

In and Out of Catholicism

BY

MARY FRANCES BERGER



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A Personal Sketch

by

MARY FRANCES BERGER



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A Husband's Tribute

*I*T gives me great pleasure that after so many years my dear wife has at last consented to let the story of her early life take printed form. Very many times has she been solicited to do so by those who have heard her narrate the events which so radically changed the whole current of her life, but until now she has refrained.

And now as the sixtieth anniversary of our marriage is just passing I have the sincerest joy in referring to her unswerving fidelity to her convictions in espousing the Protestant faith, as well as also to her loving loyalty and devotion as a wife through all the varied experiences of the long life which our Heavenly Father has graciously permitted us to live. D. B.

Author's Preface

MANY times I have been requested by friends to write some account of those early experiences which wrought so great a change in my life destiny.

Long I have hesitated to do so, but at last have consented to yield to their solicitations, and place in this form some of the more salient points. Whatever of interest may inhere in what I have written may be augmented to the reader by the fact that the story is in no sense colored for the sake of effect, but is a simple narrative of things which actually occurred.

yours sincerely

Mary Frances Berger

TO MY DEAR HUSBAND,
WHOSE LOVE AND TENDER CARE HAVE
SUSTAINED ME THROUGH THE
MANY PASSING YEARS,
AND TO THE MANY CHERISHED FRIENDS
WHO HAVE DESIRED ME
TO RECORD IN THIS FORM SOME
OF THE INCIDENTS OF
MY EARLY LIFE,
THESE PAGES ARE AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

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Childhood Days

THE incidents narrated in the following pages mostly lie so far back in time that many of them begin to seem almost like a half-forgotten dream. Yet so deep were the impressions made by many of the experiences undergone that each particular stands out with a vividness as but of yesterday. And the reader may here be told that the story as related is in no sense a creation of fancy, but a simple narrative of life events and experiences.

The home of my birth was in the city of Manchester, England, and in that city the first sixteen years of my life were spent. My father's name was Edwin Merry. My mother's family name was Saulsbury. My father was engaged in mercantile pursuits, and was a gentleman of ample fortune. My maternal

grandfather was a large landholder, his estates lying along the seashore, near the city of Liverpool. All of my people were devout members of the Roman Catholic Church, and in that church I was carefully reared. Our own immediate family consisted of my parents and three children, a brother and sister and myself. My brother was educated for the priesthood, and entered in due time upon that sacred office. My sister was educated for a nun. I, the youngest of the family, was intended for the same separated life, the intention, in the providence of God, not being fulfilled.

My early home life was as delightful as that of any child could be. Our home was a luxurious mansion, with every appointment of comfort that ample wealth could procure. To the easy comforts of home my parents added the pleasure of travel. Visits were made to Scotland, where we had relatives residing, and I retain most vivid recollections

of scenes in the highlands where a portion of our time was spent. My parents also made visits to the continent, including Italy and Rome. Twice I was taken to that city, once by my parents, and once by my grandparents. I was then too young to understand very clearly much of what I saw, but I remember distinctly the impressions made on my mind when I saw St. Peter's, and others of the great churches of that city. A portion of my vacations usually was spent at my grandfather's, and many of my child experiences there are remembered with the clearest distinctness.

My school life was passed in the convent connected with the cathedral, and was without any special incident, except such as is common to children in convent schools. During the earlier years I was in the school as a day scholar. Arrived at the proper age, I became an inmate of the convent, and from that time had permission to visit my home, only a few

squares distant, once every two weeks. The government in the convent was rigid, and absolute obedience to the requirements of the nuns, who were our teachers, was enforced in every particular. The nunnery was adjacent to the cathedral, the bishop's church. This church my parents attended, and here I was baptized and confirmed, attended the confessional, and learned to worship God after the forms of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Voyage

AFTER these brief notes relating to my early days, I pass at once to speak of an event and of experiences that changed my entire subsequent life. My father's brother, Mr. John Merry, a bachelor somewhat advanced in years, had made an investment in an extensive plantation in Louisiana, and had made several trips across the ocean to visit it, returning again to England. On his last return he was married, and, having arranged to bring his young wife with him to America on a bridal trip, he persuaded my parents to let me come with them for company for her. Permission for a four months' vacation accordingly was obtained from the convent, and preparations were made for the voyage.

At that time, now more than sixty years ago, there were but few steamers on the high seas, and ocean travel continued mostly in the old-fashioned sail vessels. My uncle engaged passage on a ship called the Astrachan, a stoutly-built merchantman with accommodations for a limited number of passengers, and on the 29th of December, 1848, we set sail.

And now was soon to follow an experience of disaster, of protracted storm, of utter shipwreck, of helpless floating on trackless waters, of starvation and death, prolonged through month after month, such as seldom has befallen travelers on the watery waste. So absolutely distressing were the experiences of the voyage that no tongue or pen may adequately portray them.

The trip from Liverpool to New Orleans was expected to be accomplished in four weeks. Instead of this we were on the sea until three days after Easter, a period of fifteen weeks and three days. We were but a

few days out from Liverpool when the storm struck us, continuing for many days, and with such terrific severity that our vessel became an utter prey to its fury. Our two suits of sail were rent until only fragments remained; the mainmast was broken beyond repair; the cabin, a thing of frailty before such terrific power, was shattered and swept away; a leak was sprung in the hold which no means at command could fully repair, so that trunks and boxes floated about in the rapidly filling water.

