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AN INTERIOR.



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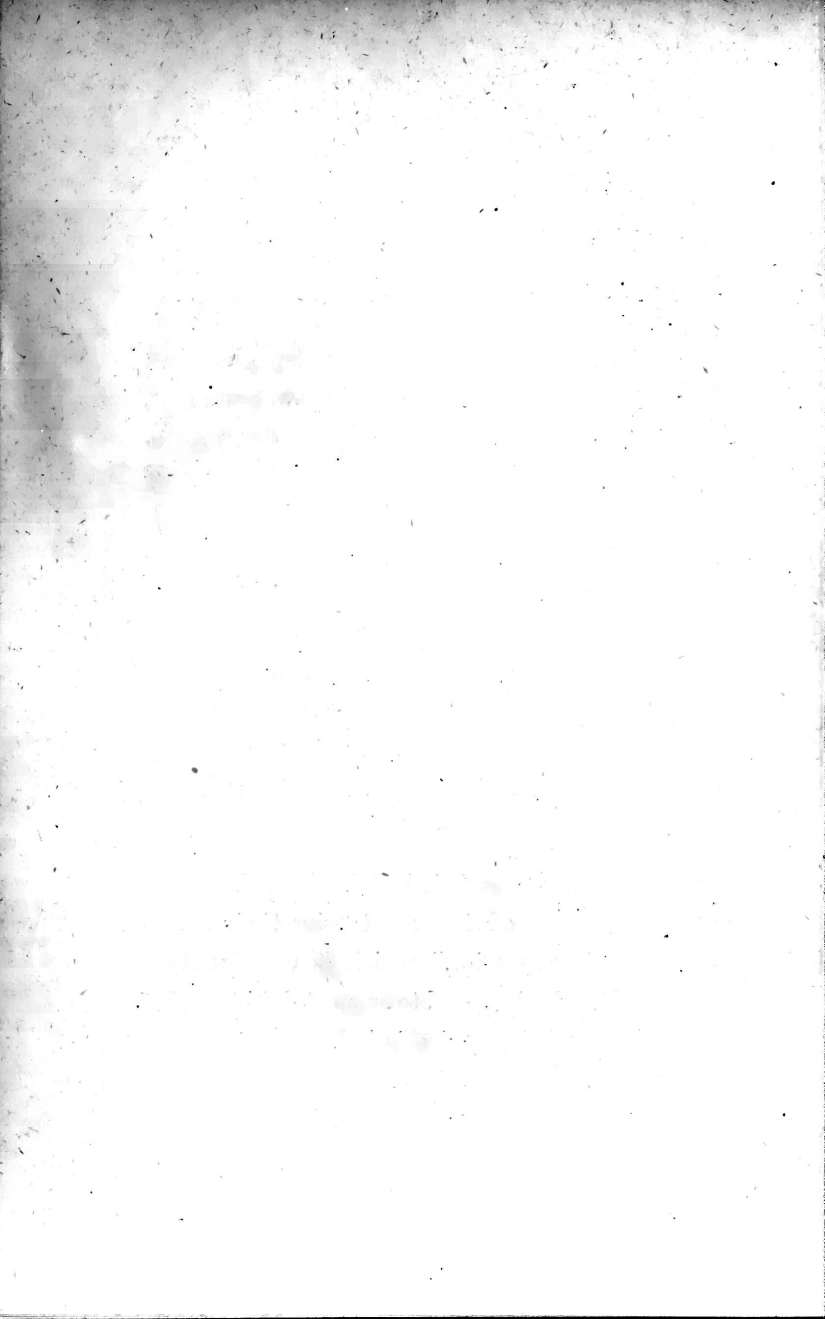
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INTRODUCTION.

THOSE who, having given a cursory glance at this "Interior," put it down and never resume it, have the cordial sympathy of the writer, who is well aware that portions of it strongly resemble passages from the 'Lives of the Saints,' a work said to have been "written by knaves and read by fools." These pages can interest those only who have had some experience of earnest, persevering, fruitless prayer. They can be useful to those only who may still be running after phantoms, building beautiful castles upon fallacious texts, and striving to grasp the unattainable.

