

SO AS BY FIRE

BY JEAN CONNOR

CHAPTER X
THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

For a moment Barbara Greene's strong heart seemed to stand still, the gray eyes darkened and dilated with terror. Church, altar, worshippers—all were in a dizzy whirl about her—only a mighty effort of will kept her from fainting outright.

Then the clear, piercing glance passed her by, the deep voice whose strange blending had lingered through all change and peril in her ear, began to speak, and the warm blood rushed through the girl's chilled veins again. Did he know? Did he remember her? What had the dying girl told him in that hour they had spent together? Could those clear eyes recognize in the dainty white-robed little lady of Roscroft, the shabby starveling of the Road House? What would happen when all this chanting and bowing and preaching were over? What would happen to her—Barbara Greene?

Allston Leigh, stealing a look at the young face, wondered at its rigidity. Bess Dixon could scarcely restrain her pious horror. Even Judge Randall was conscious of a painful shock, as, through all the solemn part of the Mass, this grandchild sat with unbowed head, unbent knee, with unseeing eye, unheeding ear. All around her was dim, shadowy, unreal—she was back again on her own mountain ridge, in her old grey sweater and sun-bonnet.

She was sitting on the soapbox in Duffy's store, hearing his talk of the strange preacher. She was standing in "Union Hall" at the mission altar; she was guiding this tall, grave-eyed speaker through the springtime woods to "help Elinor to die."

And when at last the Mass was over and the congregation rose to go, she started up like one roused from a dream.

"Take me home!" she whispered to Allston Leigh. "Please, quick, take me home."

"You are ill?" he said, anxiously.

"No, no," she answered. "I only want breath—air again."

And while the Randalls stopped to exchange greetings with old friends and neighbors, "Nellie" hurried her escort feverishly to the river where the little boat was waiting in the sunshine, and the shimmering waters stretched into dizzying distance.

For the moment there seemed safety and escape. But the preacher! The preacher whom she had guided through the springtime woods to Elinor's dying bed. Every nerve thrilled with sickening suspense as the girl thought of what those clear eyes had seen, what that deep voice might tell.

What a story it would be for all those proud visitors gathered at Roscroft to hear—what a story to rouse the Randall spirit into fierce passion—what a story to echo and re-echo forever in this great world where the daughter of Buck Greene had forced a path through the waters into the pale cheek and a desperate glitter into the gray eyes as they looked down into the shining waters of which the dead Elinor had dreamed. "I wonder if it hurts much to—drown," she said, suddenly to her companion.

"There is no last word on that subject," he laughed, "but according to the most authentic information we have it is not a bad way to shake off this mortal coil."

"It would be such a quick way out of trouble," she said, "just to jump in and let the waters close over you and be done with—everything and everybody. If you ever hear of me as being dead, Mr. Leigh, you may be sure that I am at the bottom of some nice, clear, deep river like this."

"Don't," he said, sharply, "don't talk like that. It makes my flesh creep."

"Does it?" she asked, with a short laugh. "It makes mine creep, too. Still, I think if I were driven very hard and there was no help—no hope for me—nothing but misery and disgrace—"

"I can't imagine anything more direful and impossible," he said, lightly. "In such a beautiful life as yours no such morbid fancies can find place." Then as if vaguely conscious of some gloomy undercurrent in her mood, he resolutely turned the conversation to lighter things, telling her of the old houses on the river banks, that they passed—of the Oriole club-house, whose gay pennant fluttered from the little island in midstream, of the "fete champetre" that Aunt Van, as he called Madame Van Arsdale, gave at her old manor house, twenty miles away.

"It's the dear old lady's one yearly splurge, as the boys would call it. She is not rich enough to entertain as all her family traditions demand, and the manor is an utterly impossible place in winter. But for a short, bright time in summer the Van Arsdale comes to her own again. When the white jasmine is in bloom, and the old house is wreathed with it, the doors are thrown open, the old family servants flock back from their little cabin to Missus' call—and the lady of the manor is at home again. The old furniture is uncovered, and the old silver polished, and the bats and beetles are driven off. Then, when all is ready, Aunt Van proceeds to entertain for two weeks in the good hospitable fashion of old."

