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ST. THOMAS'S PRIORY.



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ST. THOMAS'S PRIORY

OR

THE STORY OF ST. AUSTIN'S STAFFORD

BY

JOSEPH GILLOW

And I too dream'd, until at last
Across my fancy, brooding warm,
The reflex of a legend past,
And loosely settled into form.

—TENNYSON.

LONDON: BURNS & OATES, LIMITED

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1494
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TO

FRANCIS WHITGREAVE, Esq., J.P., D.L.,

OF BURTON MANOR, AND MOSELEY COURT,

STAFFORDSHIRE,

TO WHOM, AND TO WHOSE FAMILY,

THE MISSION AT STAFFORD IS MUCH INDEBTED.

1490403

PREFACE.

Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.

THE following pages are the outcome of a visit with a friend to the remains of St. Thomas's Priory, and originally were written at his request to awaken in the Stafford congregation an interest in the story of how their forefathers handed down to them the Teaching of their Redeemer. What the Faith was in pre-Reformation days is so evident to the Catholic of to-day that it would be a needless encroachment upon time to exemplify that period. It is sufficient to say with Verstegan :—

Thus was the Faith, this is the Faith of old,
Held by the whole, now by the parte control'd.

The history of Stafford Mission is *facsimile* in outline with hundreds of others that might have

been culled from my collection towards a detailed account of all the Missions, Chaplaincies, and Missionary Stations that have existed in England and Wales since the so-called Reformation or Overthrow of the Ancient Faith. The record is sadly incomplete, and yet too vast, may be, ever to be displayed in its entirety. Therefore, from time to time, I have ventured, almost haphazard, to draw a few illustrations, and have issued them in some similar form to this, in the belief that Light discovers Truth, and that, thereby, others may be led to exclaim with the eminent antiquary, poet, and exile, previously cited :—

And live that Faith, whereof Christ gave the ground,
As long as Faith may on the earth be found.

J. G.

WOODLANDS, DUNHAM MASSEY,
CHESHIRE.

I.

Stafford's great name in old records did sleep,
And lay regardless 'mongst the common heap.

—*Nathaniel Thompson.* 1685.

HITHERTO, I believe, there has been no attempt to throw light upon the obscure history of Catholicity in Stafford. We are living in an age remarkable for its spirit of inquiry and its honest endeavour to brush aside the cobwebs of prejudice and ignorance, which so long have darkened the religious history of this country. In furtherance of this object the following jottings in my note-book are set down in chronological order, but without the formal pretension of a history, being presented rather as historical finger-posts to direct the future historian in his path.

It is unnecessary for the present purpose to enter into the origin and growth of the novel doctrines foisted upon a simple people by tyran-

nical sovereigns and their attendant mercenaries. It is sufficient to note that all the property of the Church, with the people's real and inalienable interest in it, was either confiscated, or transferred to a new religion, set up and established by the State, to which the people were forced to bow under penal laws framed and administered in a spirit rivalling that of the pagan persecutor. Every kind of abuse and calumny was heaped upon the ancient Faith; its professors were proscribed and outlawed, and the rising generation assiduously inoculated with the heresies of the reformers.

By Law we'll bring't within the reach
Of Death for papist priests to preach,
Say Mass or even to be found
In any place on English ground.
Nor will we Mercy have, or spare them,
Who either harbour priests, or hear them.

—*Ward*, Canto ii. 1710.

Hence it is that our first glimpses into the history of the Stafford mission only reveal pictures of a crowded gaol, barbarous executions of priests, and other cruelties devised to deter people from exercising the rights of conscience. These scenes are too numerous

to be recorded in the space at our disposal. Sometimes it is an account of a sudden raid upon the houses of those who clung to the Faith, by pursuivants in search of evidence against the proscribed religion, or in the hope of catching a priest; at others, a harrowing description of poor recusants being despoiled of their goods, and even homes, on account of their inability to pay the penalties inflicted upon them for non-attendance at the established service. A few such examples will suffice, for—

To bring the number in accompt,
Unable is my skill:
Of all such glorious martirs names,
And their endured il.

—*Rich. Verstegan, Odes.* 1601.

In or about 1586,¹ Sir Robert Parton, a venerable old priest, presumably assisting the Catholics in the town, was apprehended and thrown into Stafford gaol. Some time previous to this he suffered four years' incarceration in Newgate, whence he was set at liberty, and, full of zeal and courage, he had come down to

¹ Strype, *Annals*, 2nd ed., iv. 184.

Stafford, where he had probably held some cure in Queen Mary's reign, to devote his remaining years to the preservation of the ancient Faith. For six long years he patiently endured the horrors of Stafford gaol, encouraging the numerous recusants, who suffered a living death rather than conform to the new religion, ministering to their spiritual wants, and comforting them in their extremity. Probably it was on this account that the good shepherd was transferred by his relentless persecutors to the Marshalsea in London at Christmas, 1592. There the old man was immured, awaiting his martyr's crown, at the time of a report issued in 1593,—his longings for the heavenly Hierusalem being aptly pourtrayed in "A Prisoner's Songe," penned by a priest and fellow-confessor about 1615.¹

My thirstie soule desyres her drought
 At heavenlie fountaines to refreshe,
 My prisoned mynd would faine be out
 Of chaines and fetters of the flesh.

—*F. B., Priest.*

An ancient manuscript,² written in the last

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 15,225.

² Foley, *Records S. J.*, iii. 232, iv. 493; Morris, *Troubles*, iii. 8.

decade of the sixteenth century, tells us how Erasmus Wolseley, of Wolseley Hall, about eight miles from Stafford, William Maxfield, or Macclesfield, of Chesterton Hall, esquires, Edward and Francis Thornbery, two brothers, and Edward Sprott, of Ashenbroke, gentlemen, and William Myners, yeoman, besides others, all prisoners for conscience sake, were met together in a closed chamber in Stafford gaol,¹ attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, at which the venerable martyr, Robert Sutton, was officiating, when the pursuivants or gaolers rushed in and arrested them. They were all tried, at the Stafford summer assizes in July, 1587, and condemned to death,—the martyr, as we shall see, on account of his priesthood, and the others for aiding and relieving him. Father Sutton suffered at Stafford on the 27th of that month; but though the other prisoners were likewise sentenced to death as felons, the judge, seeing that popular feeling was strongly in their favour, for most of them were highly esteemed in the town, thought fit to reprove them.

¹ Stafford gaol at this time, and down to the year 1700, stood in the Broad Eye, near the site of the Wesleyan chapel.

They were, nevertheless, detained in custody ; and it is said that Mr. Maxfield, whose property was forfeited, passed the remainder of his life in Stafford gaol. His wife was condemned with him ; and their son Thomas, who is believed to have been born in prison, subsequently became a priest, and suffered martyrdom at Tyburn in 1616.

Though the eldest son of Anthony Wolseley, Esq., Erasmus would seem either to have been disinherited or to have had his estate forfeited in consequence of his recusancy ; for Wolseley Hall passed to the Protestant descendants of a younger brother of his father, to whom a baronetcy was granted in 1628. This branch happily returned to the Faith upon the conversion of the late Sir Charles Wolseley in 1837. Both Erasmus and his wife¹ endured many years' imprisonment for the Faith in Stafford gaol. This lady was Cassandra, daughter of Sir Thomas Giffard, of Chillington, Co. Stafford, by Ursula, daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton, of Coughton Court, Co. Warwick, and by her Mr. Wolseley had two or three sons and two

¹ Bridgewater, *Concertatio*, 1594.

daughters, one of whom, Grizle, became the wife of Ralph Fitzherbert, Esq. The children appear to have shared the sufferings of their parents. Two of the sons, John and Humphrey,¹ escaped to the Continent, and entered the English College at Rheims. There the former was ordained priest, but the latter proceeded to the English College at Rome, where he died in deacon's orders in 1589, aged twenty-three.

It is also stated² that about the same period Nicholas Thornes, a pursuivant of infamous memory in Staffordshire, drove away at a time hundreds of cattle belonging to Catholics, even all that many possessed, and afterwards turned the unfortunate owners with their families out of their homes. Amongst those so wronged were "Knolles, Widow Wade, George Cooke, William Poker, John Coher, Timothy Browne, Mr. Richard Fitzherbert, and many others". Elsewhere³ we find that William Knowles, of Kidware, yeoman, a married man, a native of the county, and a good Catholic, was committed

¹ *Douay Diaries*; Foley, *Records S.7.*, vi.

² Foley, *ibid.*, iv. 492; Morris, *Troubles*, iii. 23.

³ Foley, *ibid.*, iii. 226.

on account of his religion to Stafford gaol, where, in about a year's time, he died, and was buried in 1587 at the Friary. Miss Joan Vyze,¹ a very virtuous lady, also died a prisoner in the same gaol, after more than four years' imprisonment, in 1589; and Mr. Edmund Vyze, of Stoke, gentleman, of an ancient family seated at Staundon, was apprehended at his residence, committed to prison in Stafford, and after three months died there in 1592. Alice Palin, a devout Catholic, probably of Dearnsdale, near Stafford, where the Palins maintained a chaplain at a later period, after two years' imprisonment died in this gaol, and was buried in the Friary.² This was the usual burial place for the Catholic prisoners, who were not permitted to be interred in any churchyard in the town. The document first cited speaks of many others dying in Stafford gaol at this time: "In Stafford imprisoned thirty, whereof six yet re-

¹ Foley, *Records S.7.*, iii. 226-7.

²The Friary was that of the Franciscan, or Grey Friars, extending along the present Greyfriars Street from Browning Street to beyond the houses built by the late Mr. John Sharp. Within recent years many human remains have been disinterred on its site.

main, the others for the most part dead".¹ But of this enough has been said :—

Some married were, and some were maydes,
Their suffrance sundry wayes :
Their cause all one, their only King
Did all to glorie raise.

—*Verstegan, Odes.*

II.

England, loke up, thie soyle ys steinde with bloode,
Thow hast made martyrs manie of thine owne,
Yf thow hadst grace, theire deathes wuld do thee good,
The seede wyll take wich yn such blood ys sowne.

—*Blessed Campion's Epitaph.* 1581.²

The venerable martyr, Robert Sutton,³ to whom we have already alluded, resided in Stafford with a relative of Fr. John Gerard for a considerable time, possibly from his first coming to the English mission in 1578. He probably acted as tutor in the family with which he lived, and at the same time attended to the spiritual wants of the town and neighbourhood, besides secretly administering the comforts of

¹ Foley, *Records S. J.*, iv. 493.

² Bodleian Lib., Rot. F., i, 2.

³ Pollen, *Acts of Eng. Martyrs*, 323; Challoner, *Memoirs*, ed. 1741, i. 193; Foley, *ibid.*, iii. 231; Dodd, *Ch. Hist.*, ii. 94.

religion to the crowds of poor recusants who were wearing away their lives in Stafford gaol.

His father is said to have been only a carpenter at Burton-on-Trent; but if so he was able to provide his sons with an excellent education. Robert, the eldest, after studying humanities in his native town, was sent in his fifteenth or sixteenth year to Oxford, where he was admitted a scholar of Christ Church. In due course he proceeded in arts, and obtained repute as lecturer in logic, philosophy, Greek and Hebrew. After remaining at the university for eleven or twelve years he was rewarded with the important rectory of Lutterworth, Co. Leicester, formerly held by the heretical John Wycliffe. There he spent six years, till, through the mercy of God, he received grace to see the falsity of his position, and strength to abandon his benefice. His younger brother, Abraham,¹ was also beneficed in the Anglican Establishment, and the two resolved to forsake their worldly prospects to follow Christ by devoting their lives to the reclamation of the scattered sheep of His fold. Their conversion was in-

¹ Bridgewater, *Concertatio*, ed. 1594.

strumentally brought about by the letters of their younger brother William, formerly of Trinity College, Oxford, but then studying for the priesthood at Douay College.¹ The latter was ordained priest, and came to England in July, 1577, and some three years later became tutor to Sir Thomas Gerard's son John, the renowned Jesuit. About 1581, he was exiled, and in the following year was admitted into the Society at Paris, and eventually was drowned on the coast of Spain in March, 1590. A fourth brother, John,² subsequently became a lay-brother in the Society, and was first *socius* to Fr. John Gerard in London, and then for many years lived with the venerable martyr Henry Garnett, S.J., up to the time of his arrest in 1606.

Under Fr. William Sutton's advice, the rector of Lutterworth³ announced from the pulpit to his assembled parishioners his intention to leave them. Overcome with grief, he began by beg-

¹ *Douay Diaries*; Foley, *Records S. J.*, vii. 750; Dodd, *Ch. Hist.*, ii. 137.

² Morris, *Condition of Catholics*, lxvi.; Morris, *Life of Fr. John Gerard*.

³ Pollen, *Acts*, 323.

ging pardon for having been so long not only a blind guide, but one who had led them into pitfalls and noxious errors. Then he declared that there was no hope of salvation outside the Church of Rome, and explained the reasons thereof. Finally he offered up a prayer for his deluded people much to the following effect :—

God grant you grace still in your hearts
False doctrine to refrain,
And hold the true Catholic Faith
Which Christ did once ordain.

—*Ven. John Thules' Song.* 1616.¹

Upon the conclusion of his pathetic address he quickly descended the pulpit stairs, threw off his gown, and, being otherwise ready booted and girt for a journey, joined his brother Abraham, who by arrangement had come to him. Without delay the two brothers mounted their horses, which a trusty servant held in waiting outside the churchyard, and rode in hot haste to London, whence they set sail at once for Flanders.

The two brothers arrived at Douay College²

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 15,225.

² *Douay Diaries.*

23rd March, 1577, and were admitted to the community on the following day. There they applied themselves to the study of divinity; were ordained 23rd February, 1578; celebrated Mass for the first time on 7th March; set out together for England on 19th March; and proceeded to the mission in their native county. About seven years later both fell into the hands of the persecutors, and were banished the realm, with a number of other priests, in 1585. Fr. Abraham was betrayed by the notorious Bess of Hardwick, then wife of George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury.¹ Notwithstanding, both returned to the scene of their apostolic labours,—the elder to Stafford, and the younger perhaps to Padley Hall, Co. Derby, for he was certainly at one time tutor to two of the young Fitzherberts. Fr. Abraham lived till the time of James I., and was one of the forty-seven priests who, being confined in various prisons in the beginning of that reign, were sent into perpetual banishment.²

¹ Morris, *Troubles*, iii. 26.

² Challoner, *Memoirs*, ed. 1742, ii. 14.

St. Thomas's Priory.

Wee that are heere in banishment
 Continuallie doe moane,
 Wee sighe and sobbe, wee weepe and waile,
 Perpetually wee groane.

—*The Exile's Song*, by F. B., Priest. About 1615.¹

This was in 1606; but Fr. Abraham's zeal for the salvation of souls daily increased in intensity, and would not permit him to stand idly groaning, so that the following year saw him once more braving the dangers of the English mission; and from this time the apostolic man is lost to sight.²

Fr. Robert, whose zeal and piety were unsurpassed, was markedly successful in reclaiming his deluded countrymen from the snares of the new-fangled doctrines. In his care for the faithful he was undaunted by the terrors of the penal laws, and even ventured into the very prison itself to minister to the suffering recusants. At length, apprehended as we have seen in Stafford gaol, he was straightway dragged before Sir Walter Aston, a justice of the peace, and a virulent persecutor, who, in the words of the manuscript relation,³ "writ his

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 15,225.

² Dodd, *Ch. Hist.*, ii. 386.

³ Foley, *Records S. J.*, iii. 231.

examination as pleased himself, and when he read it to the said Mr. Robert, he utterly denied it to be his confession". Thereupon the irate knight uplifted his staff, felled the helpless priest to the ground, and forthwith committed him to gaol. This happened in July; and the summer assizes being at hand, the holy martyr's detention previous to his appearance at the bar was of but short duration. Meanwhile, he was visited in his cell by William Overton, the Protestant Bishop of Lichfield, who "came hither, and disputed with him of many things, but of what matters I cannot learn," says the contemporary narrator, "but in the end, by every man's saying, he put the bishop to silence". The valiant confessor was then arraigned at the bar, and with him the prisoners previously cited who were found in the chamber at the time of his apprehension. The verdict of the jury was "Guilty" in each case—the martyr of high treason, on account of his priesthood, and the others of felony, "for aiding and relieving him," that is for being present at his Mass. Sir Walter Aston was vehement in denunciation of the priest, and

protested that if his evidence was ineffective he would never more sit on the bench. Neither did he, tradition says; the wretched persecutor was soon afterwards seized with sickness, and was buried on May-day, 1589. All the prisoners were condemned to death; but the gentlemen, as we have already seen, escaped the extreme penalty; for, in the words of the manuscript relation,¹ “the judge, seeing the people flock about them much lamenting for them (for they were well-beloved in the town), was moved to some compassion, and so re-prieved them.”

Many, too, were the lamentations that so learned a man as Fr. Sutton should suffer; but in his case no mercy could be shown unless he would renounce the authority by which he received his sacred orders, to which, like a fellow-martyr, he could only reply:—

Yet that shall never fayle
 Which my faith bare in hande;
 I gave my vow; my vow gave me;
 Both vow and gift shall stande.

—*Ven. Robert Southwell.* 1595.

¹ Foley, *Records S. J.*, iii. 232.

“In the night preceding his passion,” writes Fr. Gerard, an intimate acquaintance of the martyr,¹ “he was heard by some Catholic prisoners in conversation with others; but they, knowing that he was in strict solitary confinement, and fearing lest some attempt might be made against him secretly, descended to the door of his cell and found it securely shut; but looking through a window, they saw him enveloped in light and praying. Next morning the Catholics waited at the door of the prison to see the martyr go forth, and to commend themselves to his prayers; on seeing them the good father commended himself to theirs, that God would be pleased to grant him constancy and perseverance to the end, ‘from Whom,’ he said, ‘I have this night received greater consolation than I deserved.’” This account is corroborated by another contemporary writer,² who says: “Truly the prisoners there do assure themselves he had some special comfort in prison the night before he suffered; for in the morning, being ready to go towards execution, he turned him towards his fellow-

¹ Pollen, *Acts*, 325.

² Foley, *Records S. J.*, iii. 231.

prisoners, giving them his blessing, then said these words: 'God comfort you all, for I am comforted;' and so went most cheerfully and boldly towards the end".

The same writer continues: "When he came to the place he desired he might speak, but they would not permit him. Then he took his handkerchief out of his pocket, lapped it together, made a fine discourse of the candle we receive in baptism and in the hour of death; and in remembrance of what he said, he held up the handkerchief in token he lived and died in the light of the Catholic faith. He was put off the ladder and cut down very lively, for he stood upon his feet, was taken by great violence, dismembered, spoke these words: 'O thou bloody butcher! God forgive thee!' So, calling upon Jesus and Mary, he gave up his spirit."

Such is the graphic account handed down to us of the sufferings of this holy martyr. The horrible tragedy was performed at the ordinary place of execution just outside Stafford, to which he was drawn on a hurdle in the customary manner, on 27th July, the feast of the martyrdom of the Seven Sleepers, 1587. After the

lapse of a year, the Catholics, longing to possess relics of the holy martyr's body, one night carried off from one of the gates of the town a shoulder and arm, the thumb from which is now preserved at Stonyhurst College.

My skaffold was the bedd where ease I founde,
The blocke a pillowe of eternall reste ;
My hedman cast me in a blisfull swounde,
His axe cutt off my cares from combred breste.

— *Ven. Robt. Southwell.* 1596.

III.

O God above, relent,
And listen to our cry :
O Christ, our woes prevent,
Let not Thy children die.
—*Song of the Death of Ven. John Thules.* 1616.¹

A generation has passed before we again catch a glimpse of missionary work in Stafford. The darkness meanwhile has become more intense ; scenes of blood throughout the land are witnessed with ever-increasing rapidity during the long reign of the modern Jezebel ; and the respite which was looked for under her more humane successor has been delayed. It is now

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 15,225.

that we meet with another martyr closely associated with the local mission—the last to suffer on the scaffold in the reign of James I.—the Venerable William Southerne.¹

This zealous missionary was born within the limits of the old diocese of Lindisfarne, and was probably a son of Thomas Southerne, whose daughter Isabel married George Killingworth, Esq., of Killingworth, near Newcastle-on-Tyne. It is also likely that he was a near relative to Mr. Southerne, the merchant of Newcastle, whose daughter and co-heiress, Eleanor, became the wife of Thomas Forster, of Durham, gent., in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. On 15th December, 1569, Fr. Southerne was admitted into the English College at Valladolid,² whence after some time he was sent to the English College at Seville, where he was ordained priest. He then returned to St. Alban's, Valladolid, and thence came to the English mission.

So to his native soil, upon command he came,

Of only love to save the souls that fell from virtue's frame.

—*Brief of the Life of Champion.* 1581.

¹ Challoner, *Memoirs*, ed. 1742, ii. 118.

² *Valladolid Diary*, MS.

