

## THE CONVERT

Querino - age 41, born in the Cape Verde Islands, 20 years resident in America, occupation, Cook.

### Introductory Statement

Tuesday, September tenth, a policeman on street noticed the patient suddenly shoot his arms up above his head. This conduct seemed to him peculiar. He therefore took him to the station. It was there discovered that he was under the influence of religious excitement and that he regarded these motions as prompted by the Holy Spirit. Up to eight months before he had been a Roman Catholic. He had also been sexually promiscuous and somewhat alcoholic. Since that time he has become a regular attendant at a "Pentecostal" mission. He has given up entirely his former manner of life even to his smoking and his innocent amusements. Last week he feels that he received the baptism of the Spirit. The physician at the City Hall considered his mental condition such as to make it advisable to send him to the Hospital.

In appearance the patient is somewhat below average height but is well built. He has curly and in fact kinky hair, swarthy complexion, and a pleasant, noticeably happy expression. He appears to be of the negroid type. He speaks English imperfectly but understands readily and can make himself understood. He answers the questions which are put to him freely and with some degree of intelligence. The names and addresses and facts which he has given have checked up completely.

### Sources of Information

The patient himself, his three friends, the manager of an employment agency, his mother two sisters and two cousins supplied the information concerning the patient which is embodied in the following account.

Securing the information from the family proved to be rather an arduous matter owing to the language handicap. The mother speaks no English and one sister and the cousin very little. A young man, a son of the cousin, who keeps the small, poorly stocked grocery store in which the interview took place served as interpreter.

The family was found very much alarmed over the patient's condition. A letter had just been received telling them that he was very sick. The mother wanted to know if he was able to talk and whether they kept him tied down the way they usually do in a "crazy House!"

### Family History

The family is of Portuguese peasant stock. The father died twenty-two years ago of a fever. The mother, now about seventy-five years old, relatively tall and thin with aquiline features and straight hair, came to this country six years ago to join the rest of her children. Of these there are besides the patient three daughters. One of these, three years older than the patient, short of stature and alert in manner, resembles the patient rather than her mother. She is married but works in a bake-shop while her husband is engaged in the cranberry business. The mother makes her home with this daughter. The second daughter, who bears a striking resemblance to the mother, has a numerous progeny and lives at the store mentioned above. The third daughter, 33 years old, is in the cranberry business. She is unmarried. Neither of the married daughters, so far as it was possible to discover, had changed their names. Both go by the name of their brother and mother. So far as could be learned there were no other children. The mother and the three daughters seem all in good health.

The family are Roman Catholics but they do not seem to take the patient's defection very seriously. The oldest sister, who says she is a regular attendant at church, thinks this "salvation business" no good. The rest do not apparently attend church very regularly. They have apparently accepted the patient's recent change as his own business. As for the "Pentecostal" Church, "everybody know of that now." There is a Pentecostal mission in their own neighborhood which the young cousin says he attends quite frequently.

### Personal History and Environment

The patient, according to his mother, was a thoroughly healthy and normal child. He walked before he was one year old and talked before he was two. He was never sick and did not even have the usual children's diseases. In school he did very well though he went only a short time. He was a friendly, sociably inclined boy and fond of play. When "only a little shrimp", nine or ten years old, he got work on a boat and has been working ever since. No facts of importance were discovered about his sex life in his childhood.

### Patient's Statement

According to the patient's own account he has been very fond of pleasure. He has indulged some in alcohol, he has frequented the theatre and the movies, and he has been quite promiscuous with women. His trade is that of cook, though he has also worked as waiter and as dish-washer. He has served both on boats and in hotels and restaurants. For the last three years when not working he has been living with three friends at ----. For the last eight months he has not been working partly because he has not been able to find just what he wanted and partly because of his growing interest in religion. Five months ago he received the baptism of

the Spirit and the week before he had some very special experience. For confirmation of his statements he refers to his three friends and to "Jerry" the manager of an employment agency with whom he has been doing business for the last fifteen years.

