

A Decision Rendered.

FROM dreams of putting into practice those various intricate movements, theorized for three long months in the training camp, Lt. Vernon Colby was awakened by the persistent ringing of the telephone. He rolled over, half opened his eyes and tried to think what was disturbing him. It was the call that he had left at the hotel desk for ten o'clock, that he might attend last mass. The bed never felt more delightful as he lay on his back gazing at the ceiling and reminding himself that he did not have to report to Camp Oglethorpe until one o'clock.

A serious operation had caused him to remain away from college the preceding year. When his country entered the great war, Vern, as he was known to his friends, had been of a perplexed mind. No mention was ever made of his discontinuing his studies. His recuperation had been sufficient for him to return to school that fall, but it was only spring and many of his friends were going about in uniform. His civilian attire did not signify that he was not just as patriotic, but his family and friends as well as himself always had the idea that Vern would some day go to the seminary. Until recently, this had been the prevailing conviction of his life. When a small altar boy, he had first conceived this happy thought, and had fostered it through the time of his primary education; when graduated from high school, without any hesitation he had chosen the classical course to enter upon his freshman year at college.

One of the first things he had done after matriculation even before fixing up his room, was to take from a notebook a small card on which was written four Latin words. Selecting the most conspicuous place on the desk, he had ceremoniously attached it thereon and then read aloud—"Es tenax proposito semper." To his comrades, this self-composed motto was always most indicative of his character. He was held in great esteem by them and when his class-mates had entered upon their junior year without Vern, they had sent him a telegram urging him to return as soon after the operation as possible.

It was while convalescing in the hospital that Colby had begun to wonder, whether after all he wanted to go to the seminary. Then after leaving the hospital and while recuperating he had sought out companions whose society he had hitherto considered undesirable. Although he had often heard that worldly experience was invaluable in all walks of life, his conscience had troubled him. His mother timidly expressed her anxiety over his change of manner, but he had carelessly assured her that there was no need to worry. While he might have succeeded in allaying her apprehension he knew in his own heart that he was not doing right.

Seeing an opportunity of avoiding the current issue he had applied for training camp and had been duly accepted, though at first it had appeared as if the results of his operation would thwart his plans. The Colby family were patriotic, so had viewed his enlistment with no resentment. When he had been awarded his commission they were happy because of his success and proudly congratulated him.

After a brief stay at home, he had left for his new command and had arrived in Savannah on Saturday night. Before going to bed he had left the call in order that he might attend Mass next morning. As he lay in bed reviewing the events of the last few months, he allowed the time to slip by until it was too late to attend church.

A month later found Lt. Colby an efficient officer with a responsible command, as deeply absorbed in his work as though a veteran of years. He had many new acquaintances and each evening he journeyed to the city, where under the guise of good fellowship to service men, he was entertained by the so called elite of Savannah. It was a merry round of good times, and being exceptionally popular his company was always in demand. "Poor little bird, it knew the plane of the sky and yet the rays from the lighthouse bewildered it and led it astray." He was now a member of what he shortly before envied as the "best of society". He was enjoying the good times and pleasures that he formerly coveted.

No one ever mentioned religion to him and on Sunday morning he was always too tired to get up for church, while the omission of his daily prayers became a habit. He tried to feel no

remorse of conscience, but invariably the thought of vocation came up before him. His new vocation with its diversity of pleasures and environments even made him desire to have the war continue, for so long as it did, he could console himself with the legitimate excuse of not being able to follow his inclination. Indeed he went to the extreme of fatalism, by hoping to go overseas and perchance have all questions solved by a convenient accident. This in itself made him again realize that he was trying to overcome the persistent dictates of his conscience. Do what he would, even now in his irreligious mood the great question continually came up before him. He had debated it thoroughly and considered it his vocation absolutely, not that it was a matter of choice as he would like to have himself believe. If he did not follow the calling or heed the voice of conscience, he could not picture himself anywhere but out of place. He was trying to deceive himself. At balls, at dinners and the various good times he was enjoying, even when he thought there was little else to live for, that one question would loom up before him and efface it from his thoughts he could not.

It was six months after that memorable day of Nov. 11th. that he was discharged. He journeyed home without any battle scars for he was never sent overseas. He did have what he set out for, but could not now appreciate and that was experience. It was a great teacher he had often heard, but this theory now failed, for experience had not taught him that he had had enough experience. He had been home on several short leaves of absence, but now he was welcomed home for a longer stay. Two years' absence had made a considerable change in him.