His first labours appear to have been in his native county of Northumberland, where he was reported in 1606 as saying Mass at Halton Tower, the seat of Lancelot Carnaby, Esq. Again, some half-dozen years later, his name occurs in connection with missionary work in the same county.¹ Most probably the persecutions raging in the north at this time necessitated his withdrawal to a county where he was unknown; for we next hear of him as converting and assisting the poor at Baswich, an estate belonging to the Fowlers, and adjoining their residence of St. Thomas's Priory. There he was seized at the altar, and hurried away in his vestments to a neighbouring justice of the peace, who committed him to Stafford gaol. A contemporary document,² entitled "An Account of the Present State of Persecution" dated London, 15th November, 1618, gives the following character of the roving pursuivant, a servant of the governor of York, Lord Sheffield, who was instrumental to Fr. Southerne's martyrdom:—

"This Dales is notorious, on account of two

¹ Foley, *Records S. J.*, iii. 8, 115, 119, 120.

² Foley, *ibid.*, iii. 120.

or three murders he committed, and for his brutal and immodest conduct towards a lady, whom he both struck with his cudgel and loaded with abusive epithets, and then robbed her of her shoes, stockings, and under-dress, declaring that they were the dress of some priest; he also carried off her towels, table-cloths, etc., pretending that they belonged to the altar; and he has already carried off property of this description to the value of thirty crowns. Gentlemen he commits to prison as priests; of the priests he will sometimes take forty crowns for ransom money. He examines all the public streets in the towns, the roads in the country, and the inns; carrying off everything he can lay hold upon, and committing to prison with all fury."

Such is a fair sample of the miscreants designedly selected and employed to stamp out the Faith of our fathers.

Nor did remorse to expiate sin prescribe,
But slew their fellow-creatures for a bribe.

—*Dryden, Religio Laici.*

Fr. Southerne's apprehension happened at the beginning of the Stafford assizes, so he was immediately placed at the bar, convicted,

and condemned to death for being a priest, having refused the proffered oath of allegiance, to take which would have been an act of apostasy. Upon the sentence of death being pronounced, the holy martyr fell upon his knees, and gave hearty thanks to God for the great privilege he was to have of dying for the Faith. He was then removed to a dark and loathsome dungeon, where he lay for six days, owing to the difficulty experienced by the authorities in finding any one to perform the odious office of executioner. Eventually he was conveyed to Newcastle-under-Lyme, and there on 30th April, 1618, was strangled and butchered alive according to the barbarous custom of the times. His four quarters were distributed in various places, and his head was sent back to Stafford, where it was fixed upon a spear over one of the gates of the town *in terrorem*.

The bloody axe his body fair
Into four partis cut;
And every part, and eke his head,
Upon a pole was put.

—Chatterton, *Bristow Tragedy*.

IV.

The Church shone brightly in her youthful days,
 Ere the world on her smiled ;
 So now, an outcast, she would pour her rays,
 Keen, free, and undefiled :
 Yet would I not that arm of force were mine,
 Which thrusts her from her awful ancient shrine.

—*Cardinal Newman*

The church at Baswich, or Berkswich, two miles south-east of Stafford, belonged to the Austin Priory of St. Thomas, which, some little time after the dissolution of religious houses, on 13th October, 1539, was granted to Rowland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield,¹ one of Henry VIII.'s most active agents in the suppression of monasteries and in the spoiler's pretended divorce, though Burnet² indeed asserts that "he did afterwards turn over to the popish party". Lee died 24th or 27th January, 1543, having divided the St. Thomas estates among his four surviving nephews, sons of his sister Isabel and her husband, Roger Fowler, of Broomhill, in Norfolk, descended from an

¹ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. 1846, vi. 471.—Fowler pedigree.

² *Hist. of Reformation*, ed. 1849, i. pt. i. 255, pt. ii. 430.

ancient Buckinghamshire family. This good couple having died early, the bishop had taken charge of their five sons and three daughters, the latter of whom he gave in marriage. The Priory fell to the share of the second son, Bryan, who married Jane, daughter and heiress of John Hanmer, of Bettsfield, Co. Flint, and likewise became possessed of that estate. The Fowlers were staunch supporters of the ancient Faith, and maintained chaplaincies at St. Thomas's and Bettsfield throughout the days of persecution. There can be little doubt that the venerable martyr, William Southerne, was supported by them, if, indeed, he did not actually reside at St. Thomas's. With this chaplaincy the Stafford mission is inseparably associated, and derives its immediate descent. Soon after Father Southerne's martyrdom, we incidentally meet with the name of another priest, who would appear to be attending to the spiritual wants of the neighbourhood. In 1620 the Rev. Mr. Fisher is found reconciling to the Church a gentleman in Stafford.¹ It is probable that he lived with the Fowlers, and is identical with

¹ Foley, *Records S. J.*, 423.

the Rev. Thomas Fisher, *alias* Ashton, an elder brother of the eminent president of Douay College, the Rev. George Fisher, *alias* Muskett.¹ They were younger sons of Thomas Fisher, of Barton-Segrave, Co. Northampton, and subsequently of Stilton, Co. Hunts, by Magdalene Ashton, a lady of high family, supposed to have been connected with one of the ancient Lancashire families of that name. After studying humanities for some years at Stilton, the two brothers, born respectively about 1580 and 1582, went to Wisbeach Castle, where the imprisoned priests secretly kept a sort of college, and instructed a number of youths, who, under the guise of servitors, were permitted to reside in the prison. Several of these eventually became priests. The two Fishers appear in a list² of boys in nominal attendance upon the priests, drawn up in January, 1595-1596. The Rev. Christopher Thules, *alias* Ashton, and the Rev. Christopher Southworth were confined at Wisbeach at this time, and both were related to the Lancashire

¹ *Douay Diaries*; Foley, *Records S. J.*, iv. vi.; Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, iv.

² Morris, *Troubles*, ii.

Ashtons, the latter being also connected indirectly with a family named Fisher. It is therefore not improbable that the two boys were allied to them. Dr. Lee, the Anglican Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth, in his "Church under Queen Elizabeth,"¹ gives an interesting account of the experiences of the two youths during their life at Wisbeach. It is slightly misleading, however, as regards the social position of their parents, and also is difficult to reconcile with the statement of their elder brother Richard, which implies that it was the youngest brother George who first went to Douay.

"They had been admitted to the Castle," writes Dr. Lee, "to attend upon the prisoners as servitors. Naturally clever and observant, by degrees they each became greatly influenced by what they heard and saw. The old religion, as so many persons quietly and privately maintained, was a strong and remarkable contrast to the new; and though these youths had been brought up under the latter, in no long time they became sincerely attached

¹ ii. 77.

to the former ; and, at their own request, were carefully instructed in its tenets and duties. This being reported to the governor [of Wisbeach], offended him greatly, who, on a certain day when a sermon was to be preached in the parish church 'by a painful and weighty minister,' commanded them both, as a test, to be present at its delivery. But, in respectful language, they asked to be excused. They would rather not go. They had recently learned what the religion of their fathers was, and, if they might be allowed to make choice, they preferred it to that now set up. The governor now became furious. Was ever such insolence and heresy known : and from two boyish knaves ! As a punishment they were stripped to the waist, and publicly flogged in the market place in the presence of a large concourse of people, and then put in irons. Being subsequently set free, the eldest escaped abroad, and became a student at the college at Douay. But the younger, on a certain occasion, was found serving one of the old priests at Mass, and was imprisoned in company with some of the worst and most depraved criminals.

At length he was brought to trial, accused of being an ignorant recusant, and upbraided by the magistrates for being so foolish, and for bringing so much misery upon himself and his parents.

“‘It is true that I am very ignorant about many things,’ he replied; ‘but of this one thing I am quite certain, notwithstanding my ignorance, that the Catholic Faith is the only faith for salvation, and that it is a deal older, by many centuries, than your new religion.’

“‘How can you, an ignorant boy, know which is the oldest religion, or anything about it?’ asked the magistrate.

“‘Why, in this way, sir,’ the youth replied; ‘your own chroniclers, your own ministers, admit as much. Holinshead, who must have known, says so.’

“The magistrate denied that the writer in question had admitted anything of the sort. ‘You lie, sirrah!’

“Upon this the youth triumphantly drew out from his breast pocket a single leaf of the ‘Chronicles’ of Holinshead, and presented it to the official.

“It contained a description of the coming hither of St. Augustine, with litanies, Catholic prayers, silver cross, and pictured banner, and had been given to him by one of the prisoners at Wisbeach, as evidence of the antiquity of the old religion,—a leaf which might be judiciously produced when it was required. The youth himself, being poor and unable to pay fines, appears to have been dismissed with a warning.”

George Fisher would seem to have escaped to Douay early in 1596. The elder brother, Richard, previously referred to, who was studying for the law in London, came down to Wisbeach to visit his brother Thomas in the Castle at Easter, 1596, and was converted to the Faith by one of the imprisoned priests, the Rev. John Greene. He was then persuaded to accompany his brother abroad; and, eventually, in 1599, obtained admittance into the English College at Rome, upon entering which he made the long statement, already mentioned, in reference to his brothers' and his own conversion. On account of ill-health, he was unable to persevere in his studies for the

Church in the Eternal City ; and on 30th May, 1600, he left the college for Belgium, from which period we lose sight of him. His brother Thomas joined George at Douay College, and thence proceeded to Rome, where he was admitted into the English College, 21st October, 1598. There he received minor orders ; but the climate disagreeing with him, as it had done with his brother, he departed on 16th October, 1602, for Flanders, and, returning to Douay, was ordained priest in 1603. In the following year he came to the English mission ; but when he first came to Stafford, if we are right in identifying him with the Mr. Fisher who was here in 1620, it is impossible to say. Parson Gee, who pretended to be a convert in 1623 in order to gain information about Catholics and their affairs, and then published it in his "Foot out of the Snare," in 1624, includes "Ashton, *alias* Fisher, M. Muskett's brother," in his list of priests residing in and about London in the former year. Hence it is probable that he removed from the Priory shortly after the death of Walter Fowler, Esq., in 1622. But as this is all we can gather of the chaplains at the

Priory down to this date, we must turn for a moment to a glimpse which we catch about this time of another chaplaincy to which the Catholics of Stafford had been long indebted.

Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.

Henry Stafford, son of the attainted Duke of Buckingham, was restored in blood, summoned to Parliament as a baron, and died in 1562. Both he and his son and successor, Edward, appear to have retained the Faith; but it is the grandson Edward, the third baron of the new creation, whom we meet with during this dark period as a protector of religion and provider of a pastor for the afflicted Catholics of Stafford. This nobleman, in 1595, married Isabel, daughter of Thomas Forster, of Tonge Castle, Co. Salop.¹ Hitherto the Staffords had married into none but the noblest houses, and indeed were allied to royalty. Hence the marriage was regarded as a *mésalliance*, and a calumnious report was issued that the lady had been chambermaid to his lordship's mother.

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, ii. 324; Burke, *Extinct Peerage*.

Now in reality the marriage reflected honour on the Stafford family. The lady's parents were both of ancient lineage, but reduced to great straits by persecution, on account of their faith. The mother was the daughter of Humphrey Vyze, Esq., of Staunton, Co. Stafford, members of whose family we have seen dying confessors of the faith in Stafford gaol. She also was apprehended for recusancy, and committed to Shrewsbury gaol, where she was manacled and grossly treated by the inhuman keeper, till her glorious death as a confessor, July 15, 1590. During her mother's imprisonment, Isabel Forster was compassionately taken into the household of Lady Stafford, Mary, daughter of Edward, Earl of Derby, and wife of the second Baron Stafford; and it was thus that her marriage came about with the third Lord Stafford. The young baroness had a brother, then a secular priest, but afterwards a Benedictine, who came to reside at Stafford Castle, and attended to the wants of the Catholics in the town. His name is the only one preserved of the successive chaplains at the Castle, from the change of religion upon the accession

of Elizabeth till its capture and dismantlement during the civil wars, about 1643-4.

Francis Forster,¹ Lady Stafford's brother, was admitted into the English College at Rheims, with Lawrence Stafford and others, October 7, 1590. Thence he was sent to the English College at Rome, where he arrived February 21, 1592, and took the gown on the following day, being then twenty years of age. In 1597, he returned to his former College, which meanwhile had been transferred back to Douay. There he completed his theology, was ordained priest, and in 1598 came to the English mission. After some time he was apprehended and thrown into Newgate, and was one of the forty-seven priests banished the realm in 1606. Notwithstanding, he soon ventured again into England, joined the Benedictines, and was professed on the mission. It is recorded that he was imprisoned many times, and possibly he was banished more than once. Ultimately he settled at Stafford Castle, where he resided during the minority of his sister's grandson, Henry, fourth Baron Stafford, and died June 4,

¹ Dolan, *Weldon's Chron. Notes.*

1631, aged fifty-eight. His earthly resting-place is probably in the Castle churchyard, with—

No name to bid us know
Who rests below,
No word of death or birth,—
Only the grass's wave,
Over a mound of earth,
Over a nameless grave.

—*Adelaide A. Procter.*

He was an admirable missionary, says Dom Bennet Weldon, who adds that he was “particularly addicted to deeds of charity, both spiritual and corporal, in which he gave away all that he had”.

There is no record of any successor to Fr. Forster at the Castle. It is very improbable that the Stafford chaplaincy was maintained later than the demolition of the Castle by the Parliamentarians in 1644. Mr. Arthur Clifford states in the “History of Tixall” (p. 265) that Viscount Stafford, who fell a martyr to the Oates Plot, in 1680, resided at the Castle. No doubt he did so before its destruction; but it was given in evidence at his trial that in 1678 he was only staying at Stafford in the house of Mr. Thomas Abnett, who was possibly his steward.

Having now exhausted the little information we possess about the mission at Stafford Castle, we must return to that at the Priory of St. Thomas.

And though I dy, succession wil supply,
Undying truthe unto posteritie.

—*Verstegan, Odes.*

V.

Never more, when the day is o'er,
Will the lonely vespers sound ;
No bells are ringing—no monks are singing,
When the moonlight falls around.

—*L. E. Landon.*

We have already referred to the dissolution and grant of the ancient Priory of St. Thomas-the-Martyr, and briefly sketched its subsequent history. A portion was adapted to domestic use, and the remainder of the buildings were converted into stables, barns, and out-houses. It was situated in a sweet sequestered valley, watered by the river Sow, under a woody height which sheltered it from the north and east. Above this wood, say the historians of Tixall,¹ was formerly a tract of ground, sur-

¹ Clifford, *Parish of Tixall*, p. 40.

rounded by a paling, called St. Thomas's Park, which was bounded on the north and east by Tixall parish.

Though the Priory has been demolished, and a farm-house occupies its site, there are yet remains sufficient to interest and repay an antiquary's visit.

Walter Fowler, Esq., son of Bryan, the inheritor of the Priory, married Mary, daughter of Ralph Sheldon, Esq., of Beoley, Co. Worcester, and resided alternately at Bettsfield, in Flint, which he inherited from his mother, and at his paternal estate of St. Thomas's. His son Edward, born at Bettsfield, went in 1603, at the age of nineteen, to the English College at Rome, where he adopted the *alias* of Blake, but returned home in the following year, on account of the death of an elder brother.¹ Another son, William,² also born at Bettsfield, was admitted into the English College at Valladolid 16th November, 1609, aged eighteen, and assumed the name of Stapleton. He took the College oath to serve the secular mission, but

¹ Fowler pedigree; Foley, *Records S. J.*, vi.

² *Valladolid Diary*, MS.; Palmer, *Obit. Notices*, O.P.

after a time obtained leave to enter a Dominican convent, and was professed in that order, and subsequently took the degree of S. Th. Mag. When at length Cardinal Howard, nephew of Viscount Stafford, purchased Bornhem, in Flanders, and enabled the English Congregation of Friar Preachers to establish a convent of their own in 1658, Fr. Fowler contributed largely towards its foundation. As far as can be ascertained, his missionary labours were confined to St. Thomas's, with occasional service, perhaps, at Bettsfield, so that possibly he succeeded Mr. Fisher some time after 1620, and served the mission at the Priory till his death, 24th May, 1662. His father died in 1621; and his nephew, Walter, who married Constantia, youngest daughter of Walter, first Lord Aston, of Tixall, had his estates sequestered by the Parliamentarians, but lived to see the Restoration, and died in 1684. The brief record of Fr. Fowler's life is, that he lived, died, and was buried among his relations, the Fowlers of St. Thomas's Priory.

So earth to earth, and dust to dust—
And though my bones decay,

My soul shall sing among the just,
Until the judgment day.

—*R. S. Hawker.*

There was another priest, however, of whom we catch a glimpse as serving the mission at the Priory during some portion of this period. The civil war brought great trouble to the Fowlers, in common with all Catholic families. On account of his recusancy Walter Fowler's estate was sequestrated; and under the Rump Act of 15th July, 1651, was purchased by Robert Ducy and Thomas Rogers, for which Mr. Fowler compounded in a very large sum.¹

The deplorable state to which the nation was reduced is thus aptly described in a humorous portraiture of the Puritans in a broadside circulated at this period:—

There dwells a people on the earth
That reckons true religion treason,
That makes sad war an holy mirth,
Count madness zeal and nonsense reason;
That think no freedom but in slavery,
That makes lyes truth, religion knavery;
That rob and cheat with "yea and nay";
Riddle me, riddle me, who are they?

On 5th June, 1651, two priests travelling in

¹ Dring, *Catalogue of Compositions*, 1655.

Yorkshire were apprehended at Malton,¹ and taken to York Castle. One of them answered to the name of Thomas Fowler, but ultimately acknowledged himself to be Fr. John Robinson, a Jesuit; the other called himself John Mannering, otherwise Gravenor. The Jesuit was convicted of being a seminary priest, and condemned to death at the Yorkshire assizes in March, 1651-2, but was reprieved at the last moment. Of the fate of his colleague, whom he had accidentally met on the road, we are left in the dark. If our identification be correct, he must have been a man well in years, over threescore and ten; and, as we do not trace him further, it is not improbable that he was detained in prison, and there spent his few remaining days, like so many other priests at this period. The following is his deposition, taken upon his examination:—

“John Mannering saith that he is sometimes called by the name of John Gravenor, his mother being of that name. Was born near Stafford town, at a place called Hampton. Was bred a Catholic. Served one Mr. Fowler,

¹ Raine, *York Castle Depositions*.

in the county, of the same profession, and since hath lived with Mrs. Meynell, of Kilvington, and did teach her children. He met with John Robinson at Wetherby, and stayed with him until he did eat meat, and did not know of his coming. They met on this day se'nnight, and did part with him at Ripon, and met again upon Monday at Osmotherley. He doth now belong to Mr. Thomas Watterton, of Walton, and doth teach his children. He was arraigned for the death of Robert Cooper, the last Lammassizes, and was acquit. Denieth that he was in arms against the Parliament. He was going yesterday, when he was taken at Malton, to Farburne, hard by Brotherton, and saith that John Robinson was going to Beverley, as he told this examinant, and the said Robinson did undertake to know the way."

It seems probable that this priest is identical with John Gravenor who was admitted as a student into St. Alban's College, Valladolid, 18th October, 1602, and shortly afterwards on account of ill-health was sent to Douay College.¹ At the latter he was ordained priest in

¹ *Valladolid Diary*, MS.; *Douay Diaries*.

1606, and thence in the same year came to the English mission. A branch of the Gravenors, or Grosvenors, ancestors of the Dukes of Westminster, resided at Bellaport, Co. Salop, and several times intermarried with the Mainwarings, of Ightfield, in the same county, and of Peover, Co. Chester. William Grosvenor, of Bellaport, married Cecilia, daughter of Richard Mainwaring, of Ightfield, and possibly was father of the priest. Another branch of the Grosvenors was settled at Bushbury, Co. Stafford, one of whom, Henry Grosvenor, married, in the reign of Elizabeth, Alice, daughter of Robert Whitgreave, of Burton Manor. It is difficult from John Grosvenor's deposition to assign the date of his residence at St. Thomas's Priory; but judging from the ages of the children of Mrs. Meynell and Mr. Waterton we may conclude that his removal to Yorkshire was during the civil wars.

Before proceeding with the history of the chaplaincy at the Priory we must not omit to say a word about the very eminent Catholic writer, John Austin, who is commemorated on one of the Fowler tablets in Baswich Church.¹

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, i. 87.

He was a student at St. John's College, Cambridge, and some time after his conversion, about 1640, became tutor in the family of Walter Fowler, with whom he resided for some time. It was probably at the Priory that some of Austin's works were written before his withdrawal to London, where he died in 1669. Such was the esteem in which he was held by Mr. Fowler, that when that gentleman died at London, in 1681, he was buried by his own desire at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, "near his vertuous and devout friend Mr. John Austen".

Here lies a man by all good men esteemed,
Because they proved him really what he seemed.
Faith, hope, and resignation filled his breast,
Good ground we therefore have to think he's blest.