### The Three Friends

The three friends were found at home on the fourth floor of a tenement house in a crowded foreign district. Their apartment was spotlessly clean. The floors were beautifully scrubbed, the stove was polished and the elegant brass bedstead in the front room was adorned with a clean white spread of excellent material. On the wall were a number of framed pictures, a crayon enlargement of a young man, a pretty lady or two, but there was no evidence of police gazette taste beyond three small photographs of prize-righters in fighting costume, presumably Firpo. The three friends themselves are nice-looking fellows all of them Portuguese. One is a longshoreman who works also in kitchens, a tall lanky fellow of a distinct negroid type. The other two are cooks. Both of these are small sharp-featured and alert. They were surprised to learn of their friend's predicament, though also a little relieved, for they had begun to worry about him. All of them have been interested together in the pentecostal mission. In fact it is they who are responsible for enlisting the patient's interest. They think a great deal of the patient. He's a good fellow and a good cook. They haven't seen anything wrong with him. Of course he's been religious, but there's no harm in that. He don't stab nobody. He used to smoke and drink and go to theatres and movies and associate with women. Indeed he was crazy about these things. But he has given all that up now. He goes to meeting every night. In the day time when he ain't out looking for a job he reads the Bible and he sings hymns. He has not been working. The reason is he can't find the kind of a job he wants. His last job pay him \$35 a week and board and room.

For the last five months he has been throwing up his hands. He does that when he feels the Spirit. "But what of it? I hold up my hands too," said the taller friend, "When you rejoice and feel good, is it not right?" Still they had told the patient that he ought to be careful not to do this out in public. But the Bible is a book you mustn't fool with. We must all have a belief of some sort of else we are just animals.

### The Employment Agent

"Jerry", whose last name none of them knew, and who is listed in the directory as Coughlin, gives an excellent report of the patient. He has known him fifteen years and has placed him a number of times. The last place he found for him was in Malden two years ago. His wages at that time were \$25 a week and board. He stayed there 8 months. Some years ago he placed him at the ---- club in Brookline. There he received \$80 a month and board and room. He had placed him at other times but could not give the figures without

going to the books which would require a lot of time and trouble. He has however always made good. He is a good little cook. One difficulty with all these fellows is that they never like to accept a job for less money than they received at the last place. It would not be difficult to place him now if he does not hold out for his \$35 a week.

### The Mission

The mission attended by the patient and his friends is called the "House of Prayer." The situation in that general neighborhood is characterized by the following clipping from the current number of the negro city paper.

#### THE STREET CORNER MISSIONS

Not the least among the objectionable features of the South End's daily life that ought to be cleaned up at once is the street-corner mission, so-called, which has now become a public nuisance. Not only has it become a nuisance to persons who dwell in the neighborhood of its operations, but it has become more and more a cause of shame and humiliation to the decent, self-respecting, orderly citizens of that section.

There are now according to reliable information, nine so-called missions on ----- Avenue alone within the space of some five blocks. These places are maintained by a regular clientele--men and women whose modes of livelihood are not always above reproach and who cannot be said in other respects to be what we know as exemplary citizens.

Some of the most reliable residents in the affected districts have assured us that these "missionaries" are not what they represent themselves to be. Whether they are or not we know little personally, but we do know that their open-air and street-corner antics, degenerating always into the most disgusting monkey-shines, are anything but uplifting and we believe they ought to be stopped. "Religion" has always had to bear many a reproach for deeds committed in its name, but when bootleggers, dope-fiends, pick-pockets and despoilers of young women hide behind the cloaks of religion in an effort to escape censure or punishment, it is time that every citizen began planning how best to remedy matters.

It is surely a poor brand of religion which is secured at the sound of rattling jazz instruments, from gibbering and frenzied men and women, who, the police assert, will accept your order quietly during the "intermission" for a quart of bootleg gin, or who will, for a consideration,

whisper into a believer's ear information as to where and when to seek for women of that character who sell their honor for Gold.

But the police can do nothing so long as the law protects them. It is the duty of every good citizen--every man and woman who believes in the spiritual instruction as given him in his legitimate place of worship--to take this matter up with the law-makers of the district. They should not run the risk of bringing into disrepute the properly founded and universally recognized religious sects or beliefs."

