

The Priest & the Actress





THE PRIEST & THE ACTRESS

by
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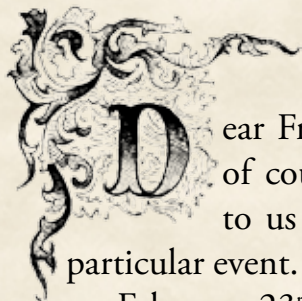
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CHAPTER 1

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSENGER



Dear Friends of the Catholic Kingdom - the following story is absolutely true. It is one of countless examples of the incredible power and mercy of God. It has been related to us by Cardinal Mermillod, who was himself the instrument that God used in this particular event. He was born at Carouge, Switzerland on September 22nd, 1824 and died in Rome on February 23rd, 1892. He studied at the Jesuit College at Freiburg, Switzerland and became a priest in 1847. In 1857, he became parish priest of Geneva and at the same time Vicar-General of the Bishop of Lausanne for the canton of Geneva. He was made a cardinal in 1890 and Cardinal Mermillod was one of the great preachers of modern times. This is the source of the evidence for this incredible story.

Father Mermillod had had a difficult and busy day. Now, late in the evening, he was looking forward to some quiet prayer time and then some well-earned rest. But God had other plans. Suddenly, a loud, insistent rap summoned him to the door.

When he opened it, a young man, well-dressed and of pleasing manner, entered. The priest had never met the man before. Reverend Mermillod was very active in the practice of his priestly vocation, though, and was beginning to be known throughout his diocese as a man who loved the sublime vocation that Jesus had bestowed upon him. He applied himself tirelessly to studying the timeless truths of the Roman Catholic faith - the one and only Church established by God - and devoted all of his time and energies to bringing the treasures of God's graces, which the Catholic Church alone can give, to all in his diocese that were in need of them.

The unknown visitor informed Father that his priestly gifts were required - a lady was in danger of death. When Father inquired whether the case was urgent, the messenger responded that the case was, indeed, very grave. He gave the address where the woman would be found and requested that the man of God call on her at the same hour on the following night. The address was in an unfamiliar district, so Father Mermillod was very careful in double checking the address before his night visitor left. As he prepared for bed he gave little thought to the matter.

Mindful of his promise, he made his way on the following evening to the home of the sick lady, which he found without much difficulty. It was a beautiful chalet in the midst of a garden and commanding a magnificent view of Lake Geneva.

He opened the gate and approached the house, noting that a dinner party was in progress. The dining room was alight and through its open windows the sound of light-hearted voices and laughter could be distinctly heard.

Somewhat mystified, he rang at the door, which was promptly thrown open by a distinctively

dressed butler.

“Good evening,” the priest nodded. “My name is Father Mermillod, and I have been requested to provide the aid and comforts of the Catholic sacraments to a dying woman. Could you take me to her?”

“Dying woman!” replied the shocked butler, “but there is no one even sick in this house! I am sorry sir, but somehow you have come here by mistake. Perhaps the address is incorrect?”

“But is this not Chalet Violet and are we not in Rue Valois?” he asked, showing the carefully written address.

“The address is quite correct, Sir, but there must be a misunderstanding of some kind. There is no one ill in the house, and I cannot understand how a message should have been sent without my knowledge. It is my duty to see that such communications are delivered, and I receive corresponding instructions as to whom I am to receive into the house.” The butler was attempting to be helpful but the obvious impossibility of the situation could not be overlooked.

“Might I speak with your Mistress?” suggested Fr. Mermillod.

“I regret, Reverend Sir, that my Mistress is, at the moment, entertaining at dinner a company of actors from the Opera. If you insist, though, I will take her your message.”

“I should be obliged if you did so since the case seems mysterious. I am not yet sure what is the truth, but it was difficult to come such a long distance. I would appreciate an opportunity to verify the situation because I will not be able to make the journey again very easily.”

The butler kindly reported to the lady of the house the odd details surrounding the unannounced visitor that now stood at her door. On hearing about the strange incident, the lady was naturally surprised and, telling her guests what had happened, suggested to her husband that it might be well to see the priest. Her husband went accordingly to interview the visitor.

