

Mosaic priesthood; for how few amongst their parishioners are they of whom we can hope that their fleshly hearts will, for a long time to come, permit them to see and acknowledge their duty in this respect.

And for the rest, when once men thus honour God with the first fruits of their substance to Himself, their "joy in believing" will so increase, and their substance will so multiply, that neither their debt to His poor, nor their free-will offerings to His Church, will be withheld or grudgingly bestowed.

But as our space is gone, we hope to notice the Essays themselves more fully next month.

The Old Year, and the New One.

It was towards midnight. Fleecy clouds lowering over the whole face of the sky had all day long been threatening snow. It had been cold and cheerless, and was now full dark—the moon's first quarter—and the stars hidden in the blackness of the thick atmosphere. I was kneeling in my oratory—no light, but on my knees in silent meditation thinking of the past, and wondering. Of a sudden there rang along the passages of the night, the dull heavy sound of the Old Church Bell. It was the great tenor bell, and slowly it went on wailing and wailing as over some deep misfortune, sending forth its heavy lamentations far and wide—fit company for the darkness of the night. No doubt there were many at the very same moment smitten with the same thoughts that then rushed along my own cheerless heart; for the sound of the deep-toned bell, and the midnight stillness were full of blank sorrow to me. Peal after peal it rang on,—slowly chiming—then more slowly still—more slowly still—then it stopped.

It was the end of the Old Year.

There was a pause of some few moments—perfect stillness—not a sound. Then the Old Church clock sent forth, from the tower on high, the striking of the midnight hour. Twelve o'clock! The last note had hardly died away—its last vibrations were still lingering in the air, when of a sudden there rang out from the walls of the belfry such a volume of clattering, riotous, tumultuous sound, as made one think that the old walls would crumble into dust;—swaying the vane, and the cock that crowned it on high, to and fro—here and there—as though all would come down about our ears. I started from my knees. Strange thoughts came whirling through my brain. Where am I? What have I done? What has happened?

It was the beginning of the New Year.

"Yes," thought I, "it is gone. Another year is gone. I looked out into the world at large, and what did I find? I looked through

our own little parish, and what was there? I looked round into myself, and what had I to tell?

I thought of Easter-tide and holy Lent—Lent, when we had our laying on of hands in Confirmation, and so many had come with vows renewed and resolutions strongly made to serve their God. Easter—when so many had come the first time kneeling at our altar to receive the precious Body and Blood of our Blessed Lord—I thought of their young hearts, so fairly promising, of their faith so full of hope; and I wondered where they all were then—whether the holy vows had all been kept; whether they were still found in the precincts of the Church; whether the Blessed Eucharist, celebrated each Lord's Day, still received them, as they were then, in holiness and purity of heart, the faithful ones of their loving Redeemer. My mind glanced rapidly along, and took them in by name. John?—I had not seen him for many weeks. Robert?—No. Susan?—No. Martha?—Not since Whitsuntide. Job? (the old man who had come so late, and promised so well).—No. Since that first so fair beginning, I had only seen him once. Thus I ran along in my mind's eye the many wandering sheep—ah! *why* had they wandered? They had been brought into the fold, may be, too suddenly, and without preparation, and the fault was mine,—or the seed had fallen on stony ground—or the birds of the air had come and devoured it—or I know not what—but this only—What the year had so fairly begun, I did not find so fairly ended. There had been so much promise. Things had looked so very bright and beautiful. Such eagerness—such anxiety to be of God. Lent and Easter had appeared to win so many souls on every side. But now! Deadness again. It seemed as though the merry ringing peals of the New Year bells were mocking in their sounds, and saying—"All in vain—all in vain. Toil and trouble—all in vain. The Old Year is but a memory, and the New Year but a dream."

Then my thoughts ran on again. The sermons, and the preachings, and the prayers, how many, many times! Were any sinners won? Had any forsaken schism and loved the Church afresh? Had any said, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest?" Had any Magdalen confessed her sins, and come once more to her Blessed Lord, bathing His feet with her tears? Had any, in the bitterness of a stricken heart cried out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Ah! yes, *some* had; but did they abide stedfast? Were they still enduring? In the waters of Baptism they had been washed; but was the water's cleansing still with marks of its power manifest? Then I thought of several by name. They are gone—back. No