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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE TER-CENTENARY OF ST. TERESA.

ON Sunday next will be the third centenary of the death of Saint Teresa, and the day will be celebrated devoutly. At Avila, where the Saint was born, and at Alba de Tormes, where her body now rests, will be the chief celebrations, but in every

church and chapel of the Carmelite Order especially throughout the world will the day be kept, and none of those who wear the scapular of our Lady of Mount Carmel should allow it to pass unobserved—nor, indeed, should any Catholic do so. The one object of Saint Teresa's life was that which led her when a little child to stray away from home, having persuaded her brother Roderigo to accompany her to the country of the Moors, where they were to seek for martyrdom. The "little one," Roderigo pleaded, when they were overtaken a short way out of the town and brought back, wanted to see God, and to die as soon as possible in order to do so. To see God, on the other hand, was what she was destined to live for, and she so lived for this object that many by means of her labours have also attained to the Beatific Vision. "Not only the Church in general experienced the wonderful effects of Saint Teresa's reform in the great reaction against the heresies of the sixteenth century," say the *Annales du Carmel*, "but France in particular, the France of the last Valois dynasty (1559-89), the France of religious wars, was assisted in a special manner by her, who, M. Edgar Quinet himself has not hesitated to say, did more towards preventing Protestantism from overwhelming Europe than Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Philip II. ('Leçons du Collège de France,' 1845.)" But notwithstanding the influence of Saint Teresa in preventing the growth of Protestantism, it is remarkable that she is one of the few Catholic saints of whom the Protestant world as a rule speaks well, admitting her great natural talent, and her common sense, which say some Protestant authorities, hindered her from ever having surrendered herself to "fanaticism." Yet who among all the saints has been more fervent, who more favoured with ecstasies and visions. All the saints, however, have not written as Saint Teresa has, books that rank with the chief classics of their various countries, and which attracting thus the attention of men of learning and literary judgment, without the pale of the Church, have caused the character of the Saint to be recognised as different to that which unseen it had been thought by them to be. But among the celebrations that are to be made of the ter-centenary to which we refer will be the essay on "Qualities which characterise the language of the Saint, and comparative appreciation of her writings with those of Saint John of the Cross, and other classics of her time," and for which a prize of fifteen hundred francs has been offered by the Royal Spanish Academy.—May we not count that nation blessed that owns among its classic works those that have come from the inmost soul of one whose life was spent only that she might see God, and whose visions, while yet on earth, of all that related to heaven won for her a right to count among the doctors of the Church. Let us, in passing, contrast with this the misfortune of a nation one of whose greatest works is marred by the touch of a false theology—for Mr. Matthew Arnold tells us Puritanism has spoiled the "Paradise Lost." But even among the lives of the saints that of Saint Teresa possesses an especial beauty: we seem to find in it, indeed, an illustration of the old saying that extremes meet, for sublimity and simplicity here go notably together. The Saint who has been wrapped away above the heavens in ecstasy at one moment, next is giving some word of homely advice to her kindred, and the hand which now is engaged, in obedience to her superior, on a manuscript containing divine revelations and contemplations of unspeakable depth, is now employed in writing a letter on family affairs to a brother in a distant land. We get a pleasant sight also from this life of Saint Teresa into the Spain of the sixteenth century, and find how kind hearts were abundant there, and how close and warm were the ties of family life—ties in no way broken by the absence of the members of the family in far off lands.—The brothers of Saint Teresa, for example, in Ecuador still busied themselves about

the needs and welfare of even their married sisters at home—and that although they themselves were married also. But as for the stilted method of life, and extraordinary punctilio that are often associated with Spain, we see they existed only among the nobility of the very highest rank, and were unknown among the classes of the gentry to which St. Teresa's family belonged. The following is the opinion of the Saint as to matters of high etiquette, given by her on the occasion of her visit to Donna Luisa de la Cerda: "People must be very careful of the dignity of their state, which will not suffer them to live at ease; they must eat at fixed hours and live by rule, for everything must be according to their state, and not according to their constitutions; and they have frequently to take food fitted more for their state than for their liking. So it was that I came to hate the very wish to be a great lady. God deliver me from this wicked, artificial life! Though I believe that this lady, notwithstanding that she was one of the chief personages of the realm, was a woman of great simplicity, and that few were more humble than she was. I was very sorry for her, for I saw how often she had to submit to much that was disagreeable to her, because of the requirements of her rank." The pity and kind sympathy, moreover, which Saint Teresa showed here for this lady in her irksome exaltation she felt as well for all her fellow-creatures in their necessity and troubles. The heart which was pierced by an angel with a dart of fire, whereof the marks may be seen at Alba de Tormes to this day, had also been fully inflamed with brotherly love, and the Saint had confessed that whereas at the beginning of her conversion she had relieved the poor because it was her duty to do so, she had afterwards attained to a perfect feeling of compassion for them. But now the concern is that Saint Teresa should be duly honoured throughout the Catholic world on the occasion of the ter-centenary of the day upon which she entered into glory, and became an advocate for the fellow-creatures whom she had so ardently longed on earth to serve. "I think I should like to raise my voice," she says, "and publish to all the world how important it is for men not to be satisfied with the common way, and how great the good is that God will give us if we prepare ourselves to receive it." But her advocacy in heaven will obtain for us the grace to prepare ourselves for the great good of which she speaks. Let no one fail to ask for her aid on the approaching festival.

MR. DONNELLEY'S LECTURE.

THE chief event of the week has been Mr. M. Donnelly's lecture—"George Eliot, her principal characters analysed and criticised"—delivered in the Temperance Hall, Dunedin, on Monday evening, in aid of the fund being raised for the boy Webb, the Mayor of the city in the chair; and before an audience which, although comparatively large considering the elevation of the subject above the popular taste, was small in proportion to the merits of the lecturer, and the nature of the object for which the lecture was given. The lecture was lengthy, embracing, as it did, a comprehensive sketch of almost all the chief characters of the authoress under consideration, and it would be impossible for us to do it anything like justice in the space we have at our disposal. The lecturer began with 'Adam Bede,' the first considerable work written by George Eliot, and in which the people among whom her earlier life had been passed have been drawn upon to furnish the groundwork, at least, of an immortal story, and to become the familiar and welcome guests of all our memories. The lecturer truly said of them as they appear in the written page: "No lifeless forms are they—no unreal shadows of humanity. As we gaze upon them they become flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath; they touch us with soft, responsive hands; they gaze upon us with sad, sincere eyes; and appeal to us in soft, appealing tones. Their virtues, their vices, their passions, their joys, their temptations are all human. We pity them in their weakness, we love them in their strength; we rejoice when they are happy, and sigh when they are sad." Various accounts, indeed, have been given of the youth of George Eliot, and in some it has been asserted that she was of what is called good birth and had possessed all the advantages of education that wealth could bestow upon her. The fact, however, is otherwise. From the railway gates, where the road crosses the Ashbourne line at Ellastone,