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"Chiefly Among Women"

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MR. GLADSTONE, in his "Political Expostulation," makes use of the following expression in regard to the growth of the Catholic Church in England: "The conquests have been chiefly, as might have been expected, among women." That the ex-Premier intended this as a statement of fact rather than a sneer is very probable; for he evidently endeavors to employ the language of good manners in his controversies, unlike his predecessors in polemics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The debate between him and his distinguished antagonists in the English Hierarchy bears, happily, little resemblance to that between John Milton and Salmasius concerning the royal rights of Charles I. But that, nevertheless, there is a sneer in the quoted expression is scarcely to be denied; and that this sneer had a lodgment in Mr. Gladstone's mind, and escaped thence by a sort of mental wink, if not by his will, is beyond doubt. The pamphlet bears all the internal as well as external marks of haste; it is only a piece of clever "journalism," written for a day, overturned in a day. "Mr. Gladstone lighted a fire on Saturday night which was put out on Monday morning," said the London *Tablet*. But the sneer, whether wilful or not, stands, and cannot be erased or ignored; and it is worth more than a passing consideration. It is an indirect and un-

graceful way of saying that the Catholic Church brings conviction more readily to weaker than to stronger intellects; and that because the "conquests" are "chiefly among women," the progress of the Church among the people is not substantial, general, or permanent. We presume that this is a reasonable construction of the expression.

Whether the first of these propositions be true or not is not pertinent to the practical question contained in the second. We will only remark, in passing it over, that there stands against its verity a formidable list of giant male intellects for which Protestantism and infidelity have failed to furnish a corresponding offset. Students of science and literature and lovers of art will not need to be reminded of the names. That Catholic doctrine is intellectual in the purest and best sense there are the records of nineteen centuries of civilization and letters to offer in evidence. But what Mr. Gladstone invites us to discuss is the power of women in propagating religion. In arriving at a correct estimate we must review, with what minuteness the limits of an article will permit, the part that women have had in the establishment of religion, the intensity, the earnestness, the zeal, the persistence—for these enter largely into the idea of propagation—with which women have accepted and followed the teaching of the Church, and the ability they have exhibited and the success they have achieved in the impression of their convictions upon others. We must take into account the relative natural zealousness of the sexes; for zeal, next to grace, has most to do with the making of "conquests." We must remember the almost invincible weapon which nature has placed in the hands of the weaker sex for approaching and controlling men; the beautiful weapon, affection, which mother, wife, sister, daughter, wield, and for which very few men know of any foil, or against which they would raise one if they did. If we admit, to conciliate Mr. Gladstone, that religion is an affair of the heart as well of the head, he will be gracious enough in return, we apprehend, to concede that women must be potential agents in its propagation.

Surely, it is only thoughtlessness which enables well-read men to assign to women an insignificant place in the establishment of religion, or their reading must have been too much on their own side of the line. Even the pagans were wiser. They recognized the potency of women with an intelligence born of nothing less correct than instinct. Their mythological Titans were equally divided as to sex. A woman was their model of the austerest of virtues: perpetual celibacy. A woman was their goddess of wisdom, and, as opposed to man, the patroness of just and humane warfare. A woman presided over their grain and harvests. Every Grecian city maintained sacred fire on an altar dedicated to Vesta, the protectress of the dearest form of human happiness: the domestic. It was from Hebe the gods accepted their nectar. The nine tutelary deities of the esthetic, the Muses, were women. So were the Fates, who held the distaff, and spun the thread of life, and cut the thread:

> Clotho and Lachesis, whose boundless sway,
> With Atropos, both men and gods obey.

Splendor, Joy, and Pleasure were the Graces. It was a woman who first set the example of parental devotion: Rhea concealing from their would-be destroyers the birth of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto. It was a woman

who first set the example of conjugal fidelity: Alcestis offering to die for Admetus. It was from a woman's name, Alcyone, we have our "halcyon days": Alcyone, who, overcome by grief for her husband, lost at sea, threw herself into the waves, and the gods, to reward their mutual love, transformed them into kingfishers; and when they built their nests the sea is said to have been peaceful in order not to disturb their joys. It was a woman who dared to defy a king in order to perform funeral rites over the remains of her brother. It was a woman, Ariadne, who, to save her lover, Theseus, furnished him the clew out of the Cretan labyrinth, although she abolished thereby the tribute her father was wont to extort from the Athenians. In all that was good, beautiful, and tender the pagans held women pre-eminent; and whether we agree with the earliest Greeks, who believed their mythology fact; or with the philosophers of the time of Euripides, who identified the legends with physical nature; or prefer to accept the still later theory that the deities and heroes were originally human, and the marvelous myths terrestrial occurrences idealized, the eminence of the position accorded to woman is equally significant. Woman was supremely influential, especially in all that related to the heart. She had her place beside the priest. She was the most trusted oracle. She watched the altar-fires. She was worshiped in the temples, and homage was paid to her divinity in martial triumphs and the public games. Whatever was tender and beneficent in the mythical dispensations was associated with her sex. She was the goddess of every kind of love. Excess, luxury, brute-power, were typified by men alone. The pagans knew that love was the most potent influence to which man

was subject; and love with them was but another name for woman. "It is in the heart," says Lamartine, "that God has placed the genius of women, because the works of this genius are all works of love." Plautus, the pagan satirist, offered his weight in gold for a man who could reason against woman's influence. Emerson, a very good pagan in his way, appreciates the subtlety, the directness, and the impervious character of such an influence in the making of conquests. "We say love is blind," he writes, "and the figure of Cupid is drawn with a bandage around his eyes—blind, because he does not see what he does not like; but the sharpest-sighted hunter in the universe is Love, for finding what he seeks, and only that."

