

Mother Seton

(Continued from Page 1)

pleted the work of the little school. Her father's abilities as a teacher, supplemented by the daughter's desire for self-improvement, gave her an excellent, well-rounded education for those times. She became well-versed in history, literature, and a master of the French language.

She was baptized and confirmed in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and showed great piety from her earliest years. In her mind there was no bigotry or prejudice, and she felt drawn to some Catholic practices and devotions. She wore a small crucifix, and could not understand why this custom was not more common among her own co-religionists.

She loved the Church in which she was reared, and practiced its tenets faithfully. But those things which she loved most were those which had inherited from the Mother Church, that is, the Catholic faith.

She was devoted to her guardian angel, bowed at the name of Jesus, and used to examine her conscience as if preparing for Confession. These things were part of her hidden life—a secret between herself and God.

After the war, New York settled into post-war prosperity, and Elizabeth's opportunities as one of the outstanding belles of the high society of that day were many. In that society she took the place which the family position entitled her, but only to please her father and step-mother.

Beautiful Debutante

She was then considered "the most beautiful debutante of her day." She kept command of herself, however, moving among those surrounding her with tact and discretion.

She would be gracious and sparkling at a party; yet on her return home write in her diary that the time would have better been spent in prayer and retirement. She even dreamed of a cloistered life where she would be "shut away from the world and pray and always be good."

The only one of many suitors who attracted her was William Magee Seton, a devout Episcopalian like herself. He was a business man, son of a Scotch merchant, and "the handsomest man in New York, well educated, widely traveled, and heir to a large fortune."

Marriage—1794

Elizabeth was 20 when they were married Jan. 24, 1794. The ceremony was performed by the Episcopal Bishop Prevost. This seemed to make her still more a part of the Protestant system, of which she was a rigid observer of its principles and forms.

Of her life as a child and maiden, the formative years before her marriage when her character was moulded, not enough can be said of her re-

markable father, who was the greatest single influence upon Elizabeth's nature and whose training prepared her for the trials and decisions of later life.

Public Health

After his wife's death and his second marriage, he turned again to his interest in public health, although his fame as a surgeon had just grown widespread when he performed the first successful amputation of an arm at the shoulder joint.

As a public health officer his methods were vigorous. He worked to improve the atrocious streets, to clean up the swamps which surrounded the city, and to prevent contagion from entering by the infested ships coming into port. He worked for restrictive health legislation to curb insanitary practices, thereby making some bitter enemies.

He set up the quarantine station at Staten Island, and spent much time there caring for the sick and the dying immigrants who arrived on the infected vessels. Countless numbers had for weeks been cramped in the ship's bowels without fresh air, little food, suffering, starving, afflicted with yellow fever. He went among them fearlessly.

Not only was he as a father to the unfortunate, but in his single person stood as a veritable shield between the dread epidemics of the times and the city—indeed the entire nation.

Though thus immersed in his life's work, he found as much time as he could for the formation of his children's minds and their education. He showed Elizabeth the virtue of moderation, counseled prudence in all things, and taught her to restrain and control any impulsive inclinations.

Citing this close and affectionate father-daughter relationship, a biographer, Father Charles White, suggests this passage from Ecclesiastes: "Honor thy father in work and word and all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end."

(Next week's installment shall present Mrs. Seton's story as a newlywed young wife and as a mother of five children.)

Gulf Oil Company Aids Catholic College

Winooski Park, Vt. (NC)—A gift of \$2,000 from the Gulf Oil Corporation has been made to St. Michael's College here, Father Francis E. Moriarty, S.S.E., president, announced.

The latest survey of college juniors by the U.S. Health, Education and Welfare Department shows that St. Michael's is leading the state in the percentage of students pursuing science courses, with 30 per cent. St. Michael's, Vermont's only Catholic college for men, is conducted by the Society of St. Edmund.

Face Facts Seen Best Way To Solve Marital Problems

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S.J.

