

"Make the Sign of the Cross!" I commanded in an angry tone. "I have made it," he answered, firmly. "Swing him up to the arm of your tree!" I roared, now furious, but still with no intent to bring the incident to a fatal ending. The soldiers seized him. "Hang him!" I continued. "He is not worth the powder and shot you would waste upon him." Then, with a less angry voice, I turned to him again, saying, "One more chance. Make the Sign of the Cross in the manner I have told you." "He shook his head. "I determined to conquer him, I cried out— "Wait, men—wait! Do not spoil a rope with him. Take him to the river. "The soldiers prepared to obey. I led the way. It was bitterly cold weather—the ice was two feet thick in the narrow but deep little stream. He came without resistance, standing calmly, with hands folded over his heart, while the soldiers began to break the ice with their heavy boots, finishing the work with the ends of their bayonets. Very soon they had made a hole about twice the thickness of a man's body. "Look!" I exclaimed, catching him by the shoulder and making him bend over the back orifice. "You see that water? You hear how swiftly it is rushing to the sea? Unless you make the Sign of the Cross they will throw you into it, and you will be swept away. And your father and mother will never know what has become of you. "Father and mother I have none," he replied. "But if they were living, they would not, for all the riches of this earth, have had me deny the religion they taught me to revere. And now I say to you, once, and for all, Captain, I shall not make the holy sign either in my fashion or yours. To do the first would only expose it to ridicule; and to do the second would be to me but a mockery. "Boy!" I cried out almost beside myself with rage and that humiliating feeling which comes to one when he sees himself baffled by an apparently insignificant object, "until now I have been playing with you—trying to frighten you; but is so no longer. Unless you make the Sign of the Cross in the manner commanded by his most sacred Majesty, the head of the Russian Church, I swear to you that before five minutes have passed you shall be drowned in that river. "The lad simply shook his head. "Do you deny it at once!" I cried to the two soldiers by whom he was held on either side. "They lifted him from the river bank. "Captain," he said, giving me a swift but penetrating glance, in Purgatory a soul will soon be praying for you. "These were his last words—the next moment the waters closed over him! Father, from that day to this, his dying promise has seldom been out of my mind. Try as I would I could not banish it; the remorse which I felt for my crime served to impress it still more deeply in my memory. It was the darkest deed of a reckless and irreligious life. It is not necessary to relate to you why after a checkered career, I became an incumbent upon me to leave my native country. I came here, taking my mother's name. I had a small income which has served my needs. For several years I have been presumptuous enough to hope that perhaps that pure and faithful soul sent by me too early to its Maker had kept its dying promise. At first I rejected the thought; of late it has served to console me. It has almost become a superstition with me that the poor child whom I murdered is in some sort a Guardian Angel; little appreciated until now, it is true, although for some years past—since I have grown old and have seen the world and myself as they really are—I have got into the way of asking his intercession. "There is no superstition about it," said the priest. "In my opinion, you have been wonderfully favored. I have not the least doubt that the dear child has never ceased to pray for you; although far from purgatory, but in heaven, at the feet of the Master Whom he would not deny. Bless God, my friend, and thank Him for His great mercy. "That is not all," said the old man. "I have long struggled against a desire to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. Two things have restrained me—a reluctance to abandon the faith of my fathers, and the fear that I was entirely unworthy to offer myself. But during the last fortnight I have felt an irresistible impulse to speak to you on the subject. It came, I think, only a couple of days after the time you advised me to make my peace with God. "About the beginning of the month when I was endeavoring to interest the holy souls in your behalf," said the cure. "Will you receive me, Father?" asked the sick man. "All the pains and miseries I have suffered here—and they have not been few—would be insufficient to atone for my wicked life; and all the punishment a wrathful God may see fit to inflict hereafter would be only small satisfaction for my sins. But I wish to make my peace with Him, as it seems to me that the faith which makes such heroic martyrs is the one in which to die. "You have the right disposition," said the good priest. "Throw yourself on the clemency of God and He will not refuse you mercy and pardon. I am ready to baptize you at any time."

Not long afterwards the good cure stood beside the bier of the old Russian, who, after a week of the most intense agony, which began immediately after his baptism, had yielded up his soul to the Almighty. His death had been edifying in the extreme, and in the mind of the priest there was not the slightest doubt that, secure in the promise of eternal happiness given to those who shall have expiated, either here or hereafter, the sins of mortality, he had joined the great army of suffering but holy souls who people the shadowy realms of Purgatory.

