ZHF
Matthew
The Mass and its Folklore

By

JOHN HOBSON MATTHEWS

"Of all that is the world is, Most worthy thing of all the Mass."

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
69 Southwark Bridge Road
London, S.E.
1903
"It is fitting; indeed in this age it is specially important, that, by means of the united efforts of the devout, the outward honour and the inward reverence paid to this Sacrifice should be alike increased. Accordingly, it is Our wish that its manifold excellence may be both more widely known and more attentively considered."

(Entreaty of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on the Most Holy Eucharist, May 20, 1903)
PREFACE

There are many good and popular English books on the Mass. Some of them treat the subject after the manner of a Rationale, explaining the significance of the prayers and ceremonies of the Eucharistic rite; others are historical and antiquarian, and elucidate the origin and evolution of the ceremonial—while of devotional works there is no end. It appeared, however, that there was room for a short treatise on the folklore and minor antiquities of the Mass; by which are meant the various aspects and the numerous details of the Holy Sacrifice which have so impressed the minds of Catholics in the past as to leave permanent traces in the popular traditions and speech. The aim of this little book is to stimulate love for the Mass by showing how it was valued by our ancestors in the ages of faith, and what our
predecessors in the penal times willingly suffered for its sake.

The Church, being the Catholic Church, has many ways of leading her children along the pathway to heaven. Her chief effort, the primary object of her existence, is to secure the salvation of all men by every means in her power. And since the collective human mind comprises an infinite variety in intellect, character, temperament, imagination and taste, the Church (making herself "all things to all men") adapts with like diversity the forces which she brings to bear upon mankind, including her ritual, her discipline and her methods of worship both public and private.

At the same time, there can be no doubt that the spirit of antiquity strongly permeates the services of the Catholic Church—the most conservative institution on earth, as well as the most democratic—and that those are entirely in harmony with the genius of Catholicism who are animated with a profound reverence for the pomp and solemnity of the Church's public offices, and with a tender
Preface

love for even the most homely religious traditions and practices of our Catholic forefathers.

While some of us may be more attracted by the Church’s conservatism and others by her vigorous modernity, we are all bound to respect equally Catholic antiquity and papal sanction. Both these authorities are of the highest kind—are, in fact, identical. Rome permits no deviation from the Catholic standard in her devotions, and the freshest flowers in her “garden of the soul” have their roots deep down in the rich soil of the Church’s past.

Cardiff, Feast of St David, 1903.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Introductory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The Virtue of the Mass</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Mass in the Penal Times</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Mass Vestments and Church Furniture</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V The Ordinary and Canon of the Mass</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI The Attitude of Prayer</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII A Hymn at the Elevation</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mass and its Folklore

I. Introductory

The Mass is the liturgical rite whereby the Catholic Church, from the Last Supper until this very morning, has celebrated throughout the world the divine mystery of the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His perpetuation of the one sacrifice of the Cross. It is the great act of worship of historic Christianity, the mainspring of the Church’s mechanism, the throbbing heart of the Bride of Christ. Whether celebrated by united prelate amid the clustered columns and tinted lights of some Gothic cathedral, with all the splendid accessories of ecclesiastical pomp, or by a poor blackrobe missionary in a wigwam of the Far West, the Mass is the supreme and central Catholic worship; the one great reality, as Carlyle deemed it,
The Mass and its Folklore

which yet survives in an age of unsubstantial insincerities. As a still more modern thinker* has pithily said, “It is the Mass that matters.” It was for the Mass that the ancient Briton constructed his wattled egluys, the Gael his drystone oratory. For this the Norman baron built the parish church hard by his manor house, and the lord abbot erected his stately minster. For the sake of the Mass the painter, the goldsmith, the scribe and the limner, produced the masterpieces of art which are the despair of our artistically degenerate age.