Woman holds a very prominent place in the religious history of the Jews. Two books of the Old Testament were written in her exaltation, the Book of Ruth and the Book of Esther, while in the others she is found constantly at the side of man, exercising in religious affairs a recognized power. Patriarchs acknowledge her influence; she is addressed by the Prophets. It was Anna who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. It was to a mother's prayers that Samuel was granted. Sara is honored by mention in the New Testament as a model spouse, and the Church has enshrined her name and her virtues in the universal marriage service. O Miriam directed the triumphant processions and inspired the hosannas of the women of Israel, and was their instructress and guide. As it was then, as now, the custom of the Israelites to separate the men from the women in public worship, Miriam was looked up to as the appointed prophetess of her time. Micah, the prophet, speaking in the name of God, says to the Jews: "I brought thee up out of the

land of Egypt, and I sent before thee Moses and Aaron and Miriam." That she had been appointed by the Lord, conjointly with her brothers, to rescue her people from servitude, appears from her own words in Numbers: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?" It is needless to allude to the esteem in which Noemi and Ruth were held. The widow of Sarephta fed the prophet Elias when she had reason to believe that in so doing she would expose her son and herself to death by famine. The Second Epistle of St. John was written to a woman. The reverence and affection with which the writers in the New Testament speak of the Virgin Mary are too familar to need more than a mention. The women who followed Our Lord were singularly heroic, and the influence which they exerted upon their associates and upon all who came in contact with them must have been correspondingly strong. Woman never insulted, denied, or betrayed Christ:

> Not she with trait'rous kiss her Saviour stung,
> Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;
> She, while Apostles shrank, could danger brave—
> Last at His Cross, and earliest at His grave.

St. Paul himself commends the women who labored with him in spreading the Gospel. It was Lois and Eunice who taught the Scriptures to Timothy. It was in response to the appeals of women that many of the greatest miracles were wrought; Elias and Eliseus both raised the dead to life at the request of women; and Lazarus was restored by Our Lord in pity for his sisters. It was to a woman Our Lord spoke the blessed words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . Go in peace." It was a woman whose faith led her to touch the hem of His garment, confident that thereby she would be made

whole. It was a woman whom He singled out as the object of His Divine love on the Sabbath day, in spite of the malicious remonstrances of the Jews. Almost His last words on the Cross had a woman for their subject. It was woman who followed Him with most unflagging devotion; and it was woman He first greeted after His Resurrection.

We come now to women in the Church militant. The question is no longer, What have women been in religion? but, What have they done? Does the record which they have made for themselves in the propagation of Christianity justify the sneer of the ex-Premier? The implication in Mr. Gladstone's quoted sentence is that, because the Church in England has found her conquests thus far "chiefly among women," the Catholic faith is not making such progress in that country as should create apprehension. He thus raises the issue of woman's potentiality in religion.

We venture to suggest that there is no department of human endeavor in which she is so powerful. Woman's power in the present and the future, as a working disciple of our Lord, is reasonably deducible from her past. We may not argue that tomorrow she will be able to bring others to the knowledge and service of God, if, throughout the long yesterday of the Church, she was indifferent or imbecile. She has little promise if she has not already shown large fulfilment. We may not look to her zeal at the domestic hearth and in cultivated society for fruits worthy an apostle, if, in the crimson ages of Christianity, her sex made no sacrifices, achieved no glory. We may doubt the strength of her intellect, as applied to the science of religion, if the past furnishes no testimony thereof; and we may accept, with some in-

dulgence toward its author, the ex-Premier's sneer upon her efficiency in the active toil of the Church if, in the past, she has not been alert and successful in its various forms of organized intelligence, humanity, and benevolence.

What, then, are the facts? Did women in the early days submit to torture and death, side by side with men, rather than deny their faith in Christ? Was their faith, too, sealed with their blood? Did women share the labor and the danger of teaching the truths of religion? Did they, when such study was extremely difficult, and required more intellect because it enjoyed fewer aids than now, devote themselves to the investigation and elaboration of sacred subjects? Have they contributed anything to the learning and literature of the Church? Have they gone into uncivilized countries as missionaries? Have they furnished conspicuous examples of fidelity to God under circumstances seductive or appalling? Have they founded schools, established and maintained houses for the sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the stranger? Have they crossed the thresholds of their homes, never to re-enter, but to follow whithersoever the Lord beckoned? Has their zeal led them into the smoke and rush of battle, into the dens of pestilence, into squalor and the haunts of crime? Have they proved by evidence which will not be disputed that, to win others to their faith, they have given up everything, they can give up everything, that their faith is dearer to them than all else on earth?

Then, surely, a faith which has made its progress even "chiefly among women" has made a progress as solid as if it were chiefly among men, for no greater things can man do than these.

It is neither possible nor desirable, in an article of narrow limits, to enumerate the women who have taken even a prominent part in the establishment of Christianity through the various agencies which the Church has employed. The notice of each class must be brief, and we shall not formally group them; the testimony will be valid enough, even in a cursory presentation. What have women done to prove their ability to propagate the Faith?

