

THE POWER OF THE MASS

In the course of a sermon at the mission conducted recently by the Marist Fathers at St. Joseph's Church, Buckle Street, Wellington, Father Ainsworth said that the life of almost every priest was full of incidents, and he proceeded to relate an incident of his early days in the priesthood to illustrate the subject of his sermon—the Mass. He was attached (he said) to the parish of Te Aro, which in those days included St. Mary's, St. Joseph's, and St. Anne's. The greater part of his duties was in the care of souls in the Wellington Hospital.

One day he proceeded from the presbytery on his bicycle to pay a visit to a parishioner in Newtown. He cycled along, and suddenly found himself at the Hospital. He thought to himself that he must have been dreaming, as he had no intention of visiting the Hospital, but as he had reached there it occurred to him that he might as well take an opportunity of seeing the secretary on a matter he desired to discuss with him. He went to the secretary's office, but found that official out, which was most unusual. On inquiring as to the secretary's whereabouts, he was directed to one of the wards. While there he saw a case being brought in. Going over to investigate, he found the patient was past human aid, and so he determined to stay in case the man was a Catholic and desired the consolations of our holy religion in his last moments. When the patient was placed in the ward Father Ainsworth went over to the bedside and found he bore a name which was unmistakably Catholic, but the card over his bed indicated that he professed no religion. One of the rules of the hospital is that no clergyman is to approach a patient other than of his own denomination, on religious matters. Recorded as having no religion, therefore, the priest, entertaining a suspicion that the patient was a Catholic, spoke to the man, but received a very hostile reception. The priest's presence seemed to irritate the man, and he gave expression to some of the vilest language it was possible for a man to use. Persevering, however, the priest at last got the man into a more reasonable frame of mind, and he admitted that he was brought up a Catholic but had given up the practice of his religion. The poor fellow was filled with despair, but after much exhortation, he at last consented to make his confession. Father Ainsworth immediately left to procure the essentials, and arrived in time to administer the last Sacraments.

Reflecting on the remarkable manner in which this man was converted, the priest asked him whether he had continued some practice of his holy religion. The man replied that he had not practised his religion for years. He then requested Father Ainsworth to take charge of a letter which he had received a few days before from his aged mother in Ireland, and to acquaint her of his death. The letter was from an anxious mother who hoped her son was regular in the performance of his religious duties. She had had (she wrote) the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up for him that he would not die without God's priest to administer the last Sacraments, and to die a happy death. The end came, the penitent dying with the priest holding his hand.

Father Ainsworth wrote to the mother in Ireland conveying the news of her son's death, and informed her that owing to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up for his happy death, he had died fortified by all the rites of Holy Church. People might say that this episode of his (the speaker's) life was a coincidence, but his deviation unconsciously from the road he set out for, and subsequent happenings at the hospital, were something more than a coincidence. It was undoubtedly the guiding hand of Divine Providence in response to the mother's offer

of the Holy Sacrifice in far away Ireland for the spiritual welfare of her son.

PRESIDENT WILSON ON IRELAND.

In a book written by President Wilson 30 years ago, when he was a young man (says the *Catholic Press*), there are some very sapient sentences on the relation of minorities and of majorities to the law, together with a very pointed reference to the misgovernment of Ireland as an example of the truth of his sayings on this subject. In view of the President's unique position as the personage capable of exercising in the Peace Conference more potent influence than any other member of it upon questions involving the fate of small nations, it is only right, in the highest interests of Ireland and of international justice, that his remarks upon the iniquity of the system under which Ireland is denied freedom should be given the widest publicity. Mr. Wilson wrote:—"The power of the community" must support law or the law must be without effect. The bayonets of a minority cannot long successfully seek out the persistent disobediences of the majority. The majority must acquiesce or the law must be null. "This principle is strikingly illustrated," continued the future President, "in the inefficiency of the English repressive laws in Ireland. The consent of the Irish community is not behind them, though the strength of England is, and they fail utterly, as all laws must which lack at least the passive acquiescence of those whom they concern." These weighty words are reproduced from the President's learned and cogently reasoned book, *The State Elements of Historical and Practical Politics*, written in 1889, when he was Professor of Jurisprudence and Politics in Princeton University.

Ireland will be intensely anxious to know whether President Wilson adheres to the principle enunciated in his younger days when he referred so scathingly to the scandal of British misrule of Ireland, and whether he will stand up for it at the Peace Conference. This principle in relation to Ireland applies with the same force as when laid down by the President three decades ago—indeed, with infinitely greater force now in view of the refinement of Prussianism marking the coercive activities of the military regime in that country. *Litens scripta manet*. If Ireland should fail to secure the right of self-determination by means of the Peace Conference, history will judge President Wilson's record in connection with her fate by the standard of right which he proclaimed in the extracts taken from his book.

AN APPRECIATION OF CARDINAL MERCIER.

Exchange of international visits may be expected to be much the fad in the coming months (says the *Post Despatch* of St. Louis, U.S.A.). No matter how great the number of these exchanges and no matter how conspicuous the other personages participating in them, American interest in one announced for some indefinite date in 1919 cannot be dulled. This is a visit by Cardinal Mercier of Belgium. He did not direct armies like Foch. He was denied the privilege of freely expressing, like Wilson, the great principles of right and justice involved in the conflict. The oppressors of his country knew how dangerous would be the use of that privilege. But, virtually mute, deprived of means of resistance, he radiated moral influence, issued commands that were none the less obeyed because unheard, exercised the potent leadership which the imponderables exercise, assumed command over souls.

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