THE PRIEST.

A babe on the breast of its mother  
Reclines in the valley of love  
And smiles like a beautiful lily  
Cared by the rays above.  
A child at the knee of his mother,  
Who is counting her decades of prayer,  
Discovers the cross of her chaplet  
And kisses the Sufferer there.  
A boy with a rosary kneeling  
Alone in the temple of God  
And begging the wonderful favor  
To walk where the Crucified trod.  
A student alone in his study,  
With pallid and innocent face,  
Has raised his head from the pages  
And lists to the murmur of grace.  
A cleric with mortified features,  
Stolid, humble and still,  
In every motion a meaning,  
In every action a will.  
A man at the foot of an altar,  
A Christ at the foot of the cross,  
Where every loss is a profit  
And every gain is a loss.  
A defiled man on a mountain,  
His arms uplifted and spread;  
With one he is raising the living,  
With one he is losing the dead.  
—Irish Monthly.

WHAT SICKNESS DOES FOR THE SOUL.

Sickness, considered from a physical point of view, causes trouble and pain, and weakens the vital powers of the body. Considered from a moral and supernatural point of view, it produces many beneficial results for the soul. And, first, it curbs or stops the sinner in his evil course. We have an example of this in the wicked Antiochus, as is related in the first book of Maccabees (chap. vi.). He slew the inhabitants of Judea, plundered their city and desecrated their temple, but when stricken with a painful and loathsome disease, confessed his wickedness and promised to repair the evils which he had done. And to how many sinners illness or disease is the only means by which they can be stopped in their career of sin? Friends, parents, even the priest may exhort them to renounce drink, evil companions, or other scandalous habits, but all in vain until stricken down on the bed of sickness. Secondly, sickness effects the conversion of the sinner. In most parishes, perhaps, one third of the male portion, rarely, if ever, go to Mass and the sacraments. They are practically lost to the Church. How are those to be changed? Is it sermons and instructions? No; for they are not present to hear them. Is it by the voice of conscience? No; for in their case it is disregarded. How then? It is, generally, by some disease or dangerous sickness. Sickness and its complex ment, the bed of death, bring many a sinner to repentance, whom neither the voice of conscience nor the preacher could convert. There are dozens in many a parish whom the pastor or assistant would never know that they lived in it, were it not that they were stricken down with a heavy load of sickness, and death stared them in the face. Sickness is an affliction; but for the sinner it is a salutary one. It is often the last means which God tries to convert him. Was it not by afflictions and chastisements rather than by sermons and sacraments that God made the Jews, His chosen people, so many times renounce idolatry, as we read from almost every page of the Old Testament. The ruler of the synagogue, mentioned by St. Matthew in His Gospel (chap. ix.) would not in all probability come to Jesus to beseech Him to raise his daughter to life, if she had not sickened and died. Thirdly, sickness lightens or shortens the term of punishment for the soul in purgatory. When man sins both in body and soul are guilty before God; and, consequently, both deserve punishment. But the body descends into the grave and will not rise before the General Judgment, when purgatory no longer exists; hence God often afflicts the body with sickness in this life, to lessen or shorten the sufferings for the soul in a middle state beyond the grave. Fourthly, sickness disabuses us of our pride and vanity. How many in the flower and strength of youth spend their days and nights in riotous and drunken excess? boasting that they had nerves of steel and stomachs of brass, which nothing could affect; but a fever, a disease or distemper soon convinces them of the emptiness of their boasts and the hollowness of their pride. Alexander the Great, in the heyday of his success and strength, sought and received divine honors from his followers as a god, but when stricken with a mortal illness informs us, "that he would die," and that he was not the god which his pride had made him. Fifthly, sickness curbs the rebellious appetites of the flesh and makes it work in more harmony with the spirit. It was so with the saints, many of them even of a sickly and delicate frame. The Corinthians said of the Apostle St. Paul: "His bodily presence was weak, Timothy, his beloved disciple, suffered from frequent infirmities," St. Basil

was a confirmed invalid. St. Chrysostom suffered from lung trouble, and was the victim of many distempers. St. Bernard was rarely exempt from corporal infirmities. St. Alphonsus, for the last thirty-four years of his life, suffered much from bodily ailments. It cannot be doubted but the bodily infirmities of these and other saints, gave them a greater facility in mortifying their senses and the inordinate inclinations of flesh and blood. "When I am weak," says the apostle, "then I am strong."