Beginning in the days of the Apostles, we find the blood of women flowing as freely as that of men in vindication of the Christian creed. If men joyfully hastened to the amphitheater, so did they. If men meekly accepted torture and ignominy, so did they. If men defied the ingenuity of cruelty and smiled in their agony, so did they. If men resigned human ambition surrendered possessions, and abandoned luxury, so did they. The annals of the martyrs show, with what degree of accuracy it is difficult now to determine, that if either sex is entitled to higher distinction for the abandonment of everything that human nature holds dear, in order to follow Christ, even to ignominious death, the preeminence is in favor of the weaker sex. It is impossible to read a chapter of the martyrology from the inauguration of persecution until its close without finding therein the names of noble and gentle women illuminated by their own blood.

Contemporaneous with St. Paul is Thecla, who was held in so great veneration in the early ages of Christianity "that it was considered the greatest praise that could be given to a woman to compare her with St. Thecla." She was skilled in profane and sacred science and philosophy, and excelled in the various branches of

polite literature. She is declared one of the brightest ornaments of the Apostolic Age; and one of the Fathers "commends her eloquence and the ease, strength, sweetness, and modesty of her discourse." She was distinguished for "the vehemence of her love for Christ," which she displayed on many occasions with the courage of a martyr and "with a strength of body equal to the vigor of her mind." She was converted by St. Paul about the year 45. Resolving to dedicate her virginity and life to God, she broke an engagement of marriage, and, in spite of the remonstrances of her parents and the entreaties of her betrothed, who was a pagan nobleman, devoted herself to the work of the Gospel. At length authority placed its cruel hand upon her. She was exposed naked in the amphitheater; but her fortitude survived the shock undaunted. The lions forgot their ferocity and licked her feet; and St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Methodius, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and other Fathers confirm the truth of the statement that she emerged from the arena without harm. She was exposed to many similar dangers but triumphantly survived them. She accompanied St. Paul in many of his journeys and died in retirement at Isaura.

Visitors to Rome are taken to the Church of St. Prisca, built on the original site of her house, the house in which St. Peter lodged. Prisca was a noble Roman lady who, on account of her profession of Christianity, was exposed in the amphitheater at the age of thirteen. The lions refusing to devour her, she was beheaded in prison. In the third century we behold St. Agatha displaying a fortitude before her judge which has never been surpassed by man, and suffering without resistance torture of exquisite cruelty: the tearing open of her

bosom by iron shears. In the same century Apollonia, daughter of a magistrate in Alexandria, was baptized by a disciple of St. Anthony, and there appeared an Angel, who threw over her a garment of dazzling white, saying, "Go now to Alexandria and preach the faith of Christ." Many were converted by her eloquence; for her refusal to worship the gods she was bound to a column, and her beautiful teeth were pulled out one by one by a pair of pincers, as an appropriate atonement for her crime. Then a fire was kindled and she was flung into it. Apollonia preaching to the people of Alexandria forms the subject of a famous picture by a favorite pupil of Michael Angelo, Granacci, in the Munich gallery. In the beginning of the fourth century a Roman maiden, whose name is popularly known as Agnes, gave up her life for her faith. "Her tender sex," says a Protestant writer, "her almost childish years, her beauty, innocence, and heroic defense of her chastity, the high antiquity of the veneration paid to her, have all combined to invest the person and character of St. Agnes with a charm, an interest, a reality, to which the most skeptical are not wholly insensible." The son of the Prefect of Rome became enamored of her comeliness, and asked her parents to give her to him as his wife. Agnes repelled his advances and declined his gifts. Then the Prefect ordered her to enter the service of Vesta, and she refused the command with disdain. Chains and threats failed to intimidate her; resort was had to a form of torture so atrocious that her woman's heart, but for a miracle of grace, must have quailed in the pangs of anticipation. She was exposed nude in a place of infamy, and her head fell "in meek shame" upon her bosom. She prayed, and "immediately her hair, which

was already long and abundant, became like a veil, covering her whole person from head to foot; and those who looked upon her were seized with awe and fear as of something sacred, and dared not lift their eyes." When fire refused to consume her body, the executioner mounted the obstinate fagots and ended her torments by the sword. She is the favorite saint of the Roman women; two churches in the Eternal City bear her name; there is no saint whose effigy is older than hers; and Domenichino, Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto have perpetuated her glory.

In the previous year, at Syracuse, Lucia, a noble damsel, refused a pagan husband of high lineage and great riches, preferring to consecrate herself to a Divine Spouse. Her discarded suitor betrayed her to the persecutors from whose hands she escaped by dying in prison of her wounds. Euphemia, who is venerated in the East by the surname of *great,* and to whom four churches are erected in Constantinople, died a frightful death in Chalcedon, four years after Lucia had perished in Syracuse. So general was the homage paid her heroism that Leo the Isaurian ordered that her churches be profaned and her relics be cast into the sea. Devotion found means for evading the mandate, and the sacred remains were preserved. In the same year Catherine, a niece of Constantine the Great, was martyred at Alexandria. From her childhood it was manifest that she had been rightly named "the pure." Her graces of mind and person were the wonder and admiration of the people. Her father was King of Egypt, and she was his heir. When she ascended the throne she devoted herself to the study of philosophy. Plato was her favorite author. It is declared that her scholarship was so profound, so varied,

and so exact that she confounded a company of the ablest heathen philosophers. The Emperor Maximin, failing to induce her to apostatize, had constructed four wheels, armed with blades, and revolving in opposite directions. Between these she was bound; but God miraculously preserved her. Then she was driven from Alexandria, scourged, and beheaded. St. Catherine has been honored for many centuries as the patroness of learning and eloquence. In art St. Jerome's name and hers are frequently associated together as the two patrons of scholastic theology. She carries a book in her hands, like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, to symbolize her learning, and her statue is to be found in the old universities and schools. She was especially honored in the University of Padua, the Alma Mater of Christopher Columbus. In England alone there were upwards of fifty churches dedicated in her name. The painters have loved to treat her as the Christian Urania, the goddess of science and philosophy. She afforded delightful opportunities of genius to Raphael, Guido, Titian, Correggio, Albert Dürer. In the same century and about the same year Barbara, the daughter of a nobleman of Heliopolis, was decapitated by her enraged father on discovering her profession of the Christian Faith; Margaret, who refused to become the wife of a pagan governor, was beheaded at Antioch; Dorothea was slain in Cappadocia.