“We are very sorry, dear Sir, to hear that someone without our knowledge has asked you to call. We cannot imagine who it could have been, or what could have been the motive of such an ill-timed joke. There is no one ill in the house, and quite frankly, we do not even belong to your religion. Just now we are entertaining some friends from the theater. Would you mind joining us at dinner? You are most welcome, and my wife will be glad to hear all about this singular incident from your own lips. Some of our guests, are, I believe, also Catholics.”

Father Mermillod’s first thought was to decline from the invitation and he replied that he had already dined. But Father was a good and spiritual man and knew that God usually leads His instruments by hidden ways. Somehow, God had some good to accomplish through him that night, and so the priest informed the gracious owner of the elegant home that he would be glad to join the party.

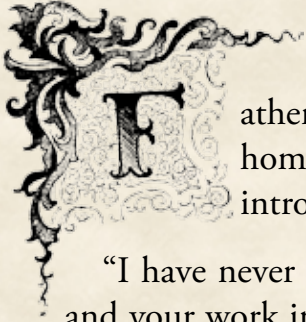
As he was led by this generous man through his luxurious dwelling, so lavishly decorated and filled with the cheerful banter of carefree souls, Father Mermillod could not help but wonder about his mysterious visitor of the night before. He had seemed so sincere, honest and determined that it was

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difficult to believe that he had been some foolish prankster, sending the priest on a phony mission. But there were clearly no signs of any tragedy in the villa. Certainly, no one was dying. As he entered the elegant formal dining room he was haunted by the events of the previous night. Who was the mysterious messenger and what was the purpose of his calling?

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THE UNINVITED GUEST



ather Mermillod was still puzzling over the events that had led him to this wealthy home that was completely unknown to him, when his thoughts were interrupted by his introduction to the hostess.

“I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, Father,” she said, “but we have all heard of you and your work in our city. We are, I am sure, delighted to have you among us, but what a strange experience! What was your visitor like?”

All the attention in the festive banquet room was now focused on the humble Catholic priest. Everyone’s curiosity was rising. With exact detail, Fr. Mermillod described the appearance of the well-dressed and serious young man who had called on him the night before. He repeated the urgent words his visitor had used to convince the priest to make this house call. Showing the address, and the few words of instruction on how to find the house, that his visitor had given him, he admitted that he had never seen or heard of the man before.

The lady of the house was intrigued: “You Catholic priests must have unusual experiences. Must you go to everyone who calls you, even if you don’t happen to know them?”

“Yes, madam, it is our custom to go to everyone who sends for us, if they need the help and support that only the Church’s holy Sacraments can provide.”

“But have you had many such experiences as mysterious as this one?”

“We have, so to speak, all kinds of adventures, and meet with people of every description. But, thank God, we can do a great deal of good and bring untold comfort to many a heart filled with misery or despair. I confess that I have never had such an experience as odd as this one, but some of my colleagues have had cases just as strange.”

At the sound of his words, all the party guests seemed to huddle closer in joyful anticipation of hearing interesting tales. Like children, snuggling up in their blankets in eager anticipation of their father telling them a bedtime story, they pleaded:

“Oh Father! Do tell us, please, some of your ‘adventures’.”

The priest wished for nothing better and so proceeded to relate some of the thrilling little episodes of his life. All present listened with careful attention and asked him many appropriate questions, which was the best indication of the interest he had awakened.

With delightful frankness, this body of actors and actresses displayed the greatest curiosity in hearing all he had to tell them. It was the first time that most of them had met a priest, even though

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they had been told a lot of things about them. Fr. Mermillod was decidedly different from all their preconceived notions of Catholic clergy.

