heretics had there not been bad Catholics to begin with.

But, after all, it does not seem that our Lord is speaking so much of heretics, or of bad Catholics, when He says: "He that is not with me is against me." For He goes on to tell us that "the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there: and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

The meaning of this is plain enough. It is that a man cannot give up a bad life and then remain betwixt and between, neither bad nor good. His soul cannot stay empty, swept, and garnished. He must keep the love of God in it; he must have good thoughts and do good works, or the devil will come back, take possession of the empty soul, and make it worse than it was before.

So this gives a new sense to the words, "He that is not with me is against me." He that is not a real good Christian, trying to live for the glory of God, and to do the work for which God has put him in the world, will be a bad one before long, if he is not already. We cannot lie low and shrink the duties which belong to us as Christians and as Catholics. We must be God's servants, and live in such a way as to be known as such, or we shall begin again to serve His enemy.

Let us take an instance, and you will see well enough what I mean. A young man or woman has been going with bad company, who, though perhaps they call themselves Catholics, are a disgrace to the name, and has joined with them in all their vile conversations and sinful actions. Now, too many of those who have been living in this way seem to think that after their confession and Communion they can go back to this company and still avoid remark; that nobody will have occasion to say that they are pious, or notice any change in their life; that they can keep all right in God's sight, and also in that of their bad companions; that they can avoid doing any harm, and still do no good.

Let such remember these words: "He that is not with me is against me." If you want to stay in the grace of God, you must hate sin, and love virtue; and if you really do this your life and conversation will show that such is the case. You must be a friend of Christ and an enemy of the devil and of all his works, and not only be willing but proud to be known as such. If you will not do this our Lord will not have you or keep you. Choose, then, which side you will take: do not fancy that you can take neither. If you try to steer a middle course, and live an empty and unprofitable life, neither one thing nor the other, you will soon slip back just where you were before.

Put Them in Jail.

It has been our opinion all along that good would result from the new Know-nothingism represented by organizations like the A. P. A. It has given occasion to a great many prominent non-Catholics to defend the Church while denouncing bigotry; and their audiences, for the most part, could never have been reached by Catholic apologists. There are reasons, furthermore, for thinking that Know-nothingism will never again disturb the peace of our country, once the present storm of fanaticism has abated. A bill has been introduced into the Kentucky Legislature, prohibiting the organization in that State of any society whose object is so discriminate between Christians on account of their religion. The penalty is a fine of \$500 to \$1,000 or imprisonment from six to twelve months, or both. And there is no reason why the same prohibition should not, sooner or later, become a law in every State of the Union—Ave Maria.

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WM. WRIGHT, Wallaceburg, Ont.

A MAY-DAY GIFT.

By MARY CATHERINE CROWLEY. IV.

"Just think, Larry!" said Abby to her brother, when he came home after a game of ball. "I'm to be Queen of May?"

"You!" he cried, in a disdainful tone. "Yes, indeed! And why not? I'm sure I don't see why you should look so surprised. I've been chosen because I can speak and act the best in our division."

"But the Blessed Virgin is Queen of May," objected Larry. "Oh, of course!" Abby said. "But this will be only make believe, you know. We are going to have a drama, and I'm to be Queen—that is all."

"I should think you would not even want to play at taking away what belongs to the Blessed Virgin," persisted Larry, doggedly. "She is the Queen of May, and no one ought to pretend to be Queen besides."

"Oh, you silly boy! There is no use in trying to explain anything to you!" cried Abby, losing patience.

For the next half hour she was not so talkative, however, and after a while she stole away; for in spite of her petulance at Larry's words, they had suggested a train of thought which made her want to be by herself. She went up to the oratory and stayed there a long time, amid the twilight shadows. Finally the ringing of the supper bell put an end to her musings. She knelt a new minute before the statue, and then ran down to the dining-room. She was very quiet all the evening; and, to Mrs. Clayton's surprise, the family heard no more of the May drama.

The next day, at school, Abby waylaid Marion Gaines in one of the corridors. "I want to speak to you," she began.

"Well, what's the matter, Abby? What makes you so serious this morning?" inquired Marion.

"Nothing—only I've been thinking about the May piece, and I want to tell you that I'd rather not be Queen," faltered the little girl.

"You'd rather not be Queen!" repeated Marion, in astonishment. "Why not? I thought you were delighted to be chosen."

"So I was—yesterday," the little girl hastened to say; for she would not have Marion think she did not appreciate the compliment.

