

endorses, the Union involves a right on the part of Ireland to get rid of it by force. Never was a measure more destitute of the moral character of a compact.

What has been done in Canada, and in Australia, can as easily be done in Ireland. It is unstatesmanlike to prolong by force an unnatural and irritating species of connection that requires a large army for its preservation. How Ireland would rejoice if Queen Victoria solved the problem! if Her Majesty ended the quarrels of seven centuries in the only way in which they can be ended; if she opened her restored Irish Parliament, and by that act of honest restitution should inaugurate an era of Irish loyalty and imperial strength.

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ART. V.—THE THIRD ORDER OF S. FRANCIS.

THE issuing of an Encyclical Letter, by the Pope, though a thing of frequent occurrence, is yet not an event of small importance. For the Pope is not accustomed to address himself in an official Letter to all the Bishops of the Catholic world, except for the purpose of opening his mind to them on some grave matter, more or less directly affecting the salvation of souls—of conveying to them some special instructions for the more sure and safe guidance of the different portions of the universal flock committed to their pastoral care. His words also, on such an occasion, derive additional weight from the well-grounded certainty that they are the result of much mature reflection, the outcome of many anxious thoughts that “reach far deeper than the human aspect of things,” and that they are dictated by a far-seeing and practical wisdom, enlightened and directed from above. It is the duty, therefore, of all who acknowledge in the person of the Pope, their chief spiritual Father, and their divinely-appointed teacher and guide, to listen to his voice with humble and respectful submission, to weigh his utterances, and study their drift, and show a willing readiness to meet and embrace his views, and carry out his clearly-expressed desires. To slight his exhortations and pursue our course heedless of his advice, would be to incur no little responsibility. When he speaks, he does not mean to “beat the air”—his words, like those of his Master, must not remain void, barren and fruitless.

Thoughts similar to these have no doubt been suggested to many of our readers by a recent Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. Before offering a few remarks on the subject which it treats, it

will be useful to give a translation in full of the Letter itself. The Latin text will be found at page 201 of the present number.

A happy circumstance enables the Christian world to celebrate, at a not far distant interval, the memory of two men who, having been called to receive in heaven the eternal reward of their holiness, have left on earth a crowd of disciples, the ever increasing offspring from their virtues. For, after the centenary solemnities in honour of S. Benedict, the father and law-giver of the monks of the West, the opportunity of paying public honours to S. Francis of Assisi will likewise be furnished by the seventh centenary of his birth. It is not without reason that We see therein a merciful intention of Divine Providence. For, by calling on men to celebrate the birthdays of these illustrious Fathers, God would seem to wish that they should be induced to keep in mind their signal merits, and at the same time to understand that the Religious Orders they founded ought on no account to have been the objects of such unbecoming acts of violence, least of all in those States where the seeds of civilization and of fame were cast by their labour, their genius and their zeal.

We are confident that these solemn feasts will not prove fruitless to the Christian world, which has always, and rightly, deemed the Religious Orders its friends; and thus, having honoured as it has, with love and gratitude, the name of S. Benedict, it will strive with equal ardour, by public festivities and by numerous acts of piety, to revive the memory of S. Francis. Nor is the field whereon this noble rivalry in devotion will be displayed bounded by the limits of the region where this great saint first saw the light, nor by those of the neighbouring territories enlightened by his presence, but it extends to every part of the earth, wherever the name of Francis has become known and his institutions flourish.

Certainly We, of all others, approve of this zeal for so excellent an object, especially because we have been accustomed from Our youth to admire Francis of Assisi and to pay him a particular veneration; because We glory in being on the roll of the Franciscan family: and because, more than once We have, out of devotion, climbed with eagerness and joy the sacred heights of Alvernia; there the image of that great man presented itself to Us wherever We trod, and that solitude, teeming with memories, held Our spirit rapt in silent contemplation.

But, however praiseworthy this zeal may be, it is not enough; it must be understood that the honours in preparation for S. Francis will be especially pleasing to him who is honoured, if they who pay them derive profit therefrom. Now their solid and

lasting fruit is in the attaining some likeness to him whose eminent virtue is an object of admiration, and in endeavouring to improve by imitating him. If, with the help of God, this practice is zealously followed, an opportune and extremely efficacious remedy will have been found for the evils of the present time.

And therefore it is that We wish, venerable brethren, not only that these Letters should convey to you the public testimony of Our devotion to S. Francis, but that they should, moreover, excite your charity to labour with Us for the salvation of men by means of the remedy We have just pointed out.

Jesus Christ, the Liberator of mankind, is the everlasting and ever-flowing source of all the good things that come to us from the infinite bounty of God; so that He who has once saved the world is He who will save it throughout all ages; "for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."* If then the human race fall into sin, either through its natural propensities or through the faults of men, it is absolutely indispensable to have recourse to Jesus Christ and to recognise in Him the most powerful and the most sure means of salvation. For so great and so efficacious is His divine virtue that it is at once a defence from all dangers and a remedy for all evils. And the cure is certain, if mankind returns to the profession of Christian doctrine, and to the rules of life laid down by the Gospel.

When the evils We have spoken of arise, as soon as the providentially appointed hour of help has struck, God raises up a man, not one of the common herd, but eminent and unique, to whom He assigns the salvation of all. Such is what came to pass at the end of the twelfth century and in the few subsequent years; S. Francis was the agent in this great work.

That period is sufficiently well known, and its character of mingled virtues and vices. The Catholic faith was deeply rooted in men's souls, and it was a glorious sight to see multitudes inflamed by piety set forth for Palestine, resolved to conquer or to die. But licentiousness had greatly impaired popular morality, and nothing was more needed by men than a return to Christian sentiments. Now the perfection of Christian virtue lies in that disposition of soul which dares all that is arduous or difficult; its symbol is the Cross, which those who would follow Jesus Christ must carry on their shoulder. The effects of this disposition are a heart detached from mortal things, complete self-control, and a gentle and resigned endurance of adversity. In fine, the love of God and of one's neighbour is the mistress and sovereign of all

* Acts iv. 12.

other virtues ; such is its power that it wipes away all the hardships that accompany the fulfilment of duty, and renders the hardest labours not only bearable but agreeable. There was a dearth of such virtue in the twelfth century ; for too many among men, enslaved by the things of this world, either coveted madly honours and wealth, or lived a life of luxury and self-gratification. All power was centred in a few, and had almost become an instrument of oppression to the wretched and despised masses ; and those even who ought by their profession to have been an example to others, had not avoided defiling themselves with the prevalent vices. The extinction of charity in divers places was followed by scourges manifold and daily ; envy, jealousy, hatred, were rife ; and minds were so divided and hostile that on the slightest pretext neighbouring cities waged war amongst themselves and individuals armed themselves against one another.

In this century appeared S. Francis. With wondrous resolution and equal simplicity he undertook to place before the eyes of a decrepit world, in his words and deeds, the complete model of Christian perfection.

And even as at that period the blessed Father Dominic Guzman was occupied in defending the integrity of heaven-sent doctrine and in dissipating the perverse errors of heresy by the light of Christian wisdom, so was the grace granted to S. Francis, whom God was guiding to the execution of great works, of inciting Christians to virtue, and of bringing back to the imitation of Christ those men who had gone both long and far astray. It was certainly no mere chance that brought to the ears of the youth these counsels of the Gospel : " Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses ; nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff."* And again, " If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come, follow Me."† Considering these words as directed personally to himself, he at once deprived himself of all, changed his clothing, adopted poverty as his associate and companion during the remainder of his life, and resolved to make those great maxims of virtue, which he had embraced with a lofty and courageous mind, the fundamental rules of his Order.

