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A FEW FACTS FROM MY LIFE

--AS--

Father Superior

--OF A--

Monastery In Spain

--AND AS--

Apostolic Missionary in South America.

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1896,
MILBOL PRINTING HOUSE,
STAMFORD, N. Y.

A FEW FACTS

FROM

❖ MY LIFE. ❖

I

As not all who read this paper have seen the various extracts from my biography published by the Venezuelan and American press, I beg leave to present the following resume:

Seeking something far more satisfactory than that which could be found in so-called "Society," I withdrew, in the year 1888, from "the world," burying myself in the cloistered solitude of the Capuchin convent of Olleria, Spain.

Of this step my family knew nothing until it had been taken, when their most strenuous efforts, and their use of the most influential means could not induce me to leave the cloister. They then appealed to his Eminence, Senor Don Dr. Antolin Monecillo, then Cardinal of Valencia—now Primate of Spain—a particular friend of my family, to lend his powerful influence.

Whereupon this prelate proceeded to Rome in order to represent properly the disappointment of my family, and the advisability of placating them by interdicting the entry of their eldest son into an order of Monks so rigorous as that of the Capuchins.

The most Reverend Father Joachim de Llevaernas, Commissary General of this order in Spain, and the most Reverend Father Bernardo de Audermatt, General of the Order, together with Cardinal Massaya, himself a Capuchin, in a conference with Leo XIII, on the 9th day of July of the same year, obtained from his Holiness the Pope, a special grace which never before had been conceded, and this was, that the usual year of the Novitiate be dispensed with, and that I proceed at once to utter my monastic vows, with the sole condition, that in the presence of two witnesses, I swear that, spontaneously, of my free will, I adopted the monastic life.

Meantime Cardinal Monecillo received no answer, and my family without hope of thus gaining the desired result, turned to the Civil Governor of Valencia, who promptly repaired to the convent, having the power to withdraw me from the same. But on his arrival, he was presented by the friars with the official record of my profession and vows, made and registered one week before; together with a bull of his Holiness excommunicating any person who in any way should seek to promote an anti-monastic spirit in my family, or ally himself with those who, by means of the civil authority, would strive to frustrate my declared desires.

In view of this, the Governor desisted from all further efforts.

My Father then submitted the whole matter to the Queen, seeking through her to obtain from Leo XIII, a decree annulling my profession of Monastic vows.

But before this could be effected, the General of the Capuchins, during his visit of eight days at my home, by means of his Jesuitical arguments gained such an influence over my Father, that he gave up his opposition, and consented to go with the General to make me a visit at the convent.

By pontifical brief I was released from the observance of the rules and discipline, so prejudicial to any delicate physical constitution, although I preferred to endure these. Other personal privileges followed in quick succession, the documentary certificates of which I have carefully preserved, in order to prove their authority and authenticity. These were submitted to public scrutiny, under direction of Rev. J. Balcom Shaw, D. D., my beloved pastor in New York City.

The same distinctions with which Rome honored me on my entering the cloister, were accorded me at my ordination as Priest: which by special pontifical dispensation I received while yet under the prescribed age, and without passing through the lower degrees of novitiate and deacon.

I intoned my first mass in Antequera, my sponsors being the very excellent Lady the Countess widow de Colchado, my Mother's aunt; also Don Francisco Romero Robledo, Prime Minister of Spain, an intimate friend of my Father; while the Marquis de Vega de Armijo presented for my signature the writing of my emancipation from all relation to my family, and for the renunciation of my patrimony and all civil rights of primogeniture. No act of my life appeared to me so sublime, none ever so satisfied my heart, as this, in which, by a stroke of the pen, I dispossessed myself of everything to follow Christ, (as I thought.)

After this I was inducted into the chair of Theology in the Convent of Antequera. Then with little delay I was appointed Commissary of the third order of Capuchins for the Provinces of Granada, Malaga, Sevilla, Cordova, Jaen, Badajoz and Huelva. These distinctions gave me honor during my connection with the Church of Rome, but of these I do not intend to make a boast, nor does this occasion require any ostentation.

II.

Why did I Become a Monk?

The strict religious education which I received from a very early age, tended powerfully to fix an inclination towards the most perfect life, so firmly in my soul, that it amounted even to a desire for sacrifice.

The Jeusits, entrusted with the direction of my conscience endeavor-

ored to strengthen this predisposition of my mind, by means of their well-known duplicity.

My Mother, having an unlimited devotion to the Order, and desiring to give me all possible means of obtaining a complete Christian education and a perfect intellectual discipline, placed me, when I had scarcely completed my eighth year, in one of the schools directed by the Jesuit Fathers.

Although my Mother's desire was respected by all the family, because she was the object of their affection, nevertheless, her action displeased some of my relatives, who, because they were not devoted to the Jesuits were afraid these would exert too great an influence over me, causing me to believe my only salvation lay in joining their order. This presentiment of one of the principal members of my family became in time a reality.

When I was fifteen years old, on returning to my home for the vacation, after having passed my examinations, my whole manner revealed that my soul had fallen under the spell of Jesuitical mysticism.

Every year, on my arrival at home, in the summer vacation, there occurred in the family a scene, the memory of which will never cease to move my soul and fill it with delight.

After the first transports of joy, I presented to my Mother the literary prizes obtained by my diligence during the year, and thus received from her another prize, with an expression of love, which brought to me worlds of happiness. The gift of my Father consisted in granting any special favor I might ask of him.