—*Old Epitaph.*

The Rev. John Sergeant, in his Epistle Dedicatory to the 1672 edition of Austin's "Devotions", gives the author the following character: "He was a gentleman so far from retirement that his chamber was generally open to multitudes, who either lov'd his friendly affability, or needed his useful advice or char-

itable assistance. His conversation and outward behaviour were exceeding cheerful and pleasant. He appear'd severe in nothing but sincere honesty, in nothing singular but perfect innocence consistent with so much freedom. The great business of his life that concern'd Heaven was transacted in the inmost recess of his soul, and never disclos'd itself without reluctancy and constraint. He was a traveller, and brought home from forreign countries all that could conduce to a manly becomingness and wise carriage, leaving the extravagancies and follies where he found them. He was well skill'd in the best of our European languages, and an absolute master of our own. He comprehended also to a very great degree of excellency, law, mathematicks, philosophy, but he penetrated thoroughly all the solid and useful parts of divinity, which comfort faith and advance charity. . . . Thus, having fitted his soul by a well-spent life for a happy death, he sweeten'd a tedious sicknes with a perpetual exercise of Divine Love." He, indeed, was a living illustration of his own paraphrase of Martial's saying, *non est vivere, sed valere vita*—

Time is well bestow'd on those
Who well their time bestow,
Whose main concern still forward goes,
Whose hopes still riper grow.

—*John Austin, Devotions.* 1668.

Some years before Fr. Fowler's death, the Rev. Daniel Fitter, son of William Fitter, of Wolverhampton, gent., came from the English College at Lisbon, and in or about 1654 was placed at the Priory, with the spiritual charge of the Catholics at Stafford.¹ During the terrible persecution raised by the Oates Plot, and fomented by the unscrupulous Earl of Shaftesbury to prevent the succession of the Catholic Duke of York to the throne, a local informer, prepared for any perjury, was found in the person of Stephen Dugdale, a fraudulent steward, discharged by Lord Aston, of Tixall—*Monstrum nulla virtute redemptum a vitiis*. The nation, lashed into frenzy by the pretended disclosures of the miscreant informers, demanded the rigorous enforcement of the penal laws; and the objectionable oath of spiritual supremacy was presented to every known Catholic. Mr. Fitter evaded imprisonment, and possibly death,

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, ii. 270.

by submitting to the oath, and defended his action in writing by interpreting the word "spiritual" agreeably to the sense given to it in the injunctions of Queen Elizabeth, and by the generality of Protestants. His patrons and some friends followed his advice, but most Catholics declined to accept this compromise. About Michaelmas, 1678, William Howard, Viscount Stafford, was charged with the pretended plot, convicted on the perjured evidence of Oates and Dugdale, and suffered death for the Faith on the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, December 29, 1680.

And happy Stafford, unto whom
God gave the crown of martyrdom.

—*Ward, Canto iv.*

Stafford gaol once more was crowded with priests and recusants. Amongst them may be noted Mr. Fitter's nephew, the Rev. Andrew Bromwich, who resided chiefly about Wolverhampton, and was apprehended and committed to Stafford in 1679. A Jesuit, also serving in that locality, was taken about the same time, and likewise brought to Stafford. This was Fr. William Atkins, a paralysed, bed-ridden

octogenarian, almost speechless, and perfectly deaf. In this pitiable condition he was dragged from his bed and carried to the gaol, a distance of eleven miles. These two inoffensive priests were brought to the bar at the next Stafford summer assizes, and actually condemned to death for being priests by Scroggs, the Lord Chief Justice, on August 13, 1679.

Subsequently Fr. Bromwich was reprieved and obtained his release, but Fr. Atkins died a confessor of the Faith in Stafford gaol, March 17, 1681, aged eighty. The carrying out of his sentence had been deferred on account of the difficulty in executing it upon such a wreck. During his trial he was unable to hear a word of what was going on ; but when it was signified to him that he was condemned to be executed, he turned to Scroggs and said : " Most noble lord judge, I return you my warmest thanks ".

Sic itur ad astra.

—*Virgil.*

Among many others imprisoned in Stafford at this time was Fr. Robert Petre, *alias* Williams, and Spencer, S.J., who obtained his

liberation on bail in 1680. Fr. Richard Babthorpe, S.J., died at Stafford in 1681, aged sixty-three, but what had brought him to the town is not stated. The Society of Jesus certainly never had a mission in Stafford; perhaps he, too, was in gaol.

Another secular priest, condemned to death for exercising his priestly functions during this period of national fanaticism, was allowed to wear out his life in Stafford gaol in 1685, just before freedom came in view with the accession of the much-abused sovereign whose offence, which cost him his throne, was his struggle for liberty of conscience.¹ In the record, the Old Chapter Obituary, which tells us of this confessor, he is merely called "Farmer". It has been thought that he is identical with one of the six younger sons of Henry Fermor (pronounced Farmer), Esq., of Tusmore, Co. Oxford, by Ursula, daughter of Sir Peter Middleton, of Stockeld, Co. York, great-grand-daughter of Charles Neville, last Earl of Westmoreland.

¹Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, ii. 250.

Besides the blood profusely spill'd,
All prisons in the land were fill'd,
Where cruel usage, stench, and whips,
And hunger, slaughter'd them in heaps.

—*Ward, Canto iv.*

Mr. Fitter continued to reside at the Priory, and when hopes of better times were raised by the accession of the Catholic monarch, James II., he opened a school in Stafford for the benefit of the town and neighbourhood. At the general assembly of the Chapter, in 1687, he was elected vicar-general of the counties of Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, and Salop, upon the condition that he should sign the declaration made by the English brethren in Paris against the oath of supremacy, which, as we have seen, he had previously approved. With this condition he complied, and probably held the office till he became a member of the Institute. For a brief period the prospects of religion in Stafford were most promising, and Mr. Fitter's school began to flourish; but all this was brought to a sudden termination by the Revolution of 1688. The school was broken up, No-Popery mobs paraded the streets and threatened the personal safety of Catholics,

and the houses in the vicinity of the town, wherein Mass was usually said, stood in imminent danger of being sacked. Priests throughout the country had to hurry into concealment, and for a time it appeared as if the worst forms of persecution were about to be revived.

Religious ornaments they burn,
 And sacred things to ashes turn,
 Break chalices, and corporals rent,
 Blaspheme the Blessed Sacrament.

—*Ward, Canto ii.*

Once more Stafford gaol began to fill with prisoners for religion, and amongst them was Father Philip Philmot, S.J., a native of Staffordshire, who was seized at some neighbouring mission and closely confined for fourteen months before he was brought to the bar at the Stafford assizes.¹ Upon his indictment being read, the judge, detecting a flaw, deferred the trial, and remanded the father to Stafford gaol. There, strong efforts were made to induce him to apostatise; but proving of no avail, he was transferred to London, where he obtained his liberation on bail, and finally his discharge.

¹ Foley, *Records S.7.*, vii

The position of Catholics now became more tolerable, and Mr. Fitter was enabled to continue his missionary duties in comparative quiet until his death, at the Priory, February 6, 1700, aged seventy-three.

The old man's head is white with age,
Weary has been his pilgrimage ;
Yet 'few and evil' were the years
Spent amid our vale of tears.

—*L. E. Landon.*

He was laid in the Fowler vault at Baswich Church, where his name may still be seen on one of the family monuments.

In or about the year 1695, at the recommendation of Cardinal Howard, the Institute, a society of secular priests, originally established in Germany, was introduced into England, with certain modifications of its rules to render it suitable to the English mission. Mr. Fitter was one of the first to embrace it, and was appointed provincial-president and procurator of the Staffordshire District, which comprised the counties of Stafford, Derby, Salop, Warwick, and Worcester. In this office he continued till his death, when his private estate passed under his will to his brother Francis for

life, with remainder to the Institute. But the latter was dissolved in 1702, and Francis, who had succeeded his brother as provincial-president, assigned the property bequeathed to the Institute by his brother to Bishop Giffard and others in trust for the benefit of the secular clergy of the Midland District. From a subsequent administrator the trust obtained the name of Johnson's Fund, by which the Common Purse, or secular clergy fund of the old Midland District, was commonly known until recent times.¹

The Rev. William Pegge, a kinsman of the Fowlers, succeeded Mr. Fitter in the chaplaincy at the Priory.² He was a member of the ancient Catholic family of Pegge, of Yeldersley, Co. Derby, and presumably a brother of Father Dominic Pegge, O.P., who died in 1691, aged thirty-five. His aunt Katharine, daughter of Thomas Pegge, Esq., of Yeldersley, being in the suite of the royal exiles in France, was taken advantage of by Prince Charles, subsequently King, and in 1647 gave birth to a son, Charles Fitz-Charles, who was elevated to the peerage by

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

² Kirk, *ibid.*; Burke, *Extinct Peerage and Baronetage*.

his Majesty on 29th July, 1675, as Baron Dartmouth, Viscount Totness, and Earl of Plymouth. The lady subsequently became the wife of Sir Edward Greene, Bart., of Sampford, in Essex, who by extravagance and gambling entirely ruined and alienated his extensive estates.

Mr. Pegge is said to have been educated and ordained priest at Douay College, though his name does not appear in the published diaries. For many years after he came to the mission he was house chaplain at Madeley Court, the seat of the Brooke family, in Shropshire. Thence he removed to the Priory on the death of Mr. Daniel Fitter in 1700. Like his predecessor, Mr. Pegge was a member of the Institute, which was dissolved in 1702. In that year he succeeded the Rev. Francis Fitter as administrator of the Common Purse, or clergy fund, and, on 14th Feb., 1703-4, he was elected an archdeacon of the Old Chapter. In 1703, the Fowlers invited the new vicar-apostolic of the Midland District, Bishop George Witham, to take up his residence at the Priory, which he made his head-quarters until his translation to the Northern Vicariate in 1716. Meanwhile

Mr. Pegge retained the chaplaincy till his death, which happened at the Priory, 7th Nov., 1711. He was held in great respect by his brethren; and the love and veneration with which he was regarded by the family is testified by the squire, Walter Fowler, commemorating him on one of the Fowler tablets in Baswich Church, where he was interred, as his "vertuous kinsman". He was perhaps too much reserved, for Bishop Witham complains of his unwillingness to tell him anything concerning the Common Purse; nevertheless—

Most orthodox he was and sound,
And many errors did confound.

—*Old Epitaph.*

VI.

O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.

—*Tennyson.*

The dozen years which Bishop Witham passed at the Priory formed, no doubt, one of the most interesting periods of its ecclesiastical history after its suppression and the expulsion of the Black Canons. The ceremonies of the Church were once more performed with a

degree of splendour scarce likened since Richard Pécché, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, resigned his see to become a canon here in 1182, and pass in the peace and solitude of the cloister the remainder of his days.

His cope-clad priests, with chant divine,
The sacred Host upraise ;
And girt with tapers holy shrine
His gorgeous altars blaze.

—*W. J.*

Bishop Pécché had been present at the consecration of St. Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and founded this Priory in honour of that martyr.

Besides the missionary, or family chaplain, Bishop Witham's private chaplains resided in the house, and occasionally his lordship kept for a term under his immediate supervision one or two newly ordained priests before launching them on the dangers of the mission. Of the necessity of this practice an illustration will shortly appear, in which one of these young priests, bending under the pressure of penal laws, or seduced by the emoluments offered to apostates, first turned informer, pursuivant, and priest-catcher, and ultimately settled down in a

Protestant vicarage in Yorkshire, presented to him as a reward for his infamous services.

George Witham,¹ born in 1655, was a younger son of George Witham, Esq., of Cliffe Hall, Yorkshire, and his wife Grace, daughter of Sir Marmaduke Wyvill, of Constable-Burton, in the same county, knight, and baronet, by Isabel, daughter and sole heiress of Sir Wm. Gascoigne, of Sedbury, knight. In due course he was sent to Douay College, where he was admitted an *alumnus*, under his mother's maiden name of Wyvill, 26th May, 1674. Four years later he proceeded to St. Gregory's Seminary, at Paris, where he took the degree of D.D. at the Sorbonne, 14th August, 1688, and in the same month returned to Douay as professor of divinity. After teaching theology for four years he came on the mission, and was chaplain at Naburn, near York, the residence of his brother-in-law, George Palmes, Esq. After a year or so Bishop James Smith, vicar-apostolic of the Northern District, appointed him grand vicar; but he had not held that office long when, in

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.; *Douay Diaries*; Brady, *Episcop. Succession*, iii.



THE RIGHT REV. GEORGE WITHAM, D.D.,
BISHOP OF MARCOPOLIS, AND SUCCESSIVELY VICAR APOSTOLIC
OF THE MIDLAND AND NORTHERN DISTRICTS.

From an original oil painting in the possession of the R. R. Mgr. Thomas Witham,
of Lartington Hall.

1694, he was sent to Rome by the vicars-apostolic, and there for the next six years or more discharged with much credit the office of their agent at the Papal Court. He had hardly returned home when he was despatched a second time in 1701. Shortly before Bishop John Leyburne's death was known at Rome, Clement XI. had resolved to give him a coadjutor in the person of Dr. Witham. So Propaganda, in general congregation, held 7th Aug., 1702, decreed that Dr. Witham should be appointed to succeed Dr. Leyburne in the London vicariate. He was described in the acts of Propaganda, in congregation of the previous 17th July, as a man of much prudence, learning and zeal, with great practical experience in the affairs of the Catholic Church in England, and of the government of that kingdom, as well as in the affairs of the Roman Court. Subsequently, however, it was arranged that Bishop Giffard should be transferred to London, and that Dr. Witham should take the Midland District thus vacated. Meanwhile Dr. Witham retired to the seminary at Montefiascone, where he was consecrated to the See of Marcopolis *in partibus*, 15th April, 1703. On

the following 22nd June, he arrived in London, and at once proceeded to his vicariate. On the invitation of Mr. Fowler he took up his residence at St. Thomas's Priory, where he passed under the name of Markham, a precaution necessitated by the persecuting spirit of the times. Here he remained until his translation to the Northern Vicariate in March, 1716. It is related of him in the "Douay Diary" that he never ceased to labour strenuously, and was eminently successful in confirming Catholics by his conversation and manner of life, and that many Protestants were converted to the Faith through his convincing arguments. He governed the Northern Vicariate with the same zeal till his death at Cliffe, the seat of his brother John, 27th April, 1725 (N.S.), aged sixty-nine.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

—*Longfellow.*

Bishop Witham wrote many works, but owing to the penal laws, and the peculiar circumstances of his time, it is doubtful if any of them were published. Amongst his English works are—

“A Catholic Thesis—*He who denies all infallibility in knowing what Christ taught, can have no Christian Faith;*” “An Answer to Dr. Tillotson’s ‘Discourse against Transubstantiation’;” “A Weekly Exercise for the Use of a Good Christian;” and Prudential Directions”.

During his residence at the Priory, his lordship had several young priests assisting in the mission, and preparing themselves for more onerous duties. It is to be regretted that all their names are not recorded. One was the Rev. Stephen Bowes,¹ brother of the Rev. Robert Bowes, *alias* Lane, author of the well-known “Practical Reflections for every Day throughout the Year”. He was born at or near Arundel, in Sussex, of a good Catholic family, and in due course followed his brother to Douay College, where he made his profession of faith, 16th April, 1694, and was admitted an *alumnus*, 24th April, 1696. After teaching classics for some time, he was ordained priest in March, 1703, and came immediately to reside at the Priory as assistant to Mr. Pegge in the mission. He remained until 1712, when he

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, i. 281.

was appointed chaplain to Anne, Countess of Sussex, natural daughter of Charles II. by Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, and wife of Thomas Lennard, fifteenth Baron Dacre, who in consequence of his marriage was created Earl of Sussex.

Mr. Bowes did not survive his change many months, for he died suddenly in the first half of the following year, 1713.

To each anointed priest
 God's summons came :
 Oh, soul, he speaks to-day
 And calls thy name.

—*Adelaide A. Procter.*

VII.

Latet anguis in herbâ.

Thou hast done well, perhaps,
 To lift the bright disguise,
 And lay the bitter truth
 Before our shrinking eyes.

—*Adelaide A. Procter.*

It must have been shortly after the departure of Mr. Bowes that the Priory had the misfortune to be polluted by an infamous apostate who worked widespread trouble amongst

Catholic families, and perhaps occasioned more loss and confiscation of Catholic charities and ecclesiastical property throughout the kingdom than any other informer. This unhappy man was Richard Hitchmough,¹ *alias* Barker, whose name will ever be held in execration. He was born in or about 1675, at Garston, near Warrington, in Lancashire, where his forefathers had lived for centuries on the estate of the Norris family of Speke Hall, and had always been honest men and staunch to their religion. For the latter we have the evidence of the fines for recusancy paid by them annually from the reign of Elizabeth.

The parents of this apostate informer were Richard and Mary Hitchmough, of Garston, his mother being of the good family of Barker, which gave many excellent priests to the Church. Through the influence of his maternal relatives he was sent to Douay College, where he assumed his maternal name, and in due course took the missionary oath, 12th April, 1697, but about two years later was

¹ Gillow, *Lanc. Recusants*, MS.; Foley, *Records*, S.7., vi.; Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

turned out of the College for misbehaviour. He then proceeded to Rome, where he was admitted by the Jesuits into the English College, 12th September, 1699. Though probably he conducted himself better at Rome, for he was ordained priest on 10th June, 1702, his superiors considered it prudent to detain him for some little time before permitting him to brave the dangers of the English mission. Thus it was not till 29th April, 1703, that he left the College for Paris *en route* for England. On the mission his life was anything but that which a priest should lead, and no persuasion or endeavour of his superiors could reclaim him. Obligated to leave Lancashire, where he certainly was till 1709 and probably later, Bishop Witham kindly took him under his immediate supervision at the Priory, but with no return other than gross ingratitude. He was then sent, at much expense, to reside for a time at St. Gregory's Seminary at Paris, in the hope that he might reform; but there he lapsed into unruliness and drunkenness to such an extent that he was quickly expelled. He, indeed, was the unhappy illustration of the

axiom—*grave virus munditias pepulit.* In Wordsworth's paraphrase—

His genius and his moral frame
 Were thus impaired, and he became
 The slave of low desires :
 A man who, without self-control,
 Would seek what the degraded soul
 Unworthily admires.

Meanwhile the failure of the Jacobite rising of 1715 was followed by a renewal of persecution, and priest-hunting again became a profitable calling. Moreover, the appointment of a commission for seizing upon the property of those who were implicated in the late rising and upon that devoted to Catholic purposes, or, as it was termed, "estate given to superstitious usages," presented a tempting bait to informers. The wretched Hitchmough lost no time in offering his infamous services, and, armed with warrants, roamed about from place to place, seeking to prey upon his former brethren or the belongings of their missions. Many were the houses in which he had formerly found shelter and comfort that now were ruthlessly broken into, ransacked, and plundered by

this wretch in quality of his new office, or at his instigation. Neither bishops nor priests escaped his attention ; and many of the latter, if not one of the former, fell into his hands and were hurried off to prison. In a letter to the commissioners, in 1718, he informs them of valuable chalices and other altar plate formerly seen and used by him when officiating as a priest ; and in the long list he specially enumerates the following : “ At St. Thomas, the seat of William Fowler, Esq., in the Co. of Stafford (where used to reside George Witham, who was titular Bishop of Calcedon, but departed for Canterbury, and to whom this deponent was chaplain), one large massive silver chalice, one paten, one other silver chalice and paten double gilt with gold, two large silver crucibles, one large silver plate for the said crucibles to stand upon, two large silver thuribles, six large silver candlesticks and a large silver crucifix, one other silver crucifix carried in procession on Maundy Thursday, and a large silver ciborium double gilt within with gold, in which was kept the consecrated Hoste—all which plate this de-

ponent has used when officiating at the altar".¹ Whether the commissioners succeeded in obtaining possession of this plate does not appear. Meanwhile, after Hitchmough's departure, great changes had taken place at the Priory. Mr. Fowler had died in 1716, and the property was in the possession of others. As to Hitchmough himself, he seems to have received considerable payments from the commissioners for his services. He settled in Liverpool, and married some low woman, by whom he had several children. His new friends would doubtless be reminded of a *jeu d'esprit* of the Merry Monarch. Whenever Charles II. heard his prelates congratulating each other on the acquisition of a new brother in the person of a fallen priest, his Majesty used to twit their lordships with the near prospect they had of having a new sister also! About 1717 Hitchmough removed to Preston, his sole support being that obtained by his infamous trade, which being highly resented, the good people of that town made his residence amongst them anything but agreeable. In November, 1720, as a

¹ 21 P., *Forfeited Estates Papers*, P. R. O.

reward for his services and for his apostasy, he was presented to the living of Whenby, Co. York. But this he did not long enjoy, for the "Bishop's Certificates" for the archdiocese of York give the 20th April, 1724, as the date of the next presentation to the vicarage, then vacant *per mortum naturalum Richardi Hitchmough*,—the only record we have been able to trace of the end of this miserable man.¹

There lies Dick Hitchmough, apostate,
 Traitor and fratricide,
 With n'er a stone to state his date,
 His name, or how he died.

VIII.

Make the charred logs burn brighter ;
 I will show you, by their blaze,
 A half-forgotten record
 Of bygone things and days.

