

## THE ENGLISH DOMINICANS\*

GREAT is the difference between old things that are dead, and old things that live. And still greater between old institutions, however glorious, that have passed away for ever, and old institutions that, adapting themselves to new conditions and environment, have continued in vigorous life unto our own day. Crowns and orbs and sceptres when collected in some dreary museum of antiquities interest but a few, and excite a very languid curiosity; the feudal and medieval trappings of the British monarchy (ancient indeed, but still a power that counts for something in the world) appeal to the historic imagination of multitudes, and even fill them with enthusiasm. Who cares to read of the quaint but utterly dead constitutions of Venice and Genoa and Poland? But what student does not delight to study the time-honoured customs of the "Mother of Parliaments," faithfully and scrupulously perpetuated in the legislative assemblies of the Dominions and the Commonwealths?

The English reader pays as a rule very little attention to the great Monastic Orders of the Catholic Church. They smack too much of the museum. They belong to the realm of the dry-as-dust and the merely curious. He looks them up in his *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and finds them spoken of in the past tense, as something swept aside once and for all by Henry VIII, and gets no hint that, in Lacordaire's phrase, "the monks, like the oaks, are immortal." Black canons and white canons, Benedictine and Cistercian, friars grey and friars black, nuns of Carmel and nuns of St. Bridget or St. Clare, they all pertain to the limbo of antiquity. That they have never ceased to be and to flourish, that since the Reformation centuries of good work can be put to their account, and that to-day they are as throbbing with life as ever, and as ready for the fray, never dawns on him. For such an one Father Bede Jarrett's book will come as a revelation. Looking into it, he will look into a world he dreamed not of. The painful researches of scholars and antiquaries innumerable, the details gleaned and garnered by

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years of work in Record Office or Diocesan Registry by those who have laboured there long since and have now passed beyond the veil, are here gathered up and woven into an harmonious whole by one who has the secret of writing interestingly and with a modern appeal and a present-day outlook.

This well-produced volume (for the publishers and their printers, binders, and illustrators have all alike done their work more than adequately) tells the story of the English branch of the great organization founded by Saint Dominic. It compresses and summarizes a whole literature. The humble beginnings and rapid and immediate progress and success of the English Province are first set forth. Then the typical Priory, its buildings, furnishing, officials, and the life led within its walls are described. Chapters are devoted to the Order's plan of studies, the aims and methods of its preachers, its higher intellectual life at Oxford, its clinging to lofty ideals and rigid authority, its national usefulness. Then the crash of the Reformation, the short descent into the catacombs of obscurity. The gradual reorganization; the new life, and its adaptation to difficult and trying conditions. Lastly, modern times and the promise of a second spring.

The earlier and longer portion of the book shows us the Order in the full tide of English existence, walking the broad high road of the nation's life. It was a picturesque time, when the friar's habit was familiar in the streets and lanes, when his voice rang out in the lecture-hall and the pulpit, when he moved in the palace as the royal confessor, or sat in the council chamber, or headed an embassy, or filled episcopal thrones, once even the primatial one. The rich, full-coloured, dramatic world of the Middle Ages, the enthusiastic idealism of a great movement, live again in these vivid pages. The strong, masterful Plantagenet kings, the proud, imperious churchman, the merchant princes of the city, the great military nobles, many whose names are still household words among us, pass across the stage.

But the latter half of the book will please the most, and has more of the charm of novelty. The life-work of Philip, Cardinal Howard, the restorer and re-founder of the English

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Dominicans, is all too little known, albeit he figures in Pepys and Evelyn, and every contemporary memoir or chronicle. It is here sympathetically set forth. How captivating is the romance of Philip Howard's entrance into the Order! Change the names and the dates, and you have the strange story of the vocation of St. Thomas Aquinas over again. History repeats herself. In each case a determined and engaging stripling sets the world ablaze, fights popes and cardinals, statesmen and nobles, friends and family, and wins for himself in the end reluctant admiration and assent from all.

Deeply interesting, too, is the chapter which deals with Bornhem, the convent-home of the English Dominicans on the Scheldt, their "England in Flanders," their nursery and rallying-point during dark, depressing penal times at home.

And very interesting it is to read how this little remnant left in Israel, this handful of English friars, clung on like grim death to their corporate existence, and for generations handed on their traditions of a glorious past, till a day came when—feters struck off, and a fair field offered, though no favour—their successors could prove that the heritage was well worth saving, and that the Province had still a work to do for England and the Church.

In this effort to depict seven centuries of English Dominican life, the writer has contrived to be at once scholarly and popular—no easy thing; and in spite of the modest disclaimer of his introductory note, we doubt if any who may follow him in this field of research will do so with greater accuracy or fullness.

Although the main theme is a serious and a lofty one, there is much quiet humour scattered up and down these tightly packed pages, and many quaint anecdotes. But on page 282 the author seems to us to err in finding something to smile at in the story of the Prior's servant before the Court Leet. That servant was charged with an assault, and that "with a stick of no value." But these last words do not at all signify an absurd adding of insult to injury. They relate to the old legal principle (lasting down to 1847) of "Deodands." By virtue of this doctrine any personal

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chattel which caused, or might eventually cause, the death of a man was forfeit to the Crown. Hence it was a necessary part of the indictment in this case to state the nature and value of the weapon employed in the assault.

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## *CANTERBURY AND CONSTANTINOPLE*

TWO recent efforts towards Reunion between the Church of England and the Eastern Orthodox Church are worthy of notice.

The first is entitled *Terms of Intercommunion suggested between the Church of England and the Churches in communion with her and the Eastern Orthodox Church* (S.P.C.K.). "These terms were drawn up at the request of the Eastern Churches Committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and are now published at their request."

The second is entitled *The Relations of the Anglican Churches with the Eastern Orthodox, especially in regard to Anglican Orders*, by the Rev. J. A. Douglas, B.D. (The Faith Press, pp. 198 ; 12s.).

As an organism is essentially defined in terms, not of what it is, but of what it will become, and as movement is essentially defined in terms, not of its term whence but of its term whereto, we are loath to criticize the present state of a movement which may one day re-unite the scattered flocks of Christendom. We are not sure that the present interchange of terms between semi-official groups on either side is a display of sincere faith. But if it is a display of sincere charity we may hope that divisions and schisms begotten and fostered by a lack of love may be undone when charity—which is the love of truth—has come unto its own. For this reason we would ask the writer of the second work to drink deeply of the spirit of the first. The recurrent anti-papalism of his work is but a dubious compliment to the Orthodox Christians with whom he wishes to intercommunicate.