In the year to which I refer at the time of giving him my Bachelor's diploma, I asked of him the privilege of entering the company of Jesus. My Father was greatly shocked, and, for the first time, broke his word. All the family were much moved, and as my mother was always accompanied by her Chaplain, Father Jose Gavila, my Father, fearing that during the summer he would strengthen me in my desire, felt himself obliged to send me to spend the vacation with my uncles.

My Father would not give me permission to go to a Jesuit University, and from that time I had as confessor Dr. Don Juan Bautista Sendray-Mut, Royal Chaplain of the Basilica of Alicante.

My Mother, in spite of her admiration for the order, forbade me, not only to think again of becoming a Jesuit, but even to be intimate with them, prescribing for me a certain prudent reserve to be used in their company.

In Spain, six years of study are required to graduate a Lawyer. My first year of reading Law, I passed in Graanda, and there, free from the servile yoke of the Jesuits, I entered into social life, and my former religious mysticism disappeared entirely.

A few years after this I was pursuing my studies in the University of Madrid. There I was found by Father Sanz and again came under the spiritual direction of the Jesuits. Notwithstanding, not until the death of my beloved Mother did I again think of the Cloister.

III

Why did I Choose the Order of the Capuchins?

Jesuitical training had exaggerated the extreme sensitiveness of my conscience and intensified my spirit of abnegation to such a degree, that my desire for perfection obliged me to aspire to a sanctity greater than that I had seen among them.

I did not know any other Monks, except the barefooted Carmelites of "Desierto de las Palmas," (the Desert of Palms) in the Province of "Castellón de la Plana," where, a few years previous, I had been with my mother; and, in truth, I liked them more than the Jesuits.

After my Mother's death, while I was meditating on the mode of life I ought to adopt in order to secure the best good of her soul and mine, a rare coincidence placed me in contact with the Capuchins.

On the fifteenth of October, 1886, I saw in the streets of Paris, an aged Capuchin, whose humble exterior presented an aspect of the most perfect sanctity. Social exigencies did not permit me to speak to him then, but an hour later, in the sacristy of Notre Dame, I gave him my card, begging an interview. The same night I went to the Convent of the Capuchins.

Father Hilario received me. I did not wish to miss the opportunity of offering a tribute of regard to this Capuchin for whom I still have heartfelt sympathy.

Father Hilario is a son of one of the most enlightened families in Paris. Gifted with singular intelligence, he knows how to unite the

modesty of the monk, with the aristocratic culture which captivates all with whom he comes in contact. The University of Paris has honored him with the title of Doctor of Philosophy and Civil Right, and Rome, with an excommunication of his works, which, in my opinion, is the greater honor to his intelligence.

Father Hilario gave me the address of some Spanish Capuchins, the Statutes of the Order, and the lives of the Capuchin Saints.

Retirement from the world; a life of constant prayer, penitence and abnegation, like that of the son of Asisi, all conspired in deciding me to join the order of the Capuchins, which was favored with peculiar Papal privileges.

IV

What are the Peculiarities of the Capuchin Order?

The Capuchin Order is the last of many reformations of the grand family of Franciscans.

Maseo de Bassi, as the chronicles say, seeing even as Luther did, the corruption of the monasteries and their limitless transgression of justice and holiness, separated himself from the reformation called the "Observancia," that he might keep the rules of St. Francis in their primitive purity.

The persecutions suffered by the Protestants at the hands of the Roman Church, cannot be compared with those of Maseo and his followers at the hands of the "Observantes." Read the chronicles of the Capuchins and if you are not scandalized it is a sure sign you have no religious feeling, and hold human dignity of little value.

Such persecutions are going on even to-day, but the nature of this paper does not permit me to speak of them fully, as a complete exposition of them will be found in my book entitled "Why I Left the Roman Church, or the Experiences of a Spanish Monk."

The peculiarity of the Capuchin Order consists, then, according to the first Article of the Rule given by St. Francis in "keeping the Holy Evangel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and living in Obedience, Poverty,

and Chastity." This life is midway between Contemplative and the Active, and should have as its chief end, the sincere preaching of the Gospel; but to-day its chief end is to extend the Empire of the Pope, and to hide the crimes of Rome.

The Capuchin Convents are the prisons of Priests whom the Bishops send there with secret administrative orders to exercise upon them inquisitorial laws.

In these Monasteries are invented all the stories of visions and miracles, which serve to captivate the people.

The Pope has no confidence in the Jesuits, but he holds the Capuchins as the "*best soldiers to guard his frontiers*" (as said Leo XIII in a letter to us written at the time of the canonization of San Lorenzo de Brudisium.)

Obedience to Rome is such among the Capuchins that St. Francis proscribes in his Rule, the confinement of everyone who is found infected with heresy; establishing the dignity of the Custodian, whose obligation it is to watch day and night those who oppose the orders of the Pope, and present them personally to Rome.

I think this is the reason why the Capuchin Order does not register more than two Apostates, Bernardino de Occhino in 1542, and the author of this article. And we have escaped with our lives only because he sought a refuge in Geneva, and I among the noble sons of the great Republic of North America; or perhaps because of him it was possible to say, what has been said of me by an Archbishop of the Roman Church; "nothing in the life of Senior Ferrando indicated that he could reach the point of becoming an Apostate."

A special pious characteristic of the Capuchins is the adoration of Mary, and the propagation of her worship. Every Saturday they feast in honor of her and have the special privilege of saying the Mass of the Immaculate Conception, which the Church in general celebrates only on the eighth of December. They have other especial privileges of blessing pictures, medallions and scapularies of the Virgin.