Thenceforth, amidst the effeminacy and fastidiousness of the time, he is seen to go about careless and roughly clad, begging his food from door to door, not only enduring what is generally deemed most hard to bear—the senseless ridicule of the crowd—but even to welcome it with a wondrous readiness and joy. And

* Matt. x. 9, 10.

† Matt. xix. 21.

this because he had embraced the folly of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and because he deemed it the highest wisdom. Having penetrated and understood its awful mysteries, he plainly saw that nowhere else could his glory be better placed.

Together with the love of the Cross, an ardent charity penetrated the heart of S. Francis, and urged him to propagate zealously the Christian Faith, to devote himself to that work, though at the risk of his life and with a certainty of peril. This charity he extended to all men; but the poorest and most repulsive were the special objects of his predilection; so that those seemed to afford him the greatest pleasure whom others are wont to avoid or over-proudly to despise.

Wherefore has he deserved well of that brotherhood established and perfected by Jesus Christ, which has made of all mankind one only family, under the authority of God, the common Father of all.

By his numerous virtues, then, and above all by his austerity of life, this irreproachable man endeavoured to reproduce in himself the image of Jesus Christ. But the finger of Providence was again visible in granting to him a likeness to the Divine Redeemer, even in external things.

Thus, like Jesus Christ, it happened that S. Francis was born in a stable; little child as he was, his couch was of straw and on the ground. And it is also related that, at that moment, the presence of angelic choirs, and melodies wafted through the air, completed this resemblance. Again, like Christ and his apostles, Francis associated with himself some chosen disciples, whom he sent to traverse the earth as messengers of Christian peace and eternal salvation. Bereft of all, mocked, cast off by his own, he had again this great point in common with Jesus Christ—he would not have a corner wherein he might lay his head.

As a last mark of resemblance, he received on his Calvary, Mount Alvernia (by a miracle till then unheard of) the sacred stigmata, and was thus, so to speak, crucified. We here recall a fact no less striking as a miracle than considered famous by the voice of hundreds of years. One day S. Francis was absorbed in ardent contemplation of the wounds of Jesus crucified, and was seeking to take to himself and drink in their exceeding bitterness, when an angel from heaven appeared before him, from whom some mysterious virtue emanated: at once S. Francis felt his hands and feet transfixed, as it were, with nails, and his side pierced by a sharp spear. Thenceforth was begotten an immense charity in his soul; on his body he bore the living tokens of the wounds of Jesus Christ.

Such miracles, worthy rather of the songs of angels than of the lips of men, show us sufficiently how great was this man, and

how worthy that God should choose him to bring back his contemporaries to Christian ways. It was undoubtedly a superhuman voice that bade S. Francis, when near the church of S. Damien, "Go thou and uphold my tottering house." Nor is the heavenly vision which presented itself to the gaze of Innocent III. less worthy of admiration, wherein it seemed to him that S. Francis was supporting on his shoulders the falling walls of the Lateran Basilica. The object and meaning of such manifestations are evident; they signify that S. Francis was to be in those times a steadfast protector and pillar of Christendom. Nor, in truth, did he delay about his task.

Those twelve disciples who had been the first to place themselves under his government were like a small seed, which by the grace of God, and under the fostering care of the Sovereign Pontiff, quickly became an abundant harvest. After having holily instructed them in the school of Christ, he allotted to them for the preaching of the Gospel the various parts of Italy and of Europe; and some he sent even as far as Africa. There was no delay; poor, ignorant, unrefined, they mingled with the people; in the highways, and in the public squares, with no preparation of place or pomp of rhetoric, they set themselves to exhort men to despise earthly things and to think of the time to come. It is marvellous to see the fruits produced by the enterprise of such workers, apparently so inadequate. Crowds gathered round them, eager to hear them; faults were bitterly bewept, injuries were forgotten, and peace was restored by the appeasing of discords.

It is impossible to express the enthusiasm with which the multitude flocked to S. Francis. Wherever he went he was followed by an immense concourse; and in the largest cities, as in the smallest towns, it was a common occurrence for men of every state of life to come and beg of him to be admitted to his rule.

Such were the reasons for which the saint determined to institute the brotherhood of the Third Order, which was to admit all ranks, all ages, both sexes, and yet in no way necessitate the rupture of family or social ties. For its rules consist only in obedience to God and his Church, to avoid factions and quarrels, and in no way to defraud our neighbour; to take up arms only for the defence of religion and of one's country; to be moderate in food and in clothing, to shun luxury, and to abstain from the dangerous seductions of dances and plays.

It is easy to understand what immense advantages must have flowed from an institution of this kind, as salutary in itself as it was admirably adapted to the times. That it was opportune is sufficiently established by the foundation of so many similar associations which issued from the family of S. Dominic and from

other religious orders, and by the facts themselves of history. Indeed, from the lowest ranks to the highest, there prevailed an enthusiasm and a generous and eager ardour to be affiliated to this Franciscan Order. Amongst others, King Louis IX., of France, and S. Elizabeth of Hungary, sought this honour; and in the course of centuries, many Sovereign Pontiffs, cardinals, bishops, kings, and princes have not deemed the Franciscan badges derogatory to their dignity. The associates of the Third Order displayed always as much courage as piety in the defence of the Catholic religion; and if their virtues were objects of hatred to the wicked, they never lacked the approbation of the good and wise, which is the greatest and only desirable honour. More than this, Our predecessor, Gregory IX., publicly praised their faith and courage; nor did he hesitate to shelter them with his authority, and to call them as a mark of honour, "*Soldiers of Christ, new Machabees*": and deservedly so. For the public welfare found a powerful safeguard in that body of men who, guided by the virtues and rules of their founder, applied themselves to revive Christian morality as far as lay in their power, and to restore it to its ancient place of honour in the State. Certain it is, that to them and their example it was often due that the rivalries of parties were quenched or softened down, arms were torn from the furious hands that grasped them, the causes of litigation and dispute were suppressed, consolation was brought to the poor and abandoned; and luxury, the ruin of fortunes and instrument of corruption, was subdued. And thus domestic peace, incorrupt morality, gentleness of behaviour, the legitimate use and preservation of private wealth, civilization and social stability, spring as from a root from the Franciscan Third Order; and it is in great measure to S. Francis that Europe owes the preservation of these advantages.

Italy, however, owes more to Francis than any other nation whatsoever; as it was the principal theatre of his virtues, so, also, it received most plentifully his benefits; and, indeed, at a time when many were bent on multiplying the sufferings of mankind, he was always offering the right hand of help to the afflicted and downcast; rich in the greatest poverty, he never desisted from relieving other's wants, neglectful of his own. In his mouth his native tongue, new-born, sweetly uttered its infant cries; he gave utterance to the power of charity and of poetry in his canticles composed for the common people, and which have proved not unworthy of the admiration of a learned posterity. We owe to the mind of Francis that a certain breath of inspiration nobler than human has stirred up the minds of our countrymen so that, in reproducing his deeds in painting, poetry, and sculpture, emulation has stirred the industry of the greatest artists. Dante

found in Francis inspiration for his noble and sweetest verse ; Cimabue and Giotto drew from his history subjects which they immortalized with the pencil of a Parrhasius ; celebrated architects found in him the motive for their magnificent structures, whether at the tomb of the Poor Man himself, or at the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, the witness of so many and so great miracles. And to these temples men from all parts are wont to come in throngs to venerate the Saint of Assisi, the father of the poor, upon whom, as he had utterly despoiled himself of all human things, the gifts of the divine bounty so largely and copiously flowed.

