

MAY 7, 1904.

A MODEL COMMUNITY.

EXEMPLARY FAITH EXHIBITED BY ALABAMA COLORED PEOPLE.

Rev. Francis J. Tobin furnishes the Union and Times with an interesting account of a community of colored Catholics. The settlement referred to is on the west shore of Mobile Bay, cut off from Alabama mainland by Owl River, thus forming a small island called Mon Louis, and is commonly known as the "Island of Straits."

Father Tobin writes as follows: "The people of the community are all colored. They are also Catholics of the strictest kind. As for their sterling faith the testimony is not that alone of the writer but also that of four Bishops of the Mobile diocese and of all the missionary priests who have at different times attended, what I insist on calling, this model community."

The first trip the writer made to this place will never be forgotten, because of the exemplary faith there manifested and the life of which he never before witnessed in any other place in his missionary career. When he got off the train some thirty odd miles from Mobile City he found himself at a small station. There were no cabs to drive through the woods to the model settlement to which he was sent to say Mass. Meeting two young men near the railroad station he learned from them that he had yet to learn some three miles before reaching his destination, and knowing there was no team on hand to go there, the two young men generously offered to take the priest in their naphtha launch down the river to the objective point which they called "settlement." The day was hot, there was no shade in the launch, and no breeze on the water. The reader can imagine the condition of a traveler in Alabama waters on such an occasion.

After an hour we reached a shipyard at the mouth of the Fowl river, and thence the writer was directed to a small house in the distance. Thither he directed his steps and on his arrival he was joyfully welcomed by a colored man, the father of the settlement. The father was at work, but the mother, leading the family, came to the priest, and kneeling asked his blessing for herself and her children. This, certainly, was the most welcome address any priest could desire. This house formed, as it were, the outpost of the settlement, which was reached by a short jaunt through the woods. Approaching our point proper, the people came forward and with glad smiles welcomed the priest; and asked his blessing. The houses are all clustered together, not, however, too close to prevent each family from having a small yard for garden. From house to house the priest went, simply by leaving one and entering another through gates, which opened each into its next neighbor's yard most conveniently. Everywhere neatness and cleanliness were noticeable. The countenances of these good people reflected the purity of their hearts. Coming to a small church-shaped building, the priest was told it was the "Oratory." On the walls were small statues, a small altar in front and the statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. The interior of the building was bare, and the rattles bespoke their age. This was the first church these good people put up, some seventy years ago. Over the door was the Cross and near it the bell. At present this so-called "Oratory" is used for daily prayers and devotions. Every morning at six the bell calls the people to morning prayer, and again at 6 o'clock in the evening, all the year round; the third bell ringing calls everyone for the recitation of the beads.

After highly commending this devotion to the Queen of the Holy Rosary, the writer was told why they were so faithful in the daily recital of the beads. During the civil war the Confederate forts at the mouth of Mobile federate forts at the mouth of Mobile were in danger. Every available man was taken away from Mon Louis island to defend them. Young and old had to go. It is needless to say what sorrow this occasioned. The good Jesuit Father who was visiting this place at the time was the only one the people could turn to in their affliction. And he, to comfort and console them, led the way to the "Oratory" and recited the beads. He advised his sorely stricken flock to say the rosary every day, that the Mother of God might protect those in war and assist them at the hour of death. The misfortunes of war, particularly the diseases of the swampy camping grounds, left little hope in the hearts of the mothers, wives and sisters for the return of their beloved ones.

One evening, however, about 6 o'clock as the people were coming out of the Oratory after the recital of the beads, their hearts sad but reconciled to God's will, they were startled by cheering which re-echoed in the piney woods. Before they had a chance to realize the situation, they heard the strong voices of their fathers, sons, brothers and husbands joyfully chanting a hymn to the Blessed Virgin. This was sufficient, and soon the women folk joined their sweet voices. This was certainly a beautiful act of thanksgiving rendered publicly to God by a whole community; and good reason they had, too, for not a man was missing. The forts which they were to defend had been taken by the Union forces the day before their arrival at the mouth of Mobile Bay, and they were allowed to return to their homes in Mon Louis. The rosary has been recited every day since by these good Christian colored people, in thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin for the return of all their kinsmen.