The habit of the Capuchins, according to the second chapter of the Constitution, should be of rough cloth in the form of a cross with a "Capucho," or cowl attached, and girt with a coarse rope. No friar can have more than one habit.

A candidate wishing to incorporate himself in the order, makes known his desire to the Superior, who, after securing all necessary information, obtains from the Bishop a guarantee of his good conduct.

The day of ingress is a day of feasting in the Convent, celebrated with one or two unusual ceremonies, and a larger allowance of wine than that ordinarily used under the name of "a little swallow" (*traquito*.) The ceremony of presenting the garments is as follows:

All the community gather about the circular platform in the Church which is called the Presbytery. The habit of the new candidate is spread on the floor, having around it four lighted candles. The bell tolls, as if for the dead, and the Church is draped in black. After the company has prayed a few brief moments, the Superior appears dressed in his pontifical robes, bringing with him the new candidate. If he is to become a "Father" (Priest) the tonsure is already made; a Lay Brother requires none.

The Superior ascends to his chair and two monks take the candidate and lay him on the habit as though he were dead. Over his outstretched form another Father, elected by the Superior, preaches a sermon on the necessity of dying to the world and its pomps and vanities in order to live wholly consecrated to "the Church," which is the Kingdom of Christ. At the close of this moving address, the Superior intones a hymn, in which all the company join, and then disrobes the aspirant and reclothes him in the habit. Now, dressed in his monkish garb he turns towards the Superior and kneeling, kisses his feet and hands. Then, greeting the Fathers and Brothers with an embrace, he goes with the other Novices to the "Noviciado," which is a place separated from the common edifice, where he remains confined for a year, without being allowed to speak even to the Monks, or to write or receive letters or messages from anyone, until his profession.

To-day the roughness and coarseness of the habit has disappeared, and every friar has as many habits, made of as fine cloth as the riches of his family or friends allow.

Our readers will not take it amiss if we give them but a brief glimpse of convent life.

The convents contain as many Monks as their capacity will allow. There are separate convents for Novices, Choristers and Regulars. The first besides the community of the Monks contains a separate building for the Novices. The second is for the Choristers who having completed their Noviciate in another convent, are removed hither to finish their Monastic studies. There is another class of friars, who

make the three great vows, and are called "Lay Brothers," and who are charged with the domestic duties of the convent.

The rule of the Capuchin Convents is that all should rise at midnight to recite Matins and Laudes, but to-day, in scarcely any convent is this rule observed except in those of the Novices. Still, in order that the people may not note this fault, the bell man never fails to toll the bell upon the stroke of twelve.

At one o'clock they retire to sleep until quarter before five, when all rise and go to the Choir. The morning service is begun by the Superior, who recites once the Ave Maria, which, according to the custom of the Capuchins, is repeated every hour; these all join in repeating the Angelus, and three Ave Marias to the Virgin, and the Litany of all the Saints, after which, two monks, kneeling before the chair of the Superior, hold up to him a ritual from which he reads prayers for the extermination of heretics, prosperity of the Church, and health of the Pope. Then one of the Choristers reads the meditation for the day, which must be on the Passion of our Lord; all the lights are extinguished and the whole company remain in rigorous silence until six o'clock. At half past five masses are begun, according to the order prescribed by the superior at the beginning of the week, on a tablet in which the names of all the Fathers are written. A few at a time, the Fathers steal out of the Choir and perform a silent mass at the different altars in the main part of the church.

At six o'clock, the Superior recites the Ave Maria, and retires from the Choir, while the Fathers chant in scarcely audible voices *Prima* and *Tertia*.

As soon as these Latin prayers are begun, the Lay Brothers leave the Choir. (The prayers of the Lay Brothers consist in reciting the *Pater Noster* twenty-five times for the Matins, five times for Laudes, and seven times for each of the hours, *Prima*, *Tertia*, *Sexta* and *Nona*, twelve times for Vespers, and seven times for "Completas," at the close of the day.)

When *Tertia* is over, which is at half-past six, the Conventual Mass is recited, which formerly used to be said for the souls of benefactors of the Convent, but is now only repeated for gain.

After this, all who are not engaged in saying mass go to the Refectory and take chocolate; then the Brothers separate. Some go to work in the vegetable gardens, others to beg alms in the city, and others to the different offices of tailor, cook, and shoemaker. The Fathers must pass the day in confession and study.

At eleven the bell is rung, and the Fathers and Choristers flock to the Choir to recite Sexta and Nona.

Half-past eleven is the hour for dinner, which consists of soup, meat and vegetables, accompanied by desert. In all the convents wine is allowed.

After dinner all kneel before the Superior who is seated in his chair, and, beginning with the youngest, each makes his confession in this way: "My Father I confess my faults; I am a wicked monk, not performing my obligations;" then he names some special offense and is given a penance by the Superior. One of the Fathers then reads a chapter from the New Testament in Latin, and a Chorister reads a story of the Saints, or a portion of the Chronicles of the Order.

The afternoon is passed in the same way as the morning until six o'clock when prayers are recited. At seven supper is served, and after that there is an hour of recreation, when the Fathers may converse with Fathers, Brothers with Brothers, and Choristers with Choristers. At nine o'clock all in the Convent should be asleep.

