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Making a Retreat

"Only feeble-minded persons go to a retreat," said Algy, as he thrust a piece of sausage savagely into his mouth.

I never get angry with Algy when he is dense. It does no good to get angry with men. If they don't see a thing, they don't (especially at breakfast time), and there's an end of it. So I merely told Algy that he was mistaken.

"Isabel, Lady Burton went into retreat frequently," I added, in conclusion, "as you may see if you read her book."

"Then she must have been the exception that—"

"How feeble," said I, before he could finish and then, "I have written to Nolly and Dora, to give them a chance of going too."

"H'm," said Algy, wiping his mouth, "if Molly and Dora and you go into retreat together, it seems to me—"

"You'll be late, Alfie," I said. "It'll be the third time this week; and always through idle talk."

Coming out of the noise of city streets on a wild October afternoon into the shelter of the convent, one's first sensation was of a great peace. It was not stillness for there was a hustle and bustle of arriving guests going on; but it was certainly peace. Little Sisters met and welcomed you with the cheerful courtesy so characteristic of all nuns; so kind and friendly was the reception that you might have fancied yourself the only person who ever visited them.

They took you, as it was natural they should, first to the chapel, and then to your room. Here, as often as you wished for the next week, you would be able "to shut yourself up within four walls"—singularly blessed privilege! And how pleasant those little rooms were, with their French-shuttered windows, looking out into the tops of quiet ash trees! One liked everything about them—their simplicity, their very smallness; the little statue of Our Lady on the mantelpiece—one commended oneself so naturally to her prayers there; the wooden crucifix alone on the wall above the bed; the holy water stoup at the door; to make use of at all one's goings out and comings in; even the card upon the wall that showed the order of the day, so that of worldly necessities there should not be left to one during these days even that of making plans!

One fell so easily into that order that it must certainly have been very well chosen. People, like nuns, who live austere lives, are, I notice, always the most careful of other people's comfort. They never seem to have any other concern, for the time being, than to make things nice for you; which, if you come to think of it, is not consistent of them, because they ought, you would think, to encourage you to mortification! But it is much pleasanter than consistency would be; and if you lay yourself out to be really good, I cannot answer for how long you will remain [even if you are so now] wholly consistent! Anyhow, the nuns left us to make our own penances. They got us up only at 7:00 and put out our lights at 9:30 and gave us a pleasant garden to air ourselves in, and too much food, and plenty of warmth and all the rest. And what attractive people they were themselves! How serious, how obviously gay and light-hearted, how busy and thoughtful about outward things, yet how always "recollected," how simple and childlike, how comprehending and womanly. All this one knew without exchanging dozen words with them in the day. They had plenty to do with over sixty guests in their house, but they were never in a hurry and never showed weariness. They sang for us in choir, apart from their own office; visited us each at least once in our rooms (I suppose they thought we might be getting lonely, but anyhow it was always had a smile lurking some out of kindness); they lent us books, of course, and one of them

read to us at lunch and dinner every day out of an uninteresting book about an interesting Jesuit; they served us excellent meals four times a day with attention exceptional even among lay sisters (who, I think, are the cream of the earth), kept our rooms in order, and made all things delightful; while each day they were also fulfilling the religious obligations of their order, with the same fidelity to God, one may be sure, that they showed in the service of their neighbors.

Well, it is edifying to go into retreat, if only to watch the life of the nuns. And how much of the spiritual benefit of a retreat depends upon this careful consideration and management of externals by those responsible! The value of such service is enormous.

It is a great thing, too, to have a large garden to walk in, and to be expected to walk in it. One can think best in the open air, better even than in a cell. "God Almighty first planted a garden," but it was very tranquil and sun-bathed and sufficiently weedy to be pleasant. Ladies in black veils walked there at intervals during the day. A few leaves changed color every day and some others fell off the trees, because it was autumn. Also a lay-sister came out every morning in clogs and sack-cloth apron, and cut cabbage. The garden was a good place to be in.

I never knew, till I went into retreat, the meaning of silence. I do not mean the kind of silence you get when your family happens to be away from home for a few days and you are alone in the house with the servants; because then you will have a long talk with the cook in the morning and in the afternoon somebody will call. Nor do I mean the silence one finds with solitude in the country (that is a good sort, I think, but it never lasts long enough and what is more it is not the intense silence). The real silence must be kept voluntarily in the midst of others, by you and by them. It must be maintained for days together. I would go further to say that it is thorough and complete silence must be accompanied by a certain restraint of outward demeanor. We are not contemplative nuns at a retreat, and we are, not bound, therefore, to any unusual practices; but it is quite certain that religious know what they are about when they recognize the guard of the eyes as an essential habit for those who would lead the interior life.

A significant glance at your friend is a very harmless thing in itself; the spontaneous smile when you pass her, as you will many times a day very likely, in garden or corridor, is quite natural of course; but neither is in the least necessary. They are pebbles thrown into the stillness of a pool and the silence preserved at the cost of suppressing them and everything else of the kind; will be extraordinary deeper than mere abstinence from speech could have made it. As my nurse used to say, "Miss Edie, how can you say your prayers, if you keep all on looking about so!"

