

The Catholic Journal

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The Chastening of Sister Claire

The visit to New Orleans would be her first since she entered the convent, and Sister Claire was anticipating it with the eagerness of a child. Devoted as she was to her companions in the order and absorbed in her dedicated life, there was still about this journey the particular charm of a return to her own people.

She was a member of one of the old families from the land of the fleur-de-lis who had entered America through its Southern ports many years before. Her own particular family group had lingered for a time in the old Louisiana city, then passed northward, while her uncle's branch of the family remained in the South. As a little girl she had dreamed romantically of those Southern relatives. Having no sisters and brothers, no cousins in the community where her family had pitched its tents, her childish imagination pictured her little kinsmen and wished for their presence in her games. The roots of inherited affections stirred in her childish heart. In her girlhood the older members of the family were associated in a business relation which meant financial loss to her father. For this the New Orleans brother was blamed. The result was a cleavage of affections and business relations. Thereafter the daughter of the Northern branch of the family was discouraged in her affection for her Southern cousins.

But youthful sentiment withers slowly. Though their names were not spoken, the Southern cousins continually reappeared in their young relatives' thoughts. Even when she entered the convent they were not forgotten, and gradually it became her custom to pray for them daily. Thus, though she had never seen them, these men and women of her clan were bound to her not by ties of blood only, but by a distinct spiritual union.

By one of the roundabout roads which fact and falsehood sometimes travel, she had heard that her father's brother, after his losses, had gradually fallen away from his Church. She concluded that her cousins were what her father bluntly styled "little pagans," and as such she fondly commended them to the Shepherd of straying lambs.

And now, when Sister Claire, in the maturity of her womanhood was to be sent on a very special mission to a distant city, her heart and imagination turned eagerly to her unknown but endeared relatives. Could she find them?

She had some hope. Their name was unusual. A few years ago she had drifted to her desk the name of a merchant in the city to which she was journeying—her family name. She now placed it in her pocketbook. She would, if possible, go to see them—and who knew what she might accomplish for their spiritual salvation? The idea became a fountain of enthusiasm.

Sister Claire welcomed the day when, having accomplished the purpose for which her Superior had designed the visit, she was free to undertake this more personal devoir, this intimate, Heaven-directed duty.

Then she took the slip containing her family name to the Sister in charge of the parlor. In response to her inquiry the Sister said that she knew the name—it was one of some prominence in the city—but she did not know if its bearers were Catholics. Sister Claire decided to write a note declaring her own identity and asking if the person addressed was a member of her family. Thereupon she stated that the recipient was the child of Sister Claire's uncle, that he and his brothers and sisters were living—living together in somewhat patriarchal fashion—and that his wife and sister would like to call for Sister Claire the following morning to escort her home to make the acquaintance of the whole family, now eager to see her.

The next day Sister Claire went gladly forth to make the acquaintance of "her own." She learned something of the family from the two gracious and dignified matrons who called for her. They had transplanted their Old World tribal loyalties to American soil, and had preserved the family as an ideal unity—offering an example of love and unselfish filial and fraternal piety. Sister Claire felt as if she were being initiated into the beautiful traditional ideals which had given her family dignified position in the Old World and some strength and standards in the New.

The two women talked with inherited French volubility during the ride home, telling her about this and that member of the family, preparing her for all the new acquaintances she was about to make. So much description, so much rapid sketching of the large family's various personalities, so much revelation of the speakers' own exuberant natures, so many polite, considerate questions about herself so filled the conversation that poor Sister Claire had little opportunity to put the question burning in her heart.

At last her voluble companions paused simultaneously to draw breath—for further dissertation—and Sister Claire contrived to ask: "And where does this large clan go to church?" The answer, "St. Paul's," did not leave her much wiser. Before she could press another direct question the carriage had stopped, and the two women were exclaiming: "Here we are!"

Sister Claire's quick vision noted that the house they were about to enter was apparently comfortable. Though not new, it attested good housekeeping. The two chatty dames briskly resumed the family chronicle:

"You will find us in an old home, Sister, but a comfortable one. It is the old Le Blanc mansion. We wish to live together—and it is difficult to find a newer house large enough to shelter our numerous family."

The purpose of spacious shelter was evidently well accomplished. Sister observed as they entered the wide hall with its spreading wings of large rooms on either side. She was ushered into one of these rooms after the several greetings which awaited her in the hall. Almost conventional simplicity! There were a few pictures on the walls, and these of a religious nature—a copy of the Madonna della Sedra, of the Leonardo Last Supper, of a Fra Angelico or so. But this proved nothing definite.

Then Sister Claire was ushered into a sumptuous dining room, whose "note" in furnishings and wands was comfort, and around the luxurious board her hitherto unknown lovely family assembled. There were a few matrons—her cousins or her cousins' wives—a few youths and maidens, several little people—a truly patriarchal assembly, reflected the guest of honor, thoroughly charmed by the harmony and affection that seemed to prevail.

Still more delighted was the visitor when, once everybody was assembled, the eldest member of the family addressed Sister Claire: "Perhaps you would say grace for us, Sister—I yield to you."

