

[From the Tablet]

CONSECRATION OF THE BISHOP OF BRUGES.

My dear —, I have just returned from a most interesting visit to Belgium, and I will record my impressions of it, while yet fresh, in the shape of a letter to you. The object of my going was to attend the consecration of Mgr. Malon, as Bishop of Bruges, to which See he has been designated since last autumn, but owing to the troubled state of things at Rome, it was only very lately that the Bulls for his consecration were received. Mgr. Malon, I should tell you, was formerly the Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Louvain, and appears to have been raised to the Episcopate by acclamation. My own acquaintance with him began seven years ago, when I was a Protestant, and was revived in 1845, shortly before I became a Catholic; when, at the instance of a common acquaintance, Mgr. Malon took the trouble of writing me a letter of four sheets of paper on Catholic Unity; a very interesting and able document, which had its weight, with other things, in helping me to my decision in that memorable year. It is curious enough that the first consecration of a Catholic Bishop I have been present at should be that of Mgr. Malon. However, he kindly asked me to go to it, and so I did, in company with a party of four, and as happy a party we were as you might wish to see. Travelling together, it is said, either makes friendships or breaks them, and ours was of the former sort. We had, moreover, the advantage of being, in a manner, under the wing of our Bishop; for at Bruges we fell in with Dr. Wiseman, who had arrived at the same point by a different route. I need hardly tell you what an advantage this was to us all, for Dr. Wiseman knows every body and every thing abroad, and his name was, of course, a passport for us with all the distinguished and interesting Ecclesiastics whom we met. Now, then, let me proceed with my story. After a beautiful passage of six hours, we got to Ostend on Monday morning, the 30th ult., at eight, when after hearing Mass and breakfasting we started for Bruges. The church at Ostend presents nothing very remarkable; but there is always something unspeakably delightful in feeling oneself (as a Catholic) at home in foreign churches, and hearing 'Per omnia secula seculorum' on the other side the water. I think any one would have been struck by the reverent appearance of things at Mass. We got to Bruges in the afternoon, and found it full of bustle on account of the coming solemnities. They were beginning to decorate the streets for the procession, and everywhere are seen long programmes of the order of the day of consecration. We first paid our respects to our own Bishop, and then repaired to the "Evechie," where we found Mgr. Malon, full of courtesy and kindness, and were all appointed our several places in the cathedral for the next day. Mgr. Malon is a very pleasant intelligent looking man, about forty, and, in fact, something like Father Faber—a good omen, I hope. I observed that he wore a richer chain than our Bishops, and a very splendid pectoral cross; altogether, his appearance was very prepossessing. The next point of interest was the arrival of the assisting Bishops, who all excepting Dr. Wiseman, came together in the evening. At the station where the train was expected, crowds were assembled, as if to welcome some prince or conqueror; and the station was decorated with flags. This was the first sign we had of the light in which Bishops are regarded in a true Catholic country. The crowd was so great that we made a push to get through the station to the platform, a privilege which was yielded on payment of a franc, and receiving a railway ticket as a passport. The train soon arrived and was received with cheers. The venerable party passed through the station house, and was received by many on bended knees, and by all with heads uncovered. It consisted of the Papal Nuncio (an Archbishop), the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, the Archbishop of Paris, all the Bishops of Belgium, the Bishop of Luxembourg, and the Archbishop of Tyre, in partibus. These, with Dr. Wiseman (whom they called L'Evêque de Londres), were, I think, all the Bishops present. The Cardinal Archbishop is quite a sight in himself. Such grace, sweetness, and majesty combined as realise one's very *beau idéal* of a prince of the Church. Mgr. Sibour, the Archbishop of Paris, is a sweet placid, and not elderly man; a peculiar interest hangs over the successor of Aître. The Nuncio is a very striking person in appearance. What one re-