Abstinence from speech, as a matter of fact, is not silence at all; it is only the door into it. And the deepest silence of all, I suppose, implies abstinence from thought, too. "And that," you will say, "is Quietism." But if you think twice you will see it is nothing of the kind.

There was a young girl there, from Italy I imagine, with a pair of magnificent hazel eyes, who walked the garden like Diana herself. There was an old lady who must have been quite eighty who doubled up and devout, with a shawl over her shoulders. There was a high school teacher, neat and firm in blue serge and spectacles, the widow with the serene face and little white cuffs at the wrists. All these I saw in the gar-showered weariness. They sang for us in choir, apart from their own office; visited us each at least once in our rooms (I suppose they thought we might be getting lonely, but anyhow it was always had a smile lurking some out of kindness); they lent us books, of course, and one of them

heirress with her poor companions; the Sisters from another community; the comfortable, easy, "well-to-do" woman, and the fat, good-humored mother of six fat, good-humored children; some old maids, several pairs of mothers and daughters, and a score more who had nothing particular to distinguish them outwardly, but who were distinguished by who knows what forces within. And we were all feeble minded!

Moreover, all these lived together for four days in silence, and met together four times a day to hear about God and the soul.

"Four sermons a day!" cries the non-Catholic. "My goodness!" But to the average Catholic the thing is quite comprehensible.

The Catholic is, as a rule, well instructed in his religion, but he is generally ready for more instruction; and if you come to think of it, it is not surprising that in the theoretical part of it, one can go on learning forever. So, in a retreat, you are brought day by day face to face with the great Realities, the inexhaustible truths of God. It is the eternally interesting thing, this life of the soul after all; the only life that is, really, the only thing that matters at all. And because we forget this so often it is well to come together into retreat and have it brought home to us again. Four sermons a day are none too many.

There are certain things one has merely felt about, which in a retreat one begins to comprehend. Different things for different people, I suppose. The inaccessibility of one's own life, its inadequacy, its effectiveness; the meanness of one's motives perhaps, if closely scrutinized (and they may be sometimes!) the half-heartedness of one's devotion, one's paltry ambitions, ungenerous endeavors, puerile self-will—one's greedy acceptance of God's love and bounty, and little recognition of them—all these things become plain to one as the knowledge that one is. They are, they always have been a reality, only now one knows it. And in contrast to all this there stands out the immensity of God and His purpose, His immeasurable love and mercy.

A retreat may be a terrific overthrow. It may pull you off every pedestal onto which you have ever climbed, knock down all your packs of cards, dissolve your castles in the air, confound a lot of your most cherished theories and strip you of your last delicate vesture of self-regard.

It certainly will bring you face to face with God and your own soul. If it does not do that, I don't see the good of it.

But if it is an overthrow, we must remember that a retreat is also a builder up. That which hurts also heals, and the strength which we gather in these days of silence with God, is like the strength gathered from a long convalescence. When you come out you will see life from a fresh viewpoint, that is perfectly certain, and if the four sermons a day, and other things, have accomplished anything like their purpose, the new standpoint will be a better one than you were ever before.

The Church does many things for her children, but, aside from the Sacraments, I doubt if she offers them any greater blessing than a Spiritual Retreat.—Edith R. Steer in the Magnificat.

The late Mr. Justin McCarthy, the novelist and historian, who died at Folkestone, England, in estate and a widower, left an estate of the gross value of \$2,300.

St. Joseph's Hospital, Providence, R. I., will build a Home for Nurses costing about \$100,000.

Night School
A Special Dictation Class

Is conducted at the Rochester Business Institute on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings of each week, from 8.15 to 9.15 o'clock, for shorthand writers of any system. Tuition \$3 per month. Students can enter at any time. Y. M. C. A. Bldg.



Rev. Simon FitzSimons.
Picture by Post-Ex.
West Bloomfield, N. Y.,
Sept. 26, 1912.

In St. Joseph's church on Sunday morning last the pastor, Rev. Simon FitzSimons, preached his farewell sermon to a large and saddened congregation. Father FitzSimons after laboring in our midst for the past twenty-eight years has been appointed to the pastorate at St. Mary's in Rochester. The appointment is a worthy one, an evidence of appreciation and we extend our warmest congratulations to Father FitzSimons, and also to the people of St. Mary's. This announcement brings with it a feeling of pain as well as pride at parting with our beloved pastor whose general presence, his faithfulness, great ability, good judgment and devotion to his calling have been marked features in his service here and the people realize they are parting with a friend, advisor and fellow-citizen.

He has been taken to a larger and wider field of action where his sterling worth and ability will shine forth more resplendent than it ever could with us. The appointment unlinks the chain which the memory of good and charitable acts, performed in our midst has welded with an enduring constancy. We shall watch his future course as it tends onward and upward and shall never forget our unfailing friend, a sharer in our sorrows and our triumphs, a Christian gentleman, a faithful follower of the Master and a perfect priest of God.

