

A STORY OF GOD'S MERCY.

[From the Catholic Weekly.]

"I am very sorry about this, mother, but really I do not see how I can do otherwise."

"You do not?"

"No."

Robert Gray was sitting with his mother in her own little parlor. He was nervously tugging away at his moustache, with his eyes fixed on his faultless patent-leather boots. Evidently he was very ill at ease—annoyed, perhaps,—and were he not in his mother's presence he might, indeed, have lost control of himself. But he could not forget himself so far. He was too well-bred for that.

With him, like many another young man of twenty-five, plunged to his eyes into the stream of what he so fondly calls "life," religion and its practices had melted away into something very vague and undefined. What with operas and Germans, races and tennis, there was very little time or thought left for Masses, Benedictions, and similar "fresome and antiquated" forms of worship. A string of pearls for some fair feminine throat was vastly preferable to Mary's Rosary, and a volume of "Keats" far more interesting than the "Imitation."

It was now nearing the close of the time set apart by the Church for the reception of the Easter Communion, and Mrs. Gray was urging upon her son the necessity of paying this mere pittance of devotion to his God. But the young man stoutly refused. With a provoking indifference he informed his mother that he really could not persuade himself that any disastrous consequence would follow from his failure to make his Easter Communion; that, of all things, he abhorred hypocrisy, and that if, in his present disposition, he should comply with her request merely for the sake of so doing, he could not possibly exonerate himself from the charge of being a hypocrite of the deepest dye.

Mrs. Gray sat motionless. Presently she raised her hands, and pressing them to her closed eyes, probably to check the starting tears, she said, quietly, but with an aggrieved tone:

"Robert, you must know that this pains me exceedingly."

"Yes, mother," he replied, "but, as I said before, I do not see how I can help it."

"What has come over you?"

"Nothing, I assure you."

"I never thought I should live to see my son grow up a godless, irreligious man."

"I beg your pardon, mother; but, truly, I am neither godless nor irreligious. I firmly believe in the existence of God; and as for religion, if you could see into my heart you should find a godly store of it there still."

"Then why do you refuse to manifest it in your actions?"

"I am not aware that I fail in this respect. I believe I behave like a Christian; and if I refuse to burn candles and swing incense, it is merely because I do not see the necessity for these adjuncts. I can and do adore God without them."

"Robert," exclaimed Mrs. Gray, vehemently, "I must ask you to spare me the annoyance and the pain of utterances like these."

An awkward silence ensued, during which this poor, deluded young man walked to the window, and drawing aside the curtain, stood vacantly staring out into the street.

If he could but realize the absurdity of his position, perhaps he would abandon it at once. Wonderful, indeed, that a mere stripling of five and twenty must come to ponder the uselessness of "adjuncts," with the aid of which millions and millions of enlightened Catholics so barely contrive to save their souls. But "so runs the world away." Little by little we stray from the beaten path, and when we find that it will be unprofitable and painful to retrace our steps, we fall to philosophizing; and lo! in the twinkling of an eye we have persuaded ourselves that the direction we are after all not a "digression," but rather "a progression." Yes, we have advanced. We are numbered with the disciples of modern thought. Wings are clapped on our shoulders and we begin to soar. High above the superstitious rabble we take our flight straight into the fierce sun of "Reason;" but, ah, too late we discover that our wings are waxen ones that melt and run in the heat of this orb, and like another Icarus we fall through space and sink into the bottomless sea of despair.

Mrs. Gray arose from her chair, and approaching her son laid her hand gently upon his shoulder.

"Robert,"

"Yes, mother."

"I am going to exact a promise from you. Look at me, I beg of you."

Robert wheeled about and looked his mother straight in the face. Oh, what a world of pleading was in those eyes, and what anguish written on that mother's face.

Mrs. Gray held in her hand a little silver medal of the Blessed Virgin.

"I am going to ask you to take this medal from me, to carry it about you through life, and every day say just one 'Hail Mary.' I feel that if you will do even this little Our Blessed Mother will obtain for you the grace some time to see the folly of your ways, and to make amends. Will you do this for me?"