It is manifest that from this one man innumerable benefits have flowed into the Christian and civil republic. But since that spirit of his, thoroughly and surpassingly Christian, is wonderfully fitted for all times and places, no one can doubt that the Franciscan institutions would be specially beneficial in this our age. And especially for this reason, that the tone and temper of our times seem for many reasons to be similar to those ; for as in the twelfth century divine charity had grown cold, so also is it now ; nor is the neglect of Christian duties small, whether from ignorance or negligence ; and, with the same bent and like desires, many consume their days in hunting for the conveniences of life, and greedily following after pleasures. Overflowing with luxury, they waste their own, and covet the substance of others ; extolling indeed the name of human fraternity, they nevertheless speak more fraternally than they act ; for they are carried away by self-love, and genuine charity towards the poorer and the helpless is daily diminished. In the time we are speaking of, the manifold errors of the Albigenses, by stirring up the masses against the power of the Church, had disturbed society and paved the way to a certain kind of *Socialism*. And in our day, likewise, the favourers and propagators of *Materialism* have increased, who obstinately deny that submission to the Church is due, and thence proceeding gradually beyond all bounds, do not spare the civil power ; they approve of violence and sedition among the people, they attempt agrarian outbreaks, they flatter the desires of the proletariat, and they weaken the foundations of domestic and public order.

In these many and so great miseries, you well know, venerable brethren, that no small alleviation is to be found in the institutes of S. Francis, if only they are brought back to their pristine state ; for, if they only were in a flourishing condition, faith and piety and every Christian virtue would easily flourish ; the lawless desire for perishing things would be broken ; nor would men refuse to have their desires ruled by virtue, though that seems to many to be a most hateful burthen. Men, bound together by

the bonds of true fraternal concord, would mutually love each other, and would give that reverence which is becoming to the poor and distressed, as bearing the image of Christ. Besides, those who are thoroughly imbued with the Christian religion feel a conviction that those who are in legitimate authority are to be obeyed for conscience' sake, and that in nothing is any one to be injured.

Than this disposition of mind nothing is more efficacious to extinguish utterly every vice of this kind, whether violence, injuries, desire for revolution, hatred among the different ranks of society in all which vices the beginnings and the weapons of Socialism are found. Lastly, the question that politicians so laboriously aim at solving—viz., the relations which exist between the rich and poor, would be thoroughly solved if they held this as a fixed principle—viz., that poverty is not wanting in dignity; that the rich should be merciful and munificent, and the poor content with their lot and labour; and, since neither was born for these changeable goods, the one is to attain heaven by patience the other by liberality.

For these reasons it has been long and specially our desire that every one should, to the utmost of his power, aim at imitating S. Francis of Assisi; therefore, as hitherto we have always bestowed special care upon the Third Order of S. Francis, so now, being called by the supreme mercy of God to the office of Sovereign Pontiff, since thereby we can most opportunely do the same, we exhort Christian men not to refuse to enrol themselves in this sacred army of Jesus Christ. Many are those who everywhere, of both sexes, have already begun to walk in the footsteps of the Seraphic Father with courage and alacrity, whose zeal we praise and specially commend, so that, venerable brethren, we desire that by your endeavours especially it may be increased and extended to many. And the special point which we commend is that those who have adopted the insignia of *Penance* shall look to the image of its most holy founder, and strive to imitate him, without which the good that they would expect would be futile. Therefore take pains that the people may become acquainted with the Third Order and truly esteem it; provide that those who have the cure of souls sedulously teach what it is, how easily any one may enter it, with how great privileges tending to salvation it abounds, what advantages, public and private, it promises; and in so doing all the more pains are to be taken because the Franciscans of the First and Second Order, having been struck recently with a heavy blow, are in a most piteous condition. God grant that they, defended by the patronage of their Father, may emerge, youthful and flourishing, from so many disasters; may He also grant that Christian people may tend towards the

discipline of the Third Order with the same alacrity and the same numbers as formerly from all parts they threw themselves into the arms of S. Francis himself with a holy emulation.

We ask it above all, and with yet more reason, of the Italians, from whom community of country and the particular abundance of benefits received demand a greater devotion to S. Francis, and also a greater gratitude. Thus, at the end of seven centuries, Italy and the entire Christian world would be brought to see itself led back from disorder to peace, from destruction to safety, by the favour of the Saint of Assisi. Let us especially in these days beg this grace, in united prayer to S. Francis himself; let us implore it of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, who always rewards the piety and the faith of her client by heavenly protection and by particular gifts.

These are beautiful words; words coming from the abundance of the heart—of a heart full to overflowing of a tender devotion to S. Francis and a loving admiration for the work he accomplished seven centuries ago. But it is not mere personal devotion to the Saint of Assisi which has dictated them, and induced the Holy Father to speak them in the hearing, so to say, of the world. It was not simply to make known and publish abroad his high veneration and esteem for S. Francis, that he chose this great servant of God and his admirable virtues for the theme and subject-matter of an Encyclical. Nor must the Pope's Letter be viewed only in the light of a grateful tribute to the memory of one who, in his day, did great things for the Church of God. For, all the founders of religious orders have rendered eminent services to religion and conferred signal benefits on the Christian world. Each in his turn was raised up by heaven to do a certain work, and each is deserving of the Church's eternal gratitude. And yet on the occasion of the centenaries of S. Benedict, the founder of the great Benedictine Order and the Father of Western Monasticism, and of S. Theresa, the splendour and glory of the Order of Carmel—we might almost say its foundress—the Pope did not honour either of these two illustrious saints, as on a like occasion he honoured S. Francis. Why is it then that the Pope has singled out "the poor man of Assisi" for the admiration and study of all Christians? Why does he at the present moment bring under the notice of the whole Catholic world the work and mission of S. Francis? It is, as he himself tells us in his Encyclical, because he sees in the "Institutions" which St. Francis has left behind him, and more particularly in his Third Order, a remedy and an antidote against the evils that afflict our age.

Already in former Encyclicals Leo XIII. has pointed out the

chief errors of the misguided intellect—errors concerning the rights and privileges of the Holy See, the nature of Christian marriage, the mutual obligations of rulers and subjects. And now, in his last Apostolical Letter, he calls attention to the sores and wounds of the heart—the moral disorders that are now rife amongst men—and to counteract these he advises the imitation of S. Francis, the acquisition of his spirit, and warmly counsels the spread of his Third Order amongst the masses of the people. And he feels fully justified in proposing this remedy and entirely confident of its efficacy, if zealously adopted, when he considers that before now it has healed and saved society in times similar in many respects to our own. In the thirteenth century the “Franciscan Institutions” rolled back the tide of moral corruption and depravity that ruthlessly swept over the face of the Christian Commonwealth; why should they not be able, under God’s blessing, if properly organized and directed and imbued with the true spirit of their holy founder, to render a like service to the world at the present day, and stem the torrent of lawless iniquity that threatens to carry all before it, and to change and transform the hearts of men and turn their minds to higher and better things?