Those who are satisfied with themselves and their prayers are advised not to give their attention to this "Interior," which is calculated to wound their feelings and to suggest doubts which may disturb their peace of mind.



AN INTERIOR.

I AM a straightforward practical woman. I have never been into hysterics, and was never fond of allegories, fairy tales, or ghost stories. I was not particularly piously brought up. Religion in our family was viewed mainly from a controversial point of view. My mother was a consistent churchwoman, and went to church once a week. My father cared only for good sermons and good organs; he generally waited till all the prayers were over before he entered any place of worship. There was nothing at home to draw my attention to the subject of prayer. I may have been about eighteen when an aunt came to see us, and hearing that I had not been confirmed, said it would be "as well" to send in my name, because, if in after years, I should wish to be confirmed, I might "feel awkward among the young people." This view of the subject was entertained, and, to avoid the contemplated contingency, it was voted that I might "as well" be confirmed. The Rev. Llewelyn Davies prepared me for the rite. He did not inquire into the state of my religious belief, which, considering the praiseworthy motive which brought me to him, was fortunate. He gave me many questions, which I answered to his satisfaction, and obtained my ticket for Confirmation.

I suppose the rite had already been delayed too

long, for I felt exceedingly awkward on the Confirmation day; others, especially the boys, looked as if they felt uncommonly awkward too. However, they might have felt still more ill at ease in after life, and it was perhaps "as well" to confirm them then. That day was an eventful one, for my aunt had her pocket picked in the church, and an impression was made upon me which may be called the beginning of my spiritual career. Upon returning to the pew after kneeling at the altar, I took my seat; there were no hassocks. Presently the young lady next me placed herself upon her knees upon the dirty floor, and began praying with evident fervour. Her hands covered her face, and I could see the tears streaming between her fingers. I felt inclined to laugh, but was ashamed of myself. I ended by admiring her moral courage, and by envying her her apparent faith and sincerity.

Converting in the received sense of the word I did not require. I was a thoughtful, studious girl. I hated dancing and all other amusements which involved late hours. I never omitted morning and evening prayers, and was rather fond of going to church. I had long been a communicant, so that Confirmation was not in my case a stepping-stone to the Lord's Supper. I had looked upon it as an optional affair, and went through it without faith or fervour. By prayer, I understood nothing beyond reading over or repeating by heart other people's compositions. That young girl did not appear to me to be doing either, and her conduct struck me, though the impression faded away.

Some months later we passed a few weeks with a friend who had an Irish cook. One winter's morning I rose for some forgotten reason earlier than usual, and went into the kitchen at a quarter to seven. At the same moment in walked the Irish cook out of the foggy street. An unworthy suspicion crossed my

mind, and I wished myself back in my room ; it was dark enough for me to retreat unobserved, but Nancy had the gas alight in a trice, and we stood face to face. In her chapped hand was a well-worn prayer book, and round her huge wrist was a rosary. She had been to Mass, and it was not Sunday. "That," said my friend, "is the best of Nancy, she gets my husband's breakfast ready every morning at half-past seven." Nancy's conduct made a deep and lasting impression upon me. There was something earnest and practical about it that edified me, and I began to "meditate upon these things." I determined to devote more time and attention to prayer, and, as there was morning service twice a week at our own church, I began to attend it with great regularity. I made quite a study of the Liturgy, and at length came with reluctance to the conclusion that it was an inappropriate manual for constant use. I was not always in the same mood, but the prayers were always equally melancholy, depressing, and monotonous. My spirits were frequently at high water mark, and on those occasions I felt like a dissembler while saying my prayers—or rather somebody else's prayers—for it never entered my head to use words of my own when speaking to God, or even to ask Him for anything that was not named in the Prayer Book. However, it very often struck me that we were saying an immense deal to God, and not giving Him the opportunity of saying anything to us. I felt attracted towards God, dissatisfied with the means I was using to get at Him, and very anxious to feel upon a surer footing with Him. I suppose I was what is called "awakened"—I was in earnest. I repeated my prayers with unflagging reverence, and while wishing they were more in harmony with my grateful happy frame of mind, continued to use them, until one morning, while the curate was reading a chapter in the Old Testament consisting principally

