

to obtain peace for Europe, could She refuse to hear the voice of the whole Catholic world on its knees? Let us be as one, with the Holy Father of the faithful in prayer, Mary's own prayer, and strive to spread it. "How admirable it will be to see in the cities, in the towns, and in the villages, on land and on sea, as far as the Catholic name extends, hundreds of thousands of the faithful, uniting their praises and

prayers, saluting Mary with a single heart and with a single voice, imploring Mary, placing all hope in Mary!" It is with this unanimous prayer that Catholics will obtain the return to Christ of the nations that are astray, the salvation of the world and that peace so eagerly desired. Mary, the Dove of Peace, offers the Olive Branch—Her Rosary. Will the world accept it?

Aquinas McDonnell, O. P.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE FRIARS.

"The thousand souled Shakespeare" is an epitath bestowed on the master writer of the most momentous epoch in the history of the literary world. Thousand souled is Shakespeare. No one is more deserving of such a title. His genius is bounded by no country. He is of no age. He is universal. His language is of to-day as of his own day. His thoughts, his feelings, his portrayal of human nature in its joy and sorrow, in its love and hate, in its mirth and woe, in its elevations and sordidness belongs to our day as to his. Three-hundred years have not dimmed his luster. The star of his genius shines as brightly to-day as in the noonday of his career. His works are immortal. They please and thrill to-day as they pleased in his day, and they will continue to please as long as the heart of man remains human for human

is his portrayal of it. His name is emblazoned far above all other English writers. He is praised and lauded by all nations and why? Because no one equals him in creative power of mind, in vividness of imagination, in richness of imagery. No one equals him in his comprehension of nature and in his delineations of character. He gave reality to every character from the most prominent to the most obscure. His characters are real men and women and not abstract moral qualities of vice or virtue. He never forgets the infinite complexity of human nature. And herein lies his greatness. His characters may be ruled by love, jealousy, or hatred, but they are actuated by other impulses also. Not only the natural but especially the supernatural influence the action of individual characters. Religion and reason, the divine

and the human are combined to portray a man as a man really is. It is the religious element in his characters that shall here claim our attention.

Shakespeare makes use of divine retributive justice, of imagery borrowed from Catholic liturgy, of friars, monks, bishops and Cardinals that flit back and forth throughout his pages. If he was not a Catholic he is at least, in the words of Carlyle, the product of Catholicism, the blossom of Catholicism. Shakespeare was a poet, the foremost poet of his age and of all ages, and he must needs therefore turn for inspiration to the Church the mother of purity, of sanctity, and song, of the ideal and the real, of Dante and Aquinas. "She," (the Catholic Church), says Newman, "is the poet of her children; full of music to soothe the sad and control the wayward, wonderful in story for the imagination of the the romantic; rich in symbol and imagery, so that gentle and delicate feelings, which will not bear words, may in silence intimate their presence or commune with themselves. Her very being is poetry; every psalm, every petition, every versicle, the cross, the mitre, the thurible is a fulfillment of some dream of childhood, or aspiration of youth." And in reading Shakespeare we are transported into a realm of song, of music, into a region of thoughts without words. His power is great enough to soothe

the sad; the vividness of his imagination pleases the romantic; his imagery, his symbolism startles, bewilders but yet satisfies all. Where could Shakespeare have found the imagery that decks his thoughts if not in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in the romanticism of her antiquity, in the poetry of her liturgy must have made an impression on him, for many are the allusions to her doctrines, ceremonies and discipline scattered through his plays. The monastic institutions of the Church, the barefooted friar in his habit of brown or the friar in his habit of white with all the memories that cling to the friar in brown and the friar in white must have made an impression on the poetic mind of Shakespeare. And an impression was made, for around the friar the action develops in some of his plays. The manner in which Shakespeare portrays the character of the friar is worthy of special notice.

One of Shakespeare's earliest plays is *Romeo and Juliet*. In this play the plot hinges around the action of Friar Laurence. Friar Laurence is one of Shakespeare's most sympathetic creations. He is first presented to our view as he enters his cell in the early morning hours carrying an osier basket filled with herbs and moralizing on the properties of plants in the cure of the sick. Evidently the Friar is an infirmarian, and as infirmarian he

represents a class. Shakespeare has caught all the prominent features of this class and set them forth in his picture of Friar Laurence. The Friar of the middle ages was a natural philosopher. As infirmarian of a convent, he was often their only physician. His services were even extended to the town's people in the vicinity of the convent. Chemistry yielded its secrets to his bidding for he had need of these secrets in caring for the sick. To his study he added observation and reflection, "which with experimental seal did warrant the tenor of his book," as the Friar informs us in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Such were the Friars Roger Bacon and Albert the Great, natural philosophers the equal of whom the world does not know. By their studies, by their observation and experiments they advanced the cause of learning and bettered the condition of humanity. Friar Laurence is pictured as one of these, as the infirmarian, the natural philosopher caring with tender solicitude for the sick brethren and striving to cure the ills of mankind. It is a pleasing picture and true.

Friar Laurence's activity is not confined to the realm of natural philosophy. Nor is it bounded by the medicinal properties of herbs. His care extends not only to the body but also to soul. In the second picture painted for us by Shakespeare we behold the Friar as a spiritual director.

