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The True Witness

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MONKS IN ART.

(By Louis de Meserac, in Rosary Magazine.)

In art as well as in literature certain grotesque, if not actually malicious, misrepresentations are carefully cherished among the most valued traditions of the craft. In literature the sly and crafty Jesuit, the relentless heretic-hunting Dominican, the unwashed and tooth-brushless Franciscan, the intriguing prelate, the cruel Spaniard, the treacherous Italian, and the sweetly noble Puritan are familiar figures. In fact, to such an extent do these worthies pervade the field of art and literature, polite and otherwise, that by many ordinarily intelligent people they are accepted without question as authentic types.

In centuries past the Inquisition, an institution much maligned and little understood, wishing to encourage and promote the best in art, and discourage all that was base, promulgated certain regulations for the guidance of painters; for example, an artist, before commencing a religious painting, was expected to go through a certain preliminary course of fasting and prayer, and, if possible, receive the Sacraments. There were certain broad principles published, also, regarding the portrayal of certain characters. For instance, the Blessed Virgin must be depicted as a beautiful woman, blonde in type, chaste in mien, robed in pale blue, and with feet modestly covered.

In our own day the Inquisition is unfortunately extinct, but our artists, with the exception of the distinctly religious painters, are still bound by certain conventions as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. In accordance with these latter-day conventions, a cardinal may be portrayed in his own apartments or at court. If one may judge from the various paintings extant, a cardinal's apartments are limited to his dining-room and library, except in the rare instances where His Eminence is depicted on his death-bed, in which case he occupies a luxuriously furnished chamber, through the open door of which the dining-hall, with its table loaded with delicacies (mostly bottled), is distinctly visible.

To the uninitiated observer it might be difficult to distinguish a prelate's dining-room from his library, but to the adept nothing is easier. The library table is instantly recognized by its bottle of ink, three goose-quills and two books, which are never found on the dining-table. In all other respects the two apartments are identical. This is one of the cases where

authenticity of the artistic tenet that members of the Roman hierarchy don complete sacerdotal vestments to drink a cup of beef-tea or to discharge an erring cook.

When the cardinal goes to court—presto! change! The jovial "bon vivant" disappears, and in his place we find a thin, cadaverous ascetic, deep in unholy plots and intrigues to advance his own nefarious schemes (a cardinal's schemes are always nefarious, "per se." In art and literature) and confound his enemies. Kings and emperors are but puppets in his hands, while lesser folk are scarcely worthy his notice, except, perchance, they stand in the way of his ambition, in which case they are remorselessly wiped out of existence.

Under no circumstance may a cardinal be portrayed as he is, a gentleman, a scholar, and, withal, a useful member of society.

Monks have suffered many things at the hands of many artists. In art, it seems, a monk is not restricted to the garb of his own order. Jesuits are frequently portrayed in the brown habit of the Franciscans, in the white robes of the Carmelites, or in the black and white of the Dominicans. We have heard a great deal in controversial literature of the "reprehensible adaptability of the Jesuits," but had never supposed they carried it to such an extent. Dominicans, Benedictines, Recollets and Capuchins all wear each others' habits in the friendliest manner imaginable, and in many cases also appear in outlandish costumes so fearfully and wonderfully made that their like has never been seen under the all-protecting wings of Mother Church.

A monk may be portrayed in any one of half a dozen artistically orthodox ways. If he is young, he may be represented as contented but stupid, but preferably is portrayed as bright, with an alert, intelligent face and an apparently regretful longing for the beautiful world from which he is cruelly shut out forever. A middle-aged monk may be portrayed as fat, lazy and sensuous, and either eating, sleeping, drinking, drunk, or making love. On rare occasions he is allowed to indulge in harmless and not actually discreditable buffoonery. As he advances in years, the monk may be occasionally portrayed as a venerable patriarch grown old in the service of God and humanity, but is oftener painted as a jolly old reprobate, old in years and iniquity.