Finally, sickness is a messenger of death. It comes to us, as came the prophet Isai to Israel's king and bids us "put our house in order, for we shall die, and not live." It is true not in every case is sickness an infallible messenger of death; but in every case it is a useful one, and one to be feared.

When this messenger taps at the door of our earthly home we should send for the priest and settle the affairs of our conscience. Conscience is an adversary with which we must be at peace if it may "deliver us over to the Judge and the Judge to the officer, and we be cast into the prison, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished."

Another reason for "calling in the priest of the Church," in our sickness, is that our unrepented sins may be the cause of our illness, and when confessed and repented of good health may be restored. Remove the cause and the effect will cease. It was thus with the cripple healed by the Saviour at the pool Probatica. "Sin no more," says Jesus to him after He had healed him, "lest some worse thing happen to thee." (John v.)

And this is what sickness does for the soul, always a preventive of sin whether it be sent as a punishment or as a test or trial and of consequent merit.—Catholic Review.

A CATHOLIC'S PRIVILEGES.

An admirable definition of a Catholic was given by Rev. Louis A. Tierney of Cincinnati state trustee of the Catholic Knights of Ohio, on the occasion of the annual convention of that organization, in the course of an eloquent sermon delivered to the delegates. It was as follows: "Now I ask, what is it to be a Catholic? Go read the answer in the lives of men and women who for 1900 years have trod the ways of heroic virtue in the footsteps of the Crucified. Go study in the calm and peaceful heroisms of the early Christian martyrs, who laughed at the threats of tyrants, and prayed for his executioners as his life went out beneath the sword rather than betray his God. Seek it up and down the ages, in every rank and station, from the monarch on the throne to the peasant in the field. Seek it in the hearts of nature's noble men and women, where it shines with a beauty and lustre all its own and elevates their hearts above the ties of kindred and country, even to the Eternal God Himself—the centre and source of true Catholicity. Seek it and find it in the supernatural lives of men and women living to-day, living not alone in cloistered solitude, but alone at the foot of God alone in constant adoration, nor alone in priestly robes, but even in the busy world of noise and wild distraction, in the marts of trade and in domestic cares, where the lots of most of you are cast.

What is it to be a Catholic? It is to rest secure in the possession of eternal truth, in the certainty of being right, in the precious privilege of not being blown about by every wind of doctrine. It is to live with the sunshine of divine good warming the human heart, and enlightening the human soul. To be a Catholic is to love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. It is to live in a disposition, at least, of the highest charity: charity toward our neighbor; charity that stops not at a mere theory, not a mere speculation or profession, but that works itself out in acting—high, noble, Godlike acting. This it is to be a Catholic. Faith, hope and charity, these are as the faculties of his soul to a Catholic."

WASHINGTON IRVING'S TESTIMONY.

Extract from "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U. S. A. in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West," by Washington Irving. Hudson Edition, (G. P. Putnam & Son, page 410, ch. 38. (Copyright 1898). "The Peninsula of California was settled in 1698 by the Jesuits, who, certainly, as far as the natives were concerned, have generally proved the most beneficent of colonists. In the most instance, they gained and maintained a footing in the country without the aid of military force, but solely by religious influence. They formed a treaty, and entered into the most amicable relations with the natives, then numbering from twenty-five to thirty thousand souls, and gained a hold upon their affections, and a control over their minds, that effected a complete change in their condition. They built eleven mission establishments in the various valleys of the peninsula, which formed rallying-places for the surrounding savages, where they gathered together as sheep into the fold, and surrendered themselves and their consciences into the hands of these spiritual pastors. Nothing, we are told, could exceed the implicit and affectionate devotion of the Indian converts to the Jesuit Fathers, and the Catholic faith was disseminated widely throughout the wilderness. The growing power and influence of the Jesuits in the New World, at length

