

A RETREAT AT LA TRAPPE.

W. L. Scott, LL. B., in the Catholic World.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.)

But to return to the daily life of the Trappists. The hours for the several offices, prayers, and works vary with the varying seasons and with the amount of work to be done on the farm, but I will do my best to give a general idea of a day at the monastery, choosing in preference the fall of the year, as that was the season when I made both my visits. Two o'clock in the morning is, as I have said, the general hour for rising. On Sundays, however, when Matins are sung instead of being merely recited, they rise at one, and on special feasts, called "doubles," when the office is unusually long, they rise at midnight, and are then, it must be remembered, up for the day. As the monks sleep in the habit worn during the day, their toilet does not occupy much time and at five minutes after the ringing of the bell for rising, every monk is in his place in the chapel, ready to commence the office. And here let me say that this sleeping in their habits is one of their severest penances. The guest-master, who had been forty six years in the order, told me that it was the only rule that he could never grow accustomed to. The Trappists, before each portion of the canonical office, recite the corresponding portion of the "Little Office of the Blessed Virgin," and their first duty on going to the chapel in the morning is to recite the Matins and Lauds of the latter. This occupies half an hour, and is followed by half an hour of silent meditation. The monks are obliged by their rule to commit to memory the "Little Office," and also all portions of the canonical office of frequent recurrence, and to recite or sing them without lights. The chapel is, therefore, for the first hour in darkness, broken only by the flicker of the tiny flame that tells of presence of Him to whom they speak. Nothing can be imagined so weird and at the same so devotional and impressive as this scene. The dim chapel, the altar-lamp serving only to accentuate the darkness; the ghostly white-robed figures, with their graceful folds of drapery scarcely visible in the surrounding gloom, and through it all the plaintive yet ardent voice of most devout supplication, combine to produce an impression not easily effaced. Even in the daylight the voices of the Trappists lifted up in prayer preach a sermon to the heart more eloquent and more effective for good than many a one decked out with brilliant arguments and rounded periods. For while the recitation of the office is one of the Trappists' most ordinary duties, it never seems to become a matter of mere routine. There are sixteen distinct offices during the day, each of which begins with the words "Deus in adiutorium meum intende; Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina," and yet every time these words are uttered—very slowly, the monks standing, but with their bodies bent down to a horizontal position—they convey a depth of heartfelt supplication which is touching and edifying in the extreme.

The "Gloria Patri" at the end of each psalm is said or sung in the same manner, and with an air of humility and devotion well befitting the sacred words, but unfortunately not always found accompanying them in the world.

After the "Little Office" of Matins and Lauds and the half hour of meditation, that is at three, two, or one o'clock, according to the day, the lamps are lighted and the canonical Matins are said or sung, and are followed by the Lauds, the whole lasting until four, when the monks separate, those of them who are priests to say Mass at the various altars, and the others to serve or assist, or else to attend to some other duty of the

day. At half-past five all re-assemble for the office of Prime, lasting about twenty minutes. At a quarter past seven Terce is said, and is followed by the conventual Mass, at which the whole household assist. This usually a low Mass; but in winter, when time will permit, grand High Mass is sung. During this Mass a custom prevails which struck me as very beautiful and devotional, and which I think might be followed with great profit in our parish churches. Immediately after the elevation the whole community bursts forth simultaneously, and if instinctively, into the hymn "O salutaris Hostia," in joyous welcome of the Guest who has just descended upon the altar. At Masses in honor of the Blessed Virgin the "Ave Verum," and at Masses for the dead the "Pie Jesu Domine," are respectively substituted for the "O salutaris."

After Mass the manual labor of the day begins for the choir monks. The lay monks, who are exempt from attendance at most of the offices, have already begun theirs at three, after the morning meditation. During the summer months they are also exempt from attendance at the conventual Mass, and attend instead a Mass said at three for their especial benefit. All or most of the skilled labor about the monastery, such as butter-making, cheese-making, etc., as well as the exclusive care of the cattle and live stock, is entrusted to the lay monks, the choir monks reserving for themselves only the most ordinary labor. And this is shared in by all from the highest to the lowest. A friend of mine once called to see the abbot and found him in that act of carrying a couple of pails of water to the cook. On one of my walks over the farm I came on five of the brethren filling in with clay a trench in which a water-pipe had been sunk, they were all choir monks, the party including the prior and other priests. Although it was then about one o'clock, and they must therefore have been up and fasting for nine hours, they seemed to be working with at least as much energy and effect as average laborers. At a quarter to twelve the monks again assemble in the chapel for the office of Sext and the Angelus, after which they return to their work. At ten minutes past two None is said, and the monks repair to the refectory to partake of their well-earned repast, the first, as I have said, of the day. The remaining two offices are Vespers and Complin, said at a quarter past four and twenty-five minutes past six respectively, except in summer, when the latter office is said an hour later. After Complin follows the most striking and characteristic prayer of the Trappists, the singing of the "Salve Regina." This it is that invariably impresses the visitor far more than anything else at the monastery. I will not attempt to describe its beauty, for to me it is beyond description. It is a chant peculiar to the Trappists, and one which I have never heard elsewhere—very, very slow and solemn, but with a fullness and earnestness which fairly raises one out of one's self. The effect is heightened by its being sung without lights, with the exception of two candles placed on the altar.

