

assuming young lady. Her quiet self poise, and dignity attracted James Dalton, and after being introduced to her, and listening to the charm of her conversation, he found he had lost his heart.

At first he tried to shake off the feeling, but it had all at once gripped him, and he realised that, at last, fate held him without hope of release. He began to visit Miss Wafford, and as there was no doubt of his earnestness, or his intentions, the young lady announced to him one day that she was a Catholic, and she would never trust her life or her future to one who was of a different faith. James saw she made this announcement with an effort, which gave him hope he was not disagreeable to her; and he determined to persevere and win her. He told her that his whole wish in life was to win her, and that he would never cease trying.

Bessie smiled—but becoming grave at once—told him seriously that she would never marry one who was not of her faith.

‘And your Catholic religion is the one obstacle, nothing else?’ said James.

‘My Catholic religion,’ said Bessie, ‘is my life. What happiness can married people expect whose roads separate on the most vital of all questions?’

‘Isn’t that a narrow view of God?’ said James. ‘Must we not believe His pleasure is in the heart’s motives, not in lip service? What difference does the outward form of religion make if our hearts bow in sincere worship before Him?’

Bessie shrugged her shoulders impatiently:

‘You are just like the rest of men who do not know the first principles of the worship of God. You would argue forever, and then be unconvinced. If you are sincere, I will give you a book or two to read, and you may see for yourself where you are mistaken. You tell me you have never touched a Catholic book, and you pretend to denounce our views as “narrow.” Well you read the books, I shall lend you; or shall we say “Good-bye” forever?’

James would do anything sooner than say ‘Good-bye’ to this fascinating girl. He accepted the books, and returning home wrote a long letter to his mother, telling her he thought he had found his destiny, but that she was stubborn on religious matters; he hoped by patience and gentleness to overcome that obstacle. He was liberal and broad, and she should be whatever she wished; he would never interfere with her religion. He said he had accepted some reading matter about the Catholic Church, to oblige the young lady, but there was nothing in that to cause his mother alarm.

His mother wrote a reply in anguish of heart, warning him that his sister Alice had made herself and the family unhappy by her friendship for a Roman Catholic, and bidding him beware of the snares and traps that Rome was perpetually setting for the unwary. But her eldest son, at the age of 28 was a man, she said, matured in mind and body and she counted on his strength of character, and his virile personality to scorn all allurement that might tempt him from his childhood’s faith.

James smiled as he read the letter he knew his mother well, and realised the pang his announcement had cost her, and told himself she was a dear old foolish mother to worry about him, for he determined he would keep to his Methodist Church, in name anyhow—and win the girl his heart covered. ‘He become a Catholic? Never! But Bessie he would have! if she loved him, as he loved her.’

In this spirit he carelessly opened *The Faith of Our Fathers* and tolerantly turned the pages. He was amazed when he looked up to find he had spent an hour over the book. A new feeling took possession of him. Was it possible he could have been mistaken? Had he been instructed wrong? He closed the book, but his mind was full of what he had read. The next day he read more.

He paid a visit to Miss Wafford, and she saw something was working in his soul. Was it the beginning of grace? He said he was reading one of her books, and no further mention was made of religious matters. Bessie found that her heart was praying for James.

Two months passed, and James wrote to his mother a letter that produced consternation in the family. He said he was becoming interested in the Catholic religion, and had bought a copy of the two books he was reading—viz., *Faith of Our Fathers*, and *Catholic Belief*, and was sending them to the house, begging his mother to read them also. On hearing this terrible news, she became hysterical, and it took all the efforts of her daughters to calm her. The books came by mail, and without being divested of their wrappers were thrown out on the ash-pile. Their very touch would contaminate!

But Alice, whose heart was given to a ‘Papist,’ stoutly defended her brother. She reproached her mother and sisters for not giving the books a chance. What harm could they do? In fact she declared she would go out to the rubbish heap and rescue them, and indeed she did so. The two books had not suffered by their ignominious punishment, and when they were placed upon the table, curiosity impelled mother and daughters to open them and comment on their contents.

Weeks passed by, and a wonderful change came over the family. In Ohio, James Dalton had placed himself under instruction, and Miss Bessie’s heartfelt prayers for him seemed to have brought the grace of conversion. She had never weakened in the least particular, always upholding by precept and example the pure doctrines of the Holy Church of which she was a fervent member. Strange to say, she gave to James the same little prayer Herbert had given to Alice, and, unknown to each other, brother and sister had continually on their lips: ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus! I place my trust in Thee.’

By this time Bessie had learned from James Dalton all about the prejudices of his family, all about his sister Alice’s Catholic friend, Herbert, and her separation from him, and she truly sympathised with the girl, and fervently prayed for her. She often asked James, as the days passed by, if he heard any signs of the effect produced by the two Catholic books on his mother and sisters. But they had kept their feelings entirely to themselves. At last James wrote home that he was going to be baptised and enter the Catholic Church, not because he was in love with Miss Wafford, but because his honest convictions told him it was the only true Church, and he meant to be square and fair with his conscience. This was James’ character, as all the family knew, and it had great influence with his mother and sisters in strengthening the impression made by the Catholic books which they had read through, with surprise and interest. Much of the Church’s doctrines they wanted to have explained more fully, and so after a family council, Alice and her mother plucked up courage and came to me, the only Catholic priest they knew, and laid their doubts before me, after mentioning the extraordinary fact of James’ conversion.

It was not hard to answer their difficulties and they were amazed at the simplicity of the explanations. Mother and daughter began a course of study and instruction, and I had the happiness of seeing them advance in perfect faith and assurance of happiness. There was one drawback. Gertrude, the second daughter, denounced the whole thing, in deep indignation. She was astonished at the way things were moving, and rated her mother and Alice and James in emphatic terms. They told me about it, and I was interested enough to wish to meet this young lady, and try to save her soul in spite of herself. She had a horror of a Catholic priest, and never had spoken to one, and all the accounts that Alice and her mother gave of their hours of instruction were exaggerated into a fancy that I had bewitched them. If she saw me approaching the house, she would disappear, or show such evident dislike that there was no doubt about her sentiments. One day, however, I met her squarely, and as she was too polite to show her feelings, I had the chance I wanted, and factfully drew her into a pleasant argument, which ended in softening her prejudices, and made her desirous of accepting me as a friend.

Later on, Alice told me she found Gertrude poring