This in short, is life in the Monastery according to the Rule of the Order, but on entering the Monasteries of to-day one finds that the actual practice is far different. This is why good Monks find life unbearable; all their illusions concerning the Monastic system are dispelled as soon as they have seen the inward corruptions of these institutions.

It seems to me that the hard walls of the Convent of the Magdalena then received and will ever bear the record of my tears and my afflictions as I was imprisoned in their precincts, without hope or consolation. They might tell how my spirit suffered when I saw the virtuous Father Bernardino leave the convent never to be heard of by us again.

There, in the same convent lived such men as the infamous Father Reos, who mixed potions for his victims, that with their bodies certain scandals might be buried in the silence of the grave. (See chap. 6, Vol. 1, in my work "The Three Phases of Life," which contains extracts from the original documents and papers.)

O, God, how could I remain in a Monastery the scene of such crimes, and in a community so depraved!

There I saw what I never could have imagined until I gained an inside view.

While I was Secretary of the Superior General of the Capuchins in Spain, a secret order from the Sacred College of Cardinals obliged me, against my will, and contrary to the rules of the Capuchins, to undertake

a most delicate political commission favoring the election as deputy of a certain favorite of Rome. A crime committed by Monks of the Monastery of Antiquera was such as to throw this town into extreme excitement, as is yet to be seen in the reports and remarks of the newspapers of that day. But why go into the sickening details of the many outrages to morality and social purity?

Time fails me here to state the defilement and red-handed sin, of such men as Father Nicholas who was expelled for a social crime, and as he departed discharged a revolver at the Superior; Father Prudencio equally shameless and guilty; Father Carlos a beastly sot as well as a monster of iniquity. What shall be said of the nameless deeds, the infamous cunning, the brutality of the Monastic system, which, instead of making men holy, by its prison severity of discipline and its worse than prison morals infuses even in good men, the spirit and compels the acts of Convicts. The details of these notorious scandals known to myself, together with the documentary evidence of the same, I reserve for publication in my work to be published later, entitled "Convent Life Revealed" by a Superior of the Capuchin Order in Spain.

Oh hearts in which any feeling lingers, why have you proscribed me? Why call me "Apostate" and "infamous!" Is it not a free and pure conscience which demands a separation from such despicable beings? Is it not the very voice of my tender Mother, which in the sorrowful nights I passed in the Cloister, bathed in tears, and bitterness of spirit, called to me: "Go forth, my son, go forth for the love of God, before whom you have bowed the knee, for the love of your own soul, and for your love to me! Go, tarry not, lest the tainted air of that foul slough defile you, and destroy the good seed which, with so much care, I labored to sow in your heart, from the first years of your life!"

Do you need further evidence? I will say to you, that, after becoming Superior I saw that I was in danger of losing my self respect, as it seemed impossible in the circumstances to act with any sincerity.

Only two facts are needed to prove the actual state of the Convents: The Very Reverend Father Jose de Monovar, Pvincial Vicar of Spain said to one of my relatives; "If before becoming a Monk I could have imagined what exists in Convents, and what I see in them, I never would have entered one." He himself wrote me a letter which I copy here *literatim*:

Reverend Father Eduardo de Pego, Superior of the Convent of Banlucar de Barrameda:

My Dear Father ;

I have received your Reverence's estimable favor in which you are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of the decree of my appointment as Vicar Provincial.

I thank your Reverence very warmly for your felicitation, for it was an act of special courtesy characteristic of your Reverence, and a token of good will toward me, but, this aside, does it appear to you, dear Father a cause of satisfaction to assume a burden so heavy in the actual circumstances? I have indeed accepted it, but only because of my obligation of "Holy Obedience," (blind submission to Superiors.)

Another letter from the Most Reverend Father Calasanz, Counsellor of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, the Holy Office, Bishops and Regulars (Special Secret Court for adjudicating all cases arising in the different orders of Monks) and Examiner of the Roman Clergy, which he addressed to me and which I still have in my possession. He writes as follows :

"Having submitted to us with evidence, and by means of authentic documents that there exists in the Province of Toledo, a low conspiracy, and plots against the authority and prestige of the Courier General, and the Superiors General, and their delegates and coadjutors ; we wish your Reverence to bring and present to us the documents and letters, all and several, which you have received since your election as Superior, whatever the character of the authors of these documents and letters, in which are treated matters of Provincial Elections, Government of the Order in General, or in the Province of Toledo, or of Superiors General or of the Courier General, or of delegates of the same.

Use all means within your power, and I exhort you to proceed without fear or favor and without personal scruples in this matter, and that wherever you discover an indication of any possible evidence for my government, do whatever seems to you best for the same, and to this end I give you the order of "Holy Obedience."

"The honor of the Superiors General is to be regarded above all things, and I promise to you the most inviolable secrecy."

Thus, in the state in which every dispassionate reader can imagine me, my spirit tortured with doubts and sorrows, I was compelled to drag out a life pitiful enough. I turned to my God ; I cried to Heaven for light which should indicate to me what I ought to do, but the heavens seemed brass above my head and upon my agitated conscience there fell no gentle dew of peace.

What could I do in such extremity? Leave the Order? I loved it passionately. I knew that its members were unworthy, but I desired to uphold its pristine purity. I prayed, I consulted venerable Bishops, my

personal friends, who found themselves much perplexed as to the course, to be given me.