Sometimes the women of these early days walked to martyrdom with father, husband, brother, or friend; as Domnina and Theonilla; Lucia with Gemmianus, under Diocletian; Daria with Chrysanthus; Cecilia with Valerian, Tiburtius, and Maximus; Flora with Mary in Cordova; Dorothea and her troop of followers; Theo-

dora with Didymus; Victoria and Fortunatus; Bibiana, a young Roman lady, with her father, mother, and sister, whom she inspired and sustained.

Shall we prolong the calendar to show that woman's courage did not expire with the fervor of Apostolic times? There were Tharsilla and Emiliana, aunts of Gregory the Great. There was the English abbess, Ebba, who, with her entire household, perished in the flames of their convent; the noble Helen of Sweden, who was murdered by her relatives in the eleventh century.

Did women seek the solitude of the wilderness and the perils of the forest to serve God as hermits and solitaries? They began the practice of the ascetic life in the Apostolic days; they had formed communities as early as the second century; many lived in couples, as the anchorets Marava and Cyra in the first century; some imitated the example of Mary of Egypt, who spent twenty-seven years in isolation. There were the Irish hermits, Maxentia who dwelt in France, and Modneva, who in the ninth century, for seven years lived all alone in the Island of Trent. St. Bridget, of Ireland, had her first cell in the trunk of an oak-tree.

When we undertake to answer what sacrifices women have made for religion it is difficult to frame an adequate reply with sufficient brevity. From the day that St. Catherine gave up the throne of Egypt until this hour women have been sacrificing for the Catholic Faith everything. If the objects of their attachment are fewer than those of men, their domestic love is of more exquisite sensibility, and its sacrifice is in many cases not the result of an instant's strong resolve, but the slow martyrdom of a lifetime. Nearly all the early heroines of Christianity were women of high social position, of rich and

luxurious homes, and many were noted for their beauty, their culture, or their address. Some were on the eve of happy betrothals; yet Eucratis spurns a lover, and Rufina and Secunda depart from apostate husbands. It was to the courage and self-sacrifice of their respective wives that the martyrs Hadrian and Valerian are indebted for their palms. In the fourth century we see the Empress Helen, mother of Constantine the Great, when fourscore years of age, proceeding from Constantinople to Palestine for the purpose of adorning churches and worshiping Our Lord in the regions consecrated by His presence. It was she who discovered the true Cross of Christ. In the seventh century Queen Cuthburge of England resigned royal pleasures, founded a convent, and lived and died in it. In the seventh century Hereswith, Queen of the East-Angles, withdrew from royalty, and became an inmate of the convent in Chelles, France. Queen Bathilde, of France, followed her thither as soon as her son, Clotaire III, had reached his majority, "and obeyed her superior as if she were the last sister in the house." The abbess herself, who was also of an illustrious family, was "the most humble and most fervent," and "showed by her conduct that no one commands well or with safety who has not first learned and is not always ready to obey well." Radegunde, another queen of France, also passed from a court to a cloister. In the ninth century Alice, Empress of Germany, presented, in two regencies, the extraordinary power of religion in producing a wise and efficient administration of political affairs. She was virtually a recluse living and acting in the splendor of a throne. Is it necessary more than to allude to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, or to her niece, Queen Elizabeth of Portugal, who, after a glorious career, to which we shall

allude in another connection, joined the Order of Poor Clares? In the East, Pulcheria, the Empress, granddaughter of Theodosius the Great, withdrew from a régime in which she was the controlling spirit, and did not end her austere retirement until urgently requested to do so by Pope St. Leo. At her death she bequeathed all her goods and private estates to the poor. Queen Maud of England walked daily to church barefoot, wearing a garment of sackcloth, and washed and kissed the feet of the poor. It was a queen, Jane of France, who became the foundress of the Nuns of the Annunciation.

When we consider the part that woman has had in the formation of the various Religious Orders, the temerity of the ex-Premier in belittling her influence assumes still greater proportions. The undeniable fact that Protestantism has never been able permanently to maintain a single community of women, either for contemplation or benevolence, proves that the Catholic Church alone is the sphere in which women's religious zeal finds its fullest and most complete expression; that it is the Catholic Faith alone which thoroughly arouses and solidly supports the enthusiasm of her nature, and embodies her ardor into a useful and enduring form. The achievements of women in the Religious Orders demonstrate that it is impossible to exaggerate this enthusiasm or to overestimate the subtle influence which she exerts in society, Catholic and non-Catholic. Human nature, in whatever creed, bows in involuntary homage to the woman who has left her home, and father and mother, brother, sister, and friends, to follow Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This instinct is as old as man. The pagan Greek, the brutal Roman, punished with almost incredible severity offences against their oracles and vestals. His-

