

The Catholic Record

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CATHOLIC SOLDIERS' HUTS

"Whatever else the Church might give or deny me, she could not refuse me a man's job."

These words of the Rev. Ronald A. Knox, which he wrote concerning his conversion to the Faith, are quoted by us elsewhere on this page, where we deal at some length with this brilliant convert's story. But the words are worth using in more than one place for they are very applicable to the effort which Catholic men in Canada will make next week in behalf of the Catholic men doing their country's work overseas. We use the word "man" in a general sense which includes woman as the better half. A work exclusively masculine would be a sorry job. The Knights of Columbus are simply the initiators and by no means the monopolizers of the Dominion-wide drive to raise half-a-million dollars for Catholic Soldiers' Huts. It is a work which appeals to all the Catholics of Canada, but especially to the laity. Sometimes there are grumbling heard that the laity are not given a sufficient share in the management and direction of Catholic work. However that may be, here is undoubtedly a chance for laymen to show their mettle. This is a job for them. The CATHOLIC RECORD has weak in and weak out preached the value and necessity of Catholic Soldiers' Huts. We need not repeat the considerations we have so often put before our readers. It is work of this kind that gives testimony that the Catholics in Canada are heart and soul with their fellow-Catholics who are now fighting so magnificently and victoriously in France. Let our victory next week be decisive and glorious; defeat would be disastrous and disgraceful! We will not grudge our dollars when asked for a work that is Catholic and patriotic, which is for our own gallant kith and kin. The praise of Canadians now resounds through Britain and France and all Allied countries. The Canadian Corps inspires wholesome respect in Germany. Canadian Catholics at home will show a generosity worthy of the courage that has been shown by their men in France. The poorest of us will give not our dimes or quarters, but our dollars to carry the campaign far beyond its objective of half-a-million.

THE POPE'S WORK FOR PRISONERS

When Dr. Beland returned to Canada it was very correctly pointed out that it was due to the efforts and mediation of the Pope that his release from captivity had been effected. One of the Toronto newspapers, which finds it commercially advantageous to bait the Pope at regular intervals for the satisfaction of its Orange readers, went to great pains to try and prove that no credit at all was due to the Holy Father for Dr. Beland's repatriation because, so ran the argument, the British Government had returned to the Germans a captured German nobleman in exchange for Dr. Beland. No one would think of denying there was some arrangement of this kind. The Pope does not possess the power of obtaining gratuitous favours from the German Government, and it may be doubted whether the British or the Canadian Government would be disposed to welcome such favours. But it is a fact beyond dispute that the arrangements made between belligerent Governments which have made possible the transfer of prisoners of war are due to the Pope, who has worked long and perseveringly for this humane object. An

interesting and valuable summary of what the Pope has done for prisoners appears in the August number of The Month, from the pen of Father Sydney F. Smith, S. J. The work has not been easy or pleasant. The opposing governments have been suspicious of each other, not without reason, for in the course of the negotiations there were manifest efforts to get the best of the bargaining. Some of the Governments concerned, though not the British Government, also showed no disposition to cooperate in anything that originated from the Vatican and which might give satisfaction to the Vatican.

Benedict XV's first step was in the first months of the War. He proposed that wounded prisoners incapable of further military service should be interned, with proper safeguards, in a neutral country like Switzerland instead of in the enemy country. This proposal was quickly carried into effect and the thousands of prisoners and their relatives who gained by this plan were people of every religion. The Pope has never done less for non-Catholics than he has done for Catholics.

The Pope's next attempt was for the exchange of civilian prisoners, all women and children and all men outside of military age, as well as men within military age if they were of certain professions, like clergy and doctors. The Pope made this proposal in January, 1915. Half a dozen governments had to be arranged with separately and mutually. They all gave a platonian assent to the plan, but they all made difficulties about details. England wanted one age limit and Germany wanted another. Belgium claimed that certain prisoners in German hands were civilians and Germany replied that they were soldiers. France said she could have no negotiations in any case with the Central Powers until they ceased to violate Hague conventions. Serbia, Russia, Turkey and Austria were more accommodating. Up to this day it is only partially that the Pope's plan affecting male civilian prisoners has been put into effect, though the Pope has tried over and over again to bring about an agreement. In so far as he has failed it is not the fault of the Pope, and his success has been great enough to merit from the British Government "cordial thanks to the Holy See for its benevolent and humanitarian action."