The affairs of the Order had become more and more stormy and desperate when it was abandoned by Reverend Bernabe de Astorga first Counsel of the General of the Order, who to-day is Chaplain of the Nuns of Cadiz, and by the Father Cayetano de Ignalado, Secretary General, Father Pablo de Behar, Superior of the Convent of Leon, and other eminent and respectable Fathers.

At this juncture the Custodian of Missions in Colombia arrived in Spain. He came to obtain Friars for the Missions in that country.

One night, being at prayer, it appeared to me that all my sufferings were because I had been called of God to serve him as a missionary.

I laid my desire before Rome, and received answer that even if my health should permit, there was no case in which a Superior should leave his proper Convent for this object.

Seeing that nothing could be gained from my Superiors, I resolved to write directly to his Holiness, telling him that the sad events which were discovered in our Order with oppressive frequency had laid upon me the necessity of leaving the Order or of entirely losing my faith. "Which last is so abhorrent to me, that I pray Heaven I might pass through a thousand deaths, if it were possible, rather than pass through such an experience. While in prayer to God that he would give me to know His holy will in this matter, my desire to consecrate my life for the good of the poor Indians and the benighted people of South America, arose anew within me.

"Having submitted my desire to my Superiors, and received a refusal without other reason than their excessive tenderness for me, I presume to present this desire to your Holiness in order that such an extraordinary proposal may be placed in the hands of God, and you may decree that which is in accordance with the Divine Will."

Within a few days I received a decree from the Sacred Congregation of the Propoganda Fide, signed by the Cardinal Ledochowski, in which they appointed me Apostolic Missionary. Shortly thereafter, we sailed for Columbia.

It would be impossible for me to express the conflicting emotions of my heart when the steamer, ploughing majestically the high seas, left the shores of Spain to convey me to those other shores, the sight of which caused the anxious heart of Columbus to leap for joy, and lifted his soul with gratitude to Heaven.

My heart had been sorely bruised, but nevertheless hope rose anew within me—a hope to find outside of the dark conditions of my Order the long sought peace of soul; and my joy was unbounded. But on arriving at the end of my voyage I perceived my error. The Monks in Columbia were in worse condition than those of Spain.

The Custodian had his residence in Rio Hacha, having built in that town a convent and church with the donations drawn from Spain in a most scandalous manner, as our readers can see in another paper entitled "The Poverty of the Convents," which we think to publish shortly if circumstances permit.

Meantime, other Monks passed a life of heroic sacrifice among the Indians, without more to eat than some few fruits such as they could find, and the scant supply of milk which the Indians gave them; without other covering than the vault of heaven, or other bed than a poor hammock.

The Custodian and his secretary lived in a city without troubling themselves about the mission, and drawing from the Columbian Government the salary of all the Missionaries. The lives of the Custodian and his Secretary and Father Pedro de Mira, his Counsellor, were scandalous in the extreme.

I have in my possession several letters of the most reprehensible character written to Father Pedro. In view of the state in which the affairs of the Order were found, I commanded the Monks, each one to address me a letter exposing all the scandals which attached to these three principal Monks.

These letters accompanied by another of my own I sent to Rome. To my great surprise, instead of receiving a decision such as was to be expected, I was told to discipline my Monks in order that they should not become accustomed to pass judgment on their Superiors!

The affairs of my Mission obliged me to convene a chapter, in which I discovered the motive which prevented Rome from treating the case as justice required.

The Custodian received from the Government a great sum, and another from the Market of Guagiro. Besides, he drew regularly for six years, the money for an orphanage which was never in existence, and also the salary for a school teacher in every village of the Indians, where in reality there were no schools. This money, with other funds collected in different ways, all went to Rome,—excellent means of holding power.

In January, 1893, the Ministry of Public Instruction published a complaint against the Capuchins, which the curious reader can see if he so desire.

In Barranquilla the papers published another scandal which gave us much trouble to conceal. These facts, now notorious, contributed powerfully to disgrace the order and its members. The result was to plunge me in profound grief.

All the good Monks, who saw the scandals of the people of Rio Hacha and other towns, wrote to me and I had the disagreeable duty of telling them I did not see any other remedy than that of prayer, since I had lost faith in Rome to such a degree that I could have no hope of any assistance from that source.

In December, 1894, all the Capuchin Monks of Colombia, assembled in Rio Hacha, and there we considered various questions regarding certain unjust penalties imposed by the Custodian upon his Monks. Thereupon, instead of sending an account of the state of the missions to Rome, I sent a letter in the following terms:

Considering the impotence of Rome to avert the total ruin which menaces our Order; having assured myself that the actual evils of which we are openly accused owe their origin directly or indirectly to the high functionaries of the Order in Rome, I confined myself solely to the petition to be separated, unconditionally and at once, from the Order; and in case of refusal, I should be obliged to adopt other means for my relief, which would in no way better the reputation of Rome, albeit they would be in accord with the most sacred convictions of my conscience.

Without being able to wait for an answer, and in order to obtain better means of communication with Rome, I moved my residence to Barranquilla, on the tenth of January, 1895, taking with me eight Monks.

During my residence in Barranquilla I corresponded with other Monks who agreed with me to leave the Order.

I was sorely troubled that I did not know what system of belief to adopt for myself and my friends. The Dogmas of Rome were rejected by my reason and repugnant to my conscience. My torture became extreme. According to my strict religious education I was now an outcast; but for what, O my God! What more could I have done than I did?

As a man of society I had left all to follow God, when I might well

entertain worldly aspirations; as a Monk, what distinguished honors and rewards, when I chose the hard life of a Missionary!