"And really, in spite of her sixty odd years, it is quite a festive time, and the fete champetre is the crown

of it all. Everybody comes, young and old, but especially the young. It is a sort of presentation at court. To make it gay, dear old Aunt Van insists on fancy dress, something quaint and picturesque. I was just thinking this morning I would like to choose your costume. You would make an ideal Undine."

"Undine!" She started. It had been one of the books in the Road House—it was one of the stories she knew. And the shadow deepened over the young face—darkened in the gray eyes. Ah, those old, old, days, how bare and dread and lonely they had been, but oh, how free—how safe! How honest and true!

In the dim shaded old priest's house of St. Barnabas, Father Lane and his host, Father Martin, were at dinner. They had been classmates years ago, and the brief meeting of to-day was a great pleasure to both. "Well, I am glad to have seen old St. Barnabas" at last, even though I had to pay for it with a Sunday sermon," said Father Lane, smiling. "It's the slowest, the sleepiest place I have struck for many a day. But all good people I am sure—that don't need waking up. I don't suppose there's a real mortal sinner in the whole parish. By the way, are the great folks in your front pew? That fine-looking, white-haired old man and his family?"

"The Randalls, I suppose you mean—Judge Roger Randall. If you were a Marylander," laughed Father Martin, "that would be quite enough to say, but as you are not, I will say that the family came over with Lord Baltimore, after holding the Faith against fire and sword from the days of Catholic England."

"Randall, Randall," repeated Father Lane, thoughtfully. "There was a girl dressed in white beside the old gentleman that I have seen somewhere before. I can't just recall where, but the remembrance was really a distraction to me. She had an unusual face and as it was lifted to the pulpit it impressed one strangely as if it were associated with some painful, almost tragic experience in the past."

"It was the Judge's new granddaughter, I presume," said Father Martin. "I call her new because she is only a recent acquisition by the family. And he proceeded briefly to sketch Elinor Kane's story. As it went on, a curious expression came over the missionary's face. The vague experience of the past began to take bewildering shape, a picture stood out with startling distinctness against the busy, crowded background of his strenuous life. The dim old room at the Road House, the pale, dying girl propped up among her pillows, confessing her pitiful sins into his fatherly ear, the guide who had called him to her, waiting on the dusky porch below.

"And this—this girl I saw to-day is the Judge's granddaughter, you say? She came a stranger to him—without proof?"

"Oh, there was no doubt about it," said Father Martin. "Letters, papers, everything were found with her at the time of the accident. The doctor telegraphed to the Judge at once and he went on and claimed her. She was coming to him on the ill-fated train that was wrecked at Bixby's Creek. It was rather a close call for her, poor child. And she was ill for a long time. This is the first time she has been at church. She has grown up absolutely without Faith—without religious training whatever. A strange offshoot for the Catholic Randalls."

"Strange, indeed," said Father Lane in a low voice, "very strange! So she was willing to accept the family Faith—to receive religious instruction?"

"Quite willing, I understand. I advised the Judge to send her to the good Sisters at Mount Mercé this summer. She has taken a strong hold of his heart already, and his self-reproach for his years of neglect is really pathetic. They tell me he will allow no allusion to the girl's past; he insists upon it being a closed book—forgotten and forgotten."

"An impossible condition," said Father Lane, gravely. "I fear they will find it so. Meantime, I trust, Father you will be able to guide this stray lamb safe into your fold—God's light and grace can do all things. Now I have just time to catch my train, I believe, so I must say a quick and rather brusque good-by. I open a retreat at Pittsburg to-morrow night. I am glad to have had this little peep at you, old friend, in your green pastures with your quiet flock. It will be a restful memory to take with me in the dusky highway." And after a few more pleasant parting words the old friends said good-by and Father Lane turned his face toward busy scenes of labor, in which the vague doubt and perplexity caused by Judge Randall's "granddaughter" were soon effaced by the deeper shadows and fancier light of the missionary life.

And so the "preacher" passed and gave no sign.

But there had been serious discussion in the party that rode home from St. Barnabas on the wild weed of paganism they had transplanted to the family garden. Nellie's public denial of the faith, as evinced by her attitude during Mass, was a shock that no Randall could stand.

