

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE  
SAVOY COLLEGE, LONDON.

The subjoined account makes no pretence at finality. It deals with an interesting feature in Jesuit London of the seventeenth century which is wrapped in many mysteries. With his article the author has sent us a series of questions regarding the College to which he, like ourselves, is desirous of knowing the answer.—ED.

\* \* \*

1. Had the College any endowment? It would seem difficult for it to carry on and give education gratis without some large revenue. The income, including alms, of the whole College of St. Ignatius at this date seems to have been only about £300. There is mention in Foley (Vol. V. p. 268) of the king allotting an annual grant of about £350 from the royal treasury for the *smaller* college which had been opened in the city, adjoining the Bavarian Embassy. From this it might seem probable that he had also made a proportionate grant for the Savoy.

2. Is there a copy of the Prospectus extant? It would be interesting to get the details and schedule of hours of classes, etc.

3. It is rather difficult to account for the reported success of the teaching when there were so few masters and so many boys.

\* \* \*

Upon his accession to the throne of England in February, 1685, James II. immediately made a public profession of his faith, and though he could not yet effect a general restoration of Catholic worship, the openness with which he practised his religion considerably alarmed his Protestant subjects.

It was not until April 4th, 1687, that the Declaration of Indulgence was issued, which not only suspended all penal laws in religious matters, but abrogated all religious tests, allowed public worship to all men, and

*A Contribution to the History of Savoy College.* 139

forbade interference with any religious assembly. However, soon after the King's accession, not only did priests and Religious venture to appear once more in public, but, in spite of the penal laws and the bigotry still rampant, already in the previous year (1686) Catholic chapels and schools had been opened throughout England, and in London especially the Benedictines were established at St. James's, the Franciscans in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the Carmelites in another part of the city.

Fr. John Keynes, S.J., the Provincial, now considered that the time was opportune for establishing our Fathers in community in one house, where they would be a mutual help to each other, and would be the better able to visit their flocks. Hitherto they had been scattered in private families and were deprived of the benefits of community life. The Provincial finally decided to establish a college in that part of the town, lying on the banks of the Thames, known as the Savoy.

This place occupied the site of a famous hospital, originally built by Peter, Earl of Savoy and Richmond, in 1245, as a chapel and cell for the "Fratres de Monte Jovis"<sup>1</sup> of Hornchurch Priory, by Havering-at-the-Bower, in Essex.

Having been overthrown by the rebels of Kent in 1381 it was rebuilt in 1505 by Henry VII. as a hospital dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and endowed for one hundred poor people.

The hospital was suppressed by Edward VI. shortly before his death, but was later established and endowed by Queen Mary I. in the fifth year of her reign, her maids of honour furnishing it with necessaries.

The hospital seems to have been suppressed again, for at the time of its conversion into a College part of the building was in use as a barracks for soldiers, and continued to be so used. For this reason and the fact

<sup>1</sup> Monks of the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard in Savoy. A temple dedicated to Jupiter stood on the pass near the Hospital. Havering, in Essex, was "cella et parcella hospitalis S. Bernardi de Monte, in Sabaudia, ultra mare."—Dugdale's "Monasticon" (Ellis), VI. 652.

that it enjoyed the rights of sanctuary the Savoy appeared an appropriate place, and one affording protection in case of any sudden outbreak on the part of the fickle and turbulent populace.

How the Society acquired this building,—whether it was given them by the King, or purchased by the Provincial—is not quite clear.

Dr. Oliver<sup>1</sup> says that it "was granted by King James II. to the English Jesuits for a College." In a letter written by a Father of the Society at Liège to a brother Religious at Fribourg on February 2, 1687, occurs the following passage: "There are many houses bought in the Savoy, near Somerset House, which is the Queen Dowager's Palace, towards the erecting of the first college in London, for about eighteen thousand florins."<sup>2</sup>

And Foley writes: "The Fr. Provincial therefore purchased such portion of this large and ancient building as extended to the river's bank, and was washed by it at high tide."<sup>3</sup>

The site of the future College was duly approved and confirmed at a Provincial Congregation held about January, 1687, and the necessary alterations and adaptations were immediately commenced.

The situation itself was ideal. Lying in a bend of the river which was continually covered with wherries and other small craft it commanded a view of Westminster Bridge, the Hall, and the Abbey, whilst on the opposite shore lay the open fields.

On May 24, 1687, the eve of Whit-Sunday, the new College was ready to receive the community, and the following Fathers entered into residence: John Keynes, Provincial; William Mumford, Socius to the Provincial; Charles Poulton (alias Palmer), Rector; Edmund Green, Minister; Edward Tidder, Procurator of the Province; John Pearsall, Preacher to the King; Edward

<sup>1</sup> Collections towards illustrating the biography of the Scotch, English, and Irish Members, S.J. London, 1845, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Foley, Records, Vol. V. p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Foley, Records, Vol. V. p. 264.

Humberston, and Andrew Poulton, the future masters of the school; and three Lay-brothers.

The chapel was opened the following day, Whit-Sunday, and though small in size, it was crowded for the services.

Prospectuses of the College had already been issued announcing that Latin and Greek would be taught, that the education would be gratis, and that boys would be admitted irrespective of religion or condition. It was further pointed out that they would by no means be required to abandon or change their religion. On the first day of schools (June 2, 1687) about 250 boys presented themselves, very many of them being Protestants, who soon became sincerely attached to the school. At first the boys were arranged in two divisions or classes, there being but two masters, who, as we can well imagine, found it a somewhat laborious and difficult task to reduce such a number into any sort of order. As the number daily increased a third master, Fr. Thomas Parker, was sent over from Belgium.