Distinct from the work of releasing prisoners has been that of finding the missing which was undertaken by the Holy Father. Many relatives have been relieved from cruel suspense by this compassionate action. The work is one of tremendous extent. The head office is at Rome and there are two other main offices at Vienna in Austria and Freiburg in Switzerland. Besides these three chief centres there is a whole series of branch offices, as Father Smith says, from London to Constantinople and from Palermo to Stockholm. Co-operating with these offices in the work of enquiry are large numbers of volunteers, priests and nuns, laymen and laywomen.

What the Pope has done for prisoners is only one department of his work for lessening the cruelties and sufferings of war. The Pope does not get due credit for his work, but after all, that is a matter of minor importance. God will repay.

A MAN FOR A MAN'S JOB

The most notable of recent conversions to the Church in England is that of the Rev. Ronald Knox. Mr. Knox is a son of the Anglican Bishop of Manchester and though he is still only twenty-nine years of age he has had an astonishingly brilliant career. An Eton scholarship took him to Balliol where he was marked out as a "coming man" in that school of England's leaders. It was at the age of twenty-two that he got his "First in Greats," the summit of examination success in Oxford, and two years later he was Chaplain of Trinity, a very high honor for so young a man. He had become known as a leader of the extreme "High" party of the younger Anglicans and he possessed a pungent pen that he used with smashing effect against the Modernist theologians of his church. He achieved celebrity by some verses, meant for nothing more than a squib, in satire of a book called "Foundations," written by a number of Oxford Anglicans of a "moderate" kind. The skit was published in The Oxford Magazine and the issue sold out, as did the next number when the poem was reprinted. All over England the poem travelled and a year later a

contributor to The Church Times complained that if he ever asked a clerical colleague whether he had read "Foundations" the answer was "no, but I've read a poem about it by a man called Knox."

Both the late George Wyndham and Sir F. E. Smith had urged young Knox as an undergraduate to abandon his clerical aspirations and to enter politics as a career, but the young man was too much in earnest to be tempted into secular paths. At the age of seventeen he had taken a vow of celibacy. Yet he was an *enfant terrible* in the Church of England owing to his extremism and his combativeness. At the time of the Kilkenny controversy he came out with a pamphlet, "Renunciation All Round," which made exquisite fun of Anglican "comprehensiveness" in admitting Dissenters to Anglican sacraments. He had friends as audacious, if not as talented as himself. "Six young, unmarried clergymen, born before their time, are looking out for a loyal, tractable vicar," was an advertisement designed by some of his friends for The Church Times; and, as Mr. Knox remarks, perhaps it is not surprising that The Church Times never put it in. The best literary work Mr. Knox did was a serious reply to "Foundations" in a volume he called "Some Loose Stones." For a man who could write such a book at the age of twenty-five a future of real greatness may be predicted. Now Mr. Knox is in our ranks. In God's providence he will be a mighty defender of the Faith. In his Anglican days he always was intensely militant and he comes to the Catholic Church knowing that he joins a fighting organization. In his absorbing book, "A Spiritual Aeneid" which is of the same kind as Newman's "Apologia" and Benson's "Confessions of a Convert." Mr. Knox says:

"I found the Church, as in the days of the Apostles, a sect that is everywhere spoken against. I found that Catholicism in Italy was condemned as denationalized, Catholicism in Germany for its nationalism, Catholicism in Switzerland because it was pacifist, Catholicism in France because it was chauvinist, Catholicism in Spain as a pillar of reaction, Catholicism in Ireland as a hotbed of revolution. . . . Disagreements there might be between various sections of the Church—and its critics, Heaven knows, have made the most of them—but at least it had one thing in common everywhere, common enemies. They might respect it for the moment, but in the years to come they would not be slow to join in assailing it, the indifferent, the baffled seekers after a sign, the fanatical opponents—as once before Herod and Pilate and Chaphas—sinking their differences in a joint attack upon this defenceless but never insignificant foe. Surely such a cause was worthy of being championed. Whatever else the Church might give or deny me, she could not refuse me a man for a man's job."

Mr. Knox comes as a man to a man's job. As a defender of the faith he will have plenty of chances for fighting. But it is not the attraction and adventure of a Crusade that brings Mr. Knox. As he says:

"It is wrong to join the Church because the Church seems to you to lack support which you can give. You must come, not as a partizan or a champion, but as a suppliant for the needs in your own life which only the Church can supply—the ordinary daily needs. You must join the Church as a religion, not as a party or as a clan. But if I am asked if I find peace in being a Catholic—does it look like it? Rather it seems to me that in the disintegration of the world, and of Europe in particular (far greater perhaps than we yet realize) which must follow the War, men will look for guidance to the two institutions which override the boundaries of country—International Socialism and the Catholic Church. And the forces of disintegration which will be at work will be in conflict most of all with the latter institution, because, being more centralized, it will be at once more formidable and more vulnerable. To feel every stab the Church feels, to rejoice in the triumphs she celebrates, that should be enough to keep a man's interests active and his heart awake."

