

road. I am satisfied to abide by his decision.

"Let us hear what he'll say first," replied McEnery.

Saying this he looked about in the direction pointed out by his man, but could see nothing.

"What white horse do you speak of?" he said. "I can see no—Eh? what's this?" He looked around again—above, below, behind, on all sides, but neither man, nor boots, nor cattle were to be seen. All had vanished, and there he stood, at the foot of the hill, as poor as he had left it two days back, the wind lifting his threadbare garment, and sighing with a melancholy cadence through the strings of his old harp.

Tom recovered his astonishment to vent his feelings in a burst of lamentation. The utility of wasting his time in the mere indulgence of grief was, however, apparent, and he accordingly soon desisted. Sitting down on the roadside, he endeavored to collect his scattered thoughts, and entered into the following dialogue with himself:

"Well, Tom McEnery, what are you to do now? If you go home you know you must be under the painful necessity of leaving it again, and parting with your family in the same manner as you did before, and where would be the use of that. I'll tell you what you'll do, Tom, as I'm your best friend, and indeed I may say almost your only friend, these times. Go to the next farmer's house, and begin to play your harp for them, and you'll get welcome there for this night, and stop there; and if you want to know what you are to do in the morning, don't be in a hurry, but take things easy, and I'll tell you. Start off with yourself at the peep of day for Carrigtoile, and come before John of the Wine, and tell him you want a letter of recommendation from him to the great O'Neil, in Ulster, stating what an ugly face he had, an' what a purty one you gave him in the place of it. When you get the letter, which he will be most happy to give you, start away with yourself again for Ulster, an' when you get there, you have only to put a purty face upon the great O'Neil, the same way as you seen your man done upon O'Connor, an' you'll get twice as great a reward from him as from Seaghan an' Fionna, an' you can keep it all to yourself, without having an ungrateful, un-naythir' baste of a man to squander the half of it away upon the road home, and rob you of the rest when you get there. That's my advice to you, and if you're a wise man you'll take it."

TO BE CONTINUED

"O, THAT WE COULD BLOT THEM OUT EVEN WITH OUR BLOOD"

The Triduum preparatory to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception had certainly proved a success, and as twenty or more striped jackets made their way up to the altar rail in the little Penitentiary chapel, good Father Brennan's eyes were liquid with tears of holy joy. Indeed, a new spirit seemed to have come down over the abode of stern justice, and more than one despairing soul had plucked up fresh courage for repentance and resignation.

Not much surprised, then, was the zealous priest when, after supper that evening, a faltering knock came at his door. "Come in," he cried, looking up from packing his valise; and in response to his invitation, a burly close-cropped man of about middle age entered the room, and stood in awkward silence knotting his fingers, feeling in his pockets and altogether pretty much ill at ease. "Well, my good fellow, what is it," asked the priest coming forward, "do you want to—?" "I want you to pray for me, Father, that's what I want, and I want your blessing before you go." And without another word, he was down on his knees, with bowed head and folded hands. "Certainly, certainly, my man," replied the priest, making the sign of blessing and laying his hands tenderly on the grizzled head, "there now," as the man arose, "but remember this is not to be all one-sided; I mean you must pray for me, too."

With the door half-closed behind him the man turned and re-entered the room; the good Father's gentle action and kindly words had touched him. "Perhaps I'd better tell you all, Father, that is if you've time—" "Time?" answered the priest, glancing at his watch, "certainly; my train does not pull through for an hour and a half yet. Come sit down (bringing forward a chair) and tell me all."

He heard all, a strange, sad yes even terrible all; hot-headed, disobedient youth, criminal early manhood, criminal middle-age, crime, punishment and crime again. "Ten years is what I'm up for this time, Father. They'll be run out two weeks from now. That's why I want your prayers. Pray that I don't go back again, as before, to the old ways. I squared up a year ago, and of course have been keeping pretty straight since; but I tell you what this Triduum did for me, Father, and I feel as though the Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart have rescued me from hell. Those words, Father, in that act of reparation you read this evening, they're burned into my memory. I mean this: 'O would that we could blot them out, even with our blood!' You see, I remember them. Father, pray hard that God may give me time to make some atonement for that awful past; there's the trusty with his lantern

coming up the yard now, I must get out, good-bye, Father," and he was gone. "No sham about that fellow," mused Father Brennan, thoughtfully. "I've met them, dozens of them, but he's none, if my twelve years' experience with jail birds count anything."