Could God abandon me to such a lamentable state while my heart was seeking all the more to merge my will in His? Impossible! Should I end by losing faith in the Pope and in his religion? I did not believe them, and yet day and night I wept bitterly because I thought that inseparable from that religion was the God of my dearest mother, whom I loved with all my soul. I remembered her piety, her virtues and counsels; and finding myself so far from thinking what I had thought while she was still living, I sank overcome in a sea of doubt and sorrow.

I ought now to say that, without knowing why, after having devoted myself for some time with intense interest to the study of the Bible in the Vulgate version, and having seen in it my conduct justified, I resolved to teach the Bible only, using no commentaries of any kind. In all my public sermons and private instruction in the confessional, I sought to inculcate my ideas.

Some of the Monks noted this and warned me that I was becoming very liberal. Up to this time I had never thought of becoming a Protestant for the simple reason that, according to what I had read, Protestantism could never satisfy the longings of my heart. I needed to love the God my mother loved, a God all love and goodness, who in better spheres had prepared for us eternal mansions, where our dear ones should be united with us sometime to part no more.

I also needed a religion which should have for its foundation Divine Truth, and one which should be accompanied by the sweetest Liberty, and holy Equality and human Brotherhood; and this religion I did not think to find in Protestantism, according to the ideas I had received from the Roman Apologists.

For this reason, to become a disciple of the pure Gospel I supposed would place me alone in the midst of the world, looking forward to an impossible Utopia.

One day, returning from a visit to a sick person, the wind wafted over the sandy street, a loose leaf, which fell right before my feet. I took it up and saw that it contained a hymn with music, its author no other than the much persecuted Father J. B. Cabrera, an ex-Escolapian, now the Protestant Bishop of Madrid. Without stopping to read the leaflet, I hid it in my pocket, and turned anxiously towards my home.

There I shut myself in my room and began to read the hymn. It is

beyond my utmost power to say how deeply my heart was impressed by the finding of this precious treasure. My soul was full. Now I did not stand alone in the world. I saw that outside of the Church of Rome, which imposes doctrines repugnant to reason, and corrupts so many souls in the name of God, there existed true believers in my Mother's God for whom my soul thirsted.

From that day I was happy. As my soul could no longer continue in such violent agitation, I took steps toward realizing my new ideals.

During the night I wrote an order for all the Monks to proceed to Caracas, under pretext of the Revolution in Colombia. I remained alone in Barranquilla with a Lay Brother. From that time I employed every occasion to investigate Protestantism and Protestants, but no one could give me any satisfactory information.

One day there came a Beata (a woman blindly devoted to the Church and Priests) to me for confession, and I at once asked her if she ever had the misfortune to speak at any time with Protestants, or with persons who had any relation with them. The Beata hesitated and answered me. "Father I have a sister who has some Protestant books."

"How is that?" said I. "Can you sleep tranquil, with that deadly poison of the soul near you, in your house? Go without delay, and bring me those books. I can give you no absolution, before you bring them to me."

The Beata departed, and after a short time returned with a New Testament, a Bible, a hymn book and a tract entitled "Lucilla." I gave her absolution, and went immediately to my house.

All that day I spent locked in my room comparing the Bible with my own. The translation was most faithful, and had none of those errors alleged by Roman authors to exist. The only difference was the absence of the Apocryphal Books.

What are the Apocryphal Books? What end do they serve? For several days, I devoted myself exclusively to the study of these books. The Roman Church teaches us that the Reformers rejected them for the sole reason that they were in conflict with their Protestant system of belief; but after a careful study I inferred that, if Luther had lacked that faith which impelled him to achieve some of the greatest works which the human mind has accomplished, he would necessarily avail himself of the aid of such books to establish a worldly cause.

In a word, the Apocryphal books, if they are necessary to sustain the

power of any man, are proved useless in a Divine cause, and even in many cases would be destructive to the purity of religion.

In this conflict I needed some one who should aid me, and who better than a real Protestant?

Rome being so full of intrigues, fallacies and perversities may be false and perverse when speaking of Protestantism; on the other hand, I read the hymns, and said to myself, "impossible that a community which expresses itself in such hymns should be corrupt. I will speak with the Protestant pastor himself."

But how? In Paraguaipoa, a little hamlet near Maracaibo and subject to its jurisdiction there was a Capuchin Monk in whom I had perfect confidence, and of whom I could avail myself in all cases of difficulty. That very day I sent him an order to come without delay to Barranquilla. He arrived within a few days.

I told him nothing the first day, except that I, not liking to remain alone, had decided to close the residence in Paraguaipoa for some time, I despatched an order to two Monks who remained there to remove to Rio Hacha and to put themselves under the order of the Custodian until further notice.

The following day I called to my office the Monk alluded to, and after imposing upon him entire secrecy, which the case demanded, I revealed my desire and entrusted to him my commission, which was no other than to go and speak with the Protestant minister.

At first I did not tell him my real purpose, and he, thinking there was a matter for secret investigation in order to write something against Protestantism, made no objection. I commissioned "Beata" to buy a suit of citizens' clothes, and that she might not suspect anything, I told her that on account of the Revolution, I had to direct certain secret measures.

At last the supreme moment came for taking one of the most extraordinary steps of my life; for the first time there fell upon me the curse of the Pope, and his excommunication destroyed forever the "virtues" which with so much care my own sweet Mother had sown in my heart.

