

BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

The following summary of a lecture by the learned English Benedictine priest, Father Gasquet, the historian of the English monasteries, is copied from the *Liverpool Catholic Times*.

"One by one, the clouds of ignorance and misrepresentation which encompass so many points of Church history in the mind of the average Protestant Englishman are being dispelled by the searching light cast upon them by the able lectures of the Historical Research Society. One more such misconception was disposed of in masterly fashion at the last lecture of the present series at Archbishop's House on Monday night by the Rev. Dom. Aiden Gasquet, O.S.B., the distinguished champion of the monastic orders in the time of Henry VIII., a searcher after truth, who has done more to 're-make' the history of England than almost any man of our day. If there is one idea to which the British mind has hitherto clung with greater conviction than any other, and to which even the Catholic body, as represented by Lilly, had given its assent, it is that the centuries immediately preceding the so-called Reformation were essentially "dark ages," in which learning and knowledge were at their lowest ebb, and when the people were ignorant of the very elements of their Faith. That such a belief is utterly gratuitous, unfounded and false was the Burden of Father Gasquet's lecture, his statements receiving confirmation from so imposing an array of facts and authorities as to set his hearers wondering how so palpable a misrepresentation could have endured so long. So completely, indeed, did the learned Benedictine turn the tables on his opponents as to elicit from Father Croke Robinson the humorous query, "If those were the dark ages what must we be living in now?" a question which seemed to meet with a corresponding echo in the minds of the audience.

Father Gasquet prefaced his lecture with what he himself described as the bold statement that the history of the pre-Reformation period in England had yet to be written. As, until lately, the secular historian had merely given us biographies of the rulers of the land with accounts of the wars in which they took part, without troubling himself about the people at large, so, in a similar spirit, the Church annalist only described to us the great ecclesiastical events of their time. But nowadays we wish to hear more of the people themselves, and especially more of the religious side of our national life. What did the people believe? How were the services carried on? What popular devotions were preached? How did the priests instruct their flocks? What did the Church do for education, and for the material prosperity of the realm? But who can answer those queries? They still lie buried under the dust of hitherto unexplored archives.

Whilst disclaiming anything more than a slight knowledge of the social condition of the Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, the lecturer proceeded to enunciate the point for discussion. The first duty of the Church after the administering of the Sacraments is the instructing of the people in the doctrines of the Catholic faith. Was the English Church mindful of this duty or not? At the outset we must admit that hitherto Protestants have believed in the profound ignorance of the English people, and in this verdict many Catholics have concurred. In 1891, in the *Dublin Review*, Mr. Lilly wrote of the "lamentable condition" of the people in the fifteenth century, "knowing nothing beyond the 'Ave Maria' and the 'Pater Noster.'" He, however, offered no evidence in support of his contention. "So far from conjoining Mr. Lilly," continued the lecturer,

"my studies have led me to a directly opposite conclusion. I believe that in pre-Reformation days the people were thoroughly well-instructed by the priests."

Religious teaching naturally divides itself into two classes, it can be given either by sermons or by instructions. Sermons undoubtedly were not so frequent as to-day, when all teaching of adults is conveyed by them. Plain instructions in medieval times resembled much more our catechetical teaching. Of these we find most abundant evidence in the 14th and 16th centuries, to which we must confine ourselves. Already in the 12th century Archbishop Peccham had issued elaborate orders known as the "Constitutions of Peccham," for the instruction of the people in all the elementary truths of Christianity four times a year in every parish church. In the 14th century Thoresby of York had an exposition drawn up, and sent to all the priests of his diocese, of the Creed and the Articles of our Faith, with strict injunctions to teach them to the people. From the Acts of the Synod in 1384 we learn that frequent preaching was urged on the priests, who were also to see that the children were taught their prayers. At the same time manuals for priests were everywhere multiplied. One of the earliest books printed by Caxton contained four lengthy discourses covering the whole field of Catholic teaching, which, being delivered according to the rule of four times a year, would occupy sixteen Sundays. In the lecturer's opinion these elementary instructions were given quite as much as a matter of course as our catechism-teaching is given to-day, and hence it is that there is so little direct evidence of them. Yet sufficient material has been discovered to satisfy most people. A few of the old parish registers and visitation papers have luckily escaped the almost universal destruction of papers and archives that took place at the Reformation period, and these show us the facts. Here we have the sworn depositions of the parishioners regarding their priest, and most of their testimonies are eminently satisfactory. These papers show us, too, that the parish priests were regularly reported on to the Bishop, and they also manifest very considerable intelligence and knowledge on the part of these jurors, which, in spite of our Board schools, it is doubtful whether we could see surpassed in a similar class to-day.