Perhaps some musician following in my footsteps, too critically cultivated to appreciate a chant whose chief attraction lies in that tenderness and pathos which flow from the heart, may consider that I have painted in too high colors the evening hymn of the saintly Trappists to their Mother. To such a one I would recall (but with no intention of thereby disparaging the excellent voices of the Oka brethren) a legend, old no doubt but none the less beautiful, of a certain monastery where the monks, aged and worn with prayer and mortification, yet never failed, as their closing duty of the day, to lift up their poor weak voices in loving salutation to the Mother of God. One day a novice came crav-

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ing admission to their house and order—a novice with a fine, clear, rich voice, so powerful and yet so sweet that when he raised it in the "Salve" the poor old monks were fain to hold their breath and listen, fearing to mar the beautiful effect with their harsh croakings. But if the voice of the novice was beautiful, the novice knew it and was pleased and gratified to note the impression its beauty created. That night, when the monastery had sunk to rest, there came to the cell of one of the poor old monks a messenger radiant with the brightness of the skies, saying: "I have come from the Mother of God; she bids me to ask why this evening you omitted your wonted hymn of praise. Every evening, in all the years that the monastery has stood here, the 'Salve Regina' has ascended from it like sweet incense before her throne; but to night she heard it not!"

At seven in winter and eight in summer the Trappist retires, but even in his sleep his mortifications follow him. I have already spoken of his sleeping in his habit, but this is not all. It is popularly said that the Trappist sleeps on boards. This is a fiction, but a fiction so near the truth that it is scarcely worthy of correction. In fact his bed is of straw, but had I not seen it and felt it, I would scarcely have believed that straw could pack so hard.

In giving this sketch of a day at La Trappe I have not, in all cases, filled in the time between each of the offices, as the duties vary so much at the different seasons, but such time is, in each case, taken up with either manual labor, study, or private prayers, the hours of study being shorter and those of work longer among the lay than among the choir monks.

There are numerous other interesting features of the rule to which I should like to refer, but I have, I fear, already drawn too largely on the patience of my readers in this connection. I will, however, mention one thing not in the rule, though it is one of the customs one hears of most frequently as characteristic of the Trappists. It is said that they are obliged to dig a little of their graves each day, and to sleep in them at certain intervals. This tale is entirely without foundation. It may possibly have originated from the fact that whenever one of the community is buried a grave is opened next to him to the depth of a foot or so, and left in that condition awaiting the next of the brethren who may go to his long rest.

But I must not omit to describe the picturesque dress of the order. The

working dress of a professed monk is white with a black scapular. During the hours devoted to study, and while in the chapel, a very full white garment is worn over this, descending in graceful folds to the ground, and with wide and long flowing sleeves; the whole presenting, as I have already said, a most graceful and picturesque appearance. In the novices the scapular is white instead of black, and the over garment is a sleeveless white cloak reaching almost to the ground. The dress of the lay monks is of similar make, but dark brown in color, the over-mantle being a sleeveless cloak, short in the novices and long in those already professed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

St. Paul's Parish.

Last Sunday will long be remembered in St. Paul's parish. At the eight o'clock Mass the members of the League of the Cross and St. Paul's Commandery Knights of St. John received Holy Communion in a body. In the afternoon at three o'clock the League held a more than usually interesting meeting. Mr. Geo. Duffy occupied the chair, addresses were delivered by the Rev. Father Hand, the president, Mr. W. H. Cahill; and in addition the members had the pleasure of addresses from Mr. Jos. Tait, M. L. A., and Mr. Patrick Boyle.

In many Temperance Societies the interest seems to waken when the summer season sets in. Not so with the League of the Cross—the members being more than ever determined to push their noble cause.

In the evening a grand procession was formed at St. Ann's Hall, the children of the Sacred Heart Society leading, carrying a statue of the Blessed Virgin. They were followed by the ladies of the Children of Mary Sodality, adorned with beautiful white veils. The men of the League of the Cross marched in rear. On entering the church the entire procession joined in singing the beautiful Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The sacred edifice was crowded.

After Vespers the Rev. Father Hand received at the altar railing the young ladies who were to become members of the Sodality, and also a large number of the children who were made promoters of the League of the Sacred Heart. The members of the League of the Cross then renewed their Temperance Pledge in a loud voice, and produced quite an impression on the congregation.

The members of the Choir are to be complimented on their excellent music, which added much to the day's celebration, and the clergy of St. Paul's deserve the warmest thanks of the different Societies in the parish for the great interest they take in all that pertains to their work and progress.

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