On the evening of December the twenty-third, about two weeks after the above mentioned incident, there might have been noted among the arrivals for the Northern Limited at the town of X—a stoop-shouldered middle-aged man, who on alighting, made his way down the platform with nervous haste, as if anxious to avoid rather than court the society of his fellowmen. Passing hurriedly through the waiting rooms he crossed the street and entered one of the restaurants, whence he emerged in about half an hour, and stood glancing up and down the street in a way that showed him to be a perfect stranger to the place. "Paper, sir!" cried the ever-watchful newsboy. "Post, Herald News?" "No; but, say, can you tell me the way to the nearest Catholic Church?" "Catholic Church? Shure; right 'roun' de corner, dere, and tree blocks dis way, north."

"Thank you," replied the stranger, walking off briskly in the direction indicated. "Ah, service of some kind," he said to himself, as, on nearing, he caught the sound of music and voices. "Friday? O' yes, benediction I suppose. How fortunate!" and, entering, he slipped quietly into one of the rear pews. What a wonderful glory about the altar; the lights, the flowers, the fragrant incense! What inspiring devotion in the faces and posture of those about him! The poor convict, still in all the fervor of his new repentance-life felt his once stony heart grow warm, and it was all he could do to restrain the tears that came all unbidden to eyes but little used to such tokens of emotion. The organ ceased, and the priest at the altar began to read a prayer. "An act of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

"What! could it be? Yes, that was the very prayer Father Brennan had read at the close of the Triduum. Those words were in it. Listen, yes, there." "O would that we could blot them out, even with our blood!" The rest of the prayer he heard not, but from that truly contrite heart went up a prayer and a desire surpassing far the choicest prayer of words.

A few pious women alone remained in the now darkened church, and even after these had taken their departure one figure still knelt on in prayer. No, asleep; the great joy of the first day of freedom, the day-long travel, the heated atmosphere of the church, the sense of sweet tranquility amid such holy surroundings—all conducted to slumber, and all unconsciously the poor fellow had dropped off asleep. Nor, indeed, was he noticed by the half-blind old night watchman, who, inexorable as death, came around at his appointed hour and made every door secure.

Not a little startled was our friend to find himself, on awakening, alone in this great vault of cold and gloom, darkness all but for the feeble glimmer of the lamp before the altar. How the shadows shifted in his flickering light! He passed his hand across his eyes. Those shadows were moving queerly! "My God," he muttered, "those are men—and about our old business. Ah, my God, let not these fresh memories drive me mad. I've other work now!" and he began to crawl towards the door. It might not have been locked, or perhaps was even now open for the thieves' escape. Crash! His foot had struck an upturned kneeling-bench; he was discovered. Covering low he waited. Scuffling feet came down the aisle. A sudden glare of light, a hand on his throat; blinded and half-choked, he could make no struggle. "A sound and you take your leave of this earth!" O God, how well he knew the voice! His captor, too, was scanning him curiously as he lay in the dark-lantern's glare. "By cracky! Well, that's pretty good; why, it's Bill! I thought you was sly and safe behind the bars up at Punkah? Hello! what's up?" noting the other seemed anything but pleased at the recognition. "O, I see, turned over, have you? I might have known it, seein' you weren't here on biz. Gosh, I'm glad we caught on before you could do any mischief. There, I guess you'll lie quiet now."

Gagged and bound the man lay helpless, while the sacrilegious wretches went back to begin their work. Helpless, too, the King of Kings there in His frail tabernacle. Just punishment, my God, that I, who was once as these, must now lie helpless, powerless to prevent this outrage. O how different it seems now! Helpless; and they about to begin their heave's work. Cry out? How could he? Wait and inform; but the outrage, which alone was his grief now, would have been done. A hundred kindred thoughts flashed in the moment through that perplexed brain. Time was short. O could he do nothing! nothing! He prayed, O the fervor of that prayer; then like a flash it came. In that one instant, in the light of grace, he had weighed every probable consequence, and was resolved.

Struggling, he continued to slip off the gag; then shout after shout rang through the vault of gloom. They ceased; but hurrying footsteps, grating keys and excited voices took their place.

The priest's first glance was towards the tabernacle, his first action to feel behind the half torn veils. God be praised! All was safe. They knelt for a moment in prayer of thanksgiving. A groan brought them to their feet.

"Somewhere down there near the door," Father Brennan motioned to the others to remain, himself striding quickly down the aisle. Almost at the door he stumbled upon it—the prostrate form of a man, bound, and with the death-rattle in his labored breathing.

Touching the nearest gas jet the priest bent down, there was blood upon the pavement and he started back as in the uncertain light he recognized the features of his convict friend. The half-closed eyes opened wide, and in the glance of joy and exultation. "Father, bless me—it's all over now. Father Brennan—I've blotted them out—please God—with—my—!" He stood alone beside a corpse.