"She must go to Mount Mercé for instruction to-morrow," said the Judge decidedly. "It is not her fault, poor child, that she is ignorant or irreverent. It is mine."

And late in the afternoon, when the day of fear and suspense was nearly over, the old man sought out

the little-robed figure that was gradually growing to be the dearest thing to him on earth—the child of his remorse, his expiation, his dead daughter's neglected little girl.

He found her, apart from the rest, down by the waterside where the shalving mossy bank was shaded by leaning willows, and the river ran dark and deep in the leafy gloom. She was seated in a low fork of a tree, with her head resting against the rough trunk, a hard, set look on the young face and the glittering gray eyes. She started up like some wild hunted thing at bay as she saw the old man coming toward her. But one glance into the kind face, into the tender eyes, and she sank back into her rustic seat all at once.

"Nellie, my dear child, what is it you are doing here alone?" "You must not steal off like this, my little girl. I want to see you bright, happy, and gay like the others."

"Like the others?" she echoed. "But I am not like them—I can never be. I—I do not know how," she added desperately. "They have always been happy—and I—I—"

All the fear and despair of the day unnerved her; she burst into a wild passion of tears that wrung the old man's heart. And, as with fatherly tenderness, he soothed her, he told her of Mount Mercé and the gentle Sisters there, where he would take her on the morrow, where she would learn new beautiful lessons that her past life had never taught.

And as the girl listened the fear that had troubled her all day died in her breast—the cold, despairing eyes kindled again.

"Oh, I will go," she said, tremulously. "I will learn all things that you ask. I will try to think, to believe as you wish, if—I can, if I can."

"You can and will, dear child, I know," he answered, "for the faith is your heritage. It is a part of that sad past of which we have agreed never to speak, that you have been deprived of your birthright, but it will be given back to you, I am sure."

And after that long, long day of suspense and terror, Nellie found herself in the evening by Allston Leigh's side, in the great, oak-beamed hall that, lighted by a soft moon-beam lamp swinging by silver chains from the ceiling, stretched in dim vista through the full length of the spacious house.

It was the "pictured hall" of which the dying girl had told in the old Road House. The Randalls of six generations looked down from the painted walls. Cavaliers, Colonial buds, Revolutionary heroes, prelates and statesmen, royal dames in ruffs and farthingales, coquettes with powdered hair and Watteau gowns, and soft eyed little maids who had vanished beyond convent grilles to bring unseemly benediction on their race and name. And the girl who sat here, with the lamp light falling on her delicate face, her red-gold hair, seemed, in Allston Leigh's eyes, a fitting addition to this stately line. She wore one of her daintiest gowns to-night; a soft white crepe that fell in the graceful folds that only a French modiste can accomplish.

"You look as if you ought to be put in a frame and hung up with the rest," the gentleman said, as he sank on the carved "settle" beside her.

"I wouldn't stay there," she answered. "I can't imagine anything more dreadful than staring down for hundreds of years at a world you have left behind."

"It must be somewhat monotonous, I confess," he laughed. "Still, they make a goodly company, these old Randalls. Have you been introduced to them all yet?"

"No," she answered; "and I don't think I want to be. Most of them look very cross."

"I suppose most of them do. They lived in sterner times than ours, you see, Miss Nellie, and perhaps were made of sterner stuff. That gentleman to the right there had to choose between giving up his faith or his head, and he went to the block without hesitation; that dark-eyed cavalier beside him died in the Tower for loyalty to his exiled king; that pale-faced saint above was the father John Randall hanged at Tyburn. And there to the left is Sir Roger, the sturdy gentleman who gave up title and lands to plant his race in these far shores to which they brought the ancient faith; and the danger the ladies had their own hard times. Mistress Dorothy Randall, there, it is said, held this very house two days and two nights against the Indians, until her lord, who was down at St. Mary's, came back to the rescue. And there is a pretty story of that Elinor Randall in the corner, your namesake, I believe, who rowed across the river with only a faithful slave at midnight to carry a dispatch to General Washington's courier on the opposite shore, the young lady's lover who bore it having unwisely stopped at Roscroft and been captured by the enemy."

"It is all a goodly record, you see, of noble women and brave men, Miss Nellie, a record of which the Randalls are justly proud."