"Then what has caused you to change your mind so suddenly?" Marion went on. "What a fickle child you are, to be sure!"

"It is not that," stammered poor Abby, a good deal confused; "but—but—well, you know the Blessed Virgin is Queen of May, and it seems as if we ought not even to play at having any other Queen."

Marion stared at her incredulously. "And so missy has a scruple about it!" she said, smiling.

"No," returned Abby; "but my brother Larry thought so. And if it looks like that to a little boy like him, I think I would rather not pretend to be Queen."

"A May piece without a Queen! Why, it would be like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out!" declared Marion. "Did you not think that if you declined the part we might give it to some one else?"

Abby colored and was silent. This had, indeed, been the hardest part of the struggle with herself. But there was an element of the heroic in her character. She never did anything by halves; like the little girl so often quoted, "when she was good, she was very, very good."

Marion stood a moment looking at her. "And do you really mean," she said at length, "that you are ready to give up the role you were so delighted with yesterday, and the satisfaction of queening it over your companions if only for an hour?—that you are willing to make the sacrifice to honor the Blessed Virgin?"

With some embarrassment, Abby admitted that this was her motive.

A sudden thought occurred to Marion. "Then, Abby, you shall!" she said. "I'll arrange it; but don't say a word about it to any one. Let the girls think you are to be Queen, if they please. Why, missy," she went on, becoming enthusiastic, "it is really a clever idea for our drama. We shall have a lovely May piece, after all."

Marion hastened away, intent upon working out the new plan which her quick fancy had already sketched in outline. To be sure, she and Ellen had devised a different one, and agreed that each should write certain scenes. Ellen had taken the first opportunity that morning to whisper that she had devoted to the drama all the previous evening and an hour before breakfast. Marion, indeed, had done the same.

"But it will not make any difference. We can change the lines a little," she said to herself, after reading the manuscript, which Ellen passed to her at the hour of German study—a time they were allowed to take for this particular composition.

Ellen, however, thought otherwise. "What! another plan for the May piece!" she said, when Marion mentioned the subject. "Why, see all I've written; and in rhyme, too!"

"But it can be altered without much trouble," explained her friend. "No, it can't. You will only make a hodge-podge of my verses," she answered, excitedly. "I do think, Marion, that once we agreed upon the plan, you ought to have kept to it, instead of changing everything just because of the notion of a little girl like Abby Clayton. Here I've been work-

ing hard for nothing—it was just a waste of time!"

Marion pleaded and reasoned, but without avail. Ellen's vanity was wounded. She chose to imagine that her classmate, and sometimes rival, did not care whether her lines were spoiled or not.

"No, no!" she reiterated. "I'll have nothing to do with your new plan. You can get up the whole piece yourself."

"At least give me what you have written," urged Marion. "We are so hurried, and the children ought to have their parts as soon as possible."

But Ellen remained obdurate. Marion consulted the others of the class, and, after some discussion, they decided in favor of the later design. For the next few days she devoted every spare moment to the work. By the end of the week she not only finished the portion she had been expected to write, but also much of what Ellen was to have done; and the parts were distributed among the children. There were still wanting, however, the opening address and a dialogue, both of which Ellen had completed.

"Oh dear," cried Marion, "that address of Ellen's is so pretty and appropriate! If she would only let us have it!" As we planned it together, if I write one the principal ideas will be the same; and then, likely as not, she will say I copied from hers. How shall I manage?"

Ellen remained on her dignity. She would have nothing to do either with Marion or the drama, and kept aloof from her classmates generally.

The intelligence had spread through the school that the two graduates had differed over the May piece. The exact point in dispute was not known; however; for Marion wished to keep her design a secret, and Ellen would not condescend to explain. In fact, she did not clearly understand it herself; for she had been too vexed at the proposal to change the plan to listen to what Marion said upon the subject.

During this state of affairs poor Abby was very unhappy. She felt that she was the cause of all the trouble; and it seemed hard that what she had done with the best of intentions should have made so much ill-feeling. This disastrous occurrence was followed by another, which made her think herself a very unfortunate little girl.

As has already been explained, it was Larry's delight to keep always a few blossoms in his pretty vase before the beloved statue of the Blessed Virgin. This he attended to himself, and no one ever interfered with the vase. On the day referred to Abby had been rehearsing with Marion, and thus it happened that they walked part of the way home together. Marion stopped at a florist's stand and bought a little bunch of arbutus.

"Here, put this on your altar," she said, giving it to Abby. She had heard all about the oratory.

