

THE MONKS OF MOUNT MELLERAY.

Written for the Register by W. H. Higgins.

(Continued from last issue.)

The brethren of the Community are very abstemious. They eat only two meagre meals a day, and spring water is the only drink. Bread and milk and vegetables form their diet—the use of flesh of animals being prohibited by the rules of the Order.

The Community at the time of my visit numbered 70 members—of whom about one-half were choir religious—28 of the latter being priests. The robe, black scapular and cowl are always worn—that of the choir religious being a robe of white wool, and that of the lay brothers, brown, of a coarser material. The wool used is from the shearing of their own flocks. Being a contemplative Order, perpetual silence is the rule of life. Guests are not permitted to address the brethren—except those who may be in attendance upon them for the time being. All the monks rise every week day morning at two o'clock, and on Sundays and holidays at one o'clock a.m. From the time of rising until four o'clock a.m., they remain chanting the divine offices of the Church, commencing with the office of the Blessed Virgin. From four until a quarter past five the priests say their Masses. At six, the Community assembles in chapter. There is then an interval of spiritual reading and studies up to 7.30 a.m., when the Community Mass is sung. Masses for the people, who assemble in numbers, are said at 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.30 in the secular church, and there is an additional mass on Sundays at 11.30. On Sundays the congregations are very large—the people attending from all directions within a radius of five miles.

All the brethren, without exception, engage in manual labor—the choir brothers for five hours, and the lay brothers for nine hours, each day. The principal officers are the abbot, prior, sub-prior, procurator, master of the novices, master of the lay brethren, and guest master. There were during my visit four novices on their novitiate. All retire to their dormitories at 8 o'clock in the summer and at 7 in the winter. The priests officiate at the daily community mass, each a week about in rotation.

The main abbey building is in form of a quadrangle—the sides of the square forming the church, the refectory, the chapter house and the guest house—with the cloisters of about 100 feet each in length between these—and the cemetery extending from the east end of the square. Passing along the gloomy cloisters, buried in profound silence, and meeting a solitary cowed monk, so lost in meditation that he appears utterly unconscious of your presence, one cannot help being overcome by the feelings of awe and deep reverence inspired—

"In those deep solitudes and solemn cells,
Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells."

The abbey church, on which there is a square tower, surmounted by a steeple 150 feet in height, displays great beauty of design and finish. There are besides the church proper of the community, the secular church, eight chapels and thirteen altars. The sacristy is necessarily quite a large and roomy apartment, fitted up in a very complete manner, and containing the altar furniture, vestments, etc., and the allotted places of each priest, arranged in order according to seniority. It also contains a plaster bust of St. Bernard, said to be an accurate likeness, and protected in a glass case.

The Abbot's chair, in the chapter house is of beautiful white oak, and his crozier, a remarkably well executed specimen of Irish bog oak. A spacious and well fitted up library is well stocked with books—most of them, as might be expected, on theological,

religious and historical subjects, but it is not deficient in works of literature and art. Attached is a bindery, where members of the community work at the trade of bookbinding, and have all necessary tools and conveniences for the purpose.

The great dormitory is on the second storey, and is reached by a broad stone stairway. It is of noble proportions—100 feet in length by thirty in breadth, and 20 feet in height. Ranged on each side are wooden boxes, 8x4 feet, containing the straw pallet and straw bolster, placed upon a hard narrow frame, and forming the sleeping compartment of each inmate. A single blanket suffices as covering. A crucifix is the only article that takes the place of furniture. The large apartment is well ventilated and lighted from the roof. The monks are good sanitarians, and particular attention appears to have been given to the proper plumbing and ventilation of their buildings. There is also a smaller dormitory (boarded off from the principal room) set apart for the occupation, as was whispered to me, of any "snorer," who was likely to disturb the other brethren in the short hours given to sleep. On the same flat are the single rooms of the priests, set apart for private study and devotions.

