

had grown dim, until, as the years went on, its light was almost extinct.

To such a man, the life of M. Guillemont was unmeaning mockery. Soured and enraged by the hateful disease which in the prime of his manhood had laid him low, this poor wretch felt nothing but irritation and envy at the health and strength which he saw in the chaplain. The maxims of infidelity which had for years replaced in his heart the sweet teachings of the Gospel, made him anyhow regard the presence of the priest with what was little short of loathing; while his sufferings, unrelieved by any tinge of Christian resignation caused him to regard the chaplain's visits almost in the light of insults.

"You are not wanted here," he would say, as the priest, unmoved by his rebuffs, paused by his bed in his passage through the ward. "I am not a believer. Speak to those who are, I know too much about priests."

"Alas, my poor child," the chaplain would answer, "it is not for my own sake or my own pleasure that I visit you. I come to plead with you for your soul."

It is needless to dwell upon the replies which the dying sinner made to such appeals. Suffice it to say that as the days went by, M. Guillemont's patience never failed, that he never passed the bed of the wretched infidel without doing all he could to relieve his sufferings and without, above all, imploring the poor man to have pity upon his own soul and to turn to God.

At length it was plain that the sick man's end was near. The last stage of the disease was upon him. The chaplain now redoubled his efforts to win this soul for heaven.

With burning words he exhorted him to cleanse himself from his sins before it was too late.

"In a few hours," he said, "you will be in eternity. Nothing can now save your life. It rests with you to say whether, when yonder sun next rises, your soul is safely on its way to heaven or in the everlasting prison of hell. Which is it to be?"

"But, my good sir," replied the patient, "it is no use your talking of such things to me. Though I believed them once." He added with a sigh.

The priest saw his opportunity.

"Yes," he said, "think of that time. Think of your happiness then. Can you recall the moment of your First Communion with your mother kneeling near? Can you truly say that your after life has given you any happiness to compare with the peace and joy of that bright and happy morning long ago?"

"Stop, spare me," moaned the dying man. "Why do you torment me by recalling the past, which can never come back to me? Why do you not leave me at least as much peace as I can have with this loathsome disease?"

"Your peace may be beyond all words if you will but turn to the God of Peace. From whose hands did you receive the happiness the memory of which thrills you at this moment? From the hands of Jesus Christ. He is ready once more to bestow upon your heart this peace and happiness, if you will but let Him. I speak in His name, and I offer you His peace. I am the priest of Jesus Christ. If you listen to my words, our Lord will listen to you when, in a few short hours, you stand before His Throne."

The dying man lay silent for a few moments. There was no sign in his face—so scored with the ravages of disease—of the struggle which was going on in his soul. That contest, old as creation, was raging in his poor fluttering heart—the contest between good and evil.

At last it seemed that his harassed mind had reached some conclusion. The glassy eyes opened once more and turned towards the chaplain.

"You tell me," he said, "that you are the priest of Jesus Christ. But you do not imitate Him. You value your life like any other man. If you love Jesus Christ and believe that He is awaiting you, you should wish for death, and even court it, as a means of joining your Master."

"My son," replied the priest, meekly, "I am but a man, and I have, therefore, a man's natural clinging to life. Still, when God calls me, I trust Him that He will give me grace to face death. And indeed my life is not so dear to me but that I would willingly give it up for Christ's sake, or for the least of His redeemed."

"I do not believe it," replied the other. "It is easy to speak as you do in full health, and you are obliged, as a priest, to say such things. It is part of your profession. If you are sincere in your contempt for life, your readiness to die, and your belief in Christ, give me a proof. You see the state I am in. You see my face, black and fetid with the illness which is destroying me. You tell me that for Christ's sake you love me. Prove it. Stoop down and kiss my face, and I will believe in you and in Him whose priest you are. Risk your life by placing your lips against mine, and I will do all you ask."

Without a moment's hesitation, the holy man stretched out his arms, and folding them round the dying man, as a mother fondles her sick child, he stooped down and imprinted a kiss upon the fevered and discoloured face.