The cabin being gone, all the passengers were now confined below, the hatch being firmly closed to prevent any persons except the seamen appearing on deck. With the continued stress of the storm, and with knowledge of the helpless condition of the ship, the consternation of the passengers became indescribable. Most of the time they were in absolute darkness, keeping the lights burning becoming impossible. They could but hear the

incessant roaring of the storm above, the sullen sound of water pressing into the hold, and the heavy beating of the waves against the ship. Mingled with these sounds were the cries of the fearstricken passengers in the gloomy prison of the ship.

One time especially I most distinctly remember, when the captain, brave officer that he was, had given up all hope that the ship could be saved. Coming to the hatchway he announced his belief that all was lost, and called upon the passengers who believed in God, or who could pray, to appeal to the Almighty for help. The agonizing scene which followed no language can describe. In the almost rayless darkness parents called to their children, children to their parents, and friends to their friends: "Oh, where are you? Come here and let us die together." Whether or not the fervent prayers of that hour brought answer from him who is Lord of the seas, and who with his word stilled the waves on

Galilee, the fury of the winds soon afterward began to abate, and comparative quiet followed the fearful storm.

But even now, when at last the great power of the storm was spent, none on board could anticipate the more dire calamities which yet awaited our unfortunate company of seafarers. The provisioning of the ship had been made for eight weeks, twice the time of ordinary expectancy for completing the voyage. As the weeks grew into months, and the months were prolonged, the supplies gradually grew less; and as week followed after week all the horrors of gaunt starvation were to be experienced. The helpless hulk of our once noble vessel had drifted out of the usual routes of ocean travel, and while for weeks our foremast carried a flag of distress only a single vessel, a man-of-war, came in sight, and that also had hoisted the same ominous sign. A boat was lowered and several of our sailors rowed across to the vessel, but brought back

no supplies except a small quantity of tobacco which many of the men on our vessel received with great avidity. The ocean so long ago was not covered with ships as it is at the present time, and once out of the lines of ordinary travel a vessel might indeed be lost for a long period without seeing a single sail.

Our supplies of food and water gradually reached the point of almost absolute exhaustion, so that only the half of a sea biscuit was given to a passenger as a daily ration. Under the strain of this terrible famine, thirty-two of our people died, including passengers and seamen, while most of those who finally reached our goal were reduced to the merest skeletons. Meanwhile, constant exertion had to be made to keep the ship from sinking. The pumps were kept going day and night, passengers and crew taking turns, and some of the men dropped dead at the work.

How our vessel finally entered the Gulf of Mexico, and how it proceeded westward so as

to reach the mouths of the Mississippi, I am not now, from my youth and inexperience at that time, able to recount. But I remember some most pathetic scenes that were enacted on board, when one morning we gained the first sight of land. The morning was quiet and beautiful; the sun had just arisen, when land in view was announced. The passengers who were able to leave their couches hastened to come on deck. Others, too weak to walk, were assisted to come up to share the delight of the welcome vision. All hailed with inexpressible joy the glory of the sight, intensified by the rich April foliage of a southern landscape. Faces haggard and consumed with hunger, eyes fallen deep into their shrunken sockets, were illumined with an expression of gladness such as previous despair had deemed never again possible. And there were exclamations of thanksgiving to God that at last hope had come again, for now we would be able soon to escape from the charnel house

which had so long confined us and walk once more upon the solid earth.

On our approach to the Mississippi, we were met by the pilot boat, and from its stores of rice and water we received our first supply of food. With the greatest eagerness the small amount parcelled out to us was eaten, while the earnest begging for more was rigidly denied; for there was at once a new source of danger, lest from even a small excess in eating death might result. Our passage from the lower waters of the river to the city was without incident, but the green grasses, the foliage of the trees, and especially the golden fruit on the orange trees, were most delightful to our eyes after months of ocean travel.

Our arrival at New Orleans was to bring us another disappointment. The passengers had anticipated immediate debarkation, and consoled themselves with thoughts of the abundant food which they soon would obtain. This hope was to be chilled rudely by the coming of

the medical officers on board, who ordered a detention on the river for fourteen days, until all on board could be so far dieted as to make landing safe. And so we were transferred to another vessel and anchored in the middle of the river.

Yellow Fever

OUR landing at New Orleans was to bring us at once face to face with another peril no less dreadful than that of shipwreck and starvation on the sea. It was now the beginning of May, and that fearful scourge, the yellow fever, which has so often in the past visited our southern cities, was prevailing in its direst form. The people of our vessel who were left, emaciated and reduced by the famine, were in ill condition to resist the power of this new foe, and many of them soon fell victims to its ravages.

My uncle and aunt and myself were among those who survived the dangers of the sea, and we were hoping, after some days of rest and recuperation, to leave the city and proceed inland to my uncle's plantation. We stopped at

the St. Charles Hotel, that well-known hostility of the past, reduced to ashes some years ago, and succeeded now by a splendid new edifice. For some days, as strength was beginning to return, we experienced a joy and hopefulness such as we had not known through the gloomy months of helpless drifting on the sea. But alas, our hope was destined to bitter disappointment. Within a few weeks we were smitten with the dreadful scourge, and little power remained to battle with the disease. The angel of death struck us each with his wing; I alone survived. My aunt was the first to yield, and her body was hastened away to the cemetery. Not many days later, my uncle followed. We two were not yet stricken when my aunt died and we attended her body to the burial. I was taken next, and then my uncle, and in a few days he died. On account of my weakened condition, all knowledge of his death was carefully withheld from me for many days. The nurses were sisters of charity, and they

cared for me throughout my illness with the utmost tenderness. Father Woods, the pastor of one of the Catholic churches, visited me frequently as confessor.