of names, it struck me that I was making no spiritual progress; that those prayers would remain the same; that, having admitted for the millionth time that I was a miserable sinner, I was absolutely unable to keep my soul in such a penitential attitude any longer. I required a more varied diet; and though nobody I knew found any fault with the Liturgy, I was painfully conscious that it no longer suited *me*, so I began to confine my devotions to Sunday. It seems very strange that it never occurred to me to address God in words of my own choosing. Though most anxious to become better acquainted with God, and to realise something like fervour, I saw no further than that melancholy Prayer Book, and of mental prayer I had no idea whatever. The people I knew never appeared to care at all about these things, so I kept my aspirations to myself. Now and then I went to dissenting chapels, but the vulgarity of the extempore prayers I heard there soon thoroughly disgusted me, and for a while I took more kindly to my own sad Liturgy as the lesser of two evils. I wonder it never once occurred to me to pray extempore *myself*, for I was deeply interested in my soul's welfare, but it did not. I was very well acquainted with the tenets of the Church of Rome, but took no interest in Catholics, and never went to their chapels. However, I always defended them whenever I heard them ridiculed for the *absurdity* of their doctrines. I used to say, with pertinent flippancy, "those who live in glass houses should not throw stones; and you must give up nearly all *you* hold before you are in a position to twit them with the absurdity of what *they* hold." My friends were shocked. We had but one Roman Catholic acquaintance, and he was far above the average: at that time he was our most intellectual visitor.

One morning, long after my interest in the Church prayers had considerably diminished, I was walking

in the region of the wretched little French Catholic Chapel and it began to rain heavily. The door was open; I went in, and there I saw one solitary man kneeling near the altar. I had never noticed a man on his knees before. He was in a very cramped position and must have been extremely uncomfortable; but there he remained for a long time, and I sat watching him. He had no book. I could see his profile. His lips were closed, his eyes were fixed upon the altar. Not until he turned his full face towards me as he came down the aisle did I recognise our highly-cultivated Roman Catholic friend. I wished myself out in the rain, and fancied he would feel ashamed of being caught upon his knees in such a miserable little place as that chapel was then. I felt myself turn scarlet, but he came forward with his usual simple, manly manner, and said, "Say a little prayer for my intention, I am rather in a fix;" then composedly beating the dust off his knees with his gloves he went away, leaving me with abundant matter for meditation.

I had never seen any one praying in a church when no service was going on. I had never seen any one praying mentally. The people I knew viewed prayer solely as a duty and were glad if anything prevented its accomplishment. They never seemed to me to expect any results to ensue from their prayers, and they laughed at those who went to church on *week-days*. Here was a man of more than ordinary acuteness who came on a week-day to pray upon his knees for half-an-hour without a book, in an empty church, to be helped out of "a fix." The simplicity of the scene puzzled me beyond measure. Of course I was well aware that Adam's conduct had placed us *all* in "a fix," and that we must be continually beseeching God to "have mercy upon us miserable sinners;" but here was a man asking his Father to help him out of a private, personal dilemma, and I envied him his

filial confidence towards that Being with whom I so earnestly longed to become better acquainted.

Four years' practical experience of the lachrymose Liturgy of the Church of England had wofully disappointed me. For some months I had been merely putting up with it, but the idea of leaving the Anglican communion never occurred to me, not even on that memorable morning in the little chapel.

It was not as a *Roman Catholic* that my friend came before me, but simply as one who seemed on a very enviable footing with God. He appeared to have attained what I was aiming at. Had I seen a Quaker or a Mahommedan thus earnestly engaged in prayer, I should have been equally sure that he was nearer God than I was, and should have envied him as I envied my friend; moreover he had asked me to pray for his intention, which nobody had ever done before. I knew people who were in "a fix," but they never said "Let us pray;" perhaps they had found out the futility of prayer, as I did later on. I was just thinking about leaving the chapel when the door was pushed, and in came a man. He did not take the trouble to go into a seat, he knelt in the aisle close to the door, slightly in advance of me. After several failures he at length succeeded in poising his dripping hat upon the knob of his umbrella, and producing a very thick book, began to pray. I looked over his shoulder and read "Litany of the Holy Ghost." Here was a discovery! there were *other* Litanies.

