

ON HOLY COMMUNION.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER IX.

THE EUCHARIST.

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III. - ON THE HOLY COMMUNION.

574 Communion of a Child a Year Old. -

It was the custom in the first ages of the Church, as I think I have already told you, my very dear friends, to administer the Holy Eucharist to little children, whilst they were still in their baptismal innocence.

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who was martyred in 258, relates a very extraordinary fact on this subject, of which he was himself a witness. At the time of the great persecution of the Emperor Decius, a father and mother took flight so hastily that they left behind them, in a cradle, a little girl still on the breast.

Her nurse, who would not be encumbered with her brought her to the magistrates of Carthage. The chief magistrate did not wish her to be confined to the dungeons as he would be obliged to do if the courts determined her to be a Christian child. As she was scarcely a year old, and unable to eat anything solid, they made her swallow some bread, which they had soaked in wine offered to the idols, in order that she might be regarded as no longer a Christian. Then, a kind-hearted wet-nurse was found for her. Some time after, the initial heat of persecution having somewhat abated, this little girl was restored to her mother, who, not knowing what had happened, took her with her to a house where the Christians were, secretly assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. A strange thing, and one that shows, dear friends, with what purity of heart we should participate in the Holy Mysteries, the little girl could not remain a moment quiet after the Offertory; she cried, she struggled, tormenting her mother, and seeming as though she were trying to explain by signs what had passed before the magistrates. This was not, at first, understood by the onlookers.

At the moment of

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Holy Communion, the deacon went amongst the faithful, according to the pious custom of that time presenting the chalice which contained the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Each one drank a little, because then the laity themselves communicated under both species. Coming to the little girl, the deacon would have her swallow some drops; but the poor child began to stamp and kick, to turn away her head, close her lips, and push away the chalice with her little hands. They succeeded, nevertheless, in making her swallow some drops of the consecrated wine; but immediately her stomach turned, and she threw up all she had taken. Of course this was then reverently interred in the earth for natural decomposition. The precious blood of Christ could not remain in a heart which had been defiled by the presence of wine offered to idols. The presiding priest finally was spiritually enlightened as to what had occurred to the poor child and gave her a special exorcism blessing of the Church. The child immediately settled and received some drops of the Precious Blood with coos of delight. If such was Our Lord's repugnance to enter the heart of a child, who knew not what it did, with what horror he must descend into hearts defiled by sin!

- GENEVAUX, *Hist. Chois.*, 237.

575. *The host in the Mire! -*

Would it not be an abominable crime, my friends, to let a Sacred Host, fall on the ground through neglect? But it is a much more heinous one to place it in a defiled heart. I remember a fact which has some relation to that. In the Monastery of Philozenes, situated in the Island of Cyprus, lived a poor man, who wept incessantly for several years, by night as well as by day. One day a celebrated religious, named John Mosch, having come with several others to visit this monastery, was strangely surprised at sight of this singular monk.

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He was asked to suspend the course of his tears, and tell them the cause of a grief so extraordinary. "Father!" they said to him, "why do you weep so? Know you not that it is only God alone who is without sin?"

-- "Ah! Fathers, you never found in the whole world a sinner like unto me; no, there is no crime to equal that which I had the misfortune to commit, and for which I will never cease asking pardon of God. Hear me and judge for yourselves. When I was still in the world my wife and I had the misfortune to follow the heresy of the Severians. Returning home one day, I was surprised not to find my wife; I asked for her and sought her some time. I learned then that she was gone to the house of a neighbour, who was a Catholic; that she was converted and they were to communicate together that same morning. Full of rage on hearing this, I ran to the neighbour's house to prevent it; but it was too late.

"I arrived at the very moment when my wife was receiving Holy Communion.

"Listening only to my impious rage, I threw myself upon her, seized her by the throat, and never let go my hold till she had thrown up the Sacred Host."

Here the penitent monk stopped a moment, overcome with grief. At length he resumed: "The Holy Host fell into the mire; but, to the great surprise of all who witnessed this sacrilegious scene, it appeared all luminous, and we prostrated ourselves to adore it.