The victory was won. The zeal, true to death, of the holy priest had triumphed. Old memories of the happy past flooded the soul and softened the heart of the sinner. It was a heroic act of faith in the truth of what he taught which the chaplain had just made. He was under no mistake as to the risk he ran, when, to rescue that soul from hell, he kissed those parched and blackened lips. It was his life which he offered for that brother's soul, and he knew it well.

His sacrifice was accepted.

With hot tears, such as since childhood he had never shed, the dying man began to implore the priest for those life-giving sacraments which but a few moments before he had so proudly rejected. With his new-born humility, his faith of long ago once more revived.

An hour after, the sin-laden soul shone bright with the grace of God. The forgiving Lord—so long rejected and outraged—came to the dying bed the moment the sinner invited Him. The loving Saviour, in the Sacrament of His Love, came, as He always comes to those who call, to help that poor soul, who for so many years had been His enemy. There was no reproach—nothing but love and forgiveness, as though He Himself were receiving a favour which had long been denied Him, in being allowed at last to rescue the fallen soul from the devil's snares.

The end was not long delayed. With humble prayers for mercy with his hand clasping that of the priest who had given his life for his salvation, the penitent sinner breathed his last.

But the price of this sudden and wonderful conversion had still to be paid. Scarcely had the grave closed over the convert's body, when the chaplain began to feel the first approach of the dreadful disease. But in his brave heart there was neither regret nor fear. He had counted the cost, and with calm resignation he laid himself down to die.

At first it was thought that his seizure was but slight, and his friends tried to encourage him with the hope that his was one of the few cases in which the dread disease could be successfully combated.

A dear friend who visited him at this time, Mous, La Serre, the Vice-President of the Ecole, attempted to instil this hope into the priest's heart.

"We will soon see you back," he said, "teaching our boys. They are longing to have their old chaplain again."

For the first time since his illness began, the sick man seemed disturbed.

"Ah! those classes," he sighed. "I should like to have held them once more. But," he continued, his face brightening as he spoke, "it is God's will, and I will not wish it otherwise. No, do deceive yourself. I shall not recover. I have offered my mortal life to gain life eternal for the poor soul, and our Lord has deigned to accept the sacrifice."

He never for a moment entertained any expectation that he would recover.

A few hours later, with the calmness which is alike the reward and the accompaniment of a good life, M. Guillemont received the last sacraments, and within a few days gave up his pure soul to God.

Can we doubt that God received him? Surely not. What our Lord chiefly requires from us is love, and with His own Divine lips He has told us that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend."—*The Month*.

C R E M A T I O N .

(By a Theologian, in the Liverpool *Catholic Times*.)

It is difficult to account for the revival of this pagan custom. The reasons against it are so strong and the plea for it so weak that we are compelled to think it is based on a radical misconception both of facts and principles. It is without doubt a practical subject of the day. Crematoriums are established in some places, and in others will soon be pouring forth their unsavoury fumes. There seem to be many persons who desire their dead bodies to be burned and who balance the prospect as against its repulsive features in its favour. The objections against the practice, however, are such that we doubt whether it will spread widely or prevail for any long time.

Religion is against it. As a fact the religious mind, feeling, and sentiment condemn it. No Catholic opinion is to be found on its side. Earnest thoughtful persons in every place dislike it. This fact is plain and notorious. Yet here science steps in and interposes its veto. Religion declares ought not to speak on the matter. This arrogant claim of scientific men will assuredly be resisted. For it is not a purely scientific question. Of all bigots the scientific bigot is the most obstinate and the most conceited. His notions and conclusions may abide in his mind for only twenty-four hours, but so long as they there abide they are god-like and infallible. The scientist may expel them himself, but no other man may so much as touch them. The scientific veto, therefore, must be despised. Science is not everything, and the limits of science must be clearly ascertained.

The Catholic Church has never sanctioned cremation. The burning of dead bodies may be allowed in some cases for exceptional