

JOHN RUSKIN.

A few weeks ago it was announced that John Ruskin had been offered the post of Poet Laureate. Several of our contemporaries expressed surprise and found it strange that a man who had never written verse should have been chosen to wear the Laureate's crown. The Boston Pilot was taken to task by a western journal for having stated that Ruskin had "never written any poetry." In support of the contention that the eminent art critic, whose old age is thus honored by the Government of England, has written poetry, the following lines from his pen are quoted:—

"Awake! awake! the stars are pale, the east is russet gray;
They fade, behold the phantoms fade, that kept the gates of Day;
Throw wide the burning valves, and let the golden streets be free.
The morning watch is past—the watch of evening shall not be.

Put off, put off your mail, ye kings, and eat your brands to dust:
A surer grasp your hands must know, your hearts a better trust;
Nay, bend aback the lances point, and break the helmet bar—
A noise is on the morning winds, but not the noise of war!

Among the grassy mountain paths the glittering troops increase:
They come! they come!—how fair their feet—
they come that publish peace!
Yea, Victory! fair Victory! our enemies' and ours,
And all the clouds are clasped in light, and all the earth with flowers.

Ah! still depressed and dim with dew, but yet a little while,
And radiant with the deathless rose the wilderness shall smile
And every tender living thing shall feed by streams of rest,
Nor lamb shall from the fold be lost, nor nursing from the nest.

For aye, the time of wrath is past, and near the time of rest,
And honor binds the brow of man, and faithfulness his breast—
Behold, the time of wrath is past, and righteousness shall be,
And the Wolf is dead in Arcady, and the Dragon in the sea!"

Some people imagine that to "write poetry," it is absolutely necessary to "write in verse." We remember having once heard a lad remark that there was no poetry in Milton's "Paradise Lost," because, as he said, "there is no jingle at the end of the lines." There is a saying that "one swallow don't make a summer;" no more does one piece of verse make a poet. Moreover, the bulk of the verses written in our day is most prosaic. However, that by no means affects the case of John Ruskin and the Laureate-ship.

Where we find that the editor of the Pilot's critic has missed the mark, is in saying: "Will he read the following from the pen of Ruskin and still persist that the new Poet Laureate 'has never written any poetry.'" The writer of this has not paused to distinguish between verse and poetry; had he done so he would have had a far more solid ground for criticising the editor of the Pilot. To say that Ruskin never wrote verse would not be surprising, even from the best read men of the day. The fact is the foregoing may be the only verses that Ruskin ever penned; and even had he written volumes of verse, he never published them, and the world does not know him as a maker of verses. But to say that he "has never written any poetry" is an entirely different and a very unjust statement.

No person can read Ruskin's wonderful works, his volumes of criticisms, his hundreds of pages upon the beauties and perfections of art, without recognizing at once the hand of a real poet. Read his "Stones of Venice" and in every chapter you will find subject-matter for a perfect lyric, all required is to change the words into verse. John Ruskin is a poet in the truest and highest acceptation of the term. He is a venerable poet and one whose head bends beneath the load of his labors in the cause of literature. He is old and his life sun has already descended almost to the horizon. He gave to English letters the fruits of his researches,

the results of his unceasing labor. It is a grateful and a gracious act to crown such an eminent man and distinguished writer with the laurel of the first poet in the realm. John Ruskin's wonderfully attractive works shall live when millions of so-called poems are in oblivion; his name shall survive, when those of many prosaic versifiers are forgotten. We can only express the hope that he may live many years and that his health will be sufficiently restored to enable him to enjoy the honor that has come to him in his old age.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

FIRST COMMUNION CEREMONIES.

An Eloquent Sermon Delivered by Rev. Father O'Brien, S. J., on Trinity Sunday.

A large audience assembled in the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, on Saturday, the 29th May, last, to witness the impressive ceremonies connected with the First Communion of the parish children. The Blessed Sacrament was received, for a first time, by the happy children at half past eight in the morning, and at two in the afternoon over one hundred were confirmed by His Grace the Archbishop. These events are amongst the brightest in the history of a parish; and great credit is due to the popular and beloved pastor, Rev. Father O'Donnell, as well as to his able assistant, Rev. Father Shea, for the manner in which the young people were prepared for the two most important events in their lives.

On the following day—Trinity Sunday—the feast was observed with the usual appropriate ceremonial. High Mass was celebrated by the parish priest, Rev. Father O'Donnell, and a most eloquent sermon, on the Gospel of the day, was preached by Rev. Father O'Brien, S. J.

The following is a synopsis of the sermon. We regret very much that space will not permit us to give the full text of that impressive address; but from these few extracts our readers may glean an idea of how ably the subject was treated by the eminent preacher. Thus spoke the Rev. Father:

In the words, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," we have expressed the mandate which Christ gave to His Church, to go into the whole world and proclaim the immaculate gospel which He himself had taught during the three eventful years of his public career. Not only was the mandate given, but, Our Divine Lord, to show us the necessity of submission to that teaching, was careful to remind them of the source of their authority: "All power is given to Me, in Heaven and on earth, Go ye &c.;" that is to say, "The power I have received from the Father that same power I communicate to you; go into the world then, with my authority, as instruments for the regeneration and sanctification of mankind." Therefore the Apostles, representing the Church, come to us with the same power, authority and divine mission, as Christ Jesus, Himself. And what from this? It follows, what our Divine Lord taught more than once, that all who are submitted to Him, must listen to the Church. And the Church is not "an invisible something, somewhere in this world." No! It is a living, real, palpitating being, having for its august head the Vicar of Christ, and governed by the chief pastor in each diocese, as successor of the Apostles. It is the assemblage of the faithful, listening to the words of their parish priest, of the bishop in each diocese, and of the direct successor of St. Peter, and all these have the same right to be listened to, respected and obeyed as our Divine Lord Himself. But there is something else that this day's gospel reminds us of. We are told the reason why the generality of Christians obey and listen to the voice of Holy Church. "Go, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." These words are a reminder to us that we are called to the faith, that we are made the sons of God, co-heirs of Christ Jesus, sanctified temples of the Holy Ghost, and destined to a glorious eternity. When we look upon ourselves, therefore, in the supernatural life, how dependent we are upon God! But it is not necessary to go beyond this

natural life to see our entire dependence. By God's power we have been called into being; God's power and goodness creates and preserves the things around us that we see, and need for our sustenance in this life.

