

tend to respect a man for his bigotry?"

"Because it's honest bigotry," he smiled. "The fellow has the courage of his convictions. He would be converted more easily than the chap who is indifferent, or the man who says that one religion is as good as another. Also, he is quite different from the professional bigot—that is, the man who uses his bigotry as a means of money-making."

She nodded her pretty head wisely. "I think I see what you mean. It makes me understand why you respect him. But isn't there some way of making him see the truth?" Higgins smiled at the enthusiasm of the girl.

"There are many ways, but, as I've explained to you, controversy is the least desirable. If just has to come to him naturally as the sense of reason comes to a child. This may take a long while, but you know, my dear, the longest way round is, after all, the shortest way home."

"Dad," she cried impulsively. "I'm beginning to think you're a wise man."

He patted her on the head again. "Don't talk that way, or you'll spoil me entirely."

Chapman and Agnes met only at rare intervals after that, but on these rare occasions he did not harp on his hobby, and she had nothing to say about religion. But each of them felt keenly interested in the other. Her loyalty to her faith had impressed him and caused him to admire her, but without changing his views of Catholicism. Agnes, on her part, studied him carefully, and came to feel with her father that no matter how mistaken he might be he had the virtue of honesty.

It was three months after the first discussion between Chapman and Agnes that the young man and Lawrence Higgins went on a business trip together. They sat in the smoking car of the express train and discussed a number of subjects in which they were mutually interested.

Suddenly in the midst of their talk there came a dreadful crash, and in the twinkling of an eye chaos reigned. Chapman found himself sprawling in the aisle, and when he looked up he discovered Higgins jammed between two seats. It was only a matter of a few moments to extricate him, and fortunately neither of them was injured beyond a few scratches and bruises. The air was filled with dust and din; the car windows were broken, and they heard moans coming from a distance.

"What is it?" asked Chapman as soon as he was able to speak. "Wreck! that's plain enough," replied Higgins, "our car turned on its side."

The young man glanced about him in a dazed way. "I believe it has. But what are we going to do about it?"

As he spoke he noticed a means of escape by way of two broken windows. They had to move carefully to avoid injury by glass and splinters, but eventually they managed to climb out into the daylight. Passengers were running in all directions, and help had already been summoned. First aid was being given to the injured, many of whom were lying on the damp grass in various stages of consciousness.

Chapman and Higgins joined the other volunteers in doing all they could for the afflicted ones. While thus engaged they came in contact with a man wearing a Roman collar who seemed to be performing the labors of three persons at once.

"Well, Father, Father!" exclaimed Higgins, extending his hand, "I never expected to see you here!"

"Larry, my boy," retorted the other, clasping the proffered palm in his own begrimed hand, "I'm glad to be able to see you walking about on two sound limbs."

Before there was a chance to say anything more, a woman came running up to the priest, wringing her hands.

"Oh, Father, the first car is burning, and there's a man in the ruins calling for a priest!"

Without a word Father Fisher left them and hastened in the direction indicated. Instinctively, Chapman and Higgins followed. The first car, like the others, had been derailed and was on its side. The upper portion was in flames, and beneath the side next to the ground they could see the body of a stalwart man pinned down. The possibility of saving his life was remote. It would take heavy machinery to move the obstruction, and before that could be obtained he would die. The priest looked about for some way of reaching the sufferer. The only opening was by way of a window from which the sash had been wrenched and which was now smouldering as if ready to burst into flames. Father Fisher got down on his hands and knees and began to crawl through the aperture. A railroad official came along at this moment and grabbed him by the arm.

"For God's sake!" he cried, "don't try to go in there. You can't possibly do him any good, and you're risking your own life."

The priest halted for a moment and looked at the other with perfect calmness.

"No earthly good," he said quietly, "but there's something else."

Before any one could interfere he had gone all the way in and was by the side of the stricken man. Those on the outside witnessed a remarkable transformation. They saw the face of the man who was pinned beneath the weight of the debris. It had been distorted with pain, but the moment Father Fisher took his

hand the poor victim's countenance cleared and assumed an expression of tranquillity. They saw the priest reach into his pocket and pull out a stole, which he slipped about his neck. He bent his ear toward the victim, and his lips began to move. Everybody realized that the poor man was making his confession.

