

husband died fifteen years ago. I have never grown tired, because I have had something to keep up my courage. But now—now—

Her voice broke, and she paused, but not for long.

"I was determined to keep John in school. He went through the eight grades, and after that through High school at St. Xavier's, and after that to college for full four years—working in summer and at odd times. Then at last he was ready. We had planned and worked so long, both of us, and at last he was ready to enter the seminary. That was last September. He did better than ever this year; and he is very fervent, very good, the rector tells me. It's because he longs to be a priest that this trouble is so hard to bear. But John is brave; he never complains. Sometimes I almost wish he would. Now I—"

she stopped abruptly, for someone came in, bringing her son back to her.

He was smiling, as usual, as she put his hat into his hand.

"Those fellows think I'm better than a side show," he grumbled, laughing. "They're not done with me. Dr. White put some drops into my eyes and wants to look at them again in half an hour. You will have to wait a little longer, mother. Are you very tired?"

The mother denied being tired at all. She had forgotten me since her son returned, and sat in silence a few minutes looking straight ahead of her. When at length she spoke, I knew that she had been gathering courage to hear the probable answer to her question.

"And this other doctor, John—what does he think?"

"He and Dr. White agreed like brothers—like twin brothers. So—so—" His voice shook a little just then; and in that instant I made a decision toward which I had been groping during the preceding quarter of an hour.

Turning toward the mother and the son, I said: "I should like very much to speak to you both for a few moments. But not here. Will you come with me into the little room to the left?"

When we reached it and closed the door, it was to John I spoke.

"Your mother told me that Dr. White believes that your sight might be restored by Dr. Buxton of London. She told me, too, that it is impossible for you to meet so heavy an expense. She explained why your sight is so precious to you and to her and—many others. Now I—I am a Jew at a bargain; all my friends tell me so; and I want to make a bargain with you. My dear only brother is—he's disappointed; and he has been out of the Church for ten or twelve years. Won't you permit me to supply the money you need? I have an abundance—a super-abundance; and in return, you will sometimes pray for my brother's soul. Will you agree to this?"

Both faces flushed. I saw that they were both embarrassed, and somewhat humiliated. Still addressing John, I added quickly and pleadingly:

"Can you refuse? There is my brother to be thought of, and my Master is my Master, too. Won't you give me an opportunity to do something for Him?"

The young man held out his hand then, but he could not speak, and, turning quickly to his mother, I explained my plan, and gave her a card on which I had scribbled a few words.

This is the name and address of my lawyer. I will see him today, and will you please take him tomorrow. For whatever time you want it, he will secure passage for you both, and he will put two thousand dollars to your credit in the bank. It is good of you to allow me to do this. And you will help me to save my brother, won't you?"

It was my voice that trembled now, and hastily shaking hands with them both, I hurried away—entirely forgetting my appointment with Dr. White.

As I walked toward town my mind was busy devising means of making ends meet without those two thousand dollars; for my income, though large, was not inexhaustible. I determined to forego my summer outing—a small sacrifice, as I had not been seen about the plans that were afoot; and I resolved to buy no new clothes for several months.

Before going home I stopped at my lawyer's office, explained the case, told him that there was no need of my name being mentioned in the matter; and so all was settled. I did not see either mother or son again, and after a few months the incident was beginning to fade from my mind. It had been too short, and too impersonal to myself, to make a deep impression upon my mind or heart.

It was five years later that the accident occurred. A train, coming from New York, was wrecked 20 miles from the city, and my poor brother was brought home to me dead. He had been terribly mangled, and had lived but half an hour after the collision. He and I were alone in the world, so it would have been sad enough for me in any case; but to know that he had died as he had lived was almost more than I could bear. I shut myself in my room, refusing to see even my intimate friends; but, to my great annoyance, on the day following the funeral the maid came to my door, saying apologetically that

Father Henderson was in the drawing room and wished to see me.

"I told you, Mary, that I will see no one," I answered crossly. "Why, I do not even know a Father Henderson."

"I said that you are seeing no one, but he said to tell you it's important," the maid explained. "I could not send a priest away; so, very reluctantly I went down stairs to find in the drawing room a very young priest, a stranger to me. He carried one arm in a sling, and there was a plaster above the right eye."

I beg your pardon for intruding, Miss Levert," he began. "I have news that you will rejoice to hear. I was on the New York train last Monday, and had a seat behind your brother's. We talked together early in the day, and he told me that he was a renegade Catholic. When the crash came I remembered him at once, and crawled to his side. He was only too glad to go to Confession, and did so most humbly and contritely. I was ordained only a month ago, and his was the first Confession I ever heard. I chanced to be on my way home to visit my mother."

Then Father Henderson smiled—and in a flash I understood. This was the young man whom I had sent to London that he might be able to continue his studies for the priesthood. "Dear Lord, the reward is too great," I said in my heart; and to Father Henderson I said: "I hardly know what except that I thanked him again and again—Florence Gilmore in The Ave Maria."

THE VALUE OF INDULGENCES

Of the many teachings of the Catholic Church that have been attacked by non-Catholics, none has been the subject of more misrepresentation than that relating to the granting of indulgences. So persistent has been the reiteration of the falsehoods concerning this practice that it is not uncommon to find among those Protestants who are not given over to bigotry a belief that an indulgence carries forgiveness of sin and is virtually purchasable for a money consideration.

