

THE FUNERAL OF THE MURDERED PRIEST.

SERMON BY REV. FATHER WILLIAM O'RYAN.

More than a blow at the Catholic Church was the murder of Father Leo of St. Elizabeth's. It was a blow at the very life of the State and civilized society, said the Rev. Father William O'Ryan, regarded as the most eloquent priest west of the Mississippi, in speaking his few words of eulogy over the dead body of the Franciscan monk.

From "festering European dung heaps," said Father O'Ryan, a constant stream of degenerated blood is pouring into America, and he asked dramatically, "What are we doing? What are we thinking of?" In allowing this condition of affairs, Father O'Ryan does not consider the assassin insane evidently, for he said that the killing was logical in the extreme. In Italy the one power that has prevented the red hand of anarchy from crashing the State, he declared, is not the king or army but an imprisoned Pope and ill-used Church. The anarchist, hence, hates the Church as the one power against which he cannot prevail.

Father O'Ryan spoke simply of Father Leo, saying that there is not a priest in the country but envied him his glorious martyrdom. In closing, he also spoke against the "men ruled by greed," who he declared were anarchists that could not be pitied as Alito is pitied. Following is his address:

"My Dear Brethren, The preacher on this solemn occasion finds himself helpless and unequal to his task; neither thoughts nor words will come. S' meaningless and wanton in its conception, so horrible and revolting in its execution was the murder of Father Leo of the Friars of St. Francis that the mind is stunned, the whole intellect as only stagger and grope in its darkened chamber. Why? Why? Why? We ask ourselves, and in vain. For answer nothing presents itself to the imagination except the horrid spectacle of blood and sacrilege, the cruel, maddening scene, as of some foul nightmare or hideous dance of demons.

SIMPLE PRIAR STRUCK DOWN PERFORMING DUTY AT ALTAR. "But we must think, we must strive to think, we must summon calm and deliberate thought now and here, even in this church, the home of God and eternal symbol of the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ, which was polluted by the foul murder; here in the presence of that dead body of the simple friar who was struck down while breaking the Bread of Life.

"The occasion demands no words of eulogy of the martyred priest, the follower of the gentle Saint of Assisi. The rule of the humble St. Francis forbids that. The murdered man was a good priest; he was a faithful Franciscan in all the words imply; let that be his sufficient epitaph, and a greater no saintly man, a true lover of Christ could win or desire before men and God. And, forgetting the manner of his death as it affects our hearts and imaginations, no priest living but must envy Father Leo his death, which God allowed to come to him in that divinest moment in the life of the minister of Christ, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in his hands, and on his lips the prayer for the other—'May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to His everlasting.' Ah, God was good to him and blessed Francis in heaven must have loved him even as he loved that other brother, Leo, his companion, who sang for him on his death bed in Assisi long ago. St. Francis sang to Sister Death, 'Praised be Thou, oh, my Lord of Sister Death, the death of the body, from whom no living man may escape, but who unto them that shall die in deadly sin, and be blessed by they that shall work according to Thy most holy will, for unto them shall the second death do not hurt.'

SERMON BECAUSE OF HUMAN SOCIETY THAT WAS OUTRAGED. "That any sermon is attempted on this solemn occasion is therefore, my brethren, not because of Father Leo who is dead, nor because of the high offense against our Almighty Father who lives, but because of the human society in which we live and its outrage and loosened bond of law. Crime such as that of last Sunday morning are assaults on no mere individual—they are against you and me and all of us; they are against every altar

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and every heart; they strike at law and justice in her holy sanctuary whence it breathes, the very life of the state and civilized society.

"Father Leo was struck down, the murderer confesses, because he was a priest and not for any fancied grievance or imagined injury that the murderer had received from him. He never knew the dead priest, he had never spoken with him; their lives, except in that one dread moment of blood and sacrilege, had never touched. But the fiend knew that the priest was some outward symbol and present ambassador of that only authority by which kings reign and magistrates prescribe justice and human law rears itself in awful dignity and finds its sanction—the authority and governance of God. And because the murder had revolted against God's authority, his rebellion went to its uttermost logical ending in action—he revolted against its presence in the world in human laws until his revolt gashed forth in human blood, he revolted against its outward symbol, the priest, and slew him.

"The murderer was logical, the anarchist is never truer to his diabolical principles than when he slays a Catholic priest and slays him at the altar of God. It matters not that the individual priest has little of the world's goods or power, nor desires them for himself; it matters not even that he is a follower of that Francis of Assisi who chose Lady Poverty for his bride and the poorest things of this world for his love, wherever he is the Catholic priest in so many ways carries in himself the church authority and of God and extorts her to men. He is an officer in that great army whose tramp is around the world, whose discipline is most perfect, whose organization is most minutely defined, whose banners are forever set over against the enemy of disorder and anarchy in the speech, in the heart and in the actions of men as opposed to just human government and divine rule.