"Yes," she answered, "I know. And I wonder, if something or somebody happened to strike at that dreadful pride, what the Randalls would do."

"Fight it out to the death," was his light answer. "Since I am in the family history line to-night, I can tell you a story about that, too. You see that tall gentleman to your left, with the fair hair and blue eyes?"

"Yes," she answered, lifting her gaze to the handsome portrait, "he looks different from the rest."

"He was. That is your great-uncle, Martin Randall, the judge's younger brother. Aunt Van—he belonged to her generation—knew him well. He was not like the others at all. He had not the stiff Randall backbone, but was quite a gentle, quiet fellow, one of the men who see visions and dream dreams. He was an artist, too, which was another departure from family precedent, all the Randalls having been either soldiers, statesmen, or saints. And this new trade proved his undoing, for he fell in love with a pretty girl in some out-of-the-way place where he had gone to paint wild scenery—and was broken up forever."

"Why?" she asked, quietly.

"Why, indeed?" he echoed, laughing. "You have a way of putting questions that is most upsetting to social standards. Why, indeed? Should not a free American love and marry as he wills? Because—because tradition, precedent, family pride, all sorts of stern unrealities forbid. In this case the girl was quite impossible. Her father was a tavern keeper in the mountains, her mother even was a gypsy—so the story goes. Though the girl had been sent to school and educated beyond her class, the combination was unthinkable. Yet poor Martin Randall's head was so turned that he was ready to throw the Randall pride to the winds and marry the girl offhand, when your grandfather broke things up."

"Grandfather! Grandfather!" repeated the listener, breathlessly, a sudden memory bringing startled color to her cheek. "How?"

"As the strong can control the weak," was the answer. "Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately in this case, your great-uncle was weak. And when the family batteries, with the accumulated ammunition of five hundred years, were brought to bear upon his summer love dream, it could not withstand the shock. But something must have gone down with it, for love and life slipped from the poor fellow almost together. He went into a rapid decline and died the following year in Italy, whether he had gone to find health, your grandfather and grandmother were with him, and Mrs. Randall told Aunt Van that the last words on poor Martin's lips were Rachel Varney's name!"

"Rachel Varney! Rachel Varney!" Allston Leigh went on lightly with his family story, but his listener heard nothing more. She was back again in the dusky gloom of the Road House, a harsh old voice croaking in her ear. "He stood between me and my spring sunshine. It was my one glint of light in fifty years of darkness and I cannot forget—I can not forget."

No! Rachel Varney could not forget. For it was her granddaughter who sat in the proud home that had been closed against Martin Randall's love, listening to her story. It was her grand daughter who held the place she had been denied fifty years ago, it was Rachel Varney's granddaughter whom she had forced upon the proud Randalls of Roscroft as their own. Truly the croaking old mistress of the Road House had found her revenge.

"I don't think you like family history," Allston Leigh was saying, when she at last caught his words.

"No, I don't," she answered, slowly. "It seems like the opening of a grave, and Martin Randall was a fool and a coward!" she added passionately.

"Oh, don't be too hard on your great-uncle, Miss Nellie," was the light answer. "He was confronted by the impossible. Can you imagine Rachel Varney here?"

"Yes, Mr. Leigh, I can."

"Oh, you are a hopeless little Anarchist," he laughed. "But a year at Roscroft will convert you. You will be as proud a Randall as ever bore the name. Aunt Van assures me you have an air of the old noblesse—even beyond the Randall stamp. So even she," he added, gaily, "I can not escape my fate."

"I can not escape my fate," she repeated his words slowly, almost drearily. "I believe that is true, Mr. Leigh. I cannot escape my fate."

Then there was a call to supper and the conversation was over.

But far into the night, Rachel Varney's grand-daughter sat by her open window, wide-eyed and restless, Allston Leigh's words echoing and re-echoing in her troubled brain.

Stunned, dazed, dazzled, she had wakened into her new life so gently, so quietly, that she had not seen the perils among which she must walk, the dangers she would sustain her.

The past day had been a revelation to her—a sudden shock waking her from her dream of peace and rest.