We pray, he may have the strength to do his duty in the future as he has in the past.

One of his flock

Blessing of the Graves

Thousands journeyed to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery last Sunday afternoon to witness the annual ceremony of the blessing of the graves, conducted by Bishop Thomas F. Hickey, assisted by priests of the city churches and students from St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries. The Bishop gave a sermon.

Monsignor Hendrick Appointed

Ovid, Sept. 24.—Governor Dix has appointed Monsignor Hendrick of Ovid, as delegate to the American Road Congress, which meets in Atlantic City September 30th to October 5th. Monsignor Hendrick has been active in furthering the improvements of roads and the building of state roads throughout Seneca county.

Weekly Church Calendar

18 Sunday after Pentecost
G. The Man Sick of the Palsy.
29 S.—St. Michael, Archangel.
30 M.—St. Jerome.
Oct. 1 T.—St. Remigius
2 W.—Guardian Angels
3 T.—St. Gerard
4 F.—St. Francis of Assisi Fast
5 S.—St. Placidus.

According to the Apostolic Mission House at Washington, Mobile had last year 738 converts, Louisville 302, Covington 191, Columbus 278, Omaha 402, Nashville 150, Baltimore 861, Grand Rapids 578, Alton 322, Indianapolis 445, Peoria 325, Fort Wayne 346, and Kansas City 203.

News From Ireland

Married.—July 31 at St. Paul's church, Belfast, by Rev. R. McNamee, C.C., Bernard J. O'Kane, to Anne M. Kelly, both of Belfast. —July 12, at Holy Cross, Antrim, by Rev. Father Mark James Smyth to Agnes Elizabeth youngest daughter of T. McHugh, both of Crumlin road, Belfast.

At the convent of Mercy, Lurgan, on August 21, Miss Bridget Murphy of Dundalk, made her final vows as a member of the Order of Mercy assuming the name of Sister M. Clara.

Amongst the students who passed the recent examination of the Cottage of Physicians was Dr. Michael J. Hillary of Milltown Malbay.

Died.—Recently in Dublin, Richard Hewitt, Drummrow, August 17, William J. Hughes, Killarnack, aged 65 years.

Miss Greta McGee, daughter of P. McGlade, Knockloughrin, was received in the Loreto convent, Omagh, Tyrone, on Aug. 20.

Miss Catherine Clarke of Temple House, Temple road, Rathmines, Dublin, who died on April 4 last, left personal estate in the United Kingdom valued at £22,000 most of which she donated to Catholic charities.

On the eve of the Assumption Sister M. Evangelist, Dundon, a member of the George's Hill community, died. For forty-one years the deceased Sister had labored faithfully for the little ones of the school and for the poor of the district.

A. E. O'Reilly, "business manager" of the "Connacht Tribune" was drowned at Howth, County Dublin, while bathing on August 17.

Randolph Colohan, son of Prof. Colohan, University college, Galway, was drowned in Lough Corrib as a result of a squall sweeping a boat in which he and another were sailing.

Mrs. Mary Nolan, Rathbride, died recently at the age of 87 years.

Patrick Shine of Gorteenavallig, Tarbert, farmer, who died on July 1 last, left personal estate in the United Kingdom valued at £653.

While Father O'Byrne, C. C., Philipstown, was cycling along the bank of the Grand Canal recently, he had a narrow escape from drowning at Ballycommon. A stone or root came in contact with the front wheel of the machine, causing it to swerve, with the result that Father O'Byrne suddenly found himself precipitated into a depth of water about seven feet. He succeeded, however, in extricating himself from the machine and swimming to the bank.

Nicholas Cruddery, of Kilanny was seriously injured recently whilst cycling near Louth, being struck by the shaft of a cart in the back.

The maps of the Norbury estate were recently lodged with the Congested districts board with a view to that board making an offer for purchase.

The death of J. Hegarty, N. T., Clooness school, has occasioned sincere regret in Ballymore districts, where he was popular with all classes.

Married.—August 13, at St. Mary's church, Melmount, Strabane, by Rev. James O'Kane, P. P., George, son of the late Rev. George Gladstone, Glasgow, Theresa, daughter of Edward Gallagher, Lissdowney, Strabane.

Cardinal Farley in Denver

His Holiness, Cardinal Patrick Joseph Farley, of New York, arrived in Denver on the 25th of September. The cardinal will remain in the city for several days, attending to the affairs of the Holy See, and will be accompanied by his secretary, Rev. Father John J. McManis, and his personal secretary, Rev. Father John J. McManis. The cardinal will be accompanied by his secretary, Rev. Father John J. McManis, and his personal secretary, Rev. Father John J. McManis.

That the cardinal's visit to Denver will be a most successful one, is a fact that is well known to all who are acquainted with the cardinal's work. The cardinal is a man of great energy and ability, and his visit to Denver will be a most successful one.

On the day following his arrival in Denver, the cardinal attended a meeting of the Board of Catholic Charities, and gave a most interesting address. The cardinal is a man of great energy and ability, and his visit to Denver will be a most successful one.

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