In a series of one hundred and twenty-four paintings, presumably portraying the reverend clergy, which are displayed in the various museums, art dealers' galleries, hotels, clubs, and private homes of Chicago, there were depicted altogether fifteen cardinals, twenty-eight archbishops and bishops, and two hundred and ninety-seven monks. As to the occupations of this galaxy of pictorial prelates and priests, nine of the cardinals were indulging in the combined pleasures of wine and feminine society, three were drinking and joking with other congenial clerics, one was gently dozing while sitting for his portrait, another, apparently Cardinal Richelieu, was bull-dozing a cringing and tearful queen, while number fifteen apparently contributed a needed dash of scarlet in the picture of the return of Columbus.

The pictorial bishops seemed especially prone to gastronomic jollity, as twenty-three out of the twenty-eight are represented as feasting, their round, rubicund faces showing a more lively appreciation of the good things of this world than interest in the world to come. Of the remaining five, two were lolling in easy chairs, laughing and telling stories, and one is ogling a buxom maid servant. One is sitting before a fire, his hands crossed on his well-rounded stomach, the picture of comfort and content, while another, a most unamiable individual, is superintending the racking of a recalcitrant sleeper.

Among the two hundred and ninety-seven monks portrayed, a few are good, many are bad, the rest

indifferent. One of the best representatives of the first class is by Von Hoesslin, and represents a young monk seated at an organ in an ecstasy of devotion. Every line of his strong, ascetic face is spiritual, his figure is in strong relief against a Gothic window, while in the flood of light at his side are poised two angel figures, their outlines suggested rather than defined. The whole effect of the picture is pleasing as well as uplifting. In a picture by Rosenthal, a young monk is portrayed as pausing in his work by an open window to watch the movements of a butterfly which has just fluttered in. In this picture there is an apparent effort to accentuate the severe, almost bleak, simplicity of the interior in contrast to the sunlit beauty and freedom of the outer world.

Hosch, in his painting, the "Idyl of the Monastery," portrays two monks, one an old man with a gentle, kindly face, slightly tinged with asceticism, poring over a well-loved volume, while at his side a young monk leans against the casement, looking at the flowers and the beautiful, bright landscape outside, dreaming of the delights of Heaven, and in his fancy seeing the unfading flowers upon which the blessed feet of the elect tread as they follow the Lamb.

Grutzner's paintings, "Monastery Secrets" and "Wine," are but types of a popular but more or less offensive variety of "monk pictures." In the first picture the scene is laid in the monastery cellars, with all the conventional monastic accessories, such as flagons, beer barrels, etc., very much in evidence. The monks themselves show very plainly the effects of high living rather than of high thinking. In the second picture, a group of monks are gathered around a table in a richly furnished library where cases of books and scientific apparatus lend an atmosphere of learning, while the elaborately carved furniture, gorgeous tapestries, and rich brocades give an impression of luxury rarely found in any but a pictured monastery. The fact that the flagon to which the attention of the group is directed is of superbly chased silver, and that the glasses from which they are drinking are of the daintiest of silver-mounted Bohemian ware does not remove them from the class of sensuous tipplers of the former picture. The technical excellence of these two pictures only serves to aggravate the artist's offense. Much may be forgiven a dauber, because of him but little is expected, but for a really excellent artist to so prostitute his talents is unpardonable.

In "A Jolly Song," Cederstrom portrays a fat and bibulous friar whose ruddy countenance and red, bulbous nose do not in the least suggest the outward signs of inward grace. This unedifying and scarcely creditable son of St. Dominic is strumming a guitar and trollying a sentimental ditty in a fashion strongly suggestive of an unduly convivial Tracy Tupman.

These pictures of half-drunken monks are unfortunately not limited to paintings, but on the contrary are found everywhere. They appear in the advertisements of many brewers and wholesale liquor dealers. Tobaccoists consider the picture of a besotted Franciscan, smoking one of their cigars, a wonderfully taking advertisement, entirely overlooking the fact that the average beholder would infer from the picture that a man had to be very drunk to enjoy a cigar of that particular brand. Beer steins are frequently defaced with these pictures, while in furniture stores, library cabinets, liquor cupboards and book-racks are not infrequently disgraced with poker-work portrayals of Friar Tuck and his ilk.