During the days of my wearisome waiting, I often begged to see my uncle, but the nurses told me he was too weak to see me, or to permit my being carried to his room to see him. When at last, after about three weeks, I was thought to be strong enough to bear the information, Father Woods, with the doctor, and the proprietor of the hotel and his wife, came into my room to impart to me the dreadful truth. On seeing the anxious expression on their faces, I quickly discerned the nature of their errand. But oh, the intense agony of that moment when the direful truth was conveyed to me it were indeed vain to attempt to portray. An indescribable sense of loss and of utter loneliness came upon me. I was separated by thousands of miles from my parents and friends at home. Not a soul was near me

whom I had ever before known. Strangers were they all, hotel people, physician, nurses, women in the hotel. All were kind, and all seemed anxious to comfort and care for me. But the faces of the dear ones with whom I had come over the sea I should never see again, and the loved ones at home were so far away.

The proprietor of the hotel was a Mr. Deane, earlier of Cincinnati. Mrs. Deane also was of Cincinnati, and, as I afterward learned, was closely related to Mr. Mitchell, of the widely known firm of Mitchell and Rammelsberg, in that city. Mr. and Mrs. Deane became as guardian angels to me. My uncle, before dying, had committed me to their charge, and to them I was very greatly indebted. Of them I shall have more to say presently.

Coming to Cincinnati

WITH the continued prevalence of the yellow fever, business in New Orleans was almost completely at a standstill, and people in great numbers were leaving the city, seeking escape from the dread destroyer. The hotels shared the general prostration, the St. Charles in common with the rest. Mr. Deane decided to join the exodus, and with Mrs. Deane, to come north for a time to Cincinnati, that city having been their early home, and, in accordance with his promise to my uncle to look after my welfare, they brought me with them. Quarantine regulations to prevent exit, if any existed, were loosely applied, and there was no hindrance to any persons leaving the city who were able to do so. The small amount of business that remained for the hotel was given into the care of the proprietor's son and trustworthy clerks, passage on a steamer was engaged, and the

journey from the plague-smitten city was begun. Among the painful thoughts that now oppressed my mind was this, that I was leaving my beloved uncle and aunt to lie in unknown graves.

The summer was now well advanced, and verdure was everywhere in its fullest luxuriance and beauty. The scenery along the broad waters of the Mississippi, and later along the hills skirting the Ohio, was all new and strange to me, and yet often gave my young heart the keenest delight. There was an immeasurable contrast between this journey and the helpless beating to and fro on the wide wastes of the Atlantic. Even the weary days of battling for life in the sick chamber of the St. Charles, and the bitter bereavement of the loved ones who were lost in that struggle, were sometimes almost forgotten in the inspiration of these changed circumstances, so quickly does buoyant young life respond to helpful and uplifting conditions.

Arrived at Cincinnati, we went to the Denison House, at that time among the foremost hotels in the city. And here presently was to begin an acquaintance which had much to do in determining all the future of my life. In the lists of arrivals as published in the daily papers were the names of Mr. and Mrs. Deane, and soon old acquaintances and friends of theirs began to call on them. Among these was a Mrs. Grayson, formerly of the city of Manchester. Accompanying her was her daughter, a young girl of about my own age. Having been introduced, we two presently stepped to the verandah, Mrs. Deane and Mrs. Grayson remaining in the parlor. In their conversation Mrs. Deane mentioned to Mrs. Grayson that I had come in the care of Mr. Deane and herself from New Orleans, that I was from the city of Manchester, and related to her a part of the tragic story of our shipwreck, the death of my uncle and aunt, and that I had come on to Cincinnati to await information from an

uncle with whom I expected to return to England at an early day.

Mrs. Grayson listened to the story with deep interest, especially on learning that I was from her own native city. Calling me in, she interrogated me in regard to streets and places in Manchester, and I soon learned that she was familiar with many of the names and places that were familiar to me. I found that even her father's place of business was well known to me. Her father was a manufacturer of fine candies, and his place, being located on the way between our home and the convent, my mother often stopped there to order sweetmeats when accompanying my sister and myself to or from the convent school.

Mrs. Grayson then, with her heart warmed toward a lone young girl so far away from her home, remarked that she would be pleased to have me become her guest, and be company for her daughter while I was waiting to hear from the uncle with whom I was to return to

England. Mr. and Mrs. Deane assented to the kind proposition and I was pleased to accept, little thinking that the Lord was leading me in a way that I knew not, and that so soon a new direction was to be ordered for all my subsequent life. The next morning this good lady's carriage called at the hotel to take me, with my baggage, to her hospitable home.

It is now time that I should relate what plans had been made for my return to England when my visit to America should be completed. A priest uncle, a brother of my mother, had been commissioned to come to America with messages from the pope to the bishop of Albany, New York, and to some of the bishops of the church in Canada. My uncle and aunt whom I accompanied to America had planned to spend a year in this country before returning home, but they were to take me to Albany within the time provided for my absence from the convent school, and from there my priest uncle was to take me home to Eng-

land. But the long delay of our vessel on the ocean, and the waiting for months without a message of any kind, led at last to the belief that all were lost, and that we should never be heard of again. A letter from the bishop of Albany, in reply to one from Mr. Deane, stated that my uncle had waited at Albany for nearly three weeks, when, entertaining no longer any hope, and with duties at home urging his return, he had reluctantly taken his departure.

