

IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

Something New and Interesting on a Time-Worn Topic.

Under the title of "Business Features of the Middle Ages" Rev. Reuben Parsons, D. D., contributes to the Age Maria an interesting and instructive article. The revelations which he cites will open the eyes of many whose ideas of the condition and habits of the people of the middle ages are derived wholly from non-Catholic sources. Dr. Parsons writes: "The average merchant of our day will tell you, of course, that his account book must necessarily deal with nothing but dollars and cents; that in his business minds and hearts have no place; and that only a madman would expect the records of his office to furnish material for a treatise on social or religious economy. Very different from this theory was that entertained by the average business man of the ages of faith. Then hardness of heart did not cause a mercantile register to present a record merely of monetary transactions—of things which are of no use to the philosophy of history. Of course in medieval days, as in our own, the merchant noted accurately each expenditure and each sale; but then time was found, or made, for such an explanation of each transaction as renders it, when examined by the modern investigator, an interesting and reliable source of history."

Under the auspices of the Historical Society of Gascony there was published, in 1890, a ledger of a mercantile establishment which flourished in the fourteenth century at Montauban. The book had been unearthed in the archives of Montauban by M. Edouard Forestie; and, when read with the aid of the introduction furnished by its discoverer, it

SHEDS MUCH LIGHT upon the social and economic conditions of the middle ages. We learn from this book of accounts that the Bonis Brothers were general merchants in Montauban. They were bankers, both of deposit and of issue; money lenders; collectors of taxes and of ecclesiastical revenues; executors of wills; dealers in all kinds of dry goods, made clothing, and shoes; jewellers, armorers and mechanicians; manufacturers and loaners of all things requisite for baptisms, weddings and funerals; manufacturers of gun powder and of all kinds of chemicals; wholesale and retail apothecaries, confectioners, etc.

We are told that the two members of the firm lived in apartments over the immense halls in which the goods were retained; that the younger brother, Gerard, was married and had several children, who were educated at home by a master of arts, that during "the year of mortality"—that is, 1349, the year of the great plague—two of these children died; and that in the following year, Pope Clement VI. having proclaimed a jubilee, the bereaved parent journeyed to the Eternal City that he might obtain, as the book-keeper piously notes, rest for the departed and grace for himself. The clerk describes carefully the itinerary of his master: "He who wishes to visit SS Peter and Paul, St. John of the Lateran and the other saints in ancient Rome, should proceed from here (Montauban) to Avignon. He will dine at Avignon. At night he will sleep at Carpentras. On the next day he will dine at Sault, and then he will sleep at Sederon. On the twenty-third day he will dine most joyously in ancient Rome. During this year 1350 our Lord the Pope grants pardon from guilt and punishment to all repentant persons who have confessed their sins. This present Pope is a native of Avignon." Since the clerk informs us how careful M. Gerard Bonis was in complying with the conditions of the "pardon," we are not surprised on hearing that in the house of the great merchants there is a resident chaplain, whose chief duty it is to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the living and dead of the house of Bonis.

ONE OF THE STRIKING FEATURES of this medieval ledger is its presentation of evidence that the Bonis Brothers never charged interest to their debtors. It is undoubtedly true that many merchants in the middle ages were less disinterested; but a very small minority—and that minority composed almost entirely of Jews—were guilty of what was then regarded as a nefarious practice, since the ecclesiastical canons of that period prohibited it. Another important fact evinced by this book is not merely comfortable, but the luxurious conditions enjoyed by most of the customers of the Bonis. The list of purchases shows that during the fourteenth century not only were garments of very fine texture worn by the lower middle classes of the French, but that even the peasants were not unaffected by the tyranny of fashion. Much of the time and energy of the Bonis was consumed in the manufacture of medicines, and the ledger gives valuable information concerning the ingredients of many of the popular nostrums of the day. We learn that in the little city of Montauban—then of about ten thousand souls—there were eighteen regular physicians; in the suburban parish of Montreux the pastor was the acting Esculapius, and in some places one individual was both lawyer and physician. One of the curious items is a charge for a quantity of powder for cannon—*polveros per to cano*—entered against the monastery of St. Theodard.