—*Adelaide A. Procter.*

We must now return to the vacancy in the chaplaincy occasioned by the death of the Rev. William Pegge, towards the close of 1711. To that virtuous pastor—*antiquâ homo virtute ac fide*—a worthy successor was found

¹ Payne, *Eng. Cath. Nonjurors*, 343; *Records of Eng. Caths.*, 125.

in the person of the Rev. Thomas Berington.¹ This gentleman was the son of Thomas Berington, Esq., of Moat Hall, Co. Salop, by Anne, daughter of John Berington, Esq., of Winsley, Co. Hereford, both Catholic and ancient families, and, though bearing the same name, not, as one might expect, in any way related previous to this alliance. He was born 11th or 12th December, 1673, and was educated and ordained priest at Douay College. In what year he came to the English mission, or where he was stationed, is not precisely stated; but in 1702 he was serving somewhere in Shropshire, and therefore it is not improbable that he filled the family chaplaincy at Moat Hall. In 1711 he became chaplain to Mr. William Fowler at the Priory, and upon that gentleman's death, in 1716, continued in the same capacity to his nephew-at-law, John Betham, who assumed the name of Fowler.² After serving this mission for at least nine years, and passing through the troubles consequent upon the rising of 1715,

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.; Berington pedigree; Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, i.

² Kirk, *Cath. Mag.*, v. 427.

Mr. Berington withdrew from the Priory, and in or about 1720 was appointed chaplain to Mrs. Mary Ann Howard, at Hoar Cross, in the parish of Yoxall, Co. Stafford. This lady was the widow of Robert Howard, Jun., Esq. The estate subsequently passed to the Talbot family, and was sold in 1793, when the mission was transferred to Woodlane, Needwood. It was possibly upon Mrs. Howard's death that Mr. Berington removed to London. In 1731 he succeeded the Rev. Charles Umfreville, *alias* Fell, D.D., as agent for the clergy of the Midland District. He was a member of the Old Chapter; and in 1748, as senior capitular, presided at the general assembly held in London, and in the second session was elected dean in succession to the Rev. Thomas Day, who died on 8th July of that year. Upon that occasion he delivered a rather remarkable address to his assembled brethren. Though he had attained an advanced age, his death would appear to have been somewhat unexpected. Shortly before, in the same year, he again presided at the general assembly of the Chapter. On 31st October he made his will,

and died at his residence, in the parish of St. George the Martyr, Queen Square, London, 20th December, 1755, aged eighty-two, to the great regret of his brethren, by whom he had always been held in high esteem and respect. In his will he mentions his three nephews, Dr. William Berington, Dr. Joseph Berington, and Thomas Berington, Esq., of Stock Hall, in Essex, the latter being executor. Amongst other bequests he leaves to his niece, Lady Philippa Fleetwood, wife of Sir John Fleetwood, fifth Bart., and daughter of William Berington, Esq., M.D., of Shrewsbury, a "spring clock that strikes the quarters". Whilst Mr. Berington was at the Priory he published a curious work, entitled, "News from the Dead; or, the Monthly Packet of True Intelligence from the other World: written by Mercury". (London: Thomas Meighan, 1719, 8vo.)

Upon the Rev. Thomas Berington's removal from the Priory, in 1720, his cousin, the Rev. Simon Berington,¹ was appointed to the chaplaincy. He was the son of John Berington, Esq., of Winsley, Co. Hereford, by Elizabeth,

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, i.; Kirk, *Biog. Collus.*, MSS.

daughter of the loyal and gallant governor of Bridgnorth, Sir Thomas Wolryche, Knt. and Bart., of Budmaston, Co. Salop, and was born Jan. 11-21, 1679-80. Like his cousin, he was educated at Douay College, where, under his maternal name of Wolryche, he took the missionary oath, and became an *alumnus* in 1700. In due course he was ordained priest, and remained at the College as professor of poetry and philosophy. Eventually he was sent to the English mission, and, as stated, succeeded his cousin at the Priory. Mr. Berington was a man of studious habits, possessed of varied acquirements and of indubitable abilities, which are illustrated in the numerous writings he has left behind him.

During the Rev. Simon Berington's chaplaincy great changes took place at the Priory. Mr. William Fowler, the last male representative of his family, died, as already mentioned, in 1716, leaving behind him the best of characters for piety, hospitality, and charity.

Uni æquus virtuti, atque ejus amicis.

—*Horace.*

By a will made in 1712 he bequeathed the whole

of his extensive estates in Staffordshire, Flint, and Lancashire (where he owned the manor of Pendleton), to his nephew-at-law, John Betham (son of Richard Betham, Esq., of Rowington, Co. Warwick), whose wife Katherine was the only child of the testator's sister Magdalen Cassey, sixth daughter of Walter Fowler, Esq., of St. Thomas, and his wife Constantia, youngest daughter of Walter, first Lord Aston, of Tixall. To his sister Dorothy, wife of John Grove, Esq., the testator merely devised £300 a year, and after her death an annuity of £200 to her son, Thomas Grove, of Worcester. This will was proved in March, 1716; and Mr. Betham, who assumed the name of Fowler according to injunctions, was given possession of the estates, and took up his residence at the Priory. On 5th August, 1726, Mr. John Betham Fowler's only daughter and heiress, Catherine, married Thomas Belasyse, fourth Viscount Fauconberg, who took possession of the Priory. Meanwhile, Mr. Fowler's later will of 1715 remained in the custody of Christopher Ward, an attorney in Stafford, whom the testator had employed to draw it up completely

unknown to his friends. Whether through forgetfulness or design, the will lodged in Ward's hands was not divulged till after his death, which happened in 1724; and two years later Viscount Fauconberg upon his marriage with Catherine Betham Fowler, in compliance with the will of 1712, assumed the name of Fowler-Fauconberg, and took possession of all the Fowler estates, which at that time yielded an annual income of more than £2000, and were considered very improving. At this period, Thomas Grove, the son of Dorothy Fowler, was established in Worcester, where, having fallen into distress, he followed some business which hardly afforded him a livelihood. Lord Fauconberg then took upon himself the expense of the education of Grove's only surviving child, Rebecca, and sent her to a convent in France; but whether this was a pure act of generosity or was done to get rid of the girl is rather questionable; for it was about this very time, in 1727, that Edward Ward, son of the Stafford attorney, in looking over his father's papers, discovered the will of 1715, and communicated with Lord Aston, of Tixall,

principal trustee for the Fowler estates. The tradition is, that Lord Aston laid the will in question before Mr. Richard Fitzgerald, an Irish barrister, for his opinion. Fitzgerald at once perceived that Rebecca Grove, as representative of her grandmother Dorothy, sister and co-heiress of the testator, would be clearly entitled upon the death of her father to a moiety of the Fowler property under the will of 1715. In consequence he paid his addresses to her, and obtained her hand.¹ Letters of administration to the will of 1715 were granted to Thomas Grove, 1st December, 1729. Lord Fauconberg disputed the will, and a long suit in Chancery was followed by an appeal to the House of Lords, where it was determined, in 1733, that the estates of the late Mr. William Fowler rested in the representatives of his two sisters, Dorothy and Magdalen. It was supposed that the testator had scruples about the partiality he had shown to the daughter of his youngest sister, and had therefore executed the will of 1715, whereby that of 1712 was revoked, and

¹ Clifford, *Parish of Tixall*, p. 39; Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

the estates equally divided between the heirs of his two sisters, Dorothy Grove and Magdalen Cassey. In consequence of this final decision, Lord Fauconberg had to surrender a moiety of the property to the Irish barrister. Fitzgerald was a man of family, being the eldest son of Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Fitzgerald, M.P. for Waterford, who was slain in 1690 in the service of James II. at the battle of the Boyne. The Fitzgeralds of Little Island, of whom he was the representative, were derived from the ancient Earls of Kildare.

Though Lord Fauconberg was not required to refund any part of the income he had hitherto enjoyed from the Fowler estates, he was very much piqued, and lost all relish for what remained to him. Indeed, in disgust he dropped the name of Fowler, and hastily sold the Priory of St. Thomas to the notorious Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. But this was not the only effect of his disappointment; for it so greatly affected both his religious and moral principles that he first conformed to the Established Church, and then added robbery to apostasy by refusing any longer to pay the interest or to

refund the principal of the money left for religious purposes in the hands of Mr. William Fowler by his former chaplain, the Rev. Daniel Fitter, on the plea of its having been left for "superstitious uses". His lordship was rewarded for his apostasy by being sworn of the Privy Council, and in 1756 was created Earl Fauconberg of Newborough, Co. York. However, he sent for a priest, and was reconciled to the Church shortly before his death at his Newborough seat in 1774.¹

By the last testament of its new owner, the Duchess of Marlborough, who died in 1744, St. Thomas's Priory passed to her grandson, the Hon. John Spencer, fourth son of Charles, Earl of Sunderland, by Lady Anne Churchill, daughter and co-heiress of the great Duke of Marlborough. His son, created Earl Spencer, in 1765, sold the estate of St. Thomas to Lord Talbot. Soon after the property had passed to the Spencers, the Priory was let to a firm of cotton printers, which in a few years' time found it expedient to abandon the under-

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

taking. A great part of the original Priory was then demolished, and the remainder was transformed into a farmhouse. On this occasion, write the brothers Clifford in 1817,¹ the ancient fixtures were sold by auction, and some aged persons still commemorate the massive marble chimney-pieces, from each of which the purchaser was enabled to make two or three in modern taste. A flower garden now occupies the site of the great hall; and a balustrade, by a flight of steps leading from the house to the river-bank, is still decorated with two large antique vases or flower-pots of very rude sculpture. Some of the buildings appear from their style of architecture to be part of the original structure of Henry II.; but no traces can now be found of the church or cloisters, whose "fretted vaults" once resounded with the "pealing anthems of the religious," and in whose "long-drawn aisles" the trophied tombs of heroes, statesmen, and bishops still served to perpetuate the memory of their talents and virtues. But the monuments of man are frail and perishable as himself.

¹ *Parish of Tixall*, p. 41.

Miramur periisse homines ? monumenta fatiscunt !
Interitus saxis nominibusque venit.

Not man alone—his works decay,
His towers and temples pass away.

Meanwhile, in or about the year 1733, when Lord Fauconberg lost his final appeal, Mr. Simon Berington had to leave the Priory, and a chapel was opened in a house in the town of Stafford, under the auspices of the Earl of Stafford, though it is questionable if a resident priest was appointed. Mr. Berington then, or some time later, settled in London, where he was given the custody of the Clergy Library at Gray's Inn. In 1748 he was elected secretary to the Old Chapter, of which he had long been a member. He died at his chambers in Gray's Inn, 16th April, 1755, aged seventy-five, leaving behind him, as already alluded to, a lasting memorial of his literary labours in the long list of his works both in print and manuscript.

So we declayne even at our highest rate,
Changing with tyme the change of our estate.

—*Verstegan, Odes.*

IX.

Not so has the creed departed,
 Once the glory of yon shrine—
 Still it cheers the lowly-hearted,
 Still it maketh earth divine.

—*M. L. L.*

The twenty years succeeding the breaking up of the Priory and the opening of a chapel in a house at Stafford, in or about 1733, is a period of darkness in the history of the mission, the veil of which is too thick to afford more than a speculative view of its condition. It is improbable that there was a resident priest, at any rate during the greater part of the time. And yet it is certain that the spiritual welfare of the Catholics in the town was not altogether neglected. About three miles west of Stafford, at Dearnsdale, in the parish of Bradley, resided the ancient family of Palin. They had ever been staunch to the Faith, and were allied to some of the best Catholic families in the county. They may be traced at Dearnsdale, in the parish registers of Bradley, from early in the reign of Elizabeth. In 1564 was baptised Roger, son of Thomas Palin and Agnes his wife, and on 5th

May, 1569, was christened Margaret, daughter of Thomas Palin and Alice his wife. It has already been shown how this good lady, Alice Palin, died in Stafford gaol, a confessor of the Faith, in 1592. Ralph Palin, in 1591, married Mary Ann Cradock, and Richard Palin, of Dearnsdale, gent., probably their son, married, in 1634, Joyce, daughter of Thomas Whitgreave, Esq., of Moseley Old Hall. The issue of the latter marriage was a daughter, Alice, born 30th August, 1638, and a son, Thomas Palin, who was one of the pupils of his uncle's chaplain, Fr. John Huddleston, at the time when Charles II. found shelter under the hospitable roof of Moseley after the disastrous battle of Worcester in 1651. Young Palin and his fellow-students, Sir John Preston, Bart., of the Manor, Furness, Lancashire, and Francis Reynolds, a nephew of Mr. Whitgreave, were employed during his Majesty's stay in keeping watch lest the parliamentarians should take the house by surprise. The story¹ of the king's adventure and escape is too well known to require repetition. It is only necessary to say that both Thomas Whit-

¹ Huddleston, *Summary of Occurrences*, 1688.

greave and Fr. Huddleston were not forgotten after the Restoration, and were rewarded by his Majesty with pensions and special exemption from the penalties imposed by law upon Catholics. Fr. Huddleston subsequently became a Benedictine, and was successively chaplain to the Queen Dowager, Henrietta Maria, and Queen Catherine. It was he who was the happy instrument of the king's reception into the Church upon his death-bed in 1685. After the accession of James II., Fr. Huddleston continued to reside with Queen Catherine, as her chaplain, till his death at Somerset House, 22nd September, 1698, aged ninety. The writer of these notes is the fortunate possessor of a most interesting memento of this venerable father. It is a finely illustrated "Missal," printed at the Plantinian press at Antwerp in 1577, of the small octavo size so necessary in times of persecution. It was used by Fr. Huddleston at Moseley Old Hall, and elsewhere during his missionary career; and the calendar is annotated in his own handwriting with a long and valuable obituary of his relatives, patrons, and friends. But to return to the Palins. Fr. Huddleston's pupil, Thomas Palin,

subsequently married a member of the ancient family of Giffard, likewise associated with the preservation of the king. He had three children: Thomas, who married a Leveson, but left no son to succeed him; Constance, who died a spinster; and Richard, the last of the family, who is closely identified with the history of the Stafford mission.¹

Richard Palin,² born in September, 1670, was educated at Douay College, where he took the oath, and became an *alumnus*, in June, 1694. In due course he was ordained priest, and came to the English mission. In 1702 he was stationed in his native country, and it is not improbable that he was chaplain at Moseley Old Hall, the seat of his great uncle, Mr. Thomas Whitgreave, who died in that year at the venerable age of eighty-four. How long this energetic pastor remained in Staffordshire is not known; but as early as Jan., 1725, if not sooner, he opened a much-needed school for Catholic young gentlemen at Rowney-wood, in the parish of Alvechurch, Co. Worcester. It was situated not very

¹ Family papers, *apud* Fris. Whitgreave, Esq.

² Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.; *Douay Diaries*.

far from Beoley, the seat of the Sheldons, under whose patronage the school is thought to have flourished. It is supposed that Fr. Francis Romanus Chapman, O.S.F., a native of the neighbouring town of Henley-in-Arden, studied his classics there previous to his admission into the English College at Rome in 1721. If so, the school must have been established at an earlier date than that assigned by extant evidence.¹ The bold step was at first successful; but, like all such ventures, was short-lived and had to be withdrawn, owing to the bigotry and persecution of the times. It is probable that Rowney-wood school was closed about 1740, and that Mr. Palin took up his residence on his paternal estate at Dearnsdale either then or a little earlier. Here, no doubt, had long been a chapel, but there is no record of a resident priest before Mr. Palin's arrival. Anyhow, from this time the Catholics of Stafford appear to have been mainly dependent on the Dearnsdale mission; and here Mr. Palin continued to exercise pastoral duties till his death, 8th December, 1750, at the advanced age of eighty. He is entered

¹ Gillow, *Cath. Schls. in Engl.*

in the burial register of Bradley Church as a "Popish Priest," and lies in the churchyard beside his brother and sister. Over them are slabs to their memories, placed there by their cousin and executor, Francis Whitgreave, Esq., of Moseley Old Hall, the great-grandfather of the present Mr. Francis Whitgreave, of Burton Manor and Moseley Court.

Then let me dy, that I may go
And dwell where those bright lillies grow.
Where those blest plants of glory rise
And make a safer Paradise.

—*John Austin, Devotions.* 1668.

After Mr. Palin's death, the Dearnsdale estate passed to families of the name of Merrye and Ryder. By deed dated 19th February, 1754, Elizabeth Ryder, of Grove Park, Co. Warwick, settled a small annual charge on a farm at Dearnsdale for a priest to say Mass once a month in that neighbourhood, and once in two months on Sundays, at the family residence at Dearnsdale. In case the trustee, Francis Whitgreave, was unable to find a priest in the neighbourhood to render this holy service, Thomas Merrye, of Dearnsdale, was to provide such help for the neighbourhood as best he could; and in con-

sideration of so doing was to take the annuity, which was "to be paid for ever to ye world's end, or Restoration of ye Catholic Religion in ye kingdom".¹ Miss Ryder died about four years after the date of this deed. Her benefaction bore immediate fruit, for in the very year of her death, 1754, a resident priest was appointed, and the mission was re-established in the town of Stafford. Though the old chapel at Dearnsdale may still be traced in the garrets of the farmstead into which the ancient seat of the Palins has descended, now—

I see no little kirk—no bell
On Sabbath tinkleth through this dell.

—*John Wilson.*

X.

Faint not, and fret not, for threaten'd woe,
Watchman, on Truth's grey height!
Few though the faithful, and fierce though the foe,
Weakness is aye Heaven's might.

—*Cardinal Newman.*

It will be remembered that in or about 1733, when the mission at the Priory was discontinued, a chapel was opened in Stafford under the

¹ Original document, *apud* Fris. Whitgreave, Esq.

auspices of the Earl of Stafford. From that period till 1754 no name of a missionary has been handed down. Hence it seems doubtful that there was a resident priest, unless the Rev. Simon Berington, whose family was possessed of considerable property in and about the town, and whose eldest brother, John Berington, Esq., died there in 1721, continued to serve the mission for a much longer period than the scanty records at hand lead us to suppose.

In 1754 the Rev. Thomas Wilson, *alias* Clarke,¹ took charge of the mission. He was born at or near Stourbridge, Co. Worcester, 10th November, 1712. It is very probable that he studied his rudiments at the Rev. Richard Palin's school at Rowney-wood, previous to his being sent to Douay College.

There, on 4th August, 1732, being at the time in his first year's course of philosophy, he was admitted an *alumnus*, and in due course was ordained priest, in or about 1737. Upon coming to the mission he was appointed chaplain to Walter, fourth Lord Aston of Forfar, at Tixall, about three miles and three quarters

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

from Stafford. When the mission at Stafford was vacant, or the missionary incapacitated, the duty of attending to the spiritual wants of the town generally devolved upon the chaplain at Tixall. In 1751 the fifth and last Lord Aston was carried off by the small-pox, which he caught whilst attending the funeral of a friend at Stafford; and three years later Mr. Wilson withdrew from Tixall to take charge of the Stafford mission, as already stated. Here this good and zealous missionary, for such he was esteemed, continued his labours till his death, 9th March; 1766, aged fifty-three.

After this there is again some uncertainty as to the succession of the pastoral charge. It is probable that the financial position of the mission had become somewhat embarrassed; for the earldom of Stafford had fallen into abeyance upon the death of John Paul Stafford-Howard, the fourth earl, in 1762. It is therefore questionable if a resident priest succeeded Mr. Wilson. It is not unlikely that the mission was served for a time by the chaplain at Tixall, the Rev. George Beeston.¹ This estimable man,

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

born at Irnham, Co. Lincoln, in 1736, was educated and ordained priest, like his elder brother Peter, at Douay College, where he was admitted an *alumnus*, 24th December, 1756. Soon after his ordination he was sent to teach at St. Omer's College, which had just been taken from the Jesuits by the French Government, and handed over to the English secular clergy, in 1762. There he would most gladly have remained, as he dreaded the great responsibility attached to the pastoral charge; but Bishop Hornyold, being much in want of priests, called him over to the mission. Disregarding his own inclinations, Mr. Beeston readily obeyed, and was placed at Tixall, which had recently become the seat of the Hon. Thomas Clifford, younger son of Hugh, third Lord Clifford, through his marriage, in 1761, with Barbara, youngest daughter and co-heiress of James, fifth and last Lord Aston. Mr. Beeston remained chaplain at Tixall till his death, deeply regretted by his congregation and numerous friends, 15th August, 1797.

Shortly after Mr. Wilson's death, Mary, Comtesse de Rohan-Chabot,¹ who died at London,

¹ *Diary of Blue Nuns*, MS.; Burke, *Extinct Peerage*.

16th May, 1769, aged forty-eight, established a fund for the benefit of the pastor of the Stafford mission, whereby it was placed in a more independent position. This benevolent lady was the eldest daughter of William Stafford-Howard, second Earl of Stafford, and his wife Anne, his first cousin, daughter of George Holman, Esq., of Warkworth Castle, Co. Northampton. She was the first pupil at the school established at the English Convent of the Immaculate Conceptionists, commonly called Blue Nuns, at Paris, where she arrived 29th May, 1733. On 21st May, 1737, she left the convent to finish her education at the Abbaye de Marquette, near Lille, and some few years later became the wife of the Comte de Rohan-Chabot. In the year 1745 she assisted her old friends the Blue Nuns with a loan of 10,000 livres; and her memory should ever be held in veneration by the congregation at Stafford for the help she gave them in a time of great need.

