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Crescent Carnival

Continued from page 2

I'm afraid it's going to be set back a few hundred feet."

"You talk as if you didn't know that meant the beginning of the end for this plantation!" The men who were here today explained what's happened, which you never did."

"The reason I didn't try to explain what has happened already was because I was sure you wouldn't understand."

"You thought I wouldn't understand! But you understood. And still you let me go on squandering money. I might as well have thrown it in the river. That's what I did do, practically."

"I did try to stop you, Anna. But you were determined to do things your own way. As you always are. I didn't think the Army engineers would come this year. And I thought before another year I could explain—"

"You could explain! I know you better than that, Breck! You're a weakling, you're a procrastinator, you're a—I'm through with you. I'm leaving you."

"Very well. Of course I'm extremely sorry. Drew's staying with me, Anna. I shan't try to stop you. But if you try to take Drew, you'll get into trouble."

...

He came a step closer to her. Involuntarily she recoiled. He smiled, in a way that was neither pleasant nor merry. "I've told you I'm sorry, Anna, for having seemed to deceive you. If you'll believe me and forgive me, I give you my word of honor that I'll never keep anything you ought to know from you again. We'll go on as if it had never happened. But if nothing I can say seems worth listening to, I'll let you go without raising any sort of rumpus about that. It's easy enough to say you couldn't stand the heat of a southern Summer yourself, or something of that sort. And I'll bring Drew to see you. But you can't have him without me, and you can't take him away from me."

He was very close to her now, so close that their shoulders were almost touching as they faced each other. "You could always talk, when you made up your mind to it, Breck," she said scornfully. "I used to believe you. But I don't any more. And I'm leaving you tonight. And some day I'll get Drew back."

(To be continued)

Thoughts For Our Time

Continued from page 2

The glow of well-being, the sense of righteousness which accompanies a simple act of kindness exhausted for him the depths of religious experience. Is it any wonder that for the less sophisticated all this is vulgarized into what is popularly described as "getting religion?"

Matthew Arnold erroneously called religion a "hebraizing" force; that is, a fierce energy proceeding from within ourselves, urging us to be obedient to God's laws, to live rightly and to avoid sin. He regarded it as a power of conduct subsidiary to general culture. Religion for him was merely doing what we ought to do as part of our general culture. It was something quite narrow, a mere part of general culture.

Two errors inhere in this concept of religion. First, religion does not centre upon men. It is not just another cultural activity. It is not a subdivision of general culture. It is something far superior to culture. Indeed, it is not only above culture but capable of directing it. It is quite wrong to try to absorb religion in culture to make it a mere means of advancing civilization. It may achieve all this but it is supernatural and transcends both civilization and culture. It proceeds from God Himself.

Secondly, religion does not reside in men as a feeling, emotion or passion. It is not to be confused with the soothing effects of sweet music or with the palliative effects of drugs or stimulants. If this were its nature, then it might rightly be regarded as some refined sort of pleasure and be sought much as other pleasures.

Religion is a virtue. It is a habit of justice by which we strive to pay off certain debts. As men we incur many kinds of debts. But one debt which we have incurred by our very existence as intelligent creatures is that of rendering to God the honor that is His due as our Creator.

Religion is the giving to God of something owed to Him. It is not a selfish satisfying of our pleasurable emotions. Religion is not primarily concerned with making us "feel good" but with paying a debt.

The acts by which the religious person pays his debts are in the first place, interior. They consist in recognizing this state of indebtedness and seeking to remove it by means which God regards as acceptable. Secondly, acts of religion are exterior too. They include prayer and adoration. Where there are no external acts of religion, there are very likely no interior ones either. It is most improbable that the man who treats Good Friday as a public holiday and performs no outward acts of worship, is possessed of the inward virtue of religion.

Some no doubt will think all this harsh and rigid. But it is really not so. For the life-spring of such thinking is Divine Love. The suffering and hardships which genuine acts of religion appear to demand are really the measuring-sticks of love. Who loves God, gladly renders Him the worship that is His and counts as trifling the difficulties that stand in the way. After all, Christ's willing acceptance of His suffering was the Act of Religion "par excellence." Our acts have supernatural value only to the degree that they become part of His.

If Good Friday reminds us of anything, it is that God's infinite love was best demonstrated in an act of suffering. This should serve to incite in us a willingness to undertake what is both difficult and even painful as a token of our love of God. If we would really know religion when we see it or recognize it in ourselves when we experience it, we must put aside the notion of emotional complicity. True religion resides in a sense of justice arising from supernatural charity or divine love.

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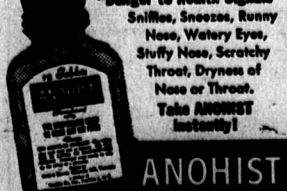
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