To the letters of my uncle, written from New Orleans upon our arrival there, and that of Mr. Deane after the death of my uncle and aunt, no replies had been received before our leaving that city. Mail communication, especially across the ocean, was slow at that period. No ocean cable flashed messages across the water, and telegraphy was as an art just entering its early stages. To my own correspondence there must needs be some weeks of waiting before an answer from home could be received.

In a Protestant Church

IN ACCORDANCE with my careful training I soon found my way to the morning service at the cathedral, where Bishop Purcell, later archbishop, was the chief pastor. I also soon made the acquaintance of the bishop, and he learned from me the story of my coming to America and of my sad experience in New Orleans. He received me with a tender and sympathetic interest, and treated me with kindly consideration. For weeks I was regularly present each morning at the cathedral service, the daughter of my generous friend accompanying me, usually with the family carriage.

Finally, one day, Miss Grayson invited me to go with her and her mother to their church. This I learned was called the Presbyterian. The name, however, did not signify much to

me, as I had no distinct recognition of any difference in denominations. To me there was only one church, the Roman Catholic, while all others were simply Protestant.

To this invitation of Miss Grayson, I made reply, "Oh, I cannot." "Why not?" she naturally asked, and I again replied, but with added emphasis, "Oh, I cannot."

"Why," she rejoined, "I have been going with you to your church, and now why can you not go with me to mine?"

To this I replied, "It would be a sin, and I should have to confess it to the priest."

"Why, that is strange," she continued; "I do not feel it to be a sin to go to your church, and I do not have to confess it to anyone."

On retiring to my room I began to reflect on our conversation, and I could but feel that it was very ungracious and indeed quite unpardonable to refuse the request when I had been receiving so great kindness from this dear mother and daughter. On further thought, I

decided that I would go, and afterward make confession of my sin, for a sin it then appeared to me to be, and do such penance as my priest would require.

Accordingly, having attended the cathedral service in the morning, I made preparation to go in the evening, for the first time in my life, to a Protestant house of worship. A part of this preparation consisted in putting away my cross and rosary, fearing they would be defiled if taken into a Protestant church. As we walked toward the church, I was almost overcome with trepidation and fear, and when we arrived at the door I said to Mrs. Grayson, "Oh, I cannot go in, I cannot go in." "Why, my dear," Mrs. Grayson replied, "we cannot do otherwise now. The hour for service is here; we cannot take you back home, and you could not find the way."

A few minutes later I was seated with Mrs. Grayson and her daughter in their pew in the church. But can my readers imagine how I

was shocked when I looked around upon the bare walls of the large room, with not a picture or image of a saint, or scene in the life of Christ for the eye to rest upon, to relieve the coldness or assist in quickening the feeling of devotion. And then I was still more shocked at not seeing an altar, or any candles, or any other rich furnishings, such as I always had been accustomed to see. There was simply a pulpit, very unimpressive except in its lack of anything beautiful, and an aged man in plain black clothing with no rich clerical vestments, sitting back of it against the wall. To me the scene was all forbidding barrenness, and I wondered how the people could feel that it was a place of worship. The singing, in which the congregation joined, seemed pleasant enough, but in the long prayer there were no responses. Then followed a sermon, to me tedious and wearisome, and I was glad when at last all was over. I left the place wondering how people could be pleased with a service in which they

had so little part, and which seemed to me so cold and barren.

During my stay in the church, my thoughts reverted again and again to my home across the sea. What would my father and mother think if they could know that I was at this hour seated within the walls of a Protestant church! The thought became intensely painful to me, so that I could not restrain my tears, my weeping attracting the attention of those around me. I realized, too, that to Mrs. Grayson it was a source of embarrassment, and I most bitterly wished that in some way I might die, and be relieved of a situation so painfully distressing, and from the sin which I believed I was committing.

I must here absolve Mrs. Grayson and her daughter from any imputation of hidden purpose on their part. I do not think that they had the most distant thought of turning me away from the form of religious faith and worship in which I had been brought up. It was their

single wish to make my stay with them as pleasant as possible until my father, or some one sent by him, should come and take me home.

A New Experience

IN THE ordering of divine providence, my steps were soon to lead me to an experience that I had not anticipated, and which, if one had foretold it, I should have declared utterly impossible. On our way returning from the Presbyterian Church, we were to pass in the near vicinity of a Methodist Episcopal Church, the once well-known Morris Chapel, succeeded later by the more elegant St. Paul's. Mrs. Grayson had a brother who was a member of this church, and she proposed that we should pass that way and her brother would accompany us home.

As we approached the church, we were greeted by the sound of singing, in which the whole congregation seemed to be engaged. As I learned afterward, services called revival meetings were in progress. Mrs. Grayson went inside to speak to her brother, while

her daughter and I lingered in the vestibule. The people were singing with so much fervor that it seemed really beautiful, and I presently desired to go in. I reasoned, too, in this way: that, as I had already committed an offense for which I must give account to my confessor, I might as well add this and receive forgiveness for both. Entering the door, an usher gave us a seat well toward the middle of the church. From here I noticed that, while a large group was standing near the pulpit engaged in singing, others were kneeling and apparently engaged in earnest prayer. This was all so new and strange to me, and I asked Miss Grayson why they were praying in that way. Quietly she explained that they were praying to have their sins forgiven. It was difficult for me to comprehend the thought of sins being forgiven in that manner, the only forgiveness I had known being that which came from the priest in the confessional. But my interest was aroused to an intense degree, and

I took the closest note of what I saw and heard, amid the new surroundings.

