

She is the inheritor and custodian of a doctrine of a middle state after death. The same will she perpetuate for ever by her teaching and merciful ministrations. The souls in Purgatory are too dear to the heart of God and His Church to be forgotten for one single day. How consoling the thought that they are within the reach of succor! How cheering the reflection that we can contribute to their happiness! And this we can do without loss to ourselves; nay, with great and ever-increasing and ever-accruing gain, in exact proportion to the value of our services to the suffering souls. 'Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy' (Matt. v. 7). And no mercy equals that extended to those who are out of the way of helping themselves. But never a soul in Purgatory but is helped by Holy Church.

Such is the Will of God,

Whose justice must punish only to reward, and Whose mercy places in His Church an infinite store of Divine treasures for her living and departed members. How wonderful the providence of God for His people! How ineffable His bounty and His mercy! How He enriches the Church with the merits of Christ for the living and the dead!

Solemn and touching indeed are the public rites and ceremonies for the departed soul. The body is reverently laid in the Church, where it had been regenerated and sanctified by the life-giving Sacraments. The draping of the altar and the catafalque denotes the sorrow of friends, while the lights that surround the corpse denote the light of faith and grace, which illumined the departed soul. The mournful dirge awakens feelings of sorrow blended with prayer for the soul now in eternity. The coffin and all its surroundings are symbols of death—the penalty of sin. They are eloquent reminders of the universal decree of death, which has passed over all mankind. The offices of the Church, the tears and heartfelt prayers of the congregation, the respectful demeanor of the assemblage, and the brief address of the officiating priest—all are in fine harmony with the solemnity of the occasion. How becoming for the devoted Christian to return once more to the temple of God, ere the grave has become his final sleeping-place!

To the great solace and edification of the pious mourners, the celebrant chants for the departed soul: 'Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death, in that dreadful day, when the heavens and the earth are to be moved, when thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.' And this affecting prayer: 'Grant him eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on him.'

The funeral procession has reached the grave. At the entrance stands the priest to receive the remains and recite aloud: 'May the angels conduct thee into paradise; may the martyrs receive thee at thy coming, and lead thee into the holy city of Jerusalem; may the choir of angels receive thee, and mayst thou have eternal rest with Lazarus, who was formerly poor.'

At the Tomb

The corpse is sprinkled with blessed water; the crucifix is in evidence at the head of the coffin; solemn silence prevails, except for the voice of the celebrant, who chants aloud: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he be dead, shall live: and everyone that lives and believes in Me shall never die.'

Over the open grave is now intoned that hopeful and triumphant canticle of Zachary: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people.' And once more: 'To give the knowledge of salvation to His people; for the remission of their sins.' The entire canticle is an eloquent and strenuous outburst of gratitude, from a heart glowing with love and illumined by the Holy Ghost. It is replete with faith and love and trust. How appropriate here at the open grave, in the hearing of the hushed multitude, and at the final view of the corpse! It takes the sting out of grim death, and is a song of triumph over the grave, which must one day give up its risen tenant. It elevates every heart and awakens the finest religious sentiments. It inspires all with hope in the salvation of the dear departed. 'Salvation,' it proclaims, 'from our enemies'; the coming of 'the Orient from on high'; the accomplishment of the primeval promise made unto Abraham—the redemption of His people.

Then follow the 'Kyries,' which are so many cries to the Lord and His Christ for mercy. The 'Pater Noster' is once more recited, followed by the touching supplication: 'From the gate of hell, deliver his soul, O Lord: May he rest in peace.' The funeral rites aptly conclude with the usual prayer for the Holy Souls in general: 'May his soul, and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.'

So far so good, respecting the obsequies of the exemplary Christian. But here springs up a sad thought, which demands clear and strenuous expression. This respects the

Graceless Deaths

of some persons. There is no denying the indifferent lives of some. They fail in realising the ideal of good and sound Christians. The honored name of Catholic they retain to the end. Others were known to be members of the Church long years ago. Some were suspected to be Catholics, when themselves and the Colony were fewer in years and more godly than in advanced age. Persons of this description, in general, usually die without priest or Sacraments. Sometimes the death is quite sudden. Possibly the sudden death is a divine visitation on a sinful life. Many such untoward endings have come under our notice. Many invitations to repentance had been given; many warnings. Divine Providence and His ministers had been long since calling to grace and reconciliation. But sin and worldliness prevailed. 'Time enough! Some day I'll do better. I'm no worse than others.' Such were the vague promises of some. Others resented all interference with them. They were satisfied with their state, or pretended that they were. They hearkened not to the divine warning: 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day.' And once more: 'The night cometh when no man can work.' The dreadful words of St. John in his Revelations had no meaning for them: 'And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire.' They did not fear God, therefore they neglected everything appertaining to salvation. They had long neglected to adorn the soul with sanctifying grace, and now, when the sudden summons of death has come, they know not how to say: 'Father, unto Thy hands I commend my spirit.' Holy Job proclaims that 'the life of man upon earth is a warfare.' But this spiritual combat they did not wage. Rather, they resigned themselves willing slaves to the triple enemy of their immortal souls. They know not now the language of the Psalmist: 'When my strength shall fail, do not Thou forsake me.' Their death, sad to say, seems a reflex of their lives. Priest and prayer and Sacraments are conspicuous by their absence from such deathbeds. How fares it with the souls of such persons? However, they have died without the armour of the Holy Sacraments.

(To be concluded next week.)

The New Zealand International Exhibition

The New Zealand International Exhibition at Christchurch was opened with great eclat on Thursday last by his Excellency the Governor. The Governor and Lady Plunket were received at the main entrance by the Premier, Sir Joseph Ward, who was accompanied by the vice-presidents, the Executive Commissioners, and the ceremonial committee. In declaring the Exhibition open his Excellency delivered an eloquent address, in the course of which he said:—New Zealand, with her enormous and constant water supply, waiting only to be harnessed, has hopeful prospects as a manufacturing country. It is difficult to believe that, with humanitarian legislation for the workers and the wise treatment of capital, there will arise before long manufacturing towns differing only from those at home in that the grinding poverty, the overcrowding, the dirt, and smoke, and fog will be absent? I do not think the people of New Zealand will consider that I have over-estimated the probable future of this land in which they take so much pride. And it seems to me that an epoch of her history such as this Exhibition is likely to prove was a fitting occasion to dwell upon her future and upon the coming day when this beautiful country will be not only happy and prosperous, but happy, prosperous, and great.

Sir Joseph Ward followed with a speech, in which he referred to the progress made by the Colony since the time of the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in 1889, when the Colony's products were valued at £9,400,000; last year they were worth £15,000,000. The imports for the respective periods were £6,204,000, and £12,800,000, so that our imports had more than doubled, while the exports had also increased largely. In conclusion, he said that Mr. Munro was of opinion that the £63,000 voted last session would be sufficient to defray the entire cost of the Exhibition. The outlook, therefore, was not unpromising. Personally, he hoped that the attendance throughout the period that the Exhibition would be open would be so good that the project would show a profit instead of a deficit.

The weather was beautiful, and Christchurch looked at its best. The opening ceremony was a brilliant

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