I think my problem is solved—I'm just checking! Looking back over five rough though happy years of marriage, I feel most of my difficulties and disappointments stemmed from failure to accept reality. What a gap between expectations and actual experience! My husband, children, home—all proved so different from what I had dreamed. After five years, I finally see how different, yet how much better, bigger, more significant. Do others learn so slowly, or am I a "queer one?"



No, Sue, you're not queer, but you're maturing; or better, I should say, growing up. All of the really important things in life can be fully understood only through experience. Knowing them from afar or only from the outside is, of course, one form of knowledge, though it tends to be superficial and can be deceptive.

Experience, as you have discovered, may prove a rough teacher, ruthlessly brushing aside our world of dreams, unrealistic aspirations, and romantic fancies. Still, we all need her discipline, for this makes us see things as they really are.

Paradoxically, our growing up is largely a process of spinning down to reality.

I like your observation, Sue, because it applies to all vocations.

What mature priest is not aware how infinitely more fulfilling has been his life than he dreamed at ordination?

What seasoned religious does not look back at her first vocation and smile at how little she knew about what it means to be a spouse of Christ?

And you, like many other brides, have also had to discover that anticipation and experience may be worlds apart.

You say, "reality is so different, yet somehow much better and more significant." I would add, "provided you are willing to learn, to grow up." Yes, there's the rub! Some married people childishly refuse to give

up their romantic, premarital fancies.

WE MIGHT SAY they keep confusing the honeymoon with the whole of marriage, though as a sage remarked, "Marriage begins only after the honeymoon fails." When experience forces them to face reality, they keep saying, "how different," or "if I had only known my partner would be like that," or "if I ever thought that marriage would mean this!"

What has happened to them? Well, Sue, they just quit growing. Somewhere along the line, perhaps at eight or ten, perhaps later, they stopped trying to face life squarely and learned the convenient trick of escaping into their own dream-bubble world. It is not that they lack experience, they simply refuse to learn from it.

IN MARRIAGE they sometimes pose as frustrated idealists—people with high aims and aspirations who have had the misfortune to be saddled with a dull, insensitive mate. Actually, they are refusing to accept the fact that reality is different from their cherished premarital dream.

When I meet them in a counseling situation, I sometimes ask what they really want out of marriage—what changes would they make if they could have their way. Some of them don't know, they just feel frustrated and dissatisfied. Others feel that they know, but as they struggle to put their aims and desires into words, we become aware that they are very much like the small boy who cries when he learns that sand in the sandwiches, flies in the lemonade, and rain at high noon are all part of the picnic.

How happy they could be if

they would just come out of their imaginary world and learn to appreciate and enjoy what they have—a faithful partner, children, a job, a home, health, friends, and so forth. Still they persist, "It is all so different, things aren't the way we expected!"

Well, if we can't help such people, at least we can profit by their mistakes.

KEEP LEARNING, keep growing. Our glowing tomorrows will become drab todays only if we expect the noonday light to retain the deceptive romantic tints of sunrise. Reality is different, Sue, but as you say, it can be better and more significant.

Your observation suggests one final thought.

If the experience of marriage proves to be so different, yet so much better and fuller than you dreamed, what will the experience of Heaven be like? For "eyes hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to know the good things that God hath stored up for those that love Him."

Chinese Priest

'We Will Hold Out By God's Grace!'

Hong Kong — (NC) — Catholic priests in South China are holding out, "by the grace of God," against Communist persecution including "brain-washing" at Red gun-point. This was reported here in a letter received from a South China priest.

Revealing that Red Terrorism has intensified its attacks against the Church, the priest relates:

"All the other priests and myself, with no exception whatsoever, have been forced (some at gun-point and some tied with ropes) to undergo a course of brain-washing.

"They want us to break off from the Vicar of Christ and they are putting on plenty of pressure, too. We have been here for three weeks, but things are not going to their liking, because every one of us is holding out firmly.

"How long this course will go on nobody can tell—it may keep on for months. But by the grace of God and the prayers of our brethren we will hold out."

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