

THE CATHOLIC.

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD UBIQUE, QUOD AB OMNIBUS CREDITUM EST.—WHAT ALWAYS, AND EVERY WHERE, AND BY ALL IS BELIEVED.

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ROBERT SOUTHWELL, S. J. (1805.)

BY W. JOE WALTER, AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR THOMAS MORE," &c.

"And smit with feelings of the olden days,
Revive the music of neglected lays."

Daniel, (1805.)

[CONCLUDED.]

We cannot close this memoir more appropriately, than by a remarkable extract from Southwell's beautiful "Epistle of Comfort to the reverent Priests and others, restrained in durance for the Catholic Faith,"—a work which should be in the hands of every lover of the beautiful and the pathetic.—"We find by experience, that whosoever suffereth, even though he suffer for an offence, is pitied; misery, though deserved, naturally begetting sympathy and tenderness in the beholders. But when such men as are of innocent life, of virtuous conversation, of gravity and learning, offer themselves to bear with fortitude every extremity, rejoice when they are tormented, smile when they are dismembered, and go to death as they would to a banquet; when such as want neither dignities to withdraw them, nor friends nor families to withhold them, nor powerful enemies to menace them, are ready to exchange their dignity for disgrace, to forsake their friends, and give themselves into the hands of their mortal foes, for nought else than for conscience' sake: men must need say, as they did in St. Cyprian's time: "It is a thing worthy to be known; yea, it is a thing deserving of the deepest consideration, for which a man is content to suffer death." Such men want no means to search out the truth, having both heard and read all that can be said on either side. They want not judgment to discover the good from the bad, being known as men of deep insight and penetration. They can have no pleasure in pain, nor any temporal inducement to undergo such misery; yea, they have many delights, honors, and preferments to withdraw them from it; and by altering their opinions, and speaking a word, might easily avoid it. Certain, therefore, it is, that they find it necessary to do this; that conscience demands it, that their very soul lieth thereon; for mere flesh and blood could never bear up against such heavy endurance.

"But who is there, despite of all he can do, who may not suffer that by misfortune, which he shrinks from suffering in God's cause? Why, therefore, fear that which cannot be avoided? Live well, and die well, we may; but live long, and not die, we cannot. We should not think life shortened, when it is well ended: He dieth old enough, that dieth good. Life is better well lost, than ill kept. If we be taken away in the flower of our age, how can it be better bestowed, than on Him who gave it? If we die in God's cause, our pitcher is broken over the fountain, but the water is not lost; it is only returned from whence it was taken. We are destined to a glorious combat, in which the mere comfort of having such honorable lookers-on were enough to cheer us against all efforts. When we fight in the cause of faith, God and his angels behold us, and Christ himself looketh on upon the combatant. What a glorious dignity, what an enviable felicity to fight under God, as the ordainer, and to be crowned by Christ, as the arbiter of the combat! Let honor to the constant and remorse to the lapsed, and us to the conflict. Chris-

tianity is a warfare, and the Christian a spiritual soldier; his weapon is patience, his leader is Christ, his standard is the cross. Now is the alarm sounded, and the war proclaimed; die you must to win the field. Nor is this news to you, who have professed yourselves the champions of Christ. You know that this is the sovereign victory,—by yielding to subdue, by dying to revive, by shedding your blood and losing your life, to win the goal of eternal felicity. Elijah must not think much to let fall the worthy mantle of the flesh, to be carried to Paradise in a fiery chariot. Gideon may willingly break his earthen pitchers, to show the light that will confound his enemies. Your daily prayer has been,—"thy kingdom come;" the time is arrived to realize the petition. Let our adversaries, therefore, load us with the infamous titles of traitor and rebel: let them draw us upon hurdles, hang us, embowel us alive, mangle our limbs, and set our quarters upon their gates, as food for the birds of the air. Will answer them as the Christians of the persecutions of the olden time did:—"Such is the manner of our victory; such the conqueror's garb: in such chariots do we triumph!" Yes, go on, ye good magistrates! so much the better in the eyes of the people, if you sacrifice the Catholics to their fury! Rack us, torture us, condemn us to death. You but renew what was done to them of old, of whom it was said, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Yes, when sown in their blood, the resurrection of immortality springs with more ample increase. Our pains spring the higher under the weight that oppresses them, our flame waves brighter by the attempt to suppress it; the spice tree when shaken yieldeth a richer odor. By persecuting us, you till and manure the ground of the church; you think to root out the core, and you do but transplant the germs that will spring up in a more plentiful harvest. You think it is the seminary priest that enlarges the Catholic faith; know, that it is yourselves who make the chief seminary, from which the Catholics spread. Though their voice doth avail something, yet comparatively it doth but little. The voice of the blood of your murdered brethren cried aloud against you, and this voice it is that so forcibly prevails. The missionary announces that books might teach; your deeds teach that which books could never do, and gain over more disciples than words. Our constancy under suffering and trial forces men to look more closely into our cause; and thus, by seeking they find, in finding they believe, and believing, they become as ready to die as ourselves. Our prisons preach. Our wounds convert; nay, our very dead bodies are able to confound heresy. You have labored to suppress us these twenty-six years, and yet from our very ashes springeth increase; and our dead bones, as Ezekiel prophesied, "are come to be a high army." By the thunders of your rage, the cloud of error is dissolved, and the earth is watered with profitable showers, to the ripening of the corn of God.

