

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

- January 7, Sunday.—Within octave of Epiphany.
 " 8, Monday.—St. Pega, Virgin.
 " 9, Tuesday.—St. Adrian, O.S.B., Abbot.
 " 10, Wednesday.—Ven. Thomas Reynolds and Bartholomew Roe, Martyrs.
 " 11, Thursday.—St. Gildas, Abbot.
 " 12, Friday.—St. Arcadius, Martyr.
 " 13, Saturday.—St. Kentigern, Bishop.

VENERABLE THOMAS REYNOLDS AND BARTHOLOMEW ROE, MARTYRS.

The mild and gentle character of Charles I. along with the influence of his Catholic consort, Henrietta Maria, caused a temporary cessation of the bloody scenes of persecution which had disgraced the reigns of the two preceding monarchs. It was, in fact, the king's unwillingness to sign the death warrants of convicted priests which formed one of the most common causes of complaint on the part of the Parliament, and helped to embitter the dispute which led to his dethronement. It is no wonder, therefore, that when the reins of government fell into the hands of the popular leaders, a fresh outbreak of persecution took place, and the barbarities of former years were renewed. Accordingly we find that the year 1641 was marked by the execution of several priests for pure matters of religion, which were construed by the cruel laws of Elizabeth into the crime of treason. Among these glorious martyrs the Venerable Thomas Reynolds (whose real name was Green) and Bartholomew Roe were conspicuous for their learning and piety, as well as for the courage and constancy with which they endured a long imprisonment and a cruel death for their Divine Master. The former was a secular priest, a native and student of Oxford, who, being converted to the Faith, was educated for the priesthood abroad; while the latter, Father Roe, was a member of the Benedictine Order, and belonged to a respectable family in Suffolk. His conversion from the Established Church was brought about by a singular providence of God.

While pursuing his studies at Cambridge it chanced that Mr. Roe, during a visit which he paid to St. Albans, heard speak of a certain Catholic recusant who was there imprisoned. Feeling assured that he would easily be able to convince him of the absurdities of the Romish doctrine, he paid a visit to the gaol, and entered into conversation with him on the subject of religion. To his surprise he found the prisoner, though only a mechanic, quite able to defend his faith, and even to press him closely on certain matters of dispute. The consequence was that he began to feel uneasy about his own position, and, being thoroughly sincere, lost no time in consulting books and conferring with Catholic priests on the subjects in question. Being at length assured of the faith, he quitted the university and retired to Flanders, where he was received into the Church and embraced the religious state in the Order of St. Benedict. Soon after he was ordained priest, Father Roe was sent by his superiors on the English mission, where, by his zealous preaching and frequent conferences with Protestants, he effected many conversions. After some time he fell into the hands of the pursuivants and was committed to prison, where he suffered great hardships. Being released through the mediation of the Spanish ambassador, he was sent into exile, but soon returned to England. After two years he was again apprehended at St. Albans, and having been sent to London he was committed to the Fleet. There he remained for 17 years, enjoying at times a certain degree of liberty, which enabled him to devote himself to the duties of the ministry.

Being at length arraigned by order of Parliament, he was transferred to Newgate, and brought up at the New Bailey on the charge of exercising his priestly office. Upon the evidence of a fallen Catholic he was found guilty and condemned to death. Upon the morning of his execution he had the consolation of celebrating Mass in the prison at an early hour, a privilege enjoyed also by the companion of his martyrdom, Father Reynolds. The latter was far advanced in years, being about 80 years old, and was executed in virtue of a sentence passed upon him 14 years previously. He was a man of remarkable meekness and gentleness, beloved alike by Protestants and Catholics. During the journey to Tyburn the two priests took the opportunity of making their last confessions to one another and receiving absolution.

Upon their arrival at Tyburn, Father Reynolds addressed the people, assuring them that though he had lived in England as a priest for 40 years, no word of treason had ever passed his lips, nor had such a thought ever entered his breast. While he was thus speaking, his companion employed himself in reconciling to God two of the convicts who were to suffer with them, and who afterwards died with every token of sincere repentance. He then began in his turn to speak to the people, but, being interrupted by the sheriff, asked permission to put to him a single question, namely, whether in case he conformed to the Established Church he would undertake that his life would be spared. 'That will I,' replied the sheriff promptly, 'and I will answer for your life with my own.' 'See, then,' said Father Roe, turning to the people, 'why it is that I am come to die, and whether my religion be not my only treason.' Having mounted the cart, the two confessors kissed devoutly the ropes, which they then placed about their necks, and recited alternately the psalm *Miserere*. This they continued along with other prayers until the cart was drawn away, and their happy souls were released from their earthly prison. They were permitted to hang until they were dead, when their bodies were cut down and dismembered. Meanwhile the people pressed round eager to dip cloths in the blood of the martyrs, or to carry off some portion of their precious relics. They suffered on January 21, A.D. 1641.

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