tory furnishes no instances of a nation possessing a religion however ridiculous, a worship however coarse and senseless, which did not award exceptional deference to the virgins consecrated to the service of its gods. Christianity, which emancipated woman from the domestic slavery in which usage had placed and law confirmed her; which made her man's peer by its indissoluble marriage tie; and which compelled courts and judges to modify barbarous statutes affecting her civil rights as well as her conjugal relations, has been rewarded by eighteen hundred years of unflagging zeal and unshrinking heroism. If woman had done nothing in the household for the Church; if she had been indifferent as a wife and incompetent as a mother; if in the world the sex were merely frivolous, pretty things, such as Diderot would describe with "the pen dipped in the humid colors of the rainbow, and the paper dried with the dust gathered from the wings of a butterfly"; if they had never done anything for religion except what they have done out of the world, in the shade, as it were, Christianity would still have been the gainer, civilization would owe them a vast balance, and the sneer of the ex-Premier would be found to describe only his own bitterness.

There has been no Salic law in the Catholic Church. Her crowns cover women's heads as well as men's; women themselves have vindicated their right to spiritual royalty. The activity of women for the spread of the Gospel began, as we have seen, in the days of the Apostles, when the preaching of Thecla, the exhortations of many women converts, and the courageous utterances of those being led to martyrdom, won multitudes to Christ. The monastic life of woman is as old as that of man. Indeed,

our word *nun,* derived from the Greek, passed into the latter language from the Egyptian, in which it was synonymous with *fair, beautiful.* As rapidly as Christianity moved over the world women joyfully accepted its precepts and hastened to its propagation. Lamartine says that "nature has given women two painful but heavenly gifts, which distinguish them, and often raise them above human nature: compassion and enthusiasm. By compassion they devote themselves; by enthusiasm they exalt themselves." These two gifts find their freest exercise in conventual life, whether strictly contemplative, as the monastic life in the East was in the beginning, or contemplative and benevolent, as it became in the West. It was, therefore, only natural that women of all degrees should listen to the voice of God, summoning them to this state. It was not natural, however, to sever the domestic ties which nature herself had made and religion had blessed. It was no easier in the days of Ebba and Bega than in those of Angela Merici, or St. Teresa, or Catherine McAuley, for the daughter to bid a final farewell to her home and its endearments for an existence of self-immolation, of prayer, of obedience, of humility, and often of hunger and cold, sickness, danger, and want. That women in large numbers have, nevertheless, chosen this which the world calls the worse life and the Apostle the better, from the time of the Apostles to the present day, shows that it is in religion they reach the zenith of their capabilities; for they have made no such sacrifices, they have achieved no such successes, in art, in science, nor in literature. They have entered the service of the Church through the convent gate, in spite of difficulties which would often have debarred men even from the entertainment of the design.

Their toil in the convents has been wholly in the service of mankind. The history of the conventual life of women is not divisible from that of civilization, and in rapidly sketching it we shall discover chapters on the progress of religion, the organization of benevolence, the preservation of learning, and the spread of education. The assistance which women have rendered to the last two has not been properly appreciated.

The catalogue of eminent foundresses is too long to be considered in detail. Every country, every century, has its list of noble virgins, of wealthy widows, or of mothers whose maternal duty was done, building houses for established Orders, or, under the authority of the Church, founding additional communities, always with a specific design; for the Church takes no step without an intelligent purpose. Among these women have been many who were remarkable in more qualities than piety, in other conditions than social distinction; and it is a fact which will scarcely bear debate that it has been inside the convents, or, if outside, under the direction and inspiration of religion, that the mind of woman has enjoyed freest scope and produced palpable and permanent results. It is true that there have been great women in profane history, ancient and modern: a Cleopatra and Semiramis, a Catherine in Russia, and an Elizabeth in England; in literature a De Staël, a "George Sand," and a "George Eliot"; in histrionic art, in poetry, and in court circles, many women have equaled and outshone men; and in science they have significantly contributed to medicine and mathematics. But the annals of women in religion reveal the heroic characteristics of the sex developed far beyond the limit reached in the world.

We have just mentioned St. Elizabeth, Queen of

Portugal. What woman has surpassed her in perseverance, that most difficult of feminine virtues? What man has surpassed the utterness of her love for God, that sublimest of virtues in either sex? At eight years of age she began to fast on appointed days; she undertook, of her own accord, to practise great mortifications; she would sing no songs but hymns and psalms; "and from her childhood she said every day the whole office of the Breviary, in which no priest could be more exact." Her time was regularly divided, after her marriage to the King of Portugal, between her domestic duties and works of piety. She visited and nursed the sick, and dressed their most loathsome sores. "She founded," says Butler, "in different parts of the kingdom, many pious establishments, particularly a hospital near her own palace at Coïmbra, a house for penitent women who had been seduced into evil courses," thus anticipating the future Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She built a "hospital for foundlings, or those children who, for want of due provision, are exposed to the danger of perishing in poverty or of the neglect or cruelty of unnatural parents." She won her ruffianly husband, by patience and sweetness, to a Christian life, and induced him to found, with royal munificence, the University of Coïmbra. She averted wars, and reconciled her husband and son when their armies were marching against each other. She made peace between Ferdinand IV and the claimant of his crown, and between James II of Aragon and Frederick IV of Castile. What woman of profane history furnishes so illustrious and so substantial a record as this? Religion alone supplied its motive and maintained its progress.

