

THE CLOSING OF THE HOLY DOOR.

His Holiness the Pope on Monday, December 24, performed the ceremony of closing the Holy Door at St. Peter's, which had been open during the year of jubilee. The ceremony was attended by all the solemnities incidental to great functions of the Church in Rome.

The Pope left the Vatican at a quarter to 12, preceded by a long train of clergy, bearing lighted candles and surrounded by Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, and Noble and Swiss Guards, his Holiness himself being carried in the portontina as far as the entrance to the portico of St. Peter's. Here he alighted and entered the cathedral by the Holy Door. The appearance of the Sacerdos Magnus within the basilica was hailed by the soft and solemn strains of the silver trumpets. The interior of St. Peter's furnished a magnificent spectacle. It was crowded in every part. As many as 80,000 invitations to the ceremony were issued. The vast church was superbly decorated, red and gold being the prevailing colors, while all the candelabra used on great occasions were displayed. The portico in which the ceremony was to take place was also handsomely draped with red hangings bordered with gold. To the left of the Holy Door was the Papal throne, covered with crimson cloth. Holy water was offered to the Pope, who, entering the Sedia Gestatoria, was borne through the cathedral, blessing the assembled worshippers, to the high altar, on which the most precious relics of the Church were exposed. His Holiness having knelt for a while before the altar, was next borne to the Altar of the Holy Sacrament, where he once more engaged in prayer.

The procession then moved to the portico for the performance of the ceremony of the day. His Holiness allowed every one of his train to pass first through the Holy Door, and then followed himself on foot, walking to the throne, on which he took his seat. Then, rising, the Holy Father blessed all the material necessary for the closing of the Holy Door, and, kneeling in front of the portal, laid three portions of lime with a golden trowel on the threshold, and afterwards three bricks, each containing a commemorative inscription. By the side of the bricks was placed an urn containing gold, silver, and bronze medals with portraits of the Pope, and inscriptions recording the opening and closing of the Holy Door by Pope Leo XIII.

His Holiness then returned to the throne, and Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli and four other penitentiaries in sacerdotal vestments performed the same ceremony with the lime and bricks. This concluded, the workmen in attendance covered the door on the inside with cloth painted in imitation of marble, with a cross in the centre.

The Pope on leaving St. Peter's was enthusiastically acclaimed. The ceremony had lasted just an hour. The crowd outside was immense. Order was kept by Italian troops. The weather was rainy in the early morning, but was brilliant by midday.

This formal act of the Pontiff, as Father Thurston, S.J., points out in his work on the jubilee, has a mystic significance. The three bricks placed in position by the Pope represent the stones spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah when he said, 'Jerusalem shall be built of square stones.' The bricks are also held to signify either faith, hope, and charity, or contrition, confession, and satisfaction. So, too, the soul when purified and embellished by grace and by the indulgence of the jubilee is as a stone set in the mystical building of the heavenly Jerusalem. When the Holy door is closed, the Cross of Christ, the standard of our salvation, is put on it in token of the victory won by the faithful over the evil one; and likewise to accomplish the precept of Daniel the Prophet, 'Close the door and seal it with thy ring,' that is, with the Holy Cross, the seal of the King of Kings, the High Priest Christ.

The gold and ivory trowel used in the ceremony was designed by Professor Tartarini, of Bologna. It is triangular in form, the blade being in gold, and the handle in ivory set with jewels. Like the mallet used in opening the Holy Door, the trowel symbolises various attributes of Christianity. A wreath of carved roses running from the handle to the blade is meant to show that from the thorns of sorrow and sacrifice proceed the flowers of pardon and gladness.

His Holiness rested on Christmas Day after the fatigue of Monday's ceremonies, for which he was none the worse. He received innumerable telegrams from all over the world, congratulating him on the successful closing of the Holy Door, notable among them being those from the aged Emperor Francis Joseph, and the Queen-Mother and King of Spain.

HOW MARBLES ARE MADE.

MOST of the stone marbles used by the boys are made in Germany. The refuse only of the marble and agate quarries is employed, and this is treated in such a way that there is practically no waste. Men and boys are employed to break the stone into small cubes, and with their hammers they acquire a marvellous dexterity. The little cubes are then thrown into a mill, consisting of a grooved bedstone and a revolving runner. Water is fed to the mill and the runner is rapidly revolved, while the friction does the rest. In half an hour the mill is stopped, and a bushel or so of the perfectly round marbles taken out. The whole process costs the merest trifle.

At the Church of the Holy Rood, Swindon, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Miss Sarah Hinder and Mrs Eliza Miles had the happiness to be received into the Church by the Very Rev. Dean Lonergan, Rector of Swindon.