Surely every Catholic reading Mr. Knox's words will realize that to-day the Church gives everyone of us a man's job.

When women sit, reflecting, they usually reflect on other women.

STATE INTERFERENCE WITH CATHOLIC WORSHIP

During the past six months we have been regularly in receipt, from some civic department either in Ottawa or Toronto, of subjects for our Sunday sermons, together with suggestions as to how to treat the matter, the three points of our discourse being outlined for us after the manner of the old French prone and appropriate texts of Scripture noted. The latest of these brochures emanated from the Social Service Council, Toronto, and was entitled "Suggestions for Labor Sunday." The grim unconscious humor of its pages was in marked contrast with the seriousness with which the author approached his subject. "The Church," says he, "is the mightiest institution in the world. It is the continuous and perpetual incarnation of Him, Who for our sakes became flesh. On whatever matters, therefore, Jesus would speak with authority the Church must not be unfaithful to her high mission. True words and well spoken, if they refer to Christ's mystical body the Catholic Church; but what an absurdity to apply them to the jarring sects that are represented in the Social Service Council! After thus extolling what he is pleased to call the Church of Christ, he tells his clerical readers that it is the working men who are most dubious of the Church's Catholic and democratic character, and that it must be made plain that the Church is controlled by no section or class and is not a mere business institution. He tells the rural pastors to "magnify their job" by getting into touch with the agricultural societies in the district, and concludes with a list of reference books, (from which Pope Leo's classic on Capital and Labor is conspicuous for its absence) appropriate hymns and a prayer that breathes a purely materialistic spirit.

What concerns us, however, is not the ridiculousness of offering so much gratuitous advice to "the greatest institution in the world," but the tendency that is herein manifested on the part of the State to encroach upon the domain of the Church. Recently in Mount Vernon, N. Y., a Catholic priest was found guilty of disorderly conduct because his refusal to have the church bells rung in honor of an American victory in France was the occasion of congregating a mob. It was not stated that there was any order on the part of the Mayor to ring the bells; but even though there were the priest was within his rights, as the civil authorities could not demand a favour. The ringing of church bells, which are consecrated by the Bishop for use in Catholic worship, is wholly under the control of the clergy, and while the latter will accede to any reasonable request on the part of the civil officers to have them rung, yet they are quite justified in refusing to join in the popular clamor every time some one interested in the sale of stocks starts a Sunday night canard to the effect that the Allies have won a great victory.

In these abnormal times, the Catholic Bishops of Canada and United States are willing to give whatever aid they can in the way of instructing the people as to their duties in war time and the sacrifices that they are called upon to make in their homes. But it is scarcely fitting that the Catholic pulpit, dedicated to the preaching of the Word of God, should be perpetually called upon to be the medium of promulgating the State's detailed food regulations and other matters of a purely secular nature. Nor is it becoming that the Holy of Holies, within which Christ dwells and the Clean Oblation is daily offered up, should be decorated with flags and Liberty Loan certificates. The Catholic Church has gained the unwilling admiration of thousands without her fold by her uniqueness, by her holding aloof from purely worldly matters by the reverence of her worship and by that necessary conservatism that belongs to an institution that has for its primary object man's eternal interests and that is heir to the wisdom of centuries. It would be a sad thing for religion if anywhere the human element in the Church emulating the example of the flag-waving heretical sects and the loyal-as-thou spirit of the times, should sacrifice the external and distinctive characteristics of the sacredness of God's House to the not too wisely guided enthusiasm of the moment. It would be a sad thing if the Bride of Christ, the One, the perfect One, should mingle with the crowd and thus lose that distinctive

ness that will give her prestige in the great work of the reconstruction of society after the War.

THE GLEANER

NOTES AND COMMENTS

WE DEVOTED several paragraphs a few weeks ago to a new "Short History of England" written by that prince of epigrammatists and consummate master of paradox, Gilbert Keith Chesterton. We return to the subject again, not with the intention of writing a review, or criticizing this, the author's latest production, but simply to lay before our readers a few selections which, better than any mere description, will give an idea of Chesterton's method as an historian.

IN THE ordinary conception of the term the book is not a history at all. To readers of Chesterton history would, indeed, seem not to be his forte. The book is rather a commentary upon certain memorable periods of English history tending to the elucidation of the causes of things and to the vindication of popular rights. There is no division of reigns or administrations, no narrative of events as they are unfolded in other works of history, and there is not a date given from cover to cover. It is somewhat unusual, too, in a work of history, to find mention of Mrs. Pankhurst and Mrs. Edjy, of "Boz" and the author of "Vanity Fair," or of Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. But in illustration of his theme the author puts the whole world under tribute and does not despise even the trifles of today. That he has struck the popular taste is proved by the fact that although first published in October of last year the book is already in its seventh or eighth edition.

