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Origin of the Crib.

A VISIT TO THE FRANCISCAN FRIARY AT OLTON, ENGLAND.

On Christmas Eve seven years ago a writer in the London Weekly Register, as we pressed our way up the long road which leads towards the newly established Friary at Olton, all was dark save for a few brilliant stars, which now and then shed their feeble light from behind the heavy driving clouds which had all day obscured our Birmingham atmosphere. We had arrived so soon. As yet there was no sign of life in the Friary; there it slept amidst the darkness of night in its silvery mantle of frost which the last two days had woven round it; and as we passed up and down the avenue beneath the trees our thoughts went back to that far off mediæval Christmas when S. Francis was celebrating, in his peculiar way, the birth of our Lord. It may not be generally known that the idea of first representing the birth of Christ originated with S. Francis of Assisi. According to French writers, the thought occurred to him towards the close of the year 1223 as he was staying in Rome. The Sovereign Pontiff most willingly gave his consent and warm approval to the project when submitted to him by St. Francis. He then went to a friend of his, the Cavaliere Giovanni Velita, of Greccio, whom he begged to procure all things necessary to carry out his idea. On Christmas Eve Francis set out for Greccio: his friend Velita had followed out his instructions to the letter. A crude hut had been erected, in it stood an altar; there was a manger, an ox and an ass, everything, in fact, to reproduce to the life the stable of Bethlehem. Towards midnight Francis and his friar friends wended their way to the wood. A large troop of peasants and mountaineers accompanied them, some with lighted torches, others with their shepherd pipes and lutes. It was a fair sight to see the lights gleaming through the forest trees, and to hear the rustic music of the shepherds and those charming Umbrian Christmas carols repeated by the mountain echoes. As to Francis himself, he was quite overwhelmed with joy, and could not refrain from shedding tears on arriving at the spot where preparations had been made.

To-night we were come to witness in a manner the re-enactment of the scene, not, as a supercilious world so often thinks, in the vain show of empty ceremony, but by hearts filled with the reality of the great event they were striving to commemorate. But our thoughts are suddenly arrested, for the Friary, which a few minutes before had been wrapped in silence and gloom, is now usually brilliant, and the sound of many voices, accompanied by stringed instruments and flutes, falls in a kind of muffled solemnity upon our ears. The porter has been told to expect us, and in a few minutes we are standing in the cloister, which dazzles our eyes with its seemingly endless rows of light. The voices are heard still chanting in the interior of the convent; and the porter explains to us that to-night each member of the Community is being separately called, on appearing at his door is incensed, and receives a lighted torch, and then takes his place in the procession. All the members of the Community have at length taken their places in the procession; nearer and nearer the voices are coming, and now the friars are wending their way through the cloister. First come the musicians, playing on their instruments in commemoration of those shepherd minstrels who accompanied Francis; then followed the brown-robed Community, each member of which bears in his hand a lighted torch, chanting a mediæval Franciscan carol. But now that chant ceases. The friars have all knelt down in two long rows before the Superior's door; acolytes and thurifer are standing before it, and the Friar-Vicar, with three loud raps, opens it, saying: "I bring you tidings of great joy; Christ the Lord is born to us." The Superior answers, "Deo Gratias." He is incensed, blesses his Community, which immediately rises, and then breaks forth in a jubilant chorus of voices and instruments into the soul stirring anthem of the "Adeste fideles." By the time this was finished they had reached their oratory, where the solemn Office of Matins was intoned by the Superior. Having vested himself in alb, stole and cope, he proceeded to the middle of the choir, accompanied by his Deacon and Subdeacon in their albs and dalmatics and sang the *Homilies* according to the Gregorian notation. This finished, he received the figure of the Infant Jesus from the hands of the Deacon, and having reverently kissed it took it in his arms. The procession of the friars then again reformed, and chanting the "Te Deum" proceeded to the public chapel, where a "Crib" had been erected; there he kneels, and again reverently kissing the figure of the Infant Saviour, hands it to the deacon, who deposits it in the "Crib." He then rose, incensed the grotto, chanted a prayer, and then knelt down with his community for a few minutes in silent prayer. There before our eyes was the representation the friars had made of the event which happened in Bethlehem. The Christian imagination and heart love to linger with fond reverence over that cave.