The muscles of Robert's face began to twitch. He bit his lips nervously, and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets started aimlessly across the room. He stopped, and found himself confronted with a copy of the "Madonna della Sedia," hanging on the wall before him. As far back as he could remember he had admired, nay, loved this picture. There was something so tenderly in the eyes with which the Madonna was gazing the Infant Saviour in her arms,—something so tender in the look of her eyes, that more than once, even when a

boisterous, noisy boy, he forgot his games and toys to gaze in admiration at the beautiful group before him. Ah, how on those occasions his mother would steal up behind him, and gather him to her breast, and caress him just as the Virgin did to the Infant in the picture! And there she stood now, holding out her hands to him, with a simple request—oh, so easy of fulfillment! And he had deliberately turned from her. But what a change in that face! There are lines there that were not then, and there are tears in those eyes that were not then.

"Will you do this for me," again asked Mrs. Gray, in tones irresistibly suppliant.

How could he refuse! Swiftly he crossed the room to where she stood, and throwing his arms about her he kissed her full on the lips.

"Yes, mother, I will."

He took the medal from her hand, and slipped it into his pocket. Her head fell upon his breast, and for awhile she wept silently; then he gently disengaged himself from her embrace, and brushing a tear from his eyes, he left the room and hurried out of the house.

II.

Four years had elapsed since the events narrated above had transpired. Some business matters had made it necessary for Robert to take up his permanent residence in one of the larger eastern cities. He was most anxious, of course, that his mother should come with him to his new home; but just as imperative as was his necessity for living in the East, so was hers of remaining in the West, and consequently they had been separated now upwards of four years. A great change had taken place in him. He was no longer the gay and festive beau, fond of fashion and society. A few seasons had served to show him the emptiness of all this, and to rub off most effectually the thin veneer which lies over it all, and which looks so bright and smooth to the uninitiated. He had settled into a staid, sensible man of affairs with a determined purpose of amassing a fortune for himself, and with all the pluck, judgment, energy, and perseverance necessary for the attainment of that end. But there was one aspect in which, unfortunately, he had not changed—his religious views were the same. It had come to be regarded as a matter of delicacy between him and his mother, and in all the letters that passed between them it was not even hinted at, nor in the visits they exchanged was the subject ever broached. When her guest at the old homestead, he went with her everywhere, and was ever by her side—save when she bent her steps to the house of God; then their paths separated, and she walked alone.

One bright October morning, returning from Mass, she seemed more cheerful than usual. She was just crossing the strip of lawn which surrounded her very pretty home, when the postman handed her several letters. Hurriedly she looked them over. Suddenly her face lighted up—ah! there was the well-known handwriting—this was one from Robert. She entered the house, and laying aside her bonnet and cloak, passed into the parlor. She broke the seal of Robert's letter, and scanned the lines with all a mother's eagerness. An ashen pallor overspread her face. The letter slipped from her fingers. She fell upon her knees, and burying her face in her hands, sobbed as though her heart would break. Her last hope was gone. This was the letter:—

"MY DEAREST MOTHER—I hope you will forgive me for this. I thought it best to do as I did. We were married yesterday—Helen and I. Why did I not tell you before? I wished to spare your feelings. I knew you could never sanction the engagement, for Helen, you know, is not a Catholic. When will you come out to see us, or shall I bring her to you? Affectionately,

"ROBERT."

O God of mercy, that breakest not the bruised reed, heal Thou this wounded heart.

Several weeks passed by, weeks of dull, miserable, creeping days. Not a line had passed between Robert and his mother. From day to day she deferred her decision as to what course to pursue. Her prayers were redoubled, and with a fervor and earnestness unexampled, she begged for strength and the light to see her course. But it seemed not to come. She could not shape her straggling thoughts into any clear, definite purpose, and while waiting and hoping for some decisive circumstance, she beguiled the weary hours, bathing with tears and pressing to her lips the miniature of a flaxen-haired, bright-eyed boy clad in surplice and cassock.

A telegram comes for Mrs. Gray:

"Come at once. Robert is very ill."

"HELEN."

Within an hour after the receipt of the telegram she was seated in the Pullman waiting for the puffing, snorting engine to start on its mad chase eastward over the rails. Would it never start? She could see no evidence of the dispatch with which business is usually transacted about railway stations. Every body and everything seemed slow, inert and phlegmatic. Twenty-four hours between her and Robert! Oh, how much and what events of consequence might transpire in those twenty-four hours! Will she be too late? Ah! thank God! there goes the bell, and at length they are under way. She put her hand into her pocket, and drew out her beads—a beautiful pair of pearl and silver—a gift from Robert. She pressed them to her lips. How well she remembered the time when, kneeling by her side, a rosy-cheeked, innocent boy, she taught him how to weave his chaplet. How she dwelt with him on the various mysteries, and tried to store his childish fancy with the scenes and images they recalled! How long was it now since a rosary had slipped through his fingers! She put back the beads. It was useless for her to try to pray. Before her mind's eye flitted only pictures of Robert—of Robert

well—of Robert ill—of Robert dead. God! would he never reach his side! In the section before her sat two men one old and venerable, the other full of all the buoyancy of youth.