As to the peasants, their condition as evinced by this quaint, but reliable

authority, is very different from that described as theirs by most modern historians. We find many of these presumed unfortunates stamping their documents with their own seals—things which are supposed to be prerogatives of aristocracy; we learn that their garments were lined with fur, and that they

LIVED IN BRICK HOUSES rather than in the loathsome huts in which we are accustomed to picture them. Every farm laborer had his wages and other recompenses assured by written contract.

Many of the laborers mentioned in this ledger had quite comfortable properties. Thus the swineherd, Jean Chausse Noire, owned a fine vineyard. Salons, an ox driver for the Bonis, owned two houses in Montauban; and his wealth must have been considerable, since the ledger notes that on the baptism of one of his children he bought two hundred and twenty livres worth of wine for the feast. Another peasant, owner of an extensive vineyard, must have dwelt in a fairly large house; for we read that he bought twenty thousand bricks from the Bonis for the facing of his walls. One of the servants of Gerard Bonis was a rival of that steward whom Chaucer represents as so thrifty that he could lend to his master "out of his own gude;" for we find that this domestic loaned three golden scudi to Gerard during his Roman pilgrimage. Those who believe that the peasants of the Middle Ages were generally illiterate should observe that in the register of the Bonis many of the laborers signed receipts, and the same book tells us that each village of the neighborhood had a school in which the parish priest was pedagogue.

Commenting on the discovery of M. Forestie, that sage and impartial critic, Lecoy de la Marche, makes these reflections: "The general prosperity of which we have seen the proof, and which the people of France owed to the wise and firm government of St. Louis, was soon to disappear amid the incalculable disasters of the hundred years' war; and the second half of the fourteenth century was not at all like the first. But the hundred years' war was at the end of the middle age, the tearing up of the pacific charter which united the nations and constituted Christian society. The middle age, properly so called, was

A FLOURISHING PERIOD for commerce and agriculture, and for both public and private fortune. Let it be loudly proclaimed that down to the end of that period—down to the day when the peace of Jesus Christ ceased to cover Europe like a protecting mantle—the world knew much more of happiness than it has known since, and incomparably more than it will know under the sway of atheism and socialism. God treats faithful individuals as He treats faithful individuals: 'All these things shall be added unto you.'

In the national archives of France there is preserved a register of the accounts of the mines of Jacques Cour in the Lyonnais and the Beaujolais, dated 1455. This document, given to the light in 1890, shows the condition of the miners at the time when, according to most modern publicists, there was no ordinary comfort for the workingman. According to this register, the mines were in the charge of a "governor"; but the decisions of that official were subject, on the appeal of the miners, to the judgment of a representative of the King, who was specially charged with the preservation of their privileges. The rules of the mines were most stringent in regard to blasphemy and all matters of immorality. The workmen were paid, for little more than half a year's labor, from 200 to 2000 francs, according to their skill and consequent position; and when we reflect on the cheapness of living at that time, and on the fact that the miners were fed, clothed, lodged and doctored by the establishment, we shall realize that they must have saved sufficient to insure for themselves a comfortable old age. This conclusion is well founded; for they were never allowed, unless in cases of real necessity, to draw their wages in advance.

THE FOOD OF THESE WORKMEN was abundant and of the best quality—consisting of beef, mutton, pork, fish, eggs, bread, cheese, spices, nuts and all kinds of fruit. They had as much white and red wine as they desired. They slept in dormitories near to the kitchens of the establishments, so that in cold weather the immense sleeping rooms might be heated by hot air carried by pipes from the kitchen fires. A modern miner, especially an English one, would wonder at a description of the resting place of these laborers. Each one had his own couch, and on it was a mattress, a feather bed, linen sheets, two blankets, a coverlet and a pillow. The suburban tasks of these medieval miners did not last from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31; many of them were owners of farms and at sowing time and harvest tide they left their ovels of the earth to attend to their crops.

Certainly the picture conjured by these two registers can not be acceptable to those who would fain believe that our medieval and Catholic ancestors enjoyed neither comfort nor common sense; that the lot of the modern working man is immeasurably superior to the apologetic for an existence which a Catholic society is presumed to have conveyed for the medieval laborer. But it conveys some valuable lessons for us who live in a time of charlatanical political and social economy.

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PROTESTANTISM AND PLUTO-CRACY.

A Glimpse of the Happy Olden days when Catholicity Reigned in "Merry England."

In the latter part of the Middle Ages England was one of the happiest countries in all Europe and was known throughout the world as "Merry England."