Sister Claire bowed, while the thought: "A Christian household, at least," flashed rapid reassurance. If she had not closed her eyes for the "Bless us, O Lord," she might have seen the sign of the Cross made around the table. Then as they chatted around her, warming her heart with their affection, Sister Claire remarked: "How ideal for you to live together this way!"

"Yes, it's like a scriptural tribe, isn't it?" said one cousin smiling from the head of the table.

"The only trouble we have, Sister, is in finding a roof wide enough to shelter us."

"You seem very comfortable," said Sister Claire, glancing at the healthy faces around the table. "You seem to have even space to spare."

"Not much," laughingly answered several of the younger ones. Sister Claire could not resist continuing:

"I was thinking of the large spare room you took me into on my arrival."

"Oh, that is the room we reserve for morning prayers. There is such an army of us, that when we assemble there's no room for furniture. Of course, the servants are always present, too."

And this was the family she had hoped to bring back to the Church, to bring back en masse! Dear, faithful, pious Sister Claire's heart knew a moment of chastening. She was divided between profound spiritual gratification and amusement at herself.

"It is indeed gratifying," she said gently, "to find you such good Catholics—I really, if you will pardon me, thought to find you—otherwise—"

The eldest cousin smiled. "Had you come ten years ago you might have found some of us otherwise."

Sister Claire's eyes were questioning.

"Yes, some of us are more recent acquisitions than others. You know our father had drifted away."

"May I ask how you happened to return?" Sister asked gently.

"I wish you would—I rather like to tell," answered her cousin.

"My occupation as a young man," he continued, "threw me into association with large groups of busy men, working industriously, often feverishly. I was fond of them, as a rule; but blasphemy was a habit with some and I could not endure hearing them call the Lord's name in irritation. I hated such language, I caught him looking at me in half-amused all approving fashion one day when I was annoyed by it."

"There's really no need for that talk," I growled to his sympathetic ear.

"None in the least," he assented, and our mutual provocation linked us into a specific fellowship. One evening soon after, I met him as I was taking a walk."

"Where are you going?" I asked, wishing to secure his society for my walk if he had no other engagement.

"I'm on my way to a meeting of the Holy Name Society," he answered.

"What's that?" I inquired.

"He explained, in a dignified manner, adding as he concluded: 'You'd better come along—I notice you don't like the 'swear-words' any better than I do.'"

"I'll walk as far as the church with you anyhow," I said.

"At the church gate he said again: 'Better come in—I'm sure you'd be welcome.'"

"Don't care if I do," I assented—a little curious about the society and its possible influence along lines I somewhat unconsciously followed.

"That was the beginning. I was impressed that evening. I met the priest who was present; I went again; and my little leaven of reverence for the Holy Name, I suppose, worked in my heart to do the rest."

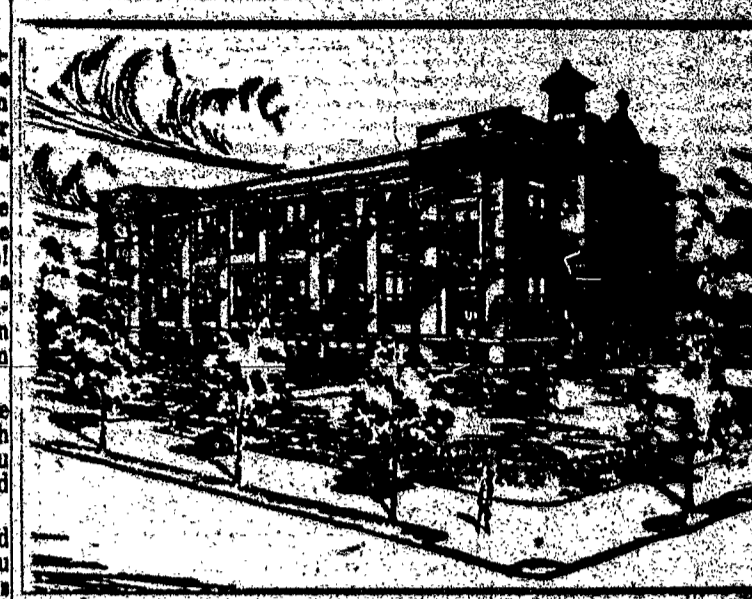
Sister Claire was deeply gratified. She had no little tinge of regret that one object of her visit to her cousin's city had been already excellently accomplished.

On her return home, she told the elderly chaplain the story, smiling as she described the wholesale conversion she had intended to accomplish—had not the Lord's grace anticipated her. Good Father William smiled.

"Who knows, my child, if the long prayers of your early years did not have much to do with it."—Anna Blanche McGill in the Magnificat.

Ladies' Auxiliary, A. O. H.

At the last regular meeting of Div. No. 1, Ladies' Aux. A. O. H. the following officers were installed by co-president Mrs. Minnie Murphy, assisted by past co-president Margaret Finn: Pres., Minnie Murphy; vice pres., Julia McGrath; Rec. Sec., Arlene Bauer; Fin. Sec., Elizabeth Dixon; Treas., Mary Morrison; chairlady, standing committee, Elizabeth Doyle; Miss McMahon; Kate Toal and Mrs. Slager; marshal, Mrs. Sloan; sentinel, Mrs. Crowley.