"As for me, two days after there appeared to me a devil, black as an Ethiopian, who said to me only these words: *We are*

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both condemned to the same torment.

"I was seriously frightened at my crime, gave up my heresy, became a Catholic, and came to shut myself up in this monastery, where, as you see, I have nothing better to do than weep my crime; oh! that I may obtain pardon from the mercy of God!" He was advised that the devil is the Father of lies and the devils words are not to be trusted. Moreover, God is the Father of Mercy and that he must never abandon hope and trust in the power of the Sacraments of forgiveness.

Furthermore, as a monk, he was performing a vital work for the Church and would be well advised to embrace his penitential practices to include pleadings for the salvation of all those stepped in heresies such as the grace of God had so recently rescued him.

- JOHN MOSCH, *Pre Spirituel*, Ch. XXX.

576. *A Sacrilegious Communion in the Ninth Century. -*

There are few examples of a sacrilegious Communion and its awful consequences which have impressed me so much as that of Lothaire, king of Lorraine, who lived in the ninth century.

In contempt of the laws of Christianity, he had broken the sacred ties which united him to Queen Thietberge, his lawful wife, to marry another named Valrade. Pope Nicholas having condemned this second marriage and excommunicated the criminal, the latter wrote to his successor, Adrian II., demanding permission to justify himself at Rome, and praying to be allowed to visit the tomb of the holy Apostles. Adrian deemed it his duty to accede to his wishes, and the artful prince having gone to him, made every external submission requisite to win his favour. Secretly, he was determined to maintain his unlawful connection with his mistress. After having promised all that was required of him, he wished above all things that the Pope should solemnly reconcile him to the Church, celebrating the Holy Mysteries in his presence, and giving him Communion with his own hand. Adrian consented provided that the king of Lorraine had kept up no further connection, even by word, with Valrade, since King Lothaire had declared that he was determined to be publicly reconciled since Pope Nicholas had exposed the king's error and excommunicated

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him. Things being so arranged, the blind Lothaire, (it was his conscience that was blind, blind with lust for his mistress), secretly applauded himself, not thinking that he was on the eve of furnishing, in his own person, one of the most terrible examples of the punishment of unworthy Communion. At the appointed time, the Pope celebrated Mass in his presence. At the moment of Communion, taking in his hand the body of Jesus Christ, and turning towards Lothaire: "Prince," said he, in a loud, distinct voice, "if you are guilty of no crime with Valrade, since you announced publicly that you were warned by Pope Nicholas and had determined to repair your fault, and if you have made a firm resolution to have no further connection with her, approach with confidence and receive the sacrament of eternal life. But if your repentance is not sincere, do not rashly receive the body and blood of Our Lord, and by profaning them, to eat and drink your own condemnation." Lothaire, doubtless, shuddered at these words, but he had resolved to commit the crime, and he did. He was still determined to maintain his illicit relations with his mistress. He even added perjury to sacrilege, and, sooner than recede, he plunged into the abyss pointed out to him beneath his feet. The Pope then addressing the noblemen who were receiving Communion with the king, all of whom were secretly but fully aware of the king's deceit and, out of false loyalty to this earthly king rather than the Heavenly King, supported the king in his wicked desire to deceive the Pope. He said to each of them: "If you have neither contributed nor consented to your master's crimes with Valrade, and if you have not communicated with the other persons anathematized by the Holy See, may the body of Our Lord be to you a pledge of eternal life." The horror of the sacrilege made some draw back, but the greater part received Communion with the king.

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After this fatal Communion, Lothaire dined with the Pope and made him magnificent presents. He, in his turn, received one from Adrian, and some days after set out in high glee. But scarcely had he reached Lucca, on the central coast of Italy, when himself and almost all his train were attacked by a malignant fever, which produced the strangest and most frightful effects. The hair, nails, and even the skin, fell off, whilst an inward fire consumed them. Most of them died under the eyes of the king, who, nevertheless, failed not to continue his voyage, solely occupied with the object of his blind passion. He got as far as Pleasance, but there he lost both sense and speech, and died miserably without giving any signs of repentance. It was observed that all those who had profaned with him the body of Our Lord, died in the same way; those, on the contrary, who had withdrawn from the Holy Table, where the only ones spared by death; thus no one could mistake the vengeance of Heaven.