This result was secured by the circumstances that its laws were based in a peculiar degree upon the enlightened, humane and generous canons of the Catholic Church, and that religious houses, those "treasure houses of the poor," those perpetual centres of hospitality, learning, benevolence and true religion, were more numerous there than in any other land.

Prof. Thorold Rogers, who, though a Protestant, is recognized as one of the very foremost authorities on the economic history of England, said, in lectures delivered at Oxford in 1887-8 (quoted in the appendix to Cobbett's "History of the Reformation"), that in the latter part of the fifteenth century the earnings of laborers, interpreted by their purchasing power, were greater than at any other period in English history. During the whole period between 1350 and 1500, he said, "English laborers were thriving under their guilds and trades unions, the peasants gradually acquiring land and becoming the numerous small freeholders of the first half of the sixteenth century, the artisans the masters in their craft, contractors in the same period for considerable works, planning the solid and handsome structures in what is known as the Perpendicular style, and withal working with their own hands in building the buildings which their shrewdness and experience had planned." At that time "there were

NONE OF THOSE EXTREMES OF POVERTY AND WEALTH which have excited the astonishment of philanthropists and are now exciting the indignation of workmen. . . . Of poverty which perished unaided, of a willingness to do honest work and a lack of opportunity, there was little or nothing known. The essence of life in England during the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors was that every one knew his neighbor, and that every one was his brother's keeper. In the life of the peasant there was 'more hope . . . and perhaps more variety, than there is in the peasant's lot in our time.'

Lord Chief Justice Fortescue, who lived in the fifteenth century, wrote while in exile in France a work entitled "De Laudibus Legum Anglie." "Praise to the Laws of England," in which he asserted without subsequent contradiction that in England "every inhabitant is at liberty fully to use and enjoy whatever his land produces, the fruits of the earth, the increase of his flock, and the like; all the improvements he makes, whether by his own proper industry or of those he retains in his service, are his own to use and to enjoy, without the let, interruption or denial of any. If he be in any wise injured or opposed he has his remedy and satisfaction against the party offending."

"Hence it is that the inhabitants are rich in gold, silver, in all the necessities and conveniences of life. They drink no water, unless at certain times upon a religious score by way of doing penance. They are fed in great abundance with all sorts of flesh and fish, of which they have plenty everywhere; they are clothed throughout in good woollens; their bedding and other furniture in their houses is of wool, and that in great store."

"They are also well provided with all other sorts of household goods and necessary implements for husbandry. Every one according to his rank hath all things which conduce 'TO MAKE LIFE EASY AND HAPPY.' In the year 1380 men were sometimes punished by 'being compelled to fast a fortnight on bread and beer.' An Act of Parliament speaks of beef, pork, mutton and veal as 'being the food of the poorer sort' (see Cobbett, p. 391).

At the present day there is in England an immense pauper class, and when Cobbett wrote—before the Catholic Revival—the "poorer sort" not only had no meat, but were glad to get even potatoes and water. Not only were the masses of the people better off individually in the Middle Ages than they are at present, but the population of the country was larger, and the collective wealth of the nation was greater, as is shown by Cobbett, pp. 374-382.

This state of affairs was the direct result of the great number of religious houses, which was no less than one to every thirty square miles throughout the kingdom. These, as Cobbett says (pp. 109, 110), "were founded in great political wisdom as well as in real piety and charity." "They were great diffusers of general prosperity, happiness and content; and one of their natural and necessary effects was to prevent that state of things which sees but two classes in the community, masters and slaves, a very few enjoying the extreme of luxury and millions doomed to the extreme of misery." It was on the monastery lands that the

FREE YEOMANRY OF ENGLAND grew up; with the destruction of the monasteries that noble class, the very bone and sinew of the nation, disappeared, being reduced to the condition of rackrenters and dependants. The secret of the beneficent results of the ownership of great landed estates by the religious houses was in such facts as these.