St. Andrew's Church.

St. Andrew's Church Will Hold Fair.

The keen interest manifested by the members of St. Andrew's church in the monster fair to be held in the new magnificent building located in Portland Av., corner Durman St., is a source of gratification to the members of the various committees who have been working diligently for its success.

The construction and decoration of booths are rapidly nearing completion and everything will be in readiness for the opening night, Saturday, Jan. 23rd. The fair will continue on Monday, Jan. 25th; Tuesday, Jan. 26th; Thursday, Jan. 28th, and will close on Saturday, Jan. 30th.

Special features in addition to music and free vaudeville are being arranged by the entertainment committee.

There will be a large dining room and hot lunches will be served. Rev. George W. Eckl, pastor of the parish has donated his Ford automobile to the fair committee and tickets are selling rapidly, as everybody seems anxious to win it. The officers of the Fair Committee assisting Father Eckl are as follows: chairman, Leo F. Kleehammer; Secretaries, Miss F. Streb and Fred Frisch; treasurers, Leo Spiegel and Leo LeFrois. A valuable door prize will be given free each evening.

The following have been named by the chairman to act on the various committees, and to have charge of booths:—Floor committee, Frank X. Foery, Jacob B. LeFrois, Henry Richter, Jr., Mrs. A. Menges, Mrs. Ernest Ribstein, Mrs. F. Foery and Miss Frances LeFrois; program, L. J. Hingstler, Frank Leckinger; entertainment, Edward Roland, Geo. McGrath; Booths—candy, Mrs. A. Matter; ice cream, Julia Hellman, Celeste Frank; Furniture, Aug. Trompeter, F. Leckinger; Fish Pond, Lizzie Burkard; Art booth, Mrs. Geo. Kleehammer; aprons & caps, Margaret Burkard; souvenirs and pictures, Anthony Limpert; Orange tree, Carrie Foery, Cora Meisenzahl; Ham tree, Henry Schlueter; country store, Wm. Lane, Mrs. Ed. Merkel; dining room, Mrs. T. Whitehouse and Mrs. F. Griebel.

Knights of Columbus.

New York, Jan. 10.—Fifty thousand dollars have been appropriated by the supreme council of the Knights of Columbus as the first step in a nation-wide movement of the Catholics to protest against the alleged slanderous and indecent publications and the organization of societies pledged to drive the Catholics out of public life.

Business School Thriving

The second annual meeting of the L. L. Williams Rochester Commercial School was held at the office of the school. The report of the president elicited complimentary comments from the trustees and stockholders. It showed that the school is developing rapidly, and that it is already on a secure financial footing. The attendance is steadily increasing, and its pupils are being placed in good positions.

Knowledge of God, The True Solution

"Knowledge of the existence of God and the realization of man's responsibility to Him, is the cure for the evils that exist in the world to-day, according to the Rev. Father Eckl, pastor of St. Peter and Paul's Church, who spoke before the Windham Study Circle at its weekly meeting in Holy Redeemer Hall last Friday evening.

"That there exists a Supreme Being cannot be doubted by any one who has eyes and uses them, cannot be doubted by any one who has a reason and employs it," said the speaker. "Look at the regularity of the seasons, how they come and go and bring with them their joys and sorrows, their delights; look at the stately harmony and see how all is order and with which the heavenly bodies travel in their courses, and then tell me that it is all the effect of chance, that it is all the result of blind force. No, ladies and gentlemen, it cannot be the result of chance; it cannot be the effect of blind force. There must be an intelligence back of it all."

"And then look about you at the various objects of nature. Take the apple for instance, where did it come from? Was it not from the tree and did not the tree come from a seed which in turn came from an apple which came from a tree? And so you will find it with all the objects of the universe. Consideration of them leads you ultimately and absolutely to the conclusion that there must be a first cause."

"And when you reflect upon the order and regularity that exists you are forced to admit that this first cause is an intelligent being. Order implies intelligence, is an axiom too well known to need demonstration. If you come into a room and find everything tastefully arranged, the pictures on the wall set with skill and design to bring about an attractiveness that charms, can you then say that it is all the result of chance? You cannot, you must admit that it is the work of an intelligent being. Yet there are those who maintain that this world and the human beings in it are the result of chance, of blind force. Look at the human body with its wonderful symmetry; is there anything in science, boasted science, that can compare with the mechanism of the body? How wonderful is the eye with its adjustments to the light and to the objects that man must use. What if it had the power of the microscope, to what inconveniences would not man be exposed? What wisdom then has not the Creator shown in adapting its powers to the needs of the creature. And then what remarkable construction is shown in the ear, with its various windings and delicate parts, so set as to arrest the faintest sounds and to distinguish the various shades of tones. Truly, everything manifests the existence of a Supreme Being."

"Now, this Supreme Being we call God. And we hold that this Supreme Being is entitled to the homage and worship of his creatures. And it is right here that

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