The next pastor on record was the Rev. Thomas Barneby; but it is not known when he took up his residence in Stafford. Dr. Kirk was under the impression that he lived on the

mission in Norfolk for more than thirty years. If that be correct he must have moved to Stafford only a short time before his death, which seems improbable. He was the son of Thomas Barneby and his wife Mary Thompson, and was born in London, 22nd October, 1727. The father was apparently the only son of James Barneby, third son of William Barneby, Esq., of St. John's in Bedwardine, Co. Worcester, by Elizabeth Acton, of Bourton, and was baptised at St. John's, 8th November, 1677. Their ancestor, Thomas Barneby, of the Hull, Co. Worcester, acquired Acton, in the parish of Ombersley, in that county, through his marriage with Joyce, daughter and heiress of Walter Acton. The Hull estate came to the family through the marriage of Thomas Barneby, of Ludlow, with Isabel, daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Whitgreave, of the Hull, brother of Robert Whitgreave, of Burton Manor. This Thomas Barneby was a distinguished officer in the army of Edward IV., and was slain at the battle of Towton.¹ James Barneby, already mentioned, married Elizabeth, daughter of

¹ Nash's *Worcestershire*.

Thomas Metcalfe, of the family seated at Nut-hill, in Holderness, Co. York, and she was residing a widow with her daughter at Stafford in 1750. This lady's grandson, the Rev. Thos. Barneby, was educated at Douay College, where he was admitted an *alumnus* in his first year's theology, 15th April, 1748; so that in the ordinary course he would be ordained priest in or about 1751. The fact of his grandmother and aunt residing at Stafford about this time shows a connection with the town, and lends force to the supposition that he came to the mission much earlier than Dr. Kirk implies. However, the only direct evidence bearing upon the date of his missionary labours in the town is that of his death at Stafford in July, 1783, aged fifty-five. There is a tradition that he used to say Mass in the garret of a house on the Green.

Now, my soul, the day is gone
Which in the morn was thine;
Now its glass no more shall run,
Its sun no longer shine.

—*John Austin, Devotions.*

For some months after the death of Mr. Barneby, the mission at Stafford appears to have been without a pastor, and it is most

probable that it was served from one of the neighbouring missions until the arrival of Mr. Corne in 1784. The Rev. John Corne¹ was a younger son of Mr. James Corne and his wife Elizabeth Birchall, and was born at Betley, North Staffordshire, 18th August, 1749.

The Cornes were originally Protestants, and the circumstances connected with their conversion are interesting. Early in the eighteenth century, the family resided in West Chester, and was noted for its adherence to the cause of the exiled royal family. Charles Corne, son of Mr. James Corne and his wife Elizabeth Butler, supposed to have been descended from a younger son of the Butlers of Rawcliffe, who suffered so much for their Jacobite leanings, was born in 1716 at West Chester, and became a distiller there. In 1745 he joined Prince Charles, and after the battle of Culloden, 16th April, 1746, hid himself till he was enabled to pass over in safety to Ireland. There he became a Catholic, and thence proceeded to Louvain. After a stay of nine months at the

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS. ; *Diary of Blue Nuns*, MS. ; *Douay Diaries*.

latter place, he was filled with a desire to embrace the ecclesiastical state; but knowing very little Latin, and not caring to go to Douay at the age of thirty to learn that language, Dr. Joseph Holden was induced by Prince Henry, subsequently Cardinal Duke of York, to admit him into St. Gregory's Seminary at Paris. John Towneley, Esq., generously proffered to pay his pension of six hundred livres.

After remaining at St. Gregory's for four years and three months without any prospect of his taking degrees, for which that seminary was primarily intended, Mr. Corne went to Douay College in October, 1751, where he took the oath of the *alumni* at the age of thirty-six, 4th November, 1752, and eventually was admitted to holy orders. At Douay he filled the office of prefect-general until 1761, in which year, on 18th May, he succeeded the Rev. William Daniel as chaplain to the Blue Nuns at Paris. In that position he continued till his lamented death, 9th November, 1777, aged sixty-one.

Meanwhile, Mr. Corne's brother James, who was married and settled at Betley, also became

a Catholic under quite distinct and very curious circumstances. One day he found Bishop Challoner's "Think well on't; or, Reflections on the great Truths of the Christian Religion," accidentally dropped in a marl pit. Taking the book home, he perused it with such earnestness that both he and the whole of his family became converts to the true Faith. In January, 1762, the Rev. William Errington established a school at Betley, and placed it under the charge of the Rev. John Hurst.¹ It is possible that Mr. Corne's sons studied in this school previous to its removal, 25th March, 1763, to Sedgley Park, where the eldest, James Corne, became spiritual director. Four years older than John, the latter was born 20th August, 1745, and took the missionary oath at Douay in his third year's theology, 3rd November, 1770. Where his first missionary labours were spent is not stated; but it would seem from a letter of Bishop Hornyold to Francis Whitgreave, Esq., dated Longbirch, 15th June, 1779, that he was for a short time chaplain at Moseley, and was replaced by the Rev. Thomas Stone. In 1781

¹ *Sedgley Park Annals*, MS.

he became chaplain of Sedgley Park School,¹ and left in 1783 to take charge of the mission at Shrewsbury, where he died, 4th December, 1817, aged seventy-two.

Two of his sisters are said to have taken the veil in a convent in France. The diary of the Blue Nuns at Paris records that on 20th Nov., 1767, "Mistress" and Miss Corne, sister and niece of the chaplain, the Rev. Charles Corne, took up their residence in the convent. "Mrs." Hannah Corne, after spending an edifying life in the convent for eight years, died there, 26th June, 1775, aged sixty-seven. Miss Corne returned to her parents in England in April, 1772, and is apparently identical with the Miss Anna Corne, sister to the two priests, James and John, who married James Orrell, Esq., of Blackbrook, Co. Lancaster, and was mother of Charles Orrell, Esq., the Rev. James Orrell, and the Rev. Philip Orrell, the last male representatives of that ancient family. The Rev. John Corne in due course was sent to Douay College, where he took the missionary oath in his second year's theology, 1st Feb., 1775. In the following year

¹ Husenbeth, *Hist. of Sedgley Park.*

he was ordained priest, and sent to the English mission, where he was given the charge of the Catholics about Burslem and Rushton Grange, in succession to the Rev. Thomas Flinn. In the spring of 1779 he settled finally at Rushton Grange,¹ a very ancient missionary station, and soon resolved to erect an independent chapel. Having acquired an eligible site, spacious enough for all future needs of the mission, on the eastern boundary of the Grange estate, and adjoining the well-known "Cobridge Gate," he began to build; but owing to the Gordon riots the foundations of the new chapel were allowed to stand for a considerable time, lest the protectors of the Protestant cause in the neighbourhood should demolish them. Indeed, Rushton Grange was actually sacked and plundered by a "No-Popery" mob from Burslem. After the fanaticism had abated, Mr. Corne proceeded with the erection of his chapel, and St. Peter's, Cobridge, was opened in 1781. He was not to enjoy the fruits of his labours long; the apparent difficulty his bishop seems to have felt in filling the vacancy caused by the death of

¹ Leith, *Hist. of Cobridge Mission*, MS.

Mr. Barneby was at length solved by Mr. Corne's removal to Stafford in 1784.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
 And ancient forms of party strife;
 Ring in the nobler modes of life,
 With sweeter manners, purer laws.

—*Tennyson.*

XI.

'Tis the Sunday's loved morn, and there breaketh the swell
 O'er the town's quiet streets of a single church bell.
 Simple bell of St. Austin's—long may'st thou impart,
 In the moil of the world, sacred thoughts to the heart!

—*Edward Wilcock.*

At first Mr. Corne resided in a house which he rented in Tipping Street, now occupied by Mr. Jennings, and his chapel was in the garden. After some time the Beringtons of Winsley, Co. Hereford, who possessed considerable property in Stafford and the vicinity, gave Mr. Corne a ninety-nine years' lease of a piece of land in the Forebridge for the purpose of building upon it a house and chapel. The Beringtons had long been closely connected with the Stafford mission, as we have already seen, and, moreover, for a considerable period

the family resided at Rowley Hall, in the vicinity of the town.¹ In 1717 John Berington, Sen., Esq., of Winsley, and his eldest son and namesake, both registered their estates as Catholic nonjurors. Amongst other property the father returned lands in the parish of Castle Church, Stafford, called the Friar's Kitchen and Sandles meadows, valued at that time at £171 10s. per annum, which would represent a large income nowadays.²

Here we see the reason of the dedication of the Stafford church to St. Austin. It is built on land formerly belonging to the convent of the Friars Hermites of the Order of St. Austin. The Friary owed its existence to one of the Lords Stafford, who, about 1344, gave to the Order a piece of ground upon the green in the south suburb called "Forbrugge," whereon to found a church, dormitory, rectory and other necessary buildings. After the suppression of monasteries the site was granted to Thomas Neve and Giles Isam, and subsequently passed

¹ Fris. Whitgreave, Esq.

Berington pedigree; Payne, *Nonjurors*, and *Records of Eng. Caths.*

into various hands, the Beringtons eventually becoming possessed of the portion referred to, upon which St. Austin's now stands.

John Berington, Jun., left Winsley, and took up his residence in Stafford, where he died about the beginning of 1721. It was at this period that his younger brother, the Rev. Simon Berington, succeeded his cousin, the Rev. Thomas Berington, in the charge of the mission at St. Thomas's Priory. Squire Berington died "considerably indebted," as he states in his will dated 26th Feb., 1720. It is therefore probable that the family did not return to their seat at Winsley for some time, and that after the sale of the Priory Mr. Simon Berington removed the mission to the Stafford residence of his own family in or about 1733. It was Mr. John Berington the younger's son and successor, Andrews John Berington, of Winsley, and his son and heir Thomas, who leased the ancient friary land in the Forebridge to Mr. Corne. The father died 2nd Feb., 1794, aged eighty-seven, and the son 14th March, 1824, aged eighty-two. On this site Mr. Corne erected a house and chapel, but how he defrayed the cost is not recorded.

The following persons were undoubtedly benefactors either then or a little later. Their memories are preserved by the *Tabula Misarum* of the mission—Jean Barras, anniversary not stated; Sophie de l'Age, 10th January; Vincent Newton, 10th April, and Marie Sophie de l'Age, 23rd October. The De l'Ages were refugees during the first French Revolution, and so probably was Jean Barras. The Count de l'Age resided at a manor-house in the hamlet of Aston, near Seighford, close to Stafford. Vincent Newton, Esq., who belonged to an ancient Catholic family seated at Irnham, Co. Lincoln, resided in Devonshire St., Queen Square, London, and died 10th April, 1814, aged eighty-eight. There are also Masses to be said for Henry Maine (? Maire) and Joseph Leveson; but from the usurious number of obligations attached to their benefactions they are evidently of a much earlier date. The Levesons were a well-known Staffordshire Catholic family. It is improbable that Mr. Corne had anything of his own to spend upon his chapel; for, as his fellow-priest and neighbour, the Rev. George Beeston, of Tixall,

facetiously remarked, he came to Stafford in 1784 "on his failing in business in the Potteries".¹

The man who builds, and wants wherewith to pay,
Provides a home from which to run away.

—*Young.*

In all likelihood Lady Chabot's fund was sunk in the new buildings. The chapel was dedicated to St. Austin, and opened, with as much solemnity as was possible in those days, on 31st July, 1791. On the occasion, the Rev. Joseph Berington, younger son of Andrews John Berington, delivered to an aristocratic and crowded audience an excellent and much admired sermon.

Mr. Corne continued to serve the Stafford mission till 1804. In that year he removed to Harvington Hall, Co. Worcester, in succession to the Rev. Richard Cornethwaite, who died 11th September, 1803, and there he remained till his death, 4th August, 1816, aged sixty-seven. He was interred at Chaddesley church. Speaking of the two brothers, Bishop Milner said: "James Corne was all soul, John all body ;

¹ Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

James was desirous of solid knowledge, John of gossip”.

The next incumbent at St. Austin's was the Rev. James Appleton,¹ who arrived on 27th July, 1804, as appears from a statement of his in an old register. According to the “Douay Dairy” he was son of James Appleton and his wife Mary Smith, of the diocese of Norwich, and was admitted an *alumnus* of the College 12th March, 1762, being then nineteen years of age and in his second year's philosophy. Dr. Husenbeth, however, without giving any authority, says that his real name was Moore.² A few years later he was ordained priest, and came to the English mission. Subsequently he travelled on the Continent as tutor to some of the Jerninghams, and after his return was made chaplain to Sir William Jerningham, Bart., at Cossey Hall, in Norfolk. There he remained till 1778, when he became chaplain to Michael Blount, Esq., at Maple-Durham, Berks. Next, after a few years, he went to Chillington, Staffordshire, the seat of the Giffards; thence to

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, i.

Memoirs of Parkers, MS., i. 6.

Mawley, Salop, as chaplain to Sir Walter Blount, Bart. ; and finally settled at Stafford, in 1804. Here he continued till his death, 22nd March, 1813, aged seventy-one, and was buried at Castle church, where his gravestone may still be seen.

Mr. Appleton was a sound theologian and an able writer, and his works obtained considerable popularity in their day. In 1792, whilst at Chillington, he translated Lhomond's "La Doctrine Chrétienne," and published it under the title of "Theophilus : or the Pupil instructed in the Principles, the Obligations, and the Resources of the Roman Catholic Religion". This was followed by another translation from the same author, "Pious Lectures" (London, 1794). Later he was induced to publish some of his sermons, entitled, "Discourses for all Sundays and Festivals of the Year on the Various Duties of Religion, as taught by the Catholic Church" (London, 1800), which passed through several editions (one of them in three volumes), the last being issued in 1852. His fourth and last work was "An Analysis, or Detailed Explication, of the Gospels read in the Mass on Sundays and Festivals throughout the Year," which

appeared immediately after his death (London, 1814), was reprinted by Andrews in 1815, and again at Dublin so late as 1853.

Six months intervened between Mr. Appleton's decease and the appointment of a permanent pastor. During this interregnum the wants of the mission were attended to by a French *émigré* priest, l'Abbé Henri Le Sage, who resided at Tixall, and had charge of that mission. This zealous man was grand-nephew of the ingenious author of "Gil Blas," Alain René Le Sage, whose work has been so frequently translated into English. The abbé was chaplain to the Cliffords at Tixall, from 1810 till his death, 4th May, 1821, and lies buried opposite the door of the parish church.

Sous ce tombeau git Le Sage, abattu
Par le ciseau de la Parque importune;
S'il ne fut pas ami de la fortune,
Il fut toujours ami de la vertu.

—*Le Sage's Epitaph.*

Thus the mission was gradually established; and, though the individual efforts of its first pastors were not distinguished by great achievements, we may say with Miss Landon:—

But not in vain—their toil was blest ;
 Life's dearest hope by them was won ;
 A blessing is upon their rest,
 And on the work which they begun.

XII.

Call those sheep back who go astray,
 And bring them to Thy fold ;
 That they and we united may
 One faith in God all hold.

—*Haydock's Hymns.*

On 24th September, 1813, the Rev. Thomas Price¹ formally took charge of the mission. At the age of fourteen he was sent to Sedgley Park School, where he was admitted 12th May, 1776.² Thence, after a few years, he proceeded to the English College at Valladolid, where he was ordained priest, and for some years was professor of theology. At length he returned to England, and about the end of 1798 was appointed to the chaplaincy at Tixall, then the seat of Sir Thomas Clifford, Bart. In 1810 he left Tixall to become chaplain to Sir George William Jerningham, Bart., subsequently Lord

Kirk, *Biog. Collns.*, MSS.

² *Sedgley Park Reg.*, MS.

Stafford, at Cossey Hall, and there he remained till his appointment to Stafford in 1813.

It was about this time that Sir George, representative of the Barons Stafford and claimant to the title, resolved upon the erection of a seat at Stafford, in accord with the early traditions of the family. Between 1780 and 1790, nothing remained visible of Stafford Castle but a solitary fragment of a wall, which Sir William Jerningham underpinned to prevent from falling. About the same time, some workmen, engaged to search for an ancient well, discovered that all the basement of the Castle lay buried beneath the ruins of the upper stories. Sir William at once ordered the whole to be excavated and cleared from débris, and thus was displayed the plan and extent of a Castle of the time of the Conqueror.¹ Sir William died in 1809; and in the following year his son and successor, Sir George, recalling its former pride, commenced to erect on the foundations of the ancient Castle the present massive and imposing fortress, in apparent

¹ Clifford, *Hist. of Tixall*.

oblivion of the peaceful change which time had effected in our national life.

Oh! vain delusion! Cruel days
Were then upon the land,—
A battlement on every wall,
A sword in every hand.

—*L. E. Landon.*

It was designed by his younger brother Edward,¹ a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, whose predilections were architectural and musical rather than legal. Only one front flanked by two round towers was completed when the great cost of this reproduction of a baronial Castle of feudal times, designed with a total disregard of domestic comfort and modern requirements, brought about a suspension of building operations in 1815; and to this day Stafford Castle remains in its unfinished state—a most conspicuous and picturesque feature of the landscape, indeed, but of no other advantage save to illustrate the folly of an amateur antiquarian's enthusiasm. Mr. Jerningham then turned his attention to St. Austin's, which he transformed into a Gothic chapel of much

¹ Gillow, *Bib. Dict.*, iii. 627.

larger dimensions, utilising the old one as the transept. This was done under his own direction, and at his expense and that of his brother Sir George, who purchased the oak stalls of Lichfield Cathedral and placed them round the sanctuary. These oak stalls had been erected by Bishop Hackett in the Cathedral at the time of its restoration after the Civil Wars.¹ The windows, also, which were of the lancet order, he enriched with fine old painted glass.² All this was accomplished by this amiable and charitable gentleman some years before his death, which occurred at London, 29th May, 1822, at the comparatively early age of forty-seven. And the congregation will long remember him—

For woordes and deedes, at parting done or said,
In memories conservance best are laid.

—*Verstegan.*

In 1818 Mr. Price erected a small school, the want of which was sorely felt. This was done at the joint expense of Sir George Jerningham and Mrs. Frith. The latter, besides her contribution of £200 towards the erection,

¹ Fris. Whitgreave, Esq.

² Kirk, *Cath. Mag.*, v. 429.

was in other ways a great benefactress to the mission, as also to those at Newcastle, Ashley, and other places. After serving the mission for almost eighteen years, Mr. Price died suddenly in London, whilst on a visit to Lady Stanley, 15th June, 1831, aged sixty-nine. The day previous to his decease, he dined with Bishop Bramston in excellent health and spirits, and retired about nine o'clock in the evening, declaring that he had never spent a more pleasant day. The next morning, at seven o'clock, the footman on entering his room found him a corpse, and on examination it was supposed that he had been dead at least four hours. He was one of the mildest of men, and universally regarded with affection and respect. On the following Saturday, the 18th June, a solemn *requiem* was performed in his chapel at Stafford, where his memory is still revered.

Death came unheralded :—but it was well ;
 For so thy Saviour bore
 Kind witness, thou wast meet at once to dwell
 On His eternal shore ;
 All warning spared,
 For none He gives where hearts are for prompt
 change prepared.

—*Cardinal Newman.*

¹ *Cath. Mag.*, i. 384.

XIII.

Let Charity and Truth prevail,
And all divisions cease ;
That nothing in the world be seen
But Love, and Joy, and Peace.

—*Haydock's Hymns.*

Meanwhile the Act of Emancipation had passed in 1829 ; and, though gradual, the improvement in the position of Catholics was very marked. In less than a generation, during our second pastorate, prejudice and ignorance had so far succumbed that His Holiness Pope Pius IX. felt justified in restoring the hierarchy in 1850 ; and the Church in this country, after an interval of three centuries, assumed its ancient form of government.

His people He affects
He wil not have destrest,
The thrallèd He wil free
With ease of their unrest.

—*Verstegan.*

Within two months of the death of Mr. Price the bereaved congregation at Stafford had the satisfaction of seeing the pastorate refilled in the person of one whose whole life was in true accord with the motto so loyally borne by his forefathers from time immemorial—*Soli Deo*

honor et gloria. The Rev. Edward Huddleston, a worthy scion of one of our most ancient Catholic families, took charge of the mission in August, 1831. He was a younger son of Edward Huddleston, Esq., of Purse Caundle, in Dorsetshire, who eventually succeeded his brother to the Sawston estates, near Cambridge. At a very early age, in 1805, he was sent to that venerable academy of Catholic youth, Sedgley Park,¹ whence he was transferred to Oscott College, 7th February, 1815. There he continued his studies till he was ordained priest in March, 1826, having some time previously filled the office of prefect of discipline. After his ordination, he went to his ancestral home at Sawston to supply the family chaplaincy, which had been filled by Dom Charles Ambrose Feraud, O.S.B., from 1824. It is probable that Sawston Hall was never without a priest throughout the days of persecution. For two centuries and more it was served by the Jesuits, from 1783 to 1785 by the Dominicans, and again by the Jesuits till Fr. Feraud took charge in 1824. At this time there was no Catholic chapel

¹ *Sedgley Park Reg.*, MS.

at Cambridge, which came under the charge of the chaplain at Sawston. The late Vicar-Apostolic of the Midland District, Bishop Milner, had long entertained the design of supplying this want, a measure strongly recommended by the celebrity of the place, the daily increasing number of resident Irish Catholics, and from the fact of there being no public chapel in the whole county. Influenced by the same weighty reasons, his successor, Bishop Walsh, determined to act upon the favourable opportunity offered by Mr. Huddleston's ordination, and appointed him to undertake the arduous task. The zealous missionary issued an appeal, and began to collect funds; but before he was in a position to establish an independent mission in Cambridge he was called away, owing to Mr. Price's sudden demise, to take charge of the more important mission of St. Austin's, though, indeed, the congregation at this time only numbered about one hundred and fifty communicants.