"How long have you been away?" inquired the elder.

"Just two years."

"Glad to get back, I suppose?"

"Ah, yes, indeed."

"And your mother?"

"Oh, she will be overjoyed. You know I am all in all to her, for she has no one else."

She closed her eyes and fell into a reverie. For hours she had been sitting thus when she felt herself aroused by the touch of two chubby hands. She was startled for a moment, and opening her eyes, beheld looking up into her face a bright, handsome little boy, chuckling heartily and holding up to her an orange of a size that his little hands could hardly grasp.

"Mamma says you will have this orange."

"Yes dear; I could not refuse you." And she picked up the little lad and held him in her arms, and pressed her cheek against his soft and velvet ones. How often she had held her boy just this way! Ah, these were happy, happy hours.

"But tell me, my little man, what is your name?"

"Robert."

The hot tears welled up in her eyes, and trickled down on the child's cheek. He was disconcerted, and having traced himself from her ardent embrace, ran off, half frightened, to his mother beyond.

A few hours more, and with the usual banging and clanging, the train pulled into the station. Mrs. Gray lost no time in leaving her coach and treading her way through the motley throng which always pours out of a passenger station. She called a carriage, and having given the man the address, was being rapidly driven thither. On they rattled over the granite streets of the business district, and the clatter and jolting seemed to distract the intensity with which her mind was dwelling on the approaching meeting. But soon the softer pavement of residence streets was under their wheels. Nearer and nearer came the moment that was to end all suspense. A turn in the street—a sudden stop, and here was the residence of Robert Gray. Quickly was the carriage door opened, and quickly did Mrs. Gray ascend the stoop, and there, great God! hanging from the door knob were the ominous streamers of crepe. Robert Gray was dead.

The door opened softly, and just as she was about to sink beneath this terrible blow she was caught in the arms of Father Clarke, a venerable and saintly priest. He led her into the dark parlor, and bade her compose herself, for he had a story of God's mercy to tell her.

It was pneumonia that ended Robert's life just an hour before. Conscious to the last, he was fortified by all the Sacraments which the Church confers upon her dying children. He was patient and resigned to everything save to his mother's absence; for her he called with his last breath.

After a little while Father Clarke conducted Mrs. Gray to the death-chamber of him who was "all in all" to her.

Kneeling at the foot of the bed, with her face buried in her hands was the young widow. She arose as Mrs. Gray entered, and there, in the pale presence of Death, for the first time, mother and daughter met and mingled their tears, without disturbing the solemn stillness of the scene.

The priest drew back the sheet which covered the remains of poor Robert. Calmly and peacefully he lay there with the image of his crucified Saviour clasped in his lifeless hands, and about his right arm, midway between the shoulder and elbow, there was welded a band of silver, and from this band there hung the little medal of the Blessed Virgin, which he had promised his mother to carry through life.

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OUTDOOR GAMES.

Growing in Popular Favor in England — An English Correspondent's Views Upon the Matter.

An English correspondent of an American journal refers to the growing tendency now manifested among all classes in England in outdoor games, in the following terms:—

All men who passed through the Strand on Tuesday had an opportunity of noticing a fact highly characteristic of the hour. The street was full of newspaper placards announcing that "the Australians were picking up." A great government had just suffered a considerable disaster; ominous telegrams were arriving every hour from South Africa; and there was, of course, the usual crop of murders, suicides, and "social events," but the news which, in the judgment of the proprietors of the evening newspapers, would interest the public was a struggle on the cricket field. There is no reason to suppose that these gentlemen do not know their own business, nor are they in the least peculiar in their notions as to the information which it pays newspapers to circulate. The conductors of the Times are grave enough men, but now frequently devote the longest single paragraph in their jealously compressed news of the day to a statement of cricket events, and they give up, like every other daily paper, entire columns to reports of racing, cricket, football, golf, and sometimes other sports, such as bicycling and billiards. Every assemblage for the purpose of witnessing games is attended by increasing crowds, sometimes so vast that, as at Lord's this week they frustrated their own object, and not only interfere with the players, but spoil their own enjoyment of the playing. And, as we noticed some weeks ago, games are becoming the leading topic in universities and public schools.