Though we know but little of the precise mode in which the sacred mysteries were solemnized by the apostles themselves, there is abundant evidence in the writings of the early fathers that in the sub-apostolic age the necessity for the decent and orderly celebration of the Eucharist had led to the formation of a liturgy with a definite ritual. When once the infant Church had emerged from the catacombs into the enjoyment of political freedom, this primitive ritual rapidly

* Mr Augustine Birrell.
developed in ornateness and, hallowed by time, was lovingly enshrined in a rich outer casket of popular sentiment and tradition, studded with gems of poetry and folklore.

The word "Mass" is in Latin missa, Italian messa, Spanish misa, French messe, Saxon mass, German mess. It is thought to be connected with the words Ite, missa est, pronounced by the priest at the elevation of the rite; and the editors of the "Catholic Dictionary" adduce some evidence to support this derivation. Although the word is, in nearly, all the languages of the Western Church, derived from the Latin missa, this is not universally the case. Thus the Celtic tongues name it by a word of purely native origin, namely, Irish aifhionn, Welsh offeren; and in Maltese it is expressed by the Arabic word koidiesa—"the sacred thing."

The Mass has left upon the English language marks which centuries of Protestantism have not been able to efface. Our greatest festival is still called "Christmas," i.e., "the Christ Mass." An attempt was made, in the age of Puritan ascendency,
not only to abolish Christmas, but also to eradicate its name by substituting the term "Christ-tide"; but ancient custom proved too strong for the innovators, and the Mass conquered once more. We have also Candlemas, Lammas, Martinmas, Michaelmas, Childermas and other words of similar formation—which is one almost peculiar to the English tongue. The earliest Mass in our old churches was called the Morrow-Mass. There were also the Jesus Mass and the Lady Mass. In the same manner were formed the old English words "mass-priest" and "mass-paper." In a later age the Protestants dubbed our poor chapels "mass-houses"; and we still sometimes call a missal a "mass-book."

In French there are several proverbial phrases bearing reference to the Mass. Thus, of a man who eats a big breakfast before attending early Mass, they say: "He is going to the Mass of the Dead, he takes bread and wine with him." "Going to Midnight Mass" is an ironical term applied to a person who haunts taverns late at night.
Introductory

A hypocrite is sometimes spoken of as "a man who hears two Masses." Of another they will say: "He has made a short Mass, he will make a long dinner." "He goes neither to Mass nor sermon," is said of an irreligious person.

Mass is celebrated only during the first half of the day, the twelve hours from midnight to noon. Most frequently Mass is said in the early morn.* It is peculiarly a morning service. To this rule there are hardly any exceptions. There is a church at Naples which from time immemorial has possessed the peculiar privilege of a Mass said at two o'clock after noon. A Mass may be commenced at noon, in which case it will end between half an hour and an hour after; or it may, on rare occasions, be begun before midnight, provided the consecration does not take place before the stroke of twelve.

A priest may only say one Mass a day. But on Christmas Day he says three Masses,

* "Best refaction, to gladden all our cheer,  
   Is every morrow early to hear a Mass."  
   —LYDGATE.
in honour of the solemn mystery of the Incarnation. Of these three, the first is—in theory, though not always in practice—to be said or sung at midnight of Christmas Eve, the second at daybreak and the third in the forenoon. Commonly, however, a priest says three low Masses in quick succession on Christmas morning early.

At St John's Church, Valetta, Malta, a low Mass is said on every holiday of obligation at 12 noon. It is called *La Messa dei pigri*—"The lazy folk's Mass," testifying to the fact that the Mass is essentially a morning act of worship. I once heard an excellent but generally prejudiced Nonconformist say: "One thing I do admire in Roman Catholicism: it is a six-o'clock-in-the-morning religion," which he evidently considered as admirable a thing as "two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage."