It was nine o'clock at night when, by a secret door, and dressed in citizens clothes, my chosen helper left the house of the Capuchins. I myself opened the door for him, and whispered, "Courage and prudence!" as I parted from him in the street. The rays of the sinking moon were kissing the hills for the last time, leaving the earth wrapped in the blackness of night. My heart beat with such violence and so filled my whole

breast as to almost stifle me; the moments appeared to me ages, and scarcely had my emissary turned the first corner before I began to be anxious for his return.

It would be impossible to describe all that passed through my mind in that time of waiting. Anxiety possessed me, and in every direction I looked with uncertainty. Am I a criminal? I said to myself "no, for my conscience remains tranquil." What do I fear? There is nothing for me to fear!

I was filled with longing to discern the form of my beloved Mother, in order to read in her face whether perchance she approved my designs.

Deep sighs escaped from me, as the time dragged on interminably. * * * * Now it seemed to me that I saw my messenger in prison and the town in an uproar with the news that a disguised Capuchin had been caught by the police in the house of the Protestant missionary. * * * * Already I seemed to hear the sad news that Protestantism could not satisfy the aspirations of my soul. I cried to Heaven and fervently besought a happy issue out of my distress, and above all, the Divine Grace, to do in everything and always the will of my God.

At last an almost imperceptible sound was heard—the concerted signal.

With anxious haste I opened the door silently, and until three o'clock in the morning I held my companion in close conference.

The following day I received a letter from Rome in which I was told to forward an order to the Custodian to present himself without delay at the Capital of the Catholic world; and I was assured that he would not return to Colombia, and that if I desisted from my effort to be made a secular priest, the news of which had been received in Rome with greatest astonishment, I should be made Custodian, provided I obtained from his Holiness a dispensation on account of my youth, the required age being at least forty-two years.

This letter I answered from "Christ's Mission," in New York.

After studying carefully all that my companion had told me with regard to my now beloved Brother, Mr. Pond, I again commissioned him to go by night and ask for a Bible, an exact copy of that which he himself used, and for his creed, and to obtain his reply to certain questions concerning his concept of human dignity and liberty. At the same time I sent to Mr. Pond a poem on liberty, in order that he might see in it my own ideas, and might tell me if they agreed with his.

When my companion returned, I had the immense satisfaction of knowing that Mr. Pond was just such a counsellor as I longed for.

His conversation and intercourse soon dispelled from my mind all prejudice against Protestantism.

Within a few days I had the pleasure of receiving Mr. Pond in my house, with all precautions which the case required and under protection of the darkness of night. In our interview no point of polemics was discussed. I confined myself to asking if the Bible were really the rule upon which the Protestants based their conduct, and receiving his answer in the affirmative, I said, "I am a Protestant."

After this interview my sermons treated of the Scripture as the supreme authority. This doctrine I preached in the Church of the San Rosario, and in the Cathedral of San Nicholas, in presence of a great congregation.

Whether by reason of public manifestations of my faith, or because of my private conversations in which I had declared that neither Pope nor ceremonial observances can avail; that only faith within our souls, inspired by the Spirit, fed by the word of God, can save; certain it is that I received a letter from the Bishop of Cartagena, who was my friend inviting me to a personal interview.

This appeared to me the best occasion for leaving the Monastery, which I at once arranged to do. Remembering that the Monks would deprive me of my manuscript, as they had done in the case of others; and not being able to remove my trunks with me because of the Revolution, I deposited all my effects in the house of a friend whom I informed that, from that moment he was to regard me as having of my own will abandoned the life of a Monk, and for this reason he should not surrender my trunks to anyone nor permit any one to search them. I ordered the Lay Brother to go to Rio Hacha, and took with me the Monk before mentioned.

Arrived at Cartagena, the Bishop said nothing particular to us. Very friendly with me, as he had always had been, he placed at my disposal an apartment in his palace. One thing seemed to me strange, as being contrary to his custom. He sent my companion to the Seminary to lodge.

At night the Bishop and I remained together for a long time, discussing the affairs of the Capuchins and the conduct of certain Monks and others.

I then declared myself determined to leave the *Order* (My intentions

was to leave the *Church* of Rome.) I remained with the Bishop eight days aiding him in the services of Holy week, and preaching.

Two days after Easter I took my leave to go to Curazao.

At our parting we both wept, I for thinking of the disappointment the venerable prelate would feel—he, from whom I had received so many proofs of affection; and he at the thought that, from Curazao, I would go to Spain, and so lost all hope of seeing me again.

There are moments in life so agonizing that no pen can represent them. When I parted from the Bishop I experienced a sharper and bitter conflict of spirit than any I had yet suffered. The Grace which I had received in Barranquilla seemed to be withdrawn, and I again suffered that weakness of heart which too frequently proves to be the hidden shoal where on our noblest purposes run aground, or are totally wrecked. My whole horizon seemed to gather blackness, from my purposed "Apostacy," and frightened me almost to the abandoning of all my plans. I sank farther and farther into the depths; at the very lowest deep of my dejection, there clearest I heard an inner voice, saying, "Forward! the Martyr's death is a thousand times preferable to the life of a hypocrite!"

At last, on board the steamer, I met several friends who, because of political complications felt obliged to immigrate to the hospitable Isle whither I was also bound.

Several hours before landing I put off my Monkish garb, shaved away the "sacred" tonsure, and put on citizens' dress.

On the steamer ticket, I had written my original secular name, thinking thereby to escape notice on arriving at Curazao.