After pointing out in what we are dependent on God, the preacher said:—Not only has the Eternal Father created us, Christ, the Eternal Son, has redeemed us, and made us co-heirs of the Kingdom of God, but the Holy Ghost sanctifies us by His grace, descending into our hearts, and giving us the necessary strength to battle courageously for the crown of glory reserved for those who fight the true fight. It is then of our dependence upon Christ for supernatural life, of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the grace we need every day of our lives in order to obtain eternal reward, that we are reminded of in those Gospel words: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Then the preacher dwelt at length upon the submission we owe to God and consequently to the church. "Whatever I have commanded you," says the Sacred Book, and "teach all nations," are texts to indicate the necessity of our submission to the teachings of the church. The first heresies; the religious revolution called Protestantism; the rationalistic theories of later years, were each dwelt upon in most energetic and logical language. He referred to France, since the spirit of infidelity took possession of the land and pointed out the fearful consequences of violating the laws of God. Referring then to the teachings of the church and what they are, the preacher said:—

"The Church has nothing to do with the material things of this world. She is not in any way opposed to modern progress. Her mission is the sanctification of souls. But side by side with this glorious mission comes the civilizing of nations. It is inseparably united with God's Church. The Gospel is the grandest, the highest factor in civilization. So that, beloved brethren, though her mission is not directly civilization, this great blessing follows the evangelization of a people.

The mission of the Church is not only to teach, but it is to point out and warn us of the danger to which we are exposed in this world. It does happen, sometimes, that God's minister, the parish priest, must raise his voice, must point out some danger and warn his flock against it. Then it is that reason tries to dominate and that some raise the standard of revolt. Men refuse to obey, saying, "We see no harm in that; others do this, why can't we do it." Ah! Beloved, this is insubordination. This is trying to live in the world without God. Speaking to a Catholic people, I need not refer to these onslaughts made constantly upon the dogma of Holy Faith, but I must signalize this insubordination, this dangerous spirit of so-called liberty. People refuse to obey when warned against some danger, and perhaps they will say they know what is their duty. But, dearly beloved, they do not know their duty; they do not see the danger. It is not for the rank and file to say what they have to do, and what they have not to do. The commander-in-chief gives the commands to his generals; the generals to the colonels of regiments, the colonels to the captains, the captains communicate to the rank and file, what is or is not to be done. Then it is that the army marches onward and victory is secured. Why? The commander-in-chief has full grasp; he knows what stratagems are necessary; he perceives the dangers and averts them. And so it is with regard to the family, and to the government of states in this world.

The authority of the Church does not clash with any other. It comes to consolidate and sanctify the authority which we find both in the family and the state. Therefore, we must obey it at all times. The ministers of God are as watchmen on towers. Their horizon is broader and wider, they see dangers which the ordinary Christian never thinks of. Knowing their solicitude for souls, knowing the dangers better than any one else, it is our bounden duty to submit to them, to obey in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Any revolt against their warning, would be a revolt against God, a rejection of that authority which Jesus Christ Himself established in His Church, and communicates to His ministers, against that power which is to last till the end of time and the consummation of the world. The minister of God speaks

to you as a representative of Christ, with the authority of Christ, and he has then a right to your respect and submission. It is your duty then to submit. We are not to say "I don't see any harm in this." We must do as in the ordinary concerns of this life, abide by the decision of those in authority. If ill, we send for a physician and do not meddle with our own health. In a matter of law, we consult a lawyer. In business concerns, we take advice, and so must we do with regard to those who have the direction of our souls. They know the dangers, they are the best ones to direct, their whole life is given to the care of souls, and consequently, we must submit ourselves to the guidance, to the kindly guidance of those to whom God has given His own power: "All power is given you in heaven and upon earth."

After pointing out the necessity of Catholics standing shoulder to shoulder: after drawing a vivid picture of the venerable prisoner of the Vatican, in the midst of persecutions and tribulations; after speaking of the disloyalty to the infallible Head of the Church exemplified in our own day and our own land, Father O'Brien closed his impressive sermon with the following appeal:

"Loyalty to the church demands that we submit to her decisions and that we lead good lives.

"Not every one that says Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Yes, words are no proof of loyalty to our church, unless supported by a faithful service. It is true, that sometimes we do murmur and grumble, and rebel against the church and the authority of her ministers. But it is christian to repent, and if we do err, let our first aspiration be to repair the harm we have done. This will always characterize the Christian man. He will regret his rebellion and inconstancy, and come back to the right path from which he had wandered.

Oh! Beloved Brethren, on this great day, when we are reminded of God's supreme dominion over us, when we are reminded of what we owe to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and to our Holy Mother, the Church, the exponent of God's voice in our regard, vested with the same power and authority as Christ himself let us bow down, and ask of God that power and strength to be always docile and submissive to lawfully constituted authority in the Church. By thus submitting, avoiding dangers pointed out to us, peace will be our lot, and one day, we may hope to enter into joy, and dwell eternally in heaven."



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