The learned lecturer, whose delivery, by the way, is singularly clear and pleasant, then passed on to a rapid survey of the principal manuals issued for the use of priests on their clerical duties, which were very numerous at this period, and copies of which are to be found in the British Museum Library.

One of the most popular of these was the "Pars Oculi Sacerdotis," published at the end of the 14th century, another, evidently much in demand having been reprinted several times was the "Pupilli Oculi." Most important of all, however, was the "Speculum Christiana," one of the earliest books ever put into type, and containing some beautiful prayers on the Blessed Sacrament and on the Blessed Virgin Mary, which the lecturer would very much like to see reprinted. Passing on to the subject of preaching proper, Father Gasquet explained, that as the work of instruction belonged mainly to the secular clergy, so that of preaching belonged chiefly to the religious orders. The Dominicans and Franciscans were essentially popular preachers, the plain, unadorned speaking was their forte. They always spoke in the vernacular, interspersing their sermons with anecdotes and fables, which helped to secure their success. It must be remembered that many of the sermons which were written and have come down to us in Latin, were

nevertheless delivered in English. Many courses of sermons were drawn up for the use of priests; one of the best known of these is the "Liber Festivalis," first printed by Caxton, and reprinted many times before the close of the century. Many aids to preaching were also issued containing a mass of information, and presupposing a very profound knowledge of Scripture both by priest and people. The value of indexes also was realized at this time for tabulating knowledge. Concordances were multiplied, and a great catalogue was drawn up by a monk of Edmundsbury of all the monastic libraries, with which, through a system of numbers, it could be ascertained at a glance in what monasteries every work of importance was to be found. The most celebrated pulpit in all England was at St. Paul's Cross, where Londoners had the opportunity of hearing the greatest preachers of the day. Two hundred and fifty of these sermons have come down to us; they are often very topical, and full of manly vigor. For one single period we have a list of no less than 200 sermon writers as the most of these are Carmelites, by far the least numerous in England of the great monastic orders, we can fairly conclude that this list is but a small proportion of the whole.

Marie Antoinette's Courage.

The *Revue de France* publishes several curious extracts from the memoirs of Klindworth, well-known in the political world from his long connection with Talleyrand, Wellington, Metternich and Guizot. The most interesting passage relates an incident in which Marie Antoinette plays a part, namely, the mission entrusted by Robespierre to M. Grandidier in 1793, the object of which was to separate Austria from anti-French coalition. This brings out the fact that the hapless Queen might have got back to her native country, and so escaped her tragic end, but for her own devotion and heroism. An agreement in the sense desired was all but concluded by M. Grandidier with the Austrian Government on the condition, assented to by Robespierre, that Marie Antoinette and her daughter should be restored to their family. The Queen's consent to the plan could not be obtained. On M. Grandidier submitting the matter to her at an interview in the prison she said:

"Please thank the Emperor and Empress for their kind consideration for me, but tell them that I desire to die in France like my husband, and I am impatiently looking forward to the moment when I shall be united to him forever."

"She is right," remarked Robespierre, on her words being repeated to him. "What has that woman to do among the living?"

Thus Austria remained one of the adversaries of the French Government, and Marie Antoinette went to the scaffold.

A Child's Confidence.

