

THE FRANCISCAN FATHERS.

THE "THIRD ORDER" OF ST. FRANCIS.

Its Foundation.—The Objects for which it was Established.—A Brief Sketch of its History and Rules.—Incorporation of the Apostolic Syndicate of the Franciscan Observance.

[By the Editor of THE TRUE WITNESS.]

Numerous are the religious orders in the Catholic Church and each has its own especial mission. There are teaching, missionary, contemplative and different other categories into which they are divided. According to the requirements of the different ages and the different conditions of the human family these institutions sprang into existence. In all times, since the dawn of history, God has summoned into life and activity, at the proper moment, men whose missions were to lead His people or guide His Church. To snatch the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt Moses was raised up by the will of the Almighty and went forth to the accomplishment of his giant task. Since the dispensation of love and redemption began, at stated periods, the men required to fill important posts, in the army of the Church Militant, appeared on earth and, under the eye of God, fulfilled their respective missions. While yet Christianity wrestled with the giant power of Paganism, while the eagles of Rome triumphed in every land, and the blood of a bleeding Faith bedewed the arena of the Flavian Amphitheatre, while the fires of martyrdom blazed upon the battlements, and the trumpets of persecution awakened the echoes of the seven hills, the Almighty flung out the banner of the Cross before the gaze of the hesitating Constantine, and in that sign did he conquer—not only his enemies but the paganism of his youth. When the fierce spirit of Mahometanism struck terror into the Christians of the East, and the tomb of the Redeemer was a prey to Musselman sacrilege, God called upon Peter the Hermit to arise and preach a crusade against the Paynim despoilers. Throughout Europe he tramped, from town to town, and at the magic tone of his inspired voice hundreds of thousands arose; kings, princes and warriors left their homes, donned the armor of the cross, trod the wilds of Taurus, fainted under the suns of the Orient, and at last beheld, amidst the green meadows that line Orontes, the gray walls and white towers of the Syrian Antioch. When the Salvation of the race required them, when the needs of the Church demanded them, we find those great leaders, glorious founders, enthusiastic missionaries coming forth from obscurity and leading the phalanxes of Christ's preaching and teaching army into lands never before trod by the foot of civilization. Of these are such men as St. Ignatius, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Vincent de Paul, and the founder of that wonderful Order, to which we desire to draw special attention—the great St. Francis of Assisi.

A little over seven hundred years ago, in the town of Assisi, in Italy, Francis was born. After a life of pleasure, during a quarter of a century, he suddenly awakened to an appreciation of God's grace, and corresponding with the call received from heaven, he dedicated his days to the establishment of three religious Orders. He astonished the world at that time by the extraordinary zeal that he manifested; but his works and their effects have surprised still more and more, as the years rolled into centuries, the children of a race that seems incapable of such wonderful sacrifices. The first and second Orders that he instituted were of men and women living in the cloister; the "Third Order"—or "The Order of Penance," is a religious life adapted to the circumstances of persons living in the world. Its members, while remaining in the world and performing the duties of their special avocations, are enabled to withdraw into the quiet of a religious life. They live in the world and yet are not of the world. It is in favor of this "Third Order" that our Most Holy Father Leo XIII., in his Encyclical Letter, *Auspicato* of the 17th September, 1882, appeals to the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic world to do their best that the people may know and really esteem

the "Third Order," and see that those who have the care of souls may teach what it is.