Those spared nobles were soon found attending the Sacrament of Repentance and Forgiveness.

- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, 71.

577. *A Religious who went 'too often' to Communion.* -

However holy Communion may be, my friends, we cannot approach it too often, since it is medicine for the soul. Spiritual writers, however, often recommend that we labour with all our might to correct our faults, and even our least imperfections. Otherwise, some of them say, one would be much exposed to become familiar with that precious food, and would derive no benefit from it, or more accurately, one would derive not as much profit as the Loving Lord intended for one in this life-giving Food. St. Teresa relates, on this subject, that she had, in one of her Spanish monasteries, a woman who passed for a Saint, and really was so, but did not, in St Teresa's opinion, sufficiently distrust

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herself, as I am about to tell you. She received Communion every day, and yet she had no particular confessor; she went now to one, now to another. St. Teresa, carefully observing her, perceived that the woman gained nothing from this little spiritual 'vagabondism', if I may use that singular expression. The sequel proved that the Saint was not mistaken. It is always profitable to secure the service of a consistent confessor and not be like a sparrow, picking and choosing at one's own whim.

This good woman fell dangerously ill; then, to satisfy what some of her jealous companions referred to as her 'somewhat injudicious piety', she became so urgent in her entreaties that she at length obtained the privilege of having Mass said every day in her chamber, and Communion given her each time. Her illness was of long duration; the priest who said Mass for her, an enlightened and prudent man, did not like her

receiving as often as especially it seemed to him to be without spiritual profit for her perfection. How wrong he was! He could not see the hidden stirrings of this blessed soul's love of Heaven. One day, therefore, he took it into his head to say Mass, as usual, in her chamber, but not to give her Communion. Such was her ardent longing to be nourished by her Living and Loving Lord, that like the Blessed Imelda her little heart burst for longing and loving desire. And behold, children, was St. Teresa right in fearing that there was underneath all this piety something human and imperfect? This woman, seeing that Communion was not given her that day, fell into such a passion, that she died immediately, leaving to all the witnesses of that painful scene an example very fit to make them reflect. No doubt, St Teresa was right in wishing that such a saint should have given even better example to her fellow nuns in her convent in the matter of confession and confessors, but what an example of love of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

- D. GENEVAUX, *Hist. Choix.*, 403.

578. *Eulogium on Communion by Frederick the Great.* -

I like much the testimonies given to our holy religion by men who have not the courage to practise it. Of this number is Frederick the Great,

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King of Prussia, an infidel prince (Christian but not a Catholic).

After the Seven Years' War, General Ziethen, a devout Catholic, became one of his most frequent guests; he even occupied the place of honour unless there were princes at table with the king. One day, when he had received one of these frequent invitations to dine with the king, he prayed Frederick to excuse him:

"Tell his Majesty that this is the day on which I am accustomed to go to Communion, and I do not wish to put myself in the way of any distraction."

(It is to be remembered, that, at that particular time, Holy Communion was not received as often as it is today under the enlightened policy of Pope Saint Pius X, and it was, most praise-worthily, treated with a great deal of serious preparation.) Some days after, when he appeared again at Sans Souci Castle, the king said to him: "Well! Ziethen; how did your Communion go off the other day?" At these words all the courtiers burst out laughing. But Ziethen suddenly rose, shaking his head, approached Frederick, and, bowing before him, said gravely and firmly;

"Your Majesty ought to know that I have dreaded no danger, and that I have fought courageously for you and the country. What I have done I am ready to do again, when your Majesty commands me.

"But there is One above us mightier than you, than I, than all mankind; that is Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood to redeem the world. I will never allow any one to insult Him, in my presence, even in jest, for in Him is my faith, my hope, my consolation. It is with this religious sentiment that your army has gained so many victories; if, then, you wish to renounce it, renounce also the prosperity of the State. There is what I have to say; pray excuse me!" The king, much affected, held out his right hand to the religious general,

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and, laying his left hand on his shoulder declared:

"Happy Ziethen," said he, "I respect your religion. Preserve it carefully, and be sure that what has now taken place never shall again in my presence." What think you of this testimony, my friends?