The twelfth century, as the Holy Father says, had its dark and its bright sides. Looking back at this distance of time, one is inclined to think that the dark predominated. For example, in two of the principal kingdoms of Europe, during the last decade of the century—that is to say, in England, under King John, and in France, under Philip Augustus—an Interdict, lasting for three or four years, had laid the Church and the people under the most terrible of visitations. The time of Interdict was one in which religion seemed to cease; and the crimes of kings, which had called down the awful censure, to have the world to themselves. The reign of Innocent III. (1198–1216) was a period of triumph and victory for the Church; but it was one of continual struggle, turmoil, and war. That great Pope had to contend with, to threaten, and to punish, literally, every European ruler, great and small. There was civil war and persecution in England, constant fighting in France, the most desperate contest with the Saracens in Spain, war between rival claimants of the Empire in Central Europe, and perpetual contests in Italy between city and city. But the most serious trouble was the rise of the Albigensian heresy and rebellion in that district, of which Toulouse is the centre. The question which was solved by the terrible struggle, so short and so fierce, which desolated Southern France at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was whether the most fertile part of Europe should or should not relapse into sensual Paganism, or perhaps Mahomedanism. Yet

the Albigensian heresy, while it gave the widest liberty to sensual crime, carried the cloak of a strict and mortified life. It was this profession of the "perfect life" which made it so dangerous to the multitude in France and in Northern Italy. By prayer, by preaching, and by the just, though stern, action of the civil powers, it was crushed and strangled to death. But when S. Francis was young the air was full of the rumours of its struggle, and in many an Italian city there were those who leaned secretly to its cause. Whilst heresy and fleshly Paganism raised their heads on high, it must also be said that the guardians of the sanctuary were only too remiss in their resistance. It was the moment when the hand of the secular power lay heaviest on the Church, when priests, and too often bishops also had to be the humble servants of fierce feudal chiefs. Innocent III. changed this; but it was a crying evil at the moment. The great nobles and military leaders were in those days the lords of men and of things. We may see, in the mighty castles which at this very time were built by groaning serfs all over England, an illustration of what was true of Europe in general, of the enormous and irresponsible power of the feudal nobles. Most of these men cared little for law, for religion, or for men's lives and rights. To them, the poor were "cattle," and the priests their menials. In Italy, even in the sovereign cities, it was no better. The sovereignty of a city meant the despotic powers of an armed oligarchy. Yet, with all these drawbacks, the Catholic faith was alive, and deeply rooted in men's souls. It was a period of crusades; it was a time when in Spain Christians beat back the Saracen, and in Languedoc rooted out the heretic; it was a time when the voice of the Pope was effective, sooner or later, throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Such was the beginning of that century in which S. Francis of Assisi was to institute his Order.

He was born at Assisi, a small town situated in the valley of Umbria, in Italy, in 1182. In his early youth he was captivated by the glitter and show of the amusements and pleasures of the world. But at the age of twenty-two, after a severe fit of illness, during which his eyes were opened, he resolved on devoting himself entirely to the service of God, in the exercise of penance and self-denial, and the practice of the most absolute poverty; in imitation of Him, who left us an example of suffering that we should follow it, and who from rich became poor for love of us. How he carried his resolution into effect; how he began to afflict himself by fasting and every austerity, and to spend much time in prayer and holy contemplation, this is not the place to relate. Having made a voluntary renunciation in the hands of his bishop of all he possessed and was entitled to inherit, and

put on a coarse woollen habit, which he girt about him with a cord, he went forth to preach penance to a corrupt, sinful and depraved world. The populations were touched and moved by the earnest winning eloquence of his words and the sanctity of his life. Many were moved to repentance and a better life; and not a few attached themselves to him, and placed themselves under his spiritual guidance. Each day saw fresh disciples flock around him, eager to walk in his footsteps, and throw in their lot with his: and their number being now considerable, S. Francis formed them into a religious family or community. He accordingly drew up for them a rule of life, and had the happiness to obtain for it the approbation of Innocent III.

Thus was established in 1209 the Order of the Friars-Minor—the First Order of S. Francis. It was founded exclusively for men. But there were many pious and devout persons of the other sex, anxious to lead, under his direction, a life of poverty, penance, and prayer, and to immolate and sacrifice themselves for the sins of the world. For these he founded in 1212 a second Order—the Order of the Poor Clares; so called after the holy virgin, St. Clare of Assisi, the first to receive at his hands the holy habit of religion. By the institution of his Second Order, S. Francis secured the zealous co-operation of many pure and holy souls—souls powerful with God by their prayers and their pleadings, in the work he had so much at heart, and for which alone he lived—the conversion of sinners. And being shortly afterwards made sure, by a special revelation, in a moment when doubts rested on his mind as to whether he should devote himself to that work by prayer only, or by preaching also, that he was called to evangelize the world, and lead an apostolic life for the sake of the multitudes that were perishing, he gathered around him his companions, made known to them the will of God in his and their regard, and, filled with a holy enthusiasm, he exclaimed: "Let us go in the name of the Lord." Marvellous were the fruits of grace that everywhere attended their missionary labours. They showed themselves living examples of the humility, patience, poverty, and charity of Christ. Their example gave efficacy to their words. Their words carried conviction to the minds of their hearers, and softened their stony hearts. The faith that was dead was quickened into life again, lost hope was recovered, the charity that had waxed cold began to glow with ardour. Enmities ceased; families were reconciled; rival factions laid down their arms. Former sins were bitterly deplored; forgiveness was sought from God with burning tears; and solemn promises made to repair the past. The sincerity of these promises was nobly and generously attested by the great numbers who sought refuge in the cloister under his fostering care and that of his spiritual

daughter S. Clare. This forsaking of the world soon became one of the ordinary results of S. Francis's preaching. The heart of the multitudes was stirred; and a craving for solitude, a longing for the retirement of a religious life, became so general and assumed such alarming proportions, that on one occasion when the saint was discoursing with his usual fervid eloquence on the eternal punishment of sin, at Canaria, near Assisi, all the inhabitants of the little town and many from the neighbouring villages who had flocked to hear him—people of every rank and station, young and old, men and women, married and single—eagerly besought him to admit them into one of his orders, that they might the better save their souls. The same thing occurred at Florence and in other parts of Tuscany. But S. Francis, who was no rash enthusiast, prudently advised them, in answer to their entreaties, to remain where they were, and to endeavour to sanctify themselves and “escape the wrath to come” by a conscientious discharge of their respective states in life. At the same time, however, he promised to provide them with a rule for their safe guidance through the dangers of the world, by following which they might practise holiness, advance in virtue and perfection, please God, and gain heaven. Thus arose the Third Order, for persons living in the world. Passing one day, in the course of his apostolic journeys, in 1220, through the little town of Poggibonzi—in Tuscany—he there met a certain wealthy tradesman, named Luchesio, who had been one of the gay companions of his youthful days. Luchesio, no doubt under the influence of S. Francis's holy example, had come to think more seriously than before of the next world, and he was preparing himself for it by the practice of every good work of charity and religion. His wife, Bonadonna, was equally imbued with pious sentiments, well-disposed, devout, and charitable. They both applied to the saint for some instruction as to how they might the better sanctify themselves and serve God in their position in life. Seized with a sudden inspiration, S. Francis said to them: “I have long felt the necessity of instituting some kind of order, into which married people and others could enter who are desirous of leading more holy and perfect lives,” and, he added, “I think you could not do better than become its first members.” They gladly accepted the proposal, and begged to be at once received into it. The saint gave them a coarse habit and a cord like those worn by the members of his First and Second Orders, and framed some regulations which would serve for their spiritual guidance until such time as he should compose a Rule of Life, suitable for a proper religious organization such as he intended to establish. This he did the following year. He at once submitted the Rule to Honorius III., who gave to it his verbal approbation. It was

many years afterwards—in 1289—that it was, with some slight alterations, solemnly confirmed by Nicholas IV. S. Francis called his new order the Order of the Brethren of Penance, but it has since generally obtained the name of the Third Order, in contradistinction to the two older orders already mentioned.