While every Catholic child of school age could correct this harmful misconception, it is doubtful if many grown Catholics, however well-informed otherwise, realize in full the part played by indulgences in the history of the Church in Europe and in the social and economic development of countries in which the Faith has always flourished. For this reason, Dr. Nikolaus Paulus is to be thanked for a scholarly work entitled "Indulgences as a Social Factor in the Middle Ages," published by the Devin-Adair Company, New York, and Father J. Elliot Ross, C. S. P., is to be congratulated on the admirable manner in which he has presented the book in English. The translation is excellent in the choice of words and in the fluidity of style which makes the reading of the book easy and satisfying. Father Ross has other books to his credit—original work as well as translations—but he has produced nothing more creditable than this presentation of subject matter of absorbing interest.

WORKS AIDED BY INDULGENCES

All who have given any attention to the study of church-building in the medieval period realize the powerful aid given to this work by indulgences granted by popes and bishops of the Middle Ages. But what is known to few who have not specialized in the subject is how many other expressions of the social life of the period were assisted by this same means. The story which Dr. Paulus unfolds establishes the contact of indulgences and their effects on hospitals, schools and charitable institutions; their influence on great moral movements such as the Crusades and the Truce of God; their use in the encouragement of such works of social utility as bridgebuilding, the construction of roads, the development of harbors, the recognition of the painstaking workers of the Guilds, the extension of the credit organization for the poorer classes that came to be known as Montes Pietatis and the various projects of colonization.

To read this story of the place held by indulgences as a social factor in the Middle Ages is to read at the same time their story as a spiritual factor of vast importance. Thus, for example, we learn that when the present Munich Cathedral was built and Rome offered a jubilee indulgence to assist in the interior decoration, 123,700 strangers flocked to the city to perform the necessary religious duties which alone made the indulgence applicable. The same story of the attraction of those who had grown luke-warm and indifferent toward the means of grace is repeated over and over again. At Berne, during a period of indulgence in 1476, the people having been exhorted to penance "full fifty confessors were busy at the start from early morning until night" and yet the crowds grew so that by the end of the week there were eighty priests engaged in the work "and could more have been found who were good and useful, they also would have been taken."

PUBLIC SINNERS DO PENANCE

Nor did the acceptance of the indulgence make penance any easier for those who had committed serious public sin. It is reported that at this Bernese Jubilee there were "about four thousand" of these public sinners and their penance is described as follows by a contemporary writer quoted:

"They were led by appointed priests into the minister and around it from one confessor to another and the men and women sinners were obliged to receive a public penance from each of the appointed confessors separately, to kneel before them and to be absolved. And in this no one from Berne or elsewhere was spared; for whosoever had sinned publicly had to do public penance according to the regulation and command of the confessors." Also "many public penitents, men and women, took part in the great procession on the feast of the Archangel Michael, the men naked (that is with the upper part of the body stripped) and the women barefoot with their hair hanging down, as is right for such public sinners."

It is a remarkable fact that a work that concerns itself almost entirely with social aspects of indulgences—what may be expressed roughly as the debt which civilization owes to their promulgation—discloses at every contact the spiritual upbuilding that established civilization on its firmest foundation. Whatever else Dr. Paulus may be, certainly he is not controversial. Nevertheless a straightforward presentation of one aspect of indulgences makes the very best defense that could be written from an entirely different aspect.

BROTHERS OF THE BRIDGES

Thus, whatever may be the correct version of the story of the "Bridge Brothers" (Dr. Paulus asserts that much has been written about them in erroneous fact stands out in splendid relief. In the beginning the builders of bridges in Southern France and elsewhere were members of societies brought into being by the needs of their particular localities. They were laymen but they came to be called Brothers of the Bridge at Lyons, or of the Bridge at Avignon, and so forth. Indulgences were granted for their encouragement. These did not merely stimulate the builders to better work for the public good. Soon, the religious atmosphere which had enfolded the workers produced men so impregnated by religious ideals of service that communities were formed and vows taken, and in the course of time strong orders of religious developed.

One of the most striking applications of indulgences was shown in the encouragement given to those who assisted in the maintenance of the Truce of God. There can be no doubt that the checking of feuds and the suppression of banditry in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were due in no small part to the efforts made through the issuance of indulgences to keep men accepting the Christian faith in the paths of peace.

A DOUBLE INDULGENCE

"Among the earliest indulgences for this purpose," says the author, "the one granted by a provincial synod of Rheims, held in 1092 at Soissons, deserves a high place. In the statutes of the synod there is mention of a double indulgence. First it was determined that the bishops could lessen the penance—according to the measure of the penitents' accomplishments—of those who took part in a campaign against the peace-breakers. Then, to all who had sworn to observe the peace and had kept their oath, the pope remitted the penance due for a serious confessed sin."

Among the indulgences granted in the thirteenth century were those offered to all who "for love of God" would aid the shipwrecked. "In a time," says the author, "when numerous Christians were taken prisoners by the Turks and the Moors and sold as slaves, it was considered one of the greatest works of mercy to help these unfortunates. Two orders had been founded to ransom the prisoners, that of the Trinitarians and that of the Mercedarians, both of which were given rich indulgences by the Holy See in order that they might the more easily obtain the necessary funds."

"But apart from these orders, popes and bishops have granted plentiful indulgences for this purpose. On the complaint of the Bishop of Elno to a synod held at Narbonne in 1185, under the presidency of the Papal legate, that many of his subjects had been imprisoned by the Saracens the synod granted a plenary indulgence to those who, according to their means would contribute to the ransom of these captives. Public sinners, however, were excluded from this indulgence. These had to apply to their bishop. Then, if he deemed it advisable, they could share in the indulgence."—N.C.W.C.

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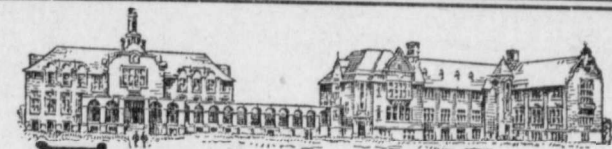
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