He had some good stories, too, of famous “freethinkers” - people who boast that they are far too intelligent and educated to believe in something so childish and naive as God. They reject the idea that anyone needed to be redeemed or that Hell even exists. If there is a Heaven, these people proudly proclaim that they, of course, will get in. Mostly, the “freethinkers” in every age condemn the doctrines of the One True Church that Jesus founded. Father spoke of their foolish and erroneous ideas towards the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Nothing, however, aroused so much interest as the topic of the Church’s Sacrament of Confession. They wanted to know everything. He especially surprised them by telling them that Confession is something wonderful. Not in those words exactly, but by the real stories that he told. The truth that Father explained was so completely different from all that they had heard or read before. Of course, what they had learned before was from evil sources that did not respect or understand Christ’s Holy Catholic Church. These wicked people, groups, and organizations exist in every age. But the sincerity of this true man of God, and the information based on his own personal experience, gave all that he said the ring of truth. What he told them was all so honest and so genuine that it went straight to their hearts.

But worldly people tend to become uncomfortable with pious, grave thoughts if they last too long. To break the serious mood that began to spread among the party guests, one of the young actresses laughingly remarked:

“How I should like to spend a few hours in the Confessional and hear all the little secrets of my dear sisters.” Her comment was greeted with a ripple of laughter all around.

“Ah, my dear lady,” Fr. Mermillod responded, “living in the midst of your frivolous world, I venture to say that you know very little of all of this life’s horrors and heartbreaks. Sitting in my Confessional for hours and hours at a time is, I assure you, a labor of unthinkable sadness and weariness. But the fruits that are produced in those who honestly confess all of their sins, humbly accept their guilt, and are truly sorry for their disobedience to God’s laws, is a source of great consolation to the priest as well as the penitent.

Men and women of all classes, rich and poor, old and young, come and pour out to us the inmost secrets of their hearts. These poor hearts are disillusioned and disappointed. Torn and lacerated with a grief that cannot be described, with bitterness that has no remedy, with wrongs that cannot be redressed until they approach God’s mercy in the Sacrament of Confession and receive His healing and strengthening graces when they make a good confession.

The only source of man’s true peace is the Most Holy Trinity - the One True God. Every sin damages our link to God - serious sin cuts us off completely. As we remove ourselves from God’s peace, the pain of our sins and the stress of life become increasingly unbearable.”

Turning to the window, he pointed to a large pleasure boat on Lake Geneva with hundreds of

tourists on board. He turned back to the young actress:

“You know what drives that boat with such speed through the waters? Steam pressure, is it not? Yet that very pressure might easily send the steamer and all its occupants to the bottom of the lake, if there was not something in the mechanism to prevent such a catastrophe. That little something is the safety valve. When the steam pressure in the boiler builds up to the point where the whole boiler will soon violently explode, the safety valve automatically lets the excessive steam out. In this way, the pressure is reduced and the pleasure boat goes on its way in perfect safety.

The human soul, with its mind and heart (the intellect and the will), is like a boiler. It can tolerate a certain amount of pressure, but a point is reached when it can endure no more. Each new sin that we commit increases the grief of our guilt. The weight of sin and the damage done to our souls by it make the load too heavy to bear. Our souls were created to love and be loved by God. Cut off from our loving God, we become increasingly filled with every sorrow, care, and ceaseless worry. All this proves too much for human endurance. We must have relief or we will fall into depravity or despair.

Confession is this necessary safety valve with its all-important healing graces. There, the broken heart finds soothing comfort; the weak and the faltering receive energy and strength; doubts are chased away, fears are put at rest, the most oppressed receive comfort, black despair is dissipated, and the bright light of hope once more cheers the drooping spirit that had well-nigh succumbed beneath the weight of woe.”

“But, dear sir,” ventured one of the company, “don’t you think that, instead of devoting so much time to Confession, it would be better to invest time and energy into relieving the lot of the poor, improving material conditions, and educating and uplifting the masses? Poverty, misery and the consequent ignorance seem to me to be one of the main causes of crime. After all, the essence of Christ’s law is charity.”

“While the Church gives loving attention to one set of evils, She does not neglect the others!” rejoined Fr. Mermillod. “Have you no idea of the countless religious orders and secular institutes of the Church whose members dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the poor, the sick, the ignorant, the young, and the old?

