

daily meditation, the punctual reading some spiritual book, the examination of conscience, and fervent, private prayer, become habitual, and almost essential to their mind, as is their daily food to the body. They teach us, too, something of the same order in the regulation of our time; and we are trained also to prayer, and taught how to pray, and to meditate, and taught how to meditate; and we are exhorted to daily serious reading, as far as our circumstances allow. And the evening examination of conscience none may omit. We are taught in our morning meditation to propose some virtue to practise, a sin, or fault, or bad habit to avoid during the day, and to persevere on this one point till it be conquered. We are taught to pause at noon, and inquire if we are remembering what we had proposed to ourselves in the morning, and to pray, if only for two minutes, for grace to persevere. We are taught to note down over night a subject for the morning's meditation; so that when we come to put ourselves in the presence of God to meditate, we may be prepared in heart. Our little children in their weekly catechism have a miniature plan traced out for them from the same model, and frequently an extra catechism is held for the more advanced to attend alone, in which their Pastor acts as their Missionary, and teaches their young minds how to meditate, how to examine their conscience, and how to pray.

But I really must now say farewell; the time is come when my letter must depart for England. I shall be most happy to receive another letter from you, informing me of the state of England; and in return I will give you every information within my power, regarding Catholic life in Belgium.

[The following Letters may be found at the end of a work written by an Oxford Clergyman, and lately published, entitled, "The Ideal of a Christian Church." They are reprinted here, not so much for the pleasing and valuable testimony they bear to the influence of religion in Belgium, as unexceptionable confirmation of the general faithfulness of our "Letters from Belgium," and which have been so very much admired.]

LETTER I.

My dear Ward,

My foreign travel has been confined to Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and Rhenish Prussia; I visited Italy and Switzerland for the first time eleven years ago, revisited them six years ago, and spent two months in Belgium and Rhenish Prussia two years ago. On first going abroad in 1838, I went with the impressions respecting the Roman Catholics and their system with which I had been brought up, and which were current among those with whom I associated; I expected to find all classes irreligious or indifferent, the poorer classes ignorant; and the priests purposely keeping them so, and I went prepared to look at their religion and their religious

services with distaste. At first, I confess, every thing that I saw seemed to confirm the impressions with which I started: if I saw people diverting themselves on Sundays, I concluded that it was a wilful and deliberate desecration of the day; if I saw priests walking amongst them, I concluded they were winking at it; if I saw a poor person by the road side on his knees before a cross, I concluded he had placed himself there for us to see, and thought all meanly clad monks mere lazy beggars; the very constancy of the people at Church I attributed to formalism, and I thoroughly believed they worshipped images; for I saw them kneeling before them, and I thought that proved it.

The notion that I should find the foreign Catholics indifferent was very soon dispelled; the very manner in which I saw a French steersman at the helm of his vessel take off his cap on passing the large Crucifix on the pier at Dieppe surprised me, and the earnestness and devotion I saw in the charities was something quite new to me; but then I fell back upon the idea, that it was all superstition and idolatry; fraud in the priests and ignorance in the people.

Of the higher classes of laity in the countries which I have travelled I have seen nothing, but have seen a good deal of the priests, of the poor, and of the schools for the children of the poor; and the more I saw, the more and more I became convinced how utterly groundless my impressions were. Of the priests (I speak now of Belgium and Prussia, where I saw them most) I have a very pleasant recollection; here and there I met with a most argumentative theologian, but, as a body, I was struck by their kindness of manner and simplicity of life, although in the conversations I had with them I might not agree with them, yet the very idea that they were not honest and sincere quite shocked and distresses me; I felt and still feel convinced that they were religious men.

That the poor are ignorant is, I believe, an entire misapprehension; I never talked to any who were so; I should say they are far, very far, better instructed in religious knowledge than our own people of the same class, and their attention to their religious duties is, to my mind, quite affecting. I have seen in large manufacturing towns hundreds upon hundreds of work-people, in their working dress, at mass at 5 o'clock in the morning before going into the factories, with their books, and joining heartily in the service; and I need scarcely say what a contrast this forms to the habits of the same class of persons in this country.

I have visited also Catholic schools abroad, chiefly those under the superintendance of the Christian Brothers, my opinion is, that we have nothing to compare with them, even as to the regularity and order of the schools, the extent of the secular education, the carefulness with which religious instruction is conveyed, or the number and character of the teachers.