THE SCHEM of the essay is set forth in these words:

"It will be very reasonably asked why I should consent, though upon a sort of challenge, to write even a popular essay in English history, who make no pretence to particular scholarship and am merely a member of the public. The answer is that I know just enough to know one thing: that a history from the standpoint of a member of the public has not been written. What we call the popular histories should rather be called the anti-popular histories. They are all, nearly without exception, written against the people; and in them the populace is either ignored or elaborately proved to have been wrong. It is true that Green called his book 'A Short History of the English People'; but he seems to have thought it too short for the people to be properly mentioned. . . . It is exactly the popular story that is left out of the popular history."

IT HAS BEEN the accepted idea in certain quarters that Chesterton is not far from the Catholic Church. The book before us hardly bears out that idea. But if emancipation from the accumulated traditions of the English people as to the Church's part in the making of England is any mark of predestination then he has travelled a long way in the right direction. Be this as it may, his "Short History" pierces many shams and certainly vindicates the Church as the age-long champion of popular liberties and the mother of civilization. For example, the following suggestive paragraphs:

"THE WHOLE culture of our time has been full of the notion of 'A Good Time Coming': the whole culture of the Dark Ages was full of the notion of 'A Good Time Going.' . . . It is not merely flippant to say that monks and nuns then stood to man kind as a sort of sanctified league of aunts and uncles. It is a commonplace that they did everything that nobody else would do; that the abbey kept the world's diary, faced the plague of all flesh, taught the first technical arts, preserved the pagan literature, and, above all, by a perpetual patchwork of charity, kept the poor from the most distant sight of their modern despair. We still find it necessary to have a reserve of philanthropists, but we trust it to men who have made themselves rich, not to men who have made themselves poor."

"Without the Church the Middle Ages would have had no law, as without the Church the Reformation would have had no Bible."

"The modern critic of medievalism commonly looks only at those crooked shadows and not at the common daylight of the Middle Ages. When he has got over his indignant astonishment at the fact that fighters fought and that hangmen hanged, he assumes that any other ideas there may have been were ineffectual and fruitless. He despises the monk for avoiding the very same activities which he despises the warrior for cultivating. And he insists that the arts of war were sterile without even admitting the possibility that the arts of peace were productive. But the truth is that it is precisely the arts of peace, and in the type of production, that the Middle Ages stand singular and unique. This is not eulogy but history. . . . What was really arresting and remarkable about the Middle Ages, was precisely its social scheme of production, of the making, building and growing of all the good things of life."

AS TO THE Church and slavery: "At the beginning of the Dark Ages (as a heritage from the Roman Empire and the subsequent Barbarian avalanche) the great pagan cosmopolitan society now grown Christian was as much a slave state as old South Carolina. By the fourteenth century it was almost as much a state of peasant proprietors as modern France. No laws had been passed against slavery; no dogmas even had condemned it by definition; no war had been waged against it, no new race or ruling caste had repudiated it; but it was gone. This startling and silent transformation is perhaps the best measure of the pressure of popular life in the Middle Ages, of how fast it was making new things in its spiritual factory."

OR THIS: "Like everything else in the medieval revolution, from its cathedrals to its ballads, it was as anonymous as it was enormous. It is admitted that the conscious and active emancipators everywhere were the parish priests and the religious brotherhoods; but no name among them has survived and no man of them has reaped his reward in this world. Countless Clarksons and innumerable Wilberforces, without political machinery or public fame, worked at death-beds and confessionals in all the villages of Europe; and the vast system of slavery vanished. It is possible enough to state roughly the stages through which the thing passed; but such a statement does not explain the loosening of the grip of the great slave-owners; and it cannot be explained except psychologically. The Catholic type of Christianity was not merely an element, it was a climate; and in that climate the slave would not grow."

OF THE ways and means which brought about the great upheaval of the sixteenth century in England which men call the "Reformation" Chesterton has this to say: "The chief tool of the new tyranny (that of Henry VIII), a dirty fellow named Thomas Cromwell, was specially singled out as the tyrant and he was indeed rapidly turning all government into a nightmare. . . . The reign of terror established, Thomas Cromwell became an Inquisition of the blackest and most unbearable sort. Historians, who have no shadow of sympathy with the old religion, are agreed that it was uprooted by means more horrible than have ever, perhaps, been employed in England before or since. It was a government by torturers rendered ubiquitous by spies. The spoliation of the monasteries especially was carried out, not only with a violence which recalled barbarism, but with a minuteness for which there is no other word but meanness. It was as if the Dane had returned in the character of a detective."

