

THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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THE MASS.

Few of those who read Tom Moore's beautiful poems, hear his touching Irish melodies, or sing those exquisite songs of that "Bard of the Land of Song," are aware that the "poet of all circles and the idol of his own," was not only a genuine Catholic, but that he had composed several works upon the subject of Catholic faith. Being ill and very much pressed for time this week we will give a chapter from that author with, here and there, a comment of our own. From what we have said in the preceding numbers of the system of mystery and restraint which the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, but more particularly of the former, thought it politic to impose upon themselves in speaking of the eucharist, it will not be deemed wonderful that there should occur passages in their public writings and discourses, which, being intended by them to be ambiguous, have fully attained that object; and that, designed originally as such passages were to veil the truth from the unbeliever and the heretic, they should, to eyes wilfully blind, still perform the same office. The only wonder indeed is, taking all the circumstances we have reviewed into consideration, that the number of passages affording this sort of handle to misapprehension should have been so inconsiderable; and that, notwithstanding all the fastidious caution of the Fathers on this subject, such a mass of explicit evidence so abundant and convincing as, with any unbiased mind, to place the truth of the Catholic doctrine respecting the eucharist beyond all question.

"It was in the third century," says Moore, "when the followers of Christ were most severely tried by the fires of persecution, that the discipline of secrecy with respect to this (the eucharist) and other mysteries, was most strictly observed. 'A faithful concealment,' says Tertullian, is due to all mysteries from the very nature and constitution of them. How much more must it be due to such mysteries as, if they were once discovered, could not escape immediate punishment from the hand of man. (Ad. Nation, l. i.) It may be conceived with what peculiar force such a motive to secrecy would be likely to act upon minds naturally timid,—such as that of St. Cyprian, for instance, whose indisposition to martyrdom, however firmly he at last met it, when inevitable, was evinced on more than one occasion when he prudently withdrew himself from its grasp. We find, accordingly, in conformity with this timidity of character, that among the observers of the Discipline of the Secret, he is allowed to have been one of the most circumspect and close."

"It is indeed curious, not only as illustrative of the character of the individual, but as part of that kindred destiny which seems to have attended throughout, the two Catholic dogmas of

the Trinity and the Real Presence, that the same cautious St. Cyprian who, in his public letter to the Proconsul of Africa, thought it prudent to keep the Trinity out of sight, should have been also the individual who, by his evasive language concerning the eucharist, has been the means of furnishing the opponents of a real, corporal presence, with almost the only semblance of plausible authority by which they support their heresy. Little did he think, good saint, that a day would come when this prudence, or timidity, would be made to pass for orthodoxy, and when—sturdy, a stickler as he was for the supremacy of the Roman See—he should attain the eminence, such as it is, of being the prime saint of Protestants."

Even St. Cyprian, however, could not help, on occasion, letting the true doctrine escape. Thus he says that, in the eucharist, "we touch Christ's body and drink his blood," and in an epistle to Pope Cornelius, speaking of the victims of persecution, he says: "How shall we teach them to shed their blood for Christ, if before they go to battle we do not give them *His* blood." Let us continue with Moore: "It would be amusing,—were not so awful a point of faith the subject of such trifling,—to observe the self-complacent triumph with which a Protestant controvertist sits brooding over one of these intentionally unmeaning passages of the Fathers, hatching it into an argument. It matters not that the holy writer from whom the passage is extracted has, in a hundred others, pregnant both with meaning and with truth, borne testimony to the belief of his Church in that mighty miracle—the fulfilment of a God's express promise which takes place under the veil of the eucharist. It matters not—the one convenient passage is alone brought forward again and again: the professional controvertist must still show himself in the lists, however 'falsified' his armour; and though self-deception is not always practicable in such cases, the great point is still gained of deceiving others."

("His shield is falsified" is a meaning of the word which Dryden attempted to introduce from the Italian.)

The argument drawn from the occasional application of the words "type," "sign," "figure," &c., to the eucharist, we have already disposed of; and a large portion of the passages cited, as favourable to the Protestant side of the question, come under this predicament. Moore says: "One of the most triumphant pieces of evidence, however, (as they themselves consider it) which the champions of the reformed faith are in the habit of bringing forward to prove that Transubstantiation was not the belief of the early Church, is to be found in a passage or two from Theodoret and Gelasius (writers of the fifth century) in which it is asserted that the nature and substance of the sacramental elements remain after consecration." The extract from Theodoret we shall here give in full to show to what straits the opponents of the Catholic doctrine must be driven, when they contrive to extract grounds for triumph for such testimony. The extract is from a work against a sect called the Eutychians. The fictitious persons who discuss the question are Orthodoxus, who represents a Catholic, and Eranistes, the Eutychian. Eran.—"I am happy you have mentioned the divine mysteries. Tell me, therefore, what do you call the gift that is offered before the priest's invocation?" Orth.—"This must not be said openly; for some may be present who are not initiated." Eran.—"Answer, then, in hidden terms." Orth.—"We call it an ailment made of certain grains." Eran.—"And how do you call

the other symbol." Orth.—"We give it a name that denotes a certain beverage." Eran.—"And, after the consecration, what are they called?" Orth.—"The body of Christ and the blood of Christ." Eran.—"And you believe that you partake of the body and blood of Christ?" Orth.—"So I believe." Eran.—"As the symbols, then, of the body and blood of Christ were different before the consecration of the priest, and after that consecration became changed and are something else, in the same manner we Eutychians say, the body of Christ after his ascension was changed into the divine essence." Orth.—"Thou art taken in thy own snare: for, after the consecration, the mystical symbols lose not their proper nature; they remain both in the figure and appearance of their former substance, to be seen and to be felt as before; but they are understood to be what they have been made; this they are believed to be, and as such they are adored."