The foundress of the Poor Clares, St. Clare of Assisi,

was the daughter of a knight, and had to suffer contumely and opprobrium for entering the religious state instead of accepting proffered marriage. Her sister and mother were led by her virtues to follow her example, and they founded houses of the Poor Clares in all the principal cities of Italy and Germany. They wore no covering on their feet, slept on the ground, practised perpetual abstinence, and never spoke except when compelled by necessity or charity. St. Clare's great fortune she gave to the poor, without reserving a farthing for herself. What but religion could suggest, sustain, and crown so martyr-like a life as this? The Little Sisters of the Poor are perhaps near the model which St. Clare became; and the Little Sister of the Poor is greater in the sight of Almighty God and in the honest reverence of the human heart than a De Staël or a "Sand"!

We merely allude to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, the foundress of the Order of the Visitation, whom our American widow, Mother Seton, foundress of our Sisters of Charity, so strangely resembled in certain properties of character and circumstances of life. The conspicuous virtue of these two women was the same: humility. Space forbids more than an allusion to other noted foundresses: Angela Merici, mother of the Ursulines; Catherine McAuley, of the Sisters of Mercy; Blessed Mother Barat, of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart; Nano Nagle, of the Sisters of the Presentation; and those holy, brave, and zealous women who are today leading their respective communities in every part of the world, whom to name, even in illustration of an argument, would be to offend. They are exercising within convent walls the sacrifices which made martyrs. They are sending pioneers of religion to the frontiers of

civilization, equipping hospitals, asylums, and schools wherever and whenever called; carrying out faithfully on our continent the example set them by the foundresses of American charitable institutions; for our first hospital in New France was managed by three nuns from Dieppe, the youngest but twenty-two years of age; and in 1639 a widow of Alençon and a nun from Dieppe, with two Sisters from Tours, established an Ursuline Academy for girls at Quebec. Bancroft says: "As the youthful heroines stepped on the shore at Quebec they stooped to kiss the earth, which they adopted as their mother, and were ready, in case of need, to tinge with their blood. The governor, with the little garrison, received them at the water's edge; Hurons and Algonquins, joining in the shouts, filled the air with yells of joy; and the motley group escorted the newcomers to the church, where, amidst a general thanksgiving, the *Te Deum* was chanted. Is it wonderful that the natives were touched by a benevolence which their poverty and squalid misery could not appal? Their education was also attempted; and the venerable ash-tree still lives beneath which Mary of the Incarnation, so famed for chastened piety, genius, and good judgment, toiled, though in vain, for the culture of Huron children." Could anything but religion enable delicately-reared women to turn a last look upon the sunny slopes of France, where remained everything that their hearts cherished, and set out in 1639, in a slow ship, over an almost unknown ocean, with certain expectation never to return, and equally certain that in the new land they would encounter an almost perpetual winter and incur all the perils of the instincts of savages? What stately woman's figure rises in profane history to the height of Mary of the Incarnation?

The part that woman has had in the building up and the spread of education has not, so far as we are aware, been adequately written. Perhaps it never will be; for the materials of at least fifteen centuries are, for the most part, carefully buried in convent archives, and their modest keepers shun publicity. The lack of popular knowledge in this portion of the history of education has induced the erroneous supposition that woman has done little or nothing for the mental progress of the race; that, until recently, the sex received slight instruction and possessed only superficial and effeminate acquirements; and that the free facilities which woman are reaching after indicate an entirely new, an unwritten, chapter in the culture of the sex.

Each of these suppositions is unwarranted by facts. Women have shared in the establishment of educational institutions from the earliest period of which we have authentic record. Their resources have founded schools, their talents have conducted them. Whenever, from the days of St. Catherine to those of Nano Nagle, special efforts have been made to teach the people, women have furnished their full share of energy and brains. The opportunities which, even in periods of exceptional darkness or disturbance, were afforded for the higher education of women, were far in advance of the standard which prejudice or ignorance has associated with women in the past; and the increasing demand which we have on every side for a more substantial and scholarly training for the sex does not look forward to that which they have never had, but backward to what they have lost or abandoned.

Again we find Mr. Gladstone's sneer answered; for religion, the Catholic religion, has been the sole inspiration

of the part that woman has had in popular education. The magnitude of that part we will only outline; but enough will be shown of woman as a foundress, a teacher, and a scholar to indicate the rank to which she is entitled as an educator, and the motive which enabled her to attain it.

There were very few convents for women which were not also schools and academies for their sex. Many Christian women, even in the days of the Fathers, were not only skilled in sacred science, but in profane literature, and these, naturally and inevitably, taught the younger members of their own households, and, when they entered the service of the Church, became teachers of the children of the people. In the fourth century Hypatia, invited by the magistrates of Alexandria to teach philosophy, led many of her pupils to Christianity, although she herself did not have the grace to embrace it, and her learning induced many women to undertake profound studies. We have spoken of St. Catherine, who confuted the pagan philosophers of that city of schools, and whose erudition was the delight of her contemporaries. The mothers and sisters in those early days were not only willing but able to teach the science of Christianity and letters. St. Paul, as we saw, speaks of the instruction Timothy received from his mother, Lois, and his grandmother, Eunice. It was St. Marcrina who taught St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyassa. It was Theodora who instructed Cosmas and Damian. "Even as early as the second century," says a distinguished scholar, "the zeal of religious women for letters excited the bile and provoked the satire of the enemies of Christianity." St. Fulgentius was educated by his mother. So solicitous was she about the purity of his Greek accent "that she made him learn

by heart the poems of Homer and Menander before he studied his Latin rudiments." It was St. Paula who moved St. Jerome to some of his greatest literary labors; and the latter assures us that the gentle St. Eustochium wrote and spoke Hebrew without Latin adulteration. St. Chrysostom dedicated seventeen letters to St. Olympias; and St. Marcella, on account of her rare acquirements, was known as "the glory of the Roman ladies." St. Melania and St. Cæsaria were noted for their accomplishments.