At eight o'clock the doors of the mission were still locked, although the hall, a made-over grocery store, was brightly lighted. Inquiry revealed that an open-air meeting was going on some three blocks up the street. This meeting seemed to be not greatly different from the usual Salvation Army affair except that all of the participants were negroes. There was the customary singing aided in this case by one trombone, two guitars, and several tambourines. There were also the customary testimonies. And there were more than the usual crowd of by-standers. At 8:30 they adjourned to the hall, which was quickly filled to overflowing. Most of those present were negroes, but there were about a dozen whites, among them two of the patient's friends. One of these took his seat in the amen corner and both were welcomed as of the elect.

As soon as the service began it was not difficult to see why a number of the whites should be drawn in. The music was most effective. It consisted of the old plantation melodies. No books were used. The words were of the simplest, merely one or two phrases, repeated over and over, such as, "God don't want no coward soldier", "There's a place in the ranks for me" or "Prayin' time will soon be over." Not less than ten minutes was required for some of the hymns. The singing was accompanied always by the clapping of hands and the banging of tambourines and by several musical instruments. The general prayer was also a musical performance. Many were praying at the same time, but instead of using the speaking voice they sang, each one after his own fashion; but the voices blended beautifully. This was followed by another hymn. Then came the testimonials. One of the sisters, dressed in black and wearing a black bonnet trimmed with white, spoke as follows:

"I praise God to-night because I've been an overcomer all day. You know I used to work in a hotel and there every day we had to punch in, in order to get our pay. I feels like punchin' in to-night so's to get my reward. I want to bear witness that I've lived a righteous life to-day and I'm so happy. It's a wonderful thing to have God in a good humor with you. When Jesus came to me the praises just leaped from my lips and I didn't seem to have nothing to do with it."

The next sister after starting up a hymn said: "I feel like punchin' too. I want to bear witness that I've done my part. I's get the power. Hallelujah Jesus! I've got the power of glory!"

Two of the testifiers, an elderly negro woman and a young negro man, spoke with a good deal of intelligence and not a little humor.

The former dwelt particularly on the subject of holiness and gave it a thoroughly practical turn. "Without holiness no man shall see God. You all can't drink whiskey and do this and that and receive the Holy Ghost. Every one who does not say that the Word of God does not say that God has power to save from all sin is a deceiver. God can take a man who is a drunkard and this thing and that thing and pick him up and clean him up."

The young man spoke in part as follows:

"I want to praise God to-night because I've got to leave this room early to catch a train to go to work. Work don't take the joy of the Lord out of my soul.....Some of you who are here to-night, if you had not come here, might be locked up now in that big hotel' they keep down on Charles Street.....It don't worry me what they call me, Holy Roller, Holy Jumper, anything they like, so long as they put the holiness in.....I used to be a Roman Catholic. For five years I studied how to go around and hold up the priests' coat-tails.....Lots of people let father and mother work hard and save money to send them to college and then they don't come out nothing but educated fools. I praise God 'cause he taught me. I went to the Holy Ghost College."

During the taking of the offering another hymn was sung. This became more and more animated until finally a stout elderly colored woman bounced out of her chair and began to jump up and down in the most vigorous fashion. It was not long before three or four others were jumping too. This lasted several minutes until finally the old lady dropped back into her seat, heaving a loud sigh of relief and mopping her perspiring brow.

And then came the "big noise." He was a burly negro with re-greating forehead and bulging cheeks, thick lips and wide nostrils who had already attracted attention by the marvellous way in which he shuffled his huge feet during the singing of the hymns. He showed a little irritation because a number were leaving the hall. Among these was one of the Patient's friends who whispered as he left: "I am very anxious to learn how the fight came out (Firpo-Dempsey.)" Then he remarked that he would not say much because the testimonies had been so fine, but he did want to add his own. This was in part as follows:

"The devil he had me down one time, thank God! I was an extra light pitcher for the old man, thank God! I threw zig-zag curves, thank God! The devil he knock me for a home run, thank God!"