The moments seemed like minutes to the awe-stricken onlookers. Presently the priest lifted his hand and made the sign of the cross over the prostrate one. All understood now that the last rights of the Church were being administered to the dying man. Instantly all—regardless of religious belief—lifted their hats and stood in reverent silence until the ceremony was completed. Chapman watched the scene like one fascinated. The poor fellow lifted his head by a supreme effort, and, looking affectionately at the priest, smiled contentedly. The next moment he fell back dead. Father Fisher closed the eyes of the corpse and crossed his arms reverently, and then and only then began to crawl out from his dangerous position.

Lawrence Higgins had moved closer to the burning car, and his lips were moving in prayer. The aperture through which the priest had entered was framed with flames. Could he get through alive? That was the question in every mind. He did, but his hair and eyebrows were singed and he was burned and bruised from the fire and the falling timbers. It was Higgins who gave him a helping hand and pulled him to a place of safety. Involuntarily the crowd burst into applause. But Father Fisher, if he heard, paid no attention to the demonstration.

"Thank God, Larry," he said to his friend, "I got there in time."

"I thought so, Father."

"Yes," added the priest, as much to himself as to the other, "the poor fellow got what he prayed for all his life—a happy death."

Chapman could restrain himself no longer.

"A happy death!" he ejaculated. "A happy death in that inferno?"

The priest looked at the speaker curiously.

"Yes," he said simply, "that is one of the most consoling of all the consoling things about the Catholic Church. It not only teaches men how to live, but it teaches them how to die."

Before anything more was said a messenger appeared to summon the priest elsewhere. Others needed his attention and ministrations. And for more than an hour he worked with amazing energy, giving spiritual help and consolation while the doctors who had arrived were caring for the physical needs of the victims. Wrecking crews came upon the scene, and before noon of that day all signs of the catastrophe had been removed, and the world went about its business as usual.

Three days after the train wreck Chapman called on Higgins at his office and said to him in his frank, outspoken way:

"I'd like to meet Father Fisher. Would you mind taking me around to see him some night?"

"Certainly not," replied the red-haired one, looking at his friend curiously.

Chapman caught the look and said with some heat:

"Oh, I'm not going to talk religion to him."

Higgins laughed in his loud, hearty, wholesome way.

"Sure, you don't suppose Father Fisher would bother his head with talking religion to you, do you?"

He's too busy a man to waste his time in that style."

And somehow Chapman felt that Higgins was entirely candid in his statement. He had half hoped that there might be something controversial in their conversation, but he did not want to be placed in the position of inviting it.

They found Father Fisher in his study, clad in a threadbare black cassock, smoking a strong cigar and reading a book. He greeted them cordially.

"I've had a busy day, and I'm taking it easy for the night."

"In that event," suggested Chapman, "you may have no desire for company."

The priest laughed.

"I'm glad to have you, and if you can stand me, I'm sure I won't find any fault with you."

The talk drifted from one subject to another. Chapman spoke of the wreck, but before he could finish the praise he wished to give the priest, the latter had taken the conversation to his own hands and turned it into a denunciation of the railroad company for their failure to provide proper safeguards for their employees and for passengers.

"Maybe a few damage suits will wake them," he concluded, "for experience has shown that the pocket nerve is usually the most acute with a corporation."

Chapman was surprised to discover how well-informed Father Fisher was concerning the affairs of the world. He expected him to be an authority in his sacred calling, but he wondered how he found the time to learn so much about the current affairs. He touched on many topics and he illuminated and clarified every subject he discussed. In the midst of their talk there was a call from the little office adjoining the study. The door between the rooms was not entirely closed as the priest went to answer the summons, and Chapman could not help but see and overhear. A young woman in black, with a shawl drawn around her head, was speaking:

"Oh, Father," she said, "they've taken Ann to the Municipal Hospital, and I don't know whether she'll ever come back. She cried to see you before she left, but they wouldn't wait."

"What was the trouble?"