All the work of carpenters, tailors, painters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, plumbers, etc., is done by members of the community. For farming work they have to engage additional outside help, and so give a good deal of employment to the neighboring poor. The spacious enclosed yards are full of workshops, in which the monks are silently engaged in the various avocations just mentioned and other industrial pursuits. There are harness-makers, making and mending; blacksmiths forging, and shoeing horses; carpenters, using plane and axe, and hammering away, and bakers as busy as bees in supplying the staff of life. The bakery is a most complete workshop of the kind. It is fitted up with every convenience, the dough being worked by water power. The need for this will be recognized, when it is mentioned that 12 sacks of flour, each weighing 16 stone, or 224 lbs., are baked every week. A good deal of the bread is made into huge 16 lb. loaves of splendid quality that did one good to look at.

A turbine wheel, of 16-horse power, supplies the motive power—the shafting extending from bakery to dairy, where the large churn, like the dough-trough, is worked by water-power. The butter making is also all done by the brethren, and the quality first class. Everything is arranged with the strictest regard to cleanliness. Nowhere have I tasted sweeter butter than the tempting fresh pats so plentifully supplied on the guest table by the monks of Mount Melleray. All the washing, etc., is also done by members of the community. In the laundry there are placed two great cylindrical washing machines and a centrifugal wringer, all made on the premises and with the latest labor saving improvements, driven by water power. From a huge boiler hot water is conveyed through pipes where desired. Turf and coal are used for firing, and wood also on occasions. Beyond these workshops are the granary and outbuildings, containing threshing machine, winnowing machine, and corn-grinder or mill, all with the latest improvements, and driven by water power. Poultry houses extend further on along the farm yard, and a plentiful supply of new laid eggs is always on hand. There are also long rows of sheds, and tool houses, for the safekeeping and preservation of the farm implements, and extensive stabling, carriage houses, cow houses, etc., etc.; and a modern bone crushing machine was also to be seen in the farm yard. In fact the brethren avail themselves of all new improvements in machinery

and mechanical appliance in prosecuting their varied labours.

The cemetery, already mentioned, is about the fifth of an acre in extent. In a period of upwards of fifty years 80 interments therein had taken place, averaging about 1½ per cent. per annum. The members of the Order at death are buried in their religious habit and without coffin or shroud. A small metallic cross marks each grave, with the name and grade of the religious and date of death. A small plain tomb of marble slabs, raised some four feet in height, and measuring 8 x 4 feet, has been erected in the centre of the plot to the memory of the founder of the abbey, Abbot Ryan. He died December 9, 1815, at the age of 57 years, and was succeeded by Abbot Fitzpatrick, who was ruling during my stay, and the first mitred abbot in Ireland since the "Reformation." This was the Father Abbot who during the terrible famine of 1847-8 fed daily over 400 of the starving poor, and "sold everything they had in the house," as some of the older brothers remember even to the organ—to buy food for the famine-stricken people.

The House has entirely independent jurisdiction and its own seal—a mitre and keys with quarterings representing a beehive and the signs of Faith and Hope, surrounded by the legend:—*Ingenitas animas, augusto in corpora versant.*

Of the 700 acres of mountain and bog, of which they originally became possessed, there were, at the time of my visit, about 100 acres under tillage, 140 acres in pasture, in valuable plantations over 100 acres, and the remainder in steady course of reclamation. The community had 12 working horses, 45 milch cows, 20 fat cattle, and an increase of 38 head of young cattle. They had also just secured a fine shorthorn bull, and were getting into the more profitable breed of Durham cattle. They had also some 100 sheep. None of the cattle or sheep are sold. The hides and fleeces are manufactured into leather and cloth, and are made up for use by the tradesmen of the community. To supply food for the 120 or 130 students, and for the never-ceasing stream of guests, and feed 150 poor people who daily assemble at the almshouse, all the meat is required at monastery, and also the contents of a well-stocked vegetable garden of several acres.

Attached to the monastery is an ecclesiastical seminary, where 130 boys were being educated—principally for foreign missions. The students pay a "pension" of £130 a year each for board and instruction. There is also attached a poor free school, in which elementary instruction is given the children of the poor. Employment is given to a large number of outside laborers—the monks making it a point to give work to as many as possible outside the community. The produce of the farm was about sufficient to supply the wants of the abbey. But over and above what they were able to raise by the hardest toil, they were compelled to buy a good deal of hay and provender, I was informed.