Thus schools proceeded until the summer vacation, and not without satisfactory results.

At the opening of schools in the September following, a fourth master had been appointed in the person of Mr. Richard Plowden, S.J., from St. Omers. New class rooms had been built, and the boys now numbering about four hundred were arranged in four classes.

The progress of the students afforded the highest gratification to their parents, greatly conciliating the good will of the latter towards the Fathers. Instruction in Christian Doctrine was given twice a week in the classes, and many of the Protestant boys recounted to their parents and friends at home what they had heard at school concerning the Catholic religion. This soon caused them to inquire into the truth, and many of them were thus led to embrace the true faith.

The College chapel soon became too small to accommodate the large numbers who came for Mass and the other services. Some adjoining houses were therefore bought, which, after the removal of the upper

stories, were annexed to the original chapel. A large and handsome chapel was thus provided which was elaborately decorated through the generosity of the King and Queen and other Catholics. The King himself gave about £800 for this purpose; the Queen presented two handsome silver lamps; whilst other donors provided altar plate, vestments, paintings, and other sacred ornaments.

In an ancient account book in the Province Archives is an entry of £50, a gift by Mrs. Jones to the "Savoy," through the Provincial, Fr. Keynes.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in spite of the extensions the chapel scarcely sufficed to accommodate the congregations who thronged to the sermons.

Besides the usual Sunday morning sermons, controversial lectures were delivered at Vespers, which were productive of much good both among Catholics and Protestants. Confessions and Communion were numerous, and two or three times a week catechetical instructions were given in the chapel, which resulted in many conversions. In addition to the work in the church and school frequent disputations were held with Protestant ministers, sometimes in private, occasionally in public before large audiences.

A printing press was also set up, from which various controversial works were published in which the Protestants were led to discover how they had been deceived in the idea of the Catholic religion as it had been presented to them by their ministers.

That the King himself took a deep interest in the progress of the new College is further evidenced by the fact that he was pleased to honour it with a visit, inspecting nearly the entire house, with the chapel and schools.

Three of the boys on this occasion delivered short complimentary addresses in Latin, Greek, and English.

Such was the progress made by the Savoy College boys during the year that they very soon outstripped those attending the various Protestant schools; and on meeting boys from the latter schools they would fre-

<sup>1</sup> Foley, Records, Vol. V. p. 266 (note).

quently challenge them to a public scholastic contest.

Moreover they had begun to write Latin with elegance, an acquirement altogether unheard of among the others, and their accuracy in translating Greek from various authors earned them great applause from a large and distinguished gathering assembled on the occasion of a public examination held during the course of the year.

That some of the boys were destined for a University career seems evident from the following entry in Luttrell's Diary (January, 1688): "The scholars bred up under Poulton the Jesuit, at the Savoy, are to be elected King's Scholars, and sent to Maudlin College in Oxford."

And Macaulay writes<sup>1</sup>: "It was not improbable that the new academy in the Savoy might, under royal patronage, prove a formidable rival to the great foundations of Eton, Westminster and Winchester. Indeed, soon after the school was opened the classes consisted of four hundred boys, about half of whom were Protestants."

These beginnings indeed augured well for the career of the new College, but it could hardly be supposed that the good work being carried on by the Fathers in London should continue without raising alarm and opposition. The Protestants were embittered at the number of those who were becoming reconciled to the true faith, and they were jealous of the Jesuit scholars who in a few months became more proficient in studies than their own sons. The sermons and controversial lectures delivered in the chapel, and the controversial books published at the press added fuel to their envy. They had begun to realize that they could make no reply but mere false assertions, threats, and blusterings. But now they went a step further by resorting to seditious meetings and circulating revolutionary tracts far and wide, with a view to compelling the "Papistical" King, as they termed him, to expel the Jesuits from England as they had been recently expelled from France.

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, "History of England," Vol. I. p. 598 (London, 1866).

By these and similar means they excited the people against the Jesuits, and further by frequent and secret conversations with the officers of the army, these bigots enkindled within them a hatred of the very name of Catholic.

And now to make matters still worse the invasion of William of Orange was imminent. The horrors of religious persecution were once more to be enacted. When it became known that the Prince was already fully equipped for the invasion, waiting only for a favourable wind to set sail for England, the populace became more bold, and began to insult and attack the Catholics with violence. This state of affairs reached its culmination when, after the Prince's landing, James; finding himself abandoned alike by army and nobility, was compelled to retire in all haste to France. The popular fury now became uncontrolled. On December 13, 1688, riots broke out in the streets of London. The houses of Catholics were violently torn down or plundered, whilst Catholic churches and chapels were almost everywhere destroyed by fire or levelled to the ground.

The Savoy chapel would undoubtedly have shared the same fate had not the fear of the neighbouring barracks overawed the rioters. The chapel itself may have been closed some short time before this date, for the King, on account of some riotous assemblages, had ordered all the Catholic chapels to be closed as early as November 9th (1688).<sup>1</sup>

However, with the outbreak of the December riots the Jesuit Fathers were compelled either to retire into hiding places or to fly to localities where they were unknown.

Fr. Charles Poulton, Rector of the Savoy, was arrested near Faversham on December 16, 1688, and thrust into gaol there. From there he was conveyed to London and imprisoned in Newgate, where after more than twelve months, worn out by the miseries of his dismal cell, he died on February 7, 1690, at the age of 74.

<sup>1</sup>Lingard, "History of England," XIV. p. 272 (London, 1831).