

St. Mary's Presbytery, Sligo. The Bishop discussed with the honourable members the present agrarian and political situation, the potato famine, the necessity of public works, and the proposed reform in the industrial training of pauper children. He expressed himself strongly in favour of the Collooney and Clonmorris line of light railway, and the drainage of the Geavagh and Owenmore rivers.

**Tipperary.**—A most enthusiastic meeting was held in the Town Hall, Cashel, under the presidency of Very Rev. Dean Kinane, in aid of the Defence Fund. It was thought that the authorities intended preventing the meeting, as close on one hundred police had been drafted into town during the morning by car from Clonmel. The meeting was most successful, numerically and financially.

Miss Cullinane has been released from Cork Gaol. She was met by J. C. Forde, honorary secretary, and J. Murphy, assistant secretary, of the Cork National League, and immediately driven to the Mayor's residence, where she remained during the day. In the evening she left for Clonmel, and was accompanied to the station by the Mayor and Mayoress and Miss Horgan, Dr. Tanner and J. Morrough, M.P.'s; Alderman O'Brien, J. Slattery, E. Walsh, C. J. O'Riordan, and J. C. Forde.

**Waterford.**—The widow Power, of Stradbally, has been reinstated in her farm. This, it is claimed, is mainly due to the vigorous stand made by the men of that district, and the way in which the agent and landlord were shown up by the *Munster Express*.

An immense gathering of the good men and true of Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Limerick, and Cork a few Sundays ago assembled on the grand old political battlefield of Waterford city, Ballybricken, to demand the release of John Daly and his companions, at present illegally confined in Chatham Prison, England. Martin Arthur and Nicholas Murphy worked up the demonstration, which was a decided success.

**Westmeath.**—Most Rev. Dr. Nulty, Bishop of Meath, arrived recently in Mullingar from Rome, where he proceeded to present the Peter's Pence collection of the diocese to Pope Leo XIII. The Bishop was met at the station by an immense crowd of people, who cheered repeatedly.

Fagan, of Rathconnell, who grabbed a farm at Martinstown from which the Misses Deverell were evicted, has now given it up.

The blacksmiths of Westmeath, learning the general lesson of combination so universally taught, are about to form a union for their protection.

**Wexford.**—Edward Mordaunt and G. Kavanagh, the two well-known Campaigners, have been released from Dundalk Gaol. Both men looked well, and had no hint to complain of. At Arklow the Campaigners of the Coolgreany estate turned out *en masse* and accorded Mr. Mordaunt a magnificent reception. At Gorey he was also welcomed to liberty by great numbers of his compatriots.

## CONVERSION: AN ANALYSIS. (In Three Chapters.)

By WATFABER.

### PREFATORY.

It is only in a missionary spirit that I set down this record of experiences, this analysis of conversion, in the hope that the perusal of it may assist those who yet "halt between two opinions," to follow the streak of light which Almighty God sheds upon the darkest life-paths.

Wellington, December 30, 1890.

### I—DARKNESS.

Darkness—physical, mental, and spiritual—involves suffering, but no suffering is comparable with that of the spiritually blind. For the spirituality of man is the very essence of his being. It is a physiological truth that the brain governs the body, but it is even more emphatically true that the temperament or the spirituality of the man governs both brain and body; and in this age of materialism the general tendency is to suppress sentiment—in other words, to ignore the spiritual element. Yet, however we strive to tread under foot or to spurn the spiritual, we can never succeed. It is unquenchable, and though it may be reduced to a smouldering condition, it can never be extinguished, and its vitality must and will assert itself. How greatly human life is governed by sentiment very few people consider. What is sentiment? It is the first link of the chain that binds us to our Creator, to the unseen, to the world behind, and the world beyond. It is a "confidant in life's feast," the power that leads us upward in our thoughts, the angel that guides us to sympathy; in short, elevates and makes useful our lives. It is the foundation of purity; it arises in vapour and crystallises in virtue.

The condition of him in whom spirituality is dwarfed is more deplorable than that of his brother, who sees not the physical beauties of earth, and of his still more hapless brother whose reason is darkened. Materialism will have its "day"; but "history repeats itself" in each domain, and the time is at hand when a revolt of secularism will take place, and weary mankind, tired of a joyless materialism, will long for the sweet consolations of the past. The very perfectness of the present structure of society is due to its foundations. The "blood of martyrs" and the tears of earnest toilers, baffled but never discouraged, prepared the ground on which arose the fabric of our religion. That religion taught man his duty to Almighty God, to his neighbour, and to himself; and on this sure foundation family life—national life—the entire fabric of society arose. Sentiment substantiated itself into law. The Unseen was the foundation of the Seen. The Ideal was the rock on which realisation was built.