Knowing the man and his life-story, past and present, Father Brennan at once surmised the situation, and with the impulsiveness and quick insight of his Irish faith, dropped upon his knees to kiss the hands of a martyr.

Home friends and his strange acquaintance had none, and the good priest insisted that all arrangements be left in his care. The funeral was such as few of the friendless have known, marked by a magnificence and devotion quite unusual. But most remarkable of all, and remembered even to this day by those who heard, was the funeral sermon preached by Father Brennan, who chose as his text these words from the act of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "O would that we could blot them out, even with our blood."

THE BRANCH THEORY

ABSURDITY OF THE THEORY WHICH HOLDS THAT THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST EXISTS IN ROMAN, EASTERN AND ANGLICAN BRANCHES

Every one knows, of course, the old Protestant theory of the constitution of Christ's Church. It said that there was no corporate, visible Church at all. The Church, as founded by the Saviour, was an invisible society, composed of all those who professed to follow Him according to their lights—whether they were Lutherans, Calvinists or Methodists. The branch theory of the average well-read Anglican is different from this. He speaks of one Visible Catholic Church, and calls himself by that venerable name. He looks out over the world at the lesser Protestant sects that divide Christendom, and his soul is filled with anger. For Methodists, and others of that type, he has unutterable scorn. The Catholic Church of Christ, he says, is a visible, corporate body. It was founded by Christ, and for a time remained one undivided society. For some centuries, past, however, it has been split up into three great branches, which are not, unfortunately, in communion with one another. These branches are the Roman, the Eastern, and the Anglican. In these three branches the true Church of Christ exists at present. Any one belonging to these bodies is a Catholic. He may rest in peace, and pray that these branches will one day be united. Other religious bodies, however, are schismatic and heretical. They have no part in Christ's Church, and no one may belong to them, except, of course, in ignorance. Again, the Catholic faith is that body of religious doctrine on which the three branches agree. Doctrines on which they do not agree are not binding on the belief of the faithful; they are merely pious opinions, not dogmas. In such matters the one's conscience is free to accept or reject; but it must be said that in the Roman branch there are certain pious opinions, e.g., Papal Supremacy and Infallibility, which do not tend to edification. If only we could get these three branches to meet in General Council, we would have the very Catholic Church justified by Christ, and its decisions would be infallible.

This is the theory we have been reading about in the papers for some time past. And the amazing thing about it is, not precisely its want of logic, but the fact that, though it has been held by many Anglicans for over half a century, it has never been really thought out; it has never been consistently formulated; it is not even a theory at all. It is a most glaring case of Anglican vagueness and confusion of thought on most theological subjects. Let us examine it briefly:

"The true Catholic Church is divided into three branches—Roman, Anglican and Eastern." But why three? Why not twenty or fifty? Why not take into account all and every Christian sect, as the out-and-out Protestants do? Some Anglicans seem to think that all the East is united "into one great Church." The fact is that the East is riddled with heresies and schism almost as badly as the West. There are over a dozen separate Eastern churches. There is the Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Church in schism with her. There is the Nestorian Church. There are Monophysite Churches, such as the Copts, Abyssinians, Jacobites, Armenians. They there are the Uniate churches in communion with Rome. Now, all these anathematize each other as schismatics and heretics. Are they all, still, true branches of the Church? If the Nestorians and Monophysites are true Catholics, what becomes of the General Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, which in the fifth century threw them out of the Catholic

Church as heretics? If it be said that the Eastern Orthodox Church alone is a true branch amongst these churches, on what principle is the selection made? What about the Bulgarians? What about the Nestorians? Why are these thrown over? In truth the Branch theory is in a hopeless muddle, as far as the East is concerned, and Anglicans have never bothered to clear it up.

Turn to the West. What are the branches here? The Anglicans answer, the Roman and Anglican—continental and British. But to take the continental, why is Rome the only branch? What about the Jesuits, whom Anglicans style "the Church of Holland?" What about the "Old Catholic" churches of Germany and Austria? What about the Reformed Church of Portugal, whose prelates were ordained by Anglicans? What about Senour Cabrera of Spain and his sect? He, too, was ordained bishop by Anglicans, and surely ordaining means inter-communion. There are all sorts of little sects and schisms amongst the Poles. Now, are all these branches of the true Church, and if not, why not? We ask the question especially about the Spanish and Portuguese people, who got their orders from the Anglicans, who agree with them in faith, and use their prayer-book! How can these be rejected? It is obvious that the three-branch theory will not do even in the West. It is simply hopeless in face of actual facts. It has not been sufficiently formulated to be called even a theory.