CATHOLIC PROGRESS IN LIVERPOOL.

IN his advent pastoral the Bishop of Liverpool deals with the progress of Catholicism in the diocese during the past 50 years. His Lordship says:—

At the time the hierarchy was re-established, if we may judge by the baptismal returns, the total number of Catholics in the diocese must have been about 200,000. If to-day we reckon over 330,000 souls in the diocese, it is mainly through the sacrifices which have been made to provide these important agencies for the salvation of souls. The need of priests was felt more keenly than anything else. Yet for the work of ministering to 200,000 souls, there were only 120 priests. To-day, to minister to half as many again, we have more than three times as many priests, altogether over 400 priests. Furthermore, the chief effort made in the diocese has ever been to keep up a constant, and, as far as possible, an adequate supply of priests. And so, in 50 years, not only has the generosity of the clergy and laity built the existing College of St. Joseph, Upholland, but the number of aspirants to the priesthood in our various colleges has been raised from about 50 to 180.

The number of our churches and chapels is the next great landmark of our progress. It is true that most of these buildings are simple and devoid of ornaments, though there are many and even noteworthy exceptions. But this was rendered necessary by the poverty of most of our people, and by the numerous calls made upon them. In 1850 there were some 86 churches and chapels erected in the diocese. To-day that number has reached 171. But it is chiefly in some of our larger centres of population that the increase in the number of priests and of churches is most striking. This was naturally to be expected, owing not only to the natural increase in the population, but also to the large expansion of so many of our towns. Thus, in Liverpool city, the number of churches has increased from 13 in 1850 to 34 in 1900, and the number of priests from 37 in 1850 to 130 in 1900. In Bootle, instead of one church and one priest, we have now three churches and 12 priests. In Preston the number of churches has increased from four to seven, the number of priests from nine to 30. In St. Helens, where in 1850 there were two churches, there are now eight; where there were three priests there are now 26. In Wigan there were 50 years ago three churches where now there are four, and five priests where now there are 13. Warrington had one church, and now it has three; it had two priests, and now it has six. Whilst in 1850 Widnes had one church, it now has three, and where there was one priest there are now seven.

There are at the present time nearly 70,000 Catholic children receiving a careful instruction in their religion in about 170 schools. Besides the increase in the number of clergy, of churches, and of schools, other unmistakable signs of progress are not wanting. Fifty years ago there were in the diocese only two convents, where religious women devoted themselves to their own sanctification and to the service of the poor. At the present day there are no less than 47 convents, in which some 700 Sisters spend their lives in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Fifty years ago there were in the diocese only two institutions engaged in what may be called rescue work—one an orphanage for girls, the other an asylum for the blind. At the present time there are no less than 30 institutions for this work— orphanages, industrial schools, poor-law schools, reformatories, asylum for the blind, refuges for penitents, homes for waifs and strays, homes for boys and girls, and homes for the aged poor. These institutions altogether shelter some 3,500 inmates.

RETURNING TO THE FOLD.

Father de Restiaux Tuckwell received two English converts into the Church a few weeks ago at Pau. He also prepared for first Communion an army captain who has joined the Catholic Church after returning from the Trausvaal.

The list of Anglican clergymen who have 'gone over' since the issue of the Papal Bull in denial of their Orders is slowly lengthening (says the *Daily Chronicle*). A new name to be added to the list is that of Mr Bird, whose secession becomes more noteworthy when it is added that he has been acting as chaplain to Lord Halifax, the president of the English Church Union, and the man through whose overtures at Rome the Commission on Anglican Orders was called into being.

One of the English Catholics who took part in what is now generally spoken of as the Duke of Norfolk's pilgrimage to Rome at the end of December was Mr Charles Brookfield, the actor-playwright, who, unfortunately for playgoers, has for some time refused all managers' offers of engagements. After a long illness, from which he has happily recovered, he joined the Catholic Church a few months ago.

Miss Emily Stather, daughter of the late Colonel Stather (says the *Catholic Times*), has been received into the Church by the Prior of Woodchester, Father Vincent MacNabb, O.P. Miss Stather's conversion has caused a great sensation in Woodchester and Stroud, where she has for many years been associated with charitable works of various kinds as a member of the Church of England.

On the feast of St. Teresa (says the *Catholic Transcript*), of Hartford, Conn., Miss Mary Teresa Hunter, of Terryville, was received into the Church by the Rev. John Neale. Miss Hunter belongs to one of the oldest and most respected families of the town of Plymouth. Previous to her conversion she was an active member of the Congregational Church, with whose religious work she was for many years closely identified. She was a Sunday school teacher and a prominent official of the Christian Endeavor and other church societies.