

## HOW A CONVERT WAS MADE

MANY years ago, in some part of Europe, there lived in an old castle a lady, the mistress of it. She was neither young nor old, though a widow of quite a number of years' standing. She had no children; and since the death of the knight, her spouse, had led a retired life, without other company than that of servants kept at proper distance. She was correct in her life, handsome in person, and took interest in nothing except the administration of her estate and the practice of religion. A Capuchin, whose convent was about a mile distant, was her chaplain and confessor, and came every morning to the castle to say an early mass for her ladyship and her vassals.

This had been going on, no one can exactly say how long, but at any rate for a very long period, when, one evening, after the drawbridge had been already taken up, a voice was heard outside the gate saying in a loud tone, intermediate between speech and song—

"God bless the owner and all the inhabitants of this castle! and may a poor traveling friar receive hospitality in it tonight for the Lord's sake!"

"Who is there?" said the gate-keeper, looking through the interval between the lifted bridge and the gate-post.

"A Carmelite brother, who is on his way from one convent to another, fears to be overtaken by night, and asks the lord or lady of this castle to allow him to spend here the night on a bundle of straw, for the love of God," was the answer, given in a voice this time approaching nearer to the tone of conversation.

"I will go and ask my lady," said the gate-keeper.

So he went, leaving the friar standing outside of the ditch, entered the room, bowed before the lady, and delivered his message. The lady heard him with that air of repressed impatience which was not uncommon among the pious people of that time in receiving the visits of monks, as monks were so many. Then she said with an air of resigned condescension—

"Tell the reverend father that he is welcome. Show him into the beggar's room near the gate. Bring there a candlestick, a bundle of new straw, a pitcher of water, and a loaf of bread, and bid him good-night on my part."

The gate-keeper bowed, and slowly left the room. As soon as he had gone, the lady was on her feet, and walked rapidly towards the balcony which overlooked the draw-bridge, in order to be in time to see what kind of troublesome monk her guest was.

Contrary to her expectation, he was a tall, handsome, well-behaved young Carmelite friar, neatly dressed in a brown tunic and snow-white woolen mantle, his head freshly shaved with the exception of a large crown of beautiful vigorous brown hair, forming a perfect circle, emblem of monastic perfection. He was at the most twenty-one, was not yet a priest, but had just completed his novitiate, and was traveling from the convent where the novices were trained to one of the ordinary convents. Just at the moment of going in he chanced to lift up towards the balcony a pair of large, deep blue eyes, surrounded by long, magnificent eye-lashes; but perceiving the lady he at once dropped down his eyes with monastic modesty, at the same time acknowledging her informal presence by the most imperceptible bow, which she returned in the same manner. He disappeared through the gate, and the lady went back to her apartment and rang the bell. A servant came.

"Go," she said, "to the room near the gate, and present to the reverend father there my humble requests. Show him to the bedroom of honor, and place at his disposal all that he requires to prepare for supper. Tell him that the lady of the castle will have the honor of his reverence's company at supper."

It was done as the lady had desired, and at supper-time the young friar was ushered into the dining-room. The lady went to meet him at the door, knelt before him, kissed his hand and his scapulary, expressed to him how much she appreciated the honor which his reverence did to her and to her house by his visit. The young friar stammered a few modest words, and was shown to a seat at the table. There were but two,—that of the lady at the place of honor, and that of the friar on her right hand. He sat after she had done so, and then dinner began.

Through the first dishes the conversation was rather slack. The hostess and her guest were evidently studying each other; but what slackened not was the interchange of courtesies, in which they vied with each other. As the desert approached, the goblets having been several times emptied and re-filled, the dialogue became freer, the lady taking the direction of it, as both the noblest and the oldest, and the friar taking his part in it with modest good sense. All his answers bore the stamp of wisdom beyond his years, and did the greatest credit to the master of the novices under whose care he had been trained.

After many subjects had been touched and dismissed, "My holy father," said she, "I ought indeed to be thankful to Providence for this opportunity of profiting

by all the instructive discourse of your reverence. I admire all the wisdom and learning which God has been pleased to accumulate in a person so young and yet so grave; and as the possibility of availing myself of it may be too short, I will not allow these precious moments to pass away without asking you to give me instruction on a subject to me most important. I understand that your reverence is a Carmelite. What does your paternity think of the Capuchin order?"