"Diphtheria, and in an advanced stage. She may not last until morning, and no priest to console her!"

Father Fisher pulled out his watch and looked at it.

"It's past the usual hour," he said, more to himself than to the woman, "but I know they'll let me in."

In five minutes he had excused himself to his callers, put on his hat and coat and left the house. At the door he paused to speak a word of comfort to the woman in the shawl, and promised to let her know the condition of her child. Chapman and Higgins left the house at the same time and started homeward.

"Think of that man going to the pesthouse," said Chapman. "Why, he's taking his life in his hands!"

Higgins smiled.

"It's all in a day's work with Father Fisher—and with every other priest."

Chapman was silent all the way home. He was thinking profoundly, and when he said "good-night" it was in an absent-minded way.

But in spite of the young man's alarm, the priest came out of the visitation unscathed, as he had so many times before. The child in the hospital recovered, too, so that the incident was not depressing by any means.

In the meantime Chapman absented himself from the Higgins' home. Agnes and her father wondered if they had unwittingly offended him.

You have quarreled with him about religion, have you?" asked Higgins.

"No," replied Agnes, with open-eyed wonder; "I followed your advice and never touched on the subject—after the first time."

At the end of six months Chapman appeared, bringing a great bunch of roses to Agnes. She was glad to see him—more so than she cared to confess.

"Agnes," he said, and the sound of her Christian name from his lips was very musical indeed. "I've some news which I think will please you."

"What, for instance?"

"I've been received into the Catholic Church."

She grasped both his hands impulsively, her eyes sparkling with joy.

"You've surprised and made me very happy indeed."

"I thought I would, and now, I want you to make me very happy."

"How?"

"By becoming my wife. Please say that you will."

He could scarcely hear the reply, but he knew that it was the word he had hoped would come from her dear lips. After some moments she looked up shyly.

"John—what sort of argument ever brought you into the Catholic Church?"

"It wasn't argument at all—although during my period of probation I've satisfied my reason perfectly—but action. I've watched Father Fisher in his work, day by day, and I am fully convinced that the Church which can produce men of that kind must be a divine institution. And my only wonder now is that I've been blind to the truth so long."—George Barton in the *Magnificat*.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR FEBRUARY

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

THE CHURCH IN THE PRESENT CRISIS

While war is raging in the most civilized nations of Europe and renewing horrors before which even the invasions of the early barbarians pale into insignificance, while men are falling like grain under the sickle, and blood is flowing in torrents, Catholics throughout the world, instead of stoically contemplating the present spectacle in Europe, should take to heart the appeal which the Holy Father addresses to them this month. Placed as he is in a station where passionate struggles and purely worldly ambitions can have no influence on him, and having only the welfare of souls in view, the Vicar of the Prince of Peace asks the whole world to unite with him in a crusade of prayer through the Sacred Heart to protect His Church and bring her out of the present ordeal stronger and with greater power for good than ever.

Obviously, the shock of nations is having its repercussion on the religious world. The peaceful operation of the Catholic Church has been more or less hampered in those countries whose populations are engaged in setting the world back. There are millions of Catholics in the opposing armies learning to hate one another and using every means which science has taught them to show how practical their hatred can be. Things have reached such a pass in the world to-day that one humbly asks the All-Highest, with the ancient Prophet: "Why lookest Thou upon those that do unjust things? Why holdest Thou their peace when the wicked devoureth the man that is more just than himself?"

However, we should not forget that, for reasons of His own, God permits the scourge of war, with all

its injustice and violence. He is still the Supreme Master of men and things, and that nations are in His hands like clay in the hands of the potter. At the present moment from His throne of glory in heaven as well as from His throne of love in our tabernacles, His eye is resting on the bloody struggle which is now desolating Europe. In His own good time He will permit the balance which He firmly holds to lean to one side or the other, according as His justice urges Him to chastise the guilty or comfort the innocent. Who the guilty are and who are the innocent we are not in a position to judge; God alone is the scrutinizer of human hearts. But the history of our race tells us that those who have felt the rod of His anger have oftentimes been the nearest to His Heart. History repeats itself; may it not be that those whom He is permitting to suffer in the present struggle are not the less loved by Him?

