

ST. WANDERLUST

THE season will shortly be coming round when, in sympathy with the resurrection of life around, some ebullience in the blood moves all sorts of people to be on the wander. Some will be lacing on nailed shoes and gripping sticks to get up into the hills; some will be fitting out small boats to be away to sea; some will be throwing handbags into dicky's and luggage racks, or climbing, armed with a day's rations, into charabancs. But one and all are moved by the same pleasantly impatient spirit: Wanderlust.

This brings to our mind one of the Church's 'Canonizations,' one of the triumphs of that triumphant humanism by which it admits even the life we share with the animals to partake in acts of worship which it teaches have an eternal significance. It has canonized Wanderlust by the institution of pilgrimages to shrines. He is now 'Saint Wanderlust.' He has lesser forms in the everyday desire to be up and moving, if it be only up the hill or about the town, which the Church has canonized by such institutions as processions, or the round of the Stations in Rome, or the Stations of the Cross up the hill at Pantasaph—with the view at the top. He has one supreme form in the Spring Wanderlust, which the poet noted when he said that spring was the time of pilgrimages. So he has been taught the way to shrines.

There are, of course, things much more profound that lie behind the institution of shrines than this harnessing of a mere stirring in the blood. Sometimes, as at Lourdes, they are of immediate divine institution. Sometimes even when of human institution they are the occasion of the granting of many favours, even of the working of miracles, as is apparently the case at Carfin; and hence of a great increase of devotion. Humanly instituted they are primarily a product of the practice of honouring Saints and relics and images, based on the doctrines of the Communion of Saints, the interdependent union of body and soul, and the Resurrection of the Body. Since, however, these things can be learnt equally well perhaps in our own parish churches

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with their Mass, liturgy, instructions, statues and relics, we will remember some less supernatural, but nevertheless important, aspects of shrines; among which let the first be (at this time of year) that they rope in this vagrant spirit, which must take one side, on the Church's side in the battle. And for this reason:

The immense energy expended in tripping and hiking in England to-day, the hordes of people that go about looking dazedly at innumerable things and taking away with them little of permanent value to their minds, let alone their virtues, suggest that there is in England a great opportunity for Apostolate by shrines. Our Lady of Walsingham seems to have determined to show us this. Only the atmosphere of pilgrimages will have to be very different from that of trips. Something will have to be recovered of the spirit of such places as the Slipper Chapel near Walsingham, where even kings took off their shoes to approach the shrine, barefoot, over the hot white road.

When we have shrines to 'Harness Hiking and Tripping' they will help to bring other elements in our nature into the direct line of our choice of Christ. Traditionalism for instance. How often do we hear the expression: 'The religion of my fathers' used as synonymous for a thoroughly sound religion. If we can remember (and shrines can remind us) our continuity with the England of Alfred, Bede and Alcuin, Anselm, Becket and More; of Glastonbury, Fountains, and Rievaulx, of the Walsingham pilgrimage, and the Canterbury pilgrimage; of monk and Mass-priest and clerk; of Lady Day and Allhalloween and Mothering Sunday, and many another of the real things that once corresponded to our household words; then it will root our religion in the soily part of our nature—which is a part given us to use. It will also help to save England the anomaly of 'Honouring its father while dishonouring its grandfather,' which is the effect of a view of history foreshortened at the Reformation. Perhaps Mr. *Punch* was on this trail when he recently complimented the leader of a Walsingham pilgrimage.

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Closely connected with this is the effect shrines might have in the production of an indigenous expression of piety. It seems desirable that the customs and imagery of devotions, to be most realized, should be most natural and homely. Shrines might help to attain this by resurrecting English Saints and devotions. In Richard Rolle, Dame Julian, and Walter Hilton we may find a piety more congenially expressed than in imagery brought from overseas, even from saints overseas. For instance, when Richard Rolle says that although many holy people kneel austere-ly at their prayers, for his part he likes to sit, many Englishmen will recognize a fellow feeling, something almost too English to be true! This may seem a small matter, but it is not altogether without its importance; there is at least a grain of truth in the idea of an 'English Way.'

Then, again, wayside crosses, oratories and pilgrimages would break down the unnatural distinction of religious worship from ordinary life. Getting to heaven is a task too hard to divide the Sunday from the week. These things would help, too, to temper that English reserve in matters of religion which, a thing good in itself, is apt to become a mere paralysing self-consciousness. In connection with shrines often appears that pleasant expansiveness of the Saints; that mannerly demonstration with which David danced before the Ark; with which Christ stood on the Temple steps and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink . . . as the scripture saith out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water'; with which St. Paul boasted and with which Saints of all ages lead the many. It is well that Catholicism should come more into the public life of the people in a country where it is, at the present moment, more truly free than, perhaps, in any other in the world—Catholic countries included; and which is growing unmistakeably more friendly to it. At such places as Carfin and Walsingham, Catholics meet and discover their strength and unity, even their popularity, in some worthy devotion.

This suggests a last thought. Our responsibility in this matter grows upon us when we consider that Britain being

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by nature what Catholicism is by principle—traditionalist—may well be a stronghold for Catholicism in the struggle which seems inevitable between the Church and the forces now massing against it, among which are the new assessment of moral values, Continental Masonry, Dogmatic Atheism, Communism and the other forms of the Absolute State. There is here an array of forces which has caused the Holy Father, who is not given to exaggeration, to say that the world is in a worse state than it has been since the flood. *Qui potest capere, capiat*. Under these circumstances it is comforting to remember the growing friendliness of this country towards Catholicism, and their common traditionalism. Even the appointment of an Anglican monk to a West End parish is not without its significance. But, above all: Hail Mary of Walsingham.

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