Some receive in their institutions the elderly and give them comfortable lodging, good food and the most loving care. Others establish orphanages, where they prepare boys and girls for the battle of life. While instilling in their minds sound moral principles in the hope of making them good husbands and wives, they teach them a trade or give them a profession to enable them to gain an honest livelihood. Some orders visit the poor in their homes and do all that God’s sweet charity impels them to for the relief of the indigent. There are Catholic hospitals and asylums for every possible need.

Nothing, dear sir, is left undone by the Catholic Church to pour out God’s compassion on the poor and the needy. But the greatest act of mercy is the Sacrament of Confession, Christ’s own blessed work. *‘I am not come to call the just, but sinners’ (St. Matthew 9:13).*”

The priest paused a moment, glancing around at his listeners before continuing.

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“You will agree with me,” he nodded towards the guest who had voiced his objection, “that moral suffering is by far the most terrible and the most prevalent of human evils. It threatens the individual, the family, as well as every society and country at large. It touches all classes, ages, and conditions.

Crime, in all its hideous forms of moral degradation and unrestrained human passion, is what we aim at uprooting and destroying by Confession for the greater Glory of God, the salvation of souls and the good of society. Can you point to any institution outside the Catholic Church that accomplishes as much?

You have police, courts of law, prisons, and punishment - all, doubtless, needful. But your corrections do not include God’s forgiveness or His grace. Without these, poor sinners have no hope of truly amending their lives or saving their souls when they die. After they make a good Confession, however, we Catholic priests impart to them, by the power given us by Christ, pardon for their past and strength to sin no more. They come saddened and burdened by their sins and sufferings, but they go away rejoicing, regenerated - with renewed strength, good will, and a resolve to never offend God again.”

All had been respectfully listening to Father’s words but those who had never heard the truth about Confession before were somewhat skeptical.

“Good sir, you are certainly claiming a wonderful power,” remarked a gentleman reluctantly, “but it is one that cannot be easily accepted.”

“Have you not read the words of Christ?” inquired Fr. Mermillod: “After breathing on His Apostles, He said unto them: *‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’* (St. John 20:22-23) Let me give you some practical examples of this power; examples that every priest who hears confessions meets with.”

His distinguished audience grew quite still and quiet, keenly interested to hear his point continued.

“The vast majority,” Fr. Mermillod explained, “of those who crowd around our Confessionals are basically good-willed, earnest, sometimes even fervent, Catholics. But at times we meet with the wrecks of humanity. Men sunk in vice for many years, weakened by repeated sins. Women like Magdalen, who have fallen and been degraded. If we can only induce these poor people to go regularly to Confession and follow the very simple and practical advice we give them, God’s grace will raise them up and make them useful, trustworthy and decent members of society.”

“But Confession,” challenged another guest, “may, however, have a very different result. If men and women may commit any and every type of sin and then run to the priest for pardon, it seems your Sacrament condones sin - in fact, it seems an incentive to sin.”

“You are under a grave misunderstanding, my friend,” the priest answered solemnly. “No true Catholic who goes to Confession holds any such idea. He knows only too well that he cannot trifle with God. He may be able to deceive the priest, he may even deceive himself, but he knows well he cannot deceive God. You see, it is God in reality Who pardons, through the instrument of the priest.

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Even the humblest of our faithful understand that, to receive pardon and the consequent help to avoid sin, they must make a sincere and firm resolution to shun sin; they must abandon dangerous occasions of sin and strive valiantly to lead good lives. Observing these conditions, Confession, I repeat, produces remarkable results.”

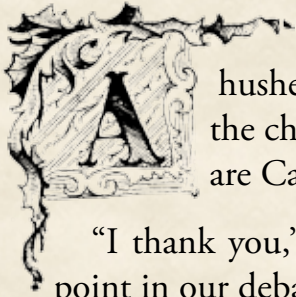
Throughout the room there seemed to be an increasing air of acceptance and openness towards the Sacrament of Confession when the host suddenly challenged Fr. Mermillod:

“If your Confession is such a wonderful remedy for evil, how is it that so many of your Catholics figure among the criminals of our world? Are there not thousands of Catholics in our prisons? Do not many, also, die on the scaffold?”