Soon, however, I was to experience an alarm which caused the eyes of all to turn toward me. In one of the corners of the church nearest the pulpit, on the side occupied by the women after the earlier manner of dividing the men from the women, sat an elderly woman, who, under the impulse of intense religious feeling, began to clap her hands. Presently she arose and began jumping up and down after the manner then frequently seen, as I afterward learned, in some of the Methodist churches. I at once thought that she was insane, and as she moved forward, and then in the direction toward where I was sitting, I was seized with the thought that she was coming to where we were. Filled with the utmost terror, and screaming aloud, I jumped up and ran precipitately toward the door. In a moment Mrs. Grayson and others were at my side assuring me that no possible harm could

befall me, but I could not be persuaded to return again to my seat.

Among those who came to me to reassure me were a Mr. Moran and his wife. Mr. Moran, who I later learned had been educated for the Catholic priesthood, spoke a few kindly words to me, and Mrs. Moran put her arms around me, saying: "Oh, my dear child, I know what is the matter with you. But God will take care of you, and everything will soon be right."

I did not at all comprehend the meaning of her words, but thought she was taking undue liberty in putting her arms about me. When I came to understand later, I knew she thought I was under conviction for sin. I was indeed under conviction for sin, but not in the sense that she supposed. My only conviction was that of sinning in going into a Protestant church, and my fear of meeting my confessor to give an account of what I had done. Yet I was deeply impressed with the seeming ear-

nestness and sincerity of the people, and with the direct address of their prayers to God in the name of Christ for salvation, without the intervention of apostles or saints, and this, I doubt not, had much to do with bringing about what afterward followed.

We did not linger long after this at the church. Arriving at home, I soon retired to my room, but not to quiet rest. My mind was wrought up to an intense degree, and for a long time I lay awake thinking on the experiences of the evening, on the reckoning I would have to make with my confessor, and of my parents in a distant land who would be horrified and angry with me for what I had done.

Sleep at last came to my eyes, but it was a troubled sleep. The tumult of my thoughts could not be readily stayed, but I did not know that through this very tumult God was supplying one of the means by which I was soon to be directed into such knowledge of himself as I had not before known.

I have not throughout my life paid much regard to dreams. Yet I believe that God may, and sometimes does, employ even such an agency to send conviction, or a new inspiration, to the hearts of men, and this in accordance with numerous instances recorded in the Holy Book. In my restless sleep a dream came to me that made upon my consciousness a deep impression and bore a significance which I afterward most forcibly realized.

I stood upon the low banks of a beautiful stream, and presently I heard above me voices in most delightful song. Soon the voices seemed to move up the course of the stream, and, charmed with the beautiful music, I attempted to follow. Presently I found my feet in the water, and soon the stream was deeper and wider. Its beauty disappeared, steep banks arose on either side, and fear began to overcome me. I looked to the top of the bank for help, and there saw Father Woods, my former confessor, and cried to him to assist me.

He met my appeal with coldness, uttered a few words of reproach, and turned away. For a few moments I was held in an agony of despair. Then I looked again, and saw a most beautiful vision. It was the divine form of the Savior. I stretched out my hands toward him, and he bade me, "Come hither, my child, to me." In a moment I scaled with an almost gliding motion the steep declivity, and stood delighted and saved in his presence.

I awoke in the morning calm and serene in feeling, but with a most vivid impression of the dream in my mind, yet not comprehending its significance. But it seemed strange to me that the priest who had earlier been so kind to me should now with scorn turn from me, while Jesus, whom before I had approached only through intermediate persons, now heard me face to face.

The Morning Dawn

AT ABOUT nine o'clock on Monday morning Mr. and Mrs. Moran called to see me. As they knew nothing of my past, of my home in England, or my coming to America, or how I came to be in Cincinnati, they made friendly inquiry, sympathized tenderly with me for the tragic and sorrowful experiences I had undergone on the ocean and in New Orleans, and for my present loneliness in waiting for a message from my parents, and expressed the hope that someone would soon arrive to take me home.

After conversing a while in this way, Mr. Moran proposed to have prayer with me. I was shocked at the thought of having a Protestant pray for me, but, as his appearance was so fatherly and his manner so kindly sympathetic, I could not object. His prayer was tender and beautiful, committing me with fervent

pleading to the care of our Father in heaven until I should find my home again with my people in England. In tone it was so different from any prayer I had ever heard as to make a deep impression on my mind.

After the prayer, as he and Mrs. Moran were about to depart, he invited me, with Miss Grayson, to ride with them in their carriage. The morning ride was refreshing to me after the tense excitement of the evening and night. But in our conversation no reference was made, as there had not been before, to any possible change of religion, neither did I at this time know that Mr. Moran was a convert from the Roman Catholic Church.

On our return, the day was spent in quietness, as was also the day following. But my mind was sorely distressed by the circumstances, with thoughts of how I should meet my confessor, and of the results to follow in my home in England when the facts should become known. During these days I did not go to

mass, as I had been accustomed each morning to do. Wednesday afternoon, however, found me again at the Methodist church to attend a special revival service. Mr. and Mrs. Moran calling for me, I went without reluctance.

And here began the real development of the religious impulses which brought me into a true spiritual experience. I was deeply burdened with a consciousness of sin, and after a period of earnest prayer entered into a blessed experience of acceptance with Christ as my gracious and present Savior. In the spiritual ecstasy with which my heart was filled, I felt the deeper joy in the fact that I could come directly to Jesus Christ in a conscious and blessed communion.