A glance, a word, a meeting with the strange preacher and all would have been over for her. Love and tenderness would have turned into horror and contempt. Rachel Varney's grand-daughter would have been turned out from the proud Randall home, shamed and disgraced, as the criminal, the impostor, the living lie that she was.

Ah, the watcher by the window was beginning to see—she was beginning to see! And as the lurid light of danger flashed upon her broadening horizon, something fierce and wild and reckless in Barbara Greene's blood flamed up in defiant response. She would dare it all—she would hold her vantage ground until the last—she would fight it out (Allston Leigh had given her the word)—fight it out to the death.

TO BE CONTINUED

Gray hairs often come from the sorrow and disappointment which wayward children cause their parents.

THE CONVICT

BY REV. RICHARD W. ALEXANDER

Reader, have you ever heard the clang of a prison door, or have you ever seen the iron ribbed cells whose wretched men, who have lost all sense of moral rights, are immured day and night into the majesty of the law is satisfied? Perhaps not. Well, follow me, and I will introduce you to a scene where God's mercy has not refused to enter, though man has set his seal against salvation.

It was visiting day in the "West" Penitentiary of a certain State. Among the regular visitors were two nuns that were permitted to go among the female prisoners, who often, alas, are harder to manage than the men. Their gentle influence had wrought a great change among the prisoners in a short time. The warden had only to say, "I'll tell the Sisters about this matter, and they will come no more," when, lo! there would be immediate, if sullen, submission. No matter how hardened the criminals were, they loved the sweet faced, low voiced religious, who spent an hour with them every week, and seemed to love these hardened outcasts. Many were persuaded to a better life—the memory of prayers learned in happy, innocent days, was revived. Some kissed the rosary beads the nuns gave them, and resolved on a better life. The officials noted with satisfaction the good results of the Sisters' visits, and they were always received by the subordinate with extreme respect and courtesy.

To reach the women's ward the Sisters had to pass by the hospital where the sick men were treated. For weeks a convict under sentence of death, but who had been confined to bed in the hospital, watched them pass the open door. As they disappeared out of sight he would sigh heavily, and turn his face to the wall. One day the Sisters noticed him, and resolved on a better life. The officials noted with satisfaction the good results of the Sisters' visits, and they were always received by the subordinate with extreme respect and courtesy.

"Why he is the notorious X—, who is only waiting till he is well enough to stand on the gallows. He is a murderer. You have surely read about him," was the answer. "A hardened wretch!"

"Poor fellow," said the horrified Sister, "I hope he is at peace with God."

"He scoffs at religion, curses its ministers, glories in his crimes, and until he was semi-paralyzed was the hardest wretch to manage we have ever dealt with. You see he is helpless at present, thank heaven!"

The Sisters said nothing, but went to their women prisoners. On their return home, the story was told, and from those cloistered hearts in the sanctuary went up fervent petitions to the merciful God that this poor sinner might be restored to grace. Was ever a prayer for mercy uttered in vain? All week long prayers and Communion were offered for the ungodly, and the Sisters pleaded and wrestled, so to say, with God's pity for the man who was doomed, as soon as he was physically able, to die on the gallows.

Visiting day came again, and the Sisters prepared to go to the penitentiary. It was a beautiful autumn day; one of those soft, sunny days of Indian summer when to live is a delight, and the exquisite beauty of nature appeals to the coldest hearts.

The Sisters noted the glorious beauty of the shrubbery and foliage in the prison enclosure; the green grass, the autumn flowers with their rich tints, the flaming colors of the maples and other trees that shaded the broad avenue, making a contrast with the frowning stone walls and iron gates, which gave evidence that these were kept grounds, were but a mask for the stern scenes within.

As usual the Sisters were admitted courteously and passing the hospital one of them asked the guide how the convict was.

"He has been fretful, and evidently worse," was the reply. "Look in as you pass. The door is always open."

The Sisters looked in, and the sick man who was propped up in bed, saw them and beckoned to the warden. He left the Sisters, went up the steps, and paused by the sick man's bed. He stayed only a few minutes, and returned to the Sisters.

"The poor fellow says he would like to speak to you ladies," was the message he brought to the Sisters.

"Why, certainly," said the nun. "Shall we go over now, or when we return from the women's ward?"

"When you return; because I have to get you a special permit," was the answer.

