

grace. The first work of creation was surely stupendous and ineffable: when into that mortal form which was the crown of terrestrial creation an immortal spirit was breathed something was done beside which the making of the hills and the seas and the fashioning of the starry firmament was as nothing; something which as a pious tradition would tell us made, by its very anticipation, Lucifer rebellious with envy. And yet a greater work remained, for the soul into which sanctifying grace has entered is as far above the soul in its state of natural innocence as Adam was above the animals that passed before him in the Garden of Eden in the far-away morning of life on earth. The creation of Adam proved God's love, but the regeneration of Magdalene proved it still more, and meant a closer and more intimate union than ever between God and man. Another and a higher proof remained. God so loved the world that He sent His own Son amongst us to become our brother by taking our human nature to Himself and becoming man in the virginal womb of Mary Immaculate; so that the Son of God was also true man, and the mother of the man who was called Christ was also the Mother of God. And yet another proof was possible. Another union was conceivable. When He who became man in order that He might die for us was to leave the world He instituted the Blessed Eucharist whereby He might still remain amongst us, not only to receive our visits and to hear our prayers, but even to become the food of our souls in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

*Se nascens dedit socium,
Convalescens in edulium,
Se moriens in pretium,
Se regnans dat in premium.*

Our brother in His Incarnation, our food at the Last Supper and for ever after in Holy Communion, our redemption in His Death, and our sure reward in glory: thus in a phrase St. Thomas sums up all the wonderful mysteries of which surely the culmination is the miracle of the Lord's Body, after which to-day's feast of Corpus Christi is named. What man of faith on hearing of this last proof of God's love for the first time would not ask how best to make some return for all that God has done? The return He wants is none other than to make, as He wished, the Blessed Eucharist the food of our souls. "Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man ye shall not have life in ye. My Flesh is true meat. My Blood is true drink." All that God wants from man is that he should avail himself of this food and drink and come freely and lovingly into that union for which Christ lingers in our midst to-day. The best return we can make is to go to Holy Communion as often as the Church permits, and that will be every day if through our own sinfulness we place no obstacle in the way that would render us unworthy to make of our hearts the temples which Christ wants them to be. The Church exhorts her children to practise daily Communion; all that is required on their part is that they be in the state of grace, which means freedom from grievous sin. And there can be no better proof of the depth of our faith or of the sincerity of our religion than our response to the yearning call of Our Lord in the Tabernacle of the Altar. For many reasons those who need it most remain away from Communion. In a striking parable Our Divine Lord Himself sums up the obstacles—the same now as when He spoke the words. One man would plead that he bought a farm; another that he had to try a team of oxen; a third that he had married a wife. *Villam emi, Juga boum quinque emi, Uxorem duxi*: ambition, desire of getting on, preoccupation about business, the accursed thirst for money, inordinate attachments, and the fettering chains of the passions are all covered by these three excuses which are as real and as new now as they were nearly 2000 years ago. For such men the Church had to make a law in past times, in order to make it clear that they who stayed away from Holy Communion could not be regarded as Catholics and as followers of Christ. The severity of the law is relaxed but its force in the court of heaven remains the same.

No man who refuses to go to Holy Communion at least once a year is a Catholic, if by Catholic we mean a living member of Christ's Church. No man who refuses to be united with Christ by means of His Body and Blood is a true member of His mystical body, the Church.

Again, no man who desires to save his soul can remain away from Holy Communion. Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man ye shall not have life in ye. And no man who wishes to advance spiritually and to grow in the favor and love of God can stay away for long. Communion at least once a year is necessary for all who would be saved; Communion every week and even every day is the surest means of bringing about that close and unending union between the soul and its Creator for which Christ longs. In this age of the world God is forgotten save of the few faithful ones. For all His boundless Love the only return He receives is from them. In the early mornings in our churches you will see them going up to the Altar rails to receive Him, during the day in the dim twilight of the sanctuary lamp you will find them on their knees before Him. Wherever there is a Catholic church they are there, the faithful and the few who do not forget, who are not ungrateful, whose love is warm and real, and who remember so many others who will not remember themselves. But, alas! how few—how few compared with the millions outside whose minds are bent on the eternal preoccupations: *Villam emi, Juga quinque boum emi, Uxorem duxi*: they have their pleasures and their profits and they care little about Christ Who died for them. One other word, and that a terrible one, was said to such: *Nemo virorum illorum qui vacati sunt gustabit coenam meam*—Not one of them that were called shall taste my supper. There, then, is a thought and a warning for this last fortnight of the Paschal season.

NOTES

Thackeray

Concerning the first-rank writers of English prose there is always some difference of opinion among the critics. Although not read universally, and by no means so great a popular favorite as Dickens, there is almost unanimous agreement about the great merit of Thackeray's prose. Personally we put him before Dickens even as a story-teller; but that is a matter of taste about which it is idle to argue. As a writer of good English it seems unquestionable that Thackeray is easily first of the two. "Nobody in our day, I should say, wrote with such perfection of style," was Carlyle's verdict on Thackeray. Frederic Harrison's praise of him is unqualified: "This mastery over style—a style at once simple, pure, flexible, pathetic, and graceful—places Thackeray among the very greatest masters of English prose, and undoubtedly as the most certain and faultless of all the prose writers of the Victorian Age." Henley pronounced Thackeray to be the master of one of the finest prose styles in literature: "Gentle, yet vigorous; adorably artificial, yet incomparably sound; touched with modishness, yet informed with distinction; easily and happily rhythmical, yet full of color and quick with malice and meaning; instinct with urbanity and instinct with charm—it is a type of high-bred English, a climax of literary art." All this praise refers to his style. Many critics find fault with him for looseness of construction as a novelist; but there are others who put him on a pedestal even as a maker of fiction. Lafcadio Hearn describes him as "the greatest of all English novelists, the very giant of the art of novel-writing," and he compares the vividness of Thackeray's characters to that of Shakespeare's: "What distinguishes Thackeray's work from all other novel-writing of the century, except Miss Austen's, is the quality that distinguishes Shakespeare's characters in English drama. They are really alive;

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