With this experience which was so joyfully sustained, I felt that the die was cast. I knew that I could no longer appear at the confessional, or use the privileges of the Roman Catholic Church, unless I would confess that in all this I had committed grievous sin for

which I must do ample penance; so not long afterward, after much thought and prayer, I decided to cast my lot with the Methodist church. The immediate result was intense excitement among many of the attendants at the cathedral, with a number of whom I had formed acquaintance, and friendship and sympathetic feeling were quickly changed into bitterness.

My Brother's Coming

MEANWHILE, as the days went by, I continued to attend the services at the Methodist church, becoming steadily more confirmed in my newly-found experience, and in the spiritual joy of a direct communion with Christ as my Savior. In this frame I waited for the expected coming of my father, or someone whom he should send to take me home to England. In an almost childlike innocency, I cherished the thought that I could keep from my people the knowledge of what I had done, and that I would continue to worship in the way I had now learned, while I might also worship in the forms of the Catholic Church. In this I was ere long to meet with a bitter disillusionment.

Some weeks had now passed by, when one morning the door bell rang and I was called

from my room to meet a man who was wishing to see me. This was my brother.

Upon receiving my letters, written from Cincinnati immediately after my arrival there, my father at once dispatched a message to my brother in Rome where he was a student for the priesthood, summoning him home, to prepare with all speed for a trip to America. I soon found that he had been fully advised of all that had transpired in Cincinnati. This was in part through information sent to my parents before his arrival in Manchester, and in part, and more fully, on his arrival in Cincinnati. In this city he called at the episcopal residence before calling to see me.

His manner toward me was stern and cold. He declared I had put a lasting disgrace upon our family, and peremptorily ordered me to prepare immediately to start for New York to embark for England.

I saw that I stood at once face to face with the greatest possible emergency. To return

to England would mean the immediate renunciation of the Protestant faith which I had espoused and which had become so dear to me. It would mean also the most severe humiliation the church could inflict, not improbably confinement in a convent for life. The moment was one of supreme trial. I lifted my heart to God for counsel as to the decision I should make. Faith triumphed, and I declined to go. My brother, becoming very angry and stamping his foot, declared, "I will see that you do go." He went away to take legal counsel, and by two law firms, one of them Roman Catholic, was advised that there was no recourse for him, that in free America all persons were at liberty to worship God in such form as they might elect, or not to worship at all if they chose not to do so.

Finding me fully determined not to return with him under the conditions imposed, my brother left for England in another day or two.

Intensely pained and sore at heart, I retired to spend the rest of the day in fervent prayer to my heavenly Father for strength to sustain me in this time of extreme trial, and to lead my way in the future. I sought to commit myself wholly to his care, and felt that in him my heart found rest.

But now there was soon to come an experience of trial, the depth of whose bitterness I would not attempt to describe. The arrival of my brother at home, and the report he brought to my father, stirred him to extreme anger, and a letter from him gave me the deepest mental distress, and for a time I almost felt that I must retrace my steps, and yield up that which I now deemed so unspeakably precious. After much prayer, and a feeling that I had the divine approval, and that God would direct my way in whatever was to come, I replied to him that, much as I loved him and my mother, I could not cast away that which I had found in God, and which was now so dear to me.

His final letter to me was indeed a crushing one. After dwelling upon the disgrace, as he termed it, which I had brought upon the family, he protested that I should never say I had a father in England, and that he would never say he had a daughter in America; and declared that I should never inherit of his estate what would jingle on a tombstone, referring to the tombstones laid flat on the ground in England. He then added, "I hope you will never come near me," with other words that I cannot here repeat. He then concluded with, "Farewell forever."

To read this letter, and to think upon its import, was a blow, the weight of which no words can express. I felt that I was now indeed alone, exiled at first by circumstances and now by this terrific decree of banishment, disinherited of the very ample portion which in course of time should fall to me, and that ere long, when my purse should be further exhausted, I must stand face to face with pov-

erty. The prospect was so different from all that in my life before I had known, that the thought of it was most overwhelming. But I did not yield my faith in God, and, in the belief that he would sustain me, I felt that I could meet martyrdom if that were necessary. And I was not disappointed in my faith, for God raised up many friends to stand by me; and so through all my life he has been pleased to sustain me with friendships that have been more precious to me than silver and gold.

During the days that followed, many persons called to see me, and their words of kindness proved of great comfort to me. Among those who thus called was a Mr. Jones, one of the attorneys whom my brother had consulted. One day in conversation with his partner he said he believed he would call and see that young English girl who had shown such remarkable firmness in standing for her religious convictions. His call proved very pleasant and helpful to me. At his request I narrated something of my early life, the circumstances

of my coming to America, my experience on the ocean, in New Orleans, and later in Cincinnati; of my espousal of the Protestant faith, and the coming of my brother from Rome. Mr. Jones was a believer, but not a professing Christian; his wife was a Presbyterian. He listened to the recital with much interest, and with quivering lips remarked that if he had ever been inclined to doubt the reality of a religious experience he did not doubt it now. When he arose to go I thanked him for the interest he had taken in me in protecting me from a compulsory return to the Catholic faith. He stepped across to the other side of the room and took from the mantelpiece a small silken flag, and, holding it over my head, said, "Ah, my dear child, it was not I who saved you, it was this flag that protected you. This protects every one in America in worshipping God in any form he may choose." I need hardly say that the beautiful American flag has ever since held for me a doubly precious meaning.

Toil and Precious Fruits

AS TIME was now passing, there were many kindnesses shown me, and various people warmly pressed me to come to their homes, and be in their families as their own daughter. I could not, however, bring myself to accept an offer of this kind, my proud spirit rising in rebellion against any thought of being thus dependent. But what I should do to earn my living was not an easy problem to solve. In any practical affairs of life I was absolutely without experience. In the luxurious home of my parents there was nothing for me to do except what has been referred to in the earlier pages of this narrative. Even in the simplest matters of dressing, my sister and I were constantly served by a waiting maid.