"WE TALK of the dissolution of the monasteries, but what occurred was the dissolution of the whole of the old civilization. Lawyers and lackeys and money-lenders, the menest of lucky men, looted the art and economics of the Middle Ages like thieves robbing a church. Their names (when they did not change them) became the names of the great dukes and marquises of our day."

"The new doctrines in England were simply an excuse for a plutocratic pillage, and that is the only truth to be told about the matter."

"Men talk of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes; but the English persecutors never had so tolerant an edict to revoke."

WE HAD marked for quotation several paragraphs relating to other periods of English history, but space forbids. We content ourselves, therefore, with these caustic references to Cromwell and the Puritans as, with the foregoing, of special interest to Catholic readers.

"NOW, THERE was a great deal that was very fine about many of the Puritans, which is almost entirely missed by the modern admirers of the Puritane. They are praised for things which they either regarded with indifference or more often detested with frenzy—such as religious liberty. . . . England was never so little of a democracy as during the short time she was a republic."

"A very decent case could be made out for the paradox that Puritanism was first and last a veneer on paganism."

In conclusion, one of the fine sayings in the book relates to the Scottish War for Independence under the immortal heroes, Wallace and Bruce. Over the remains of Edward I in Westminster Abbey stands this epitaph: "Here lies Edward the Tall, who was hammer of the Scots." "It was a true epitaph," writes Chesterton, "but in a sense exactly opposite to its intention. He was their hammer, but he did not break, but make them; for he smote them on an anvil and he forged them into a sword." To the "heroes" of the Scottish Reformation—Knox and his infamous crew—it remained to break that sword in twain.

ON THE BATTLE LINE

THE HINDENBURG line must now stand its greatest test. The chief defensive system of the Germans on the Western front, including a part of the original lines held by the enemy since 1914 on the Aubers Ridge, to the west of Lille, is under attack by the Allied armies. It has already given way in the Arras-Cambrai sector before the assault of Canadian and English troops. It has been partially penetrated on the Aubers front, west of Lille, and in the vital sector of La Fere-Leon the victorious army of General Mangin has reached Petit Baris, on the eastern border of the lower Forest of Oostey, and faces the wooded ridges of St. Gobain, along which the Hindenburg line runs.

SHATTERED and broken in spirit by repeated defeats during the past seven weeks though the Germans are, they must stand and fight once more. There is no safety in retreat. If the Hindenburg line is penetrated to the Maubeuge becomes inevitable. Such a retreat under existing conditions might well prove disastrous. From all parts of the territory, occupied at the cost of hundreds of thousands of casualties during the five great German offensives beginning on March 21 of this year and ending on July 18, the enemy's troops have been withdrawn, or are still withdrawing, to points within their defensive line. This morning the ground won in that prodigious effort to obtain "a German peace" by a speedy decision, only the Pesechendale, Pilkom and Messines Ridges, in the north, and a small strip of land west of St. Quentin and north of the Aisne remains in the enemy's hands. How much of it will remain to-morrow depends largely upon the fleetness of foot of the Australians, who, advancing yesterday in the region east of Peronne, with English troops co-operating on the north, swept the country clean of the retreating Germans on a front of almost fifteen miles to a width of seven miles east of the Somme. This advance, carried out in conjunction with a similar sweep by Humbert's French army on the Ham-Chauny sector, brings the Allied front to a point between eight and nine miles from St. Quentin and about four miles from La Fere, both of which cities are within the Hindenburg line. The front is everywhere well to the east of the old Somme battlefields, and the advance of the British and French troops is made across a region little pitted with shell holes or seamed with trenches, so that progress is fairly rapid.

THE PROGRESS of General Humbert's army between the Somme and the Oise was phenomenal. The forest-clad hill country of Austrorhont was cleared of the machine-gun nests left by the enemy to delay the French advance. On the north bank of the Oise French cavalry rode into Chauny, found it unoccupied, and pressed forward to the outskirts of Terguier, an important railway junction a little over three miles west of La Fere. On the south side of the Oise the Germans state that they stand in fighting contact with the French at Amigny, where there are advanced field works located, which on high ground command a wide stretch of the river valley. The Hindenburg line is immediately east of Amigny. Northward, near the point of junction with the Austrorhont, has been occupied, and an advance has been made of about two and a half miles northeast of the high road to St. Quentin, which is a