

seemed startled—holding the letter away from him a moment, bringing it a little closer, rubbing his eyes. "I—I can't understand," he said. "I—I don't know what he is driving at." He read a few words more. Then he thrust out one hand, holding the letter toward the priest. "I'm—I'm shaking like a woman," he said. "Will you read it?"

He looked at Father Maguire almost piteously. The priest took the letter from him, wondering. Then he read it.

"Dear Daddy—I don't know how to tell you what has happened. But all the town is talking of it, and I suppose it has already started the rounds of the news; so I must try to get it to you before you see it in public print, or have some fellow stop you on the street about it. I'm afraid it won't read half as big a thing in my poor words as it really is, but that will be my fault. So supply between the lines myself."

"I've spoken several times of my friend Larry in my letters. He's a fine fellow half through now, and as kind to me as if he were my own big brother in starting me on my way—but I won't waste time speaking of that; you've heard it all before. To begin right. He and I had a half-holiday yesterday (Wednesday), and had planned to spend the afternoon—with the rector's permission, of course—attending an illustrated lecture in town. Something happened to detain Larry, and he told me to go ahead, get a seat, and hold on to one for him. Off I went, got to the hall early, secured the best seats in the house.

"The lecture was on the Philippines—a dandy!—and the slides were great. Man knew his business—a good talker and thoroughly unbiased. I was simply lost, so much so that I failed to notice people beginning to look restless and uncomfortable. Nor did I smell the smoke, either, that was responsible for the trouble. First thing I knew of it was when a spurt of flame shot out from behind the curtain.

"I'll never forget what happened then. They say there were only twenty dead; but there were seven hundred in the place, and it seemed to me as if there were seven thousand. It looked like that. I knew better than to join in the fight. There were three exits, and they jammed up so quick that none of them was any good. I tried to calm down the people in the rear, but they wouldn't listen. So I went back and sat there, trying to think what was best to be done,—it seemed so foolish to do nothing. But at least it would be better to die quietly in a chair than be pounded to death under the feet of that crazy crowd.

"I made an act of contrition—I had been to Holy Communion in the morning, thank God!—and I was mighty sure my last hour had come. The smoke was terrible. Some of the men rushed up towards the stage; but the whole back of that was in flames, and there was no chance. I found every breath harder and harder to draw. I got down on the floor, and for a time it was easier. But I could feel myself going. And the screams of those poor people! I'll never forget it.

"Some one grabbed a little tot—she can't be more than four years old—and threw her back out of the jam. She fell between the seats, scared to death. I grabbed her. Get down here with me, baby. I said. "I'll take care of you." Poor little thing! Her father and mother are both missing. I could only think then that she and I were going on a long journey. It seemed rather pleasant to start out in such white-souled company.

"But I'm wandering, really. I can't help it. It is all so clear, so vivid, even yet. I haven't slept since it happened. The doctor talked opiate ten minutes ago, but I begged him to let me finish this first. You know, dad, I don't want you to worry.

"I remember asking the baby if she knew her prayers, and she began the 'Hail Mary.' But she couldn't go on, she was too scared. Death was coming nearer and nearer. I could hear fire bells, but they were very far away. I was choking, struggling for breath—then I heard a voice.

"Murray! Murray! Murray O'Mara! Rouse up, boy! I've got you, lad, and I've got a way out! Come, come!"

"It was Larry. I grabbed the baby, and Larry grabbed me, and pulled and hauled and dragged me to the side of the building. The house itself was of brick, but it seems that the extension in the back was of frame. When Larry saw the crowd in front he knew it was no use to try to do anything there. So he picked up an axe, and he and three other men chopped a hole through the frame siding. It wasn't on fire, but the smoke was so thick that no one else would venture in. He got me and the baby, and I'm living because he came looking for me. May God be praised!

"Dear dad, don't worry, please! And there's something I'd awfully like you to do for me. Larry's mother lives in the Immaculate Conception parish. She works, I think. Will you find out about her, and congratulate her? You'll know how to do it right. I want her to know how brave Larry is, and to hear it from you. He'll never tell her. Larry Byrnes isn't the chap to praise his own deeds.

"I'll write again tomorrow. There's lots more. I've given you only a few details, and I'm not sure they're quite straight. But the doctor's just been in again. Sound as a dollar, only I've got to get sleep. Everything will be fine. Lots of love, dad. For the last time, Don't worry!

"Strange, dad! 'Worry' and 'Murray' rhyme well together. But that's all they do,—just rhyme. Good-night! I see you in the morning. Your loving son, MURRAY."

