

THE CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

Lecture delivered in Town Hall, Auckland, on November 28, 1918, by REV. M. EDGE.

(Concluded.)

The Mass is a sure index to the religion of a people. Where the Mass is there is Catholicism. From the 6th to the 16th centuries the Mass was the central act of worship of Englishmen. In the 16th century a boy nine years of age, Edward VI., was placed on the throne of England. He was England's first Protestant Sovereign; but as he was only a child the kingdom was governed by a Council composed of Protestants—the first Protestant Government of England—and of it a Protestant historian says:—"The councillors had shown themselves to be mere greedy self-seekers, who under the guise of religion robbed God and the poor to fill their own pockets." (Ransome, p. 136.) "Equal opportunity for all, privilege for none," probably was their motto. "To fill their own pockets" these worthies suppressed the Mass, replacing it by the first Protestant service book ever introduced to Englishmen; of which Ransome says:—"Within a week of its first being read the men of Devonshire and Cornwall were in arms, demanding the restoration of the Mass . . . and all the time-honoured ceremonies of their fathers. For six weeks they besieged Exeter, and when Russell came up with some German troops whom the Government had hired as a standing army, so stoutly did they hold their ground that it was only after a fiercely-fought battle at St. Mary's clyst, in which the English peasants astonished trained soldiers by their steadiness, that the Devonshire men were put down. In the fighting not less than 1000 men were killed." (*Short History of England*, pp. 196-197.) In one glorious, unequal, and unsuccessful fight 1000 brave Devons died defending the Mass against hired German cut-throats. German might conquered British right on the soil of England when England was betrayed by her first Protestant Government. O Protestantism, behold thy apostasy! The missionaries that brought thee to England, that banished "the Mass and the time-honoured ceremonies of our fathers" were "German troops whom the Government had hired." And thou art not alien to England! The Mass alien! Far away in that twilight-time of England's history where Arthur and his knights quest for the Holy Grail, where Alfred neglects the precious bread on the hearth of an Athelney peasant, countless priests may be seen ascending countless altars to offer Mass with what, even then, were the time-honoured ceremonies of their fathers. For 1500 years that adorable Sacrifice has never ceased to sanctify the atmosphere of England, although for 300 of that total it was banished to alleys and caves and inaccessible hiding-places by "German troops whom the Government had hired."

Not only has Catholicism been the religion of England, wholly or in part, for 1500 years; it laid the foundations of England's greatness. Her navy is England's glory; its foundations were laid by a Catholic, Admiral Howard. When the Spanish Armada sailed for our shores, Queen Elizabeth, the first really responsible Protestant sovereign of England, did all she could to betray her country. She refused money to provide food for our sailors, powder for our ships, wages for our officers and men. She ordered some of our few ships to be laid aside; but this gallant Catholic seaman fitted them out of his own expense and put them in the fighting line. He prized England more than wealth, more than life. Thinking only of England, he swaggered forth in his contemptible little hearts of oak; he made for the nearest Spanish monster, he hung on its heels, he climbed its back, he broke its neck. From the vessel thus captured he took food and powder for his men and his guns, and leaped without fear at the next enemy warship. The clements, admiring his pluck, took a hand in the game, helped to destroy the great Armada, to save England in spite of Protestant Elizabeth, to lay the foundations of the incomparable British Navy. (*Vide* Lingard.) That day and that man made the noblest page in the history of England, made the greatest of those sublime traditions that are the soul of England's navy. And that man was a Catholic (Ransome, p. 216)—a Catholic at a time when, having imported a religion from Germany, an English foster mother could not hope for the survival of her adopted monstrosity unless she exterminated Catholicism with the aid of "German troops whom the Government had hired."