We have here three, no less, important points acknowledged then:—First—A change into "something else" of the symbols after consecration.—Secondly—A real presence of the body and blood of Christ, and Thirdly—Adoration paid to the sacrament in consequence. The only doubt the passage admits of is, whether, contrary to the Catholic doctrine, Orthodoxus means to assert that the substance of the bread and wine remains after consecration. The phrase "former substance," which seems to imply that a second substance has taken the place of the first, might certainly warrant the assumption that the whole passage was meant orthodoxly. On turning to the works of this Father, edited by Garnier, we find it to be the opinion of that learned Jesuit, after an impartial inquiry into the exact belief of the author, that Theodoret, had, on the whole, a leaning to the consubstantial heresy."

Such, taken at its very worst, is the full extent of that lapse from orthodoxy into which, at most, two Fathers out of the whole sacred band of the five first centuries, can be said to have fallen on this subject, and such the *quantum* and quality of that evidence against the doctrine of the ancient Catholic Church which every successive champion of Protestantism brings forward, each triumphing in the discovery of the same worn-out fool's paradise. The true view of such insulated instances of heterodoxy is to be found in the following remarks which the subject has drawn forth from the editor of that valuable compilation, 'The Faith of Catholics.' Should it be conceded that there is ambiguity in these expressions, or that even the authors of them meant to convey a sense, in our estimation heterodox, how light must their authority be, when balanced against the massive evidence of so many writers of their own age, and of the preceding centuries!"

THE FESTIVE SEASON.

Here is the Festive Season: the year 1893 is rapidly drawing to a close and the usual preparations for Christmas and New-Year are in progress. It is indeed a festive season that is at hand; in our next issue we will speak of Christmas and all the glories of that season of holy peace and celestial joy; the week after we will speak of the New-Year and the joys that surround that important event. For the present we are still in Advent; this is a season of preparation for the happiness and joys of the festival time; it is now a time for reflection, fast and penance. Before we are all whirled away in the festive happiness that Christmas and New-Year bring, let us

pause for a few moments and reflect upon the reverse of the medal. In the midst of all the glories of the Holy Time; when lights flash bright and music rings loud; when the young are looking out for Santa Claus, and the older people are enjoying their own share of the good things, there are hearts that are heavy, souls that are sad, homes where no lights gleam, places where no music sounds; and there are children for whom no Santa Claus will come, and there are little cots in which there are no children to welcome Santa Claus.

"For 'the memory of joy is a sadness'—
The dim twilight after the day;
And the grave where we bury a gladness
Sends a grief, like a ghost, on our way."

Thus sang the Poet Priest, and in truth the weird author was right. When we speak of Christmas we almost always view the bright festival through the spectacles of happiness; we scarcely ever dream of taking up the glasses of life's sorrowful experience and, through them, gazing upon the glow and enthusiasm of the season. See the rows of toys in the windows of the merchants; they tell a tale of countless happy children; but let us not forget the number of poor, ragged, half-fed, half clothed, half-sheltered urchins, whose eyes open wide in wonderment and close in disappointment—these beautiful things are not for them. See yonder Christmas tree, it was intended to decorate a particular home where the children were to enjoy the fixing and lighting of that time-honored ornament; in the interval the angel of Death visited that household, and the little angels are now singing Christmas hymns in heaven, while the lonely mother sits by the darkened hearthstone, and the Christmas tree is neglected. For every heart that is bright at Christmas time there are ten hearts that are heavy and sore. There is scarcely a home that has not some vacant chair when the Christmas dinner is served. Scattered over the world, away beyond the seas, some in unknown lands, others in unknown graves, the children of our race are divided, and each family has contributed its share to the number of the absent.

"There never was a sea-shore without its drifting wreck,
There never was an ocean without its moaning wave;
And the golden gleams of glory the summer sky that flock,
Shine where dead stars are sleeping in their azure-mantled grave."

With the old year that is dying there are hopes vanishing that shall not be renewed in the year to come; with 1893 there are joys buried that can know no resurrection in 1894. If then man would but reflect upon all the misery, the sorrow, the suffering, the untold woe and the nameless ills that throng the paths of life, especially at this season of the year, to use the sublime words in Tomson's seasons:

"Vice, in its high career would stand appall'd,
And heedless, rambling, impulse learn to think."

There would be more true charity in the world at Christmas time, and the number of hearts that might be made to rejoice would be multiplied several times. Then would New-Year's dawn bring hope and consolation to many a dreary home, and the herald rays of 1894 would illumine the path that weary feet must travel. We do not wish, when the season is upon us, to dampen the festive enjoyment with sad reflection or severe moralizing; but we take advantage of this Advent period to beg of our readers to recall, when the holy time of joy and peace comes, the number of sad hearts that cannot enjoy the glow of festive happiness. Let each one try, in a small way at least, to add a ray to the fulfilment of contentment that falls upon the lives of the poor and the afflicted. Angels sang "Glorias" on the first Christmas night; but the infant cried and the Holy Mother suffered; there is ever more sorrow than joy in life.