Some years ago a neat little church was built by the people under the direction of Father O'Grady, a missionary of the Mobile diocese; the oratory or first church, however, was left standing and is used daily for regular prayers. The new church is a short distance from the settlement. And the services of this church, dear reader, always give manifestations of the sterling Catholic faith of these good Mon Louis Island colored people. Though the

Blessed Sacrament is not kept therein, except when the visiting missionary is on the grounds, not a word is ever spoken above a whisper by any man, woman and child, once the threshold of the church is passed. They say it is the house of God and they respect it.

Every Saturday night at 7.30 all go to this church and sing most devoutly the litany of the Blessed Virgin. After this, prayers are said for the Pope, the Bishop, the poor souls in purgatory and for the conversion of sinners. At the close of this pious exercise the De Profundis is slowly recited, and the church bell is tolled as if there were a funeral. This tolling is called the "De Profundis bell," and all who are unable to attend at the church silently recite prayers for the dead.

The first Saturday the writer was there he heard about seventy penitents—all that could possibly get there—and to say the confessions were a source of edification is only to express the fact mildly. If the priest remain a few days, Mass is attended by the people at 6 o'clock. Some of the men work their farms, some are engaged on the river, others in the woods and at the shipyard. The women and girls have all that Christian modesty and refinement about them, which is so characteristic of a good Catholic maiden or mother. Sunday is a typical Sabbath resting day wherein all are happy. The children are delighted to receive a holy picture or medal from the priest. Their little rosary beads are entwined on their fingers or hang around their necks. In every house is the crucifix, holy water, blessed candles, religious pictures and very often the photos of missionary priests who have visited the place during the last seventy or eighty years. The chalice used by the writer when saying Mass was one presented to the Mon Louis people by Bishop Quinlan, the second bishop of Mobile.

Never has the writer elsewhere ever met people more grateful for Mass, benediction or sermon than he has found these good people of Mon Louis Island. The last, though not the least, fact to be recorded in favor of this model community is that they follow their religious practices now and have ever done so, without the assistance and encouragement of a permanent pastor. They simply have the benefit of the travelling missionary priest, who calls at their good settlement once a month.

THE QUEEN OF MAY.

The freshness of May, And the sweetness of June, And the fire of July In its passionate noon. Morn'g and evening, September serene, Are together no match For my darling Queen, O Mary! all months And all days are false own, In these days of their joyousness When they are gone. And we give to the May, Not because it is best, But because it comes first And it brings the rest.

Thus wrote Cardinal Newman, who, like all "new Catholics," was devoted to our Blessed Mother. It is a well-known fact that converts to Catholicity are ultra-Catholic; dogmas and practices utterly at variance with the "spirit of Protestantism" seem to have the strongest attraction for them. Devotion to the Mother of Christ is essentially Catholic; so, too, is confession, the "priestcraft," are often the chief stumbling-blocks to conversion; once surmounted, however, they are not only not neglected, but are pedestaled, enshrined. Who frequents the sacraments so often as the new believer? Who has greater veneration for the Mother of the Mother Church?

That gentleman and saintly scholar, Rev. Benjamin P. De Costa, now in Rome, where he was recently ordained, another eminent convert exalted in his devotion to the Queen of May, voices his veneration in tributary verse:

Ave Maria, the sweet bells are chiming, They sound on the mountain, the lake side and lea, And up through blue ether the echoes far climbing, Melodious ring o'er the charmed turquoise times.

Ave Maria, the soul knows the power Of mystical bells in the campanile high, Whose notes wake the day and the rose in her tower, And earth with the lark at the Angelus cry.

Ave Maria, we hasten to render The honor God's Mother immaculate claims: Thy heart, the pure seat of love's radiant and tender, The love of thy children with ardor in flames.

Ave Maria, with deep veneration, We ever would come to thy privileged shrine: Devoutly presenting the truest oblation, Hearts worth to thy Son more than gems of the mine.