Two years' service and nothing to console himself with, but the word patriotism. What invaluable time this would have been, if it had been spent at school or even directed in the right way! True, he had done his duty, but the army life held no permanent allurements for him. He was back where he started from. The question still remained unsolved. On it depended his whole future, nay even his eternity. Most of the inquiries put to him, he evaded. He told his father that he was going back to the South to enter the cotton business, in which he had become interested. His father advised him well and even intimated something about

returning to college, taking care not to persuade him against his will. It was of little avail for he had already shipped some of his things to Georgia preparatory to leaving himself.

The last two days Colby was busy bidding his friends farewell. He assured them that he did not intend to make the South his permanent home but that he would return as soon as his fortune was made. How indefinite this was to them. He was commended on having the courage of his convictions, but he well knew that the necessitated change was being brought about by ulterior motives and no others.

How was he to say good-bye to his close and dear friend, Fr. Coyle? He had corresponded with him all the time he was away and each letter he received while in the service, always made some mention of returning to college when he would be discharged. He thought of telephoning to the parochial residence and leaving word for the curate that he would be unable to call before departing. It was impossible to feign such an excuse, for they were too good friends for that, so after vespers Sunday evening he went into the house, where over their cigars, priest and layman talked of views on life. Their relative ages permitted a respectful intimacy and without any preliminaries, Vernon was being advised why he should return to school. Fr. Coyle was morally certain of his friend's vocation and had always remembered him in his prayers in this way. So now he was resorting to his best logic to convince him to decide prudently his future course. Neither was he rebuffed when Vernon referred to what he always termed "his experience". He reminded him of Peter denying Our Lord and quoted some of the conversions of the greatest sinners. Then seeing a vantage point for Vern had conceded the certainty of his vocation, he asked him to take from the book-case the life of St. Augustine and to read three chapters which he would find underlined in the index. Fr. Coyle knew that he once had to solve a similiar question, though he was thankful it had been done with less severity. He had expected this visit and had planned ahead, so while Vernon perused the pages telling about that part of Augustine's life when he was not a saint, he laid aside his logic and gazed above his desk, where before the picture of the Sacred

Heart he made an earnest appeal in Colby's behalf. Closing the book Vernon remarked that it was getting late and signified his intention of going. At the door Fr. Coyle grasped his hand firmly and said, "You know Vern that I would not attempt to coerce you into doing anything against your will, but if God has given you a vocation, and I somehow feel He has, do not be unfair to yourself by being heedless to His call.

What a turmoil took place in his mind while walking home! When he entered the library he readily acceded to the request of his young nephew to help him in his home lessons. Wilfrid was an only child of Vernon's eldest brother, who had died in the service. He was at the inquisitive age of twelve. The many questions put to his ankle, were complacently accepted as a happy diversion for a very unhappy mind. The nuns at the parochial school had inspired Wilfred with a noticeable fervor, that pricked his Uncle Vern's conscience. Uncle and nephew worked diligently until each lesson was finished. Finally Wilfred passed over his catechism to the uncle he was so proud of.

Fearing his thoughts might revert to an unpleasant subject, Vernon requested to know where the lesson began. "Oh, you will find it marked with a little card grandma gave me to use as a book-mark. She said it was one of yours and that I must always take good care of it." Though the card had dropped to the floor, he immediately recognised it and would have concealed it in the back pages, but curiosity impelled Wilfred to know what was meant by the inscription on it. He had always been anxious to know and could not be put off merely by being told that they were Latin words. He persisted until his uncle in a modulated tone, told him the translation of the words was, "Be thou always firm of purpose," Since that did not yet mean much to Wilfred, before long Vernon Colby was expounding what once meant so much to himself.

Then suddenly it came to him, Why could not this again resume its proper place in his life? "A little child shall lead them", and like Saul's conversion, Vernon Colby on the brink of disaster was held back. He knew now that the journey South must not be. Bidding his nephew good-night he climbed the stairs to his own room, where in true humility, he prayed long before retiring.

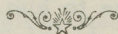
Next day his exultant mood was one of ecstasy. How he was to tell his family that he had given up the idea of going South he did not know. It seemed as though he was being aided in all things. When his father left the dinner table to answer the telephone, he thought of whispering it to his mother and those remaining, but Wilfred intervened by asking him a disconcerting question about when he was going away. The time had come. Vernon with a wistful glance at all was about to reply when his father called to him that Fr. Coyle was speaking over the phone and wanted to know if he had decided definitely when he was to leave. Hesitating over his desert, he looked longingly at his mother and replied, "Yes Dad, tell Father Coyle that I have rearranged my plans somewhat and shall leave Tuesday for Worcester in order to be on time for the opening of Holy Cross College."

Paul F. Hughes '22.



The bells of all Christendom now roll along the unbroken song of peace on earth, good will to men.

—Longfellow.



Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial fire of charity in the heart.

—Irving.