

The Purification (Feb. 2nd.)

Joy! Joy! the Mother comes, And in her arms she brings The Light of all the world, The Christ, the King of kings; And in her heart the while, All silently she sings.

Saint Joseph follows near, In rapture lost and love, While angels round about In glowing circles move; And o'er the Mother broods The Everlasting dove.

There in the temple court, Old Simeon's heart beats high, And Anna feeds her soul With food of prophecy; But, see! the shadows pass, The world's true Light draws nigh.

O Infant God! O Christ! O Light most beautiful! Thou comest, Joy of joys! All darkness to annul; And brightest lights of earth, Beside Thy Light are dull.

Making Converts.

Many a Protestant says: "I have had Catholic friends all my life, but not one of them ever spoke to me about religion."

Doctrine and Dogma may not be proper subjects for the casual chatter of a dinner or a dance, yet many an opportunity is offered even in the chance encounter for the "winged word."

Every Catholic should know the great fundamental truths of the Church well enough to explain them simply and logically to the seeker after truth or to the scoffing sceptic. There is surely no lack of books to supply this information. For example, "The Faith of Our Fathers," by Cardinal Gibbons, and nothing could be more admirably suited to its purpose, may be had for 25 cents.

But the greatest number of converts are not made by words—they are made by deeds. The best argument, it has been well said, for the Catholic Faith is the life of a good Catholic. The dealing of grace with the soul are varied and manifold, and the history of conversions runs through marvellously varied gamuts of experience, but the golden warp of most of them is somebody's holy living.

St. Ignatius was converted from the ways of the worldling to the ways of the saint, not by studying theology or philosophy or books of controversy, but by reading the lives of the saints. Not their words, be it emphasized, but their lives.

How many souls in less exalted spheres, have been drawn to the Church through the example of Catholic associates, fellow-workers in office or shop, frequently through the simple piety of the humble little serving maid.

Year after year, Protestant girls educated in convents become Catholics, although there is a rule in these schools forbidding the teaching of Catholic truths to Protestant pupils without the consent of their parents. Plainly the lives of the nuns, the Christian atmosphere of the convent, are the magnets that draw and move the ardent soul, and not arguments or homily.

If every Catholic owes the duty of right living to his neighbour as well as to himself, so much the greater is that duty on that part of Catholics of position and influence. The laxities and the scandals of high society find their way speedily down to the masses.

The bad Catholic is a social scourge—he is the bar of public opinion to be judged not as an individual but as a member of a Church that claims holiness as one of its attributes, by which all men may know its divine mission.

Every human being whose life is a manifestation of his creed is helping to make converts.

Some Roads to Rome in America.*

ALEXIS I. DU PONT COLEMAN, M.A., Keble College, Oxford. Author and translator of Maeterlinck.

Montaigne, in the tender, fragrant essay he has consecrated to the memory of his bosom friend Etienne de la Boetie, tells how people asked him why they loved each other so: "and I could only answer, 'Because it was I—because it was he.'" In like manner, when I am asked to tell something of how I found my way into the Church, I can really say no more than "Because God was good—because I was meant to be a Catholic."

I had read but little of directly controversial writing; I had few Catholic friends; I had seen for years almost nothing of the majesty and beauty of the Church's worship: Yet, though I was so long "disobedient unto the heavenly vision," grace worked on patiently until the end was reached.

It was in my last year at Oxford that the thing came up acutely for the first time. I went up to London, and, knowing no priests, sought at random for a son of St. Dominic, to whom I had long been devoted. In the great Dominican convent at Haverstock Hill, all one Sunday afternoon, a kindly friar, himself a convert, laboured to remove my doubts, and I went away almost persuaded. Once back in the stubborn High Church atmosphere of Oxford, I wavered and was less sure; and what decided me to stay where I was may have been the calm assurance of an intimate friend, the most devout and positively saintly of my contemporaries, who is to-day a Benedictine monk and one of the best known of English Catholic writers.

The same curious thing happened twice more. A second time I was on the brink, the next summer, in a studious Long Vacation spent in the peaceful seclusion of Cumbriae in Scotland; and the vice-provost of the Anghen theological college there, who laid my doubts for the time, also preceded me into the Church. The third was after I had been ordained and returned to America. I knew well one of the most learned theologians of the Episcopal Church, and put my doubts before him, to have them overborne by his superior knowledge and acute dialectics; and now but a few weeks since I have had the happiness of welcoming him too into the City of Peace.

So I worked on for six years in a parish which I had evolved out of nothing in a city slum, flattering myself that I was giving my people "the full round of Catholic doctrine and ritual," as one used fondly to say, shutting my eyes to the anomalies and the irreverences and the heresies which I knew to be all around me in the other parishes of my communion, and sheltering my congregation as far as possible from contact with them.

At last, however, stubborn logic drove me into a corner. I faced fairly the fact that I was teaching, on the sacraments for example, the straight doctrine of the Council of Trent—and teaching it not because it appealed to me personally but precisely because it was the doctrine of the Council of Trent. How, then, I was finally compelled to ask myself, could I go on doing that, and yet reject what the same Council taught as clearly on the supremacy of the Holy See?