These are the chosen few,
The remnant fruit of largely-scattered grace,
God sows in waste, to reap whom He foreknew
Of man's cold race.

—*Cardinal Newman.*

Some three years later, an incident occurred which illustrated the force of the young missionary's character, and greatly endeared him to the hearts of his people.¹ During the Lent assizes of 1834, two poor Irishmen were capitally indicted for an assault upon some constable or constables. Penniless and friendless, and intimidated by the array of judge, jury, counsel, witnesses, and all the pomp and circumstance of Justice, these poor fellows offered no defence. They were found guilty, and sentenced by Mr. Justice Parke to be hanged at an early date. Mr. Huddleston was present at the trial, and felt deeply dissatisfied with the evidence against the prisoners. He followed up his doubt, instituted inquiry, and convinced himself of the injustice of the sentence. He sought and obtained an interview with the judge, to whom he explained the grounds of his doubt. But he was ill received, and when he stated that a witness of the transaction was without, ready to swear to the truth of his representations, the judge dismissed him with

¹ Kirk, *Cath. Mag.*, v. 430.

the exclamation : “ Sir, I could not believe him upon his oath ”. Notwithstanding this rebuff, Mr. Huddleston remained undaunted. In haste he took coach to London, called on Mr. Littleton, the member for the Northern Division of the County, who was elevated to the peerage as Baron Hatherton in the following year, and induced him to see Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary. The latter at once saw the merits of the case, represented them to the sovereign, and having obtained a réprieve, sent for Mr. Huddleston and informed him of it. The men were, however, to be hanged the next day, and any accident might be fatal to them ; so to guard against the chances of failure, his lordship resolved to send three copies of the reprieve, one by post, one by express, and one by Mr. Huddleston, who had the inexpressible satisfaction of arriving in time to present the king's pardon, and thus save the lives of the two innocent men. Such was this worthy pastor's glorious triumph in the cause of humanity. The case was simple ; the poor men had resisted attacks upon themselves, and this resistance was construed into an attack upon others.

Justice for right, mercie for grace did crave,
Justice had right, mercie her favour gave.

—*Verstegan.*

In 1852 Mr. Huddleston was elected canon penitentiary of the diocese of Birmingham. Four years later, in Sept., 1856 he exchanged his charge at Stafford for the quieter mission of St. Michael, Aston, where he passed the remainder of his missionary career, till his death, 14th December, 1871.¹

I make no doubt but he is gone
Where soon I hope to go,
Where we for ever shall be blest,
From out the reach of woe.

—*Chatterton.*

Of Francis Kerril Amherst,² Fr. Huddleston's successor, the congregation of St. Austin's may well feel proud; for though his pastorate was brief, it was most promising for the welfare of the mission, and was only severed by an

¹ A monumental sculptor of a waggish turn inscribed the following lines on the tombstone of a namesake :—

“ Here lies Edward Huddlestone. Reader, don't smile!
Reflect, as this tombstone you view,
That death, who kill'd him, in a very short while
Will huddle a stone upon you.”

² Gillow, *Bib. Dict*, i.; *Oscotian*, vi. 157, 202, vii.; Burke, *Landed Gentry*.

unsought call to a higher state—his elevation to the episcopacy. Dr. Amherst, who was born in the metropolis, 21st March, 1819, was the eldest son and heir of William Kerril Amherst, Esq., of Parndon House, Essex, and of Fieldgate House, Kenilworth, Co. Warwick, who died at the latter seat in 1835. His mother was Mary Louise, daughter of Francis Fortescue Turvile, Esq., of Husband's Bosworth Hall, Co. Leicester, by Barbara, daughter of the Hon. Charles Talbot, and sister of Charles, sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury. The first ten years of the future bishop's life were spent at Parndon. Thence he was sent to a small preparatory school kept by the Rev. William Foley, at Northampton, singularly the very house in which subsequently he resided as bishop of that see.

In June, 1830, Mr. Foley was called to Oscott to act as *locum tenens* to Dr. Weedall during his temporary retirement from the presidency of the College; and thence he was followed by eight of his pupils, among whom were Francis Kerril Amherst and his younger brother, the present Fr. William Joseph Amherst, S.J., who both entered as lay students

on 10th August in that year. After continuing their studies for eight years, the two brothers left the College together to enter the world; but in May, 1841, the elder returned to Oscott to study for the Church, and was ordained priest by the late Cardinal Wiseman, 6th June, 1846. His ecclesiastical call was followed eventually by his brother, who joined the Society of Jesus; and was ordained priest at St. Austin's, Kenilworth, 15th Aug., 1859. From 1847 to 1852 the subject of this brief memoir was a professor at Oscott, and after an interval of three years resumed his professorial gown for eleven months, till his appointment to the Stafford mission in Sept., 1856. His missionary career, however, was soon closed. For on 11th Feb., 1858, the Right Rev. William Wareing, first Bishop of Northampton, resigned his see, and Dr. Amherst was selected by His Holiness Pius IX. to fill the vacancy, his episcopal consecration taking place on 4th July in that year. After twenty-one years' hard work in his new sphere of duty, his lordship was compelled by rapidly-failing health to resign his bishopric. Accordingly, in

the following year, 1880, he was translated by the Holy Father to the See of Sozusa *in partibus infidelium*. From this time his sufferings continually increased, culminating in the affliction of total blindness, till his death at his residence, Fieldgate House, Kenilworth, 21st Aug., 1883, aged sixty-four.¹

Farewell, fair saint! Let not the seas, and wind,
Swell like the eyes and hearts you leave behind;
But smooth, and gentle, as the looks you wear,
Smile in your face, and whisper in your ear.

—*Tixall Poetry.*

His lordship's brother, Fr. Amherst, in a brief review of his life in his "History of Oscott," has expressed the opinion that that College lost a great deal, in more ways than one, when Dr. Amherst was raised to the episcopacy. A period of service on the mission might have been extremely useful to him, as it is indeed to every priest; but, that period over, he should have returned to his *alma mater*. He certainly had some qualities which eminently fitted him for the episcopal order; but, considering the whole of his constitution and disposition, he was

Tablet, lxii. 339; *Wkly. Reg.*, lxxviii. 241, 261.

much more fitted for the responsibilities of college life and of parochial life than for those of an office in which weightier and more harassing cares bore so heavily on one who, with the sensitiveness of a woman, and a horror of giving pain to any one, combined the strong good sense and the high notions of honour of an English gentleman. Fr. Amherst adds, he loved his diocese, and in his testamentary dispositions he gave unmistakable proof of the claims Northampton had upon him.

In the literary world he is best known by his "Lenten Thoughts, drawn from the Gospel for each Day of Lent" (London, 1873, 12mo), which has since passed through several editions. He was also the author of a story entitled "Norton Broadhead," some sonnets printed for private circulation, and occasional articles in the Catholic press.

In June, 1858, the Rev. John Wyse succeeded to the charge of St. Austin's. He was educated at Oscott and Stonyhurst, ordained priest 27th April, 1851,¹ and, after residing at Clifton for a while, took charge of the mission

¹ *Oscottian*, vii.; Hatt, *Stonyhurst Lists*.

of St. Winifrid's, Shepshed, Co. Leicester, in 1852. In the following year he became chaplain at the convent in Alcester Street, Birmingham, where he remained till his appointment to Stafford. Though his stay was brief, he left a lasting memorial behind him in the shape of a sum of £700, which he and his curate, the Rev. John P. Dowling (a young priest ordained at Oscott 10th June, 1854), had collected towards the rebuilding of the church. In the autumn of 1859 he proceeded to Woodchester Priory to join the Dominicans; but in 1861 he left the Friar Preachers, and was appointed Rector of West Bromwich, which mission he exchanged for Warwick in 1863. Thence he withdrew to St. Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, in 1864; subsequently lived in retirement for a number of years, till he undertook the charge of Tichborne in 1884; and is now resting from missionary work on sick leave.

Whilst at Birmingham Mr. Wyse published a "Manual of the Confraternity of La Salette, comprising every information concerning La Salette, with Devotions for the Confraternities established in England" (London, 1855, 12mo),

and about the same time edited "The Music of the Hymns, Anthems, and Litanies for the use of the Confraternities of La Salette," the music being arranged by Mr. Spivey.

Though the honour of the erection of the new church was left to his successor, it must ever be remembered that Mr. Wyse was the originator of the movement, and left, as we have already seen, a substantial sum towards the carrying of it out. He had the felicity of being present at the laying of the foundation-stone, on which occasion his deserts were fully acknowledged.

With the erection of this church commences a new era in the history of St. Austin's. The old chapel was transformed into a school, and yet remains a speaking memorial of the past, a link with times which happily cannot come again.

Dear Mother! at whose angel-guarded shrine
The faithful sought of old their daily Bread,
How full thou art of impulses divine,
And memories deep and dread!

—*F. W. Faber.*



ST. AUSTIN'S, STAFFORD.



XIV.

Within these walls let holy peace,
And love with concord dwell :
Here give the troubled conscience ease,
And all our passions quell.

—*Haydock's Hymns.*

The Rev. Michael O'Sullivan¹ became missionary rector upon Mr. Wyse's withdrawal, charged with the onerous task of erecting the new church. He was a native of Ireland, born in 1823, and when but three months old had the misfortune to lose his father, a farmer of the middle class in one of the southern counties. At the age of ten, in 1834, through the good offices of an uncle, he was placed at the well-known school at Sedgley Park,² with the view of his being trained for the priesthood. In September, 1837, he was transferred to Oscott College, where he remained five years, and laid the foundation of the scholastic training, and, probably, of the dialectical skill, by which he was distinguished in riper years. His advanced studies in theology were made at the English College at Rome; but before leaving

¹ *Tablet*, lxxix. 98.

² *Sedgley Park Register*, MS.

Oscott, in 1842, he matriculated a member of the London University. At Rome he passed a brilliant career, till his ordination, 18th December, 1848. His natural quickness and industrious study brought him numerous rewards. He gained medals and distinctions in Hebrew, canon law, theology, and other subjects. After ordination his first charge was as assistant priest at St. Peter's, Birmingham. In 1851 he was removed to the Cathedral, where he was appointed prefect of the church and master of ceremonies. Here he threw himself with great enthusiasm into the work which was being carried on in the schools connected with the Cathedral, particularly in the night-schools, in which elementary education was given to adults who had not enjoyed the advantage of schooling in their boyhood. In 1857, his health having suffered from overwork, he was sent to the rural parish of Brewood, whence, in November, 1859, he assumed charge of the Stafford mission. Here his energy and zeal were shown in promoting the erection of the new church, and subsequently of the schools in Foregate Street.

The site of the church immediately adjoins that of the old chapel on the side farthest from the town. It is a brick structure, in the decorated Gothic style, and was designed by the younger Pugin. Simplicity and neatness are its prevailing characteristics. It was intended to seat five hundred persons—three hundred in the nave, and one hundred in each of the aisles,—and the dimensions were to be one hundred by fifty feet, with a tower over the porch at the end of the western aisle, from which was to rise a spire one hundred and ten feet high. The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone was performed on 26th May, 1861, by the vicar-general of the diocese, the Very Rev. George Jeffries, in the presence of some hundreds of people; and at the subsequent luncheon at the Swan Hotel, the Right Hon. Lord Stafford presided, the vice-chairs being filled by Henry B. G. Whitgreave, Esq., of Moseley Court, and his brother, Francis Whitgreave, Esq., of Burton Manor, all generous benefactors to the new church. The latter gentleman, in proposing the healths of the former incumbents of St. Austin's, F.F. Huddleston and Wyse, who were

present, gracefully acknowledged that it was to the latter that the congregation owed the commencement of the work which had that day been advanced so important a step. The building proceeded apace, so that within little over a year's time it was ready for use. In the words of the ancient hymn, *Cælestis urbs Ierusalem*, composed for the anniversary service of the dedication of a church—

Scalpri salubris ictibus,
Ex tusione plurima,
Fabri polita malleo,
Hanc saxa molem construunt,
Aptisque juncta nexibus,
Locantur in fastigio.

On the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16th July, 1862, the opening ceremony took place. The building having involved an expenditure of more than £2500, exclusive of the seats, organ, etc., the smallness of the fund at the command of the congregation had necessitated a modification of the original plans, not only by the omission of ornament, but by a material contraction of the proposed dimensions of the church. The following description ap-

peared in the *Staffordshire Advertiser* at the time of the opening :—

“The interior of the structure consists of a nave and two aisles, the nave terminating in a semi-octagonal apse, and being separated from the aisles in the usual manner by arches and columns. The centre of the columns consists of a shaft of granite marble, supported on a base of white Sicilian marble, and this again on a support of Yorkshire stone. The deep colour of the polished centre-pieces, contrasted with the white plaster coating of the walls, has a very pleasing effect. Upon the arches there is but little ornamental work, a simple moulding from pier to pier. Above, on either side, is a range of clerestory windows, fashioned in the form of cinque-foils. In the apse at the farther end of the nave there are three stained windows, by Hardman of Birmingham, each containing three figures. In the centre is a representation of the Crucifixion, with the Blessed Virgin and St. John on either side; upon the right are Our Saviour, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory, with three of the children known as ‘non Angli, sed Angeli’; while on the left are

'the Good Shepherd,' St. Peter and St. Paul, the figures being surmounted by the tiara. In the centre of the apse is the high altar, of Caen stone. . . . The aisles terminate in chapels, that on the left being dedicated to Our Blessed Virgin . . . while in a corresponding position on the opposite side of the church is a figure of St. Augustine bearing his crosier. Here a temporary screen at present shuts off the space destined for another chapel. . . . At the western extremity of the church the organ is situated, in a small gallery fronting the high altar. . . . In the west front of the church, and to some extent concealed from the congregation by the organ, is a large window of stained glass taken from the old building. In the window itself, with its geometrical tracery, there are perhaps more distinct marks of the decorative style than in any other part of the building; but the glass it contains exhibits such a diversity of design that it is impossible to characterise it as a whole. The only entrances to the church are at the west front by two principal doors. . . . The roof, like the rest of the interior, is covered with plaster, but it is

supported by open woodwork, continued over the aisles."

The Right Rev. Dr. Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham, and a large gathering of clergy, were present in the sanctuary at the opening. Fr. Peter Gallwey, S.J., preached, and at the conclusion of the ceremony the procession left the church to the triumphant strains of the *Jubilate Deo* :—

Make ye jubilation to God, al the earth,

Say a psalme to His name ; give glorie to His praise.

—*Ps. lxx., Douay Bible. 1610.*

At the luncheon which followed, the chair was taken by Basil Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq., of Swynnerton Park, brother-in-law to the subsequent tenth and eleventh Barons Stafford, to whose title his son is now heir-presumptive. In his acknowledgment of the toast of "Prosperity to the new church," associated with his name, the rector, Fr. O'Sullivan, self-abrogatingly said that the merit of having built a church at Stafford was primarily to be attributed to Canon Huddleston, who built the living church ; to Dr. Amherst and his assistant Fr. Dowling, who perfected that living

church; and to Fr. Wyse, who left £700 collected for the new church. Had Fr. Wyse presided over the building, his popularity would have enabled them to erect a more elegant structure. He thanked the benefactors, especially Lord Stafford, Mr. George Thomas Whitgreave,¹ and Serjeant Bellasis; but he reminded all who had made sacrifices that the end had not come. The town of Stafford was, like a line in Euclid, length without breadth. The new church was at one end, many Catholics at the other; and it was hard to make both ends meet. He thanked them all, and gave credit to his assistant priest, the Rev. Clement I. Harris, for the zeal with which he had accomplished his share of the labours connected with the opening.

Some three years later Fr. O'Sullivan became a member of the Birmingham Chapter, and after seven years' residence at Stafford he was summoned by his bishop to Birmingham, to succeed the Very Rev. George Jeffries as vicar-general of the diocese, an office which

¹ Mr. Whitgreave gave £100 towards the building fund, and £50 for the erection of the high altar.

he held until 1879. His departure was early in December, 1866; and yet the memory of him has remained fresh in the minds of his people to this day. He changed the scene of his pastoral duties, but the Stafford congregation never seem to have given him up, holding him in their hearts with a devotion that was a striking testimony to his worth.

Quando ullum inveniemus parem?

On the formation in 1871 of the first Birmingham School Board, the canon's experience as an educationalist marked him out as the best representative of the Catholic body. The history of the first School Board was a stormy one. There were Parliamentary and political debates which often riveted the attention of the town, and did much to form public opinion upon the questions which were in dispute. Such men as the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, the late Mr. George Dawson and Mr. Charles Vince, Dr. R. W. Dale, and the Rev. Dr. Burgess were members; and side by side with them Canon O'Sullivan, with the kindest feeling and overflowing good humour, held a

brilliant part on behalf of the interests of which he was the special custodian. In 1876 he withdrew from the Board, his place being taken by Canon Longman. His was a well-known face at public meetings for charitable and philanthropic objects; and he was a very enthusiastic member of the Hospital Sunday Committee. Amongst his own people he was especially loved, and at the annual Catholic reunions he usually received the heartiest applause of the evening when he came forward to say a few words, generally in support of a resolution of thanks to the principal visitor. He was an admirable pastor, a judicious administrator, and an eloquent preacher. In 1877 he withdrew from St. Chad's Cathedral to the comparative retirement of Solihull, where he took charge of that mission, and erected a charming presbytery, at which he spent the remainder of his days, till his sudden, though not unprepared death, 15th January, 1892, aged sixty-nine.

O wel are you that have subdude
The force of world's desyre,
And in the forte of solitude
For safety do retyre.

—*Verstegan.*

Canon O'Sullivan was a man of marked literary tastes, and up to the very last maintained a connection with Birmingham *littérateurs* as a member of the Old Library Committee, of which he was president about three years before his death. Two years before the latter event, he made a journey to the United States. He had previously travelled a good deal upon the Continent; and his keen observation of men and things, together with his ready wit and genial disposition, made him a cultured and charming companion. No man was more welcome at a dinner party; and no man, while freely contributing by his wit to the pleasure of his companions, knew better how to maintain the dignity of his clerical character, or to ensure personal respect. The Rev. Dr. M'Cave, in his funeral panegyric delivered at Birmingham, said that the canon for well nigh thirty years was the *quasi* leader of Catholicity in the Midlands. He cared not for place, and he cared not for pelf. Nay, when an informal offer of an archbishopric was made to him he declined, and preferred to live and die working in Birmingham. That meant many and many a

battle, but he threw himself into the fight chivalrously and conscientiously. He loved his Irish fatherland with intensity, and was never so proud as when his audience consisted of the sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle; indeed; he was the *beau idéal* of the Soggarth Aroon. Another feature of his admirable life was the perfect order, precision, and piety with which he discharged his priestly duties. Touching his life at Stafford, we may conclude with an extract from a sympathetic memoir which appeared in the *Stafford Catholic Magazine* for January, 1892 :—

“ During the seven years which Canon O’Sullivan spent in Stafford much was done by him, and under him, to promote the work and improve the position of Catholicity in the town. Through his exertions the church was built and freed from debt, and the schools in Foregate Street erected. In a long and bitter controversy in the *Advertiser*, the canon vigorously and learnedly defended the doctrines and rights of Catholics; and in spite of the bigotry aroused by a clerical opponent the cause of this controversy, *viz.*, the claim to have a salaried

Catholic chaplain appointed to the gaol, was carried through successfully. On the various boards and committees of the borough the canon was found taking his part, and by his tact and urbanity he succeeded in removing much anti-Catholic prejudice. When he was about to leave the town, the purse of forty guineas presented to him by his own people was augmented by a testimonial of twenty-five sovereigns from Protestant gentlemen of the town, headed by Mr. J. Morgan, the mayor, who in his address spoke of the canon as 'a gentleman who had by his uniform kindness and affability shown that social duties were not inconsistent with the priestly office'."

Indeed, from the general description of the good canon we seem to have embodied the ideal sought by Richard Crashaw :—

A happy soul, that all the way
To Heaven hath a summer's day ;
* * * * *
A man whose tunèd humours be
A seat of rarest harmony ;
* * * * *
Warm thoughts, free spirits flattering
Winter's self into a spring.
In sum, would'st see a man that can
Live to be old, and still a man.

XV.

Though our notes be short and few,
And our rests too oft and long,
If we keep in time with you,
We at last shall sing your song.