The celebrant always says Mass absolutely fasting: i.e., he must not have tasted food or drink from the previous midnight. This rule has been framed out of reverence for the Eucharist. A legend is current in
Malta that one day, towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the Knights of Saint John were to make their Easter Communion together in their conventual church, a young knight expressed his intention of taking a meal after midnight. When remonstrated with upon this sacrilegious resolve, he defended himself by saying that it was more respectful to receive the Host upon food, than to put food upon the Host. The story goes no further, being considered by the Maltese, in this inconclusive form, a sufficient object-lesson in impiety.

One of the most ancient and indispensable rules requires that Mass should be celebrated upon an altar of stone; but, although the whole structure of the altar must in general be stone, the law is, in certain cases, held to be observed when the lower portion is of wood, provided the altar-stone be of the required material. The altar-stone, before it can be used, must be consecrated by the bishop according to the form laid down in the Pontificale Romanum. Five small equiangular crosses are incised upon its surface,
The Mass and its Folklore

one at each corner and one in the middle, and a small square cavity is made near one side. At the consecration of the altar-stone the crosses are anointed with chrism, and relics are deposited in the cavity, which is thereupon sealed up. Portable altar-stones are sometimes consecrated for the use of itinerant clergy, such as missionaries in remote and uncivilized countries, where no churches are to be found.

The priest celebrates Mass standing with his back to the congregation. At St Peter's and the other basilicas in Rome, however, the Pope celebrates Mass on the opposite side of the altar, which stands insulated, and thus faces the congregation.

A High Mass is one which is accompanied with the full ceremonial. In Latin it is termed Missa Solemnis.

Mass which is performed by the celebrant alone, without deacon or sub-deacon, and assisted by a simple clerk or server, but chanted, and with or without incense and the six lights, is termed Missa Cantata, "Sung Mass." Of this kind is the last or parochial
Mass in our small mission churches. It is often, but erroneously, called "High Mass." At such a Mass the clerk or server must wear cassock and surplice or cotta, and there are often several acolytes to assist.

Low Mass is said by the priest without chant or incense, with a simple clerk or server, who need not wear cassock, surplice or cotta. There are only two lights on the altar.

Every Catholic of the age of seven years and upwards is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to attend Mass on all Sundays and "holidays of obligation," unless prevented by sickness, remoteness, or other lawful and bona fide excuse. A Catholic may not, without some good reason, take up his abode in a place where he knows or suspects that he will not be able to get Mass. Also, he is in conscience bound to see that all Catholics over whom he has any authority, parental or other, perform their duty in this respect.

Mass is the only public service which the Church obliges her children to take part in. Vespers, Compline and Benediction are also solemn and beautiful liturgical functions; the
service of Good Friday morning is largely made up of the prayers and manual acts of the Mass. Yet the Church, desirous as she is that we should benefit by participation in these devout services, does not bind us to attend them under pain of mortal sin. That supreme sanction is reserved to the Mass alone; and even the Good Friday service ("Mass of the Presanctified"* as it is called), because it comes short of being the Holy Sacrifice, is not "of obligation." It is the Mass that matters.

The question is often asked by Catholics: How much of the Mass must be heard in order to "fulfil the precept"? The Church has not seen fit to state definitely what is the irreducible minimum; but it is generally held and seems certain that it is essential to be present before the commencement of the Offertory, and to remain until after the priest's Communion.

* The Host has been consecrated on the previous day; hence this service is no true Mass. Consecration, as well as Communion, is essential to the Sacrifice.
II. The Virtue of the Mass

Much as devout Catholics of the present day revere the Holy Sacrifice and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, it is only with difficulty that we can form an adequate notion of the profound and enthusiastic devotion felt towards the Mass by the people of this country in the ages of faith. One is amazed, in reading ancient manuscripts, at the rapturous sentiments and language of their writers on this subject. To say that the Mass was the centre and heart of our ancestors' religion is to employ an inadequate phrase; it was their very life and breath. It is to the point to mention that the commonest oath in England was "by the Mass"—for people swear by what they regard as most sacred.