There is, however, no need to give evidence of the thesis. The increase of the desire, not so much for games as for seeing games, reading about games, and talking over games, is admitted on all hands, and is condemned by a good many moralists as a sign that the nation is deteriorating, and giving up both work and thought for frivolous forms of recreation. The moralists are right in part, but, as often happens when social questions are discussed, they perhaps read into a social change more evil than there is in it. It is quite true that the nation is a little more frivolous than it was, that it is under the influence of a mood which it has betrayed several times before, a mood in which it is impatient of, hard thinking wants every thing short, even its stories; likes no plays that are not exciting; gossips with gusto principally about the great, whose movements fill columns even in grave papers, and in fact is keenly desirous of any distraction which does not burden its mental powers. All that is regrettable, if only because there is in it such a dissipation of energy, of which there is never too much for the increasingly heavy demands that fall upon every class and every country in the world. We should not admit, however, having some notion of what society was like in the eighteenth century, that the English public is more vicious than it has ever been; it certainly drinks a great deal more than it ever did, and though its desire for amusement has increased, the kind of amusement is infinitely less barbaric. There are causes at work in favor of amusements, and especially of non-sedentary amusements, which in themselves are by no means to be regretted.

One is undoubtedly increased prosperity among the masses of the people. We all talk about "depression," and none but the bad question the existence of terrible suffering from poverty among us, but the majority are so much better off that they are inclined, with the sanguine temperament which is a part of the national character, to be a little wasteful of money. More is spent upon diet, much more upon clothes—God only knows how the children of working households are turned out so trim—and more, therefore, upon amusements. Just look in an evening at the crowd of bicyclists who pass, watch their dresses and their faces, and explain, if you can, on any theory except that of the working man's prosperity, how they get their machines. They do not, of course, pay the quoted prices, the rich, in fact, in bicycling as well as in surgery, being taxed a good deal for the benefit of the poor, but they cannot pay in silver for any kind of bicycle, and if they want one they always contrive to get it. Whoever is ruined, the steady worker is not, after all, in this country, although there are loafers at every street corner, and though the masses of what must be described as the precipitate of humanity is enormous, still the steady workers are in an overwhelming majority.

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Yours truly (Signed) M. AUCLAIR, Curator.

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- Legal Notices.
- PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, DISTRICT OF MONTREAL, SUPERIOR COURT.
- Dame Marie Louise Lucie Olive Pellerin, of the City and District of Montreal, wife common as to property of Napoleon Lesage, civil employee of the same place, Plaintiff; vs. the said Napoleon Lesage, Defendant. An action in separation as to property has been this day instituted against the said Defendant.
- Montreal, 23rd September, 1896. AUGÉ, GLOBESKY & LAMARÉ, Attorneys for Plaintiff.
- 11-5
- PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, DISTRICT OF MONTREAL, No. 278, SUPERIOR COURT.
- Dame Albina alias Malvina Demers, of the City and District of Montreal, has, this day, instituted an action in separation as to property against her husband, Ferdinand Bouchard dit Lavallée, Joiner, of the same place.
- Montreal, 23rd August, 1896. SAINT-PIERRE, PELLISSIER & WILSON, Attorneys for Plaintiff.
- 11-5
- PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, DISTRICT OF MONTREAL, No. 157, SUPERIOR COURT.
- Dame Julie Lalonde, of the City and District of Montreal, has, this day, taken an action, in separation as to property, against her husband, Hermenegilde Daniel dit Desrosiers, trader, of the same place.
- Montreal, 9th September, 1896. GÉOFFRON & MONET, Attorneys for Plaintiff.
- 10-5
- PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, DISTRICT OF MONTREAL, SUPERIOR COURT.
- Agnes Spalding, of the Town of St. Louis, in the District of Montreal, has, this day, taken an action, in separation as to property, against her husband, Charles Lavallée, trader, of the same place.
- Montreal, September 24th, 1896. ANGÈS, DELORMIER & GODIN, Attorneys for Plaintiff.
- 12-5
- PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, DISTRICT OF MONTREAL, No. 181, SUPERIOR COURT.
- Dame Marie Louise Arnaud, Plaintiff, vs. Oscar Teasler, Defendant.
- Dame Marie Louise Arnaud, of the City and District of Montreal, wife of Oscar Teasler, of the same place, has, this day, instituted an action in separation as to property against her said husband.
- Montreal, 3rd October, 1896. BRAUDIN, CARDINAL, DUBRANGER & ST. GERMAIN, Advocates for Plaintiff.
- 12-5

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