"My lady," said the young friar, "this is, as your ladyship observed a very important question; but, at the same time, one which I could not possibly answer without assuming the gravest responsibility. May I therefore beg of your ladyship?"

"Holy father," said the lady, "please do not plead any excuse. This question is to me of the greatest importance, and may interest my salvation itself, especially as my confessor."

"What? Does the confessor or your ladyship belong to the Capuchin order?"

"Yes, my reverend father, he does."

"In that case, my lady, it is doubly incumbent on me to be entirely silent on this subject, especially as"—

"Especially as what? Oh! please, my reverend father, do not torture me. Do not torture a poor sinner who humbly seeks the true way of salvation, and who wishes to know whether the guide to whom she has intrusted her spiritual interests be worthy of her confidence. And if there is indeed any special reason why I should not commit the care of my soul to a member of the Capuchin order, pray let me know it before it be too late."

"The fact is, my lady, that there is no absolute reason why the Capuchin order should not be considered worthy of confidence, especially as that order is confirmed by the authority of the Holy See, which we are all bound to obey, although"—

"Although what? Oh! my father, for pity's sake, reveal unto me that secret, or else—shall I throw myself at your knees?"

"My lady, I was only going to say that we are bound by our respect for the Holy See to entertain the deepest reverence for the holy Capuchin order, although—although I, for myself, should on no account have wished to enter it, and have my reasons to prefer the Carmelite order."

"And may I know what those reasons are?"

"My lady, nothing that could be considered as being in the least degree discreditable to the holy Capuchin fathers. If any thing, it is rather creditable to their humility, although"—

"Was your reverence going to say, 'Although their humility is not complete'?"

"On the contrary, it is so complete that it is even carried into excess, to such an excess, indeed, that I should really hesitate to say in what it consists."

"Reverend father, as it is only an excess of virtue, your telling of it cannot in the slightest degree injure the venerable Capuchin fathers, and can only add to the esteem in which we hold them."

"Your ladyship is right. This is the point of view in which I should place myself, and not to speak in such a matter would be indeed sinful, as it would leave the people in ignorance of some of the virtues of the holy Capuchin order—virtues of which those holy fathers themselves do not boast, being, of all the monastic orders, the most specially addicted to the practice of humility. Know, therefore, my lady, that those holy fathers are so humble that they carry humility to a degree of which most men are, and I acknowledge myself to be incapable. Whenever they commit a mortal sin, instead of telling it to their confessor alone, and concealing it from the whole rest of the world, they make a silent but public acknowledgment of it by sewing an additional patch to their robe."

My readers must be told that one of the chiefest points in which the Capuchin order boasts of humility consists in wearing garments as old as possible; and the hollower a Capuchin is the more is his garment covered with patches, of all dates, sizes, and shapes, and of all the shades of brown from a dead-leaf color to almost black. Some Capuchins enter the order at the age of fifteen, and reach that of a hundred years without having had, during all that time, more than one robe, the appearance of which, as far as patching is concerned, may be imagined! The number of patches is not, however, so far as I am aware, in any direct ratio with the number of mortal sins committed, although I should not be surprised if the confessor of a Capuchin should prescribe to him, as a penance, to put an additional patch to his raiment.

The chaplain of the castle was one of the oldest and holiest fathers of his convent, and had his robe full of patches of the most varied aspect. So, when the lady had heard the explanation given of them by the young Carmelite, she became serious, and ceased to ask further questions. The supper being now over, she thanked the young friar for all his instructive discourse; and as it was the custom of our fathers to go to bed immediately after supper, and start on their journeys early before breakfast, she recommended herself to his prayers, wished him good-night and a good

journey, and ordered a servant to escort him to his bedroom. The servant left him there in company with a brass candlestick four feet high, which stood on the floor with a candle in it two feet high, and a wick half an inch thick and two inches long. The bed was eight feet square and five feet high, with a huge canopy and heavy curtains; and there was a ladder to ascend by. The young traveler had a refreshing night's rest, and before daylight he was on his way. The lady had little sleep, and spent most of the night in revolving in her mind thought after thought. In the morning she rose earlier than was her custom, and went to the balcony to watch for the coming of her chaplain.

