

THE DOWNSIDE CELEBRATIONS.

The Downside Celebrations in England during the past month are the subject of a paper in the November Catholic World by M. F. Quinlan.

Under the benedictine sway of the Benedictine monks England took its place among the nations, for not only was it a commercial power, but *mirabile dictu*—it was also an island of peace. The land was called *Morie* England. It was a realm in which the poor knew the dignity of labor and the rich the responsibility of wealth; throughout every shire and county there existed a just relation between employer and employe.

It was thus for a thousand years. For a thousand years the village church was the centre of village life; for a thousand years the sacrifice of Calvary was offered up from countless altars, and night and day, from every monastic choir, came the hymn of worship.

Of those three hundred English Benedictine houses, destroyed in four years (1536-1540), no human soul now lives. Of the old English congregation not one member is left. But stay! From a noisome dungeon comes a muffled echo; it is the clank of chains. And behind the prison grating sits a prisoner. He is an old man and almost blind. His hair is white and his head bent with years. Is this a felon, who has outraged the law? Nay; it is Siegbert Buckley, a confessor to the ancient faith and a witness to the ancient order. But is this a felon; so he sits in chains, "Anstus and Melitas can kill me," says Socrates, "but that cannot hurt me." And with a perfect faith the Christian confessor folded his hands and waited for death. He had seen his brethren languish in prison and he had watched them pass out to the scaffold. He had seen the desecration of the holy places and every abbey of his order brought to ruin. More than that, he had seen the vineyard laid waste, wherein he and his brethren had labored throughout the centuries, until the shadow of the vintage had covered the hills and the branches thereof the cedars of God? Indeed, it had stretched forth its branches unto the sea, and its boughs unto the river. And as the old man watched in spirit from his prison window, and saw the tempest break over the fields of God, he might have repeated the words of Scripture: "Why hast thou broken down by the way do pluck it? The bar out of the wood hath laid it waste; and a singular wild beast hath devoured it." But his lips only moved in silent praise: "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be His name." So he sat with manacled hands and looked forward to his release, when the chains of earth would fall from him and he would go forth a free man.

I have always found this class of solitaries prisoner it seemed as if death were already stirring in the shadow, for he is a strong angel, and of great piety. But instead, into the dark dungeon came the Spirit of Reconcomence, leading thither two other confessors—secular priests—who were destined to share his confinement, and to seek at his hands the habit of St. Benedict. And there in the prison the novices were clothed in the monastic garb of Old England, the three being in chains; and there did Siegbert Buckley invest the younger brethren with all the rights and the privileges of the old English congregation—which was afterwards ratified by the Holy See. And it is through these three men that the modern abbey of Downside, Ampleforth and Douai date back in an unbroken line of succession to the monk Augustine, Apostle of England.

So the High Mass continued, and as the Offertory gave place to the Preface, and the Preface to the Canon, one could not but be struck by the wonderful ceremonial which is the birthright of Catholicism; of the lighted candles and the clouds of incense; of the massing of color and the grouping of figures—the Archbishop on his throne, to gather with his assistants and ministers; of the deacons in gorgeous vestments; of the rows of prelates, Archbishops, Bishops, and mitred abbots; of the lines of canons and the purple-clad monsignori, who in the foreigner stood the settled ranks of St. Benedict's sons, and at the entrance to the chancel the four cantors in scarlet copes. And all the time, accompanying the ceremonial, came the rising and falling of that volume of song which welled forth in praise and worship from consecrated lips, until the echoes fill the vastness and the great minister seems instinct with awe and reverence. As the supreme moment advances, the voices become hushed, then still. It is as if no human pulse throbbed. It is like the silence of Calvary, when the earth brought grief, the fruit of the curse, barren thorns, hollow reed, and wood of the Cross; and the sea made offering of Tyrian purple and the sky veiled her face in great darkness, while the nation of priests crucified for the last time their paschal lamb.

The sacrifice is consummated. And across the former darkness breaks the light of the Resurrection. For now the portal of death has become the gate of life and remembrance cries an end to forgetting.

The notes of the Te Deum rush forth from the organ like a cloud of spirits set free. In a tumultuous cry of praise and gladness the echoes spring and leap through space, filling the lofty arches, climbing ever higher and higher, to find a last foothold in the groined vaulting away up overhead.

"Te Deum! The song of thanks giving is taken up by human lips; for behold, this is the day of salvation, when the sacrifice of the New Law shall please the Lord, and in the days of old, and in the ancient years." "In the solitudes of Somerset there is peace. The philosophy of the world has given place to a higher philosophy that is not of earth. The fret and turmoil die away into silence." Levavi oculos meos in montes, says the Psalmist, "and downside Abbey the mind of man is drawn upwards and in the sweep of the heavenward the human heart finds rest."

THE OUGHT-TO-BE'S.

[Written for The Catholic Standard and Times by Rev. J. T. Roche, author of "Our Lady of the Good Shepherd," "Month of St. Joseph," "Belief and Unbelief," etc.]

AN OLD SUBTERFUGE.

A good Sister of Charity writes me from the East to inform me that she does not believe I have yet discovered the true secret of the "Ought-to-be's." She intimates very plainly that the scandal given by priests is largely to blame for such a condition. She takes advantage of the opportunity to send me time to criticize my attitude toward the erring in some of my articles, and hopes that a larger measure of charity will characterize my future utterances.

With regard to the latter charge, I will only say that the best I can hope for is that here and there my words may help some poor soul who is staggering under the load, or one who has already been crushed to the earth by the weight. I am well aware that not all, perhaps not even half, the readers of the Catholic Standard and Times will read these articles. I am hopeful, however, that Almighty God may be pleased to employ them to infuse new courage into some sinking heart, or make them the means of enlightening some who sit in the darkness and shadow of death. A priest preaches to a larger audience through the press than in any other way, and the duty of preaching the Gospel is incumbent upon every priest.