No one who has read the old Welsh and English tales on which Tennyson founded his Arthurian idylls, can have failed to be struck with their frequent allusions to the
Mass. King Arthur’s knights, good, bad and indifferent, all turn in to wayside chapels to hear Mass, as naturally as in the present day their descendants would enter the newsrooms of their various clubs. It would seem, too, that the hearing of Mass always preceded the taking of the morning meal: “And on the morrow he heard Mass, and brake his fast,” is one of the commonplaces of the chronicles of the Round Table. “And Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all day and all that night in a forest; and at the last he was aware of a hermitage, and a chapel that stood between two cliffs. And then he heard a little bell ring to Mass; and thither he rode, and alighted, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard Mass. And he that sang the Mass was the Bishop of Canterbury.”

Dan John Lydgate, a Benedictine monk and the contemporary of Chaucer, wrote an edifying set of verses entitled “The Virtue of the Mass,” by way of instruction for the laity. He tells his readers of the countless benefits they gain by hearing Mass, for which
he cites the testimony of the fathers and tradition:

Alban for England, Saint Denis for France,
Blessed King Edmund for royal governance,
Thomas of Canterbury for his meek sufferance.
At Westminster Saint Edward shall not fail,
That none enemy shall hurt nor prevail,
But that Saint George shall make you freely pass,
Hold up your banner, in peace and in battail,
Each day when ye devoutly hear Mass.

Lydgate makes allusion to certain pious beliefs which prevailed in England, as probably they still do in some Catholic countries. The first of these beliefs is that devout attendance at Mass brings a signal blessing upon temporal concerns in general:

Hearing of Mass giveth a great reward,
Ghostly health against all sickness . . .
And unto folk that goen on pilgrimage,
It maketh them strong, getteeth them secureness
Graciously to complete their voyage.
The mighty man, it maketh him more strong,
Recomforteth the sick in his langour,
Giveth patience to them that suffer wrong,
The labourer beareth up in his labour;
To thoughtful folks, refreshing and succour,
Gracious counsel to folk disconsolate;
The Mass and its Folklore

Sustaineth the feeble, conveyeth the conqueror,
Maketh of merchants the fairs fortunate. . .
Grace at departing, saith Saint John, to borrow;
Good speed, good hap, in city, town and house,
To all that hear devoutly Mass at morrow.
Hearing of Mass doth passing great avail;
At need and mischief, folk it doth relieve;
Causeth Saint Nicholas to give good counsel,
And Saint Julian * good harbour at eve;
Behold Saint Christopher,† no enemy shall thee grieve,
And Saint Loy ‡ your journey shall preserve.
Horse nor cart that day shall not mischieve,
Mass heard afore, who doth these saints serve.

Dan Lydgate is here writing what he terms "A short Contemplation, after the opinion of Saint Bernard, what virtue is in the hearing of Mass." His theme in general is, that Mass, devoutly heard, brings temporal benefits, and particularly to wayfarers. This latter

* Saint Julian is the patron saint of innkeepers.
† Allusion is to the colossal picture of Saint Christopher commonly painted on the north wall of a parish church, opposite the south porch. To look on it was believed to be a preservative against sudden death on that day.
‡ Saint Eligius, as a worker in iron, is regarded as a protector of blacksmiths, horses and carts.
The Virtue of the Mass

point is capable of being carried further. In the Middle Ages there was a pious belief that no journey was shortened by the hearing of Mass; * that angels guided and protected persons on their way to and from Mass; nay, that the time spent at Mass was not deducted from the duration of any man’s life:

Parting from Mass, 'giving your journey,
Call on Saint Michael your pace to fortify,
For sudden haste and good prosperity;
And for glad tiding, Saint Gabriel shall you guide;
And Raphael, record of Tobye,†
Shall be your leech and your medicine.