After counsel with friends with regard to what I might learn to do, I finally decided to

learn the art of artificial flower making. The business seemed inviting, required no large outlay of strength, made a pleasant appeal to taste, and pecuniarily was fairly profitable. In this way I soon became able to provide for myself with reasonable care as to expenditures. Meanwhile I found a pleasant home with the family of my class leader, a Mr. Thompson, and upon their removal from the city, with Mr. and Mrs. Hull, members of the same church, Mr. Hull being my next class leader. My relations with these people were most congenial.

It was some time in the fall of 1851 that Mr. and Mrs. Hull removed to a part of the city more distant from Morris Chapel and near to a church of the United Brethren in Christ. Being late one Sunday morning in starting for service, and passing near this latter church, Mr. Hull proposed that we go in. They were pleased with the service and with the minister, and we afterward came again, and a few months later transferred our membership to

this church. The forms of service being essentially the same as those of the Methodist Episcopal church, we soon felt quite at home. The pastor of this church was the Rev. W. J. Shuey. He is still living, quite advanced in age, and widely known as the Rev. Doctor Shuey.

The transfer to this church had much to do with shaping my later destiny in life. Upon further acquaintance, Mr. and Mrs. Shuey desired me to make my home with them, and on Mr. and Mrs. Hull's acquiescence I did so. In the summer of the year 1852, Mr. and Mrs. Shuey made a visit to Mrs. Shuey's parents at Springfield, Ohio, and Mrs. Shuey invited me to accompany them. It was during this visit that I met Mrs. Shuey's brother, Mr. Daniel Berger, who in the providence of God afterward became my husband. I had at this time also changed my place of employment to the large book and publishing house of Messrs. Applegate, Flickinger and Pounsford, where I re-

mained up to the time of my marriage. Thus through these several years I continued to toil for my sustenance, a part of the prolonged sacrifice I made for Christ's sake. It is but truth to say that at times the burdens seemed heavy, but I never ceased to rejoice in the fact that I possessed an open Bible, and its precious promises greatly sustained me. While I had sacrificed much, I ever felt that I possessed a richer portion.

My marriage with Mr. Berger occurred on July 28, 1853, just a little less than a year after our first meeting, and proved a most auspicious event. He was then a candidate for ministerial orders, since widely known through official relationship with the United Brethren Church as the Rev. Dr. Berger. God has been pleased to prolong our life in happy companionship through more than sixty years, our golden anniversary being passed ten years ago, and our sixtieth on the twenty-eighth of July of the present year.

The first of these events was emphasized by the voluntary calling of a large number of friends in Dayton, Ohio, the city in which we have lived for fifty years, and by numerous letters and telegrams of congratulation from abroad. The second, by virtue of necessity, was observed in a more limited way. The great flood which visited Dayton and included our home in its ravages brought to us much impairment of strength, a condition to which advancing years added their portion, so that we were not able physically to entertain a large company. Nevertheless, a considerable number of friends called during the day, while letters of congratulation from friends abroad contributed to render the day memorable.

I never can be sufficiently grateful to God, who so providentially guided my steps, for giving me so kind and good a husband. Through all these years he has sustained me by tender affection and care, and our home life has been one of the truest happiness.

Incidents

AS THIS sketch is not intended to be in any proper sense a biography, I pass over the long lapse of years, with their varied experiences, their lights and shadows, their joys and sorrows, their successes and disappointments. Every lengthened life must needs have its share of these. I might tell of early service as a pastor's wife, of long connection with the Woman's Christian Temperance work, of protracted service as leader of a band of women in the days of the temperance crusade, of later service in the National Military Home at this city, of years of Sabbath visits to the county jail, and of service in official connection with the Ohio branch of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union. But of all this I cannot here speak in detail. During those days it fell to my lot

to arrange for numerous lectures on temperance, and it was a special joy to entertain as guests in our home such distinguished persons as Miss Frances E. Willard, Mrs. Ellen J. Foster, Mrs. Yeoman, of Canada, Col. George W. Bain, of Kentucky, and others prominent in the temperance work.

During the long editorial connection of my husband with the United Brethren Publishing House in Dayton, it became my privilege to visit many times with him the annual sessions of the Chautauqua Assembly, at Chautauqua Lake, New York. These visits became an opportunity for a wide acquaintance with people from many different States of our country, and here were formed many delightful and lasting friendships. It was here I first met Mrs. Dr. Wallace, a woman greatly beloved, and whose acquaintance has meant so much for me through many years. Many of those whom I here met, acquaintance with whom was to be prized as a special privilege, have

passed on into the great beyond. Many others yet remain to bless the world.

But I want here to record one or two experiences that possessed for me a special interest. One of these is the following:

A frequent visitor to this popular lake resort and owner of a beautiful cottage there, was a Mrs. Smith, whose residence was a little way up the Ohio River from Cincinnati. Mrs. Smith was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church, and had become acquainted with the facts connected with my conversion to the Protestant faith through various newspaper notices of that time.

Introduced to Mrs. Smith by her daughter, Miss Belle M. Smith, a skillful artist with whom I had become acquainted, she desired to hear from me the story of my early experiences, and later expressed a wish that some of her friends might hear me also. She thereupon named an hour and invited some twenty or more women to the parlors of her cottage to meet me and hear the narration.