Of this "Third Order" we will have occasion to speak more fully later on. For the present we will confine our few remarks to the First Order, that of the Observance, of which we happily have some members in our midst, men whose mission may not be thoroughly understood and whose lives are such that only those really familiar with them can form any idea of the spiritual beauty and perfection that surround them. In the first place this branch of the Franciscans is called that of the Observance, because its members observe in the most minute details, every rule laid down originally by the sainted and illustrious founder of the institution. There duty is to "go about doing good," in every acceptance of the term. Their work is that of giving missions, preaching the word of God, hearing confessions, administering all the sacraments and attending to the sick and poor. Their vow of poverty is one in the strictest sense of the word. In no way are they permitted, either as individuals or as a community, to touch, use, receive, or in any way handle money. They live upon what they receive from the charity of the world, and if they receive more than suffices for one day, they distribute the surplus to the needy whom they know. Like the birds of the air they depend entirely upon God, and He never neglects to send them sufficient for the time being. They travel on foot, and if it becomes necessary to cross the seas or undertake journeys into pagan lands, they await the Almighty's pleasure, and always, without fail, God sends the means whereby they can reach their destination—and that without the means of money. They eat meat only when they can get nothing else, and were they to receive a supply of food from one man to-day, and another were prompted to send them a donation of the same kind, their porter would decline to accept the latter gift, saying "we have ample for our present wants." Were it left at their door, then, in the shades of the evening some Father would go forth with it to the neighboring poor and distribute the food to the really needy. That life of sacrifice is something marvellous in itself, it is beyond the range of ordinary comprehension, and it certainly partakes of the celestial. Yet, during all this time, and in the midst of all these privations, the members of the Order never cease, night or day, to perform extraordinary labors in the cause of religion. They say their masses, they preach their missions, they sit in their confessionals, they seek out the afflicted, the sick, the dying, the poverty-stricken; in silence and with the perpetual idea of God's holy presence, they move about, like angels of Help, like the spirits of the just returned to earth and performing, for the pure love of God, the corporal works of Mercy. They speak only when it is absolutely necessary and when they do speak—be it from the pulpit, or in private—the listener hears as it were the tones of spiritual consolation; in a minor key of devotion their words go to the heart and play upon its most delicate strings, till they too vibrate into a divine harmony that is in itself a prayer.

How fittingly apply the lines of an Irish poet who told, in beautiful verse, the story of those days of Faith, when all over the land of St. Patrick monasteries and churches arose:

"A thousand Christians incessantly raised Hosannas, around shrines that with Jewels were blazed;
A thousand Franciscans in penance trod Barefooted the road that was followed by God."

With nothing of this world about them; apart from the ordinary man; the loneliest yet the happiest of beings, they live from day to day, feeding the poor while abstaining themselves, preaching the gospel while obeying its precepts, alleviating sufferings while undergoing every imaginable human penance, tending the sick, when often stricken themselves by the approach of Death's Angel, comforting the dying, while awaiting at any moment their own summons to the presence of the Eternal. The Franciscan, properly understood, seems like that last mountain of the deluge, its feet upon the earth, its summit reaching the heavens, immutable and grand the last remnant of earth's beauty and the last resting place of heaven's light. In presence of such a personality we pause, for the life before us challenges our admiration and wonder as well as our respect and veneration. Were we but to honestly reflect

upon what the Franciscan teaches, in the eloquence of his silent life, even more than in his words of exhortation, everything would assume another aspect for us: the seasons in their change would become more lovely, the atmosphere would breathe purer and nobler thoughts, earth would unfold fairer fruits, ocean roll in a sublimer magnificence, the heavens display, in that constellated canopy, myriads of objects speaking of harmony and God; above all, would we feel how little our lives are, and "vice, in its high career, would stand appalled," and "heedless, rambling impulse learn to think." The charms of that life are humility and piety—the union of which may be called the Franciscan's Faith. In the cloister it is his companion; abroad, his introduction; in the world, his safeguard; in solitude, his solace. But we must cease our comments or else we will have no space for the more matter-of-fact statements of our article.

We said that the Franciscans can neither touch money as individuals, nor as a community; no more can they own property. Yet in this age and in a land like ours it is necessary that they should have some species of abode. They rely upon Providence, and that Providence always raises up men in the world who look after the temporal affairs—little as they may be—of these children of sacrifice. In consequence, what is called an Apostolic Syndicate is formed, composed of members of the "Third Order" of St. Francis, men of the world, whose duty it is to take charge of the temporal affairs of the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance. Here in Montreal members of this holy community have pitched their tent, and in the midst of our people, almost unknown to the world, they have commenced their works of extraordinary charity and have undertaken a crusade against the enemies of Catholicity, a veritable battle for the salvation of souls. In order that a home might be secured for them steps have been taken to form a syndicate, whose mission it is to look after all the temporal concerns of the Order, leaving the Fathers free to pursue their missions untrammelled. In consequence, a Bill has been presented to the Legislature of Quebec, and an Act passed, entitled "A law incorporating the Apostolic Syndicate of the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance." The preamble of that Bill states that the syndicate having asked for incorporation, "considering that the said Franciscan Fathers cannot, according to their rules and constitution, acquire or possess, either individually or in common, nor make any use of money, and that for all such acts they must have recourse to third parties, friends of the Order," and considering that it is proper to accede to the request, it is enacted as follows:

"1. Messrs. M. C. Galarneau, merchant, John O'Neill, collector of canal revenue, and Jean Joseph Beauchamp, Q.C., of the city of Montreal, in their quality of members of the Apostolic Syndicate of the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance, in the Province of Quebec, as also their duly named successors and those who shall be added to them, by the present, are constituted into a corporation under the name of Apostolic Syndicate of the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance."