Ave Maria, the chiming is ended, And jewel-tipped tapers Thy altar adorn, May the prayer rise as pure, with the sweet incense blended, As dew on the rose or the breath of the morn.

Even among professed Protestants there is apparent a gratifying increase of respect for "our tainted nature's solitary boast," the One Woman whom our Lord chose from all the world in all its ages to be blessed among women forever as the Mother of Divinity. Many Lutheran and Episcopalian churches are named for "St. Mary the Virgin"; some very "high" sections of sects go so far as to select a name from the Rosary Mysteries, "St. Mary of the Annunciation," etc., and in their churches are recited the Rosary and Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

A writer in a Protestant journal (The Outlook), although he mistakes veneration for "adoration," has a very Catholic appreciation of Catholic piety as manifested in devotion to the Mother of God. "Our brethren of the Roman faith," says this kindly Outlooker, "have given expression to a deep instinct in their 'adoration' of the Holy Mother, and in the worship of the world there is nothing more touching than the love of children for the Madonna and the sweet trustfulness of their approach to her shrines and the simplicity of their prayers. She seems to take them by the hand and lead them up the great altar steps of the world to Him Whose awful purity and stainless love make Him remote

and almost inaccessible to a multitude of striving and sinful men and women. The Catholic instinctively recognizes what the Protestant too often fails to comprehend."

Kipling, Protestant poet though he is, pays Catholic honors to the Mother of God in his beautiful hymn:

Ah, Mary, placed with sorrow, The soul that comes to-morrow Before the God that gave, Since each was born of woman, For each an utter need— True comrades and true foes— Madonnas, interests!

In the days before "Morrie England" acknowledged Harry the Gross as Vicar of Christ and founder of a new religion, devotion to Our Lady flourished apace. Long after the Lady Chapels had been wrecked by the Deformers of the Deformation the wild flowers of English meadows preserved in their common names as they do to this day—a perpetual remembrance of the time when English hearts delighted in paying honor to the Mother of the World's Redeemer.

In recognition of the beauty of this perennial floral litany a Protestant Englishman was moved to write of "Mary's Flowers" in the Westminster Gazette. Most of these ancient and pious names are more names to us on this side of the water; our native flora is entirely different from that which brightens the byways of England:

Slag how Mary lived on earth In simplicity, To give to God's Son virgin birth, To man fertility.

And to a name that Heaven adores, One tribute man has paid, Her path that once was set in thorns Is now in flowers laid.

For Mary buds and Lady's keys Her tresses fragrance, Our Lady's beads, her beads of beads, Heart's ease and Rose-Mary—

Our Lady's smock and Golden Stair, Bright things that know not blaine, These children of the meadow bear Remembrance of her Name.

And fitting praise is this, that one Of such fair fame in Heaven, From fairest of earth's store alone Should have remembrance given.

Here we have none of these Mary-blossoms, not even Rose-Mary for so acclimated, however, is the Mary-gold (marigold). Our May flower trailing (arbutus) is not even a relative of the English and Irish May flower, "sweet as Blessed Mary's breath."

Much vaunted in the heraldry of codfish—the name of a vessel which bore to "the stern and rock-bound coast," so many plebeian ancestors of present-day American aristocracy. It one of life's little ironies that the Mayflower, whose "passengers, crew, and captain too" were to found the most intolerant of Protestant communities, should have been a ship named indirectly in honor of our Blessed Lady, a successor to the pioneer ship in American waters, the Holy Mary (Santa Maria) of Columbus. Prophetic, perhaps, of the prayer for time when the land discovered and explored by Catholic heroes, sanctified by the blood of Catholic martyrs, will come into the undivided inheritance of the faith of the ages in a recurrence to the spring of Christianity—the May of Mary, the blossom whose fruit is Christ.

Such was the dream of mariner and missionary; Columbus in his frail ship chanting the "Salve Regina" to his heavenly mistress; Ojeda traveling through the wilds of South America, often foodless, shoeless and ragged, but never once failing to carry the picture of his beloved Madonna, which he hung above his head at every rest.