"Good Lord,—good Lord!" The words came from John O'Mara's ashen lips. He was striking one closed fist into the open palm of the other hand. "Think of it! Yesterday afternoon! And I sat there at my desk and didn't know I O my God, I didn't know,—I didn't know!"

His religion! Father Maguire stared, realizing. This was a new John O'Mara,—this pallid-faced, shaken man,—a John O'Mara to be comforted, buoyed up with consoling words.

"Sit down," the priest said gently. "It's all over!"

"All over—"

"All over, and Murray is safe. What's to fret about? Let's go over the letter again. Sit down. We'll read."

"No," said the father, covering his eyes with his hand—"No, not yet."

But the priest scolded as if he were scolding a child, talked of this and that incident, guessed at details, surmised occurrences, discussed Larry; and finally had John O'Mara back in his chair, shaken, but composed. And then, as if to give another turn to the man's seething thoughts, Father Maguire alluded to the last clause in Murray's letter. "I'll call up Father Lang (he's the pastor of the Immaculate Conception parish), and see if he knows Larry's mother," he suggested. "He can give her address, if nothing else."

"Do" assented John O'Mara.

So Father Maguire called up the rector of the Immaculate Conception parish. As it chanced, Father Lang was at home. John O'Mara sat staring straight before him, hearing little, tapping the arm of his chair with restless fingers. But Father Maguire, talking and listening, felt his own face grow pale. There was something like fear in his eyes when he at last hung up the receiver very, very slowly, and moved almost noiselessly to his place. There was silence, the quietness was intense—so intense that the priest could hear the loud thumping of his own heart.

"Did you get the address?" asked John O'Mara.

"Yes," said Father Maguire.

His agitation was so marked that, in spite of his perturbation, O'Mara said:

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Father Maguire pushed his hair away from a forehead moist with perspiration. "You—you do believe in God, John O'Mara—not from the lips out, but right from the bottom of your heart? You do believe that, no matter how strong our will, how cast-iron our ambitions, God has the giving or withholding of all?"

John O'Mara bowed his head. "I do believe," he said. "I do believe in God's writer and care. And, O my God, I thank Thee!"

The words issued brokenly from his lips.

"There is another thing—no, don't look like that! Not Murray. It's the woman—the mother. She is very ill. Was taken ill some days ago in her place of employment. Her employer sent her home, discharged her. There was some talk about a glass of water. She is Larry Byrnes' mother."

The two stared at each other. John O'Mara sprang up suddenly. Father Maguire rose, too, facing him.

"A woman—a glass of water—!" John O'Mara uttered the words, absorbing them. He caught at Father Maguire's wrist. "No, no, no!" he shuddered. "Don't tell me that—don't tell me that! It isn't true!"

"It is true," said Father Maguire.

"And it was—her son?"

"It is her son."

"Her son?" John O'Mara released his wrist as suddenly as he had seized it, and sank down limp and helpless. "Now, may God be merciful to me, a sinner!" he murmured.

He wavered to his feet again, holding to the back of his chair for support.

"There was once a pharisee—you remember him? And the publican who stood afar off?" (His lips wreathed in a smile that was a contortion.) "Five thousand dollars for a bed, this pharisee gave to a hospital to please Murray! And he discharged the mother of the boy who saved Murray's life! Discharged her—because she drank from his glass!"

"Wait!" said Father Maguire.

But the man was bent on self-torture. Incoherent phrases fell from his lips. Father Maguire let him talk on until he had exhausted himself. At last the opportunity for interruption came.

"The mother is poor. Father Lang tells me that she would never let Larry know she had to work so hard. He thought she kept herself by sewing or lace-making or something of that sort. She needs everything, care and rest principally. You can see that she gets them."

"The least—the very least!" whispered John O'Mara.

It was done. Father Torrance smiled a little at Father Maguire when he heard the story.

"Well, Pat," he said, "the man had a religion."

"Yes," said Father Maguire, thoughtfully; "he had one, though I don't think Murray himself ever realized it. But the one he has now is the best."

He was right. In the very last few of the beautiful Church of St. Mary, John O'Mara was kneeling at that moment. He had just heard Mass. With eyes fixed on the Taber-

nacle, his heart sent up a prayer so deep, so intense, that the words could not issue from his set lips. It was the prayer he was to make his own through all the long years of a useful, noble, charitable life; "May God be merciful to me, a sinner!"—Grace Keon, in the Ave Maria.