A little further on, this note appears in the margin: “Words of Saint Austin touching the meeds of the Mass, so as it is ledged in Fasciculus Morum”—and Lydgate continues:

That day a man devoutly heareth Mass,
While he is present he shall not waxen old.
In going thither his steps, more and less,

* An old Welsh proverb ran: Nid hwy y daith ei gwrando Offeren—“Not longer is the journey for the hearing of Mass.”
† As witness Tobias.
The Mass and its Folklore

Be of angels numbered and told... Hearing of Mass leteth no voyage, As it hath well been proved in certain, Prayer at Mass doth great advantage, With Christ's Passion, to souls in their payne. The Mass also doth other things twain: To soul and body giveth consolation; If he pass that day by death suddain, Standeth for housel and his Communion.

Mass heard afore, the wind is not contrary To mariners that day, in their sailing... No time is lost during that service. For which let no man plainly be in doubt, But that God shall dispose in many wise To increase all things that they gon about.

Let us now see the same idea worked out in another composition. We will turn from the Saxon to the Celtic race, and select a Welsh poem written by the bard Ieuan ap Rhydderch, about the year 1420. It is entitled *Cywydd yr Offeren*—"An Ode to the Mass." The bard says:

"Many, by pure and blessed Saint Mary, are the virtues of the Mass. He who hears Mass devoutly will come to a good end.

* I have collated three different MSS. of this.
The Virtue of the Mass

The man who is present thereat, God strengthen him, he will not grow old, he will not get too hot. A good angel will be at his side, numbering every step from his house to the fair church. If he should die suddenly as he stands, and there should be a lawsuit for his property, God will reward him, and his lord will find it difficult to take a pennyworth of his goods. . . . When Mass is spoken of, what sense or what word is adequate? It is to the soul eight kinds of medicine at once, all prosperity and all worthy protection; to the body true happiness."

Let us now turn to another old Welsh document. This is a fragment written in 1346, and entitled: Rhinweddua Gwando Offeren*—"The Merits (or Virtues) of hearing Mass." It runs thus:

"The five merits (or virtues) of Sunday Mass are these: The first of them is, that the duration of thy life shall be the longer by

that of every Mass thou ever hearest. The second is, that all thy unseasonable food of Sunday * shall be pardoned. The third is, that God will pardon all thy venial sins of Sunday. The fourth is, that when thou goest to get † Sunday Mass, it shall be the same to thee as if thou wert given from thy father’s home as a true gift to God.‡ The fifth is, that if a man go to purgatory he shall have rest for the duration of every Mass he has heard.”

The document then continues with what seem to be the same ideas in a different form: “The merits (or virtues) of seeing § the Body of Christ are these: When Mass is sung, thy unseasonable food is forgiven on the day thou seest It. Thy profitless conversation is not remembered against thee. For oaths sworn in ignorance thou shalt not be punished. Sudden death shall not come

* The meaning is obscure.
† The phrase “to get Mass” is still common among English-speaking Catholics.
‡ A doubtful translation of an obscure passage.
§ This phrase will be explained later.
The Virtue of the Mass

to thee that day. If thou die on the day that thou seest It, the privilege of Communion shall be thine that day; and this because of taking Mass-bread.* Whilst thou hearest Sunday Mass thou shalt not so long grow older. Every step thou goest to get Sunday Mass, an angel shall accompany thee; and for every step thou shalt have a reward. No evil sprite shall abide with thee whilst thou goest to Sunday Mass."

Then follows a stanza of poetry, evidently of greater antiquity than the foregoing prose text:

Of thy speech, Tyssul,† I will ask thee on thy mule:
What shall I do about Sunday Mass?
If thou keep Sunday Mass through faith and belief and religion,
Blessed will they be that travel with thee.
Of thy speech, in earnest, I will ask thee, through attributes:‡

* This point will be explained later.
† A saint of the old Cambro-British Church, who has given his name to the parish of Llandysilio-gogo.
‡ Doubtful translation of this word.
What shall I do if I be without it?
If thou shalt be without it, without necessary
labour,
For the rest of that week see thou laugh not nor
smile.

