

public squares. In the 14th century, Passion and Miracle plays were frequent in England. Henry VIII. forbade the performance of religious plays, and they gradually disappeared from England. In France, Spain and Italy they continued. The subjects were the miracles of our Lord and the parables, but chiefly the sacred Passion. Of all these ancient plays, there has come down to us the Passion play at Ober Ammergau, which is still performed in all its integrity every ten years. The legend of the origin of this play is, that in the year 1633 there raged in the valley of the Ammer a deadly plague, which threatened to depopulate the district, while the village of Ammergau was, from close quarantine, exempt from its ravages. The infection having entered, and in a short time eighty-four of the villagers having died, the terrified survivors made supplication to God, and registered a solemn vow that if He heard their cry and stayed the plague, they would represent every ten years "for thankful remembrance and edifying contemplation, by the help of the Almighty, the sufferings of Jesus, the Saviour of the world." After this the tradition is, that not a person died. The people have ever since most rigorously kept their vow.

Without giving a full description of the passion play, with which many of our readers are familiar, it will suffice to say that its decennial performances bring together a vast concourse of people, sometimes as many as 60,000. Strangers from abroad are attracted by mere curiosity; some by the material advantages of trade; the majority, however, are drawn by religious motives. The latter are no doubt more impressed by the scenic representation of the passion of our Lord than they could be by the most eloquent discourse. All those who personate the sacred characters are individuals of unblemished reputation. Not only are scenic representations of Old Testament history given with the utmost faithfulness, but the principal events in the life of our Lord and his disciples. These tableaux are accompanied with orchestral music, and solos and choruses explaining them. A writer describes the tableaux which precedes the last act of the final drama of the crucifixion: "Christ appears with ten disciples in the garden of Gethsemane and endures His agony. This is acted with exceeding reverence and remarkable naturalness. When the Saviour falls to the earth the third time beneath the bloody agony, an angel with a chalice in his hand appears over His head and addresses Him words of comfort. This appears to strengthen Him, and He returns to the three disciples, whom He finds again asleep. He exhorts them to watchfulness, and tells them the traitor is at hand. The rest of the disciples are in the background, and are suddenly aroused from their sleep by the approach of soldiers, led by Judas, who carries a lantern. Then follows an exact repetition of the Gospel narrative—the kiss of Judas and Christ's reproachful question, the enquiry addressed to the soldiers as to the object of their search, and their sudden prostration at the sound of His dread name, the maiming of Malchus by the impetuous Peter, and the healing of the wound by Christ, who rebukes Peter and tells him he has no need of carnal weapons, since legions of angels would hasten to His side if that were compatible with the recovery of man's fallen race. The soldiers then rush upon Him, bind His hands behind Him and lead Him away. The disciples escape; but John, followed timidly by Peter, returns and goes after the mournful procession." Following this scene, Christ is dragged before Annas, and after He is arraigned before Caiaphas. The whole is enacted with the greatest fidelity to the Gospel narrative, with an entire absence of anything approaching to irreverence.

In the next tableaux the Sanhedrim confirm the sentence of death passed upon Christ before the tribunal of Caiaphas. Judas appears as prominent personage, and the conception of his character is given as leaving no suspicion at first as to the fatal tragedy his treachery was to consummate, but now the realization fills him with horror. Judas had witnessed Christ's miraculous powers, and he doubtless thought that He could baffle all the murderous plots of His enemies. But now, when he sees that Christ cannot or will not save Himself, and that He must die, is overwhelmed with remorse and horror, he rushes into the council and expostulates with vehement grief, only to find mockery and cold contempt. He flings among the priests the price of his treachery, and rushes out to commit suicide upon a neighbouring tree. With breathless attention the vast crowd awaits the final scene in the passion of our Lord. As the curtain rises there appear two crosses erect, each with its victim nailed. Between the two is a taller cross on the ground upon which a sad, wan figure is nailed to it; this is slowly raised and fixed in its socket. The head of the crucified is crowned with thorns. The minutest circumstances of the crucifixion are enacted. As the figure cries "It is finished!" the head drops upon his breast. To the writer, who witnessed the passion play, under less favorable accessories than at Ammergau, the falling of the head in death seemed as real as the pen with which these lines are written is real. The appearance of Joseph of Arimathea, the breaking the legs of the two thieves, the piercing the side of Christ with the spear, the issue of the blood, the drawing of the nails, the descent from the cross, all are managed with wonderful skill and fidelity to the narrative. Nor less wonderful was the guard at the sepulchre, the various visits of the disciples to the empty grave, the differences of Christ after the resurrection, the meeting of the disciples in Galilee and the final ascent from Mount Olivet. The passion play is now closed and the vast multitude retire to their distant homes. There can be no doubt that to the days of the passion play are calculated to draw out the deepest and purest feelings of the heart. The most eloquent preacher could scarcely impress the vast audience with a deeper sense of the sublime sacrifice of the Son of God upon Calvary for the salvation of man. Most certainly is this true in regard to the uneducated. We have given this sketch of the mystery play of Ammergau in order to notice the revival of these religious plays recently in Paris at the Odeon Theatre. The piece is called "Goodman Misery," and the text is written by a famous dramatic poet, and is introduced with all the accessories of costume and scene for which the French are famous. The "New and Diverting History of Goodman Misery" is one of the many legends of the thirteenth century. It is as follows: Saints Peter and Paul, out on an excursion one evening, are caught in a storm. They are turned away from rich men's doors because they are not over well dressed and look like anything but saints. So they seek shelter in the cottage of a poor old wretch called "Goodman Misery." He is so poor that he cannot even offer them bread to eat, and adds that he might have given them a pear if the wicked inhabitants of the town did not steal the fruit from his one lone pear tree as fast as it ripened. Goodman Misery mentions incidentally that he has

been so much troubled by his neighbours about those pears that he hopes any person who climbs the tree in future may never be able to get down from it without his permission. Peter and Paul exchange glances, and to reward the good man for his hospitality they grant his wish. Next morning, when he finds his pear tree plentifully ornamented with thievish fellows who cannot get down, he makes up his mind that he has entertained angels unawares, and falls on his knees to prayer. All this is reproduced on the stage in the most elaborate manner, and with that astonishing care for smallest details which is the glory of the French stage.