He came at last; and as soon as she could discern him in the distance,—his form bent with age, his steps slow and tottering, his eyes evidently dim, his hand leaning upon a cane and occasionally using it to feel the way—her heart burned with indignation. "The scoundrel!" said she, "the old scoundrel!" But I wonder whether he will dare to say mass!"

When he approached nearer, and was preparing to cross on the draw-bridge, she could with the naked eye count every patch on his garment. "And with that robe on too! that robe, every part of which, by the innumerable patches which it bears, stands as a witness of his abominable sins! But I must prevent that. I must not permit such a horrible profanation of the holiest ordinance of our religion."

So she went rapidly down stairs, and met the father at the door of the sacristy, going to prepare for mass by putting on the priestly garments, "Holy Father," said she, "if this expression is not a mockery, I perceive that you are not in a fit condition to say mass. Return to your convent, and tell your superior that I request him to send in your place another priest more worthy than you."

At these words of his penitent, ordinarily so docile, pronounced in a tone of voice so different from those to which he had been accustomed to hear her employ, the old ascetic at first felt his heart dismayed and his mind dizzy. But he soon recovered the balance of his thoughts and of his feelings, for he had been too long at the school of voluntary humiliation to be met unprepared for any insult that this world might still have in store for him. So he answered with a meek voice, tremulous through age but not through evil conscience, "Your ladyship is very right. You are very right my child. God knows that I am a poor sinner, very unworthy to say mass. I trust the Reverend Father Superior will send you a priest worthier than I."

So he resumed his way toward the convent in the same manner as he came. When he reached it, he went to the cell of the superior, asked his benediction, and delivered his message without comment. The superior, supposing that he had been overtaken by some scruple of conscience just before saying mass, spoke to him encouragingly, saying, "It will be well, my son. God is merciful to us sinners. Go to your cell and pray. I will come after a while, and hear your confession."

The old father went to his cell; and the superior began to think within himself, "But whom shall I find to send now, if Father Anselm is not holy enough. There is none holier than he, unless it be perhaps Father Romuald. So he sent orders to Father Romuald to go to the castle to say mass instead of Father Anselm."

The lady of the castle had been all this time on her balcony waiting to see whom the superior would send to her. At last Father Romuald came, walking slower than his colleague, for he was older, and having his garment, if possible, more full of patches, for he was, if possible, holier. This sight was too much for the lady. She did not even give him time to get into the castle, but sent him orders by a page to return to the convent, and tell the superior that she would write for further explanation. She immediately went to her writing desk, and began to write two letters. The first was as follows:

"To the Reverend Father Superior of the Capuchin Convent.

"REVEREND FATHER.—The salvation of our soul being the principal thing, it is of the utmost importance for us to intrust our spiritual direction to none but the worthiest hands. As you do not happen to have in your convent any holier men than the Reverend Fathers Anselm and Romuald, I shall therefore dispense with the ministrations of your order."

The second letter read as follows:

"To the Reverend Father Superior of the Carmelite Convent.

"REVEREND FATHER.—I am anxious to intrust the direction of my conscience to none but one who can truly lead me in the paths of eternal salvation. The Reverend Father Elias lately honored my dwelling with a visit, which lasted but a too short time. It was, however, sufficient to fill me with respect and veneration for the learning, wisdom, and Christian virtue of the order to which he belongs. I therefore humbly beseech your Reverend Paternity to select for me a confessor and chaplain from the Carmelite order; and, as there is no convent of your holy order in our immediate vicinity, I have given orders that an apartment be prepared for him in the castle itself."

Both letters were dated, signed, sealed and dispatched. The superior of the Capuchins did not know what to make of the one which was addressed to him, except that it was clear that his convent had lost

the chaplaincy of the castle. The superior of the Carmelites, in receiving the other letter, looked jubilant, and ordered the chapter bell to be immediately rung.