I have devoted so much of my introductory remarks to this subject because I feel very deeply its importance as a basis; because I see in sentiment the basis of future triumph. To-day we see around

us a tragic struggle for existence among men. Nothing could be more hopeless and unhappy than the lot of the workers who perforce obey the behest of the monopolists. And it is from this rain of blood and tears that we see now arising a sentiment that will anon become a realisation. The rights of our common human nature and of labour are being recognised, and the brotherhood of man in course of accomplishment. He who sees not this, whose eyes are closed to the "signs of the times" is indeed blind, and dwells in darkness. Similarly, he who is satisfied with the present, individually, is "in a bad case." The darkness of the spirit may indeed be felt. There is (to put it in the vaguest way possible) an unseen power; there is an unseen future. We have proceeded from a mysterious Past. We are hastening towards as serious a future. Between these, clothed in a material being, we move, with an imperfect vision. With the best of us vision is imperfect; but if we have not even an imperfect vision, if before our eyes there is not even a "green hill far away beyond the city wall" if there is no shadowy past, no luminous future, how hopeless is our lot; for this life is after all but a tragical pilgrimage, and of all the good things it may yield, we can carry none away. And besides, in our dark hours (and dark hours descend upon the happiest of us) do we not long for some prospect outside the present; in our moments of doubt and disgust, of fear and trouble—do we not yearn for a higher life; do we not turn to the Unseen, do not our eyes ache for rest?

It is from this vision, from this weariness that religion springs. This, in brief, is the history of religion. I doubt very much, however, whether there has ever been so much spiritual darkness in the world as now prevails. Revolt from system (too often corrupt) has produced Secularism and indifference. The pursuit of "wandering fires" has been a too frequent but always unhappy chase. Those most engrossed in this world's affairs have found it unsatisfactory and in the end profitless, or have despised themselves for their hypocritical pretence. For there are moments when every man's conscience holds for him "the mirror up to nature." Therefore trade he as successfully as he may, let him put on the semblance of religious sentiment as he may, he is but a materialist, and when earthly joys fail him, he has no other source of consolation, for his spiritual orbs are sightless, or his vision is oblique.

Perhaps, indeed, the lot of those in whom the spiritual is developed in preponderance, is even more unhappy in this world. When sentiment counterbalances calculation altogether, the result is disastrous. The spirit then gropes about and finds no foothold—for there are a hundred platforms of sectarianism, and all weak. I should say the son of Anglicanism has the loosest foothold of all; for he belongs to an institution founded upon an Act of Parliament (so say no more). There is no central authority and no discipline, but there are exasperating phantoms of both. For the so-called "Dissenter," what is there? A sham, a hideous sham, a turmoil of "private interpretation," a nauseating Puritan issue; a cloak for greed, graspingness, and cold-heartedness, a respectable-looking cloak too, which fits every wearer and shelters him from reproach, *Marriage à la mode* forsooth! Where is the Hogarth of this decade to give us *Religion à la mode*? What is the alternative then to the mind which has not yet received (or rather has failed to perceive) the true light? The alternative is the Dark Abyss of free thought into which many noble souls have hurled themselves in despair.

This is darkness. There are souls wilfully and determinedly dark; there are also souls driven into darkness. The latter are more numerous; but the lot of both is hard. Darker brooding on the face of the waters is said to see. I can conceive no lot more dreadful than that of a soul which is wilfully darkened itself, or has flown in despair from an apparently futile pursuit of light, into the outer darkness of unbelief. Yet that, I venture to say, has been the experience of most converts. I would not beckon anyone into these dark shadows, yet I would like to see even the great procession that now yearly enters them, increasing in numbers. The gloom, the awfulness of this Cimmeria, are indescribable, but there a *Styx* which everyone must cross who would enjoy untadged and true pleasures.

The dangers and disadvantages of spiritual darkness, however, are not merely negative. To say that the darkened soul goes without all that the illumined soul enjoys does not exhaust the subject. The mind spiritually dark is liable to fall under the masters and influences that dwell in the darkness—pride of intellect, besotment, despair,—each able to wreck a human life.

Pride of intellect is a conspicuous failing of civilised humanity to-day, and it is the failing most difficult to convict anybody of. The immense strides of scientific enquiry, the magnificent results that have been achieved in the domain of science, the extraordinary effects which these have had on human life, have indeed quickened and multiplied the growth of the infirmity, which, no less and natural as it may appear in some aspects, is still an infirmity which, allowed to remain undisturbed, becomes a dangerous malady. Pride of intellect is fatal to the intellectual growth itself—much more to the spiritual or inner life. From it springs the Egoism which hinders progress, mental and spiritual. It is quite a mistake, corrected by daily experience, to think that the greatest minds of the age are the least religiously inclined; it is just the greatest minds which are the most beset with pride of intellect and are nearest to the Divine Ideal or being "as little children." The greatest benefactors of the age are the truth-seekers, whose eyes, fitted to the firmament, discern the fix stars as well as the brightness of truth, who long for the Unseen and adore the Unutterable. The self-satisfaction that follows triumphant research is the parent of Egoism, and the forerunner of decline. It was so in ages gone by, it is so to-day. The spread of it is fatal to spiritual life, and the failure of that growth will have—say, is having—effects appalling to contemplate. "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"; the inscription is fading in the scorching heat of intellectual pride. The Unseen is to be appraised and subjected to the crucible! "The ocean and the mountain of Divine Truth" must be held in the hollow of human intellect's "tiny hand, or weighed in its tiny scales." Pride pulls down the temples and overthrows the shrines, and laughs to scorn