excited the jealousy of the Spanish government, and they were banished from the colonies. The governor, who arrived at California to expel them, and to take charge of the country, expected to find a rich and powerful province, with immense treasures hoarded in their missions, and an army of Indians ready to defend them. On the contrary, he beheld a few venerable, silver-haired priests coming humbly forward to meet him, followed by a throng of weeping, but submissive natives. The heart of the governor, it is said, was so touched by this unexpected sight that he shed tears; but he had to execute his orders. The Jesuits were accompanied to the place of their embarkation by their simple and affectionate parishioners, who took leave of them with tears and sobs. Many of the latter abandoned their hereditary abodes, and wandered off to join their southern brethren, so that but a remnant remained in the peninsula. The Franciscans immediately succeeded the Jesuits, and subsequently the Dominicans; but two of the missionary establishments are at present occupied by priests; the rest are all in ruins, excepting one, which remains a monument of the former power and prosperity of the order. This is a noble edifice, once the seat of the chief of the beautiful Jesuits. It is situated in a beautiful valley, about half way between the Gulf of California and the broad ocean, the peninsula being here about sixty miles wide. The edifice is of hewn stone, one story high, two hundred and ten feet in front, and about fifty feet deep. The walls are six feet thick and sixteen feet high with a vaulted roof of stone, about two feet and a half in thickness. It is now abandoned and desolate; the beautiful is without an inhabitant—not a human being resides within thirty miles of the place."

THE WILL OF GOD. Submission to the will of God is one of the hardest things in life to learn, and yet, if we would enjoy any peace of heart, it is one of the most necessary. It is not conducive to our spiritual well-fare, either here or hereafter, to be in a continual state of rebellion against the workings of God's decree. Only those who accept with patience and resignation whatsoever God may send, are happy.

In the Providence of the Almighty, grief has its place. Grief and pain are hard to bear, and the human heart, turning naturally to pleasure, revolts against these visitations; but in the development of character, and in the purifying of the heart and soul it is necessary that we should suffer. The finest and strongest souls are those that have passed through the fires of sorrow. Steel is tempered, and gold is purified by fire. To be pure as gold and strong as steel, the nature of man must be refined and tempered in God's own crucible pain.

To take from God's hands patiently, may, thankfully, the chastisement that He gives, knowing that it is for our best, should be our desire. All this sorrow and suffering is sent to make us more perfect, to fit us more truly for the work which He may have in store for us. None of the saints were allowed to pass through life suffering nothing. On the contrary, they were assailed on all sides by the direst griefs; and these were imposed upon them that they might be more adaptable to the hand of God, when, in His own good time, He chose to use them for His own glory and the salvation of souls.

Let us, therefore, cease our grumbling at the little troubles that God sends us. Let us recognize in them not the evidences of God's forgetfulness, but the sign of God's displeasure, but of His love. For as the loving parent reproves and corrects the child of his heart, for its own sake, so because of the love which He bears our immortal souls, God sends us these sorrows.

THE METHODIST PARSON AND POPE. The Pawtucket (R. I.) Gazette and Chronicle, one of the very oldest of the old-fashioned weekly papers of New England, has a new and bright editor in the person of Mr. Fred Sherman. Last week the editor, who abhors sham, had the following to say:

"We don't like to be too captious but the talk of those Methodists in convention down in New York last week was, to say the least, rather verging on the ludicrous. A Bishop Goodsell, no doubt a most worthy man, waxed very wroth over what he called an outrageous proceeding on the part of the Pope. His remarks sounded or looked very funny at this distance. The Bishop complained eloquently and vigorously that the Pope had excommunicated—issued his bull against—the Methodist teachers and ministers in Rome. That was what the good Bishop so bitterly complained of. He was awfully mad because the Pope had done this, and his audience seemed to be as mad and as absent minded as he was.

"Now, what bothers us is why the good Bishops didn't stop to think how ridiculous it was for a loyal Protestant to find fault with a Pope's excommunication, and what in thunder the Pope was excommunicating the Protestants from. If they were actually excommunicated, how could they excommunicate them? We have always understood that for a man to be excommunicated he must certainly belong to the body that did the excommunicating job. And there is another thing we can't for the life of us understand, and that is why good Protestants will persist in following the customs of Rome in the use of such titles as 'Bishop' and 'reverend' while they are about it, why don't they make a clean deal and cast off all semblance to all the practices of the 'Scarlet Woman'?"