The Third Order, as may be seen, had a very humble beginning; but there was a grand and glorious future in store for it. It was a small tiny seed which was to grow up into a large tree, with rich luxuriant foliage, and wide-spreading branches. It was one of those weak instruments which God is often pleased to choose for the execution of some high purpose and design. But before we describe its wonderful progress and the still more wonderful influence it came to exert upon the world, we shall here give a brief sketch or outline of the Rule which it received from its holy founder. As a first and all-essential condition for admission into the order, S. Francis required a profession of the Catholic faith and of loyalty to the Holy See. This he also demanded in the case of those who would join either of his other two orders, and nothing was more necessary in those days when the poison of the Albigensian heresy had tainted the minds of many in Italy, as well as in France, and when the Ghibelline faction that opposed the Holy See had not a few adherents amongst all classes of the people. S. Francis was truly *vir catholicus et apostolicus*; and he would have all his spiritual children distinguished for their deep attachment to the one true faith, imbued with the same spirit of intense loving devotion to the Vicar of Christ by which he himself was ever animated and influenced. He knew well that right faith is the foundation of all sanctity, and love for the Church the only source of lasting success in any work undertaken for God's glory. Besides this profession of Catholic doctrine and declaration of fidelity to the Holy See, all applicants to the order were obliged before their reception to restore all ill-gotten goods to their lawful owners, and sincerely reconcile themselves with any with whom they might be at variance. For what would it avail them to offer themselves to God, or how could they please the God of peace and charity, if they wronged their neighbours unjustly, and lived in enmity with their fellow-men? The members of the Third Order were, moreover, called upon to give an example of Christian modesty and decency in their apparel, to shun all dangerous, profane, and sinful amusements, to avoid all unnecessary oaths and lawsuits, and never to take up arms except to defend the Church and their country. Thus did S. Francis seek to check and destroy that foolish passion for vanity and extravagance in dress—that love of pleasure and self-indulgence—and those revengeful quarrels and party-feuds which are the fruitful source of so much misery and sin. The Rule also enjoined the

Brothers and Sisters to fast and abstain at stated times ; to recite daily the seven canonical Hours, or the Little Office of Our Lady, or fifty-four " Our Fathers " instead ; to hear Mass as frequently as possible ; to visit and console one another in sickness ; to provide decent Christian burial for the dead, and to pray for the departed.

These are the chief points—the main features—of the Rule of the Third Order, which bears the impress of the heavenly wisdom of the saintly legislator who framed it. It was suited for persons of every condition, living in the world, laden with the world's cares and responsibilities, and exposed to its dangers and temptations. And it was admirably adapted to meet the needs and mitigate, if not entirely extirpate, the evils of the unhappy times which called it forth. This is sufficiently attested by the rapid extension of the Order, its marvellous success as a means of moral regeneration, and the astonishing results for good which everywhere attended its spread and accompanied its growth. Enriched from the beginning with the sanction of the Church and the blessing of its holy founder, it could not but prosper. No sooner was it instituted than multitudes hastened to seek for admission. To be allowed to join it was a privilege which all who conveniently could eagerly embraced. Not a town or village but soon had its congregation of Tertiaries ; scarcely a family but could boast of having at least one of its members enrolled in the new religious organization. After striking its roots deeply into the soil of Italy, the land of its birth, it spread itself gradually into France, Spain, and Germany, and found its way into many other countries. And wherever it went it was readily welcomed ; there was the same eagerness on all sides to join it. Popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, emperors, kings and queens, the noblest of the land, the brightest intellects of the day, high and low, rich and poor, men and women of every class and condition, all deemed it an honour to wear the humble livery of S. Francis. We can here mention but a few of the most illustrious Tertiaries. Michael Paleologus, Emperor of Constantinople ; Rudolph of Hapsburg, Emperor of Germany ; Charles V. and his royal consort ; Philip II. and Philip III., Kings of Spain ; Anne of Austria ; Maria Teresa, Queen of France, married to Louis XIV. ; Bela IV., King of Hungary ; Jagallen, King of Poland ; John, King of Aragon ; Charles IV., King of Bohemia ; Charles II. and Robert, Kings of Sicily and Jerusalem ; Alexander VII., Duke of Savoy ; the unfortunate Catherine of Aragon, Queen of England, wife of Henry VIII. ; Sir Thomas More ; all these were members of the Third Order. The celebrated painters Cimabue and Giotto ; Raphael and Michael Angelo, eminent alike in painting and in sculpture ; poets like Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch, and Lopez de Vega, the great

satirical poet of Spain, paid the homage of their genius to S. Francis, requesting the favour of being buried in the Tertiary habit. Christopher Columbus was a most pious and devout Tertiary; he said the Divine Office daily, and was clothed in the habit of the order when he made the discovery of the New World. And many others besides, men distinguished for their genius, eminent in every department of science, literature and art, did not think it beneath them to become spiritual children of the "Poor man of Assisi," but rather gloried in it. This feeling of just and legitimate pride, in belonging to the Third Order, is beautifully expressed in a letter which a certain great Spanish cardinal wrote in 1623 to Father Wadding of Limerick, the learned author of the annals of the Franciscan Order: "You praise me," said the cardinal, with some surprise, "that I should have taken the habit and made solemn profession to adhere to the rules of the Third Order of S. Francis. But is not the garb of S. Francis a real purple, which may adorn the dignity of kings and cardinals? Yes, it is a true purple, dyed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and in the blood which issued from the stigmata of his servant. It gives, therefore, a royal dignity to those who wear it, and far from being humiliated by putting on this holy habit, I have reason to fear that I have done myself too much honour, and that I derive from it too much glory."

