

THE CATHOLIC.

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD UBIQUE, QUOD AB OMNIBUS CREDITUM EST.—WHAT ALWAYS, AND EVERY WHERE, AND BY ALL IS BELIEVED.

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ROBERT SOUTHWELL, S. J. (1595.)

By W. JOS. WALTER, AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR THOS. MORE," ETC.

"And smit with feelings of the olden days,
Revive the music of neglected lays."

Daniel, (1595.)

[CONTINUED.]

It may be well to pause for a moment, and take a view of the state of the English Catholics at this period. We shall thus be able to form some idea of the position of things when Southwell entered upon his mission. Upon the promulgation of the penal statutes, many of the Catholics sought, with their families, an asylum beyond the sea. Their lands and property were immediately seized by the crown, and given or sold at low prices to the followers of the court. The Catholics who remained, may be divided into two classes:—first, those who, to escape the penalties attended occasionally at the established service, and endeavored to elude the charge of hypocrisy, by maintaining, from the words of the queen's proclamation, that such attendance was with them nothing more than the discharge of a civil duty, an expression of their obedience to the letter of the law, and secondly, those and happily the far greater number, whose conscientious scruples were not content with such an evasion. They kept aloof from a worship which they disapproved, and were in consequence compelled to pass their lives in solitude and alarm. They lay at the mercy of enemies, or ill-disposed neighbours; they were daily watched by the *pursuivants*, a name invented for a mongrel breed, a something betwixt the spy and the blood-hound; they were liable at any hour to be hurried before the courts of high commission, to be interrogated upon oath how often they had been at church, and when and where they had received the sacraments; to be condemned as *recusants* (refusers to attend a church), to be fined and imprisoned, or as persons reconciled to the church to forfeiture and imprisonment for life. The terror of these laws were renewed every year by proclamation, calling upon the magistrates, the bishops, and the ecclesiastical commissioners, to redouble their vigilance, and enforce the laws respecting religion. Private houses were searched to discover priests, or persons assisting at mass. The foreign ambassadors were compelled to make complaint of the violation of their privileges, by the intrusion of pursuivants into their private chapels; and even the female head of the church herself, in order to set a good example, occasionally condescended to examine recusants, and to commit them to prison, when denounced to her in the course of her progresses; nay more, we shall find her stooping so far as to correspond with the scamps and ruffians, who, under the name of pursuivants, were paid for doing the foul work of the law.

The opening of the year 1581 was marked by new penal enactments. When the parliament assembled, the ministers called on the two houses for laws of great severity, "to defeat the devices of the Pope, who had sent Jesuits into the realm, to preach a corrupt doctrine, and to sow seeds of sedition." Every measure which they proposed was readily adopted. It was enacted, that all persons possessing, or pretending to possess, or to exercise the power of *absolving* (and we advantage was taken of the ambiguity of this term), or

of withdrawing others from the established religion, or suffering themselves to be so withdrawn, should, together with their procurers and councillors, suffer the penalties of high treason: secondly, that the punishment for saying mass should be increased to the payment of two hundred marks, and one year's imprisonment; for hearing mass, to one hundred marks, and imprisonment for the same period: thirdly, that the fine for absence from church should be fixed at twenty pounds per month (the calendar month); and that if the absence were prolonged to an entire year the recusant should be obliged to find two securities for his good behaviour in two hundred pounds each: and fourthly, that to prevent the concealment of priests as tutors or school masters in private families, every person acting in such capacity, without the approbation of the ordinary; should be liable to a years imprisonment, and the person who employed him, to a fine of ten pounds per month.

During the course of this (1581) and the following year, the names of all the recusants in each parish, amounting to above fifty thousand, had been returned to the council; the magistrates were repeatedly blamed for their want of activity and success, and the prisons in every county were filled with persons suspected as priests, or delinquents against one or other of the penal laws. No man could enjoy security, even in the privacy of his own house, where he was liable at all hours, but generally in the night, to be visited by a magistrate at the head of an armed mob. At a signal given, the doors were burst open, and the pursuivants, in separate divisions, hastened to the different apartments, examined the beds, tore the tapestry and wainscoting from the walls, forced open the closets, and made every search which their ingenuity could suggest, to discover either a priest, or books, chalices, or vestments, appropriated to the Catholic worship. To resist or to remonstrate, was only to provoke additional aggression. All the inmates were interrogated; their persons were searched, under the pretext that *superstitious* articles might be concealed among their clothes; and there are instances on record of females of rank whose reason and lives were endangered from the brutality of the officers.