While the glutton may be accepted as the typical monk of the Teutonic and English artists, the religious of the Frenchman is entirely different. It is the mind rather than the senses which appeals to the Gaul, and this peculiarity is as apparent in his art as it is in his iniquity.

Vibert's paintings show this characteristic very plainly. In one of his pictures, "Bad Books," he depicts two old priests seated before an enormous fireplace in which piles of books and papers are being burned, while other books and papers are piled high on the floor, on the table and on the chairs around about. One

"Censor Librorum" sits, a book on his knee, his chin in one hand, the other clasping the tongs, soon to be used in conveying the book to the flames. On his face is a pleased expression, as he reads a few choice passages before consigning the volume to destruction. His companion, a venerable old man with a flowing white beard, leans toward him, an open book in his hand, to call his attention to some "risque" passage which seems to amuse him greatly. The whole atmosphere of the picture is suggestive of an unduly pleasurable interest in forbidden things.

In pleasing contrast to these various types of pictures misrepresenting clerical and monastic life and practice is a painting by an American artist, Herbert Faulkner, "A Christening at St. Mark's." In the dim interior of this splendid old cathedral the christening party gathers around the font, a typical Venetian family, from the smiling grandparents to the tiny "bambino." All heads are bowed to receive the priestly benediction, while the strongest light in the picture falls on the face of the gentle old priest, a face of wonderful kindness and spirituality, worn with thought for others' cares, with sympathy for their woes. Artistically the picture is far superior to any of the work of the Grutzner or the Vibert type, and it is infinitely more pleasing in its effects.

It is to be regretted that the more disgraceful a monk picture is the greater is its apparent popularity, and that copies are found not only in art dealers' shops and public galleries, but even in the homes of Catholics, where they cannot but have a pernicious influence on the young. Children will naturally think that if their parents, who are Catholics, display such pictures and even seem to enjoy looking at them, they certainly must be correct portrayals of actual conditions, and the harm done in this manner is not readily eradicated. It is unnecessary to describe the immense amount of harm such pictures are capable of doing in the way of prejudicing non-Catholics against the Church.

Rome's Debt to Ireland.

In the Kirkby Hall of the Irish College in Rome on the 25th of April, the Most Rev. John Ireland, Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, gave, at the request of the Oliver Plunket Literary and Debating Society, what he described as "a desultory talk" on the theme "Rome's Debt to Ireland."

The Archbishop was delighted to stand once again within the walls of the Irish College, that historic institution, which owed its inception and foundation to Father Luke Wadding, who, in the days of Erin's tribulation, established in Rome the two institutions: St. Isidore's and the Irish College. And from these houses went forth apostles and martyrs, preserving the light of faith in the people of Ireland. How much was done for the Faith in the times following close on the foundation of these institutions may be imagined from the fact that to be a student in them was regarded as being a candidate for martyrdom. Few pages in the history of the Church in Ireland are as bright and inspiring as those which tell of the Irish Colleges in Rome; and likewise those that speak of the English and Scotch colleges are also distinguished by a like quality.

In the course of this most eloquent talk, delivered with all that impressiveness and sincerity, that force and emphasis which mark the public utterances of Archbishop Ireland, the course of Irish history after the Reformation was rapidly reviewed, and its salient features—especially those bearing on the fate of the Irish priests educated in Rome—were graphically described. The priesthood was forbidden to them in their own land; and when they had attained it abroad, they had to return by stealth to Ireland. Thus the very walls of the Colleges of Rome taught a grand lesson to the student of to-day of the sacrifices endured by the students of the past.

There was a great advantage, said the Archbishop, in being a student in Rome. A cosmopolitan frame of mind was engendered, and to a degree which can scarcely be achieved anywhere else. Provincialism receives a check here; and the feeling that it is only in our own country the sun rises and sets, give place to a wider and larger sentiment. Never-ending gratitude was due from Ireland and the Irish Church for the hospitality given by Rome to students coming from persecuted lands. While thanking Rome for this, the Archbishop hoped a book would be written telling, in its fulness, the history of Irish institutions in Rome.

