

## A CHILD'S VOICE DIRECTS THE WAY TO ROME

"I was an Anglican clergyman—a member of an Anglican religious Order which prided itself on its 'Catholicity,'" writes Rev. E. R. Grimes in the *London Universe*. "Being in temporary charge of the London house, I could get in and out without asking leave. There was a weight on my mind. I was in grave doubt whether, after all, I was a Catholic. I had read most of Newman's books, but there was one which I was afraid of reading, lest it might unsettle me, so I had resolutely let it alone. Now, however, all of a sudden, the opportunity seemed to stare me in the face. Why could I not walk over to the library of the British Museum and read that book? I could, and I would. So I set out that early summer morning clad in cassock and girdle and long priestly cloak. It seemed like a dangerous adventure, so accustomed were we to judge adversely any internal voice which called us on towards Rome.

"But stifling the sense of danger as far as I could, I ascended the narrow street, turned the corner, and came up against the stream of workers setting out for the business of the day. I nearly ran into one of them.

"It was a little child of nine with a satchel on his back, and he was leading his younger brother to school. I had stopped him unintentionally, and as he stopped he looked up and surveyed me with wondering eyes.

"Are you a Catholic?" he asked. "We are Catholics."

"That was all. It was one of those utterances which come spontaneously from the lips of a child, but it touched the spot as nothing else could have done. It was so sudden that I could say nothing; I could only smile and pass on. But the voice of that little child was with me all day long. Immediately it sent a thrill of encouragement into my wavering mind, and I never hesitated again. The strong, simple certainty of that small schoolboy that he and his brother were Catholics made me long to solve the doubts of my aching soul, and to gain, if possible, the faith of a little child.

### On the Way to Rome.

"So I hurried my steps, went through the turnstile of the museum, passed into the library, sat down in a quiet corner, and wrote upon the slip of paper, 'Development of Christian Doctrine, by Cardinal Newman.'

"Often before I had felt that mysterious attraction to Rome which we used to call 'Roman fever.' And many times I had thrown it off with the thought that, after all, the Christianity of Rome, with its exact definition of doctrine, its elaborate ceremonial, and its amazing organisation, was a different thing from the Christianity of the early ages; and, notably, the assertion of St. Peter's authority and that of his immediate successors did not in any way compare with the claims of the Pope to-day. Newman, I had been told, had actually invented a new doctrine, in order to bridge over the gulf and to justify his secession—the doctrine

of the 'Development of Doctrine'—and had embodied it in his book.

"The book lay before me on the table, and I was reading it. It took me several days, but I plodded along, encouraged at every chapter by the voice of the child; and when I had finished, my doubts were finished. After all, this 'new' doctrine was as old as the hills. All the creeds of Christendom by their history, structure, and contents, proclaimed it—the Apostles, the Nicene, the Athanasian, bore witness to it quite as certainly as the Creed of Pope Pius IV. It was enshrined in the very words of Christ: 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.' The Kingdom of Heaven is as a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds; and when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air may dwell under the shadow thereof.' The seed and the tree—so different in appearance, yet always the same. So simple the seed, so complex the tree, yet complete in their unity. The seed so new, the tree so old, yet never a break in continuity.

"A month later I was received into the Catholic Church, and ever since then I have known what it is to share the certain conviction of that little Catholic schoolboy, who was not ashamed to bear witness to his faith to a grown-up stranger in a London street. We are not strangers now."

"The world's selfish voice proclaims: 'Everyone for himself.' But Christ has written on the banner of Christian charity the adage of His law: 'God for all, and all for God, and all for one another.' Stand firm beneath Christ's noble standard.

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