

It is an ill wind that blows no good. The Kingdom of God is not of one nation or people or clime. The defections of the Reformation were balanced by gains to the faith among the peoples of the newly-discovered lands in west and east. The French persecution furnishes another instance of the manner in which history repeats itself. A certain amount of Catholic charitable and missionary activity is merely being transferred from near the centre to further out on the circumference, where it may reap a bigger harvest of souls. The oppression of the Church in one country, remarks the 'Ave Maria', 'always means its expansion in another. History is thus constantly repeating itself. When the Kulturkampf draws the religious Orders from Germany, foreign missions were reinforced, and flourished as never before. And now in numerous parts of the world our holy religion is making wondrous progress among unbelievers.

A NEW ORDER OF CHIVALRY

KNIGHTHOOD OF OUR LADY OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

The following Pastoral Letter has been issued by his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne:—

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne.

August 24, 1906.

Very Rev. and Rev. Fathers,
and Dearly Beloved Brethren.

A striking characteristic of the Middle Ages was the influence exercised on the moral and social condition of the people by the institution of chivalry. It is not necessary to go back to its origin. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to say that the Order of knighthood was the outcome and embodiment of the spirit of chivalry. To men living in the world the knight represented the highest ideals of social conduct. He was distinguished for his love of religion, valor, courtesy, fidelity, munificence, sense of justice, and in a special manner for his loyalty and devotion in upholding the honor of woman.

Next to the service of God, the protection of the weak, and more particularly of the weaker sex, was regarded as at once the duty and the privilege of the true knight. Nor was this duty confined to home, or kindred, or native country. It extended to every place where the honor of God, the defence of the weak, or the respect due to woman called for its exercise.

Like all things human, it had its limitations and defects and abuses; but, as a whole, it made for the quickening of the religious sentiment, the refining of manners, the humanising of the art of war, the practice of self-denial, the redress of many social wrongs, and the elevation and pure love of woman.

This spirit of chivalry, as Hallam tells us in his history of the Middle Ages, left behind it a more valuable successor. The character of the knight gradually subsided in that of gentleman, and the one distinguished European society in the 16th and 17th centuries, as much as the other did in the preceding ages. But time, as he adds, has effaced much also of this gentlemanly, as it did before of the chivalrous character. This decay, both of the chivalrous and gentlemanly spirit, he attributes, in part, to increasing commercial wealth, the modes of life in modern great cities, and the levelling customs of social intercourse.

But more deep-seated causes of this decay are to be found in the loss of the true faith, the spread of rationalism and agnosticism, the corruption of morals, the frequency of divorce, the limitation of the family, the brutalising effects of sensual gratifications, and the consequent degradation of woman, both in married and single state.

Whether we close our eyes to the facts, or look them honestly in the face, these are the deadly and widespread evils of modern society. There is no necessity for adding to the number. It is true that intemperance and gambling are very grievous evils, but they do not touch the springs of humanity, the very roots of social life, as do the evils I have enumerated. Neither is it necessary to be pessimistic, and say that our age is worse than any former age. It is sufficient that we have in our midst most grave evils, which are spreading like a cancer, and which we have it in our power by individual, as well

as by united effort, to restrain, if not to eradicate. How can we do this better than by reviving the spirit of Christian chivalry and the order of knighthood? In his first epistle, the prince of the Apostles intimates that every Christian has to fulfil the duties of a spiritual priesthood. 'But you,' he says, 'are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.' (1. Peter, ii. 9). The knights, who bore arms during the Crusades felt that they bore them more for a religious than for a military purpose. When assisting at Mass, the knight held the point of his naked sword before him while the gospel was read, to signify that he was always prepared to defend and obey it. The knightly and the priestly characters were often compared by writers of the ages of chivalry. The investiture of the one was supposed to correspond with the ordination of the other. In the Roman Pontifical we have, to this day, the prayers and religious ceremonies with which the knight was initiated. His sword and spurs were solemnly blessed, and presented by the Bishop, who, with a gentle stroke of the sword on the shoulder, bade him to be 'a peace-loving knight, strenuous, faithful, and devoted to God.'

It was in that spirit that the knights of old went forth, to preserve peace, or, as it might be, to make war on the enemies of God, of their country, or of society.

As far as society is concerned, the order of knighthood is needed now more than it was in the Middle Ages. There are more deep-seated wrongs to be redressed, more serious evils to be cured. In the Middle Ages marriage was recognised as the sacred and sacramental institution intended by God for the lawful propagation of the human race, and the inseparable union of man and woman in family life. But to-day outside the Catholic Church marriage has lost its sacramental, and much of its sacred character. The primary purpose of the Almighty in instituting marriage is largely frustrated by the artificial limitation of the family, and by race suicide. The indissolubility of marriage is destroyed by the recognition of divorce, and the unity of marriage is practically dissolved, not, indeed, by simultaneous, but by successive polygamy.

Then, outside the married state, who can enumerate or weigh the sins of unchastity which defile the earth, cry to heaven for vengeance, and corrupt souls created to the image and likeness of God. Stand at the street corner, listen where men or boys are congregated, in the office, or workshop, or factory, and how often will not the mouth be heard speaking from the abundance of a corrupt and unchaste heart. See that young couple; they are keeping company, perhaps with a view to future marriage, perhaps for mere amusement. Their parents allow them unrestricted opportunities of solitary meetings and of lonely walks, and after a time profess the greatest surprise and indignation when they learn that the daughter's ruin has been accomplished, and that the author of her fall refuses to make, by a speedy marriage, even the inadequate compensation which still remains in his power. Even if she escapes becoming a total wreck, how is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street. Although the latest official statistics, connected with the illegitimate birth rate of Victoria, are by no means exhaustive, still they throw an appallingly lurid light on the extent and enormity of secret crime.

If in ancient times the flood was sent to purge the corrupted earth, and fire descended from heaven to destroy the cities of the plain, are the sins and unnatural excesses of modern times less deserving of swift and startling punishment? One thing at least is certain, namely, that there is abundant scope for the exercise of that lay apostolate, that lay priesthood, with which the knight's office is invested. There is no danger of any conflict or collision between the two priesthoods. They operate in different spheres, and are exercised on different occasions. The Church is the centre of the one; the street, the market-place, the cricket-ground, the shop, the factory, every place where men congregate, as well as the private home, is the sphere of the other.

The knights of old made diligent preparation for the exercise of their high office. They first cleansed themselves before they undertook the work of purifying others. They vowed the observance of all the virtues that become a true knight—chastity according to their state; justice, valor, fidelity, and courtesy.

All who are willing to imitate their example, to practise the virtues they practised, to uphold the duties and responsibilities of married life, to protect the purity of the young, to put a stop, as far as op-

"A BORROWED heart is drouthy; but a cup o' genuine 'Cook o' the North' will quench any."

"A toom haun is nae lure for a hawk," but a cup o' Hondal-Lanka's a temptation for anybody!