marks about all these Catholic dignitaries is the entire absence of pomposity. They never seem to you aware that any eyes are upon them. As to the Cardinal, I cannot get his figure out of my head. I now come to the morning of May 1, the day of consecration itself. The arrangements were so good that there was no occasion to go earlier than the time mentioned for the ceremonial. Accordingly at half-past eight we were at the cathedral in our places. Precisely at that hour all the bells in the city began to ring, or rather toll, at a quick, joyful, summoning pace. The day was glorious. In the space before the great door of the cathedral were drawing up the military with their band. The cathedral itself is a beautiful structure of great height, with a choir (which was quite concealed), and two fine transepts. It was arranged as follows:—In front of the screen was erected a spacious platform for the ceremonial, seven or eight steps above the area of the church, with a high altar, and a side altar for the Bishop elect. The transepts were filled with spectators. In the nave, on the right and left sides of the platform, were seats for the Canons of the cathedral, below them were the civil and military authorities; on either side along the nave were the Clergy of other dioceses, and the rest of the church was appropriated almost entirely to the people of the town, rich and poor without distinction. On the platform, right and left, were seats for the Bishops and for the Chaplains; behind them, in the centre, was a footstool for the Consecrator. Shortly after our arrival, the procession approached from the palace; the Clergy, in surplices, preceding the Bishops. The Archbishop of Malines was habited in his Cardinal's robes, wearing on his head a small red cap, not large enough to conceal his silver hair. The Bishop's wore copes of gold. As the procession entered the drums beat, and the musicians (who were concealed behind the screen) struck up a joyful movement. The orchestra consisted of an instrumental band, besides the organ, with a full chorus of voices, the trebles being sustained by boys, for women singers, I believe, are not allowed at Belgium—at least, I heard none while there. When the Bishops and Clergy were seated, and the Cardinal (the Consecrator) had exchanged his scarlet robes for his cope of crimson and gold (it was St. Philip and St. James' day, and the colour was accordingly red), and the Bishop elect had vested in his sacerdotal habits (except the chasuble, instead of which he assumes the cope), and had been led, wearing his cap, between the two Assisting-Bishops (also in copes) to the centre the ceremony began by the reading of the Papal Brief. This is followed by the "Examen," in which occurs a magnificent piece of dogmatic theology on the Blessed Trinity; read it, and then fancy the "Archbishop" of D., or the "Bishop" of H., undergoing it! I suppose you know the Office of the Consecration of a Bishop. You remember that the Consecrator and the Bishop elect celebrate Mass together at different altars. It is after the Alleluia, or the Tract, that the Consecration properly begins. Then the Bishop elect leaves his altar and comes in front of the Consecrator, and while the Consecrator and all the Bishops and Clergy incline their heads, kneeling, he (the Elect) prostrates himself on the ground while the Litanies of the Saints are sung, as at the Ordination of the other Clergy, as it to enlist all the Court of Heaven in behalf of those who are about to receive the exalted communion. I should tell you that at Bruges all the people were let into the cathedral without distinction as soon as the Mass began. I can conceive nothing more impressive to them than the sight of their future Bishop in this posture of profound humiliation—annihilating himself, as it were, before the Presence at which even the angels shroud their faces. Certainly, a Bishop should always be consecrated, if possible, in his own cathedral. Near me there were some who could hardly restrain themselves from crying out when they saw Monseigneur flat on his face. I should tell you, however, that the glorious Litanies were sadly messed at Bruges, owing to the great mistake of accompanying them with the organ for the organ and the voices did not keep time, and thus the petitions and answers were frequently jumbled together. At the end of the Litanies, as at the Ordination, the Consecrator rises and gives the Bishop elect the triple benediction.—After the Litanies, the Consecrator places the Book of the Gospels on the shoulders of the Elect, where it remains till that part of the ceremony when it is delivered into his hands. Then follows the Consecration itself, in these

simple words:—"Receive the Holy Ghost" the Consecrator and Assistant Bishops imposing hands on the head of the Bishop elect. To this succeeds a grand Preface, sung by the Consecrator with hands extended, as supplementary to the Consecration. This is followed by the most touching act in all Ordinations, the solemn anointing during the singing of the "Veni Creator." But whereas the Priest, you know, is anointed on the hands only with the Oil of Catechumens, the Bishop receives on his head (i.e. on the "corona" or tonsure) the anointing with the Holy Chrism. The Preface if afterwards continued. As I have criticised the Litanies at Bruges, I must in justice add that the "Veni Creator," in that majestic Gregorian tone, was exceedingly fine. At the end of the Preface, the Consecrator intones the beautiful antiphon from Psalm cxxxii., "The ointment on the head," &c. and it was sung through by the choir with the Psalm to which it belongs, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is," &c. How these psalms seem written for the occasion! The hands of the Bishop elect are now anointed with the Holy Chrism, as if to confer on him the plenitude of the Priesthood. Remember that all this time he is still inclining under cover of the Book of the Gospels, with a commission to preach them, and the Consecrator seals all by giving his new brother the kiss of peace, as the Assisting Bishops also do—and a right good embrace it was.

The two Masses now proceed together, the Consecrator's at the high altar, and the Bishop elect's at his side chapel. I should tell you that ever since the anointing of the head and hands the Bishop elect has worn a bandage round his forehead, and held his hands in a sling, out of reverence to the sacred substance of the Chrism yet adhering to his person. It has a most curious effect, and wonderfully beautiful. But now that he is on the point of celebrating Mass, the bandages are removed, the head and hands washed, and the hair combed—fine fun for the Protestants!

After the Offertory, the consecrated Bishop comes from his altar and presents his Consecrator with two lighted torches, two loaves of bread, and two barrels of wine, I am not able to explain this ceremony; I do not know whether it bears on the Holy Eucharist, or is a mere symbol of Episcopal hospitality. After the first prayer before communion, the consecrated Bishop approaches to the right of the Consecrator, and receives the Pax. And after the Consecrator has received the Holy Communion, he communicates the consecrated Bishop under both species. The Consecrator and Consecrated then conclude the Mass at the same altar. After the Consecrator has given the blessing to the people, he blesses the Mitre, and then imposes it with a prayer on the head of the new Bishop. (Read that wonderful prayer!) He finally blesses the Episcopal Gloves, and puts them on the hands of the Bishop. The Consecrator then enthrones the new Bishop in his own seat, and places the crozier in his hand. His own mitre is removed, as if in token of resigning his honours, and he intones the "Te Deum." Whereupon the new Bishop is led through the church by the Assisting Bishops, giving his benediction to the people as he passes. He returns to his seat, which he occupies while the hymn proceeds. The scene at this moment was indescribably grand and affecting. In the middle was the Bishop, now invested with all the insignia of office; his brethren, even of higher rank withdrawing to do him honour; Bishops and Clergy forming a semi-circle of which he was the central point, all eyes turned towards him, and hearts (I hope) uplifted in prayer that the blessings of heaven might descend in profusion upon his anointed head.