—*John Austin.*

When Canon O'Sullivan left Stafford he was succeeded by the Rev. John Fanning.¹ This venerable man was born at Loughmore, near Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 10th November, 1805. After completing a course of humanities and philosophy in his native country, he came over to Prior Park, Co. Somerset, 14th September, 1836, to pursue his theological studies; and there was ordained priest, 14th March, 1840. His first mission was Taunton, Co. Somerset, on which he entered 16th October, 1841. To oblige Bishop Hendren he consented to separate himself from his attached congregation, and to expose himself as a forlorn hope to recover the misapplied funds of the well-founded but impoverished mission of Tiverton, in Devonshire. There he displayed his characteristic tact and energy, from the Advent of 1848 to the Advent

Cath. Times, 28th August, 1891; Oliver, *Collns.*, 249.

of 1850, when he was permitted to return to the scene of his first labours, to the delight of his numerous acquaintances. Soon after, a difference with his superiors over a demand for monies, supposed to have been advanced to the mission some twenty years before his appointment to Taunton, led to his withdrawal from the Plymouth diocese, and to his acceptance of Bishop Ullathorne's proffer to receive him into the Birmingham diocese. On 30th January, 1853, he bade adieu to his flock, who expressed their sorrow at the separation by presenting him with a eulogistic address, accompanied by a purse of sovereigns. Bishop Ullathorne at once appointed him to the vacant mission of Chipping Norton, Co. Oxford. On the following 30th June he was transferred to the important mission of SS. Peter and Paul, Wolverhampton; and whilst there he opened with unprecedented solemnity, 1st May, 1855, the fine church of SS. Mary and John. After a few more years of zealous and active labour, failing health necessitated a change to a lighter mission, and in 1858 he withdrew to Hanley, Upton-on-Severn. In 1861 he was transferred to Bromsgrove, where

he remained till his appointment to Stafford in 1866. Here he continued his faithful services till, in March, 1871, he had the satisfaction of being restored to the Clifton diocese, and was given the charge of Shepton Mallet, Somerset. In 1878 he was transferred to Frome, in the same county, where he continued to labour till old age and infirmity necessitated his retirement from the mission in 1884. For some time he resided with or near his nephew, the Rev. James F. Fanning, in Liverpool; but some three years before his death he returned to his native country to enjoy more fully amongst his friends his well-earned repose. Thus he quietly passed to his eternal reward, at Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary, 13th August, 1891, having nearly attained the patriarchal age of eighty-six.

Wherever his lot was cast during his peregrinations he made the prospects of religion brighter by his zeal and sanctity, and conciliated those at variance through either creed or party by his manners and character.

From the world's poor pageantry,
Lord, Thou call'st a soul to Thee,
Grant her rest eternally.

—*Rev. Henry Formby.*

The Rev. James Nary succeeded Fr. Fanning, and arrived at St. Austin's 11th March, 1871; he had been ordained priest at Oscott, 26th March, 1864,¹ and subsequently served at Stonor, Henley-on-Thames, till 1868, and then at Oxford till his appointment to Stafford. His sojourn terminated in December, 1872; and after serving successively at Brewood, Dorchester, Blackmore Park, Eccleshall, and Cannock, he is now stationed at Leamington.

And now we come to one in whose person the earliest and dearest traditions of the mission are associated—the Very Rev. Edward Charles Canon Acton, D.D., a descendant of the Fowlers of St. Thomas's Priory, to whom the Catholics of Stafford are so deeply indebted for the preservation of their faith during the dark ages of persecution. Dr. Acton is the third son of the late William Joseph Acton, Esq., of Wolverton, Co. Worcester, the representative of an ancient family deriving descent from the Actons of Acton, and of Mary, widow of William Trafford, Esq., brother of Sir Thomas Joseph de Trafford, Bart., of

¹ *Oscotian*, vii.

Trafford Park, Co. Lancaster. His grandfather, William Acton, of Wolverton, married, in 1801, Ann Constantia Davies, descended from the family of Fowler, of St. Thomas's Priory.¹ And thus is added one more link to the chain of the past :—

Behold one more connection,
And long may it abide,
The brilliant reflection
Of Stafford's quondam pride.

Dr. Acton² was born at Wolverton on 13th Oct., 1839. In Sept., 1853, he entered Oscott College, and two years later had the distinguished honour of being elected by his fellow-students their "public man"—an honour only fully appreciated by those who have the privilege of calling themselves Oscotians. In 1856 he matriculated at the London University, and proceeded B.A. in 1858, after which he left Oscott for the English College at Rome, where he took his degree of D.D., and was ordained priest in Sept., 1863. Shortly afterwards he returned to England, and was given charge of

¹ Burke, *Landed Gentry*.

² *Oscotian*, vii.



THE VERY REV. CANON ACTON, D.D.

the mission of Warwick, which he exchanged for Brewood in 1869. Thence he came to Stafford in December, 1872.

In Oct., 1880, the Very Rev. John Hawksford, D.D.,¹ whose zeal and labour had overwrought his strength, found it necessary, owing to continued indisposition, to resign the presidency of Oscott College ; and the bishop of the diocese, Dr. Ullathorne, called upon Dr. Acton to exchange places with him. Thus, in the following December, Dr. Hawksford took charge of the congregation at Stafford, and Dr. Acton was duly installed president of his *alma mater*. Dr. Hawksford, son of the late Mr. John Hawksford, of Graiseley Hall, a solicitor in Wolverhampton, who had the honour of being the first Catholic mayor of that town in 1863-4, was admitted into Sedgley Park School in 1844, and was transferred to Oscott in August, 1850,² was ordained priest 19th Dec., 1859, and was retained at the College as a professor till 1868, when he became attached to the Cathedral at Birmingham for two years. In 1870 he returned to Oscott as prefect of studies, and continued

¹ *Oscotian*, vii.

² *Sedgley Park Reg.*, MS.

his professorial duties till his election to the presidency, in succession to Dr. Northcote, in July, 1877. Two years later His Holiness Leo XIII. conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, and in Feb., 1880, he was installed a canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Chad. Towards the close of the latter year he resigned the presidency, and, as we have already seen, came to recruit his health at St. Austin's. Four years later he withdrew from Stafford, to take upon himself the presidency of St. Wilfrid's College, Cotton, the lineal representative of the venerable and time-honoured school at Sedgley Park—an office which long may he continue to grace!

In January, 1884, the Rev. Louis F. Torond came to supply the vacancy at Stafford. He, likewise, was an Oscotian, ordained priest 23rd December, 1866,¹ having previously been a "patriarch," or parlour-boarder, at Sedgley Park School from 1862.² From that time till his appointment to Kidderminster, in 1877, he was attached to St. Chad's Cathedral. From Kidderminster he came to St. Austin's, and after

¹ *Oscotian*, vii.

² *Sedgley Park Reg.*, MS.

-serving this mission for a little over a year, he was transferred to Bloxwich, Walsall, where he still flourishes.

When Dr. Acton was appointed to the presidency of Oscott, he expressed his determination to uphold and secure for the students by every means in his power that moral and intellectual wellbeing which is embodied in the motto above the College porch, *Religioni ac bonis Artibus*; and well did he fulfil his promise! In 1882, by invitation of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, he attended at St. James' Palace, 28th February, to consider the question of the establishment of a Royal College of Music. In 1884 he was elected to the vacancy in the Birmingham Chapter caused by the death of Canon Estcourt. Early in the following year he announced his resignation of the presidency of Oscott, which aroused general expression of regret. Thus in March, 1885, Dr. Acton returned to Stafford, to the great delight of his old congregation, whose affection and respect is the best evidence of his worth.

More needs not; when acknowledged merits reign,
Praise is impertinent, and censure vain.

-- *Atterbury.*

XVI.

Me resonare jubent pietas,
Mors atque voluptas.

One can hardly conclude this panoramic view of the life of the Church in this country, as represented in the history of Stafford mission, without pondering over the inscrutable ways of Divine Providence. There was a time when Englishmen were “non Angli, sed Angeli”. One altar and one creed alone were known throughout the land; truth and piety held sway. Yet the avarice and lust of a despot and his sycophants were permitted to disturb and ultimately change the Faith which Christ came to implant. In the wail of the Elizabethan poet, staunch Richard Verstegan, who suffered imprisonment and exile for that Faith, this so-called reformation, or rending of Christ’s seamless garment, has been thus quaintly portrayed :—

Somtyme the Crosse as sundry recordes tel,
Derying vertue from our Saviour’s death,
Hath had the force the divel to expel,
And by the same confirmèd Christian faith.
But now it seemes, faith hath sustaynèd losse,
Because the divel hath chaste away the crosse.

And now, after three centuries of oppression, by every form of persecution that human ingenuity could devise, what a marvellous change has come over this country! Is it the effect of a new leaven, or rather the return of the prodigal to "the days of our fathers"? The nets of Peter are again let down. Narrow prejudice and extreme ignorance are fast giving place to ingenuousness and a sincere desire for enlightenment. Half a century ago there was hardly a bell in England that could be rung from a Catholic church to call its congregation to Divine worship. Thrice a hundred years intervened ere toll from turret and steeple called to the ancient service—the sole one of old. Now from numberless Catholic churches peal forth sweet chimes, and over the land hundreds and hundreds of bells like St. Austin's daily send forth their summons:—

When mirth and joy are on the wing,	I ring;
To call the folks to church in time,	I chime;
When God requires of man a soul,	I toll.

The gloom is lifting, gleams of pure bright-

ness are spreading. May we not hope, therefore, that our well-loved country is once more to see the splendour of the day, and to rejoice in the radiance of the true Faith in the one fold?

'Tis the old history, Truth without a home,
Despised and slain, then rising from the tomb.

—*Cardinal Newman.*

FINIS.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

FOWLER OF ST. THOMAS'S PRIORY.

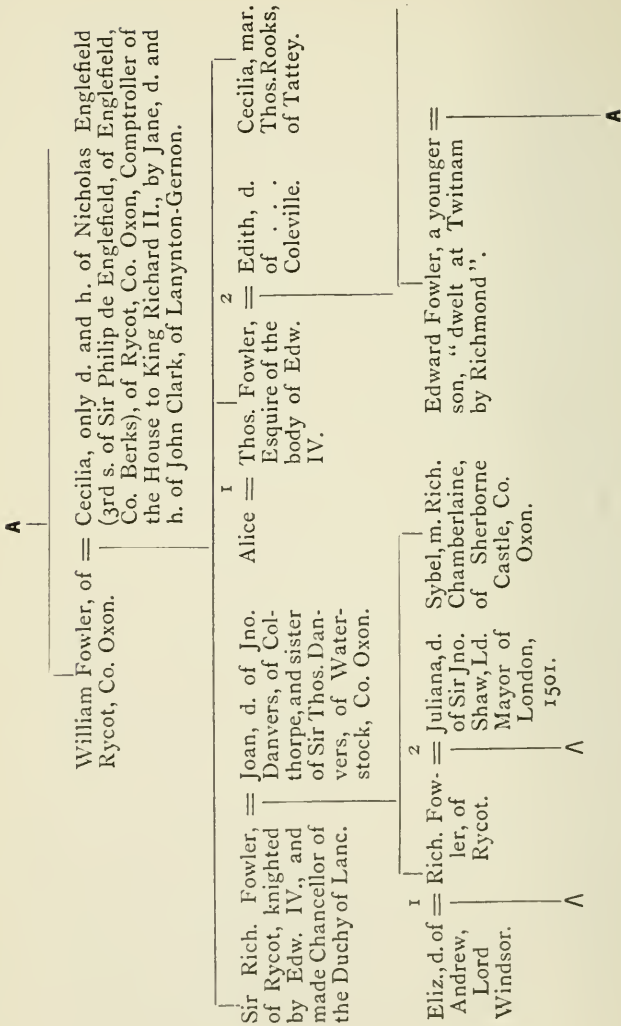
Arms:—Quarterly, 1 and 4, az., on a chev. engr. arg., betw. 3 lions pass.-guardant or, as many crosses moline sa. (Fowler); 2 and 3, erm., on a canton gu., an owl or (Barton, of Barton Hartshorne, Bucks).

Crest:—In a ducal coronet or, an owl rising arg. (Barton).

Authorities:—*Heraldic Visitations of Staffordshire*, by H. Sydney Grazebrook, Esq., vol. v., pt. 2, William Salt Archaeological Soc.: *Diaries of the Eng. Colleges at Rome, Valladolid, and Douay*; *Burke's Commoners*, under *Fowler of Pendeford*; *Harl. Soc., Visit. of Oxon*; *Palmer, Obit. Notices*, O.P.; *Payne, Cath. Nonjurors*; *Payne, Records of Eng. Catholics*; etc., etc.

JOHN FOWLER, of Foxley, Co. Bucks, descended = . . . d. and h. of . . . Loveday.

from Sir Richard Fowler, of Foxley, who accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion to the Holy Land in 1190, and maintained at his own expense a body of English bowmen, all his own tenants, to serve in the Holy Wars. At the siege of Acre, or Ptolemais, by extraordinary care and vigilance, Sir Richard baffled a night attempt of the infidels to surprise the Christian camp. In reward of these eminent services, his royal master knighted him in the field, and commanded that his crest, a hand and lure, be changed to a vigilant owl.



A

Roger Fowler, of = Isabel, d. of William Lee, of Morpeth, Northumberland,
 Broomhill, Co. Norfolk, Treasurer of Berwick, and sister and co-h. of Rowland Lee, a dau.
 folk, engaged in the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, who died 24th or 27th o. s. p.
 Scotch wars, and ob. Jan., 1543. Her mother was Isabel, d. and h. of Sir
 temp. Henry VIII. Andrew Trollope, of Thornley, Co. Durham.

1. Rowland Fowler, of = Margt., d. of John 3. Wm. Fowler, of Harnage = Mary, d. of John
 Broomhill. Bradshaw, of Grange, Co. Salop. Blythe, Esq., M.D.

^
à quo

Fowlers of Harnage
 Grange, Baronets.

George Fowler, of = . . . d. of . . . 4. James Fowler, of Pende- = Cath., d. of Robert
 Broomhill, eld. son. Montfort, of . . . ford, Co. Stafford, ob. 21st Moreton, of
 Bryan Fowler, 2nd son. Co. Norfolk. Feb., 1584. Haughton, Co.
 Salop.

Walter Fowler, Esq., of = Margt., d. of Thos.
 Pendeford, æt. 29, ad motr. Burton, Esq., of
 patr. ob. Jan., 1646. Longner, Co.
 Salop.

^
à quo

Fowlers of Pendeford.

A

Fowlers of Broomhill.

A

2. Bryan Fowler, who became possessed of St. Thomas' Priory, Stafford, as his share of the estates of his uncle, Bishop Lee. Bur. at Baswich, 1587. He was frequently imprisoned for recusancy.
3. Frances, mar. Thos. Cansfield, Esq., of Cansfield, Co. Lanc.
4. Anne, mar. Wm. Montfort, Esq., of Kingshurst.
5. Doro., mar. Sampson Walker, of Weston-on-Trent, Co. Staff.
6. Jane, d. and h. of John Hanmer, Esq., of Bettfield, Co. Flint, younger son of Sir Thomas Hanmer, Knt., of Hanmer Hall, (ancestor of the baronets), by Jane, d. of Sir Randolph Brereton, Knt., of Malpas, Co. Chester.
7. Thomas Fowler, o. s. p.
8. Joyce, mar. Edward Onslow, s. of Humphrey Onslow, by Margt. Wrottesley.
9. Alice, mar. . . . Bradshaw, of Chester.
10. Anne, mar. Geoffrey Thorne.
11. Martha, mar. Thos. Skrimshire, Esq., of Orslow, Co. Staff.
12. Margt., mar. Edw. Lane.
13. Cassandra, mar. John Stone, of Walsall.
14. Jane, mar. Rich. Day.
15. Isabel, probably Sister Dorothy, O. S. Brid., who ob. at Syon Convent, Lisbon, 27th Oct., 1655.

A

1. Walter Fowler, Esq., = Mary, d. of Ralph Sheldon, Esq., of Beoley, Co. Worcester, by Anne, d. of Sir Robt. Throckmorton, Knt.

1. Bryan Fowler, died at Naples in 1583, æt. 3.

3. Ralph Fowler, adm. a convictor at the Eng. Coll., Rome, 19th Oct., 1623, æt. circa 35, under the *alias* of Brian; left the college 25th Feb., 1625.

4. Fr. William Fowler, O.P., nat. Bettsfield, 1591; adm. St. Alban's Coll., Valladolid, 16th Nov., 1609, æt. 18, under *alias* of Stapleton; ob. at St. Thomas's Priory, 24th May, 1662.

I

Anne, d. of Sir = 2. Edward Fowler, Esq., of St. Thomas' Priory, and Bettsfield. Nat. at Bettsfield, but chiefly brought up at St. Thomas's; studied 3 yrs. at Oxford, then went to Rome, where adm.

A

2. Rev. John Fowler, born at St. Thomas's Priory. Admitted Eng. Coll., Rome, under the *alias* of Fris. Geoffrey, 4th May, 1604, æt. 34, having previously studied at Oxford in the house of Master Case, and under the same tutor at Gloucester Hall, and subsequently travelled abroad with his brother Walter and family; ord. sub-deacon and deacon Feb., 1605, but left the college on account of ill-health 11th May following for Belgium, where probably ordained priest or died.

3. Bryan Fowler, gent. Bur. at Baswich 2nd June, 1616.

2

= Doro, d. of Thos. Eyre, Esq., of Hassop Hall, Co. Derby. 1. Anne, mar. John Draycot, Esq., Draycot and Paynsley Hall, Co. Stafford.

B

A	<p>Mary Jero- mima, mar . . . Godfrey, of . . . Co. Norfolk.</p>	B	<p>Eng. Coll. 23rd May, 1603, æt. 19, under <i>alias</i> of Blake, apparently with intention of becoming a priest. He is stated in the College Diary to have left 4th May, 1604, in consequence of a brother's death, not recorded in the pedigree.</p>
A	<p>2. Edward Fowler, bapt. at Baswich 31st March, 1622, and bur. there 28th Apr., 1622.</p>	B	<p>1. Grace, mar. Richard Canning, Esq., of Foxcote, Co. Warwick, and was mother of Fr. John Canning, <i>alias</i> Fowler, O.P., and of Rev. William Canning, <i>alias</i> Fowler; now represented by Philip John Canning Howard, Esq., of Foxcote and Corby Castle.</p> <p>2. Anne, mar. Richard Lacon, Esq., of Linley, Co. Salop.</p> <p>3. Mary, spr.; will pr. at London in 1649 by Richard Canning, her brother- in-law.</p>
A	<p>1. Walter Fowler, Esq., of St. Thomas's Priory and Betts- field. Bapt. at Baswich 7th Oct., 1620; bur. there 10th March, 1683-4; will dated 4th March, 1683-4; pr. at London 9th May, 1684, wherein he describes himself as "a true member of the Roman Catholic Church," and he "renounced from his heart all errors</p>	B	<p>= Constantia, d. of Sir Walter Aston, of Tixall, first Baron Aston, of Forfar, in Scotland. She was bur. at Baswich 29th March, 1664. Her father was made Knight of the Bath at the coronation of James I.; created a baronet in 1611;</p>

2. Frances, mar. Peter
Giffard, Esq., of
Chillington, Co.
Stafford.

3. Mary.

and novelties by her rejected". He took an active part in the civil wars on the king's side, being seen "often with his sword by his side and his pole-axe in his hand. And when the Moorland men came against Sir Francis Wortley, he [a witness] saw Mr. Fowler ride forth of Stafford, having a buff coat and armour upon it, with a head-piece, sword, and pistol. And further, this deponent saw Mr. Fowler, together with Sir Francis Wortley and others, charge the said Moorlanders."—*Royalist Composition Papers*. His name appears in the list of intended Knights of the Royal Oak, the annual value of his estate being assessed at £1500.

1. Walter Fowler, Esq., of St. Thomas's Priory and Bettfield; æt. 18, temp. visit. Dugdale 4th April, 1663; will dated 6th Feb., 1695; pr. at London 28th May, 1697, by which his lands and manors were bequeathed to his brother William and his heirs; ob. s. p. in London, and bur. in Covent Garden Church, "near his vertuous and devout friend, Mr. John Austen".—*Monu. at Baswich*.

= Mary, d. and co-h. (with her sister Bridget, wife of Sir James Simeon, Bart.) of Walter Heveningham, of Aston Hall, near Stone, Co. Stafford, by Mary, d. of Rich. Middlemore, Esq., of Edgebaston, Co. Warwick. She was bur. at Baswich 18th Dec., 1694.

A sent ambassador into Spain to negotiate a marriage between Charles, Prince of Wales, and the Infanta in 1619; and created a Scotch peer, by the title of Baron Aston of Forfar, in 1627. He was again sent ambassador to Spain in 1635, and returned in 1638. Her mother, Gertrude, dau. of Sir Thomas Sadler, of Standon Lordship, Co. Herts, eventually became the heiress of that family.

2. Edw. Fowler, ob. young.
1. Constantia, ob. inf.
3. Gertrude, spr., an invalid, bur. at Baswich 22nd Feb., 1699-1700.
4. Constantia, spr., bur. at Baswich 1st Sept., 1666.
5. Mary, spr., bur. at Baswich 20th Jan., 1675.