Another subject should, he considered, also be written: that is, what Erin has done for Rome—Rome's debt to Erin! He wished to impress upon them that there is such a thing. Wherever throughout the world there exists a Catholic, there exists an Episcopal See, there is the empire of Rome. If we were to eliminate from the empire of Rome to-day the work that has been done by Ireland, the immensity of the Church it has established in missionary lands, we should leave a tremendous vacuum. The people of certain lands seem to have a providential mission for the fulfillment of God's designs. Judah is one example of this; though a small and poor nation, yet what great work did it not accomplish in preparation for the reign of Christ. Here in modern times there is that little island in the Western seas: what work has it not done through the ages, and what is it not still doing in the dispersions of its people for the Church of God? The Irish people were fitted for their work both by nature and by grace. By one they were endowed with the spirit of imagination and poetry, and this led them to wander in other lands; by the other they were filled with the Faith, and wherever they brought that Faith of St. Patrick they planted it deep.

The Archbishop here, in a rapid but eloquent manner, described the going forth into Scotland, England and the Continent of Europe of the Irish missionaries in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries to widen out, as it were, the Tabernacle of Christ; and he just hinted at the

work of Irish saints—Columba, Columbanus, Gall, etc.

But the great work for Rome on the part of Erin began after the religious revolution of the 16th century, when the Catholic Church was weakened in many countries. If Erin had lost the faith then, how much would be lacking to the faith of Rome in the world to-day? It was a miracle of God's power that the Catholic faith survived the tremendous battle.

Naturally the Archbishop, after having described how the Irish were dispersed, and how they kept the faith, going away to form brigades in the armies of Continental nations; and then as emigrants, leaving their country in order to gain their daily bread, dwelt on the sadness of emigration to the people, and its blessings, through the spread of the faith, to the people amongst whom the emigrants dwelt. And he told, in connection with this, how, in 1798, a party of emigrants landed in New York from a ship that set out from Drogheda many months before. When they reached the shores of the new land they gathered in a circle, and a venerable old man with white locks falling down on his shoulders stood in the midst of them while they, kneeling, made the sign of the cross and prayed in a tongue that was unknown to the few spectators who witnessed this scene. Amongst these spectators was a lady who had never till then seen anyone make such a sign as that of the cross. Some years later she was received into the Catholic Church, and her name, Mrs. Seton, the foundress of a religious order of women, is well known all over the United States. Archbishop Seton, the grandson of this lady, was present at the lecture to-day!

In concluding his address to the students present on this occasion, Archbishop Ireland emphasized the necessity of the future Irish priests undertaking the mission to the heathen. France is fast dropping out of this work, and the Irish, he is convinced, should take it up. Bishop Hanlon, the representative of the Irish missionary spirit to the heathen, was present, and Archbishop Ireland referred to him in laudatory terms. This will, in the future, if it be taken up with zeal, constitute Rome's debt to Erin. Irish emigration is, practically speaking, at an end; and the missionary spirit must find another outlet, and that is offered in the conversion of the heathen.

An Employer's tribute to the Irish Workman.

Says the Hon. John D. Crimmins, of New York: "The Irishman at home is charged with being indolent and this is given as one of the causes of his lack of prosperity. There must be a wonderful change come over him during his voyage to this country, for the moment he lands on our shores he is off seeking employment. What race is more industrious or absorbs our conditions more rapidly? They would become citizens an hour after landing if that were possible. They seem to understand our institutions immediately. Possibly a few sometimes take too liberal a construction of our law, but that is a rare occurrence. This is their home; they are loyal to it and to the flag of our country. From many years of observation in the employment of thousands of mechanics and laborers of all races, I can safely say the Irish laborer and the Irish mechanic are the best in their class. They work with heart and head. They are strong and courageous, and are first in what may be considered dangerous work. Any master mechanic, being asked what race under his observation produces the best mechanic, will tell you the Irish. I speak now of constructive trades."

To Prevent is Better Than to Repent.—A little medicine in the shape of the wonderful pellets which are known as Parmentier's Vegetable Pills administered at the proper time and with the directions adhered to often prevent a serious attack of sickness and save money which would go to the doctor. In all irregularities of the digestive organs they are an invaluable corrective and by cleansing the blood they clear the skin of imperfections.