With the progress and extension of the Third Order, there came a remarkable change for the better over the face of society. The Third Order infused a true Christian spirit into allwhom it admitted into its ranks. It taught them the necessity of self-abnegation and sacrifice. It made them meek, humble, kind, forgiving, charitable. It also offered to them the means of leading in their respective states a holy and perfect life. It enabled them to live in the world the life of the cloister, to unite the duties of Martha with those of Mary, to sit in silent contemplation "at the feet of Jesus," even while being "troubled about many things." It thus formed a body of Christians, fervent, religious and devout; all striving to please God by faithfully keeping His commands, and following closely in the steps of S. Francis. It sanctified as many as practised its rule. It produced heroes of sanctity in every sphere of life. It can boast of having given to the Church as many canonized saints as any other order. S. Louis, King of France; S. Ferdinand, King of Castile; Bl. Henry, King of Denmark; Bl. Amadeus IX., Duke of Savoy; S. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary; S. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal; S. Elzear, Count of Ariano, and S. Delphine, his wife; S. Yves, a priest in Brittany; S. Roch of Montpellier; S. Rose of Viterbo; S. Margaret of Cortona; these are but a few of the more illustrious saints of the Third Order. Besides these, many others—martyrs, confessors,

and virgins—adorned the order with their virtues, sanctity, and miracles. It is worthy of notice that many founders of religious orders and congregations, approved by the Church, were Tertiaries of S. Francis. Thus S. Angela Merici, foundress of the Ursulines; S. Brigitt, foundress of the Brigittines; S. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus; S. Francis of Paola, founder of the Minims; S. Vincent de Paul, founder of the priests of the mission and the Sisters of Charity; Cardinal de Berulle, the founder of the Oratory, and M. Ollier, founder of the Congregation of S. Sulpice, belonged to the Third Order. Through the practical holiness of its members, the Third Order proved a powerful agent for the revival of Christian faith and morality. The saintly lives of Tertiaries were everywhere a standing reproach to evildoers, an unceasing condemnation of vice, an irresistible exhortation and encouragement to virtue. Their holy examples were not lost upon the world that witnessed them. They had many imitators; and society soon became leavened with the spirit of S. Francis, the spirit of the Gospel—of Jesus Christ Himself. Under its quickening influence it began to live a new life, to wear a new and improved aspect, to give evidence of a total change and transformation, to show forth the most admirable fruits of virtue, piety, and religion; it arose, as it were, from the tomb of moral corruption and depravity, in which it had so long lain buried, in all the freshness, beauty, vigour and health of a renewed and perfected existence. We may here remark that, shortly after the death of S. Francis, many of his Tertiary children, of both sexes, began to live together in communities, in order to devote themselves entirely to works of Christian charity. Some ministered to the wants of the poor and destitute; some gave instruction to the ignorant; others looked after orphans; others waited upon the aged and infirm; others again tended and nursed the sick; and others took charge of the insane. There was no work of mercy, spiritual or corporal, which their loving charity did not embrace. Now, besides the mere material gain accruing to society, from the care taken by these Tertiaries of all its suffering and afflicted members, what a strong moral influence it must have exercised; what a beneficial humanizing effect it must have produced on an age of barbarous cruelty and oppression by the spectacle it offered of so much tender devotion to all that was weak and helpless! Religious houses of Tertiaries exist to this day in every country in Europe; they are to be found in even these islands where once they were so numerous; thirty-two having, as Wadding tells us, been destroyed in Ireland alone by the devastating hand of heresy; and they are still carrying on the work initiated and begun centuries ago, under the inspiration of their holy founder—still consecrating themselves with untiring

zeal and energy to the relief of every want, to the alleviation of every human misery and infirmity.

We shall now mention one fact in particular which goes incontestably to prove the deep hold which the Third Order soon obtained on the populations, amongst which it was spread, and the signal services it rendered to religion, in a time of great trial, a few years only after its institution. When Frederick II. (1194–1250), King of Sicily and Emperor of Germany, was in arms against the Holy See, and trampling under foot all its most sacred rights, it was the Tertiaries of S. Francis that rose up everywhere in the defence of the Church's freedom—that offered a determined resistance to the Emperor's project of reducing all Italy under his sway, and compelled him to renounce his ambitious designs, and give up the struggle as hopeless. This is no fable—no exaggeration; but plain history. It is the open and candid confession of the Emperor's Minister of State, Peter de Vignes, who in a letter to his Imperial Master, explaining the cause of his defeat and humiliation, writes these remarkable words: "The Friars-Minor have risen up against us. They have publicly reprov'd our life and our enterprises. They have trampled on our rights, and made nothing of us. And to entirely destroy our predominance and wean the people's affection from us, they have erected a new Confraternity for men and women, into which everybody is rushing, so that there is hardly any one whose name is not upon its muster-roll." Thus did the Tertiaries show themselves true children of the Church, faithful and devoted servants of the Vicar of Christ. Their devotion to the Holy See, on this and many other occasions, gained for them the gratitude of the then reigning Pontiff and his immediate successors, who never lost an opportunity of defending them against the ill-will and slander of their enemies, honouring them with rare privileges, and earnestly recommending the bishops to take them under their special care and protection.

That the regeneration of the thirteenth century was mainly brought about by the Tertiary movement is admitted by all who have made the history of that age their particular study. We quote an eminent Protestant authority in support of this assertion:—

The founder says (Sir James Stephen) of such a confederacy (the Third Order) must have had some of the higher moral instincts of a legislator. It would be difficult even now, with all the aid of history and philosophy, to devise a scheme better adapted to restrain the licentiousness, to soften the manners, and to mitigate all the oppressions of an iron age . . . and it would be mere prejudice or ignorance to deny that it sustained an important office in the general advancement of civilization and truth.—"Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, S. Francis of Assisi" p. 84.

But we have the higher testimony of Leo XIII., bearing witness in the Encyclical to the same fact.

The associates (writes his Holiness) of the Third Order displayed always as much courage as piety in defence of the Catholic religion in them also the public welfare found a powerful safeguard certain it is, that to them and their example it was often due that the rivalries of parties were quenched or softened down; arms were torn from the furious hands that grasped them, the causes of litigation and dispute were suppressed, consolation was brought to the poor and the abandoned, and luxury, the ruin of fortunes and instrument of corruption, was subdued.*

At first sight, the thirteenth century and the nineteenth seem to have little in common. Instead of war, privilege and oppression, we have now the supremacy of law, equality and safety. And, on the other hand, the influence of faith and of the Holy See has, to a great extent, disappeared from public and private life. Yet it is true that, as the Supreme Pontiff says, "the character of our times seems, in divers ways, to approach the character of those days." In those days sensuality, irresponsible power, brute violence, and impatience of religion, made the world turbulent and the life of many Christians miserable. In our days, sensuality, indifferentism, money-grasping, irresponsibility, and impatience of religious restraints,—is it not true that these are the curses of the times and the causes of misery and trouble which are spreading day by day?