His delivery was a most amazing affair. Each sentence or clause was begun with arm over head and bending deep to the right. As he came to the erect position, arm still over head, his speech increased in volume till he ended up on the other side with a bang on the pulpit, from which shortly after his performance began, one of the brethren carefully withdrew the Bible. The amens, which recurred at regular intervals, regardless of meaning, were accompanied by several bounds in the air. All during his speaking as well as in the case of the preceding speakers the sisters on the platform kept up a regular musical accompaniment of amens and hallelujahs.

After finishing his testimonial and starting another hymn, several others went out. Again he was irritated. Taking out his watch he said:

"By man's time it is now twenty-five minutes to eleven, Amen, thank God! You know people to-day don't have much time to wait for God, Amen, thank God! We have to catch them when we can, Amen, thank God!"

Then turning to the sisters on the platform he said:

"Will you please open your Bible to the Forty-seventh Psalm and read what's written there. I knows it all by heart, but we want it straight from outen God's Word."

The sister reads: "Oh clap your hands all ye people."

The speaker repeats at the top of his lungs with the usual gestures and amens: "Oh, clap your hands all ye people! Amen! thank God! Glory Hallelujah! Sister, read on!"

Sister reads: "Shout unto God with the voice of triumph!"

Speaker repeats: "Shout unto God with the voice of--of-- Yes I knows it all by heart, but Sister, what was that word?"

Much of the time was taken up with this reading and repeating. There were however occasional improvisations. Here is one of them:

"The devil, he laid his hand on Brother Job, Amen! Thank God! Glory hallelujah! And boils broke out all over him. Amen! Thank God! Glory hallelujah! But listen, my beloved brethren, Brother Job hold fast to his integrity. Amen! Thank God! Glory hallelujah! The devil he say, "Why don't you cuss God and die? Amen! Thank God! Glory hallelujah! But Brother Job he say, I will keep mine integrity. Amen, etc."

At the close of the service a woman was either baptized or treated for sickness of some sort. The preacher and another man both laid their hands on her head, repeating the trinitarian formula at the top of their lungs, both speaking at once.

In the course of the meeting there were in the case of several individuals some curious phenomena. No cases were observed of thrusting up the hands in just the style followed by the patient, but there was some very marked spasmodic jerking. This was most

apparent in two persons, a boy of perhaps seventeen and a young woman of perhaps twenty-five. Neither of these looked particularly bright. Just how far the jumping was an automatic phenomenon it is hard to say. While no hands were thrust up in the same automatic fashion so noticeable in the patient, the raising of the hands over the head was a not uncommon gesture.

### Subsequent History

The patient was released September 16 in the afternoon. In the evening he and his friends were visited in their apartment. The patient is thoroughly co-operative and is willing to go to work at the M. Church Settlement in the morning. However if it will be all right, he would like to visit his mother. She has been so much upset because of the letter telling her that he was so very sick. This suggestion was readily agreed to.

One of the friends P..... was interested to know the investigator's opinion of the mission. He himself had been the first one to discover it and had taken the others there. They apparently had taken it much more seriously than he. While he likes to go there, he also likes to look at a pretty girl and he loves the movies and follows the prize-fights very closely. No, those photographs are not of Firpo. He's an American and not from Argentina. Besides Dempsey is the best two-handed fighter he knows anything about. Was it not indeed remarkable that in the recent fight, he, a right-hander had knocked his opponent down five times with his left.

Their room was fully as neat as it had been before. Inquiry revealed that they paid \$24 a month rent. H. the tall friend was the manager and the telephone on the table was in his name.

At 7:45 the entire group adjourned to attend the meeting. On the way up the visitor noticed some nice-looking blue plums on one of the fruit stands. He inquired of P. whether he would care for any. P. hesitated and then replied: "You know this fruit which you see on the stands, even the grapes, you ought not to eat unless you wash it. It has many germs." After that the visitor did not dare to indulge himself.

September 19

The patient was seen this morning and introduced to the M. Church Settlement secretary. He made a very good impression. He was well-dressed and spoke in a pleasant, well-modulated voice with just a little hesitancy. He agrees to begin work next Monday. Secretary B. thinks that they may be able to use him in some of their religious work later on if he stands the test of the low pay and the uncongenial work at the beginning.

It was learned this afternoon that the patient's Wasserman test was positive.