Place, Pere Marquette asking Our Lady as a child might ask his mother to guide him to the discovery of the Mississippi, and dedicating the mighty river to the purity of the Virgin Mother; of other Catholic explorers and missionaries honoring the mother of their Lord, their help of Christians, their Guide of the Wilderness, their Star of the Sea.

And they to the Christ were the truest, And love to His Mother was true! —Busyboddy, in Catholic Standard and Times.

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

On Good Friday, Premier Combes ordered the Crucifixes removed from all the courts of justice in France. The despatches state that this iniquitous order is causing "agitation" throughout the country. At Havre and Lyons the workmen refused to take down the sacred effigies, in the latter city the removals were effected by the bureau of public architecture. In Paris the work is being done behind closed doors—but the Parisians know that it is going on.

Doubtless we shall be again invited to weep and pray for the poor, old French people, who are being thus outraged in their most sacred sensibilities by the wicked Fre Masons and Jews. We beg to be excused. The Catholics of France needed not the gift of prophecy to see that this blasphemous act must follow on the abolition of religious education, and the proscription of the men and women who, in the exercise of their rights as citizens, chose to consecrate themselves to God. Two years ago, in Arles, Mr. F. W. Parsons tells us, in the first paper of his series on "The Religious Crises in France," in the Dolphin, the Municipal Council ordered all the Crosses in public places removed. The order was partly complied with, when the women protested, and a temporary stay of proceedings was obtained while the Mayor re-submitted the question to the council.

The Catholic men of Arles apparently were not heard from at this time. The council denied the women's petition, and the iniquitous work was consummated.

Writes Mr. Parsons: "Crosses which even revolutionists of the Eighteenth Century had respected, were torn down. . . . A search was instituted for the remnants of all these symbols of our salvation. Fragments of them were picked up from the sewers and from the waters of the Rhone. One twisted image of Christ

our Lord, that had been wrenched from the cross, was fished out of the mire by the Pont-dos-Planiers. Several thousand persons . . . gathered to remove this image of the Saviour whom French Radicals and Socialists repudiate. These benighted Catholics carried the distorted image, in impromptu procession, past the house of the Mayor. . . . So boisterous did they become, in their wild, unreasoning protest against the reign of 'free thought,' that gendarmes and police feel compelled to restrain them, particularly when some of the crowd tried to force an entrance into the Mayor's house. Several 'free-thinkers,' who had taken part in the outrage of the night before, were rather roughly handled. The Mayor decided to wash his hands of it, after the fashion of Pilate, and had posters placed in conspicuous localities, expressing his disapprobation of the act of the iconoclasts." But the Crosses were not restored.

But why did not the Catholics of Paris and the other cities of France emulate even the above slight protest when Combes' edict was made known? Why did not they stand like walls of adamant about the attacked convents and monasteries at an earlier day? What has God given them their strong right arms for?

When Pope Leo XIII. was on his death bed, the French Cardinal Mathieu besought the blessing of His Holiness for France, and assured him that country was not hostile to religion. "It is only a small number of men who persecute," said the Cardinal. "Yes," said the Pope, "but they are the masters, and the people let them do it. Why? Where is the vaunted faith and chivalry of France?" —Pilot.

MECHANICAL RELIGION.

As a man is a being composed of both soul and body both must render to God the supreme honor which is due Him. This the soul does by interior and the body by exterior worship. With our separated brethren this exterior worship is made a matter of their own convenience. It is optional not compulsory. The Catholic, however, is conscience bound under the penalty of grievous sin to such worship. With the non-Catholic the child soon inherits the option of the parent whereas the Catholic child inherits the obligation of conscience. Thus from their most tender years they are taught the obligation of exterior as well as interior worship. In maturity their lessons are not forgotten.

It is to be feared, however, that in many constant repetitions of the act has prompted a mechanical religion. They attend Mass regularly on Sunday and approach the sacraments at respectable intervals. But their acts seem to be wanting in fervor. Their devotions are without warmth and their demeanor gives the impression that they are reluctantly present in compliance with the law of conscience. They engage in useless conversations, assume irreverent attitudes and are a cause of scandal. Convinced that they possess the true faith they cast themselves upon a good act for their salvation.