- *Magasin pittoresque, Annee 1844*, 207.

579. *When an Unworthy Communion is to be Made.* -

There is in Scripture, children, a tremendous saying! It is St. Paul who speaks: *The word of God*, says he, *is a two-edged sword*; that is to say, if it do not make us better, it will make us worse. Well! it applies still more strongly to the Holy Eucharist. So, listen: A robber chief had amongst his brigands, an unhappy young man, who appeared to have great trouble in accustoming himself to crime; his conscience did not seem to have as yet quite stifled remorse; do you know what means the chief gave him to harden him to every crime? "*Go and make a bad Communion!*" said the chief to him one day, "and you will be sure to fear nothing." The unhappy young man followed this diabolical advice, and soon became the most determined of all the band; so true it is, children, than one is capable of doing anything when they have had the frightful misfortune of deliberately making a sacrilegious Communion.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 94.

580. *The Way to Make a Good Communion recommended by Father Lassausse.* -

Persons who have the happiness of communicating often are much exposed to do it through habit, and, consequently, to lose the great bulk of merit of it. Here is the method

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that was employed by a worthy man, an excellent Christian, who was obliged to live in the world, but wished to preserve himself from the dangers that are found in it. He referred his whole life to the Holy Communion.

(Remember, this was in the days before Pope Saint Pius X strongly encouraged daily Communions, worthily received.) His confessor permitted him to communicate every Sunday; then he was occupied the whole week with that great action. He prepared himself for it during the three last days of the week, and the three days that followed were employed in thanksgiving. Thus, Thursday was for him a day of faith and adoration towards Our Lord, really present in the Blessed Eucharist. He said incessantly all that day: "My God, I believe, but increase my faith; my God, I adore You!" Friday was a day of hope, during which he humbled himself much and asked pardon: "My God, I hope in You; despise not my heart, which is humbled and broken with grief." Saturday was a day of love and of desire to unite himself with Jesus Christ: "O Jesus! my beloved! come to me; I run to You!"

Sunday, the day on which he made his Communion at seven o'clock Mass, was wholly consecrated to enjoyment, joy, and consolation; it was a true festival day: "I am in Jesus, and Jesus is in me! who can, henceforth, separate me from Him?" Monday was, for this good man, the first day of thanksgiving; he never ceased saying: "How shall I thank You worthily, O my God! for the rich present You have made me?"

Tuesday was a day of offering and consecrating himself to God: "Lord, You have given Yourself entirely

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to me, I wish to give myself entirely to You." Finally, Wednesday was specially a day of prayer and supplication: "What will You refuse me, O Lord! You who give me Yourself?"

There is how he passed the whole week ; and, when Thursday came, he commenced over again this exercise for the following Communion.

I am very sure, dear friends, that that man derived from his Communions all the profit that it is possible to derive; let us do like him, and we shall certainly become Saints, since the *Imitation* positively tells us, that it requires but one single Communion well made to become a Saint.

- LASSAUSSE, *Explic du Cat. de l'Empire*, 553.

IV. - ON FIRST COMMUNION.

581. *A First Communion Well Prepared For.* -

None of you is ignorant, dear children, that the First Communion is the greatest and holiest thing you have to do. I am now going to give you a beautiful model of the way in which you ought to prepare for it.

The young Italian, Albini, not being yet old enough to make his First Communion, contented himself with sighing incessantly after the happy day on which he could receive his God, and neglected nothing to prepare for so holy an action. He had such a lively horror of sin that he avoided even the appearance of evil; he even said very often that he would never suffer the devil to enter his heart before Jesus Christ. He studied the catechism with constant