By and by, in the course of events, it happens that Death comes to summon Goodman Misery from this vale of tears. But the good man, like most of his species, is not quite ready to go just then, so he resorts to strategy. "What! are you not afraid of me?" says imperial Death, shaking his bones; "I have made Emperors and Popes tremble." "Afraid?" answers Goodman Misery. "What joy have I on earth, and why should I not be ready to go with you? There is but one thing I regret, and that is that I must leave my one pear tree behind. I should like to have eaten one pear from the old tree before I die, but I am so weak that I cannot reach it!" "Well," says Death, "I see no objection to that. I'll just climb up and get you one."

As soon as Death is in the pear tree he discovers that he is the victim of a conspiracy. Try as he will, he cannot come down. He threatens, he implores, but Goodman Misery agrees to release him only on condition that Death, in his fatal round, shall henceforth forever overlook him. "Agreed," says Death; and the legend ends with this melancholy remark: "Misery hath lived in the same poverty ever since that time; and so long as the world is a world will Misery remain on it."

The verse is full of profound philosophy, and the speech of Death is the pear tree, when he explains to Goodman Misery why mortality is necessary, is original and beautiful. The censors refused to allow Peter and Paul to wear the aureoles with which they are commonly represented in pictures, forgetting the origin of the aureoles on discs of the saints was derived from the heathen gods, and that the object of the polished metal of which they were made was to protect the gods from birds lighting upon their heads and soiling the statue.

The revival of these modern religious plays in Paris is significant of the great change in public sentiment which would not have permitted their performance a few years since.

L. J. S.

THE POPES.

(Continued.)

(45.) CELESTINE I., 423-432, very shortly after his election became involved in a controversy with Augustine and other African bishops, respecting a bishop named Apierius, who had been deposed. Celestine attempted to re-establish him in office, but a council of bishops again pronounced his deposition, and sent an expostulatory letter to the pope, complaining that he had not acted in accordance with the canons of Nicea. The pope also wrote a letter to the bishops of Gaul, counselling them that no bishop should be ordained in opposition to the wishes of the people; but that the people, the clergy, and the magistrates should severally be consulted.

In the year 429, one Nestorius began to maintain that the Virgin Mary was not to be styled the mother of God. The Pope wrote warning him that if he did not retract this doctrine he would be expelled from the Church. Councils were held at Alexandria and Ephesus, which condemned Nestorius, and also re-enacted canons against the Pelagian heresy. In the following year Celestine sent Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, to Britain, to combat the teaching of the Pelagians, whose influence was spreading among the Christians in that country. The Pope had previously sent to Scotland a deacon by name Palladius, who died there in 431. The same year was also distinguished by the labours in Scotland of St. Patrick, who had before preached the faith in Ireland.

(46.) SIXTUS III., 432-440, exerted himself greatly to bring about a union of the eastern churches, which were divided among themselves. The Emperor was also appealed to, and succeeded in restoring peace. After this a charge of immorality was brought against the Pope by one Basus. The Emperor thereupon called a council of 56 bishops, who declared the charge unfounded, and excommunicated Basus, his property being confiscated. This man died three months later, and the Pope manifested his forgiveness by administering the last sacrament to him.

(47.) LEO, 440-461, had been secretary to Celestine, and was elected while absent in Gaul, where he had gone to effect a reconciliation between two generals in command of the Roman army. On his return to Rome he at once commenced to investigate several irregularities which had arisen among the African bishops, deposing several of them. He also induced the Emperor, Valentinian III., to write a warning letter to Hilarius, Bishop of Arles in Gaul, who had incurred the Pope's displeasure by protesting against the re-installment of a certain bishop who had married a widow. Hilarius even came to Rome to expostulate personally against this step, but the Pope would not listen to him, and authorized the accused bishop to take possession of his See, notwithstanding he had been formally deposed by a council of bishops.

A new heresy was now springing up in Spain, headed by one Priscillian, who was put to death, it is stated with the approval of the Pope. Other controversies arising in the East, led to councils which were held at Ephesus and Calcedon. At the latter council an effort was made to transfer to Constantinople the privileges and authority now claimed by the See of Rome. The Pope wrote to protest against this proposal; but did not attend the Council, though it has since ranked as a General or Ecumenical Council of the Church.

In the year 452, Attila, King of the Huns, invaded Northern Italy, devastating the country; and began to advance upon Rome. The Senate, fearing it would be impossible to defend the city, sent a deputation headed by the Pope, who prevailed upon Attila to withdraw his forces beyond the Danube. Three years later, however, the city surrendered to Genseric, King of the Vandals, who pillaged it for forty days, then departing. Leo introduced many new regulations with regard to the monastic life; and also ordered that instead of