This objection fell like a bombshell on the party. It was received with an ominous silence. It seemed to disprove all the marvelous claims that Father had made about Confession. All eyes were turned toward the humble Catholic priest. With one mind they waited, wondering how he could possibly answer this objection. Father had been caught off guard by this last complaint. Quickly recovering, he calmly fixed his eyes squarely on his opponent while offering up a brief and fervent prayer for God’s truth, help and wisdom.

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IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH



A hushed silence fell on the curious group. Everyone awaited Father Mermillod's response to the challenge that 'if Catholics are given every possible help from God, how is it that there are Catholic criminals?'

"I thank you," Father replied, "for giving me an opportunity of making clear a most important point in our debate." Certain looks were exchanged amongst the interested audience.

"There are many Catholics who are such in name only," the priest explained. "These undoubtedly give a number of criminals to the jails. But we do not consider these truly Catholic. There are, however, other Catholics who live up to their faith, who practice their religion and carry out its precepts and commands. Among these, I assure you, there are very few criminals. To emphasize my point still more, let me say that by real Catholics I mean those who receive the Sacraments regularly; for the Sacraments are the great founts of strength. Among these Sacraments, Confession is of the utmost importance. Catholics who frequently go to Confession will rarely or never give criminals to the prisons and murderers to the scaffold. I say *rarely*, because there are cases of sudden bursts of passion, of unexpected temptation, of violent provocation - always to be lamented, but not surprising when one considers the weakness of human nature.

It is also certain that there are notably fewer suicides and less immorality among the Catholics who practice their faith. These statements I base not only on reliable and accurate statistics compiled by Catholics, but also on information taken from unbiased Protestant sources." Fr. Mermillod paused a moment and looked at the people around him.

"My points are of such great importance," he spoke quite earnestly, "both for this life and the next, that I invite all of you to personally and honestly investigate them.

For still greater clearness, I will mention a third type of Catholic; men and women who seldom attend church, who practice their religion in a casual manner, who rarely receive the Sacraments. These are lax, remiss, ignorant Catholics, who clearly belong rather to the first class, *nominal* Catholics, and cannot be looked upon as real or practical Catholics. As far as nominal Catholics are concerned, the Church waits hopefully, offering up prayers, sacrifices, and good works for the return of Her prodigal children. Until these poor wretches are dead and condemned to Hell, there is always the chance that God's grace can touch their hearts and lead them to amend their lives and do penance for their sins."

"But, dear Sir," inquired one of his listeners. "What can you say of the so-called Catholic countries, like Spain, France, Mexico, Peru?"

"They were formerly Catholic countries," Father agreed, and then added: "Now they are no longer so. Many Spaniards, French, and Peruvians no longer deserve the name of Catholic. They are not only

apostates, but they go so far as to persecute and revile the Church. However, there are still staunch Catholics among them, and to these my principle applies.

When Judas betrayed his Lord, he could no longer be classed as an Apostle or a friend of Christ. The same applies to this type of Catholic.

The Jews were certainly God's chosen people of the Old Testament. They were visibly loved and protected by Him. When they fell away, as they often did, they lost all right to His protection and were severely punished and humbled. Roman Catholics are the chosen people of God ever since Our Lord established His Church. Although created to be God's most faithful friends, bad Catholics, like the bad Jews of old, can become God's greatest enemies. As such, they cannot be called true members of the Church nor claim the privileges of such." Realizing that their conversation had strayed from its original course and had led them into other interesting subjects, the priest gently returned to the initial question. "Our discussion is on the merits of Confession," he said. "And my contention is that the Sacrament of Confession, properly and regularly practiced, makes men good Catholics, good citizens - and few, if any, criminals are found in their ranks."

Several of the guests were not entirely comfortable with this. Surely they had similar privileges! One of them asked him outright: "Can't we Protestants make, with equal reason, the distinction between good and bad Protestants?"

"Certainly not," replied Fr. Mermillod with a smile. "Your position is altogether different. For every Protestant claims the right to think and act for himself, and believes he is still a good Protestant. Indeed, the more independent he becomes, with his own interpretation of your Bibles and in the beliefs he chooses to personally accept, the more he is applauded.