I related in brief the story of my home life in England, my coming for a visit to America, our shipwreck and prolonged suffering on the ocean, the death of my uncle and aunt in New Orleans, and my coming to Cincinnati. All seemed deeply interested; but, when I came to speak of my first visit to old Morris Chapel and of my later conversion, mentioning familiar names of that period, I observed that one elderly woman became greatly excited. Then, as her memory revived the incidents of that now far off time, she suddenly sprang to her feet and exclaimed, "My God, is this little Mary Frances Merry? Is it possible that after so many years I have the privilege of meeting you again?" Then she embraced me again and again, uttering many more exclamations of surprise and delight. The scene presently became really dramatic. Other women experienced a thrill of excitement, and tears and laughter were mingled together. An added feature was that my husband came in at that

moment to take me to meet another engagement, and the old lady was so pleased to see the partner of my life, that she warmly embraced him also.

This woman's name was Gill, and it was in her arms, while engaged in prayer, that I first found the perfect peace of a true believer. This fact I at once recalled when her name was known to me.

Within a year from that time, Mrs. Gill with her family had removed to Buffalo, New York, her husband's business being transferred to that city, and there they still resided at the time of our meeting at Chautauqua. As more than forty years had elapsed since we knew each other in Cincinnati, the meeting here possessed a special interest. Referring to my stature as "little," I was then seventeen years of age and of quite slender build.

Another incident, which held for me an interest which may be easily understood, was substantially as follows:

One summer, some fifteen or more years ago, I received a letter from a Mrs. Barlow, of Detroit, Michigan, inquiring at what time we expected to arrive at Chautauqua. I had formed the acquaintance of Mrs. Barlow in previous years in connection with the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, in which we both were interested. She was at this time entertaining as a guest in her home Miss Frances Clare Cusack, better known to the public as "The Nun of Kenmare." Having known something of my history, she desired that Miss Cusack should meet me. She, therefore, arranged to bring her to Chautauqua at the time of our visit there.

We arrived on a Saturday evening, and on Sunday afternoon Mrs. Barlow brought Miss Cusack to the Hotel Athenaeum where we were staying. We met and were introduced in the parlor of the hotel, and on being seated Miss Cusack at once began to make friendly inquiry as to my past life. I related to her

some of the incidents of my history, and when I spoke of the sacrifice I had made for conscience' sake, and for the sake of a closer nearness to our divine Savior, she was much moved, and embracing me warmly said, "My child, you have endured many things for Christ's sake. But for his sake we can bear the loss of all things, and we have the greater reward. Yours is the better portion which never can be taken from you." A number of the guests of the hotel had been drawn to listen to our conversation, and many of them were affected to tears.

In the course of our conversation, I learned that Miss Cusack knew familiarly the cathedral and convent in Manchester with which my early years were associated; also, that she had been intimately acquainted with my brother, Father Edwin Merry, whose parish was in the city of Oldham, a short distance from Manchester, and had been interested in the erection of a convent school in connection with

his church. She had also heard that a daughter in his father's family had forsaken the Catholic fold, but had no further information concerning her. She became much excited when she learned that I was the sister of Father Merry, and exclaimed again and again, "Can it be possible that after so many years I have met the sister of Father Merry?"

Miss Cusack was a woman of culture, a writer of good ability and had published several volumes on various subjects. She was possessed in her earlier life of a considerable fortune, the greater part of which she devoted to building convents for her church. Later she espoused the Protestant faith, finding for a while an asylum in Christ's Mission, New York City, a place for counsel and worship, established some thirty years ago by Father O'Connor as a shelter for persons exchanging the Catholic faith for the Protestant church. She was at the time I met her well advanced in years. She returned again to Europe, dy-

ing a few years later in London. Her funeral was honored by a large attendance, and such distinguished persons as Dr. Joseph Parker, of the City Temple, and the Dean of Westminster, with others, officiated at the burial.



Closing Words

IN CLOSING this sketch I have great pleasure in saying that, while my life has not been without the shadows of disappointment, it has been brightened and cheered by the kindness of many dear friends whom God has been pleased to give me. It would be a long list if I could here write all their names. But the kindnesses of some of these have through many years been so conspicuous that I shall not do an injustice to others when I here mention the names of Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Shuler, of Hamilton, Ohio; Dr. and Mrs. R. S. Wallace, of East Brady, Pennsylvania; and Dr. and Mrs. Julius King, of Cleveland. I must not go farther, or I should not know where to end. But their names are in the Book of Life. The first named of these have long sustained to us a relation akin to that of an affectionate son and daughter. The loving offi-

ces of all are remembered with unceasing appreciation and gratitude, and their reward is sure at the hands of the Father.

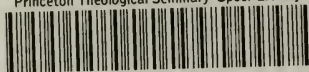
I have also this final word to say concerning the great historic church in which I was born, but from which my life has been dissociated. I have not through my life borne toward it or any of its people any measure of ill will. On the contrary, I have cherished toward it a feeling of kindness, and have greatly desired and often prayed that especially my own people might awaken to that brighter light and that greater spiritual freedom which I have found. The pages of the open Bible, and direct approach to Christ without intervention of living man or departed saint, have been to me riches of blessing above all estimate. For this I have suffered loss, but realize that I have the greater gain. The loss of parental affection and recognition was the bitterest part of my cup. But I have never for a moment cherished toward my parents any feeling of resentment or hardness.

The Apostle Paul declared that he “verily thought he was doing God service” when he persecuted the church, and this was their feeling and conviction in rejecting me from their love. And toward them I could but cherish the feeling of Jesus on the cross when he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

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