English Martyrs

FEBRUARY

Our Martyr Priests.

For slaughter from the first prepared
Like victims for the altar reared,
Hunted, proscribed, in dungeons laid,
To kith and kind opprobrious made,

Betrayed to torture, bound in chains,
Hung, bowel-drawn in cruel pains,
Their hearts they offered to their Lord,
Torn from their breasts by hands abhorred;
And all their blood as water spilt,
In ransom of their country's guilt,
Too glad to pour their lives away,
In hope of England's better day,
And of the great reward to come,
Hail, holy flowers of martyrdom!
All hail, O consecrated band,
Dear lovers of your native land!

Caswall.

Saint Thomas of Canterbury.

Through one tender Flow'rets blooming,
Flowers unnumbered sprang to birth;
Flower of flowers, our flesh assuming,
Christ with flowers bedecked the earth.

Peerless Flower like life bestoweth
On a thousand flowers beside,
Martyrs, whom Christ's grace foreknoweth,
In His strength their foes defied.

These the world in hatred beareth,
But Christ's love o'ercomes its frown;
Find with these the Bridegroom shareth
Shining robe and roseate crown.

For His Passion-marks are graven
Deeply on these victors blest ;—
After fire and sword, the haven—
Faith and love have won their rest.

'Mid these flowers, of chiefest beauty
Blooms Saint Thomas, England's flower :
Pastor, true to pastoral duty,
Strong in words and deeds of power.

Still by healing grace this flower
Blooms most brightly ; though concealed
From our fleshly sight, his power
Is by miracles revealed.

Yet and ever, grace on grace
Do the sick and dying trace
From his virtue excellent. Alleluia! D.B.C.

February 1.

Ven. Henry Morse, S.J., priest, convert; martyred at Tyburn, 1645.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting? . . Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I. Corinthians xv, 54, 57.

Come, my sweetest Jesu, that I may now be inseparably united to Thee in time and in eternity! Welcome ropes, hurdles, gibbets, knives and butchery! Welcome for the love of Jesus my Saviour.

Ven. Henry Morse's dying words.

February 2.

See that you refuse him not that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke upon earth, much more shall not we, that turn away from him that speaketh to us from heaven.

Hebrews xii. 25.

I am come hither to die for my religion, for that religion which is professed by the Catholic Roman Church, founded by Christ, established by the Apostles, propagated through all ages by an hierarchy always visible to this day, grounded on the testimonies of Holy Scriptures; upheld by the authority of Fathers and Councils, out of which, in fine, there can be no hopes of salvation.

Ven. Henry Morse at Tyburn.

Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.

Last words of Ven. John Roberts, O.S.B., at Tyburn.

February 3.

Blessed John Nelson, S.J. priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1578.

They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the Sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy. *Hebrews xi. 37-38.*

Being put in mind with what alacrity and joy of mind many thousand martyrs had suffered the most exquisite torments for Christ's sake, and that they had never complained nor shrunk thereat; he answered, that this same thought came often to His mind, and afforded him such comfort, that he no ways doubted but that he should find and feel the like grace of God's consolation in the midst of his agony. *Blessed John Nelson.*

February 4.

God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. S. James iv. 6.

Ven. John Speed was a very simple, ignorant man. At his coming forth of the prison towards execution, he went with a glad and cheerful countenance, and gave money to the Catholic prisoners, requesting them to pray for him, whereby it appeared that he rejoiced in the cause he was condemned for, and was desirous to die in the unity of that fellowship unto whose devout prayers he commended himself so freely, although his simplicity were such that he knew not in more evident and express manner how to make a public expression of the same at his execution. *Father Holtby, S.J.*

February 5.

Some of you they will put to death, and you shall be hated by all men for My Name's sake, but a hair of your head shall not perish. *S. Luke xxi. 16,18.*

Christ's own Martyrs, valiant cohort,
White-robed and palmiferous throng,
Ye that neath the heavenly altar
Cry "How long, O Lord; how long?"
Tell us how the fiery struggle
Ended in the victor song ?

'Twas His care that watched beside us,
His right arm that brought us through;
So the fiercer waxed our torture,
His bright love the sweeter grew;
Till the men that killed the body
Had no more that they could do. J. M. Neale,

February 6.

Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, for we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come. *Hebrews xiii. 13, 14.*

Jesu by Thy Grace, sweeten so our crosses
That we never faint, falle, or cast them downe;
Make us well content to sustain our losses,
Whearby Thou dost work us a blissful crowne;
Yet, good Lord Jesus, lay no more on us
Than thoue geevest strength to beare,
Beare we see wee must, yet in Thee we trust
To beare all with gladsome cheare;
Geeve us what Thou biddest, and bidde what Thou pleasest
Fullie we ourselves resigne;
In Thy Church protect us, when we sinne correct us,
Not our owne wee are but Thine.

William Blundell of Little Crosby Hall, 1560-1638,

February 7.

Blessed Thomas Sherwood, layman ; martyred at Tyburn, 1578.

De profundis clamavi ad Te Domine.
Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee O Lord!

Psalm cxxix.

The holy youth was harassed by repeated torturings, in order that overcome with pain, he might confess where he had heard Mass, but no racking, no cross examination could make him name any one. In all his torments his constant cry was “Lord Jesus, I, am not worthy to suffer these things for Thee, much less to receive those rewards which Thou hast promised to such as confess Thee.”

February 8.

Waters have flowed over my head . , . . I have called upon Thy name, O Lord, from the lowest pit.
Lamentations iii. 54, 55.

Young Thomas Sherwood, for protesting on the rack that "The Pope and he alone is God's general Vicar on earth ” and for keeping to his brave profession, was cast down into a frightful dungeon in the Tower. This is described as a cell below high water mark and totally dark. As the tide flowed, innumerable rats were driven through the orifices of the walls into the dungeon.

February 9.

To all that are at Rome the beloved of God, called to be Saints : Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, I give thanks to my God, through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is spoken of in the whole world. *Romans i. 7,8.*

We must believe in the Church of Rome and the institutions of the same, and believing so we are true Christian men. *Blessed John Forest, O.F.M.*

Schism is a voluntary departure from the Unity of the Catholic Roman Faith.
Blessed John Nelson, S.J.

I call those alone Catholics, who follow the Faith of the Holy, Catholic, Roman Church.
Ven. George Hapdock.

February 10.

S. Scholastica, O.S.B. Abbess, sister of S. Benedict.

Behold My Beloved speaketh to me : Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come.
Canticles ii. 10.

O sweetest Lord, lend me the wings
Of faith and perfect love,
That I may fly from earthly things
And mount to those above.

For there is joy both true and fast
And no cause to lament .....
But here is toil, both first and last,
And cause oft to repent.

My wearied wings, sweet Jesus, mark,
And when Thou thinkest best
Stretch forth Thy hand out of the ark
And take me to Thy rest.

Ven. Nicholas Postgate.

February 11.

Ven. Francis Levison, priest, O.F.M. ; starved to death in prison at Worcester, 1679.

And when Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry. And the tempter said to Him: If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. *S. Matthew iv. 2, 4.*

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
S. Matthew v. 6.

I live, but such a life as ever dies;
I die, but such a death as never ends;
My death to end my dying life denies,
And life my living death no whit amends.

Thus still I die, yet still I do remain;
My living death by dying life is fed;
Grace more than nature keeps my heart alive
Whose idle hopes and vain desires are Dead.

Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.

February 12.

VV. James Fenn, widower, priest.
George Haydock, priest.
Thomas Hemerford, priest, convert.
John Munden, priest.
John Nutter, priest, convert.
All martyred at Tyburn, 1584.

My father and my mother have left me : but the Lord hath taken me up.

Psalm xxvi. 10.

On the way from the Tower to Tyburn the hurdle was stopped for a moment to let the Venerable James Fenn bid farewell to his little daughter Frances. It was a moving sight to see the little girl take leave of him with many tears, while the holy priest, who had long been dead to all things in this world, looked on her with a calm and serene countenance, and lifting up his pinioned hands as well as he could, gave her tenderly his last blessing.

February 13.

Tristitia vestra vertetur in gaudium. (Your sorrow shall be turned into joy).

S. John, xvi, 20. Motto of Haydock Family.

The Venerable George Haydock carved on the very walls of his dungeon the triumphant inscription "Gregory XIII, Supreme Head on earth of the whole Catholic Church," and stoutly refused, when commanded to erase what he had written. And there it was found more than a hundred years later by another holy confessor of the Faith, together with the Haydock motto—

"Tristitia vestra vertetur in gaudium. Alleluia."

February 14.

Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.