When the monks had assembled in the chapter hall, "Reverend Fathers and Brethren," said he, "great and many are the privileges which Providence has at all times bestowed upon our order through the merits of the blessed Prophet Saint Elias, its founder. The letter which I have just received, and which I will now communicate to you is a new proof, not only of the excellence of our order, but also of the estimation in which it is held by the world." He then read the letter, and asked the advice of the community.

There was but one voice that the young father, who, by the wisdom of his deportment, had been so instrumental in procuring to the order this new and high distinction, was the person most fitted to fill the position of chaplain and confessor of her ladyship. As he was not yet a priest, application should be made to the bishop in order to have him immediately ordained *extra tempora*.

This was done. Many generations have passed since, and the castle has had many knights and ladies as successive owners. But the chaplaincy is still in the hands of the Carmelite order, a fact which those who do not know this story cannot explain, as the Capuchin convent is so much the nearer.

## An Unpleasant Visitor.

The *Detroit Free Press* tells how a wild looking man, with his hat in his hand and blood running down his shoulder from a badly bitten ear, called on the Mayor of that city. "Is this the Mayor of this town?" he screamed. "See this 'ere ear!" The official looked and replied that it was sad-looking. "Yes, and it was did right in this town—right down here not forty rods away! Is this a one-hoss town, what they jump from behind the door and grab a man's ear, or is it a big town, what they strike from the shoulder? This is the way I fight!" and he unbuttoned his jacket and danced around, shooting out with his right and then his left, and then "getting away" from a blow on the nasal. The Mayor was kept dodging to avoid a sore eye, and he hastily promised to have the police look into the matter. "Perlice!" shouted the man—"who said perlice, what I want is for 'em to stand up square and come for me so—and so—and so!" And he jumped this way and that, ducked his head, and kicked higher than the Mayor's nose. Then he squared off in front of the hatrack and knocked the hats right and left—"No, sir, I hain't no chicken! I want a square shake and no more! Let 'em climb on to me by the front door and they gits it in this way—and that way—and so—and under the chin—and on top of the head—and in the stomach!" His kicks and blows drove the official into a corner to avoid accident, and the man was promised that hereafter he should have a square show according to the latest rules of the P. R. "That's biz, that is!" he replied, getting ready to walk out, "and now I know this hain't a one-hoss town. Let 'em climb on to me now—let 'em come in front and both sides, and all around, and if 'old Trenton don't flop her wings and crow then I'm a red dog under a meat wagon!"

## A Moral.

A nut dropped by a squirrel fell through the opening in the middle of an old millstone which lay upon the ground, and, being thus protected, grew into a thriving sapling that shot up through the opening. In a few years it had increased so that it filled the space and was firmly wedged to the sides of the heavy stone. Still it grew, and in a few years more, little by little, it lifted the entire weight clear from the earth, so that a man could sit beneath it. All was done by atom after atom, borne by the sap to the growing trunk. Think of this, my little man, puzzling over "long division" in arithmetic; little by little of thinking and working will take you through fractions, rule of three, and those terrible problems at the end of the book, by-and-by; but be sure that little by little is not neglected. And you, hard-working lad on the farm, or in the shops, look at Franklin, Watts, Morse, Field, and thousands more who have lifted the weight of circumstances that would hold them down like millstones, and who have by their steady perseverance risen above their fellows, easily bearing their burdens, and "keep pegging away."

## Borrowed Trouble.

Half the misery of mankind is borrowed misery. For instance our neighbor's child is taken ill with the measles. Immediately, one begins to conjure up frightful visions about one's own children, when, very likely, they will escape the contagion altogether, or get through it very lightly. Or, we are taken ill ourselves. Immediately we aggravate every symptom, and banish possible sleep by computing the probable loss to our business if "laid up," and indulging fears that we may not recover at all, forgetting those golden words, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

"Here and there is a man," says Henry Ward Beecher, "who still believes that the world was really made in six ordinary days. Such men are twin brothers of the oldest mummies in Egypt, and the mummies are the best men of the two sorts."

## Professional Cards.

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