The act of incorporation then states that the syndicate as a body politic and corporate may sue or be sued; may acquire or dispose of moveable and immoveable goods, provided the annual value does not exceed thirty thousand dollars; this corporation will have charge of the material interests of the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance in this province; all property acquired must be administered in accordance with the rules of the Order. The principal place of business is in the City of Montreal. The members of the syndicate shall not be personally responsible for its obligations.

Such is about the sum and substance of the act incorporating this syndicate, the duty of which is to look after the temporal affairs of the Order of the Fathers of St. Francis. It is a certainty that, according as it is required, the angel of charity will visit the hearts of faithful Catholics, and they will be prompted to give some assistance—more or less, according to means and circumstances—in this cause, to help the Fathers either in gifts of daily necessities, or in funds to enable them to have a roof over their heads, a cloister into which they may retire at times, to pray,

to meditate, and to prepare for their renewed labors. It is intended to commence at once the erection of a church for the use of the Order. If any of our readers are ever touched in this way, by the spirit of benevolence, they are requested to deal with the three gentlemen above mentioned, or with any of them, as the legal representatives of the Franciscan Fathers. We have told, in a few words, the simple story of this Order, and we will add no appeal to what we have said; like the members of the Order, we leave the rest to Providence.

RELIGIOUS NEWS

Queen Victoria will receive a visit from Cardinal Bausa as the representative of the Pope.

It is announced from Rome that Cardinal Vaughan is the bearer of specific friendly messages from Leo XIII to Mr. Gladstone.

The Sacred Congregation of Rites is said to have voted in favor of the beatification of Venerable Sister Theresa Martinengo.

Tuesday, May 9, has been assigned to the Catholic Knights of America for a specific festival day at the World's Fair. This association will hold its biennial convention at that time.

The contribution of the diocese of Dublin to Peter's Pence on the occasion of the Pope's jubilee amounted to forty thousand lire. The other Irish dioceses were proportionately generous.

Rev. R. J. Mooney, a well-known member of the Oblate Congregation, recently died in San Antonio, Tex. He was for years stationed in Canada and New York State and built several important churches.

To the late General Beauregard, who was buried at New Orleans recently, Catholics owed a debt of gratitude. Thanks to his courage, energy and Catholic spirit he crushed out Know-Nothingism in New Orleans in 1857.

Friar Morbuet, of the Order of St. Francis, Paris, has constructed an intricate calendar watch. It is a tiny piece of machinery, only a quarter of an inch in diameter, but it shows seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years, and has an alarm. The case is decorated with a figure of the patron saint of the maker and two verses of the "Te Deum."

Secretary Club, of the World's Fair committee on ceremonies, has set apart September 2nd as Roman Catholic Education Day. Festival Hall has been engaged for a celebration from 9 a.m. until noon. The ceremonies will be carried on under the direction of Bishop Spalding. Archbishop Feehan will preside. Among the addresses will be one by Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia.

A medal of artistic design, to be worn during the World's Fair period, has been adopted by the Catholic school children of Chicago. It is heart-shaped, with small projecting points representing a cross. The finish is gold. The central portion of the design represents a ship in full sail, suggestive of the caravel on which Columbus sailed from Palos. Around this figure is inscribed the following: "Catholic Schools, Chicago, 1893."

Leo XIII. has reiterated the *non possumus* of Pius IX. quite recently in an emphatic manner. He caused it to be publicly announced the other day on no considerations would any Catholic European sovereign who, personally or by representative, attended the celebration of King Humbert's silver wedding at the Quirinal, be received at the Vatican. This is tantamount to a new assertion that whoever recognizes any other temporal ruler than the successor of St. Peter in Rome need expect no favors from the present incumbent of the apostolic throne.

The A. P. A.'s out in Michigan appear to be taking their cue from the Ulster Orangemen. It seems that they have been negotiating with a Hartford (Ct.) company for a large purchase of firearms. One of these days Uncle Sam may find it necessary to take these secret conspirators in his grip and give them the same sort of treatment Chicago gave the anarchists who endeavored to destroy life and property within her limits a few years ago. If the A. P. A. fanatics imagine they can with impunity defy the law and incite men to bloodshed they are laboring under the hugest sort of a mistake.