Now, let us grapple more closely with the problems, and ask our High-Church friends for a consistent test or criterion by which we may decide who are the true branches of the Church—on their assumption that it is divided into branches, and not one corporate body in communion with itself, as Catholics say. What conditions are required, on Anglican grounds, to be a branch of the Catholic Church?

The old-fashioned answer of some Anglicans is that to be a branch of Christ's Church two things are required—valid orders and the creeds. We may ask why these are selected rather than the Papacy and extreme unction? But we let it pass. Let it be valid orders and the creeds. But what orders are these? The Apostles' Orders admitted by every one as valid; or those claimed by the sect in question? If the first, then down goes the Anglican Church. No one acknowledges her orders as valid except her own members. Rome rejects them. The whole East rejects them. If the second, then all bodies who claim to have bishops are true branches—the Methodist Episcopalian, the Reformed Episcopal Church, the Lutherans in Scandinavia, the Old Catholics, and the Jansenists—not to mention the little sects of Portugal and Spain. Valid orders evidently won't do.

But the creeds! We ask, what creeds? The Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian? Well, the Apostles' Creed was not known in its present form till the sixth or seventh century. It is unknown to the Eastern Church as we have it. It is no test at all. Neither will the Athanasian Creed do as a test. It is a Western compilation of the seventh century, made, perhaps, by the Irish monks of Northern Italy against the Arians. It has no authority in the East, and is found only in the Western Breviary. It may be disputed whether it has any symbolic position in the West. The Nicene Creed is the worst test of all. The Roman and Orthodox churches do not agree over this. If it is a test of Catholicity, one or other of the three bodies will have to go. Theologians know all about the "Filioque" dispute. And leaving aside the "Filioque," all the Eastern heretics, Nestorians, etc., have valid orders, and hold the old creed of Nice as elaborated by the General Council of Constantinople in 381. But, surely, all these are not true Catholics.

The Anglican will now shift his ground, and propose as a test of Catholicity: "Valid Orders and the Catholic Faith." We have discussed the question of Orders, and found it wanting as a criterion. Let us turn to the "Catholic Faith." The various perplexed friends who does he mean by the "Catholic Faith." If he tells us that it is the faith held conjointly by all true branches of the Catholic Church, we have a delightful example of a vicious circle. Are we not trying by means of this test of "Catholic Faith," to find out exactly what are these true branches? Do you mean to say that the "Catholic Faith" determines what are the true branches of Catholicism, and the true branches determine what is the "Catholic Faith?" The various purpose in the art of logic would laugh at such an absurdity. If it is said that the Catholic Faith is that laid down by the General Councils, the difficulty is only removed a degree. Which are the General Councils? Those held as such by all branches of the true Church? But what are those branches? That is

the question at issue. Perhaps you will say that these are the General Councils on which all Christendom agreed. But all Christendom never agreed on even one General Council. The Arians rejected Nice, the Nestorians rejected Ephesus, the Monophysites, Chalcedon, the Protestants rejected Trent, and so on.

Thus we go round and round, and it is easy sport tying up this absurd branch theory in a knot. It stipulates that certain branches combine to make up the one Catholic Church of Christ. But no one knows what these branches are, and no one can give any logical reason for the inclusion or rejection of any Church whatever as a true branch.

On the other hand, the true Catholic has no difficulty in saying who are the members of the true Church. The branches of the vine are united branches, meeting in the visible unity of the main trunk. Christ has established St. Peter and his successors in the See of Rome as the centre of unity, the palpable test of Catholic communion on earth. "He who abandons the Chair of Peter, upon whom the Church was founded, does so at his peril," said St. Cyprian in the third century. "Where Peter is, there is the Church; where the Church is, there death is not, but eternal life," wrote St. Ambrose in the fourth century.—"Anon" in Truth.

THE LENTEN SEASON

Lent is the fast of forty days preparatory to the great feast of Easter. We keep the Lenten fast after the example of Moses and Elias, but especially of our blessed Lord Himself. At all times and in all ages men have fasted and abstained by way of preparing for the reception of some great favor from the hand of God. We learn in Holy Writ that Moses before he ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Law made a fast of forty days and Elias observed a fast of like duration before he went forth to behold the passing of the Lord on Mount Horeb. Many instances may be cited to show the antiquity of the practice of fast and abstinence, for many instances of this character abound in the Scriptures. "Be ye converted to Me with all your heart in fasting, in weeping and in mourning," says God through His holy prophet Joel.