The new and valuable addition of Dodd's Church history, for which we are indebted to the industry and research of Rev. Mr. Thierney, enables us to particularize some of the "searches," and other outrages against the Catholics here spoken of. The reader will be pleased to see an instance or two. The first is from Father Garnet's "Report" to the general of the order. "On one occasion the sheriff of Northumberland having fired one of the beacons of the country and raised a body of 140 men, proceeded, in the dead of night, to invest the three Catholic houses of Dissington, Rowchester, and the Grange. At daylight the search began. Dissington the property of the Ogles, was first assailed; Rowchester, the residence of the Rutherfords, and the Grange, that of the widow Lawson, followed; and before the close of the day, each of the three residences had been subjected to the violence of these legalized ruffians. In the two last, however, the heads of the family had eluded the vigilance of the searchers. To complete their work, the party returned early the following morning to Rowchester, and having taken up free quarters in the house, announced their determination to remain, till Rutherford and his wife should appear. They had, however, concealed themselves in one of the hiding

places of the mansion. But hunger and confinement at length subdued their resolution. The voice of Mrs. Rutherford, begging to be released, betrayed the place of their concealment; the door which was unfastened from within, was flung open, and the captives, half dead from exhaustion, were brought forth, and immediately hurried off to prison: A similar attempt to secure Mrs. Lawson, at the Grange, was less successful, but other captives speedily made amends for the disappointment; and a general search through the three counties of Northumberland, Durham and York, at once terrified the Catholics, and gratified the avarice and malignity of the pursuivants. As the latter approached, the former fled from their dwellings, to seek a refuge wherever they might offer. Many were taken; others scarcely more fortunate, only escaped from the hands of their persecutors, to obtain a doubtful asylum in the woods or caves and amidst the fastnesses of the hills. Youth and manhood, infancy and age, the pregnant mother and the timid daughter, alike were driven forth to the inclemency of the heavens, and for a period of nearly six weeks, numbers were glad to find a shelter in tents constructed for the occasion in some sequestered spot, or to hide themselves with the toad and the lizard among some ruins as their neighbourhood afforded." The above is abridged from the Latin original, preserved among the valuable MSS. at Stonyhurst.

Our next extract is from another "Report" of Father Garnet to his superior, descriptive of a search made in the house of a respectable family of the name of Trollope. "On the appearance of the pursuivants, the head of the family, his wife, son, grand-daughter, and two maid servants hastily concealed themselves, leaving every thing in the care of a trusty female domestic. Disappointed in their immediate object of seizing the family, the first care of the officers was to plunder the house; the next to discover the hiding place of the individuals whose good fortune had enabled them to elude their pursuit. For two whole days together, during which the party in concealment remained without food the pursuivants continued the search. They compared the exterior dimensions of the building with the interior; they sounded the walls and the floors; they listened to every noise; they endeavored by every artifice to surprise the fugitives into a betrayal of their hiding place; none was it until baffled at every point, and already in possession of plate, linen, clothes, and almost every valuable and portable article on the premises, that, at the close of the second day, they reluctantly abandoned their enterprise."

How exactly does Father Gerard's account of another of these searches correspond with the above. "What a thing it is," says he, "for a Catholic gentleman to have his house beset on all sides with a number of armed men, both horse and foot; and not only his house and gardens, and such enclosed places all beset, but all the highways belayed for some miles near him, so that none shall pass without being examined! These too, these searches are often so rude and barbarous, that if the doors be not opened [the instant they wish to enter,

At the trial of Father Garnet, the earl of Northampton declared that the places of rendezvous of the Catholics, were "like the lapwing's nest, to which there is no tracing the bird." We find the same image in old Middletown.

"I am afraid he has the lapwing's cunning,
That cries the most when farthest from her nest."