

priesthood is very commonly supplied, give in to these practices even in furnished rooms and before all companies, they cannot intend any disrespect by them. One ought not to complain if they are as decorous in church as in other places, though one would wish them to be more decent everywhere. At St. Paul's Cathedral I have seen people walking about when Divine Service was going on, in their hats. This, the same people would not have done in the presence of their betters in ordinary society. We are apt, with our English notions, to expect gentleman-like habits in the foreign Catholic Priests, I mean in external points; forgetting how much the "efficiency" of these ministrations often depends upon their belonging to a rank short of the highest. Not, however, that I would seem to undervalue the temper of mind which the word "gentleman-like" expresses better than any other; or to deny that this temper when combined with more obviously christian qualities, is of very essential use to a clergyman in mixing with the poor.

Now for Belgium. I thought the appearance of the people less satisfactory in 1842 than in 1828. The towns are evidently more flourishing in a worldly point of view since the Revolution; at least there is a great advance in civilization. As they have become more commercial, they have of course so far become less religious, and I believe this is fully acknowledged by Catholics. An infidel spirit has sprung up, which the Church sets herself vigorously to counteract, and I understand with increasing effect. The king, too, professes impartiality in religious matters, which is another trial to the Church. Still it is undoubtedly making immense way. Comparing Belgium and France, the Church gives greater signs of power in the former country than in the latter. It had a great hold on the people before the changes, and this it still retains with whatever drawbacks from circumstances which it cannot control. The Services are more fully carried out and more splendidly conducted; the government does not seem, as in France, to attempt restrictions as to the number of Festivals, &c.; more priests appear in the streets; and processions are not (as in France) commonly interdicted.

The clergy impress one with the idea of being a most devoted body. The amount of work which they go through is prodigious. They rise generally at five (the Belgians are universally early risers) and seem to have their days fully occupied with devotional and charitable works. I remained some little time at Mechlin where I was most kindly treated, and had an opportunity of going over all the principal institutions of the place, in company with a priest. The schools for the poor seem to be admirable; the teachers are, I believe,

for the most part members of the Society of *freres Chretiens*, and the clergy of the place superintend and occasionally take part in the teaching. One establishment was especially striking; a sort of Sunday School for young maid-servants. The demeanour of these poor girls towards their priest was most pleasing; when he entered they begged his blessing, which he gave them in the usual forms. I must not forget to add, that at one of the boys' schools which I visited, I had an opportunity of examining some of the boys whom I took quite at random, upon the distinction between reverence and worship. I may say that they (almost indignant) repudiated the idea of paying Divine honours to the blessed Saints.

The churches in Belgium are open generally at six, and many persons both assist and communicate at the earliest Mass. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that the Mass is used exclusively or generally as a source for contemplation only. Nothing apparently can exceed the devotion of those who so use it; but there is a series of Lower Masses from six or ten every day, at which I think there are always some communicants, and often many. This is a point in which we thought Belgium superior to France.

At Antwerp we fell in with one of the boys who officiated at Mass in the Cathedral. Considering that he was a mere chance specimen of his class, I cannot but augur very favourably of the attention paid to young persons in the Belgian Church. I had a great deal of conversation with him on two separate occasions, and was struck and pleased beyond measure by his general tone and demeanour. We learned that he was in the habit of confessing every fortnight. He was between twelve and thirteen. He spoke with delight of his duties in the church, and of his hope of one day attaining to the dignity of the Priesthood. It was impossible to see that boy even for a few hours and doubt, from his conversation and general deportment, that he had been most carefully and religiously brought up.

I had the good fortune to come in for a confirmation at Brussels. It was a most beautiful sight, carrying one back in thought to the days of St. Ambrose. The present Primate of Belgium bears the highest character, and sustains his dignity with most especial majesty and sweetness. Every child and young person knelt during the service, and had his, or her, sponsor standing behind, and the demeanour of the whole assemblage was reverent and devout. The children were arranged in the nave; the choir was reserved for the service. On entering, the Archbishop proceeded to the Altar, and the *Veni Creator* was intoned to a simple Gregorian Chant. There was no noise nor confusion of any sort; the children did not move