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application, and instructed himself in all that concerns the Adorable Sacrament of our altars. The innocence of his life, the extreme desire he showed for Holy Communion, and the earnestness with which he prepared himself for it, induced the priest who was charged with the direction of his conscience to admit him sooner than children were usually received in those days. It was the most welcome news to him. He thanked the priest with the liveliest transports of joy, and from that moment he thought only of redoubling his efforts to purify his heart, and prepare for Our Lord a dwelling worthy of Him. With that intention he made a retreat before making his First Communion, and during the retreat he made a general confession of his whole life. If you had seen the torrent of tears he shed, and the lively sorrow wherewith he was penetrated, you would have

thought, my very dear friends, that there was no greater sinner on earth. Yet he had never stained with mortal sin the fair robe of his innocence. But whence, then, came his grief and his tears? Ah! it was that the grace with which he was enlightened made him regard the least faults as so many odious monsters, and he could not console himself for having offended a God who deigned to become his food. It was in these sentiments that he passed the time of his retreat. The happy moment for which he had so long sighed came at last: he had the happiness of receiving his God! It would be impossible to express the lively sentiments of piety with which he was animated during that holy action.

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It was nothing but sighs, tears, transports of love and gratitude: "O my God!" he exclaimed, "since You have had the goodness to give Yourself to me, I will give myself entirely to You; since You are united so closely to me, nothing will ever be able henceforth, to separate me from You. I would be the most ungrateful of children, if I reserved anything from a God so good and who has loved me so much." Nor was this a passing fervour, which vanished with the occasion that gave it birth. Albini never forgot that happy day, nor the engagements he had contracted with God. The Communion was for him a salutary food, which made him grow sensibly in virtue and in piety.

Do the same thing, happy children, who are preparing for your First Communion, and you will make it well.
- GUILLOIS, *Nouv. Explic. du Cat.*, 370.

582. *The First Communion of a Prince.* -

Amongst the children who may be proposed to you as models, dear friends, I will select one to-day from the highest rank, because it will, I am sure, make more impression upon you. When the illustrious Fenelon, - who had been charged by Louis XIV. with the education of the Duke of Burgundy, his grandson, - felt certain that he was sufficiently instructed to approach the sacraments with all the faith and piety which the Church requires, he had him make his First Communion. Here is the touching discourse which he addressed to him on this occasion:

"Behold, my lord, the long-expected day is at length arrived, the day which

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is to influence all the others of your life, even till your death. Your Saviour comes to you under the appearance of the most familiar food, in order to nourish your soul, even as the material blood daily nourishes your body. It will only appear to you as a particle of common bread, but the virtue of God is hidden therein, and your faith will not fail to recognize Him. Say to Him with Isaiah: 'O my God! You are truly a hidden God!' In truth, my lord, He is hidden there through love for us; He veils His glory that our eyes may not be dazzled by it, and that we may approach Him more familiarly. It is there that you will find the hidden manna, with the divers tastes of all the heavenly virtues; you will eat the bread which is above all substance.

"It is not He that will change into you, vile mortal, but it is you that will be changed into Him, to be a living member of the Lord. May faith and charity make you taste the gift of God!" This pious ceremony, which took place in the chapel of the palace of Versailles, was an object of edification to the whole court; the Duke of Burgundy retained the impression of a piety so sincere and so profound, as the chronicles of that time relate, that he received Holy Communion every fortnight, with a humility and recollection that impressed every one. (In those days, this was regarded as a very frequent reception of the most Blessed Sacrament. How fortunate we are to receive Our Lord even more often, under the wise encouragement of Pope Saint Pius X!)

Once more, dearly beloved children, let us imitate such faithful models.

- GUILLOIS, *Nouv. Explic. du Cat.*, 371.

583. *A Young Communicant's Request to Her Father.* -

If you have any favour to ask of your parents

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dear children, the day of your First Communion will be well chosen for that.

The day that a young lady of Paris, named Emilie Le Camus, made her First Communion, (in those days, it was done at a much later time in life than it is today,) a poor widow, who knew her piety and charity, came to

tell her, in the most affecting way, of the deplorable situation to which she was reduced. She painted, in the liveliest colours, the misery she endured when her children held out their hands to her for the bread she had not to give them.