Montalembert declares that literary pursuits were cultivated in the seventh and eighth centuries in the convents in England, "with no less care and perseverance" than in the monasteries, "and perhaps with still greater enthusiasm." The nuns were accustomed "to study holy books, the Fathers of the Church, and even classical works." St. Gertrude translated the Scriptures into Greek. It was a woman who introduced the study of Greek into the famous monastery of St. Gall. The erudite author of "Christian Schools and Scholars," says that "the Anglo-Saxon nuns very early vied with the monks in their application to letters." There is preserved a treatise on virginity by Aldhelm, in the seventh century, which contains an illumination representing him teaching a group of nuns. St. Boniface directed the studies of many convents of women.

Hildelitha, the first English *religieuse,* had received her education at the convent of Chelles, in France, "and brought into the cloisters of Barking all the learning of that famous school." This institution, about five leagues from Paris, was founded by St. Clotilda, and one of its abbesses in the ninth century was Gisella, a pupil of Alcuin and sister of Charlemagne. It was in a convent

school, that of Roncerai, near Angers, that Heloise received her education in classics and philosophy; and Hallam, who finds little to remark concerning convent schools, because, we presume, their archives were not searched by him, says that the "Epistles of Abelard and Eloisa, especially those of the latter, are, as far as I know, the first book that gives any pleasure in reading for six hundred years, since the 'Consolation' of Boethius." The learning of St. Hilda was so highly esteemed that "more than once the holy abbess assisted at the deliberation of the Bishops assembled in council or in synod, who wished to take the advice of her whom they considered so especially enlightened by the Holy Spirit." Queen Editha, wife of Edward the Confessor, taught grammar and logic.

The scholarly women of the time were not all in England. Richtrude, daughter of Charlemagne, had a Greek professor. The historian from whom we have already quoted says, in "Christian Schools and Scholars," that the examples of learning in the cloisters of nuns were not "confined to those communities which had caught their tone from the little knot of literary women educated by St. Boniface." It was the natural and *universal development of the religious life.*

Guizot ranks "among the gems of literature" the account of the death of St. Cæsaria, written by one of her sisters. Radegunde, queen of Clothaire I, read the Greek and Latin Fathers familiarly. St. Adelaide, Abbess of Gelden, in the tenth century, had received a learned education, and imparted her attainments to the young of her sex. Hroswitha, a nun of Gandersheim, in the tenth century, wrote Latin poems and stanzas, which prove, says Spalding, "that in the institutions of learning at that

day classical literature was extensively and successfully cultivated by women as well as by men." In the twelfth century the Abbess Hervada wrote an encyclopedia, "containing," remarks Mgr. Dupanloup, "all the science known in her day."

Nor were women content to study and teach in their native countries. When St. Boniface needed teachers in Germany to complete the conversion and civilization of the country, he endeavored to enlist the enthusiasm of the English women of learning and piety; and Chunehilt and her daughter Berathgilt were the first to listen to his appeal. They are called by the historian *valde eruditæ in liberali scientia.* The Abbess Lioba, distinguished for her scholarship and her executive ability, also accepted the invitation of Boniface, and thirty nuns, of whom she was the head, reached Antwerp after a stormy passage, and were received at Mentz by the archbishop, who conducted them to the convent at Bischofsheim, which he had erected for Lioba. St. Boniface declared that he loved Lioba on account of her solid learning; *eruditionis sapientia.* Walburga, a subordinate of Lioba, went into Thuringia, and became abbess of the Convent of Heidesheim, where she and her nuns cultivated letters as diligently as in their English home. The Church herself watched over these efforts of women to elevate their sex; for the Council of Cloveshoe, held in 747, exhorts abbesses diligently to provide for the education of those under their charge. In so great admiration and affection did St. Boniface hold Lioba that he requested that her remains might be buried in Fulda, so that they might together await the Resurrection. Lioba survived the Saint twenty-four years, during which she erected many convents and received signal assistance from Charlemagne.

The convent schools maintained by these disciples of St. Boniface were not the only ones in which women obtained more culture than is accorded to them in our own boastful time. At Gandersheim the course of study included Latin and Greek, the philosophy of Aristotle, and the liberal arts. One of the abbesses of this convent was the author of a treatise on logic "much esteemed among the learned of her own time." It would be easy enough to continue this record; to carry on the chain of woman's assistance, always under the guidance of religion, in the educational development of Europe. It is not easy to avoid dwelling on the aid she rendered in the foundation of colleges; of the standing which she attained in the universities, where, both as student and professor, she won with renown and wore with modesty the highest degrees and honors.