There it was before our eyes in all its rudeness and cold ruggedness, the traditional cave gleaming through the rocky heights, the frost, and snow, all so well according with the outside world to-night. It must have been a night such as this when the streaming glory of the Lord manifested to the wondering ears of the shepherds an angel who announced to them the birth of our Saviour in the stable. We know little of what happened in that cave save that the Virgin Mother brought forth her first-born Jesus and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; and this is the simple tale the rocky grotto in the Olton Friary tells with such vividness. It was now midnight, for the friars had risen an hour before their usual time, and the solemn tolling of the bell announced that High Mass was beginning. The Superior, having divested himself of his cope, assumed a chasuble, and accompanied by his deacon and subdeacon, now proceeded to celebrate that sacred rite. The students and Fathers of the Community formed the choir, which rendered in a very impressive style the various parts of the Mass. Mass over, the Superior then intoned the Lauds, and we left the Community thus celebrating their Christmas festival. As we passed into the solemn gloom of the night we felt the reality of all the ceremonies at which we had been assisting. The chasm of that Christmas eve we shall never forget. Here, within a few miles of us was Birmingham busy with the life of the world, all its energies centred on the thoughts of the present day. Does it ever look back upon old world customs? If so, it is but to regard them as so much mummery, which has long since been consigned to its fitting grave—oblivion—and yet here in our very midst the ages of the twelfth century are again living. Its life is throbbing in each of those breasts as with firm and manly tread, joy beaming from every face, the Friars pass by. They are not numerous: present day life is so much a reality to them as to an man in this nineteenth century. To-morrow, as you will listen to them as they fill many of our Midland pulpits, you will hear them preach our nineteenth century creed. What they are doing is a part of the reality of life, which an age with its groveling utilitarian ideas has done its best to banish, and by which it has undoubtedly made our life poorer. He who would understand life cannot afford to dispense with its poetry; what Mr. Ruskin and others are endeavoring to revive by their "Festival of the Bees," and such like things, these friars have always known the virtue of and have ever striven to preserve. But it always is; the world of ideas comes and goes; customs and habits chase each other through our midst in a very death struggle for predominance; but that which is true must remain.

The world must take lessons from men such as these in the true nature of life. Though they know how to adapt themselves to the exigencies of the age, they change not in any of the essentials of their life. The world has wandered away from much that their lives might teach us; but if it would truly learn the lesson of Christmas it must unlearn much of its sordidness and utilitarianism, and take a lesson from these men, a chapter of whose life lay open to our eyes on Christmas Eve.

The Early English Church.

REV. J. S. VAUGHAN ON MASS IN THOSE DAYS.

On Sunday, November 13, at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Camberwell New road, London, the Rev. J. S. Vaughan preached on the above subject. From the dawn of Christianity in England, he said, the Mass was the central object of devotion. In those days, as in these, the Roman tongue was the language of the Church and of the liturgy. The churches contained altars such as we find in Catholic churches to-day, *i.e.*, of stone. The altar was spoken of by the Saxons as "the seat of the heavenly sacrifice." Another point which vividly illustrates the close ness of resemblance between the early Church of Britain and ourselves is the use of vestments. These were, Dr. Rock reminds us, "with very few and unimportant differences, the same both in number, shape, material, and ornament as those which, to the present day, the Catholic priesthood in England and throughout Christendom wear at the altar" (Rock, i, 314). All those external appeals to the senses, and all such pomp and ceremonial as were then as now connected with the Mass, showed that men believed a higher and greater act of Divine worship was being enacted than at other times, and this is distinctly intimated by the enactments of some of the so-called reformers. They had abolished belief in transubstantiation, and were afraid of some still clinging to this doctrine taught by the Catholic Church in all ages, and so Guest, writing to Sir William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's secretary, says: "for if we should use another garment (*i.e.*, priestly vestments, etc.) it should seem to teach us that higher and better things be given by it than by the other service, which we must not believe." Now, it is precisely because "higher and better things" are given in the Holy Mass that our forefathers, like ourselves surrounded this celebration with as much pomp and glory as was possible. Indeed, no pains were spared by our ancestors to do honor to the sacred mysteries celebrated in the Mass. That the Christmas inhabitants of Britain truly believed, from the earliest times, in the presence of Christ upon the altar is proved beyond all doubt. This faith is evinced by the manner in which they spoke of the sacrifice, by the expressions of the liturgy, by the extraordinary respect they were taught to show upon entering into a consecrated church, and by the most explicit teaching of their writers and teachers. We meet with such expressions of theirs as "the celestial and mysterious sacrifice," "the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ," "the renewal of the Passion and Death of the lamb." These were quite commonly applied by them to the adorable sacrifice of the Mass (*vide* Lingard, p. 290.) Venerable, our best known Anglo-Saxon chronicler, writes: "the elements of bread and wine are, through the ineffable hallowing of the spirit (*ineffabili spiritus sanctificatione*) made to pass into the mystery of Christ's flesh and blood" (quoted by Lingard, p. 290). Alcuin (A. D. 725) states that "the bread and wine are then consecrated into the substance of Christ's body and blood." Even the external pomp and ceremony which accompanied the celebration of the Mass in Saxon times is one with our own, and in striking opposition to Protestant practices. Lingard tells us that "on solemn feasts, the clergy in attendance were dressed in their richest apparel, the altar, with its furniture, presented a most gorgeous appearance; the sanctuary, or space within the chancel, was illuminated with a profusion of lamps and wax lights; the air was perfumed with clouds of incense; to the voices of a numerous choir was added the harmony of the organ, and of musical instruments, and no labor, no cost, no ingenuity was spared, to attest by outward magnificence the deep feelings of awe and devotion with which the Anglo Saxon Christians were taught to contemplate 'the celebration,' as S. Bede calls it 'of the most sacred mysteries.' Even we Catholics have much to learn from those who lived in England a thousand years ago of the love and tender devotion which are due to Our Lord in the Blessed sacrament. The reverend preacher went on to say that if the inhabitants of Catholic England were careful about the structure of their churches and beautified them with much pains, they were still more solicitous about the sanctuary, the altar, and the sacred vessels. The ladies of olden England, for example excelled in needlework and gold embroidery, and were never better pleased than when they were dedicating their skill to the service of the church. If we go to the museums, where ancient and rich specimens of needlework and embroidery are preserved, we shall find that the most exquisite consists of religious objects. In conclusion Father Vaughan urged his hearers not only to love their faith, but also to years to spread it; to make it known and loved by those who have it not; and day by day to pray fervently for the conversion of England.