CATHOLIC AGENTS OF MORALITY UNCHANGED AND UNCHANGEABLE. "Yes, he was logical. He might hate the ministers of the Christian bodies, but not with similar hate—the impotent hate that slays; for the other Christian bodies are, alas! too divided to be dangerous to him. He might hate a king, for he rules, but kings come and go and kingly policies have their changes and changes; but the Catholic priest is slain but to live and the Catholic policy of to-day is the Catholic policy of tomorrow, the Catholic agents of morality are unchanged and unchangeable as the throne of God.

"He saw this at home in Italy, that there it is not the parliament of the king that saves him his crown; it is not the army of Italy that saves her from the spoiling of the socialist and the red hand of the anarchist; though weakened by many defections the one strong, coherent unyielding force is still an imprisoned Pope and an ill used Church. Hence, the whole foul brood of them, the socialist who preaches and the anarchist who translates the sermon into red deeds of blood, come here having logically the Church and her priesthood. And here they learn to hate all other things concentrated to us—the ample power with which we clothe our president, the calm wisdom of our senators,

the serene majesty of our courts and the quiet dignity of our homes.

"My brethren, what are we doing, of what are we thinking? A great president of this country is slain by a degenerate who was awakened to the deed by socialist and anarchist vapors. We read that in New Jersey the anarchists have headquarters; that they meet in New Orleans; that they take counsel in Chicago.

"By stranger hands, did I say? Alas and alas, they are not always strangers. The type of anarchist of which is the murderer of Father Leo, the wild-eyed degenerate ever ready to slay, who cries out against law and order and is as the beast; he is the product of other lands; he was bred in some festering European dung-heap. Our feelings toward him may be of unutterable indignation, but the indignation is not unmitigated with pity. For, oh, it is a pitiful thing that our human nature should so degenerate, that the human will execute so fell a deed, that a man for whom Christ died should so fling away redemption and make a mockery of the cross. It is the most pitiable thing in human annals that a man should kill the priest who offered him the Bread of Life, the pledge of immortality. It reminds us of that crime of long ago when the Master was betrayed with a kiss. But, indeed, the indignation of a Christian in the presence of this crime is overwhelmed and cooled by the tears of awe-struck pity; pity for human nature itself.

"There are other anarchists whom we cannot pity, who are not strangers, who are Americans, the men ruled by the demon of greed and ambition ready to trample on the rights and lives of their fellow-citizens, who assail justice with bribes and strangle the law in its birth. For the punishment of these other anarchists, blood of American blood, who give some apology and offer some excuse to the ranting Socialist and raving anarchist we have no pity. We thank God that as a threat and a judgment to them God has given us our president. But this is not the time nor the place to dwell on the failings of human nature.

BUT ONE CURE FOR EVILS OF HUMANITY AND THAT FROM HEAVEN. "Ah, my brethren, in the end how little after all the baton of the policeman, the justice of the tribunal can effect. How widespread is the moral disease of our own land. There never was but one cure for the evils of humanity and that came from heaven; there never will be any other. God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. All anarchy begins and ends in the rejection of God and His messenger, who

is Christ Jesus. The fathers of this land knew Him and revered Him; in Him and through Him they built this nation; and their children are forgetting Him. Agnostics, materialists, atheist, socialist, anarchists, they are all but a dread succession of diseases, rather various phases of the same disease that come to them that have turned away from the Great Physician, who refuse in their minds to acknowledge, in their wills to obey God, their Father and King.

"The kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord and His Christ. Thus saith the Lord what iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me and have walked after vanity and become vain. My people have changed their glory into an idol. "Little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin when he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just. And He is the propitiator for our sins and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world. And in this we do know that we have known Him that we must keep His commandments. "Brethren, life is hard and the world difficult, its burdens heavy to bear, 'Abide in Him, abiding when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be put to shame.' "Little children, love one another."

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Literary Note. Patrons of Catholic publications throughout the country who have read one or more of the charming and edifying experiences of Rev. Richard W. Alexander whose writings first attracted notice in the pages of The Missionary will be interested that these intimate narratives, vouched for as true, have been collected and will appear in book form at Easter or a little later under the title 'A Missionary's Notebook.' These narratives have been over and over again the subject of the wonderful conversation of souls. No short stories have been more widely copied by the press over the world. They are absorbing in their interest and while they blend at times the smile and tear, they always have for their culmination the mercy of the Lord for His creatures. Inspiring reading for both young and old, the volume will be particularly desirable as a Sunday school or confirmation premium. The book will issue from the press of The Catholic Standard and Times Publishing Company, Philadelphia, and will contain about two hundred pages, attractively bound and illustrated, and will sell at 81 per copy.

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