

mark our appreciation of a sacrifice, of which, collectively regarded, the world has never seen the equal?

It is as the result of some such train of reflection as this that I am led to gather together here some desultory chapters upon the practices observed in past ages to do honour to the dead, and to provide for the relief of their souls. The matter, it is true, is not new. The devotion of our forefathers in this connection has long been a favourite subject of research for students of antiquity. The older charitable endowments throughout the land, the colleges at our Universities, the chantries and memorial chapels in our great cathedrals have all helped to bring the topic home to the minds of even the least observant. But we are not all archæologists, and there are certain aspects of the question which do not ordinarily come in the way either of the general reader or of those whose interest in the subject is mainly devotional. In these more secluded bypaths there is matter of interest and often of edification. Incomplete as these sketches are, they may perhaps help to direct attention to the varied aspects of a subject to which no Catholic, and indeed no religious-minded man, can at the present time be wholly indifferent.

Naturally the first question which arises refers to the antiquity of prayers for the dead. As the well-known passage in the second book of