The catalogue of that metropolis of learning, the University of Bologna, a Papal institution, contains the names of many women who appeared to enviable advantage in its departments of canon law, medicine, mathematics, art, and literature. The period which produced Vittoria Colonna, who received her education in a convent, discovers Properzia de Rossi teaching sculpture in Bologna; the painter Sister Plautilla, a Dominican; Marietta Tintoretto, daughter of the "Thunder of Art," herself a celebrated portrait-painter, whose work possessed many of the best qualities of her father's; Elizabeth Sirani, who painted and taught in Bologna; and Elena Cornaro admitted as a doctor at Milan. We find a woman architect, Plautilla Brizio, working in Rome in the seventeenth century, building a palace and the chapel of St. Benedict. In the Papal universities, as late as the eighteenth century, women took degrees in

jurisprudence and philosophy; among them, Victoria Delfini, Christina Roccati, and Laura Bassi, in the University of Bologna, and Maria Amoretti in that of Pavia. In 1758 Anna Mazzolina was professor of anatomy in Bologna, and Maria Agnesi was appointed by the Pope professor of mathematics in the University of Bologna. Novella d'Andrea taught canon law in Bologna for ten years. A woman was the successor of Cardinal Mezzofanti as professor of Greek. Statues are erected to the memory of two women who taught botany in the universities of Bologna and Genoa. It is well to mention these facts as a sufficient reply to the flippant charge, too frequently made, that the Catholic Church is "opposed" to the higher education of women.

The relation of women in religion to the education and refinement of the present day can be lightly passed over. In the convent schools in every part of the world young women receive the best education now available for their sex. The demands of society have affected the curriculum. It is not as abstract or classical or thorough as in the time of Lioba and Hroswitha, but it is the best; and it will return to the classical standard as quickly as women themselves make the demand. In a word, the Orders of teaching women in the Catholic Church are, we repeat, a sufficient answer to Mr. Gladstone's sneer at the status of women in religion. It was out of these that arose Catherine of Siena: orator, scholar, diplomat, saint. Of these was St. Teresa, whom Mgr. Dupanloup characterizes as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, prose writer in Spanish literature. There have been hundreds and thousands of women who, moved by the Spirit of God to His service, have found within convent walls opportunities for culture which so-

ciety denies, and who, in the carrying out of His Divine will, have made more sacrifices, attained higher degrees of perfection, and lived lives of sweeter perfume and nobler usefulness than the mind of Mr. Gladstone appears to be able to conceive. A religion which makes conquests enough among women, since it can inspire, control, and direct them thus, is the religion which must conquer the world.

Finally, Mr. Gladstone forgot the subtle power of mother and wife, and the marriage laws of the Catholic Church. The mother's influence for good or evil, but especially for good, to which she most inclines, is second to none that moves the heart of man. Whether it be Cornelia, pointing to the Gracchi as her jewels; or Monica, pursuing and persuading St. Augustine; Felicitas, exhorting her seven sons to martyrdom; or the mothers of St. Chrysostom, St. Basil and St. Anselm converting their children to firmness in holiness; or whether it be the untutored mother of the savage, or the unfortunate head of a household setting an unwomanly example, the mother's voice, issuing from her quivering lips or coming back silently from the tomb, is heard when all other sounds of menace, of appeal, of reproach, or of tenderness fail to reach the ear. Every mother makes her sex venerable to her son. The mother's love is above all logic; it destroys syllogisms, refutes all argument. It cannot be reasoned against; and when the salvation of the child is the motive, there is no power given to man to withstand its seduction. "It shrinks not where man cowers, and grows stronger where man faints, and over the wastes of worldly fortune sends the radiance of its quenchless fidelity." Christ himself upon the Cross was not unmindful of His Mother; yet He was God! Says

Napoleon Bonaparte: "The destiny of the child is always the work of the mother." To the end of time she will be, as she has ever been, "The holiest thing alive."

The faith of the mothers, if they believe in it, must become the faith of the sons and the daughters. That the Catholic mother believes, even Mr. Gladstone will hesitate to deny. In no faith but the Catholic have mothers accompanied their sons to martyrdom. In no faith but the Catholic is the mother taught to believe, while still a child at her mother's breast, that she will be held responsible for the eternal welfare of her children; that they must be saved with her, or she must perish with them. For this salvation she will toil and pray and weep; for this she will spend days of weariness and nights without sleep; for this religion will keep her heart brave, and her lips eloquent, and her hand gentle and strong. For this she will work as neither man nor woman works for aught else; and for this she will lay down her life, but not until her sublime purpose is accomplished. That done, she is ready to die.

> Hath she not, then, for pains and fears,
> The day of woe, the watchful night
> For all her sorrow, all her tears,
> An over-payment of delight?

If the mothers of England become Catholic, England becomes Catholic. The law is of nature. Love must [illegible], if talent partly fails; for even in heaven the Sera[illegible]m, signifying love, are nearer God than the Cherubim, [illegible]ifying knowledge.

What One Woman Did

By I. T. M.

SOME time ago a relative of mine died in a western city. Since the days of the Civil War, when her father went to the front, that woman had taught school. For many years, she had been principal of the leading school in her city. She never wanted to vote, never attended a teacher's political rally, never cried out for "equal pay," because, being deserving and competent, she received it without the asking. In her whole lifetime, she never attended a meeting of the board of education, and as the board changed, never made any attempt to curry favor with the powers that be. What was the result? She was loved by her pupils, and her friends were as numerous as the sands on the shore. When she died, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, a former pupil, said that no man had done for the city, what that unpretentious teacher had done, and that her life was a model which the younger teachers might well imitate. The schools of the city were closed for her funeral, and the church was not large enough to hold the friends who gathered to pay a last tribute to her worth.

Women of leisure, look about you for opportunities to make the world brighter and to do good to your fellow-men! Seek out the little children suffering for a mother's love and care; seek out the young women struggling for an existence in a great city; seek out the poor and the lowly, and minister to them. Though the applause of the multitude or the glamor of the soap-box does not reward your efforts, look to the time when you may hope to hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant," of the Master." What richer guerdon is there than that?