I might have asked for the title of the book, but in leaning forward, shook the woodwork, and down went the hat and umbrella; so I merely apologised and took my leave.

As far as I was concerned there might as well have been no Holy Ghost, though I was supposed to have received Him in Confirmation.

I walked home full of good resolutions, which for fifteen years were, in spite of many obstacles, religiously kept.

Before going further it seems necessary to state what my idea of religion was. I lived in an atmosphere of religious discussion, and had come to the conclusion that doctrinal difficulties had nothing to do with personal piety. I had seen my father confound men of different persuasions with the simplest questions, and was of opinion that the doctrines about which they grew so vehement could *never* be satisfactorily proved, and that therefore salvation could not depend upon *them*. I was tired of these continual discussions, which rarely ended amicably, and which were so hostile to my notion of piety. So little interest did I take in the subjects generally brought forward that I could defend either side without scruples of conscience. The truth of Christianity and the inspiration of the Bible were never attacked in our house. I firmly believed both; but so contrary to common sense did I consider the doctrine of the Trinity, that I wondered how believers in *that* could cavil at Transubstantiation, Baptismal Regeneration, &c.

To know and to love God under the name of Christ, and to get into communication with Him by His own appointed means—Prayer—was my ambition.

Quite tired of the Church Prayers, and thoroughly disgusted with the lamentable want of unity among Christians generally, I found no help from without. I was *in* the Anglican Church, but not *of* it. Still I had no intention of joining any other sect. For forms, ceremonies, choral services, and sermons, I cared not one whit. Sermons I always thought a vexatious excrescence thrust in when the attention was wearied with so many prayers; my mother and I often sneaked off before the sermon began. I only cared for *Prayer*. Those who are neither tired of

the Liturgy nor much interested in these matters will fail to appreciate the intense delight and sense of relief I experienced while turning over the leaves of the Catholic prayer-books I bought.

After having addressed God in a minor key until I no longer felt sorry at all, it was indescribably refreshing to get into a major key, and find prayers suggested by a spirit of *love* from which all fear was banished—prayers emanating from a feeling of gratitude, not merely for abstract and contingent blessings, but for tangible, every-day advantages—prayers, in short, of which the spirit was in harmony with my own, and which gave a fillip to my devotion, then on the wane. It was not that I admired those prayers—far from it: as compositions they were inferior to those in our Liturgy, and the translations were less dignified; but as a bird would rather fly around a large barn than hop about a golden cage, so I, after my long confinement to the Liturgy, enjoyed the wider range afforded by a book in which there were more varied devotions, and where the Holy Ghost was prominently brought forward as the great illuminator and consoler of the faithful.

Conscious how utterly I had neglected *Him*, and most anxious to be enlightened, I commenced invoking Him with a fervour and a perseverance which in the retrospect amazes me.

Casting aside the feeble translations, I committed the noble Latin hymns to memory, and in the simple words of the fine old "*Veni Sancte Spiritus*," I invoked the Holy Ghost with all my heart. Not by fits and starts, but many times a day for many months did I implore Him to give me light to know and strength to execute God's will. I addressed Him in a spirit of reparation for past neglect, and long after I had entered the more lofty region of mental prayer the "*Veni Sancte Spiritus*" was one of my daily companions. It became painful to me to listen

to the frequent discussions concerning His personality, mission, procession, etc., which went on in our family; I ceased to take any share in them, and used to pray that they might be discontinued. The Ghost, however, was not invoked to the exclusion of the Father and the Son. I invoked them *all* with all the faith, hope, charity, reverence, and humility I could command. I did my very best. I used to visit Catholic chapels merely because they were open, and as others were praying too, I was not an object of attention. I always chose times when no service was going on, and was aiming at feeling alone with God. Occasionally I prayed mentally, but it was not until Christ became the main object of my love and devotion that I dived deeply into the depths of that unfathomable ocean called mental prayer. I had been quite ashamed of having for years all but ignored the existence of the Holy Ghost, and had been zealously making up for past negligence; but now it occurred to me that Protestants, at any rate Anglicans, were extremely remiss in reference to Christ too; for they pray to the Father almost exclusively. There is but *one* Collect in their Prayer-book to God the Son, while in my Catholic manual *He* took precedence, and the petitions to the Father were few and far between. I preferred the Son to the Father, and could no longer blind myself to the fact that I was *of* the Roman Catholic Church, but not *in* it. Led, as I firmly believed, by the Holy Ghost, whom I was continually petitioning for *light*, I abandoned the Anglicans entirely. Ever since I had found out that even on Sunday during High Mass Catholics were quite at liberty to use what prayers they pleased, and were by no means compelled to follow the priest, I had given up going to my own Church. I dearly loved the liberty I enjoyed, and ardently did I thank God for leading me, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, along the flowery path of prayer. I had