What the monastic landlords received from the land they returned to

the land; while the lay landlords spent it on their families and dissipated it at courts, in foreign travel, and in various extravagances. The monks were "easy landlords," "as all historians, however Protestant or malignant, agree," letting their land at low rents and on long leases. The monastery, says Cobbett (pp. 112, 113), "was a proprietor that never died; its tenants had to do with a deathless landlord; its lands and houses never changed owners, and its tenants were liable to none of the uncertainties that other tenants were; its oaks had never to tremble at the ax of the squandering heir; its manor had not to dread a change of lords; its villagers had all been born and brought up under its eye and care; their character was of necessity a thing of great value, and, as such, would naturally be an object of great attention. A monastery was the center of a circle in the country, naturally drawing to it all that were in need of relief, advice and protection, and containing a body of men or of women having no cares of their own and having wisdom to guide the inexperienced and wealth to relieve the distressed." The monasteries also PROVIDED CONGENIAL HOMES to the younger sons and daughters of the aristocracy, who since the Protestant times have been largely supported by Government sinecures and pensions, and produce whole families of idlers, whose support falls upon the people at large, as does that of our own home-made plutocrats.

The monasteries thus made the nobles less dependent upon the crown, and therefore less subservient to the royal will; and they made the people less dependent upon the nobles and set an example which the lay landlords were obliged, to some extent at least, to follow. They furnished education, entertainment, attendance in sickness, care in old age, relief in poverty, assistance in trouble, and performed a thousand other important social functions, not only without cost to the individual recipients of their benefits, but without cost to the Government or the community at large.

While the religious houses were the direct cause of the prosperity of Medieval England, the prosperity was also greatly promoted by the absence of the

TERRIBLE FINANCIAL BURDENS which crushed down the people of modern times.

These burdens consist partly in the enormously increased Government taxation, made necessary by the existence of a national debt, a standing army, the vast pension list, and other political novelties; and partly in the existence of a horde of money changers, brokers, and other middlemen, who, in the last resort, have to be supported by the tillers of the soil and the handicraftsmen. Now the same influence that suppressed the monasteries created the onerous taxation, the standing armies, the national debts, the banish the pensionists, and the other devices by which the people of the whole world are being gradually reduced to a state of contemptible and hopeless servitude—namely, the influence of Protestantism; not of theological Protestantism, perhaps, but of historic Protestantism, Protestantism considered as a social and economic institution. Cobbett's "History of the Reformation," reviewed on p. 4 of this paper, shows that these were the direct results of the "No Popery" sentiment; but the "No Popery" sentiment itself had been manufactured, and Protestantism itself had been adopted, solely for the purpose of perpetuating the reign of oppression and fraud which had been begun by Henry VIII.

On subsequent occasions we hope to outline for our readers the history of that movement which on its religious side is Protestantism and on its political side Plutocracy, and demonstrate that it has been at every stage absolutely inimical to political liberty, to popular rights and especially, to the happiness and material welfare of the poor.—Church Progress.

October Fancies.

What a pleasure to roam through the woods where nature speaks to heart and mind the wondrous works of God! How beautiful is all nature now! The foliage so rich and varied, the swaying of the trees, the rustling of the leaves, the gentle falling of the fir cones, the gurgling of the brook, the melody of the birds,—all these are as voices of nature singing the praises of the great Creator and reminding us of our duty to Him. How true the poet's thought that pictured the woods as God's temples, in which stately trees stand as columns of a mighty nave, and birds and leaves act as sweet choristers chanting a never-ending anthem of thanksgiving and praise to the great King! Man never realizes the full beauty of creation until he has dwelt in the woods and listened to their myriad voices that make the harmony of nature. How complete the chant, when man adds his voice of intelligence and offers all that he sees and hears to the good God who has made all these beauties for man that man through them may be lifted up to heavenly thoughts and thus learn to praise the God from whose bounty all things come! If God so clothed the woods and gave life to all, how much more must He love mankind, to whom He has given not merely life, but intelligence and love and immortality! Let our walk through the woods teach us to love God better and serve Him more faithfully, see God everywhere, hear His voice in the voice of creation, and obey Him as all nature does. Thus will our October fancies bring us

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closer to the good Lord, who craves our service and our love.—Rev. T. J. Conaty in Catholic School and Home Magazine.

FATHER JOGUES.

Sunday, October 18, will be the two hundredth anniversary of the death of Isaac Jogues, of the Society of Jesus. It will be celebrated at the shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs, Auriesville, Montgomery County, New York, known in American missionary annals as the "Mission of the Martyrs" for its soil has been hallowed by the virtue and sacrifice of many heroic men and women of the French and Indian races.