The Ladies' Home Journal.

The social laws which govern girls at the theatre, opera and concert form the third of Mrs. Barton Harrison's excellent papers on "The Well-Bred Girl in Society," in the January *Ladies' Home Journal*, and Mr. William Dean Howells fitly supplements this article with his story of American girl-life, "The Coast of Bohemia," which gains much in brightness and spirited action as it proceeds. "How Dumas Wrote Camille" is told by Dumas himself through Lucy H. Hooper, and a splendid companion article is that by Mamie Dickens, in which she tells the complete story of "How My Father Wrote His Books." Two other articles that fit well together are Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren's exhaustive and clear-cut description of "Social Life in Washington," and Mrs. Burton Kingsland's succinct resume for the dangers of a Social Career." The first instalment of "Mr Beecher's Unprinted Words" is given, and will appeal strongly in its direct interest to all admirers of the great preacher. Edward Bok writes well and wisely on "The Literary Chances in New York." a sketch which Rath Ashmore supplements by giving an admirable idea of "Girl Life in New York City. A sketch and portrait of the wife of H. Rider Haggard is given by Ada Chester Bond, while Palmer Cox has his famous Brownies on a raft crossing the ocean on their trip around the world. A most beautifully illustrated poem by Flavel Scott Mines, called "The New Year Minuet," opens this number of the *Journal*, which has again a new cover of the Italian Renaissance style. All through the issue there is that brightness of entertainment and those evidences of careful editing which have made this magazine what it is, and brings to it each month an army of 700,000 readers. "One Dollar for one year" is the motto of the *Journal*, or rather of its publishers, The Curtis Publishing Company, of Philadelphia.

Language of the Umbrella.

An American, after lengthened study of the subject, gives the following definition of the language of the Umbrella: "To place one in a rack at a club indicates that it will shortly change owners; if a cotton one be substituted for a silk, it means that 'exchange is no robbery,' " writes Angela G. Byrne in the January *Ladies' Home Journal*. "A man getting all the raindrops from the point of the umbrella, which he holds over a lady, signifies courtship but when a man keeps the lion's share of the article, giving the lady the raindrops, it denotes marriage. To carry an umbrella under the arm at an angle implies that the individual following will lose an eye, while to hold it just high enough to injure passers' eyes and men's hats signifies 'I am a woman.' Lastly, the loss of an umbrella is synonymous with an act of egregious folly."