When the new Bishop returned to the Palace he received the principal Clergy with embraces, and I am told that he positively hugged his father and brother, who were waiting to greet him.

In the evening we were at a dinner given by the Bishop in the seminary; a very grand affair. Healths were proposed and drunk at its termination with speeches in very good taste. First of course came the Pope, which was responded to by the Nuncio, who gave the "King and Queen." Then followed the "Civil and Military Governors," and the "Bishops, National and foreign," to which the Archbishops of Malines and Paris replied, the latter with evident oratorical power. One thing I liked particularly—that instead of the tiresome interchange of unmeaning compliments which characterises our English proceedings in that line, no one here

returned thanks for himself, but simply proposed some other health. Thus, too, time was gained, which, as the process of dinner had lasted quite three hours and a half, was a point of some importance. After dinner we had a nice chat in the reception room. Dr. Wiseman was so kind as to present us, both to the Cardinal and to the Archbishop of Paris.

On the third day after the consecration, the new Bishop made his public entry into the city. He was met at the gate by the Bishops and Clergy, with the Civil and Military Authorities. It was arranged that all the Bishops should walk, but as a violent storm of thunder and rain came on (by the way we observed all the people crossing themselves at the lightning), this arrangement was ultimately confined to the new Bishop alone. We were of course at first very much tempted to grumble at the weather; the single exception in our tour to the most glorious sunshine. But, really I am not sure that it was not in some respects a gain; for it brought out the patience and devotion of the people in a beautiful light. This public entry was indeed "a sight for a' seer" in those days of blasphemy and reproach. It was like the triumphal procession of a hero or popular favourite; kings and queens rarely meet with the like. Imagine the whole population of a town turning out and patiently enduring a drenching rain for half an hour to do honour to their Bishop! As the procession passed the gate of the town, the Clergy chanted the "Veni Creator." The Bishop in his vestments, and wearing his mitre, walked under a canopy, supported by the oldest Priest in the diocese, a complete veteran. The streets were prettily planted with trees, and the houses decorated with festoons and flags. At all the Religious houses, the holy inmates appeared at the windows to receive the Bishop's benediction; the children of the school were drawn up for a similar purpose. Thus did we tread the curious picturesque streets of that old city, till we reached the Cathedral where we found a guard of honour drawn up, who saluted the Bishop and cast at his feet their banners to receive his blessing. As he entered the Cathedral, the drums beat, and trumpets sounded, mingling with the notes of the "Te Deum" from within. The nave was lined with soldiers, as at royal receptions. Here one felt that the Church was in her proper place. In the Cathedral the Bishop was enthroned, and afterwards at the palace held a levee, at which Dr. Wiseman introduced us, and all the English residents, as his "lack."

In the evening the town was illuminated. All the Bishops were out in open-carriages to see the rejoicings and give the delighted people the encouragement of their presence. It was a bright moonlight night, and those beautiful streets with their tall houses and painted gables, were seen to peculiar advantage under the blended light of the moon and the illuminations, revealing at intervals the most picturesque masses of architecture, and throwing out the colours of the festoons between window and window, and the flags which pointed at one another from opposite sides. And in the distance was the stately tower of the "Halle," illuminated in parts, so as at once to break, and define, its enormous height. And gazing on this almost gaily scene, one could say, "Ald this is the world's homage to the Church."

I have left no room to tell you of our trip to Antwerp, this shall form the subject of another and much shorter letter.—Yours, &c., &c.

F. O.

SALE OF A WIFE.

A young man named Freeman, having resolved to withdraw himself from the Edge of wedlock, brought his wife to Mansfield market, and speedily disposed of his "angel love," halter included, for the astounding sum of 12s. 6d. The purchaser disposed of the halter for 2s., and thus eventually obtained the precious allotment for 1s. 3d. After the sale Freeman demanded of the woman the wedding-ring he supposed her to have on her finger. The wily woman, having surmised that such a circumstance might probably occur, had provided herself with a penny brass ring, which she presented to him instead of the gold one, and which the unblinking salesman, with much apparent complacency deposited carefully in his pocket. Nature having infused no large amount of bashfulness into their composition there was no diffidence displayed on either side, nor were the parties in the least disconcerted by the laughs and jeers of the crowd of idlers that witnessed the novel spectacle.—*Nottsham Review.*

(The Bible seems much wanted in that part of England.