Romeo is by his side flushed with the joy of a new love and forgetful of the old. The explanation which Romeo offers is somewhat disjointed and equivocal. The Friar warns him,—“To be plain good son and homely in thy drift. Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.” Act 2, Sc. 3. The Friar knows that unless the soul is bared in its entirety, unless all the gaping wounds are shown, the malady cannot be diagnosed nor a remedy applied. When he learns that the love of Romeo for Juliet is reciprocated, his course is in accordance with purest morality. His advice becomes prudent direction for the soul. He agrees to their union not as one filled with a spirit of intrigue, but as one who knows human nature and who is aware that in this case no other course remains. The course he maps out is governed by reason. He hopes that the union of Romeo and Juliet will heal the factional quarrels between Capulet and Matague.

“For this alliance may so happy prove,
To change your households' rancour to
pure love.” Act 2, Sc. 3.

He wishes to bring peace to his native city and happiness to Romeo and Juliet. And yet he feels that his own effort will be futile, unless the help of Him who guides us all is assured. He therefore prays heaven to bless the rite he is about to perform so that misery in after hours may not descend on those trusting souls committed to his care.

"So smile the heavens upon this holy act
That after hours with sorrow chide
us not."

Act 2, Sc. 6.

But Romeo with impatience,
with the impetuosity of youth
believes not in dwelling on mis-
ery that may follow, when even
a momentary union with Juliet
would compensate for all the mis-
fortune of an uncertain future.
But the Friar knows that youth
is blind, that such passionate
love breeds but disorder! The
Friar warns him that

"These violent delights have violent
ends,

And in their triumph die." Act 2, Sc. 6.

Again he shows his knowledge
of human nature and his solici-
tude for the purity of the souls
entrusted to his care by insisting
on the discipline of the Church
which demands that the be-
trothed shall not remain together
until the ceremony of marriage
has been performed.

"Come, come with me and we will make
short work;

For by your leaves, you shall not stay
alone

Till holy Church incorporate two in
one."

Act 2, Sc. 6.

When Romeo is banished from
Verona because of the murder
of Tybalt, misery in all her
blackness takes possession of
his heart. Banished! Away
from Verona, far from Juliet life
would be "purgatory," "tor-
ture," "hell itself,"

"Oh Friar the damned use that word in
hell;

Howlings attend it; how hast thou the
heart,

Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,
A sin absolver, and my friend profess'd
To mangle me with that word banished."

Act 3, Sc. 3.

Romeo in his deepest misery
needs truest comfort. And the
Friar knows that when earthly
burdens press the heaviest no
earthly hand can comfort, only
the consolation of the King of
Sorrow can lighten the burden
that weighs upon the heart.
Therefore he offers true com-
fort, "philosophy." And by
philosophy is meant not cold life-
less metaphysics, but the
warmth and life engendering
consolation of religion. The
Friar continues to work for the
good of all. He labors hard to
satisfy the demands of the un-
reasonable lovers and at the
same time allay the anger of Cap-
ulet. He condemns Romeo's
thought of suicide. He devises
the sleeping potion in order that
Juliet may escape the forbidden
union with Paris. Juliet is al-
ready married to Romeo and the
law of God demands that she
shall not marry another while Ro-
meo lives. His influence is felt
by all, for he is a Friar, a holy,
upright man as becomes his call-
ing. Finally when all seems to
fail he offers his life.—

"If aught in this
Miscarried by my fault, let my old life
Be sacrificed, some hour before his time,
Unto the rigour of severest law."

Act 5, Sc. 3.

But the Friar's efforts are re-
warded in part. In the tomb of
Capulet where the lovers lie

sleeping united in death, the one a Montague, the other a Capulet, the living members of the houses resolve to live as friends.

One more picture of Friar Laurence and we have done. In this picture, as set forth in Act II, Sc. 3, we behold the Friar as a philosopher. He looks around on the world about him. There is pictured physical evil, pain, moral evil, sin, life and death. These things present themselves to him as they are. He journeys to no Utopian isle of bliss where life's joys are many and life's sorrows few. Neither does he fall into a slough of despair when he sees the evil in the material world or the sin in the heart of man. No, he drinks deep of pure waters that gush from the fountain of life, and through faith he can tell how the seeming contradictions, evil and good, are united in a master plan guided by a master hand for the betterment of the universe. He knows that physical evil can minister to good, that moral evil is permitted by the Master for reasons which we know not. Man can see but a part of the chain of things and often that part which contains the most evil and which makes man exercise his love and faith in God.

This is the character of Friar Laurence as portrayed by Wm. Shakespeare. The picture of the

Friar is true to life. In contemplating the character of Friar Laurence we are reminded of the great medieval friars. We are reminded of the great St. Francis, the Friar of Assisi, and of the noble St. Dominic, the friar friend of Francis. We are reminded of their labors, how they struggled and how they toiled, how they offered everything—fame, fortune and even life itself,—that man might live at peace with man and at peace with God. There are other pictures of other friars such as Friars Peter, Francis and Thomas scattered throughout his plays. But enough has been said to show how completely Shakespeare grasped the essential points in the character of the friar. That this proves conclusively that Shakespeare was a Catholic is scarcely admissable. As he caught and portrayed the essential features in other characters so he caught and portrayed the essential features in the character of the friar, thus meriting the epitaph, "The thousand souled Shakespeare." But although the Catholic element in his plays does not prove conclusively that he was a Catholic, nevertheless it proves how great was the influence exercised by the Church on the master writer of the Elizabethan age.

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