"Ah! Miss," cried this poor woman, "this Sunday is such a happy day for you! Can you refuse to make us sharers in your happiness? Will you be less liberal to us than Our Lord has been to you?" These last words made a deep impression on the mind of Mademoiselle Le Camus; she felt her heart softened, and, after some moments' reflection, she said to the unfortunate widow: "I can do nothing for you now; but, wait for me, I will soon return, and perhaps I may then be able to give you some relief." So saying, Emilie hastened to her father who was very fond of her and who happened to be quite a wealthy businessman, and throwing herself suddenly into his arms

"O Father!" she cried in her most persuasive accents, "you have never ceased to give me proofs of your affection; but now you must grant me a still greater favour, one that will increase my happiness very much."

- "What do you wish for, my daughter? - Explain yourself, without fear."

-- "I dare not tell you."

-- "Be not afraid, my child! Remember you speak to the fondest of fathers, who can refuse you nothing. What do you want? Explain yourself, I say again!"

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- "I want - I want you to do it immediately."

-- "What?"

-- "To give me a hundred crowns a year out of the fortune you have to give me some day."

-- "A hundred crowns a year! And that, you say, would make you quite, quite happy? Well! I cannot refuse you so small a favour. But what induces you to ask it now of me? You want for nothing; all that is mine is yours, and all we have has hitherto been common to us all; why begin now to wish for something separate?"

-- "I have a reason for it, my dear father, which I cannot tell you just now, but I know you will be satisfied with it when you hear what it is. Do not refuse me the favour I ask of you; I beseech you by the love you have for me, by that which I shall always have for you, and if that will not be sufficient, I beseech you by the tears you see me shed." And the tears burst from her eyes. The father, much affected, promised to do what she wished. She no sooner heard his promise than, intoxicated with joy, she flew to the room where she had left the poor woman; she seized her by the hand, and drew her to her father's apartment. Then, throwing her arms round the poor woman's neck, and embracing her with transport:

"Every year I shall have a hundred crowns all to myself," cried she; "my dear, kind father, whom you see here, has just promised it to me; well, my poor woman, they are yours, and your children's." The father then understood the mystery with which she had covered her request; he understood that it was charity alone

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which had inspired it, and as he was himself very charitable, he warmly approved of the good action his daughter had just done, expressed the satisfaction he felt, and exhorted her to preserve, all her life the tender compassion she had shown for the unhappy and less fortunate on the day of her First Communion. The unfortunate widow who was its object felt it still more sensibly; she could never speak of Miss Emilie without enthusiasm; she published everywhere the extraordinary benefit she had received from her, and the touching example of her new benefactor soon procured her many others. who were able to help her previously starving family.

- GUILLOIS, *Explic.*, 372.

584. *The Happiest Day of My Life.* -

The anecdote that touches me most in the life of the great Napoleon, my good friends, is this: That illustrious emperor, so long the favourite of fortune and the child of glory, never forgot his catechism; but, above all, he never forgot the happy day of his First Communion; he had made it in 1782, at the school of Brienne, then situated in the diocese of Langres, and now in the department and diocese of the Aube.

He often said that that First Communion had left him the idea of perfect happiness. He was one day in his tent receiving congratulations for a victory he had just obtained; one of the Marshals of the Empire said to

him: "Sire, I am sure this is the happiest day of , your life!" Napoleon quickly replied: "*No, sir!*" This short, dry answer was followed by a dead silence. Then each one tried to name the day that best deserved that qualification. They recalled the battle of

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Montenotte, the day of the 18th Brumaire, the victory of Marengo, the day of his consecration and coronation, the sun of Austerlitz, the birth of his son, the King of Rome.

"*No, gentlemen!*" was still Napoleon's answer. There was silence again, and some surprise was manifested, when Napoleon, grave, collected, and much moved, let fall these words: "*The happiest day of my life, gentlemen, was the day of my First Communion!*" Casting a keen glance round the assembly, he saw nothing but surprise; but he saw a tear shining in the eyes of one of the officers present; he approached him, and pressing his hand affectionately: "*You understand me,*" said he.

That officer, my dear friends, was Count Drouot, General of Artillery, the son of a common baker, a pupil of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Nancy before the revolution. He himself practised his religion in the camp with the regularity of a primitive Christian. That brave general, who died in 1847, did not wish that this touching anecdote should be lost to posterity; it was he himself who related it to the Bishop of Nancy, who afterwards became Archbishop of Bordeaux.