not a misgiving. I looked upon the tendency of my mind as an answer to prayer, and was content to follow the guidance of that Ghost whithersoever it might lead me; it led me into the Church of Rome. Of course my relatives had no faith in the holiness of any ghost who led the way to *Rome*, and she who had formerly promoted my Confirmation now refused to kiss me!

I had not one Romish acquaintance; he of the "fix" had gone to the colonies. I cared for none of the Romish ceremonies. I cared solely for what I believed to be the Holy Ghost and His inspiration; if I was mistaken it was not my fault. The ill-will of my relations did not disturb my peace of mind; I went on my way rejoicing, doing all I could to be good, and trying to imitate the Christ of the Gospels to the best of my poor ability.

Had it occurred to me (and I wonder it did *not*) to go up with the others to Communion as if I were a Catholic I believe I should never have joined Rome outwardly. But I longed to get nearer to Jesus. All the best prayers were addressed to Him "in the Blessed Sacrament," and I was most anxious to become *one* with Him in that mysterious rite. Knowing that Confession and Absolution preceded Communion in the Roman Church, I again and with renewed fervour besought the Holy Ghost to "show me the way wherein I should walk," and he (or, as some Protestants would say, a "lying spirit") led me into the Church of Rome. I went to a Jesuit, told him how hard I had been praying, explained to him the bent of my inclination, but assured him that I could not care at all about Indulgences, Purgatory, Angels, Saints, Sacred Hearts, Scapulars, &c.

He said that faith in all these things would come by-and-by, that if I was *willing* to receive the teaching of the Church, God would supply what was wanting. After three interviews he baptised me, and three

weeks later I made my first Communion. I made it with boundless faith. I really believed most fervently that Jesus would help me to overcome some of my faults. For many years I communicated four times weekly, and no inducement would have been strong enough to divert me from my purpose. Through all weathers, at all seasons, I took a walk of twenty minutes, before seven, for I was always in church long before Mass began, and with never-failing fervour I engaged in earnest mental prayer.

I am sure that no worldly advantages would have induced me to forego my Communions. I deliberately gave up a trip to Paris because I feared that my devotion might cool amid the festivities of that gay capital; so I stayed at home by myself.

"Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." I was ready to lay down my life for the truth of those assertions, and though I was painfully conscious that hitherto I had not realised any of the help I sought, either for myself or others, I thought it must be my fault, and turned with importunity to the Holy Ghost to teach me how to pray.

Prayer now engrossed nearly all my attention and a great portion of my time.

Of distractions in prayer I knew nothing. Entirely engrossed with my subject, I could remain for an hour sunk in a species of mute adoration, called contemplation, so profound that not until it was over was I aware how stiff and tender my knees had become.

No slamming of doors, tuning of the organ, or any other disturbance could rouse me. I was intensely happy. Occasionally all sense of weight seemed to leave my limbs, and sometimes while walking down the aisle I was not conscious of the boards. Torrents of delicious tears gushed from my eyes, and thus cradled, as I fancied myself, in "the everlasting arms," I enjoyed every day what S. Climachus calls

a "spiritual feast;" for the "gift of tears" is, according to him and all the Saints, a very great favour. I had no difficulty in realising what is called "The Presence of God," and whether in the street, a railway station, or even in a place of amusement, my heart was always kneeling before the altar. I lost all interest in the studies which had formerly been my delight. I gave up the several languages of which I had previously been so fond, and for ten years or more I rarely looked into a secular book. God, I knew, was a *jealous* God. I was aiming at becoming a faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, who demanded *all* my heart, *all* my soul, and *all* my strength. He wanted all, and I gave him all, not grudgingly, but cheerfully, lovingly, and devotedly. I occupied my time with visiting the sick poor and with other charitable undertakings. Unaware that mine was an exceptional class of prayer, and that even to be able to pray without distractions was extremely rare; unaware, moreover, that Catholics were encouraged to add experiences such as mine when they went to Confession, and that these experiences were called a "manifestation of conscience," I should in all probability have kept all these things and "pondered them in my heart," without having recourse to priests, had I not become acquainted with some very fervent and intelligent Roman Catholic ladies.