But not alone are travellers and tourists attracted to visit the famous monastery—and ecclesiastics and Catholic laymen to make their retreat—the register kept shows the names of the highest dignitaries of the Church, of the highest officers of State, both at home and abroad, and of some of the most distinguished names in literature, science and art as visitors at the abbey. No one who goes there for a short rest can fail to be benefitted by the pure mountain air, and calm, peaceful repose of the surroundings. To the Catholic, desirous of acting up to the practices of his faith and of approaching the holy sacraments of the Church, Mount Melleray affords a foretaste of unalloyed happiness, to be

enjoyed nowhere else of which I have had any experience.

The prospect from the mountain top is as glorious as ever eye rested upon, and looking still upward, heavenward, as it were, towards the emblem of salvation surmounting the sacred pile, "For the Cross o'er the moss of the pointed summit stood"—one feels a throbbing pride at the glorious vision, mingled with the hope and prayer that this "refuge of sinners" may stand forever, imparting joy and benediction to all who find shelter within its hospitable walls.

Oddities of Etiquette.

In Holland a lady is expected to retire precipitately if she should enter a store or a restaurant where men are congregated. She waits until they have transacted their business and have departed, says the *Philadelphia Times*. Ladies seldom rise in Spain to receive a male visitor, and they rarely accompany him to the door. For a Spaniard to give a lady—even his wife—his arm when out walking is looked upon as a decided violation of propriety.

No Turk will enter a sitting room with dirty shoes. The upper classes wear tight-fitting shoes, with goloshes over them. The latter, which receive all the dirt and dust, are left outside the door. The Turk never washes in dirty water. Water is poured over his hands, so that when polluted it runs away.

In Syria the people never take off their hats or turbans when entering the house or visiting a friend, but they always leave their shoes at the door. There are no mats or scrapers outside, and the floors inside are covered with expensive rugs, kept very clean in Moslem houses, and used to kneel upon while saying prayers.

In Persia, among the aristocracy, a visitor sends a notice an hour or two before calling, and gives a day's notice if the visit is one of great importance. He is met by servants before he reaches the house, and other considerations are shown him, according to relative rank. The left and not the right is considered the position of honor.

In Sweden, if you address the poorest person on the street, you must lift your hat. The same courtesy is insisted upon if you pass a lady on the stairway. To enter a reading room or a bank with one's hat on is impolite.

A WONDERFUL CURE.—Mr. David Smith, Coo Hill, Ont., writes: "For the benefit of others I wish to say a few words about Northrop & Lyman's VEGETABLE DISCOVERY. About a year ago I took a very severe cough, had a virulent sore on my lips, was bad with dyspnoea, constipation and general debility. I tried almost every conceivable remedy, outwardly and inwardly, to cure the sore but all to no purpose. I had often thought of trying Northrop & Lyman's VEGETABLE DISCOVERY, so I got a bottle and when I had used about one half the sore showed evident signs of healing. By the time that bottle was done it had about disappeared and my general health was improving fast. I was always of a very bilious habit and had used quinine and lemon juice with very little effect. But since using 3 bottles of the VEGETABLE DISCOVERY the biliousness is entirely gone and my general health is excellent. I am 60 years old. Parties using it should continue it for some time after they think they are cured. It is by far the best health restorer I know."

Agents Wanted

To canvass for THE CATHOLIC REGISTER. A liberal commission allowed. Write for particulars.

Sir Charles Russell (now Lord Russell) tells with great gusto the following story, which illustrates the inborn knack among Irishmen of turning compliments. Sir Charles, who is, as the world knows, an Irishman himself, says, "An Irish girl was taking a walk with a young friend of similar nationality and a son of Sir Charles, one on each of her. They were talking of some popular English beauty, and the girl made some disparaging remarks about her countrymen, saying that beauty had died out in Ireland since that English Conquest. I don't think," said the young friend, "it has died out altogether. I fancy I have seen beauty in this country fully equal to any you can find across the Channel; but that, Frank," he added, "is between you and me."