"But for ourselves, we would render good for evil; for your hatred, charity, for your ill-treatment, prayer. We would willingly purchase your salvation with our dearest blood. But how well soever we be affected towards you, take heed that the earth which receiveth our blood, cry not aloud against you, agreeably to that saying,—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth out of the earth!" For ourselves, from our hearts we forgive your injuries towards us, and only pity your abuse of

God's benefits; that, in return for His favors towards you, you should persecute his flock, hinder the course of his religion, yea, endeavour to abolish the name of the Catholic Church. Alas! your labor is in vain; out incalculable your offence. She is a vessel of safety; howsoever the sea rage, or the winds beat; howsoever tossed among the waves, she cannot sink, having Him at the helm, of whom it is said, that "the winds and the sea obey Him."

"We are fallen upon times which many of our forefathers desired to see,—times, when they might not only profit the Church by the example of their life, but also—and how dearly did they desire it!—by the effusion of their blood. When England was Catholic, she had many glorious confessors; it is for the honor and benefit of our country, that she should also have to boast of her martyrs; and we have now, God be thanked! such martyr-makers in authority, as mean, if they have their will to make saints enough to furnish all our churches with treasure, when it shall please God to restore them to their true honors. And doubt not, least either they or their posterity, shall see the very prisons of execution become places of reverence and devotion; and the scattered bones of those who have suffered in this cause, thought unworthy of Christian burial, then shrouded in gold, and held in the highest respect. Let us, then, profit by so favorable an occasion of preferment in the court of the Most High, and be as studious, in this age, to aspire to the dignity of watering God's Church with our blood, as our forefathers were to further it by their virtuous example, and by the glory of their good works. "The kingdom of heaven," says St. Augustine, "requireth no price but thyself, and thou shalt have it! Oh! thrice happy you, who are now on the last step of glory! Joy in your happiness; but in the midst of your joy, forget not us. Pray that God may accept us also, and promote us to like happiness."

We offer no comment upon the above extract. Its eloquence, and the prophetic spirit which it breathes, will at once have struck every reader.

Southwell's merits as a poet were fully appreciated in his day; of this upwards of ten editions, in twice that number of years, is a sufficient proof; and yet few works have become more rare, a single copy in Longman's poetical catalogue being marked at six guineas. Were any testimonials needed in favour of their merits, the names of such eminent critics as Sir Egerton Brydges, Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Hendley, would be more than sufficient. The former observes, that "a deep, moral-patmos, illuminated by fervent piety, marked every thing Southwell wrote, either in prose or verse. There is something," he adds, "singularly simple, chaste, eloquent in his diction on all occasions." "Southwell's poems," says Mr. Ellis, "all of which are on moral or religious subjects, are far from deserving the neglect which they have experienced." Another judicious critic observes: "That even those, who least love the religion of the author, must admire and praise his writings, and regret that neither his simple strains in prose, nor his polished metre, should have yet obtained a collected edition of his works for general readers."

CONVERSION.—A convert from Boston was confirmed at Rome by the Bishop of Pistoia, a happy commencement of his episcopal functions. — *Catholic Herald*.