**GENERAL INTENTION FOR JULY**  
**RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.**  
**REMEDYING THE EVILS OF WAR**

The Holy Father is taking time by the forelock; he is looking forward to the moment when peace will come back to earth; he foresees that the present war is bound to leave traces after it which will take a century to disappear; and he asks us to work, according to our means and our stations in life, to make this world a spot worth living in after the cataclysm is over. This request is not a futile one; there are many reasons why each one of us, in his own small way, should try to remedy the evils of war.

Will the war bring them back to Christianity? We hear a great deal about the recognition of God in the trenches and the clamoring for the ministrations of religion among the wounded and dying; but is not this a mere incident in the tragedy that is being enacted in Europe, an evanescent something that dreams are made of? Time alone will tell. What is really wanted is a wave of fervor that will penetrate not only the trenches but millions of homes as well, a renewal of the religious spirit throughout the world that will enable men and women to stand not merely adversity but also a renewal of temporal prosperity.

Will the present upheaval effect this? Does war make people more religious? Undoubtedly, war brings out noble traits which we should be willing generously to acknowledge. There is, for instance, the strong sense of justice which for a couple of years has been moving multitudes of men to sacrifice leisure, and even life, in a cause they look upon as just. It would be hard to believe that the love of bloodshed for its own sake, or the prospect of gaining some minor glory on the battlefield, or the mere sport of the thing, could account for the tremendous upheaval we have been witnessing during the past two years, when hundreds of thousands of men, citizens devoted to peace, having no experience of war, and with no desire for war, could give up their homes and families to undergo arduous discipline, cross oceans, submit to the inconveniences of life in the trenches, and possibly die, unless they were impelled by a cause they believe to be just. This whole chapter of our history shows that the desire for justice is still a dominating influence in men's lives,—and justice is a virtue. Too often it lies dormant in civil life, but it needs only to be roused by some national or international interest to bring it into full play. And yet while giving brave and unselfish men credit for what they are doing, we must remember that love of country is not necessarily love of God; nor is the patriotic action which is justified merely by glorious exploits and noble sacrifices necessarily meritorious before God.

While patriotism is praiseworthy as a Christian and civic virtue, something more is required for salvation. In their optimism, however, enthusiasts have since the war begun seized on patriotism and its religious, if not its essential, virtues that men should practise; they argue and generalize as if nothing more were required from soldiers to earn heaven than to fight for the integrity of an Empire. The armies of the Crusaders in the Middle Ages set out for the Orient to wrench the Holy Land from the hands of the Turks. Theirs was a mission undertaken from a religious motive, but their return to Europe does not seem to have made Europe more religious. In fact, some writers attribute to those vast movements of men and their absence from their homes for years, the beginning of that laxity in the practice of Catholicism which ended, a couple of centuries later, in the great revolt against the Church. And yet we know that at the time of the Crusades there was only one dominant religion; in our age there are hundreds clamoring for recognition and living only on the strength of their mutual recrimination. Amid this bedlam of jarring sects may we, after a while, look for greater harmony and unity which is one of the tests of true religion? Is greater unity in doctrine or more fervent religious life going to be the outcome of the present war? We know not; we shall see what we shall see. Undoubtedly, a world humbled in blood and tears is more likely to turn to God; men who face death at close quarters hardly ever forget the experience; but the Prince of Darkness will be just as active after the war as he was before it, and it would all be as if we sat down with folded hands and hail the return of peace as a new and brighter era for the religious world. Let us hope that it will be so, but we feel convinced that all true friends of God shall still be called on to fight as heretofore for the truth as He revealed it.

To sum up, it seems to us that prudence and economy should be the watchwords for years to come if we would offset the temporal evils that are already dawning. The poor will have to bear their poverty and wretchedness in all patience and humility, while the wealthy will have the chance to understand, as they never understood before, that they are simply the stewards of God. The great remedy for both the temporal and the spiritual evils of the present war will be a return to the precepts of the Gospel and the application to our lives of the lessons they teach. In the words of a recent writer, socialism has failed, diplomacy has failed, peace conventions have failed, militarism is about to fail; why not give Christianity a fair chance to show what it can do? If the first principles of Christianity had been applied, there would have been no war in Europe. War or no war, whether we belong to this nation or to that, we are all members of one human family and we should submit to the laws which our Common Father has given us. With His grace, which will never fail us, we should rely for a final solution of the difficulties of the present time on the inherent common sense of the multitudes of every nation and on the practical application of the laws of charity, equity and justice. This will be easier when a purified world recognizes its own helplessness. Every trial, every sorrow, brings us nearer to the Source of grace. God is not a

God of vengeance but a God of goodness; He does not seek to crush us, but to show us that this world of error and tears is a step to things eternal. Our prayers aiding, let us trust that this will be the lesson learned from the maddest upheaval in human history. E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

**THE CHURCH OF ROME HAS A VOICE**

The Rev. Newman Smythe, D. D., is pastor of one of the leading Congregationalist churches of New Haven, Conn., and is a preacher of wide—although very modernistic—influence among the non-Catholic denominations. In a late discourse delivered before a gathering of sectarian divines in Hartford, Conn., speaking of the Catholic Church, he took occasion to say that "for centuries it has led its own following."