But looking over the published list of passengers, the Spanish Consul there, who knew several members of my family, noted my arrival and paid me a visit at the hotel; and himself informed the Bishop of Curazao of my arrival. The Bishop that very afternoon paid me a visit and invited me to lodge at his palace, which however I could not do, for the simple reason that according to the instructions of Rev. Mr. Pond of Barranquilla, I had already written to R. M. J. Norwood, agent of the American Bible Society, who was to give me aid and counsel at this all important juncture.

All Curazao was aware of my presence despite all my efforts to remain unobserved. This made my position only more difficult, and demanded more courage and will in order to adopt a resolute line of conduct. I greatly needed quiet in order to mature all plans, and yet

I must receive my friends, knowing at the same time their surprise and disappointment to come.

Hence it seemed best to change my hotel without disclosing my destination. The evening of the next day I had the pleasure of seeing Rev. Mr. Norwood, who had arrived that day in his launch. During our interview it was decided that I remove at once to Mr. Norwood's house; that the authorities be requested to grant permission and protection to announce publicly in the theatre, our renunciation of Rome. The permission was given.

After all precautions had been taken, hand-bills were scattered through the town, which caused as great a stir as if so many cartridges of dynamite had exploded.

From the moment of issuing the notices of my separation from Rome, a stream of letters had poured in upon me; some of these almost broke my heart, and others I did not read for fear they would make me untrue to my word and my conscience.

The agitation and stress of my spirit can better be imagined than described.

At 2 P. M. I set out for the Theatre "Naar." The spacious edifice was filled with people. The first words of my address were received with solicitude and silence which soon changed into loud acclamations and applause so frequent as to interrupt my speech at the end of every sentence. My address was a triumph.

Meantime my fellow-Monk had succumbed to the promises, flatteries, importunities and lies of our Roman friends. He broke his good promises and failed to put in an appearance. I had now also to speak again in the evening, in order to fulfil the published program. At five P. M. the Chief of Police came to announce that he had received notice the priests were prepared to make a disturbance that evening, and he counselled me not to go into the street until the arrival of an escort of police.

The hour was at hand and I withdrew to my room to offer myself in sacrifice to God.

I reached the Theatre and had not spoken two sentences, when there arose great confusion and outcries, which seemed to increase every moment. The police on one hand and the protestations of the general indignation on the other, against this outrage, made it impossible to speak.

Several arrests were made, and order being restored, at request of the

audience I continued my speech to the end. On leaving the Theatre, stones were thrown at me, but did not reach me.

Yielding to the supplications of my fellow-Monk, I resolved to go to the Episcopal palace to have an interview with the Bishops. Having been previously invited, the principal Ecclesiastics and persons of importance in the Island were there awaiting me.

The first act of this conference was to demand that I sign a writing, which was "a recantation of my utterances upon the true and only authority in matters of faith and practice; the Holy Scriptures—a protest that the discourse in the Theatre was exacted of me by threats and violence from Mr. Norwood, and a declaration that, fearing that the persecution of the sects which Mr. Norwood could direct against me, I now voluntarily placed myself in the hands of the Bishop, that I might live in retirement; and to this intent I prayed the Civil Authorities to forego an investigation as to my person and conduct."

When this paper was read to me, I was filled with indignation, and said with great resolution: "Gentlemen, if I had not ample evidence that the religion of Rome is not true, rather that it is rotten to the core, full of intrigues and falsehood, this very attempt to deceive me, would fully confirm my opinion. Therefore let none of you regard as strange my withdrawal from Rome without further delay."

This said I at once left the conference, and that evening sailed for La Guaira in the company of Rev. Mr. Norwood and General Mac Pherson, of the Venezuelan army. Both in LaGuaira and in Caracas I had a great reception. Never can I forget the attentions with which the authorities honored me. The hotel was guarded, that no one should intrude upon me; while both the American Legation and the Spanish Minister laid me under lasting obligation by their unstinted kindness and courtesy.

Several days passed in quiet, meantime, so urgent were the requests of former friends to see me, that I could but give one day to receptions, but so was I troubled and distressed by their supplications and tears, that I was at last obliged to refuse to see anyone. That I might obtain a greater quiet, an apartment at the American Legation was placed at my disposal, which I occupied for a few days. The Arch Bishop my personal friend, desiring to see me, and not being able to do so, availed himself of the civil authorities to accomplish this object.

One evening the Governor and I were at the Episcopal Palace. The interview was important. The Bishop respected my opinion but he

regretted my separation. This sincere friendship for me was proven in this act, and I feel assured that this will unite us always, even unto death.

I now needed two principal things, first to separate myself from so many friends, intercourse with whom broke my heart, and second to see in good time a Protestant people, whose exemplification of Christian virtues should be an object-lesson to encourage and confirm me in the justice of my course. At the first opportunity I turned to this noble American people, betaking myself to the protecting folds of its broad flag, which to-day I love as if it had floated above my cradle. Having enrolled my name as member of one of the churches, and having registered as an intended citizen of the United States, my all absorbing desire is that with the Gospel faith of the American people in my heart, and their loved banner waving over my head, I may return to the people of Colombia to teach them that, in this generation, a nation increases in true greatness, only in proportion as it frees itself from the crushing yoke of Popes, Priests and Monks, and adopts the only true faith, that of the free Evangelical Sons of North America. For their faith in an open Gospel is the eternal and only foundation of their religious and civil liberty and their proud distinction among the nations.

By the Same Author

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