While it is well to recall this primordial truth to strengthen our confidence and revive our hope, still we know that war is contrary to God's holiness and meekness, and that it is our duty as His children to use our influence to give events a right orientation. Two principal ends are proposed to our prayers for the present month. In the first place, we are asked to think prayerfully of the millions of Catholics whose souls are compromised, even endangered, in the war; and, in the second place, we are asked not to forget the interests of our Mother the Church. If we are true to her we shall be not less affected by the dangers which threaten her than by the dangers which threaten individual souls.

Undoubtedly we may leave to God the care of His Church. Because of her intimate and sacred union with Christ, notwithstanding the decay and destruction of nations in the world's history, she remained untouched by the hand of time, and undismayed amid the quarrels of men. Therefore in the midst of the appalling cataclysm and world upheaval that is going on around us today, we stand calm and confident in the faith that the Church shall not fail. Her foundations are set upon an immovable rock and she need not fear the tempests. Nations rise and fall, but the Church will go on till the end of time. She was of yesterday; she is today; she will be tomorrow. But history informs us that only too often her beneficent action in the world has been hindered and lessened by the ill-will of men and by their hostile combinations. Without going back to the centuries for striking examples, and to mention only events within the memory of most of us, we have had the *kulturkampf* and its ugly results in Germany; there are infidel laws still on the statute books of France and Italy; we have seen the brutal efforts of Russian Orthodoxy to pervert the Uniates of Galicia in recent years and even during the present war; and have we not always before us the silent, passive, if not very eloquent, opposition of Protestant England to Catholicism?

The Church has had to suffer in those countries in the past; she was actually undergoing persecution in some of them when the war broke out. Will the end of the present struggle see this spirit of opposition modified? We doubt it very much. The prejudices of centuries, in the case of nations like England, Germany and Russia, are not so easily buried, and judging from recent developments, Maspry has not lost its infamous stranglehold on either France or Italy. In both those countries, even in recent months, baiting the august Head of the Church has been indulged in a way that shows little sympathy for him or for the cause he represents. How often has his fatherly intentions and his desire for peace been misinterpreted and his words misconstrued. These incidents at least do not show a kindly spirit.

We cannot read the future; we can only surmise. It would be rash and reckless to forecast the changes that will occur, especially in Europe; but it would be equally rash and reckless to hug the delusion that we shall find in the next generation the same state of things that we have known in the past. There will be vast changes, and to deny this proposition is to deny the teachings of history. We know, however, that if it is necessary God can work miracles to preserve His church, and He will do so if the occasion call for them. Meanwhile we should do our share so that our Mother may come out of the present struggle with an augmented prestige. Judging from reports from the seat of war, our clergy are upholding their reputation for heroic charity and self-sacrifice; their activity in the trenches and at hospital bases has brought words of praise even from their enemies. The efforts of the Holy Father to soften the sufferings of prisoners and his success in having many of them exchanged or sent home have also produced a soothing effect on the public mind. All these incidents, if small in themselves, count in the aggregate. They will have an influence in after-war counsels which we hope will help the cause we all have so much at heart.

E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

One may be insupportable even with virtue, talent and good conduct. Manners, which one neglects sometimes as little things not worthy of notice, are just those very things from which men often decide our character.—La Bruyere.

WEEP NOT!

Now that the holiday joys are over, we hear the voice of Christ from His Gospel telling us to "weep not." It is the counsel of Him Who wept much for us, of Him Whose sacraments are a comfort, whose laws are the stars of salvation—the bright and happy explanation of life here and the harbingers of joys hereafter.

We often hear from worldlings that religion is a sad thing, its mind gloomy, its manners right, its penances heartless. They would fain have it as repulsive as the wrinkled face of age shadowed by misfortune. Nothing is farther from the truth.

Religion in its wisdom, has its Kyrie, but it has also its Gloria; it has acts of contrition, but it has too, its acts of love. Over its principles is the brightness of the face of Christ, saying "weep not." Its monasteries are not tombs; its convents have on them the glow of Easter morn'; its churches are the lustrous fons of hope, where the weak get strength, the strong hope and the hopeful go on smiling to an Eden of delight.