All this, however, is undevotional. It is not intelligent worship, and, therefore, not pleasing in the sight of God. Few laymen have taken the trouble to train themselves to follow the Mass untroubledly without a prayer book. Yet many are seen without one. Neither have they a rosary. How they manage to keep themselves free from distractions is a serious problem. Others far better versed in their religion would not venture it.

Now these individuals are deceiving themselves if they imagine that they are complying with the obligation of rendering exterior worship to God. For this demands attention and reverence. Giving one knee to God is not reverence, neither is a posture that is half sitting and half reclining. Such attitudes are unbecoming the parlor, and no gentleman would be guilty of them there. How much less then should he be given to them in the Real Presence! Such demeanor provokes the impression that those given to it have substituted a mechanical religion for real devotion. Without reverence of posture all exterior worship is empty show.—Church Progress.

THIS CHURCH CHAINED TO EARTH.

Of the many strange places of worship she had visited during her world travels, Jessie Ackerman, "Housekeeper" says: "It is remarkable how much one can tell of a creed or religion by the appearance, exterior and interior, of its places of worship. The Catholic Church in every part of the world is designated by the sign of the cross. The missionaries of this faith have always been most energetic in their work at the outposts of civilization, and go where you will find their little missions flourishing. The most interesting, though probably the smallest of their outposts, is on the northern shores of Iceland. Most of the people of Iceland belong to the Lutheran Church, and for many years it was the only denomination represented on the island. During the visit of a wealthy Icelandic and his wife to the continent of Europe they became conversant to the Catholic faith, and upon their return home erected the present church on the northern shores. It is situated on a spot where the winds have full sweep from the northern seas, and for fear the little church might be borne away by some of the mighty blasts of winter, it is made fast to posts driven deep in the earth, by a great chain, one of the heaviest ever constructed. On a cold night in January it is a weird experience to sit in this church and try to listen to sermon or song while outside old Boreas is howling and his blast cause the tiny shrine to sway like a ship at sea. But it is firmly anchored and the danger is more imaginary than real."

Hope for the best, be ready for the worst, and take what God sends.



The Wise Mother

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CARDINAL MANNING AS A TOTAL ABSTAINER.

"It is a peculiarity of those who throw themselves most eagerly into temperance work," says C. Kegan Paul in his sketch of Cardinal Manning, "that they are as a rule slow to adopt it, while many do not understand, for a long while, how in fact it is at the root of almost every philanthropic movement. Even the Cardinal himself had been seven years Archbishop before he gave himself wholly to the cause. His tentative steps were these: In 1866 he appointed a Committee which recommended the formation of a Temperance Society, binding to total abstinence only those who had given themselves over to the habit of drunkenness. A little thought showed him and others, who had begun in the same way, that this would never do. Such a plan is to make all those who sign the pledge write themselves down as at least, potential drunkards, and draw a hard and fast line between the virtuous and vicious. In 1867 he endeavored to bring about a 'Truce of St. Patrick,' and a promise from men and women not to enter a public house on Saturday or Sundays. In 1871 he spoke in support of the Permissive Bill, and in 1872 he took the final plunge and signed the temperance pledge. He did this on the only true ground for every moderate man, that he had no right to ask a man to do that which he was not ready to do himself. By the very fact of his asking an assembly of working men in Southwark to be total abstainers, which was to them a matter of great and serious mortification of the flesh, he was bound to do that which was to him no serious difficulty, but only the renunciation of a trivial luxury. Had it been much more, he would have been bound to carry it through, on the principle that St. Paul adopted, who was ready to eat no meat while the world stood, if it caused scandal to his brethren.

The next step was to establish the Temperance League of the Cross for Catholics, a great and living organization. In his eightieth year the Cardinal used these words, 'I have for years, I say it openly and boldly, been a fool for Christ's sake in the matter of intoxicating drink, and so I hope to die.' On his death-bed he charged his doctors to give him no alcohol.—Sacred Heart Review.

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