THE BEAUTIFUL LONG AGO. The tender gleam of the fading light  
Falls over the drifted snow;  
The fields and meadows lie cold and white,  
As they did in the afterglow  
Of that dear dead day, long lost to sight  
In the beautiful long ago.

Calic and Kidney Difficulty.—Mr. J. W. Wilder, J. P., Lafayette, La., writes: "I am subject to severe attacks of Calic and Kidney Difficulty, and find Paroel's Pills afford me great relief, while all other remedies I have ever used. In fact so great is the power of this medicine to cleanse and purify, that diseases of almost every name and nature are driven from the body."

A PRECIOUS TROWEL.

Jeweled Tool Used by the Pope in Closing the Holy Door.

The trowel which the Pope used at the ceremony of closing the holy door on Christmas eve is a work of art. An account of this precious object is furnished by Professor Tartarini, of Bologna, who, with talent and devotedness, has designed it. The artist in designing it carried out to a further expansion the thought which informs the decoration and symbolism of the hammer which was used by the Pope in the opening of the holy door.

The trowel is of the usual form and it is adorned by a tway festoon of roses which spring from the handle to the triangular blade, showing how from the thorn of sorrow and sacrifice come forth the flowers of pardon and of joy. The handle is of ivory, with small bands of gold and enriched with precious stones, bearing the arms of Leo XIII., the date of the jubilee year, the dedication in the name of the episcopate of the world which has contributed to it.

The blade, all of gold and modeled in low relief, shows on one side the sign of Christ invoked for the peace and salvation of the coming century; on the other side presents a motto of paternal comfort to the faith of all in the perpetual mercy of Christ, which seems opportune as removing the idea of rigor from the ceremony of the closing of the door of indulgence: "Et clausa porta, patet charitas Christi," suggesting that though the door is closed the mercy of Christ is ever open to the repentant sinner, is the motto on this golden trowel.

SOULS THAT ARE STARVED.

The noted author of "My Maryland," James R. Randall, writing to the Catholic Columbian, said lately: "Not long since I met two very attractive Protestant ladies, one a married woman, and they were telling me that in reality they had no specific religious attachment. They had been in New York and missed few of the public entertainments, but never during that period, entered a church. One of them said, 'Oh, I am tired of preaching.' There must come moments when these ladies feel the necessity of a spiritual life, and they have not found it in mere pulpit discourses and choir singing. They have Catholic relations, but I do not know that their minds have ever been drawn to the Church where there is that supernatural blessing so essential to human life—journeying to eternity, the Real Presence and the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. How many are there who, like these gifted ladies, are nominally Protestant, but really nothing in a religious sense."

THE CHURCH AND THE DYING.

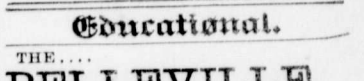
The Catholic Church never ceases to watch over her children. From the cradle to the grave she never loses sight of them. By baptism she makes man a child of God, a co-heir of Christ; in penance she cleanses him from sin, and she prepares him by the sacramental grace of Extreme Unction to enter on immortality. A great French writer, speaking of the Sacrament of the Sick, says: "In order to see the most beautiful spectacle that the earth can present, you must see the Christian die. One is no longer the man of the world; he belongs no longer to his society; he is no longer a man of the world, but a man of God, and he dates now only time is ended with the great era of eternity. A priest seated at the pillow consoles him. This holy minister communes with the dying one upon the immortality of his soul, and the sublime scene that the entire antiquity has presented but a single time, in the first of its dying philosophers, is renewed every day upon the pallet of the lowest (in station) of the dying Christians. At last the supreme moment has arrived; a Sacrament has opened the gates of the world to this just man; a Sacrament closes them upon him; Religion balances him in the cradle of life; its beautiful songs and its material hand still will lift him to sleep in the cradle of death. It prepares his baptism for the second birth; but it is no longer water that it chooses, but oil, the emblem of celestial incorruptibility. The liberating Sacrament breaks little by little the earthly ties of the faithful one; his soul, half escaped from his body, becomes almost visible upon his countenance. Already he hears the music of the Seraphim; now he is ready to fly away towards those regions where that divine Hope, the daughter of Virtue and of Death, is beckoning him. In the meantime the angel of peace, descending towards the righteous one, touches his weary eyes with his sceptre of gold, and closes them delightfully to the light."

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