Protestantism has only been around for some three hundred years. In 1529, the leaders of the Protestant revolt from the Catholic Church - Luther, Zwingli, and others - were brought together to work out their differences and present to the Catholic people a unified new religion to stand against the One True Church. Unfortunately, after several days, they were divided, angry and calling each other terrible names! From the very beginning of this rebellion, there has never been unity. Truly, the more Protestants behave according to the key values of Protestantism the more new divisions occur. And it will never - indeed, *can* never - stop. (Editors note: As of 2007 there are almost 50,000 different Protestant religions or 'sects' in the world.)

From the very beginning, they separated themselves from Christ's divinely revealed Truths, His Sacraments, His Authority and His Unity. There can never be Christian unity outside of the Roman Catholic Church, which is the only Church that Jesus Christ founded.

The more a Catholic lives up to his faith, the better a man he is; the more you act on your Protestant principles, the less good you are.

Your principle of private interpretation of the Scriptures gives every one of you the right to choose the doctrines he wishes to hold. The more, therefore, you act *as good Protestants*, the more you differ among yourselves, drifting away from the truths and meanings of Christ's doctrine as contained in the

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Scriptures. It results in countless and appalling doctrinal differences among your various sects, among members of the same sect, and yes, even among the members of every Protestant family. You accept or deny doctrines as you please and then change them as it suits your personal pleasure or because of political pressure.

Therefore, the more you act according to your Protestant principles, the further away you are from having the purity of Christ's teaching - and yet," he pointed out, "you are still good Protestants!"

Several of the guests were evidently uncomfortable with the logical points given. They remained silent, however, and thoughtfully and respectfully allowed Fr. Mermillod to continue.

"A second belief you hold dear," the priest pointed out, "is 'Justification without works.' This is the strange notion that a true Christian somehow is not responsible for his actions, and therefore does not need to deny his vices or grow in God's virtues! The more you enforce and live up to this idea, the fewer good works you are likely to perform - and still you are all equally good Protestants! But doesn't the Holy Bible have many references in the Old and New Testaments that warn us that Almighty God judges a man on his deeds? Among these references are: 'Faith without works is dead,' and that God will 'reward each man according to his works'!

Now, you each merely pick and choose *what* you want to believe and *how* you will personally interpret it, based on how you want to live your lives. Really, your only chance of being good men and woman is to not act according to your Protestant principles! Then, perhaps, you would accept all of Christ's teachings, as He taught them to the Apostles and according to His meaning. Then you will understand the necessity of doing good works, and therefore be more ready to perform them."

"One last objection, dear Sir," said the hostess, who, though silent during the discussion, had been one of the most intent listeners of the group.

"I fail to understand why Catholics make so much account of sins. What harm can sins do to the Almighty? Surely He does not trouble about the few wrong words or thoughts which do no harm to anyone. Yet my Catholic friends are horrified if our dear friends of the theater treat us to something that reflects more modern attitudes, or if a delightful book has a few chapters not in harmony with their way of thinking. They will not eat meat on a Friday for the world, nor be absent from Mass even though the day be cold and rainy."

"Without wishing to be offensive," she continued, "I do think that these attitudes are prudish and smack of superstition. We must live in the world and let live. I fully agree that crime, theft, violence are very wrong; they are a sin against society."

This objection seemed to voice the difficulty of many others, judging from the interest it awakened.

"Yes, dear madam," began Fr. Mermillod, "the sin of the Angels was just a thought. But it was a thought of revolt and, as a result, a third part of those glorious spirits lost their thrones in Heaven - forever! It was the eating of a little fruit by our First Mother, Eve, that proved the undoing of the human race - until the end of time! Was it not an act of disobedience to God's Will that deprived Saul

of his throne? Was it not a sinful glance that led the pure and holy David to commit grave sins against purity and marriage? An act of King David's vanity cost him 70,000 of his subjects. The venerable Eleazar sacrificed his life rather than consume a little meat that God had forbidden His people to eat. And what about the death of Oza, for daring to touch the Ark of the Covenant when It was about to tip over?