We shall presently meet with a later and
more intelligible version of this poem.

The reader will have noticed the occurrence in the above document of several ideas
already found in the treatise of Dan Lydgate,
namely, the idea of security from sudden
death on the day that Mass has been heard,
the arrest of advancing age while hearing
Mass, and the fellowship of an angel and
the acquisition of merit in every step on the
way to Mass.

There is a curious and very ancient
Welsh poem consisting of a dialogue between
King Arthur and the Eagle—the bird of
wisdom in British lore. Among many ques-
tions on weighty matters of religion, Arthur
asks the Eagle: "O Eagle, a recondite
parable shalt thou tell, without concealment:
Is it good to get Mass on Sunday?" The
Eagle answers: "If thou shalt get Sunday
The Virtue of the Mass

Mass, and water and bread after, blessed is thy state." The next question put by King Arthur is: "O Eagle, thou shalt manifest truly, chief in prudence, candle of prophets: What shall I do if I be without it?" Answer: "If thou shalt be without Mass on Sunday, without necessity on thee or compulsion, throughout the week see thou laugh not nor smile."

From this and the previous reference it seems clear that a pious belief prevailed in ancient times to the effect that culpable failure to attend Sunday Mass should be expiated by voluntary abstention from mirth until the Sunday following. Before leaving this branch of our subject, it will be interesting to note that the version of the above ode, printed in the "Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales," * has undergone a Protestant editing; the word "Mass" having been altered to "service," and the words "water and bread" to "grace from God"—thus robbing the stanzas of all their point. The allusion to bread and water shall be explained later.

* Gee, Denbigh, 1873, p. 132.
It is, perhaps, little wonder that our forefathers, profoundly impressed as they were with the mystic sanctity and power of the eucharistic rite, should have early come to look upon the Mass as an invincible weapon against malignant spirits. Saint Augustine mentions the laying of ghosts by the celebration of Mass in a haunted house. The writer of an old Welsh manuscript,* citing this instance, moralizes thus: "You may see the fruit of the Mass in the driving out of devils, who are unable to endure the precious Sacrifice." On the other hand the ancient fathers, as is well known, are fond of insisting that angels surround the altar at the moment of the consecration. We have, also, in the prayer at Mass, *Jube hoc perferri*, a request that God will cause the offering to be presented to Him "by the hands of Thy holy angel"—the angel especially associated with the mysteries of the blessed Eucharist.

In the collection of Welsh semi-mytho-

---

* Cardiff Free Library, MS. 17,119 (sixteenth century).
logical stories known as the *Mabinogion,* dating, in their present form, from the thirteenth century, the Celtic demi-god, Llew Llaw Gyffes, confesses that he can be wounded only by means of "a javelin fashioned in a year's time and worked upon solely during Sunday Mass."

Principal Rhys, Professor of Celtic at Oxford University, in the course of his ethnological researches in the Isle of Man, came upon a tradition about Saint Maughold's Well, to the effect that its water was good for sore eyes, but "had its full virtue only when visited the first Sunday of harvest, and that only during the hour when the books were open at church, which, shifted back to Roman Catholic times, means doubtless the hour when the priest was engaged in saying Mass."† The learned author remarks that he has heard similar virtue ascribed, with the same restriction, to other wells in the

---

Isle of Man, and even to the sea water there.

In a manuscript of the Llanover collection, of about the year 1610,* is a long list of dreams, 183 in number, with the interpretation of each. Two of them refer to the Mass. No. 9 tells us that to dream you see a priest donning his chasuble, "signifies something contrary." No. 14 says, however, that "To dream you see Mass being celebrated, is happiness."

A more eloquent tribute to the virtues of the holy Sacrifice is embodied in the Irish proverb: *Ni luach go h-Ais frionn Dé eis-teachd*—"There is no reward like hearing God's Mass."

