

The Catholic World

ENGLAND

CHRISTMAS AT THE WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL.

The London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, describing Christmas in London, pays special tribute to the Christmas service at Westminster Cathedral. He writes: 'At midnight Mass on Christmas Eve there might be seen, standing behind the barriers in the democracy of devotion, people of all classes and conditions, working women with sleeping babies, women in rich furs, barefooted boys, elegant youths in a perfection of fashion, and very many French, Belgians, and Italians.' Only the Catholic Church has the faculty of gathering all sorts and conditions of people to her fanes. Indeed, only she has equal welcome for rich and poor.

THE LATE MONSIGNOR BENSON.

The Rev. Father Bampton, S.J., in a sermon at Westminster Cathedral, paid an eloquent tribute to Monsignor Benson as a priest. Pointing out that he had exemplified the words of the servant in the parable: 'Lord, Thou didst give me five talents; behold other five have I gained over and above,' and that he had consecrated all to the service of God, Father Bampton said that the dead priest would be long remembered 'as the man of God, as the man of prayer, as the indefatigable laborer in the Lord's vineyard, as the zealous priest, as the earnest preacher of the word of God, as the guide of innumerable souls into the true fold, as the master of the spiritual life.'

THE CATHOLIC POPULATION.

The *Catholic Directory* for 1915 contains much that is of statistical value, and altogether affords renewed proof of the unremitting care with which the compilation is made. Official figures show that the increase in the number of marriages continues. In 1913 there were 13,349 marriages as against 12,715 in the previous year and 12,002 in 1911. It should be noted that these figures take no account of such Catholics as may have contracted civil marriages, whether these are afterwards blessed by the Church or not. Marriages contracted in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are also excluded. The Catholic population of England and Wales is given at 1,891,006; of Scotland at 518,969; and of Ireland (based on the Government census of 1911) at 3,242,670, the total population of Ireland being 4,390,219. The Catholic population of the British Empire in Europe is returned at 5,872,238, in Asia 2,306,954, in Africa 537,079, in America 3,291,117, in Australia 1,217,846. The total of Catholics in the British Empire is thus 13,225,234, while the total Catholic population of the world is estimated at 301,172,712 as compared with 298,734,824 in the previous year. The number of conversions made during the year under review is given as follows: Westminster, 1434; Northampton, 313; Portsmouth, 283; Southwark, 1035; Birmingham, 872; Clifton, 191; Menevia, 122; Newport, 145; Plymouth, 185; Shrewsbury, 251; Liverpool, 1216; Hexham and Newcastle, 388; Leeds, 528; Middlesbrough, 221. The returns for Nottingham and Salford were not completed. Total for the fourteen dioceses for which figures are given, 7184.

FRANCE

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL.

I have more than once enlarged upon the religious revival that the great war has developed; it has been gaining ground for some years, but the danger of the hour has fanned it into flame (writes a Paris correspondent). This is strictly true of our soldiers at the front, of certain country districts, where the hitherto empty church is now filled, and of many quarters of Paris, where, among the women who wait and weep at home, there is a striking revival of religious practice. But

the Government remains aloof from public demonstrations of faith, and its representatives in some districts carry on a petty campaign against the 'clericals.' M. de Gailhard Baucel, deputy for l'Ardeche, complains in the *Echo de Paris* that the sums allotted by the State to women whose bread-winners are at the front, are distributed with unworthy partiality. Women whose children attend the free schools, who are themselves zealous Catholics, are overlooked; a deputy from La Vendee makes the same complaint. Anti-clericalism is awed by circumstances, but it is not dead, and after the great war is over it will certainly once more raise its head, unless the French Catholics practically assert their right to liberty of conscience that here exists in words but not in fact.

ROME

THE POPE AND THE WAR.

The Holy Father received on Thursday, December 24, the members of the Sacred College in the Throne Room for the presentation of Christmas greetings, 23 cardinals, bishops, and prelates in attendance on the Pontifical Court being present. Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli read an address in the name of Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli. The address offered greetings to the Pope, and drew attention to his efforts to bring about peace between the belligerent nations. In reply, the Pontiff said that while the endeavors to obtain an exchange of all prisoners of war might fail, he hoped to succeed in obviating unnecessary suffering by obtaining an exchange of those wounded prisoners whose condition made them unable to do military service again. Continuing, the Pontiff thanked the Cardinals, and said that among the wishes expressed by the Sacred College none seemed more appropriate to the Christmas festival, nor more in consonance with the wish at everybody's heart than that for peace. His Holiness received this wish with special solicitude, in view of the sad events which during the last five months had caused mourning throughout the universe.

GENERAL

A RETROSPECT.

The London *Universe*, in a retrospect of the past year, says:—The most tragic and dramatic event of the year was the death of Pius X. almost simultaneously with the declaration of war by the Kaiser, and the death of the General of the Jesuits, Father Wernz, who was one of the victims of the Bismarckian persecution in his expulsion from Germany. The election of Benedict XV. was an event fraught with the deepest consequence, and already his influence in the momentous events that are shaping the destinies of the world on the battlefield and in the counsels of diplomacy is one of the potent factors in the result, as the authoritative peacemaker of the world. Our losses have been great and many, but they are of priests who have left behind them in England fruits of many labors, and their lives have left footprints on the sands of time that many tides will not obliterate. Mgr. Croke Robinson was a great preacher who filled a long life of unceasing work and carried his voice through all the British Isles. His death in April was followed by the death of a famous preacher in October, Mgr. Benson, who was cut off in the flower of his priestly youth, and passed as a meteor across the sky. Their names will be long remembered, and their memories cherished. Father Kenelm Digby Best was a priest, poet, and preacher whose name enshrines high virtues, and the Oratorians lost in him one of the old guard who made them illustrious in the annals of English Catholicity. Canon Gildea, not so widely known to the public, was reputed by his clerical compeers as a theologian whose phenomenal memory alone could have reconstructed the works of St. Thomas. The College of Cardinals has suffered loss in the deaths of Cardinals Oreglia and Casimir Gennari in January, Cardinal Katschthaler in February, Cardinal Kopp in March, Cardinal Ferrata in October, Cardinal Cavallari, the Patriarch of Venice, in November, and Cardinals Dubillard and di Pietro in December.

'Pattillo'

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