When the little girl reached the house Larry had not yet come in, and the flower had not been renewed that day.

"I'll surprise him," she said to herself. "How pleased he will be to see this nice little bouquet!"

She took the vase, threw away the withered violets it contained, replaced them with the May-flowers, and put it back. But, alas! being taken up with admiring the delicate pink arbutus, and inhaling its fragrance, she did not notice that she had set the vase in an unsteady position. The next moment it tipped over, fell to the floor, and lay with an element of the heroic in her character. She never did anything by halves; like the little girl so often quoted, "when she was good, she was very, very good."

"Oh, what will Larry say!" she cried, wringing her hands. "He thought so much of that vase! What shall I do?"

While she was thus lamenting she heard Larry's voice. He was coming straight up to the oratory. In another minute he threw open the door; he had a little cluster of buttercups in his hand, and was so intent upon putting them in the vase that he was half-way across the room before he noticed the broken pieces on the floor. When he did so he stopped and glared at his sister.

"O Larry," she stammered, contritely, "it was an accident! See! Marion Gaines gave me those lovely May-flowers, and I thought you'd be pleased to have them in your vase. Just as I went to put it back, it fell over. I'm awfully sorry!"

Larry's eyes flashed angrily, and his face grew crimson. "Abby Clayton," he broke out, "you are always meddling! Why can't you let things that don't belong to you alone?"

A storm of reproaches would no doubt have followed, but just then his angry glance turned toward the statue. There stood the image of Our Lady, so meek and beautiful and mild. And there, in a tiny frame at the front of the altar, hung Father Dominic's words of advice: "Try every day to do some little thing to honor our Blessed Mother."

Larry paused suddenly; for his indignation almost choked him. But in that moment of silence he had time to reflect. What should he do to-day to honor the Blessed Virgin, now that his little vase was broken? He looked again at the statue. The very sight of the sweet face suggested gentler thoughts, and counselled kindness, meekness, and forbearance.

"Well, Abby," he blurted out; "I suppose I'll have to forgive you; but, oh, how I wish I were only six years old, so that I could cry!"

So saying, Larry laid the buttercups at the feet of Our Lady's statue and rushed from the room.

The next day it happened that Ellen discovered Abby in tears at the window of the class-room. Ellen, although quick-tempered and impulsive, was kind-hearted.

"What is the trouble now, child?" she asked, gently taking Abby's hand in hers.

"Oh," sobbed Abby, "I feel so dreadfully to think that you and Marion don't speak to each other? And it's all my fault; because from something I said to Marion, she thought that, instead of taking one among ourselves, it would be much nicer to choose the Blessed Virgin for our May-Queen."

"And was that Marion Gaines' plan?" asked Ellen, in surprise. "Why, yes! But surely she must have told you!" said the little girl.

"I see now that she tried to," replied Ellen, with a sigh at her own impetuosity. "But I was too vexed to listen. I did not really understand before. Dry your tears, Abby; I'll do my best to make amends now. How foolish I've been!" she ejaculated, as Abby ran off in gay spirit. "And how I must have dissatisfied the other girls! I must try to make up for it."

She found the verses she had written; and, on looking them over, concluded that, after all, they needed only the change of a few words here and there. Then she wrote a little note to Marion, as follows:

"DEAR MARION—I did not realize until to-day what you wanted to do about the May piece. If my verses would be of any use at this late hour, you are welcome to them. I should like to do all I can to help now, to make up for lost time."

"ELLEN."

Marion gladly accepted the overtures of peace. The May drama was duly finished, the rehearsals went on smoothly, and on the last day of the Month of Mary the performance took place.

It had been rumored in the school that Abby was not to be Queen, and there was much speculation as to which of the little girls had been selected instead. As the drama progressed, and the plan was unfolded, the audience was taken completely by surprise. Everyone had been eager to see the May-Queen; but there was a general murmur of appreciation when, at the close, the curtain rose upon a beautiful tableau; a shrine glittering with many lights, in the midst of which was enthroned a lovely image of Our Lady, at whose feet the children laid their crowns of flowers—a crown to honor each transcendent virtue—and paid their homage to their beautiful Queen of May.

A few days later Father Dominic called at the Claytons.

"Well, children," he asked, incidentally, "have you done anything to please the Blessed Virgin during the past month?"

Abby and Larry were silent, but their mother kindly answered: "I think they have tried, Father Dominic. And as for your lovely May-Day gift, the presence of the statue seems to have drawn down a blessing upon the house."

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