SINNERS AND SINNERS.

With regard to the first charge, I will say that I have heard it before, and I have heard it most frequently from men and women for whom I have very little respect. There are sinners and sinners. There are those who have manhood enough in them to shoulder their own sins and those who are always striving to shift the burden on to some one else's shoulders. For the first I have nothing but sympathy and commiseration. I am one of them, and their infirmity is mine. For the second my feelings are somewhat mixed. There is something unmanly and unfair in their attitude. They know well, or ought to know, that God will not ask them on the day of reckoning what this or that man or woman has done, but that he will judge them according to their own works. It is more than likely that Ananias found an excuse for his conduct in the avarice of Judas and the lies of Peter, but these did not save him from the wrath of God. Yes, I know well that priests ought to be pillars of light, and so ought all Christians. There is not one gospel for the clergy and another for the laity. They are all bound to strive after perfection, and none will be excused. More is expected of the priest, but that is a reflection upon, rather than a compliment to the layman.

I have always found this class of solitaries hard to deal with. There is something wrong in their attitude toward the fundamental principles of conduct, a flaw in the natural foundation upon which the supernatural structure must be built. It is the old subterfuge of Adam in the first great sin of the world, and age and custom have not made it respectable or removed it from its original taint of cowardice. Bad priests and bad ministers of religion are the favorite arguments of professional unbelievers the world over. It seems to give those people a good deal of comfort to know that here and there a minister of the Gospel gets down to their own level. They are welcome to all the comfort they or any one else can derive from such an argument.

MISLEADING AUTHORITIES.

There are a good many exploded platitudes handed down from the olden days—dogies employed originally to scare young people, which in the course of years have come to be regarded as accepted truths, and one of these is that "priests should lead better lives than the people." All Christians, priests included, should be saints, and ordinarily it is easier for a layman to be a saint than it is for a priest. The layman has only his own soul to answer for, whilst the priest has to answer for his own soul as well as for the souls of those committed to his care. This doubtful principle has led many men and women who ought to know better to make the shortcomings of priests and relations an excuse for their own personal depravity.

It is true, nevertheless, that the most difficult ideal in the world is that which is held up before the eyes of the priest. His ordinary conduct, his daily life frequently calls for the practice of heroic virtue. When he faints and falters by the way, under the heavy cross which the Church has laid upon him in making him a priest, what does he find? He finds the smile of the earth, walking in the gutters and in the mire, lifting their heads from the slough which surrounds them to grunt their contempt and lay the responsibility for their condition on his already overburdened shoulders. There is pity in plenty for the common sinner, but there is no pity for the poor, fallen priest, whose condition is most deserving of pity. He is an Ishmaelite, an outcast, and no man is stretched forth to help and comfort him in his hour of need. His fall is merely another "ea son," provisionally supplied, which the ordinary sinner should not turn from his evil ways to serve the Lord, his God. It is only another illustration of that strange logic which declares that when a priest chooses hell for his portion others must follow him into the eternal fires.

AN EXPLANATION.

I do not mean to imply in the foregoing that priests are not called upon to strive after holiness and righteousness with all their might. Every priest well understands the holiness of the priestly state and the exacting character of its requirements. He has had this drummed into his ears ever since he can remember anything. He knows he must lead a holy and a blameless life in order to do God's work worthily in the world. He realizes, better perhaps than any other, the importance of good example as far as he is concerned, and no one regrets it more than he when he falls short of the true

priestly ideal. All this, however, has nothing to do with the question in hand. Popes, Bishops and priests in the past have fallen from grace. That will not excuse me for a failure to live up to the standard set up by Christ.

Priests will have to answer personally for their imperfections. Every man who has come into the world must stand and answer for himself before the great judgment seat. By his own deeds shall he earn approval or condemnation.

THROUGH THE LITTLE SISTERS.

Recently, writes James E. Randall in "The Columbian, one of the most distinguished of ex-Confederate generals, who also held one of the highest volunteer commissions in the Spanish war, voluntarily approached me and, in pathetic sorrow, said: "I want to be a Catholic and receive instruction. My mind and heart have been thus directed by personal investigation of the Catholic institutions at Washington, D. C., notably the Little Sisters of the Poor and kindred charities."

This eminent man followed General Robert E. Lee through all of his campaigns, except when suffering from the loss of a leg at the cavalry battle of Brandy Station. He comes from one of the most historically famous families of the North and South. On the wall of the National Capitol is a great picture of his grandfather, whose exploits in the Revolutionary war and in Japan are imperishable. He has been a Senator of the United States and a lawyer and a planter. His northern kinsmen are among the leading financial magnates.

Through the Little Sisters grace entered his soul and nothing of late has more surprised me than his manifest determination, perhaps against his worldly interests, to enter the true fold. Many others have been similarly touched by Catholic charity at self-sacrifice, but never go beyond the sentimental incident.

Old Times' Lectures.

Mr. William Halley of Toronto, well known as O. A. Times, lecturer in the following places on the dates mentioned: Dundas—Town hall, Monday evening, Nov. 27. Hamilton—C. M. B. A. hall, Tuesday evening, Nov. 28. Center Toronto—St. George's hall, Elm street, Tuesday evening, Dec. 3. The subject of Mr. Halley's lectures is "Personal Recollections of Thomas D'Arcy McGee Irish patriot, American Editor and Canadian Statesman." Mr. Halley will be pleased to hear from societies throughout the province before his dates, and will be glad to bring the substance of musical and literary talent at his lectures.

DIED.

KENNY.—In London, Ont., on Nov. 16, 1905. Mc. Wm. J. Kenny. May his rest in peace!

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