- A 3. William Fowler, Esq., of St. Thomas's Priory and Bettsfield, last male representative of the family; ob. 24th Jan., 1716-17, *since prole*. He left two wills, dated respectively 1712 and 1715, the latter of which being suppressed for a time, the former was proved in March, 1716, by which the estates were bequeathed to his niece, Cath. Betham, and her husband, who assumed the name of Fowler. Upon the discovery of the later will of 1715, the testator's nephew, Thos. Grove, was granted letters of administration on 1st Dec., 1729; and after a long Chancery suit, followed by an appeal to the House of Lords, it was determined, in 1733, that the estates rested equally in the representatives of the testator's two sisters, Dorothy Grove and Magdalen Cassey.
4. Bryan Fowler, ob. young.
6. Francis Fowler, ob. young.
5. Thomas Fowler, ob. 15th March, = Elizabeth, d. of . . . Clarke. After her husband's decease 1710-11. she resided at Wolverhampton, where she died, but was bur. at Baswich 17th Feb., 1727-28. Administration of her effects was granted 17th March, 1727, to her nephew, Charles Clarke, Esq., of Newark-on-Trent, her next of kin.
- Walter Fowler, ob. young.
- Thomas Fowler, ob. a student at Paris, adm. of his effects being granted to his mother in 1712.

A

2. Dorothy Fowler, = John Grove, = 6. Magdalen Fowler, = . . . Cassey, Esq., of Appleby, Co.
 co-heiress. Esq. Gloucester, descended from Sir
 John Cassey, chief baron.

Thos. Grove, of Bre-
 wood, Co. Stafford,
 gent; Cath. non-
 juror, 1717; subse-
 quently of Wor-
 cester. Will dated
 24th June, 1730; pr.
 14th Nov., 1730.
 Claimed a moiety of
 the Fowler estates,
 but died before his
 case was finally
 established.

= Rebecca, d. of Ed-
 mund Adys, Esq.,
 of Lyde Arundel,
 Co. Hereford, and
 of Durrance, par-
 ish of Upton-War-
 ren, Co. Worces-
 ter, by Anne, d. of
 . . . Wylde, of Dur-
 rance, Catholic
 nonjuror, 1717.

1. Mary, mar.
 . . . Mitcham,
 and had two
 daughters,
 Mary Anne
 and Rachel.
2. Gertrude, m.
 . . . Bro-
 grave.
3. Doro., mar.
 Edmund Ed-
 wards.

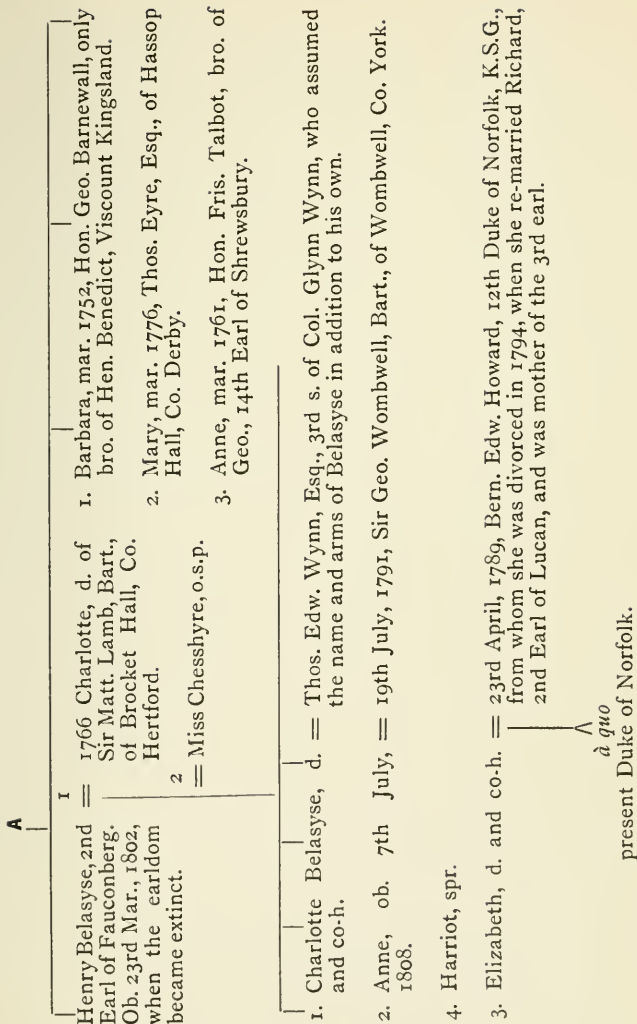
Kath. Cassey, =
 only d. and h.
 Bur. at Bas-
 wich 17th
 Sept., 1725.

= John Betham, Esq.,
 of Rowington, Co.
 Warwick, eld. son
 of Richard Betham,
 Esq., of Rowington
 (by his wife Mary),
 a Catholic nonjuror
 in 1717. Under the
 first will of William
 Fowler, Esq., John
 Betham entered into
 possession of the St.
 Thomas's Priory and
 other Fowler estates,
 and thereupon as-
 sumed the surname
 of Fowler. He was
 bur. at Baswich 23rd
 Nov., 1719.

A

B

<p>1. Rebecca Grove, = eventual sole heiress to her father.</p> <p>2. Gertrude, spr., vixit 1696.</p> <p>3. Mary, spr., vix. 1696.</p>	<p>Richard Fitzgerald, an Irish barrister, of Little Island, Co. Waterford, eld. s. and h. of Lieut.-Col. Nicholas Fitzgerald, M.P. for Waterford, descended from the Earls of Kildare, who was slain in the service of James II. at the battle of the Boyne, 1st July, 1690. Richard Fitz- gerald established his wife's claim to a moiety of the Fowler estates, in the case of "Fauconberg <i>v.</i> Fitzgerald". Dying <i>sine prole</i>, he bequeathed the manor of Pendleton, near Salford, Co. Lan- caster, and certain other Fowler estates in Staffor- shire, to his relatives, the Fitzgeralds, who still re- tain possession.</p>
<p>Kath. Fowler, = d. and h.</p>	<p>5th Aug., 1726, Thomas Belaysse, 4th Viscount Fauconberg, who took possession of the Fowler estates under the first will of William Fowler, but had to re- linquish a moiety to Mr. Fitz- gerald upon the decision in his favour by the House of Lords in 1733. Visct. Fauconberg then conformed to the Anglican Es- tablishment out of vexation, and on 15th June, 1756, was created Earl Fauconberg of Newborough, Co. York. In pique of his loss, he sold St. Thomas's Priory and estate to the notorious Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, shortly after the decision of the House of Lords in 1733. His lordship crept back to the Church on his death-bed, and died 4th Feb., 1774.</p>



APPENDIX B.

CLERGY SERVING STAFFORD SINCE THE SO-CALLED REFORMATION.

Missioners or Rectors. ¹	Assistant Priests,	Residence.	From.	To.
Sir Robert Parton.....	Stafford {	temp. Queens Mary and Eliz.	} 1592
Ven. Robert Sutton.....	"	circa 1578	{ martyrdom, July 27, 1587
Ven. Wm. Southerne	Priory	" 1612	{ martyrdom, April 30, 1618
Thos. Fisher, <i>alias</i> Ashton	"	" 1618	1622
Dom. Fris. Forster, O.S.B. (Probably a Benedictine)	Castle	.....	Death, June 4, 1631
Fr. Wm. Fowler, O.P.....	"	1631	1644
John Mainwaring, <i>alias</i> Grosvenor	Priory	circa 1622	Death, July 24, 1662
	"	temp. civil wars	

¹ The head priests were not rectors, properly so called, till after the Diocesan Synod of 4th May, 1858.

Missioners or Rectors.	Bp. and Chaplains.	Residence.	From.	To.
Daniel Fitter.....	.....	Priory	circa 1654	Death, Feb. 4, 1700 ¹
William Pegg .....	.....	"	1700	" Nov. 8, 1711
	<i>Bp. Geo. Wilham,</i>	"	1703	1716
	<i>V.A.M.D.²</i>	"	1703	1712
	<i>Stephen Boves</i>	"	circa 1709	circa 1715
	<i>Rich. Hitchmough...</i>	"	1703	1716
Thos. Berington	Other young priests	"	1711	1720
Simon Berington .....	.....	"	1720	1733
Richard Palin .....	.....	Stafford	1733	
	.....	Dearnsdale	circa 1740	Death, Dec. 8, 1750
John Wilson .....	.....	Stafford	1750	1754
George Beeston .....	.....	Tixall	1754	Death, Mar. 9, 1766
Thos. Barneby .....	.....	Stafford	1766	
George Beeston.....	.....	Tixall	.....	Death, July, 1783
John Corne .....	.....	Stafford	1783	1784
James Appleton .....	.....	Stafford	1784	1804
L'Abbé Henri Le Sage .....	.....	Tixall	July 27, 1804	Death, Mar. 22, 1813
Thomas Price .....	.....	Stafford	March, 1813	Sept., 1813
	.....		Sept. 24, 1813	Death, June 15, 1831

¹ The MS. obits of his nephew, Peter Cross, say he died Feb. 6, *æt.* 73.
² Transferred to the Northern Vicariate.

St. Thomas's Priory.

Rectors and Assistants at Stafford.	From.	To.
Edward Huddleston..... Fris. Kerril Amherst ¹ <i>John P. Dowling</i> Born Co. Kilkenny. Educ. St. Kyran's Coll., Kilkenny; Oscott, Aug., 1851, till ordin., June 10, 1854; St. Anne's, Birmingham, 1854-6: retn'd., 1859; blt. ch., and still there.	Aug. 11, 1831 Sept., 1856 Dec., 1856	Sept., 1856 June 25, 1858 Nov., 1859
John Wyse..... Mich. O'Sullivan..... <i>Clement Isaac Harris</i> Born Hamstall Ridware, Stafford, 1835. Educated Sedgley Park, Jan., 1853, to July, 1854; Carlow, July, 1854, to Mar., 1860; ordin., Apr. 15, 1860; St. Anne's, Birmingham, Oct., 1863, to June, 1868; Tunstall, July, 1868, to Dec., 1882; Har- vington, Worc., Jan., 1883, to date.	June 25, 1858 Nov. 10, 1859 April, 1860	Oct. 28, 1859 Nov., 1866 Sept., 1863
<i>James O'Sullivan</i> Educ. Sedgley Park, 1852 to 1855; Oscott, Aug., 1855, till ordin., Dec. 19, 1863; Brailes, 1864 to 1865; Dudley, 1865 till death, Nov. 18, 1865.	Dec., 1863	1864

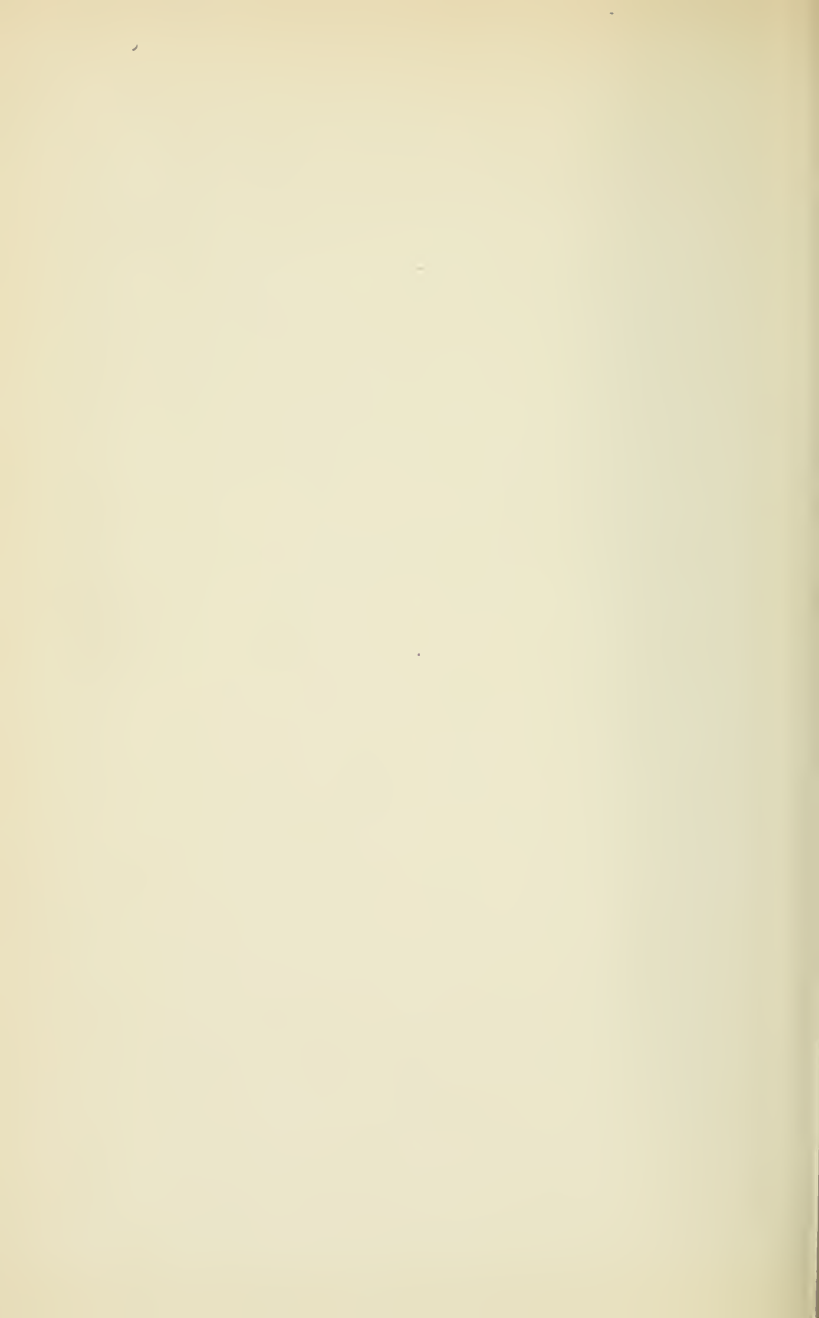
¹ First Missionary Rector. Promoted to See of Northampton.

Rectors and Assistants at Stafford.	From.	To.
<i>John Day</i> Educ. Old Hall; Oscott, Aug. to Christmas, 1856; ordin., Dec. 12, 1856; Snow Hill, Wolver- hampton, 1856 to 1858; Sedgley, 1858 to 1861; invalidated.	.....	.....
<i>Augustus P. Bethell</i> Educ. Brighton College, 1847 to 1849; tutor, 1850; Oscott, Apr., 1851, to 1855; Dublin, 1855 to 1858; Eng. Coll., Rome, 1859 to 1860; Oratory, Edg- baston, 1860 to 1863; ordin., Feb. 28, 1863; Norwood, 1864 to 1865; Chislehurst, 1865 to 1867; Petworth, 1867 to 1871; Sydenham, 1871 to 1878; Anerley, 1878 to date; invalidated; Canon of Southwark.	Advent, 1863	Corp. Christi, 1864
<i>John Stringfellow</i> Educ. Oscott, 1857, till ordin., March 31, 1866; Caverswall, 1869 to 1874; Longton, 1874 to date.	1866	1869

Rectors and Assistants at Stafford.	From.	To.
John Fanning <i>Philip Kavanagh</i> Native Co. Kilkenny. Educ. Sedgley Park, 1850-1; Oscott, Aug., 1851, till ordin., Apr. 1, 1854; Avon Dassett, 1854 to 1855; Brewood, 1855 to 1858; SS. Peter and Paul, Wolverhampton, 1857 to 1865; St. Peter's, Birmingham, 1865 to 1867; Henley, 1870 to 1871; St. Patrick's, Liverpool, 1876 till death, Jan. 23, 1883.	Nov., 1866 1867	Mar., 1871 Dec., 1870
James Nary <i>James Russell</i> Oldbury, 1872 to 1873; Sedgley, 1873 to 1874; St. Anne's, Birmingham, 1875 to 1876; died at Dublin.	Mar. 11, 1871 "	Jan. 1, 1873 Mids., 1872
<i>Michael Barry</i> Native Co. Limerick; returned to Archdiocese of Cashel.	Mids., 1872	Jan., 1873
Edward Charles Acton, D.D. <i>George Smith</i> Educ. Oscott, Aug., 1859, till ordin., Apr. 11, 1868; St. Anne's, Birmingham, 1868 to 1873; Prefect at St. Wilfrid's Coll., 1873 to 1880; Swynnerton, 1880 to date.	Jan. 1, 1873 Jan. 6, 1873	Oct., 1880 Sept. 29, 1873

Rectors and Assistants at Stafford.	From.	To.
<i>Andrew Condon</i> Native Waterford; returned to Diocese of Waterford.	Sept. 29, 1873	Sept. 29, 1875
<i>John F. Flynn</i> Educ. Yvetôt; ordin., Dec. 19, 1874; Haunton, 1876 to 1877; Burton-on-Trent, 1877 to date.	Sept., 1875	Oct., 1876
<i>Bernard Lloyd</i> Educ. St. Bernard's Seminary; ordin., Oct. 29, 1876; Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1879 to 1880; Stockton-on-Tees, etc., etc., till 1888; Campden, 1888 to date.	Nov., 1876	Nov., 1878
<i>Alfred Hall</i> Educ. Sedgley Park, 1867; St. Bernard's Semin.; ordin., July 25, 1877; Maryvale, 1877 to 1878; Kidderminster, 1884 to 1885; Haunton, 1885 to 1886; Blackmore Park, 1886 to 1887; Eccleshall, 1887 to 1892; Warwick, 1892 to date.	Nov., 1878	Jan. 5, 1884
John Hawksford, D.D.	Dec., 1880	Dec., 1883
Louis F. Torond	Jan. 5, 1884	Mar., 1885
<i>James O'Hanlon</i> Educ. Oscott, Sept., 1880, till ordin., Dec. 22, 1883.	"	date
Edward Charles Acton, D.D. ...	Mar. 25, 1885	date

vive vafeque.



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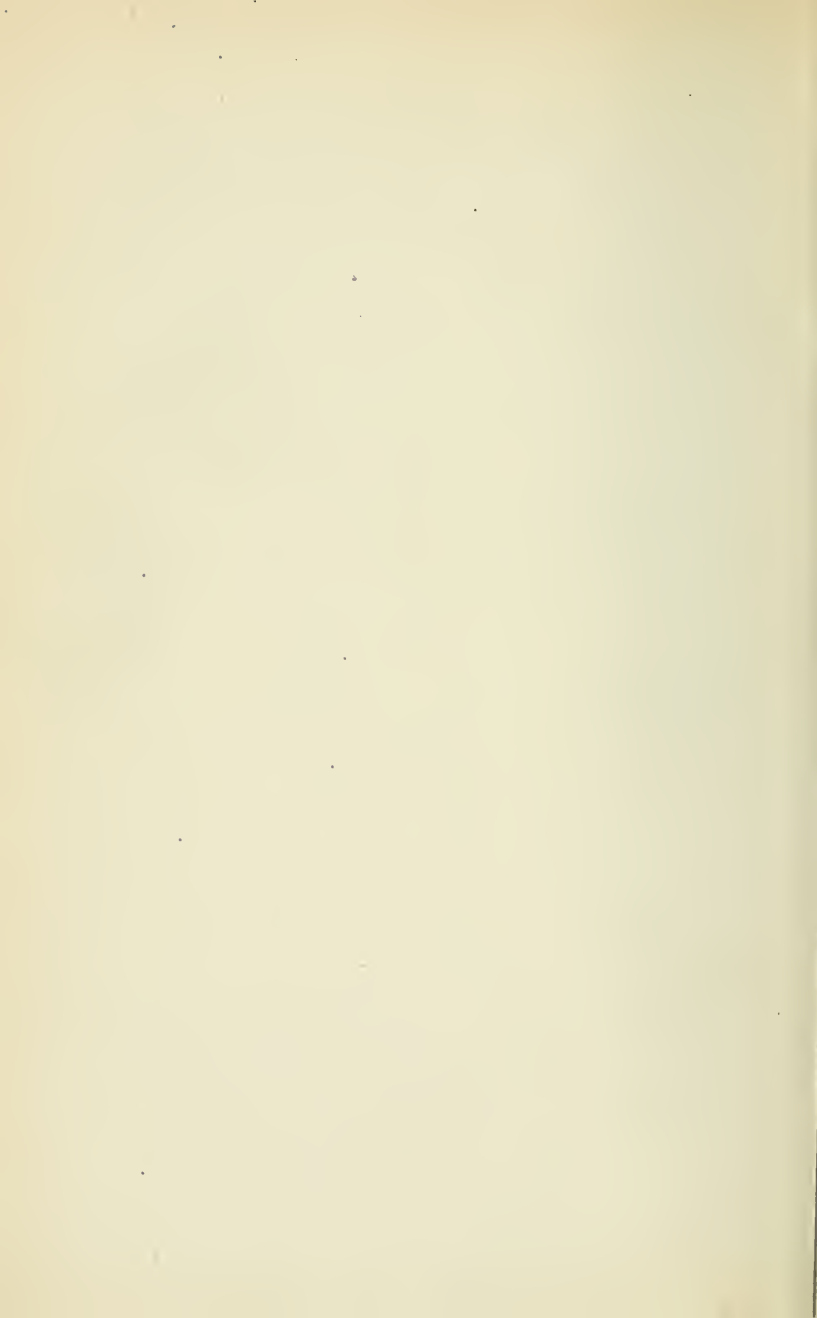
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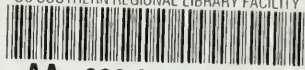
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