Wherever we have the truth of Christ, we have always the happy face, the light heart, the merry caper, the cheery and witty word. Could a land suffer more than Ireland? And yet because of the Faith, she has the smile as well as the tear, sometimes one making dancing prismatic lights on the other. Is there a spot on earth where there is more of revelry and song of the happiest and noblest kind?—holly as the figures David cut in ecstatic measure before the Ark—happy as the lark that sings high at heaven's gate as if competing with the angels within. Is there a land under the sun that can give such a rousing cheer and such a roaring laugh? And why? Because the "weep not" of Christ has given His beloved disciple among the nations a big heart, a pure mind, a hopeful temper.

Christ's "weep not" still is forceful. Its counsel heeded is shown in the contented face of the nun, in the calm of hoary Catholic age as well as in the face of childhood rising from prayer with eyes liquid in beauty as the waters of baptism, with mind reverential that has seen and felt its God.

So, over the wide world, if we seek for true joy, we will always find it near the truth of that Master who gave the gentle word "weep not." On the contrary, if we hunt fictitious pleasure, we will behold it in the votaries of a world that is far from Christ.

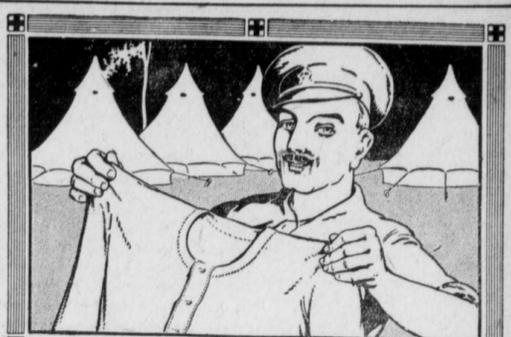
What fun is there in the hypocritical talking-out-of-a-book manner of one of society's drawing rooms? Mistrust of each other, falsehood in speech, artificiality of manner, and a straight-jacketed procedure moving in circles and squares make the mis-spent evening look like vice on dress-parade, granted that immorality has left enough dress to parade. How different from the gatherings of devoted Catholics in Christian lands. The innocent raillery, the quips of wit, the whole-souled banter, the riotous delights, all proclaim the beauty and the power of Christ's "weep not." Heed the blessed word and let it expand a heart narrowed by ugly care, brighten a mind soured mayhap with misfortune, and make beautiful a soul shut in from Christ's sunshine.

Religion is given to beget happiness, as well as to exalt and refine. Be ours the obligation to parade in our lives that, while we are conscious that earth is not Heaven and that we find little to evoke even a smile if the world is considered, yet that we enjoy and make merry in the thought and feeling that earth is a stepping stone to a land of infinite and perfect delights, where no eyes are red from tears, no cares harass the heart, no misconceptions blind the mind, no sin disfigures the soul.—Catholic Columbian.

BLESSED CANDLES

No Catholic home should be without its blessed candle. The prayers of the Church have ascended to God that "He would bless and sanctify them for the service of men and for the good of their bodies and souls in all places." Pious Catholics light them during thunderstorms that God, in consideration of Christ, whom they represent, may deign to protect His servants. Let us light them whenever we are threatened with calamity and, if we do so in a spirit of faith, we will experience signal proof of God's fatherly care for us. But, above all, let the holy candle burn by the bedside of the sick and dying, dispelling by its blessed light the shades of trouble and despair which the prince of darkness strives to cast around the Christian soul in the hour of its dissolution, and illuminating the dark road through the valley of death to the mountain whose light is God.—True Voice.

The ancients said that the sage, amid the silence of the night, could hear the music of the celestial spheres accompanying in space the harmonious laws of creation. Thus the heart of man, when its passions are silent, may hear in the midst of the world the eternal voice of truth. Religion is a lyre suspended in heaven, which, agitated at one end and the same time by the divine breath and by that of men, gives forth sounds sad as those of a suffering soul and joyous as those of an angel, but always superior to humanity.—Lacordaire.



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