Dan Lydgate wrote:

Ye folks all which have devotion
To hear Mass, first do your busy cure,
With all your inward contemplation,
As in a mirror, presenting in figure
The moral meaning of that ghostly armour . . .
Call to your mind, of whole affection,

* In the handwriting of the Welsh antiquary-bard, Llewelyn Sion of Llangewydd, Glamorgan.
The Virtue of the Mass

How that the Mass, here in this present life,
Of ghostly gladness is chief direction
To have memory of Christ's Passion . . . .
Against our ghostly sickness our restoration,
Our balm, our treacle,* health and medicine.

A correspondent of "Notes and Queries" (9th S. ix, 149) calls attention to a belief prevailing in the Vosges, that the direction of the wind during Midnight Mass of Christmas determines the predominant wind for the ensuing year. This is but one illustration of the mysterious awe with which the first Mass of Christmas Day has been from time immemorial regarded. As Scott sings:

This only night of all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.

But there is also a peculiar atmosphere of reverence surrounding the parochial Mass of this greatest of Christian festivals. What Catholic does not know well the unique sensation of delighted awe, of mingled smiles and tears, with which (at least in childhood) he has assisted at the High Mass of Christmas Day in his parish church?

* Antidote or remedy.
The Mass and its Folklore

The festal array in which the church is bedecked, the banners, the evergreen garlands, the lighted tapers on the very rood-screen, the best vestments worn by the officiating clergy for this great occasion; the crib with its holy images of the Babe and His Mother and Saint Joseph, and the ox and ass; the short and cheerful sermon, ending with the preacher’s Christmas wishes; the festive harmonies of Novello’s Adeste Fideles sung (all but the last verse) at the Offertory, and—perhaps most impressive of all—the solemn Benediction after Mass, the blessed Sacrament enthroned amid lights and flowers, dimly seen through the cloud of incense and the fog of a December morning, while the last verse of the Adeste greets the new-born King on His humble throne:

Ergo qui natus die hodiernâ,
Jesu, tibi sit gloria,
Patris Æterni Verbum Caro factum!
Venite, adoremus Dominum.

During the course of the religious revolution of the sixteenth century, a German Protestant named Naogeorgus wrote in Latin a
The Virtue of the Mass

doggrel satire on Catholic faith and practice. This was translated by an English Reforming rhymester called Barnaby Googe. His translation, printed in 1570 and entitled "The Popish Kingdom," was immensely popular among the English Puritans, both Anglican and Nonconformist. In 1680 this was reprinted; and the book, originally intended for and used as a means of pouring contempt upon the Church, is now exceedingly valuable to antiquaries of all creeds, from its minute description of the religious ceremonies and usages of our Catholic forefathers. This is how it describes the way in which the Mass was regarded in ancient times:

Their trust is always in the Mass, to this they only fly
In everything that toucheth them, and every jeopardy.
And is not this a goodly crew? they are persuaded still,
What day they hear or see a Mass, to have no kind of ill...
Mass opens heaven's gates, and doth deliver men from hell.
Mass healeth all diseases, and doth sicknesses expel.
Mass doth relieve the burdened mind, and sins defaceth quite. . . .
Mass plucks the sinful soul from out the purgatory fire,
Mass comforteth th' afflicted sort, and makes them to aspire.
Mass washeth clean the mind, and makes the guilty conscience clear;
Mass doth obtain the grace of God, and keeps his favour here;
Mass driveth wicked devils hence, and overthrows the fiends;
Mass bringeth angels good from high, and makes them faithful friends,
Mass doth defend the traveller from danger and disease;
Mass doth preserve the sailing ship amid the raging seas.
Mass giveth store of corn and grain, and helpeth husbandry;
Mass besseth every such as seeks in wealthy state to be.
Mass gets a man a pleasant wife, and gets the maid her mate;
Mass helps the captain in the field, and furthereth debate. . . .
Mass helps the hunter with his horn, and makes the dogs to run;
The Virtue of the Mass