HAWKER'S BALSAM OF TOLU AND WILD CHERRY is the safest, surest and best known remedy for the cure of Coughs, Colds, Bronchitis and all Throat and Lung Troubles. The Children's Favorite. Sold by all Druggists and Dealers.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—Latest U. S. Gov't Report.

Royal Baking Powder
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Bridegroom Wasn't Nervous.

George Bailey, a well-to-do farmer living near Riverside, Pa., had been keeping company with Esther Bailey, his second cousin for seven years. Family doctors to marry, and the ceremony was to have been performed at the home of the bride's parents a week ago last Wednesday. A large numb r of guests were present, but the prospective bride suddenly disappeared, and was found locked in her room. To the frantic appeals of her parents to come out she had but one reply: "I'm not nervous! I'm not nervous! I'll have to be put out!" Nothing would avail with her, and the ceremony had to be postponed. The agitated bride from her locked room said she could be married on the following Monday, and the groom consented to the postponement. Monday came and the bride was ready at the appointed hour. But the bridegroom did not come. In his place came a message. He said: "I'm not nervous. On the contrary, I've got nerve enough to postpone this wedding indefinitely." The wedding adjourned sine die.

Local and Special News.

Minard's Liniment is the Best.

RICH PLUM PUDDING.—This delicious confection is nicely calculated to produce dyspepsia, heartburn, biliary troubles and headache. Burdock Blood Bitters is equally well calculated to cure these troubles and has proved its power in hundreds of cases. B. B. B. regulates and purifies the entire system.

Jas. McKee,
Linwood Ont.

There are seventy-two places called St. Etienne in France, and thirty towns called Washington in America.

K. D. C. restores the stomach to healthy action.

Minard's Liniment, Lumberman's Friend.

A Turkish proverb says: Do not consider the whiteness of the turban; the soap was perhaps obtained on credit.

A FAMILY FRIEND.—Sirs,—I have used Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry in my family for years and can highly recommend it for summer complaint, diarrhoea, cramps etc.

Mrs. Geo. West,
Huntsville, Ont.

Minard's Liniment for Rheumatism.

Indiana has more Germans than any other state. They constitute 35 per cent. of the population.

THE B. N. A. ACT.—The great British North America not nowadays is to buy a bottle of B. B. B. and cure yourself of dyspepsia, constipation, headach; liver complaint or bad blood, and it is an act that always attains the desired result.

Minard's Liniment is used by Physicians

Because there is an ice trust every year doesn't signify that your iceman will let you hang him up.

CHANGE IS WELCOME—Gentlemen,—For twenty years I suffered from Rheumatism, Dyspepsia, Poor Appetite, etc., and received no benefit from the many medicines I tried, but after taking two bottles of B. B. B. I can eat heartily of any food and am strong and smart. It is a grand medicine and has made a wonderful change in my health.

Mrs. W. H. Lee,
Harley, Ont.

A Berlin inventor has invented an instrument which measures the 1,000th part of a second.

CULLED FROM THE OLD YEAR.

Lewis S. Butler, Burin, N.S., Rheumatism.
Thos. Wasson, Sheffield, N.B. Lockjaw.
My. McMullin, Gratham, Ont. Goitre.
Mrs. W. W. Johnson, Walsh, Ont., Inflammation.
James H. Bailey, Parkdale, Ont., Neuralgia.
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In every case diagnosed and authenticated. They attest the merits of MINARD'S LINIMENT.

Are you troubled with sour stomach, nausea, nightmare? Take K. D. C. the King of Dyspepsia Cures. It is guaranteed to cure you.

The annual consumption of railroad ties in the United states is estimated at about 95,000,000.

Are you troubled with dizziness, constipation, flatulency? Take K. D. C. the King of Dyspepsia Cures. It is guaranteed to cure you.

"A snake in the grass" is all the more dangerous from being unsuspected. So any copy of the blood medicine offered the public. To avoid all chance, ask your druggist for Ayer's Sarsaparilla, and take no Ayer's Almanac, which is just out for the new year.

The father of Palestrina, the composer of sacred music, was a cook; some say a waiter.

When the brain is weak, the nerves nastrung, the stomach out of order, Use K. D. C. Free sample to any address. K. D. C. Co, New Glasgow, N. S.

Apples were worth from one shilling to two shillings each in the reign of Henry VII.

With many clergymen, public speakers, singers, and actors, Ayer's Cherry Pectoral is the worth remedy for hoarseness and all affections of the vocal organs, throat and lungs. Its analyses and experimental effects are promptly realized.