Not a syllable did I utter respecting the state of my "interior," but soon collected that I was the recipient of unusual "graces"—graces which were ordinarily the portion of great saints; they talked about "spiritual direction," and mentioned St. Teresa and Fénelon. Through them I made the unwelcome discovery that it was very rare indeed to receive an answer to prayer, so rare that I ought not to expect any. Prayer, said they, is a duty; if God gave us what we want we might become proud; He withholds His gifts to *try* us and to keep us humble. It struck

me that if by prayer they meant the irreverent gabble which so lamentably disfigures the public services of the Church of Rome, it was not surprising that no results ensued.

I did not like what the ladies said. I *would* not believe that Christ could deceive. "*Everyone* that asketh receiveth," were words attributed to Him, and I clung to them. From time to time, however, an ominous cloud had crossed my horizon, many miserable misgivings had assailed me. Over and over again had I struggled with irrepressible doubts as to the veracity of such assertions as "all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive," and I could not conceal from myself the budding conviction that the whole affair was a delusion. Such notions I did my best to eject as suggestions from the Evil One; I accused myself in Confession of "doubting about God's mercy," got absolution, and recommenced praying with renewed fervour. I never undertook anything without earnestly imploring God to enlighten me as to whether it was His will that I should engage in it. No light came. My prayers were mainly for others—for the sick, the suffering, for people in "fixes," and, above all, for the conversion of sinners. To prayer I added penance, carefully abstaining from everything that gratified my senses. Every Friday, by the advice of my Confessor, I took the discipline for seven minutes, and wore a hair shirt *à discrétion*; in short, I endeavoured by every means in my power to propitiate God in the various ways approved by the Church of Rome. The non-success of my prayers I attributed to my own remissness, want of faith, hope, charity, &c., though I *knew* I was doing my best. I was very glad that my earthly parents were not so inexorable as my heavenly one, but thought it wicked to draw comparisons. I did not neglect Mary. For years I said the rosary daily with a definite object, but nothing

ever came of it. I thought over what the ladies had said, and procured Fénelon's works and Teresa's autobiography. The plot thickened. A new era began in my spiritual life.

To my exceeding amazement, that remarkable woman's experience of prayer, &c., seemed marvelously like my own. I could have written many of the pages I was reading with such interest. Here I found the same love of solitude, devotion to mental prayer, indifference to transitory things, zeal for the conversion of sinners, and, above all, the same, though in her case intensified, mysterious physical sensations, such as lightness of body, bright light, interior words, &c. However, though she was in ecstasies with God, she seemed to have found Joseph more propitious, for she very distinctly tells us that she never appealed to *him* in vain, and the Church, in a prayer to St. Joseph called the "Memorare," reminds him that St. Teresa had never had recourse to him in vain.

I was both amazed and amused. Here was a great saint, a woman of experience who, after soaring into celestial regions and communing for hours with the Blessed Trinity, came down to *Joseph* to get what she wanted! Hitherto I had been disposed to ridicule Catholics for having so many strings to their bow. I thought it so uncomplimentary to Christ and his promises; *now* my eyes were opened. Even the sublime Teresa sighed for *reciprocity*—had she found it in God would it have occurred to her to turn to Joseph? After basking in the ineffable rays of God's mysterious presence, she went round like any other beggar to the back door for some broken victuals. Joseph received her well, gave her what she wanted, and, like a sensible woman, she made frequent appeals to his generosity, and was *never* refused. In simple, forcible language, she urges everybody to apply to *Joseph*; she gives her "experience," and a very strik-

ing one it is. I had no faith in Joseph. She and Fénelon strongly advise "direction." I was bewildered about many things, and determined I would have a director—but I took my time. It consoled me to find that St. Teresa had heartily hated manifesting her interior to her director; for so thoroughly did I abhor even the mere thought of it, that I hesitated some time before I could entertain it at all. My own old Confessor had gone abroad, and the new one did not know me so well, which enhanced the difficulty.

