

STORY OF A PRIEST.

E. Temple Thurston's New Novel,
"The Apple of Eden."*



WHAT life would have been if Eve had not yielded to the charms of the apple in the Garden of Eden no one will ever know. The condition of the man of to-day who has not tasted the fruit to be desired to make one wise E. Temple Thurston undertakes to show in "The Apple of Eden." Father Everitt is the man, and the story opens in the confessional. The priest has every desire to show Christian charity to its fullest extent. The sin of the penitent is not one to be admonished from the pulpit, but in the privacy of the confessional he can speak freely. He has studied this weakness, he believes, from every point of view—with his books in the silence of his own rooms. He offers up a prayer that his words may be well chosen.

But here is an unusual penitent. He pleads the greatness of his temptation and the naturalness of his sin, while the confessor listens incredulously.

"Do you mean to tell me," the priest says, slowly, "that your body is so weak that your spirit is overcome by the mere appearance of a woman—solely by the beauty of her looks? Have you no more strength than that?"

"My son, when you feel sorry for your sin come and confess it to me again."

There is a vivid sketch of the life of the priest. A mile outside the village, reached by the sea-washed road, are the three or four one-storied, thatched cottages, whitewashed and spotlessly clean, which form the farmhouses in one of which Michael was born. A quiet, self-contained child, little understood in the busy household, he is early consecrated to the priesthood. As a boy he begins his studies, warned at the holiday vacations to avoid all temptation.

"Don't join them when they're after dancing at the crossroads," said Father Anthony. "There's no fun in it and, faith, it's all sinful."

But already in his clerical collar he is avoided by the young people of the village, and he has no interest in their amusements. At twenty-one he takes his vows. Others, uncertain of themselves, slip from the ranks, and he gazes at them in open-eyed wonder. He goes to his first parish, and his quiet, studious life continues.

There is a delightful picture of Father Tom Connelly, the parish priest, raw-boned, cheerfully optimistic, living in his big-roomed, cobweb-hung house alone, working in his garden, dusting his old hat with his coat sleeve, judging the world shrewdly and sympathetically. It is by advice of Father Connelly that his young assistant goes away from his own country and learns many things that are not to be found in books.

"Give up yer books," he said straightly, "for a year or so. Let philosophy and theology take care o' themselves and nature take care o' ye. Be up an' about an' out in the world. Get fresh air. Take exercise, faith, if ye have to steal it. Be a man and live like a man. Ye were born to live by the sweat of your brow, not by thieving your sleep and blinding your eyesight. Well, be human and let ye'self sweat." "Wisha, now, Father Michael, tell me when a man comes and confesses to ye on a Saturday evening, is ut philosophy he's wanting?" "It is not!" "Is philosophy the sort of thing to give a man on a Saturday night, when there's only twelve hours between him and holy communion for him to swallow it in?" "'Tis not, sure it's not!"

It is to Father Connelly that the curate goes last, and it is to him that he goes first after his return from the visit during which he has learned the many things not to be found in books, a knowledge of human nature and of his own nature.

"My poor child," said the older man with deepest sympathy as the younger tells of his disgrace, his shame, and his remorse. But it is with relief that he hears the confession in detail, and again he counsels moderation.

"Yirra, man, have some respect for yer sins. That doesn't prevent ye from being sorry for them. It isn't because ye made a mistake that ye must go and tell the whole world about it. Take it as a lesson and keep it to yerself. Shure ye'll learn a mighty lot from it that ye never knew before. Yirra, men like you go and take justice out of God's hands and pronounce damnation before the Almighty has had time to see how much mercy ye deserve. Make good come out of evil, man! Shure if it wasn't for that kind of alchemy this world would be one mass of stagnant unconverted sin."

It is an interesting book and a clever pen picture.

The New York Times

Published: April 22, 1905

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