Father Jogues was born at Orleans, in France, January 10, 1607. He became a Jesuit, and was sent to Canada to labor among the Indians. His first missionary experience was among the Hurons. Returning from Quebec, where he had been sent to bring back the annual supplies of the mission, he was taken captive. His tortures at the hands of his captors were something incredible. After eight days they met a band of warriors. Indian customs required all prisoners to pass between a double row of executioners armed with clubs. After innumerable indignities, on the eve of the Assumption they reached Ossernenon, now Auriesville. In August, 1643, Father Jogues, aided by the Dutch Governor of Rensselaerwyck, attempted an escape, but desisted from his attempt upon learning that his escape would endanger the lives of the other prisoners. But in the middle of October of that year he succeeded in getting away. While passing through New Amsterdam he met an Irishman, who profited by the occasion to go to confession. Thus the Father was probably the first priest to exercise his priestly mission on the Island of Manhattan.

After his return to America from France he again fell into the hands of his cruel captors, and was sent back to Auriesville, where, after savagely beating his flesh was torn from his arms and shoulders and devoured before his eyes by a wretch, who called out: "Let us see if this white flesh is the flesh of a Manitou (God)?" "No," replied the victim; "I am only a man, like you." After a general council at Tionnongueten it was decided to free the prisoners, but when the delegates brought the news to Ossernenon it was too late. On a pole of the palisade hung the bleeding head of Father Jogues, who had been treacherously struck with a tomahawk and then beheaded.

Romeward.

The Romeward tendency of Ritualism is still developing in this city, and the High-Church people of Philadelphia are to have a religious order. It is to be modeled after that of the Holy Cross in New York and the "Cowley Fathers" in England. The subject has for some time been freely discussed among Ritualists hereabouts, and is now said to have taken shape, quite a number of men having signed their intention to join the order, membership in which will entail the taking of the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and the wearing of a habit. We are, of course, pleased to note such a movement, as, initiation being the best form of flattery, it is a tribute to the Catholic Church. But it is even more. It is a repudiation of old-fashioned Protestantism, and a practical step towards the reunion of Christendom, for this order will be a stepping stone to the Catholic Church.—Standard and Times.

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Life's Road Hoping and tending and Matway twist laughter and Day after day we are wear A wearisome chaplet of y So with each day's little We add to our chaplet of A joyful or sorrowful m A decade of smiles or of God grant that when life Of evil and good deeds is We may join in the day With the angels and saint Decades of Joy—when With hearts that are ste Our Saviour to honor, our To cherish and comfort Decades of Sorrow—when For honors or power or p With hearts that are mar We labor untrusting for sel —Re—

FIVE-MINUTE Twenty-First Sunday FORGIVENESS AND I Sometimes it seems that one of the most acquire, and one o practice, is that virtu Gospel of to day—the injuries. And yet which we, as Chri strictly bound. W whatever in the mat live in the grace of acquire merit, if we souls, if we would g lass—we must forgiv us. Our Blessed Lo the plainest possibl you forgive me the says, "your Heaven forgive you your off will not forgive me. Father forgive y "Judge not, and judged; condemn shall be forgiven."

Can words be clea point than these? bound to forgive o forgiveness is dep doing so. We can without doing the of this imperative which directly han here and hereafter, are the instances v our notice of rever and unforgiving h bly common are di strife and feuds i quarrels among frie averted eyes amon in the same chur among those (God them!) who kneel to altar, and receive demnation the Bo Christ!

We must look at my brethren. We fully and freely i given ourselves, forgiveness and th forgiveness which God, we must exte offened us.

How often we h expression used (a the most sanctimon eous air imaginable; but I can't forget," wicked nonsense! thing as saying th given, and do not If a real Christlike filled your hearts room for any reme jury—which mos fanced injury alloe slights and wro standings means nursing and oddl ing them, talking t head about them, about them, you find how extremel nificant they will l and if you are re you must stop thi Suppose God said give you, of cour promised; but I c wicked conduct. for your sins, an obliged to admit y I shall remember th for all eternity." mous, almost, to m tion; but that is p of you say to yo offended you; an your just deserts t ought to say to yo How do you ask? It is not an absol quest: there is a dition attached: trespasses," you s we forgive those u us." You ask Go you forgive you in no other way. forgive your fello you ask God to fo ghastly mockery becomes under these! But Almi ceived. Be sure o the same measure ure it shall be me

What things those also shall be So then let the ing's Gospel be from a heavy de servant who owe trifle. "And his delivered him to the should pay all the my Heavenly Fath forgive not every your hearts."