The warden waved his hand at the patient who was looking earnestly through the open door, and the Sisters continued on their way.

When the rounds of the department were finished, the Sisters, who were breathing silent prayers for their new effort, found the warden awaiting them at the door.

"I have the permit for half an hour," he said, "and I am to remain on guard. You know this is just a formality. I will stay in the open. All the men sentenced to death are constantly guarded—never left alone—suicide, you know; or anything else!" And he shrugged his shoulders.

The Sisters, who appreciated the man's evident desire to be kind, thanked him and entered the room of the convict. It was a small, square room, scrupulously clean, with white washed walls, iron bed, and iron table, both screwed to the floor. There was a good sized barred window, at one end, and the open door opposite. As the Sisters entered a guard arose and joined the warden.

The convict held out a thin hand. He had been a handsome man, but the lines of dissipation on his face were accentuated by the prison-pallor and his dark eyes seemed to burn in his head. Just now they began to grow soft and moist.

The Sister took his hand and pressed it, and both greeted him kindly, standing by the bed.

"Thank God you came," said the convict. "I have been watching you for weeks, and wanted to speak to you, but feared you would not touch a blood stained wretch like me. I was once a Catholic, and I went to the Sister's school. That was long ago. The sight of your garb brought it all back to me. Do you think, Sister, that God would forgive a poor devil like me if I asked Him, or if you asked Him?"

"Why, my dear friend," said the Sister eagerly, "He is just waiting for you to turn to Him. Did He not forgive on Mount Calvary the good thief who was on a cross beside Him? Did He not promise him paradise? Do you know that every Sister in our convent has been praying for you all the week? We have wanted to come to see you often—in fact, every time we passed here we have been longing for your return to God. Why, there will be joy in heaven when you are reconciled to Him."

"Can that be true? You prayed for my conversion? How will I do it?" said the poor fellow.

"Why, let me send you a good priest this very day. Tell him all your troubles, and you will find such peace of heart that everything will be easy. Do let me send you a priest, my good friend. You remember how you prayed to God, and His dear, holy Mother when you were an innocent little boy. It will all come back."

"Perhaps he won't come to a convicted criminal. You know I am to be hanged when I am better."

"That makes no difference. I will promise that he will be here within an hour, if you say so, and in the meantime we will pray for you every moment."

"Send him, then; the sooner the better," said the man wearily.

The Sister took his hand once more, and placed in it a small rosary and crucifix. He started, but then reverently kissed the crucifix. He pressed the Sister's hands and smiled.

The guard was waiting a few steps away outside. The warden sent him back to the room, and the Sister said:

"That poor man wants to see a priest. If I send one in will you see that he is admitted without delay?"

The warden started. "Surely I will. But it's a mighty big chance for Dan! Are you sure? I never heard him mention anything about religion, except to curse it."

Well, he made the request himself, and added: "The sooner the better." So I will lose no time. I will ask Father P—. The church is close by, and he will come without delay."

The Sisters left the penitentiary, and on their way home stopped at the rectory. Father P—, on hearing who it was, at once reached for his hat and departed for the convict's bedside. The Sisters returned to their convent, thanking God, and silently praying for the poor prisoner.

All in the convent were interested, and many fervent prayers were offered for the sinner's perfect conversion.

The following morning Father P— came to the convent to celebrate the daily Mass. He used black vestments. After Mass he sent for him the two Sisters who had called on him the evening before.

"Four Dan is dead!" were his first words. "I went to the penitentiary immediately, as you saw, and found him in wonderful disposition. I heard his confession of many years, gave him absolution, and promised to bring him Holy Communion this morning. He was holding the rosary you gave him, and I never saw a more earnest penitent. Tears of sorrow flowed from his eyes. He said he was not worthy of God's grace and blessed Him for sending you Sisters to his bedside. He said that you had been praying for him, and he felt that it was to your prayers he owed his return to God. I encouraged him, and came home full of consolation and gratitude. About midnight, as I sat reading, a messenger boy rang the bell. The messenger was from the penitentiary. The warden said that Dan had taken a sudden change at 11 o'clock, and after a brief struggle, had peacefully expired. His last words were: 'Send word to Father P—not to trouble about coming in the morning. I shall be with my merciful Lord!'"