Before exposing myself to an ordeal so objectionable, and which was not of obligation, I determined to take the opinion of an eminent Jesuit. Praying earnestly to know the will of God from the mouth of His minister, I entered his confessional and said "Father, I have come merely to ask your advice as to whether it is expedient to expose other things independent of sins to one's Confessor—to have, in short, a "director."

"Far better," said he, "for every one to be his or her *own* director." An answer so opposed to my expectation and so entirely at variance with the opinions of so many distinguished writers, perplexed and disappointed me. I determined to try another priest.

Prefacing my visit with a prayer to the Ghost as before, I applied to an oblate of St. Charles, a man of vast psychological experience and well-known piety.

"Not only," said he, "do I earnestly recommend you to have a director, but I tell you it is your bounden duty to have one." There is but one *Holy* Ghost, thought I. Two entirely different counsels can never come from the same ghost. I had better have no director; he might be under the influence of the wrong ghost and mislead me. St. Teresa had suffered grievously for years, owing to an inexpert director; so might I. However, one morning I was in Church absorbed as usual with my devotions, when, just as the Sanctus bell rang, a bright

light shone round me. I lost all consciousness of the church, the priest, etc. I saw happy faces, felt intensely happy, and, upon regaining my normal condition at the "Domine non sum dignus," thought the altar, the vestments, the flowers, etc., all looked woefully faded and paltry by, comparison with the scene I had just left. This species of vision determined me to have a "spiritual conference" with my Confessor. Fully but briefly I stated all I considered necessary to enable him to judge of my "interior."

With some hesitation he assured me that it was extremely difficult to distinguish the operations of God from those of the devil; that Satan could transform himself into an angel of light, that even St. Teresa had pronounced it well nigh impossible to feel certain on these matters—that he felt unequal to the responsibility of "directing" me, and advised me to seek counsel elsewhere. I did nothing of the sort. I bought a bottle of medicine to cure the ulcers which fasting had induced in my throat, and bade a long farewell to "directors" and to ghosts generally!

In my quiet corner of the church I loved so well, and where I had passed so many hours, not merely in petitioning but in devoutly worshipping God, I reviewed my fifteen years' experience of that elevation of the soul to God commonly called mental prayer.

Not once nor twice, but frequently, did I meditate upon the practice of prayer, and finally determined to give it up entirely as useless, presumptuous, and absurd. Not in a moment of fretful impatience, of unwonted dejection, or of sudden indignation, but after considerable reflection, with reverence and humility, with confidence and gratitude, did I abandon a practice from which I had learnt many a solemn lesson. As we smile at a child who fills his pockets with salt in the hope of catching birds, so I smiled at my former self for believing that the Changeless One

would alter His course to suit me, for *wishing* Him to do so, and for supposing that He wanted any prompting from *me* as to the time when He should set about His own business.

In me the religious faculty was largely developed ; but in my loftiest flights I had felt the futility, the want of reciprocity, the chilling discouragement of the whole affair, and prayer in the sense of mere petition I had given up long before I had ceased communing with God in the various methods which, under the names of meditation, contemplation, prayer of silence, ecstasy, &c., have engrossed religious minds of all denominations. I never pray now. I have left off running after ghosts. I have given up building castles upon fallacious texts. I no longer try to grasp the unattainable. I am happy and contented. Formerly I fancied everything would go wrong if I neglected my prayers ; now I am convinced that the power we call God is and *ought* to be uninfluenced by our petitions. *Now* I am satisfied with God ; I am certain He will do the right thing at the right time, and that fortunately His creatures can neither say nor do anything which can interfere with the perfect harmony of His mighty operations. "I was blind, now I see." Upon those fifteen years I look back with more amazement than regret. I was in good faith doing my best, and quite unconscious what a poor, mean, childish idea I had formed of our great Creator. I have broader notions now and live in a healthier atmosphere. It took me many years to learn my lesson, but at length I mastered it, and am daily profiting by it.