A sense of honor in little things should be sedulously cultivated in the home. Children should early be taught the baseness of betraying one another's little confidences, and exposing one another's weaknesses. Mothers are themselves not always guiltless in this respect. Who has not witnessed the miserable confusion and utter wretchedness of some little child at the mother's reporting to some other member of the family, perhaps even to a neighbor and by way of joke, some saying or doing of its own? The solemnity of a child's confidence, however trivial in its nature, should never be forgotten.

A lady, whose hair came out with every combing, was induced to give Ayer's Hair Vigor a faithful trial. She did so, and not only was the loss of hair checked, but a new and vigorous growth soon succeeded that which had gone.

How to Wash Dishes.

Do you know how to wash dishes? Not merely so that you get them off the kitchen table into the china closet, but so that the despised and dreaded task becomes almost a pleasure. This is the way to accomplish that result:

As soon as the cooking is done fill all the cooking utensils with water and leave them to soak. When the meal is ended scrape all the plates clean—not with a knife, for that scratches and nicks—but with a soft piece of left over bread. Put the plates in one pile, the saucers in another, the cups, emptied of their drainings, together and the glass and silver together.

Have a bowl of water cool enough to allow your hand to remain in it a few minutes without scalding, but hot, and wash the glasses with soap in that. Dry them as fast as they are washed. If you let them stand upon a tray the air dries them, and does it in strokes where the water is trickling down. Have a soft, clean, lintless cloth for this purpose.

Then wash the silver; the water should be very hot for this. If there are any crevices, clean them with a brush kept for the purpose. Dry on a clean towel and polish with silver powder.

Next wash your cups and saucers—one at a time. Use a mop with a handle, and don't, in this day and generation, be without one of those wire kitchen conveniences known as a soap-shaker. Wipe each cup and saucer before putting it out of your hand, or it will dry partially and streakily and be rough to the touch. After the cups and saucers wash the plates in the same way. Then clean the tins and then the pots and pans.

To clean knives, rub with a soft flannel dipped in powdered bath brick or in wood ashes. Never let the ivory handles be dipped in hot water.

Tins may be kept in a state of dazzling brightness by being rubbed with sifted wood ashes or with whitening.

Copper utensils should be scoured with brick dust and flannel.

The dish cloths and mops should be washed, scalded and dried after each using. The towels should never be thrown aside in a damp lump, but should be hung to dry, and then dropped into the kitchen hamper against washing day.

The dishpan should be thoroughly washed with soap and water, scoured and rinsed with scalding water, dried and hung on its own hook. Then the sink should be scoured and rinsed with scalding water, in which common soda has been dissolved.

Father Mackey's Retirement.

His Grace the Archbishop has been pleased to relieve from active duty, Rev. Father Mackey, of Tyendinago, who for the very long period of forty-five years, has been a good and faithful priest of the Diocese of Kingston. This act on the part of his Grace exhibits the tender kindness and solicitude with which he cares for those entrusted with the sacred duty of ministering to the spiritual welfare of his people. Father Mackey is one of the oldest priests in the Diocese, being now 81 years of age. He has well earned the rest he has just been granted. It is needless to state that at the time he began his priestly labors 45 years ago, the duties he had to perform were of the most arduous and trying nature. Long journeys had to be made in all seasons, and when the modes of conveyance were scarcely so convenient as they are at the present time. Father Mackey was entirely unsparring of himself in those trying duties. In his long pastorate of nearly half a century we are safe in saying that he has little with which he can reproach himself. There is indeed something truly noble in such a life—a life of duty—a life of self-abnegation. Though he sought no honors or temporal glory, he has earned a greater and more lasting reward in the approval of Him in whose vineyard he labored. We congratulate the good old man in reaching his present period of life—though he is far on in the scar and yellow time—yet, his heart is young and his mental vigor unimpaired. May this good old priest have many more years to enjoy the ease and quietness that come in the evening of life in the united prayer not only from the clergy but from a multitude of people.—*Canadian Freeman*.