- *Recomp. Hebdom.*, No. LXIV., p. 9.

585. *A Dying Man's First Communion.* -

The traitor Judas, my very dear friends, had made a sacrilegious First Communion, at least, that is the opinion of a large number of the scholars of the scriptures. He only did that, and yet it sufficed to draw down upon his head the whole weight of the Divine vengeance and malediction, both in this life and the other, or so, at least, it seems to me. Oh! but a First Communion badly made is something terrible, something

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frightful. Listen to what I am going to tell you. In a town on the banks of the Rhine, in Germany, a man who had shown all his life very unchristian sentiments, and had given himself up to every passion, was struck with the disease of which he eventually died. His family who, happily, resembled him but little, seeing him in such danger, sent for a priest. The sick man says nothing, even appears glad, and confesses with dispositions seemingly sufficient. Some time after, the priest who had prepared him brings the holy Viaticum, and prepares to administer it to him. He had the holy Host already in his fingers, and was going to place it on the tongue of the dying man, when the latter, pushing away his arm, cried in a voice that made every one tremble: "Stop, Father, stop! I made my First Communion in a sacrilegious manner. I have made no others since, and I will not have two on my conscience; one is surely enough to suffer for in hell for all eternity!" At these words all present were seized with inexpressible fear and horror. The priest heard his new confession and offered him the consolations of religion. As for the dying man, he struggled for some hours in the convulsions of despair, part of him knowing the power and efficacy of the Church's sacraments. but a lifetime of bad habits sending him into a type of psychological delirium, and he expired foaming with rage; he was about forty-seven years old.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 94.

586. *An Honest Man has but his Word.* -

Dear children, you are all-powerful with your fathers and mothers on the day of your First Communion. I remember how well this was turned to account by a girl twelve years and a half old. Having passed her catechismal examination successfully, she was finally

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received. She announced this good news to her father, and added, overwhelmed with joy:

"Papa, the good God has done me a great favour, and I hope you will grant me one, too."

- "I will," answered the father, "what do you ask?"

- "I will not tell you till you have promised to grant it."

- "That cannot be, my dear Rosalie. I must know if the thing is in my power."

- "Oh! yes, you can do it; it depends only on yourself."

- "First tell me, then, what it is."

- "No, I will not tell you till you have promised me," and she redoubled her caresses and tender entreaties.

The father gave in at last, and made the required promise. "Well," said the daughter, "you must complete my happiness by sharing it with me; it is a long time since you were at Communion; you may die at any moment, and you would not be ready to appear before God; so, profit by this opportunity."

- "I will see about that," replied the father, prevaricating; "it takes time, you know, and reflection."

- "Oh! papa, you promised me, and an honest man has but his word.

"I am resolved to torment you till you consent."

Victory! Victory!

My friends, some weeks after, people were edified to see the father seated at the Sacred Banquet, beside his beloved daughter, and I confess it was hard to say which of the two seemed the happiest.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 97.

587. *The Pennies of a Young Communicant.* -

The First Communion is so important, my very dear children, that you should, in my opinion, take several years to think of it and prepare for it, even from infancy.

Imitate in that the little

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George, about whom I am going to tell you. This dear child belonged to a family of poor working people, in the little French town of St. Dizier, if I am not mistaken.

Everyday his mother, sending him to the Brothers' School, gave him a piece of bread and a penny to buy something that he might eat with it. The poor child contented himself with his piece of bread, and hid away his penny every morning in the bottom of an old press. One day his mother discovered the little treasure; not knowing whence the money came, fearing even that it might have been stolen, she asks her son where all the pennies came from, and what he meant to do with them.

"Mamma," he answers, a little embarrassed, "they are the pennies you gave me every morning; I put them away to give to the poor when I make my First Communion." Touching inspiration: this little angel wished that the poor should take part in his happiness, and that it might be a festival on earth, as well as in heaven, the day on which his heart should be for the first time united to God in this special way. His good mother understood that, and she pressed him to her heart, and shed tears of joy over him.