Do you forget the complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha? Or even better, the Flood, which wiped out almost the entire human race? Great and severe Divine punishments - and all because of sin? It is the Most Holy Trinity Who makes so much account of sins!

And in human life we see how a trifling act is construed as a great crime if it gives offense to a person of rank or authority. How many men have given their lives in defense of their so-called honor, outraged by an imaginary insult, a thoughtless word, an oversight? How many great men have lost their heads because of an offense against royalty - 'high treason against the King,' it was called. Sin is high treason against the King of kings." His points were simple and true; none could deny them. And yet, not all the listeners were ready to believe the conclusions he had reached. The Catholic priest, however, continued his explanation.

"Dear Madam, you fail to see that it is not possible for us mere creatures to judge how small or great a sin is. Sin is an offense against an infinite God, to Whom we owe all of our love, our gratitude and our allegiance.

Surely, if God died on account of sin, the cost of sin must be enormous. If sin is punished by Hell - fire that never ends - the guilt of sin must be incomprehensible. When you make light of sin, you judge not Catholics, but God Himself.

A tiny drop of poison that is hardly visible kills the strongest man; so sin, which to you seems insignificant, is an outrage to the Most High. You detest the wrongs against society, but you make nothing of sins against God!

No one discerns more carefully than the Catholic Church between small faults and grave faults. No one is so ready to pardon sins - great or small - if only they are sincerely confessed and repented of.

To eat meat on a Friday deliberately, without a serious reason, is in reality a revolt; just as it was a revolt when Lucifer cried: 'I will not serve.' Eleazar gave his life rather than eat forbidden meat.

Theaters, bad books, and the like, ruin morals, corrupt the True Faith and are the cause of countless crimes. These are sins against society, but still more, offenses against God."

"Yes, dear Lady," Father concluded, "we must be in the world, but not of the world. We must live and let live, as you say, but we may never approve of or tolerate evil and what leads to it.

Above all, let me call your attention to the fact that the Catholic Church builds all its moral edifice on the Ten Commandments and the precepts and counsels that Christ taught the Apostles. She condemns nothing that Christ has not already condemned. Surely you do not maintain that the Ten Commandments and the counsels of Christ are prudish or smack of superstition?! Yet the sins

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which Catholics do and should condemn are precisely the violations of God's Commandments and the precepts of Christ.

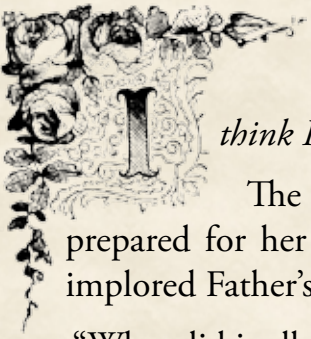
In conclusion, by sin we chase God away from us. As long as we remain in sin, we are in revolt against Him. At the same time, we also surrender ourselves to the devil and give him power over us. Until we properly confess our serious sins we are the slaves of vice - indeed the slaves and children of Satan!"

For a moment, everyone sat pondering Father's words. Then, all seemed to realize that their conversation had continued well past their dinner. The guests rose from the table and withdrew to a spacious hall, where they separated into small groups. Some still bombarded Fr. Mermillod with lively questions, to which he replied good-humoredly.

Finally, when he was preparing to leave, a young actress took him aside and said: "Father could you possibly let me come to talk with you tomorrow. I have something very important to say." She paused abruptly and drew closer. Glancing anxiously into his eyes, she whispered: "I think I can explain the mystery which brought you to us tonight."

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THE MYSTERY REVEALED

 *think I can explain the mystery which brought you to us tonight.”*

The strange young woman’s statement still lingered in Fr. Mermillod’s mind as he prepared for her arrival. It had not been two full days since the original mysterious visitor had implored Father’s priestly gifts. What was it that he had said: ‘... a lady was in danger of death?’

“What did it all mean?” wondered Father.

His thoughts were interrupted by the announcement of a visitor. Mademoiselle Blanche de Vaudois, the young actress of the previous evening, had come after all.