To Catholics, too, England owes the beginnings of her overseas Empire. As a marriage dowry Catherine of Braganza, a daughter of Catholic Portugal, brought to a bankrupt English sovereign £500,000 (about £5,000,000 of our present money); she brought also Bombay in India and Tangiers in Africa—a colossal fortune and the seeds

of an empire. (See Lingard—reign of Charles II.) Protestants betrayed Calais, sold Dunkirk, lost the American Colonies by driving exasperated colonists into revolt, gave Heligoland to the Germans. It was a Protestant Duke of Albany and a Protestant Duke of Cumberland that, at the outbreak of the late war, hurried to Germany to fight against England. Every Catholic that married into an English royal family came to England royally, brought to England an abundant fortune. Can as much be said for the Protestants brought from abroad to ascend our throne or to marry its occupant? Catholicism is alien neither to England nor to New Zealand. I think it augurs happily for the Church in this young country that almost the first colonists brought to its shores for the settlement of Taranaki were men from Devon and Cornwall—descendants of the brave fellows who in the 16th century fought the hired Germans in defence of "the Mass and the time-honoured ceremonies of their fathers"; for in spite of our free, secular, and compulsory education people some day will come to know the history of England.

Bishop Pompallier and his colleagues are too near us to be great; but the authentic story of Patrick's apostolic labors for Ireland surpass the grand epic of the planting of the cross in New Zealand by John Baptist Francis Pompallier in no way save only the gratitude of the land of his love. So young is the Church in this country that the glorious past is hardly yet discovered from the present: there live to-day some who were privileged to know the Apostle of New Zealand.

New Zealand entered into the hierarchical life of the Church in 1818; two years later a hierarchy was restored to England. It would, I think, be safe to say that since 1850 the Catholic Church in England has welcomed into her fold at least a million converts taken from every state and condition of life, including a representative of the royal family—Princess Eua. During the same period America has seen its Catholicism expand in greater measure. In New Zealand, however, conversions of Protestants are remarkably few. We seem content to retain those born Catholics whose own fidelity or the Church's watchfulness keep them within the fold. It is no part of my aim to-night to discover why conversions are so few here compared with England and America. But it must be said of these two countries that great results are the fruits of great efforts.

To expand, the Church must have light; she is a plant divinely set to which darkness spells death. Our first duty towards the Church, therefore, is to spread light—to impart knowledge, to promote education. Darkness is the Church's greatest enemy, ignorance her greatest obstacle. Look back to the great Bolshevik movement of the 16th century, called the Reformation; look back to every schism and heresy, they were patrons of darkness, they harvested in the night, they spread where ignorance was rife, where education was least advanced. The Greek schism found its victims chiefly among the illiterate Balkans and the ignorant masses of Russia. Protestantism reaped its unhappy harvest, not in the countries of the Renaissance, not in the countries where the new learning made greatest strides, but in semi-barbarous Prussia, in half-educated Scandinavia and Denmark. What about England? My statement is as true of England as of the rest of the world. Protestantism could get no footing in England until Henry VIII. and others, by robbing the Church and the guilds, had ruined education, had banished learning, had opened England's doors to the darkness of ignorance under the aegis of which heresy spreads. In the 15th century England ranked with the most learned countries in the world, and therefore was Catholic; from the 16th to the 19th centuries intellectual darkness intensified. England ranked among the most uneducated countries of Europe, and heresy revelled within her borders. During the past 75 years considerable educational facilities have been given to the people of England, and with the light of returning knowledge a million of them have discovered a path to "the Mass and the time-honoured ceremonies of their fathers."

It is the nature of darkness to obscure. So obscured are the minds of some people in New Zealand that they see in a German piano a terrible menace to the safety of our country; but they see no menace in a society with a German patron. The Orange Society in Auckland has at least one of its lodges (No. 70) placed under the patronage of, and dedicated to, that German, Martin Luther, whom the ex-Kaiser declared to be his teacher, his inspiration, his moral guide. Numerous memorials of Luther have been jettisoned by Protestants in England and the United States of America; Australia expressed dislike of Lutheran churches; New Zealand grew alarmed at the presence of a piano with its formidable array of padded hammers; Auckland Liedertafel discarded its name; but