- *Recomp. Hebdom.*, No. LXIII., p. 45.

588. *How a New Communicant Reasoned.* -

It is not enough, dear friends, to prepare well for First Communion; it is not even enough to make it well; it is necessary to persevere after having made it. I was told in Paris that a good little boy, named Anatole, the son of working people as honest as people

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can be when they have no religion, had made his First Communion with admirable fervour. The Sunday following, the child rises very early, puts on his best clothes, and prepares to go out. "Why, where are you going so early?" asks his father.

"Father, I am going to Mass; you know what the commandment says: *Sundays and holy-days, Mass you shall hear.* After the great favour God has bestowed on me, could I show myself ungrateful towards Him?"

-- "Bah! that is all nonsense; work or go for a walk, but leave the priests to sing their *Oremus* prayer alone. God never made such a law as that."

-- "But," said the child, his cheeks flushing with the warmth of his feelings, "if that law is all nonsense, that other *Honour your father and your mother*, must be nonsense, too!" Which of the two was most disconcerted? Evidently it was the poor ignorant workman; he could make no answer, and turned away in thoughtful mood, perhaps even admiring in the depth of his heart his son's presence of mind and good sense.

The fact is, my dear friends, that eight days after, the child did not go to Mass alone; his father and mother accompanied him, and ever after they became excellent Christians.

- *Recomp. Hebdom.*, No. LXXVIII. p. 7.

589. *Can Mass be Heard in a Workshop?* -

Happy the children who are animated by a good spirit, and who surmount with courage the obstacles they meet in the accomplishment of their duties! Here is one instance of a working boy, docile, laborious, and endowed

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with a generous soul, whose name was Edward. His family, not knowing, and consequently not practising his religion, (nor their own,) had, nevertheless, sent him to the Brothers, and the child had always been a consolation to them by reason of his piety and his assiduity to study.

After his First Communion his parents thought of binding him as an apprentice to a man who neither kept Sunday nor any holy-day. Edward, considering how painful it would be to him not to be able to obey God, whose will it is that the holy day of Sunday should be employed in his service, was on the point of resisting; but, having first recommended himself to God, he went to his confessor, and told him his trouble.

The minister of the Lord, a wise and prudent man, ordered him to obey, and submit to the paternal authority. "Content yourselves," said he, "with offering to God your labour, and, during the Holy Sacrifice, collect yourself interiorly, and unite yourself with the prayers of the priest and of the faithful; the good God will come to your assistance." The boy, soothed and encouraged, commenced his apprenticeship, and was constantly docile to the lessons he had received at school, and the counsels of his director. At his work in the shop, amongst the workmen, he was always gay, smiling, and amiable. He went about his work in such a willing, cheerful way, that he pleased every one, but especially his patron, and kept continually humming some pious airs, or singing snatches of hymns. But there was a day and a time when he always appeared graver and more collected; the day was Sunday,

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and the time, while the Holy Sacrifice was being offered up. His master at last perceived it, and failed not to question him on the cause of this silence, and the thoughtful air he showed on Sunday, and always at the same time. The young apprentice simply told him that being deprived of hearing Mass, he united himself in spirit with those who had the happiness of complying with that Christian duty. (It is to be remembered that there was only one Mass in that village and there was no transport to any other Mass-centre for Masses at any other time of the Lord's Day. Moreover, labour laws at that time made no provision for a regular recreation day on the Sabbath.) The master, far from being annoyed at this avowal which condemned himself, admired the virtue of his apprentice; and as he was perfectly satisfied with his good conduct and his work. "My boy," said he, "I am pleased with you; I wish to reward you and give you pleasure; for that reason, I will allow you to stay away every Sunday from next Sunday out; discharge your Christian duties and you will always be a good lad." The pious child thanked his master and thenceforward was able to satisfy his devotion by assisting regularly at the offices of the Church, and participating in the Sacraments and Sunday Mass. So he became a finished workman, blessed by God, loved, respected by his fellow-workmen, who never found fault with what he did, because he was ever amiable and obliging to every one.

- *Recomp. Hebdom*, No. XLVIII., p. 5.