

left behind, for the Church of all time, a serious warning, she has also bequeathed to us lessons of encouragement and hope. It was this Church that strenuously endeavoured to raise the standard of Christian living. Her very mistakes and heresies arose from her aiming high. She gave to the Church Universal a S. Cyprian, a Perpetua, a Tertullian. Above all she gave an Augustine.

Probably no man since S. Paul has more influenced the Church and her teaching than this eminent saint. He stands out conspicuous among the heroes of the past. His thoughts have become the thoughts of the whole Christian world. Augustine was born at Thagaste, a city of Numidia, in the year 354. His mother, Monica, was a Christian, his father a heathen. At the early age of seventeen he lost his father, and was henceforth dependent upon his mother for his training. There is another S. Augustine whom our Church has reason to remember with affectionate gratitude—he who came over at the bidding of Gregory to plant Christianity in Saxon England. The two must not be confounded. They were very different men. And the S. Augustine of Canterbury may well engage our thoughts on another occasion.

The influence of a good mother is not always apparent at once in the character of her child. Often she has to suffer grievous disappointment. The seed she has taken so much pains to implant does not spring up. Her son is wilful and wayward. He strays as a prodigal into far distant lands. He pays no heed to her words. He laughs at her fears. But let her only persevere in faith. The seed is not lost. It is but buried deep in the soil. Her prayers and her tears are not in vain. They will bring forth fruit in due season.

It was so with Monica. Many a day was to pass before she could witness the results of her labours in her son Augustine. Much of his early life he spent in idleness and worse. He became familiar with vice, and sank deeper and deeper into it. The Holy Scriptures had no attraction for him at this period. As they fell upon his ears they

were meaningless to him. It was the time of the sowing of his wild oats. It is sometimes said that a man is none the worse for sowing in his youth wild oats. 'Let him see,' it is argued, 'all sides of life; the experience will stand him in good stead when he sobers down.' Such an argument is both wrong and fallacious; for let alone the fact that 'to sow wild oats' is but another term for sinning against the Most High and the Most Holy, it is certain in all conditions of life, that 'whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' The story of Augustine gives no encouragement to such sentiments. His early sins laid up for him pangs of sorrow and remorse, which never left him until his dying day. The memory of a great sin once committed will haunt us to the end. The Psalmist's advice as to how to obtain peace at the last is good and sound. It is to 'keep innocency and take heed unto the thing that is right.' To have been forgiven after a fall is blessed. But not to have fallen at all is more blessed.

But S. Augustine suffered further for his early sins. It is the misfortune of the careless and sinful, of those whose lives are undisciplined, that to the first teachers who may cross their path they fall an easy prey. They have no power of discerning between right and wrong. Knowing nothing better, they accept the first kind of teaching that comes to hand, and thus unwittingly fall victims to gross error. It was so with Augustine. He had to take a roundabout way to the truth. It was by a long and tortuous path of darkness that he finally reached the light. Far happier those who learn the best way at the outset, who with a single eye have grace to make straight for the goal.

At the age of twenty Augustine became a Manichean. A strange and fantastic heresy it was. The Manicheans believed in a god of light and a god of darkness. They forbade their people to eat flesh. They might not even gather the fruits of the earth or pluck a herb with their own hands. Much of their teaching was the wildest nonsense. Augustine soon became wearied of this creed, and sought eagerly for some higher form of truth. He had come to loathe his life of sin. He de-