The spirit of Holy Mother Church with regard to the fast of Lent is that we reap at Easter the fruits of the redemption and rise to a new life of grace. The Church prescribes the forty days of fast in honor of Our Lord's fast in the desert. Forty is a momentous number in Holy Scripture. The deluge lasted forty days; Moses and Elias spent forty days' fast; the Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

The Lenten season is variously named among the nations. The Italians say "Quaresima" and the French "Carême," both derived from the Latin "Quadragesima," denoting forty days. The Germans say "Fastenzeit" (time of fasting) while the Dutch term it "Vasten" (fast). Our own term Lent is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "Lentem," meaning spring, which is akin to the German word "Lenz" and the Dutch "Lente." This may be accounted for by reason of the fact that with the Lenten season dawned the spring period of the ecclesiastical year.

We have ample proof that the fast before Easter has been known from apostolic days or nearly so. Tertullian mentions it in his Montanist treatise on fasting. Irenaeus a still earlier writer, tells of the fast before Easter and we learn of the different modes of its observance that prevailed in different places. Writers at various later dates speak of the Lenten fast as a duty, as did Tertullian, on its obligatory character.

As to the precise duration of the Lent of early times there is some doubt among both Catholic and Protestant authorities on ecclesiastical history. There is an obscure passage in the writing of Irenaeus that would seem to favor the contention of those who hold that the early fast was of forty days, but many scholars are of the opinion that Irenaeus refers to an absolute fast from all food for two or more days, or for forty hours.

From the early part of the fourth century and continuously thereafter we find many passages that mention Lent as a period of forty days. There are some who believe that the Greek word "tessaraktete" was originally associated with the forty hours of Our Lord's sepulture. Be this as it may, the fact remains that in the fourth century at least it was interpreted as a period of forty days.

There was some diversity as to the reckoning of the Lenten period in the early ages. Sozomen, a writer of the fifth century, says that all Africa, Egypt, Palestine and the Westerns generally kept a Lent of six weeks, while the church of Constantinople and the neighboring provinces observed a season of seven weeks. Another writer mentions that some fasted six weeks and others seven weeks and accounts for it by reason of the exemption of Sundays and Saturdays. St. Ambrose recognized the exemption from fasting on both days. The method in favor at Rome was the fast of six weeks, Sundays excepted, making a fast of thirty-six days. The practice at Constantinople was followed in the East. The Council of Trullo in 692 ordered that no fast should be made on the Saturdays of Lent.

This ordinance reveals an interesting observance prevailing among the Greeks, for at this same Council it was directed that no Mass be offered during Lent except on Saturdays, Sundays and the feast of the Annunciation, for Mass and fasting are among the Greeks quite incompatible. Their fast then was thirty-five days. Holy Saturday, however, was not deducted.

The matter of the Lenten period came up in various councils and finally it became customary to add the four days prior to the first Sunday of Lent as in our day. We read, however, that St. Margaret of Scotland introduced in the eleventh century the practice of beginning Lent on Ash Wednesday among her subjects, and St. Charles Borromeo at his first Council recognized the right of the churches in Milan and in other parts of the diocese still observing the Ambrosian rite to begin Lent with the first Sunday.

It is well to remember that in matters of discipline there may exist variations in different parts of the world subject, of course, to the approval and permission of the Church. This is because of divers circumstances or conditions. But in the matter of doctrine there must be absolute unity.

This holy season brings before our minds the necessity of penance. Penance is necessary for all adults, so much so that without it we cannot reach heaven. The saints did penance, even those of them who from their very childhood had committed no grievous offense against the Divine Law. There are many who because of their employment or for some other reason are exempt from the rigor of the Lenten season, but they should not permit this most acceptable time to pass without making some little voluntary sacrifice.—The Tablet.

A SUBSTITUTE FOR CHURCH BAZAARS

The members of the Ladies' Altar Society of the Holy Family Church South Pasadena, California, of which the Rev. R. J. Cotter, D. D., is pastor, have devised a new method of raising money for the church as a substitute for the time-honored bazaar or fair. They divided among themselves a debt of \$1,000, each guaranteeing to raise, through their exertions, the sum of \$25. To this end they will engage in various pursuits until the allotted sum is obtained.

The president of the society has planned to raise her portion by making and selling preserves; others have undertaken to do certain kinds of housework which they formerly paid others to do; while others have agreed to do their own housecleaning and laundry work and to economize in various ways in order that the money saved may be turned into the parish treasury.

In other words, says The Catholic Bulletin, they will put into work for themselves and their families some of the thought and energy and personal activity which they would be obliged to put into a bazaar or fair for the church if they were to utilize this common method of raising funds. Success will, no doubt crowd their efforts; and they will have the consolation of knowing that the money was raised without having recourse to any of the questionable methods or other disagreeable features connected with a bazaar.

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