S. Matthew v. 11, 12.

When the Venerable John Munden returned to the Tower after his condemnation, some who had not been in the Court that day, perceiving his extraordinary joy, supposing he had been acquitted, congratulated with him; but he soon gave them to understand that his joy proceeded from other sort of principles than those of flesh and blood. This joy continued with him till his happy death.

February 15.

My bonds are made manifest in Christ, in all the Court, and in all other places: and many of the brethren in the Lord, growing confident by my bands, are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear. *Philippians i. 13, 14.*

One day, when a certain priest was to be put in irons, and the gaolers were fitting them to his legs and hands, the Venerable John Nutter hearing of it, thrust himself into the company, and laying hold of the fetters, kissed them with great veneration; and when, in the way of ridiculing him, they asked him if he would not kiss the manacles too, "Yes," said he, "very willingly," and so he did with great respect, saying that these irons were sanctified by the touch of the bodies of God's Servants who had been bound by them.

February 16.

A certain Man made a great supper and invited many, and He sent His servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. *S. Luke xiv. 16, 17.*

To begin the day well and to end it better, it is necessary to hear Holy Mass every morning, *S. Philip Neri,*

We, who are the children of the martyrs, have the treasure of the Holy Mass constantly at our disposal; we have to run no risks, to fear no dangers, in assisting at these Adorable Mysteries day by day. Are we thankful enough for the grace thus lavishly bestowed upon us? Do we use the Mass as we should: eagerly, thankfully, gratefully? Surely we should never allow a day to pass on which by our own fault we have not assisted at this Divine Sacrifice !

February 17.

Ven. William Richardson, priest ; martyred at Tyburn, 1603.

Though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well rewarded, because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself, *Wisdom iii. 4, 5.*

Ah, happy who
That sequestered secret knew,
How sweeter than bee-haunted dells
The bloomy blood of martyrs smells!
Who did upon the scaffold's bed
The ceremonial steel between you, wed
With God's grave proxy, high and reverend Death,
Or felt about your neck, sweetly
(While the dull horde
Saw but the unrelenting cord),
The Bridegroom's arm, and that long kiss
That kissed away your breath, and claimed you His. *Francis Thompson.*

February 18.

Ven. William Harrington, priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1594.
Ven. John Pibush, priest; martyred at S. Thomas' Waterings, 1601.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace; of him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign. The voice of thy Watchmen ; they have lifted up their voice, they shall praise together: for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall convert Sion. *Isaias lii. 7, 8.*

So long as you have hands and halters to hang us, you shall not want priests. We were three hundred in England; you have put to death one hundred; other two hundred are left. When they are gone, two hundred more are ready to come in their places; and for my part I hope my death will do more good than ever my life would have done.

Ven, William Barrington to Topcliffe at the gallows.

February 19.

We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, unless perhaps concerning the law of his God. *Daniel vi. 5.*

When the Venerable John Pibush asked of the Judge, whether the treason they laid to his charge was anything else but his priesthood and the exercise of his priestly office, the Judge answered, they had nought else to lay against him. Then the holy man replied, "If to be a priest be to be a traitor, then am I one. I thank God for it."

February 20.

Ven. Thomas Pormort, priest; martyred in S. Paul's Churchyard, 1592.

In nothing be ye terrified by the adversaries: which to them is a cause of perdition, but to you of salvation, and this from God. Philippians i. 28.

We must remember . . . that the time of this world is most brief, during which the impious persecutors vent their fury on their holy victims, since the memory of the one becomes forthwith glorious in the sight of God and man, while the infamy of the others is infinite and everlasting.

Cardinal Allen

February 21.

Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J. priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1591.

Others were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. *Hebrews xi. 35.*

"How great a preferment," he repeated again and again upon the hurdle, "how great a preferment is this for so base a servant!"

For my most miserable and with all tears to be pitied country, I pray the light of truth, whereby the darkness of ignorance being dispelled, it may learn in and above all things to praise God, and seek its eternal good in the right way. *Spoken on the scaffold.*

February 22.

All thy children shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be the peace of thy children.
Isaias liv. 13.

It seems to me that I see the beginnings of a religious life set on foot in England, of which we now sow the seeds with tears, that others hereafter may, with joy, carry in the Sheaves to the heavenly granaries.
Ven. Robert Southwell.

February 23.

A glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.
Ephesians v. 27.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin.
Yet had she oft been chased with horns and hounds
And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
Aimed at her heart; was often forced to fly,
And doomed to death, though fated not to die.
Not so her young, whose vocal blood arose
And cried for pardon on their perjured foes.
Their fate was fruitful, and the sanguine seed,
Endued with souls, increased the sacred breed.
So captive Israel multiplied in chains,
A numerous exile, and enjoyed her pains.
With grief and gladness mixed, their mother viewed
Her martyred offspring, and their race renewed;
Their corps to perish, but their kind to last,
So much the deathless plant the dying fruit surpassed.
Dryden.

February 24.

From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is Sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation. *Malachias i. 11.*

What shall we say of those devoted priests who suffered here in England? To celebrate Holy Mass was to them the chief joy of life, the very end of their existence . . . . These were the Martyrs of the Holy Mass, the victims that were offered on the altar of sacrifice together with the Spotless Victim of Calvary; these were they who came through great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb; these who offered their oblations, the flesh and the blood upon the altar of the Lord their God.

February 25.

With all thy soul fear the Lord and reverence His priests. With all thy strength love Him that made thee; and forsake not His ministers. Honour God with all thy soul, and give honour to the priests, and purify thyself with thy alms. *Ecclesiasticus vii. 31-33.*

The glories of martyrdom were by no means confined to priests; the same fierce statutes that condemned God's ministers struck at the faithful laymen and women who received them into their houses. It was death to harbour a priest or to relieve his wants, death to receive his absolution, death to assist at his Mass . . . Nay, indeed, the pious lady who had furnished the altar and embroidered the vestments, here also paid the penalty with her life.

February 26.

Ven. Robert Drury, priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1607.

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.
S. Matthew xxii. 21.

They declared that they were most willing to obey the Queen at all times, and in all cases, as far as any Christian priests, either in this or in any other Christian kingdom are bound by the Divine law and the Christian religion to obey their temporal prince. They declared, nevertheless, that they acknowledged and confessed the Bishop of Rome to be the successor of S. Peter, with no less ample authority and spiritual jurisdiction over all Christians than that Apostle had; and that they would be obedient to His Holiness in all things, as far as they were bound by the Divine law.

Declaration signed by Ven. Robert Drury. and twelve other priests.

February 27.

VV. Mark Barkworth, priest, O.S.B. convert;
Roger Hilcock, priest, S.J.;
Anne Line, widow.
All martyred at Tyburn, 1601.

Suscipe me, Domine, secundum eloquium Tuum, et vivam, et non confundas me ab expectatione mea.
*(O stablish me according to thy word, that I may live; * and let me not be disappointed of my hope.)*
Psalm cxviii. 116.

Ad majorem Dei gloriam.

As the Venerable Mark Barkworth was going from Rome to be admitted into the English College at Valladolid, the devil appeared to him in the shape of a hermit, and dissuaded him from that course of life. After, S. Benet appeared to him, comforted Him, counselled him to proceed, and foretold him the great good that Order should do in England, and that he should die a martyr, exhorting him when he came to that glorious conflict, to die in his habit.

February 28.

This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm cxvii. 24.

Come in before His presence with exceeding great joy.

Psalm xcix. 1.

A man of extraordinary humility and exquisite patience, piety and charity, whose example is worthy to be taken as a rule of holy living.

Spoken of Ven. Roger Filcock by Ven. Mark Barkworth.

When they were put up into the cart, Mr. Barkworth, with a joyful accent, sung those words of the Royal Prophet, "haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus," and Mr. Pilcock went on in the same tone, "et laetemur in ea."

February 29.

And the Sunamitess said: I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often passeth by us. Let us therefore make him a little chamber . . . .. . that when he cometh to us he may abide there. And Eliseus said: Behold thou hast diligently served us in all things, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? . . wilt thou that I speak to the King. IV. Kings iv. 9-13. (2 Kings iv. 9-13)

I am sentenced to die for harbouring a Catholic priest ; and so far I am from repenting for having so done, that I wish with all my soul that where I have entertained one, I could have entertained a thousand.

Words of Ven. Anne Line, at Tyburn.

She told her confessor, some years before her death, that Mr. Thomson, "Blakeburn," a former confessor of hers, who ended his days by martyrdom in 1586, had promised her, that if God should make him worthy of that glorious end, he would pray for her, that she might obtain the like happiness.