Mass sendeth store of sport and game into their nets to come.
Mass mollifieth angry minds, and driveth rage away;
Mass brings the woeful lovers to their long-desired day.
Mass doth destroy the witches' works, and makes their charmings vain.
Mass makes thy prayers be heard, and giveth thy request;
Mass drives away the greedy wolf that doth the sheep molest.
Mass makes the murrain for to cease, and stock to thrive apace;
Mass makes thy journey prosper well, where'er thou turn'st thy face.
Mass overthows thine en'my's force, and doth resist his might;
Mass drives out Robin Goodfellow, and bugs that walk by night.
Mass plague and hunger doth expel, and civil mutiny;
Mass makes a man with quiet mind and conscience clear to die.
In Mass is all their trust and strength, all things through Mass are done;
In all their griefs and miseries, to Mass they straightways run.

* Bogies, ghosts.
I think we must do Master Googe the justice of saying that these stanzas hardly exaggerate the sentiment of Catholics toward the Mass—at all events where the full current of ancient feeling has not been slackened by exposure to the freezing temperature of indifference and scepticism. In thoroughly Catholic lands at the present day, as in our own before the Reformation, every undertaking, every anxious aspiration is commended to almighty God and His saints by the hearing of Mass. Mass is heard daily by the devout in those countries, as it is, indeed, in this. Our ancestors could no more dispense with it than with their bodily food. They realized the full significance of the petition: "Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie."
Mass in the Penal Times

III—Mass in the Penal Times

Having obtained a graphic picture of the way in which the Mass was regarded by our ancestors in the Middle Ages, we must turn our attention to post-Reformation times. It is a matter of common knowledge, how that reforming kings, prelates and preachers in this country saw in the Mass the pith and core of Catholicity—or, as they termed it, of "Popery." It is no wonder, therefore, that these people who, from many various motives, desired to bring about the utter extirpation of the old state of things and to establish a new order in religious matters—it is no wonder, I say, that they early perceived the Mass to be the chief object for their attacks and for their innovations. It was the Mass that mattered above and before all; for the Mass was in a manner the kernel of Catholic faith and practice and, in the eyes of the people, represented all that their forefathers had held most sacred. The Re-
formers made no secret of their conviction that Catholicism could only be uprooted from the popular mind and affection by destroying the Mass and everything connected therewith. I am writing on folklore, not history, so it will be sufficient to refer to the injunctions, straitly enforced by the governments of Edward VI and Elizabeth, for the removal and destruction throughout the realm of altars and altar-stones, patens and chalices, pyxes and monstrances, chasubles, maniples and humerals, missals and graduals—in short, everything connected with the Sacrifice of the Mass and the doctrine of the Real Presence. How thoroughly these injunctions were obeyed is eloquently witnessed by the extreme rarity of ancient English-made examples of the objects above referred to.

The establishment of Protestantism meant for Catholics the commencement of the penal times—that long period when to celebrate Mass, or even to harbour a priest, was to incur the guilt and the horrible punishment of high treason; when the priest-hunter flou-
rished, and the priest's hiding-hole was constructed in many a noble mansion throughout the country; when gibbet, and cauldron and disembowelling-knife awaited captured priests in every county town. It might be supposed that in that awful time of trial the Mass was put down throughout the length and breadth of the land. But this would be to reckon without the unconquerable devotion of Catholic hearts to the Sacrament of Love, that mystic rite which is the special solace of the faithful in the time of tribulation. Never has the Mass been so highly prized, so worthily appreciated, or so devoutly approached as in the time when to kneel at the altar was to court fines, imprisonment and death; when non-attendance at the Protestant service cost £20 a month to our Catholic gentry, and to our Catholic poor all that they possessed.

The ravages of the Reformation, while involving the demolition of many a chancel as a logical sequence to the destruction of the high altar, had a further effect, which has

\[ * = \text{five or six times present value.} \]