What proved a healing balsam once, will, under the like circumstances, prove so again. The spirit of S. Francis, permeating and acting upon society, is once more the remedy. The sainted *curé* of Ars, himself a Tertiary, frequently during his lifetime declared it as his conviction that the Third Order was the means chosen by Providence for the regeneration of the world in these days. Pius IX., also a Tertiary, on many occasions during his long pontificate spoke of it as being especially designed by God to counteract the prevailing evils of the times. At a general congress of Catholics held at Paris in April, 1879, the desire of all present was expressed that the Third Order should everywhere be encouraged and supported as being the best safe-

* It was once a flourishing institution in England. We have before us a manual of the Third Order, printed in 1643 for English-speaking Tertiaries, and dedicated to the Dowager Countess Rivers, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta, wife of Charles I., and a Tertiary also. In the dedicatory epistle, the author speaks of the Third Order "beginning anew to take root and life" in the country from which it was well-nigh banished in time of fierce persecution. This is proof sufficient that the Third Order of S. Francis was far from being unknown amongst us in days gone by.

guard against the moral decay and dissolution of society. A proposition to the same effect was carried with unanimity at a congress of Catholics held at Modena the same year. And thus there seems to have been for some time past a kind of presentiment—a growing conviction—that the Third Order was destined to play a no mean part in the renovation of modern society. This conviction has been considerably strengthened by the extraordinary revival and extension of the Third Order within the last quarter of a century. Many bishops have joined it, and earnestly recommended their flocks to follow their example. Many priests also have enrolled themselves in it, and established congregations of Tertiaries in their several parishes. And hundreds and thousands of every class have generously embraced the Rule of the Third Order in imitation of their pastors. A French periodical sums up in the following words the general feeling of the Catholic world in favour of the Third Order as a powerful instrument of social and religious amelioration :—

Now-a-days the Third Order of S. Francis is much spoken of. Its importance is seriously discussed in Catholic congresses. It is considered by all as one of the chief means which God will make use of to raise up society from the low and wretched state to which it has fallen. Everywhere Catholic papers speak of its progress, record its marvellous diffusion, and are unanimous in their praise of its salutary and regenerating influence.*

His Holiness, by his second Encyclical, has solemnly confirmed the correctness of Catholic anticipations and Catholic opinion in regard to the Third Order. After telling us that all the Franciscan institutions, on account of the thoroughly and pre-eminently Christian spirit of their founder, cannot fail to be of the greatest benefit to this age, to bring much alleviation and relief to the miseries and troubles of the times; he mentions how he has ever had a special interest in the Third Order; he praises the zeal of those who already belong to it; warmly exhorts all others to become members of it, and earnestly calls upon the bishops of the Church to promote and further its increase by every means in their power, to see that the priests under them, “teach what the Third Order is, how easily any one may enter it, with how great privileges tending to salvation it abounds.” He then expresses a hope that the people will flock to the Third Order with the same alacrity as formerly they threw themselves into the arms of S. Francis himself. And he foretells, as the result of their doing so, the peace and salvation of the Christian world. Now, “if ever,” as Cardinal Newman writes :—

* “*Semaine du Clergé*,” tom. xv., Jan. 1880, p. 473.

There was a power on earth who had an eye for the times, who has confined himself to the practicable, and has been happy in his anticipations, and whose words have been facts . . . such is he in the history of ages, who sits from generation to generation in the chair of the Apostles, as the Vicar of Christ . . . from the first he has looked through the wide world, of which he has the burden; and according to the need of the day, and the inspirations of his Lord, he has set himself, now to one thing, now to another, but to all in season, and to nothing in vain.*

We have no doubt, then, that the Pope has a clear insight into the need of the day; that he has set himself to the right thing in recommending the Third Order; that he has chosen a seasonable and opportune time for calling attention to this remedy; and, moreover, we feel confident that he has not spoken to the world in vain.

We do not, indeed, think that the Holy Father's appeal to join the Third Order will be answered to the full extent of his desire. That all Christians will become Tertiaries is not to be expected. "All do not obey the Gospel" of Jesus Christ; much less will all listen favourably to a mere exhortation, however earnest and pathetic, of His Vicar. But we believe that the Pope's words, when properly explained and their drift made known, will not remain fruitless and barren, but will have a large measure of success; that many of the faithful will hearken to the voice of their Spiritual Father and Guide; that when people are taught what His Holiness desires they should be taught concerning the Third Order, they will hasten to enlist in considerable numbers, "in this Sacred Army of Jesus Christ." Now there are four things which the Holy Father wishes the people to know about the Third Order—viz., what it is; how easily it can be joined; how valuable are the privileges its members enjoy; and how great are the benefits it confers on individuals and on society. We shall endeavour to give some information on each of these points.

1. As already stated, it is an order, instituted by S. Francis, to aid persons living in the world, to serve God more perfectly, by the observance of certain rules of conduct and exercises of piety, devotion and penance, compatible with their secular state. We have had occasion to remark, that some members of the order, desirous of higher perfection, live in community, and bind themselves by vows: these form the Third Order regular. By far the greater number, however, live in the world; and of these, some are attached to particular congregations of the order, established in some church or chapel, under the direction of any duly authorized priest, and holding regularly the monthly

* "Idea of a University," p. 13.

meetings prescribed by the Rule; whilst others are mere *isolated* members of the order, belonging to no properly organized congregation, but striving by themselves, according to their respective states in life, to keep and follow the Rule as best they can. But all Tertiaries, whether regular or secular, are members of the one Third Order of S. Francis,—the third branch of the great Franciscan family. And this Third Order, even in so far as it comprises seculars only, is not a simple confraternity or congregation, such as that for instance of the Rosary, or of the Scapular, or of the Cord, or any other of those numerous associations of pious Christians which adorn the Church; it is something more; it is a real order: not a religious order in the strict sense of the word, since it has not the three vows essential to the religious state—but still an order. This has been frequently declared by the Sovereign Pontiffs, but by none so clearly and distinctly as by Benedict XIII. in his Bull “*Paterna Sedis*” :—

We decree and declare that the Third Order has always been, and still remains, holy, meritorious and conformable to Christian perfection; and, moreover, that it is a true and proper order, uniting in one seculars scattered all over the world and regulars living in community and enclosure; and that it is entirely distinct from every other confraternity, inasmuch as it has its own special Rule approved by the Holy See, its novitiate, its profession, and a habit of determinate form and material.

The Third Order, then, is an institution far superior in the eyes of the Church to any other religious association of seculars; and is a true order—an order animating all its members of every class and condition with true Catholic sentiments; binding and holding them together by a uniform and pious Rule of life, and making of them a chosen band of Christians, zealously devoted to God’s service, in the midst of a world “*seated in wickedness.*”

2. The order is open to all who are sincerely desirous of leading a good life. It is for rich and poor, high and low. No state, no calling, no line of profession, need prove a hindrance to any one’s joining it. None, however, should rush into the Third Order, blindly and recklessly, without knowing what they are doing. This would be neither wise nor profitable. When any one thinks himself called to it, he should seek to become acquainted with its spirit and rules. He should ask the advice of his confessor, or of some other priest, qualified, by his knowledge of the order, to enlighten and assist him. If he be encouraged to enter, then he should apply to some Franciscan father, or to any other priest, duly delegated, and humbly ask for admission. If he cannot find any one having faculties to receive him, then he has only to write to the Father Provincial or other head superior of any branch of the First Order, naming a priest of his choice, and

asking for him the necessary powers. These are never refused. The postulant at his reception into the Third Order is invested with a scapular and cord. The scapular is in lieu of the habit originally worn, even in public: it reminds the Tertiary that he must clothe himself with the virtues of the great saint, whose livery he wears. The knotted cord warns him that henceforth he must overcome himself, and lead a mortified and penitent life. The scapular and cord are to be worn day and night, and should not be laid aside without some serious reason. When they are no longer serviceable, they are to be replaced by others; and these do not require a fresh blessing.