"At any time of need it has not to wait. In the morning its voice may go forth to the ends of the earth. At midnight it may speak; and, as the sun rises the whole world round, the people shall listen. Before the powers of the world it can appeal to millions of people, and in every tongue. It retains no temporal sovereignty; it can not command the sea to stop; yet its appeal has gone for the love of Christ's sake in behalf of the sufferers and the prisoners. The Church of Rome has a voice, and it can make it heard even amid the storm of war. The Protestant churches can not. The voice of the Roman Church is one voice, as the voice of many waters; there is none to declare the mind of the Protestant churches, though all would hear it spoken. Its voice is as the murmurs of running brooks from distant sources.—The Missionary.

**HOW THE TRUTH CAME**

In a recent lecture delivered at Georgetown Visitation Convent, on "Why I Became a Catholic," Mr. Louis H. Wetmore, of New York, proved how varied are the paths on which God leads earnest souls to the Truth. From the exceptional circumstances of his intellectual and religious life, even from childhood, Mr. Wetmore's conversion to Catholicity, in its remote and proximate details, presents a view of providential guardianship and awakening that excites intense and absorbing interest, with more than the usual sympathy one feels for the doubts and struggles and heart agonies of every convert to the faith.

Brought up as a Presbyterian, as early as his fifth year he was a little philosopher. St. Thomas Aquinas troubled his Benedictine preceptors at that early age with the ever recurring question: "What is God?" But this little fellow used his nascent energies in trying to locate God. After many shattered experiments the infant theologian finally located him in the organ-loft; but that too failed at last; and his puzzle growing beyond hope of solution, he startled his mother one Sunday morning as the family was preparing to attend 11 a. m. service by exclaiming: "Mother, I can't go to church; I don't believe in God any longer." Needless to say authority was used, and he was present at the morning devotions; but during the two hour sermon, to the consternation of the preacher and his pious aunt, he slipped out of the organ-loft, and to the "Yankee Doodle!" the speaker did not refer to any codign punishment for this juvenile offence.

Mr. Wetmore divided into five phases his successive attitudes of mind in regard to religious problems before he eventually found rest to his soul in the Church of the ages. From five to nine years of age he was an atheist! From nine to twelve he was an Anglican against his will; later he joined the Church and remained for several years. One day in a hotel in London he picked up a torn book which lay on the table and read it for three hours; when he arose his faith in Christianity was utterly gone.

Mr. Wetmore possesses an unusual share of intellectual and oratorical gifts. He is a forceful and convincing speaker, and while conveying his thoughts in the best English, he uses simple language intelligible to all, even when discoursing of the so-called philosophy of Hegel, Bernard Shaw and Comenius, and its almost fatal influence over his life. Now he looks back upon that period with its social theories as insanity. These men while inventing and arranging their hypotheses of the universe and its creation, of man's nature with its perplexities of moral evil, threw the great questions they could not solve into a scrap-basket called the Unknowable, and so set them aside. "When we preached atheism to crowds in a London hall, and told them there was no heaven, they applauded us. Think of it—cheering us for giving them the very worst instead of the best. . . . All men must have a shrine at which to worship; it is a necessity of our nature; and these men erected a new shrine. Instead of God, they placed high on a pedestal a thing which they called Universal Influx. Fancy praying to this invention of folly: O Universal Influx! . . . When this idol fell, as it had to fall, they placed themselves on the pedestal, and said self was now the only god to worship."

The young man's whole soul began to revolt. He heard the Church maligned, and he began to read and

reflect. The period of medieval Christianity he had always considered the Dark Ages of ignorance; and lo! he found it all illuminated with the glorious intellect and art and sanctity of the Catholic Church. The contradictions he had heard uttered in regard to the Person of Jesus Christ, now set him to study earnestly the divine story of the New Testament: the Spirit of God enlightened him, and the conviction grew that this was no human philosopher, nor ordinary Jew, as the Haeckel and Shaw tribe asserted; only a God-Man could have uttered such new and sublime doctrines, so difficult yet so consonant to the heart of humanity, could have wrought such wonders, could have been the victim of the awful tragedy of Calvary for the salvation of the race.