And so the convict died! Not on the awful gallows, but at the feet of Jesus, his Redeemer, saved for all eternity. Who can say prayer does not work miracles?

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE

"The Catholic Advance has been wondering what has become of Combes and the rest of the psagan crowd that has been ruling France for the past thirty years under the sacred name of a Republic."

"There is a war to death going on in France, and we haven't heard of one of them," remarks the Advance, "but the priests they drove out of their ungrateful country are now back fighting for it and the nuns, too, have returned to nurse the soldiers that pillaged their homes but a short time ago."

A VANISHING VIRTUE

"There is one virtue which lies at the root of all greatness, personal and collective," asserts Mr. W. S. Lilly, in the Nineteenth Century (August). This virtue, he contends, is not believed in and practiced as it should be. Men treat it as out of date, as a romance. "It is the virtue of obedience." Considering the importance of obedience as the force that unites and controls societies, smaller or larger, Mr. Lilly quotes the dictum of St. Augustine that the general pact of human society is to obey rulers; he analyzes the rule of physical law, of moral law, and then points to the changes wrought in the lives of men by the teaching of Christianity. Christianity preached the moral law in ampler measure than mankind had before known, and invested it with diviner sanctions.

Christianity changed the lives of men by changing the ideal of life, and it changed that ideal by proclaiming the supreme value of obedience. Henceforward the rule of action was not to be the individual will, perverse or corrupt, but the Divine Will, good and acceptable and perfect.

Christ was to be the Great Exemplar. His holy life was the model set before the neophyte, and on that holy life "from beginning to end, obedience is written." Christ's own last words "Not My will but Thine" became the law of His followers:

"Thus did the new religion recreate the individual. And thus, too, did it create a new civil society. The true foundation of civil society—no other will be found enduring—is the family. Now the family rests upon marriage. . . . The Catholic Church, consecrated, at holy matrimony, the lifelong and indissoluble union of two personalities, and proclaimed their spiritual equality. But while insisting upon woman's spiritual equality with man, it insisted also on her economic subjection to him. . . . In the family the husband is the king, and his wife is the first of his subjects—obedience her primal duty. St. Paul puts it with much emphasis; indeed he could hardly be more emphatic: 'Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.' . . . According, then, to the teaching with which the Catholic Church indoctrinated Christendom, the wife is the first of her husband's subjects in the little kingdom of the family. Her loyal obedience to him is a religious duty. The same duty was held by the new faith to be obligatory upon children."

As the teaching of the Church transformed the family, so also it transformed the State, through obedience for conscience sake.

"Now as we look around the world, what trace do we find of that virtue?" asks Mr. Lilly. "It is everywhere vanishing," is his answer to his own question. It was all very well for an age of chivalry or romance, but it is out of date in this twentieth century. "Quite another principle has taken its place, and rules the minds of men and large."

For the simple reason that it is indispensable it survives in certain relations—the soldier, sailor, public functionary still obeys, even if reluctantly,—but it has ceased to be the common and universal law of human existence, as the old Christian tradition has become inoperative," says Mr. Lilly, and he reiterates:

"Obedience, as we have seen, is the bond of the family as the Catholic Church has established it on the basis of monogamy, holy and indissoluble. Against that obedience what calls itself modern thought rebels. . . ."

Hardly less—probably more—significant than the attack from without on the family as established by Christianity is the attack from within. The authority of the husband as its king and governor is derided and denied. The words in the Anglican marriage service which the wife promises to obey are, I am told, not seldom omitted. Equality is to take the place of subjection for women. . . . Certain it is that when the true position of the husband as the ruler of the family is invaded, and his rightful authority impugned, not only is the dignity of the wife impaired, but the filial tie is relaxed, and the moral level of society sinks.

Turning next to the children, Mr. Lilly again refers to St. Paul, who, in warning Timothy of perilous times to come, mentions as a note of them, disobedience to parents. Citing our own day, he says:

"Assuredly it is a special feature of the times. The boy is infected with a notion of his own sovereignty. Why should I obey? he asks. And the application of the rod of correction which in a saner age would have replied to his query, is seldom forthcoming. I was talking a day or two ago to the Vicar of a large London parish