“Father, I am a Catholic,” she explained, “one of your wandering sheep. I am a cousin of the Countess de Vaudois. My brother and I, orphans at an early age, were educated by her with a mother’s care. After my entrance into society, which was a splendid and utterly successful affair, the world’s pleasures and vanities proved too much for me. I was celebrated and flattered and gradually lost my head. Gifted with what people call a ‘*divine voice*,’ I resolved to try my fortune on the stage, despite every argument that my dear aunt and brother could think of. It well-nigh broke their hearts.

Again, success awaited me. I have been the star of our company for many years. Unfortunately, I abandoned my Catholic religion almost completely. I clung only to the solitary devotion of my Rosary. The last letter I received from my dear brother was written to me from his death bed. In it, he implored me to never abandon praying it.

For some months, now, my fame has been declining. That young actress, whose flashes of wit caused so much laughter last evening, has taken my place. That I could have endured, for although it is hard, it is only what one must expect in our profession. Unfortunately, worse luck was in store for me. I have been almost hissed off the stage more than once. My role was not sympathetic, my nerves were shattered, and I had not my old charm and prestige to save me. My cup was full and I had quite made up my mind last night to end it all.”

Summoning up her courage, she looked Father in the eye: “You see, Father, I was determined to kill myself.” Her utter despair pierced the good priest to the depths of his compassionate heart.

“Everything was planned,” the actress said calmly. “I had marked the place in the lake where I intended to take the final plunge. It was a pool so deep, with banks so high, that once I had thrown myself in, escape was impossible. Here are three letters which I had written to dear friends begging their forgiveness.

My doom seemed certain, and I never dreamed that I could be talked out of doing what I had resolved to do. I felt no fear about death. My mind and heart were numb, dead. I was in the hands of a dark power much greater than my own.”

CHAPTER 4

What a change. Last night, she felt so different, and now... Mlle. Blanche turned back to her listener.

“So you see, Father? I was the lady in danger of death, whom your mysterious visitor begged you to assist.”

The memories of that strange visit came back to Father’s mind. Of all the mysteries surrounding that night, one yet remained unsolved. One question still lingered in Fr. Mermillod’s mind. But the young actress answered him before he even asked.

“He was the spirit of my dear dead brother,” Mlle. Blanche told him. The priest was surprised. That young man who visited him just two days ago? But Blanche was more than positive. “Your description of him was vivid - a detailed picture so clear that there can be no mistake.

He promised in that last broken-hearted letter that he would never stop praying for me before the throne of God.” The sweet memory of her brother brought a smile to the woman’s tearstained face. Only now did Blanche begin to understand the incredible treasure she possessed in her brother’s prayers; a treasure so precious, it was able to purchase the extraordinary graces necessary for her conversion.

“Father, he and you have saved me,” the actress said. “I am ready to confess, if you deem me worthy of your care.”

His heart was now breaking, but it was from joy, not pain. The good priest gently led her to the Confessional and prepared to help her make a good Confession. After she had been restored to the friendship of her loving God and Saviour, she expressed her profound gratitude to Christ and to His priest. Then, she quietly took her leave. Starting that day, Father began to add his own prayers to that of her saintly brother in Heaven.

A few days later, Mademoiselle Blanche ended her contract with the theater. She found time to visit Fr. Mermillod once more, and then left Geneva.

Less than a year later, Father received a letter from Sister Dominique of the Holy Rosary, formerly Blanche de Vaudois, from her home in a Dominican cloister. She assured him that in her religious community she had found perfect peace. Her *divine voice* was now dedicated to the glory of God.

“Use my story as you wish, good Father,” she wrote. “It may help to save other souls like mine from irreparable and eternal ruin.”

We, here at the Catholic Kingdom, have made this story available to all in the hopes that Blanche de Vaudois’ wishes may continue to come true. There is no tribunal of God’s mercy on earth that begins to compare with the Sacrament of Confession. Make use of it frequently. Pray that others who have need of it will be given God’s generous graces, like the young actress who was miraculously saved from despair, suicide, and the eternal fires of hell.

THE END

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