But wherever I let in logic, the fortifications behind which I had sheltered myself crumbled and fell. I heard my High Church colleagues making loud proclamation that their body was "a branch of the Catholic Church"—when they felt the need of support against

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Presbyterian or Baptist attacks; but I knew how complacently they spoke of it as "The Church" and of themselves as "Churchmen" when no outsiders were present. I knew how they resented the sending of an Apostolic Delegate to the United States, all the while that they were at least passive accomplices in the attempt to set up a new church in Mexico—Cuba, and Porto Rico and the Philippines had not yet come to form part of the General Convention's responsibilities.

In a word, the time came when special pleading could no longer obscure the truth; and twelve years ago I knelt before the Altar of St. Vincent de Paul's church in New York and made my submission with a humble satisfied heart. I emphasize the length of time which has passed to lead up to my final word—that never in the twelve years have I had a single hour of questioning or regret for the step which I took that day, or ceased to be grateful to God for bearing so patiently with my delays and hesitations and for bringing me home at the last.

A Great Editor Gone.

Mr. Hillaire Belloc, in a eulogy of the late Cecil Chesterton, says in No. 319 of the NEW WITNESS, of which paper the departed was editor, that Chesterton was distinguished by three qualities which made him a great and powerful journalist, viz:

- 1) knowledge of public affairs, 2) the power of lucid expression, 3) heroic courage.

Of these three qualities, Mr. Belloc seems to think, the second is the rarest. "For twenty men who can write good rhetoric, or even good verse," he says, "there is not one who can with intelligence seize at once the heart of a subject and present it in the shortest space so vividly and so framed that all his audience receive his own knowledge and are in communion with it." Chesterton was one of the very few to whom this power was given.

Mr. Belloc adds: "I speak here of something which I know, for I myself, with I know not what labor, have attempted and have failed in the same task, and I have seen around me other men far more gifted than I, admirable at illustration and rhythm, at strong picturing of things, who have failed in this complete task of rapidity of synthesis informed by lucidity."

Mr. Belloc is right. The power of lucid expression is rare, and because it is rare, we have so few really powerful editors, though there are thousands who "can write good rhetoric and even good verse."

But perhaps the third quality of a good editor, heroic courage, is even rarer than the power of lucid synthesis. Mr. Chesterton possessed it, too, in an extraordinary degree. "There was no risk he would not run," says Mr. Belloc, "no suffering which he would not encounter (for the sake of truth); from ridicule to misconception to imprisonment, and from imprisonment to poverty." It was this sublime courage that gave to his talent and to his knowledge their enormous value.

Cecil Chesterton, as our readers know, was a convert to the Catholic faith. He died in France, December 6th, of the effects of a wound received in the last days of fighting. In the army he was a mere private; but honest, independent journalism has lost in him a mighty general. Would that we had more like him!

Exile vs. Gratitude.

Both in France and Alsace, there is a great deal of anxiety over the question of religious liberty in Alsace under the new conditions. For three centuries, in spite of many vicissitudes and many changes, the people of Alsace, Catholics, Protestants and Jews, have been allowed in accordance with solemn engagements, taken both by German and French Governments, to practice their own religion and maintain their own schools. The proclamations which accompanied the entry of the French into Colmar, Metz and Strasbourg, have given solemn assurance to the people that their religious liberty shall suffer no diminution. No secret has been made in the French journals of the fact that the persistence of the loyalty of the population to France throughout the German domination was due in large measure to the Catholic clergy. It would seem, therefore, that there should be no reason to suspect that these engagements would not be faithfully carried out, especially since the disregard of "scraps of paper" has been utterly discredited. Nevertheless the people and the clergy in Alsace are disquieted, and are filled with forebodings lest their return to France should cost them some of the liberty which is so precious to them. La Croix does not conceal the fact that there is some ground for their fears:

"Alas there are among us politicians of ignoble souls whose sectarianism and persecuting hatred refuse to be silent in the presence of any grandeur. Do we not hear them already clamoring for the enforcement of the laws against the religious who have come from every quarter of the globe to offer to France their arms, their breasts, their blood and their lives? Already they are talking of compelling the Jesuits to depart once more into exile and to seek elsewhere the religious liberty which France denies them, the Jesuits whose bodies are lacerated, whose breasts are covered with wounds, decorated with crosses of war, with red ribbons, with palms and stars. When peace is established and Germany may come freely to France, take up his abode among us and carry on business; but the Frenchman whose glory it is to have been mutilated and whose valor has won him wounds, must be driven out, merely because he wishes to serve God according to his conscience! This is the reward which the sectarians are preparing for him."

It is no wonder that the Catholics of Alsace and France are reading sinister signs in such ingratitude, and are looking for assurances, that they may trust, of complete liberty to serve God under the French standard for Catholic, Protestant and Israelite alike.

Macaulay on "Plots."

"Nothing is so offensive to a man who knows anything of history or of human nature as to hear those who exercise the powers of government accuse any set of foreign attachments. If there be any proposition universally true in politics it is this, that foreign attachments are the fruit of domestic misrule. It has always been the trick of bigots to make their subjects miserable at home, and then to complain that they look for relief abroad; to divide society, and to wonder that it is not united; to govern as if a section of the State were the whole, and to censure the other sections of the State for their want of patriotic spirit." —From Macaulay's Essay on "The Civil Disabilities of the Jews."

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