After receiving the cord and scapular, there is put into the postulant's hands a copy of the Rule of Life which, as a child of S. Francis, he is to follow. We have already given a summary of its main obligations. It wears a certain aspect of severity which deters many from embracing it: but its severity is more apparent than real. For, in the first place, there is no point of it which does not admit of dispensation for a just and reasonable cause, such as ill-health, weakness of constitution, hard work, pressure of domestic occupations. S. Francis did not intend that those who could not keep every prescription of the Rule, should on that account refrain from professing it. He wished that all should take it for their guide, but observe as much of it only as their condition in life would permit. "He desired," says an expositor of the Rule, "to leave the door of his Order open to all Christians—to the sick as to the healthy, to the weak and the strong, the old and the young—and that no one should be obliged to do more than he reasonably could."* None therefore should remain outside the Third Order because they cannot comply with all its austerities; but they should enter it with a good-will to do what they can, and then apply for dispensation from those parts of it which they find it very difficult or impossible to observe. This dispensation should be asked from the Director of the Congregation, where a Congregation of Tertiaries exists; otherwise, from each one's ordinary confessor. Directors and confessors readily grant the dispensation asked for; but they are careful, when they deem it expedient, to commute the obligation from which they have released the Tertiary into some other good work easy of performance. By this commutation the spirit of the Rule remains intact, and the Tertiary suffers no spiritual loss. We give a few examples of commutation; a Tertiary who cannot abstain from flesh-meat on Wednesday or Saturday might be told to abstain from intoxicating drinks, or make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or say the Psalm *Miserere* or some other

* "Elzear," No. 2, c. 18, p. 135.

prayer. Another, who is unable to fast might instead hear Mass, or say one or two decades of the Rosary, or give an alms to the poor. A third, who finds it impossible to say the "Office of the Beads," might be enjoined the recitation, morning and evening, of the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus or of Our Lady, &c. Besides being easily dispensed when necessity requires, the Rule of the Third Order does not bind in any way under pain of sin; so that those who violate any part of it do not thereby offend God, unless they act out of contempt, or unless the particular obligation which they transgress be binding upon them in virtue of some other law, either of God or of the Church.

3. We are safe in saying that no order in the Church has been enriched with more spiritual favours and privileges than the Third Order of S. Francis. The Supreme Pontiffs seem to have taken a special delight in pouring out upon it all the treasures of grace entrusted to their keeping. The limits of this paper will allow us to mention a few only of the most singular distinctions conferred upon it.

The members of the Third Order may, if in the state of grace, gain all the indulgences of the Sanctuaries of the Holy Land, of all the Basilicas, churches and sanctuaries of Rome, of Portiuncula, and of S. James of Compostella, by simply reciting, anywhere and at any time, six *Paters*, *Aves*, *Glorias*, for the welfare of the Church and the intentions of the Pope. Tertiaries may also gain the celebrated Indulgence of the Portiuncula on the 2nd of August in any church, chapel, or oratory, in which they have a congregation canonically established, provided it be not near a church or chapel of the Friars-Minor.

They have, moreover, the great privilege of receiving on the principal festivals throughout the year the priceless blessing of the *general absolution* to which is annexed a Plenary Indulgence. And further still, they may receive the Papal blessing four times in the year.*

These extraordinary spiritual advantages, besides numerous others to be found mentioned in every manual of the Third Order, should be sufficient to draw the hearts of many to an association so highly favoured—so richly endowed—with all the choicest blessings the Vicars of Christ have in their power to bestow.

4. A body of men and women, like the Tertiaries, united together in the bond of religion, animated with a true Christian

* The reduction recently made by Leo XIII. in the number of times that the Papal blessing may be given within the year, does not apply to that which is usually given to Tertiaries, but only to the solemn Papal blessing which some religious orders had the faculty of imparting to all the faithful visiting their Churches on certain fixed days.—"Revue Théologique," tom. xiv. No. 7, Sept. 7, 1882.

spirit, frequently meeting to receive good advice and instruction, and to join together in prayer, cannot but edify, assist, and strengthen and encourage one another. It is clear also that their holy lives and exemplary conduct must exert a great influence for good over those with whom they mix in daily intercourse, especially in the family circle. Tertiaries, living up to the spirit of their Rule, cannot fail to raise the moral tone of their homes, to sanctify them, to make them homes of peace, charity and religion. Society naturally gains by this improvement and amelioration of families; and the more Tertiary families there are, showing forth the beauty of Christian holiness, and shedding abroad the influence of their practical catholicity, the more surely also and the more rapidly will society be renewed and regenerated, touched to its very heart, and brought to the knowledge and worship of that God whom at present it forgets, and even ignores. We do not expect a universal transformation of society by the spread of the Third Order; but we confidently look forward to a gradual and striking change. We believe that the spirit of S. Francis will, through the means of his Tertiary children, destroy in many the spirit of the world, raise their minds to higher things, purify their thoughts and affections, and remove some of the most malignant plague-spots of the modern world. There is one evil, in particular, which the Third Order will probably do much to destroy—and that is, Secret Societies. The Tertiaries of S. Francis necessarily form an organization which will wither the organizations of evil. They will not only diminish the power of the Societies to obtain recruits, and dry up all sources of sympathy with them; but they will be a most formidable band of themselves, fitted to take an active part in the Church questions, the school questions, the society questions, and the labour questions which are troubling the world at this moment.

Probably, also, the spread of the "Tertiary" movement will have a considerable influence on the luxury and the ostentation of modern life. One difference between our days and the century of S. Francis is that in his time fine clothes and splendid appointments were displayed in the streets and in public, whilst in ours there is comparative sobriety outside, but a perfect worship of comfort and luxury within doors. The dress of women, which is so costly, and in which that foolish competition which is called the "fashion" carries Christian ladies to extremes they often regret, will perhaps be regulated and kept within the bounds of moderation and decorum. The luxury of well-to-do men, which it has become a first principle in society to cultivate and arrange for, and which, even when it is despised or disregarded (as it often is, for a time or a purpose), is despised on

Pagan principles, will be tempered by the application of the great "Franciscan" rule that inconvenience and suffering are the best choice we can make, because they draw our hearts nearer to Christ. With gentlemen and with ladies, if we may venture to say so, it ought to be a valid explanation on occasions when "custom" seems to require luxurious display, to say, "I am a Tertiary of S. Francis." It is a great mistake to suppose that "Franciscan institutions" are intended only for the poor, for servants, or for the "lower middle class." Their spirit is the spirit of poverty and of self-denial, and it is precisely for those whose means and position give them wealth and the opportunities of luxury that this spirit is useful and even necessary. For the poor and for the hard-working classes of every grade they are useful, too. Progress and prosperity are not forbidden by the spirit of the Third Order. There is, no doubt, some difficulty in these days in applying that principle which Pope Leo XIII. states afresh in the recent Encyclical, that all should be content with their state. In days when the grades of society were sharply defined, this Rule meant a very definite matter. In these days, when "one man is as good as another," its application must be somewhat more vague. But it evidently means that such a spirit of "content" is to be cultivated as may exclude from the struggle for wealth all dishonesty, malice, envy, and mere pride; such as may take away the impulse to Communism, crime, and revolution; and such as may prepare even those who are striving to lessen their poverty to see that poverty is a good and desirable state. It is not too much to say that few social problems would remain if the rich did not love but only used their riches, if the money-making classes did not covet wealth, but only opportunities for doing good, and if the poor, whilst striving for their wives and their little ones, were convinced that the mere fact of their being worse off than their neighbours was a matter of very little consequence. This would be the beginning of an era of Socialism and Communism, not of the type of Proudhon and S. Simon, but of Jesus Christ.