And so the day came when, albeit in anguish of soul at the ordeal before him, he said decisively: "I must enter the Roman Catholic Church or become a lunatic." He obeyed the voice of God which at the age of four had seemed to come to him from the organ-loft, but which in truth is everywhere, and entered the bark of Peter, whither some few of that large group of forty or more who with him had been misled by modern fallacies, followed him: while the rest, alas! float wandering wrecks on the troubled sea of doubt and unbelief.—New York Freeman's Journal.

**A GREAT FATHER**

Never have we realized so well as now the meaning of the loving title "Holy Father," which is the immemorial name of the Vicar of Christ. Father is he of all men. Neutrality has been thrown to the winds in every other quarter; he alone has been true to his first pronouncement that to him all nations are the same, that they are all his children, and that the interests of one are as dear to him as the interests of the other.

Nothing emphasizes this better than a recent article in the New York Sun showing the care which the Holy Father has of all prisoners no matter what their nationality. It is said that during the period from October 24, 1914, to March 31, 1916, as a result of his efforts for the repatriation of non-combatants interned in belligerent countries, 96,753 French who were interned in Germany, Austria and occupied territories have been allowed to return home, while 10,831 Germans and 3,105 Austrians interned by the Allies have been released.

Besides this there are the permanently disabled prisoners of war released by the belligerent countries, and the prisoners of war hospitalized in Switzerland, statistics regarding which are now being collected. This is being done by the special Inquiry Office for Prisoners of War, established at the Vatican, formerly in charge of Mr. Bellamy Storor and now attached to the Secretariate of State and managed by the College of Penitentiaries.

It is interesting to read the process of this office. All the letters of inquiry about prisoners of war are sorted according to nationality, and lists are then compiled and sent to the different prison camps where the chaplains collect data and send them to the Vatican. No distinction is made as to religion.

At first all letters were addressed to the Pope who insisted on opening them personally and ascertaining whether the prisoners about whom news was asked were alive dead or missing. Once a prisoner is found every effort is made to get him into communication with his family, and by order of the Pope all Catholic chaplains are bound to write letters for prisoners under their charge who do not know how or who are unable to write. Many prisoners who were supposed to have been killed have been traced to hospitals or prison camps, sometimes in Serbia, Bulgaria or Turkey, and their families, thanks to the intervention of the Pope, have been enabled to get direct news from them.

If we put ourselves in the place of those poor soldiers and their families we can begin to understand what a work of mercy has been quietly carried on by the Pope. Is it surprising? Hardly. Children look to their father for help and pity. And the Pope is father of us all. What he is doing for those engaged in warfare he would do as readily for us. We know that. For that reason, if he holds himself as father to us, we should hold ourselves as children to him. These days he wants our

prayers, our unwavering loyalty. If we give him the best that is in us it will be ours in the time to come to rejoice that we have had a share in the work he has done for peace. When history shall refer to him as the Pope of Peace that glory shall be reflected upon all his loyal children who have strengthened him by their prayers.—Boston Pilot.

**THE THREE BEST BOOKS**

A pious old man, who lived in a poor solitary cottage, had such a store of knowledge and understanding, that he was able to give good advice and salutary instruction to every one who applied to him.

A learned man who visited him was astonished at the wisdom of his conversation, and said to him: "Where have you acquired this wisdom? I see in your cottage no collection of books from which you could have drawn so much good and beautiful learning."

"And yet," replied the old man, "I have the three best books in existence, and I read them daily. These books are the Works of God above me and around me; Conscience within me; and the Holy Scripture. "The Works of God, the heavens and earth, are like a great book opened before us; they proclaim to us the omnipotence, wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father. "My conscience tells me what I must do, and what I must avoid. "But the Holy Scripture, that Book of all books, informs us how God manifested Himself to man from the creation of the world; how the Son of God, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, came into this world; and what He has commanded and promised, what He has done and suffered, in order to make us holy and happy."—The Monitor.

**THE LAST WORDS**

How often have we taken a farewell glance at a friend without having been aware of it at the time. Had we known that our eyes were meeting for the last time on earth they would have said far sweeter words. Not until we know all that God knows can we estimate the full power and the sacredness of some one life which may seem the humblest in the world.—John Ruskin.

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