

A Forgotten Foundation.

In these days when new Monasteries are springing up all over England, there is a danger of older foundations being, in a measure, forgotten.

Visitors to Broadway will find the Catholic Church on the Stratford-Leamington road, on the outskirts of that most beautiful of Cotswold Villages. The Church has little of even passing interest, either as to age or design, its surroundings are unpretentious—a few perches of carefully tended God's acre—yet there are few shrines in the Midlands, round which such hopes were once centred. For some eighty years it has been in the possession of the Passionists, and, with a brief interruption, the home of their Novices.

This Church however, whose hundredth birthday has just come and gone, was not without a special interest, even before the coming of the Passionists.

Benedictine Foundation.

It was in the year 1828 that the Very Reverend Augustine Birdsall, President General of the English Benedictines, sought to establish a foundation in these remote surroundings, for the surviving remnant of the Lamspring Community. These monks had been driven out of their stately Abbey of Saints Denis and Adrian in Hanover some twenty-five years previously, and had found refuge, during that period, in different Monasteries of the Order in England.

A generous legacy of £1500 left for "a such-like purpose" by a certain Mr. John Taylor, Gentleman, of Cheltenham, enabled Father Birdsall and his devoted monks to realise their project. Six years later, the Church and monastery were completed—a portion of the latter has since been rebuilt, and

part of the original building now serves as the novitiate of St. Saviour's Retreat.

Though such a humble foundation could, in no way be compared in appointments with such educational establishments as Downside, Stonyhurst or Ampleforth, we find it ambitiously listed with these in advertising columns as "The German College, Broadway, Worcestershire, conducted by the gentlemen formerly of Lamspring in Germany," and offering a no less formidable curriculum to its students, with even a few additional inducements.

Mission in Broadway.

Thus, the first Catholic Mission in these parts, since the so called Reformation, came into being. Financial difficulties, however, hampered its development. The College failed through lack of funds, but not before its founder, the V. Reverend Augustine Birdsall, was laid to rest under the walls of the Church he had raised with such zeal, to God's honour. The once hopeful Foundation was consequently abandoned; the monks were again obliged to seek refuge in the Monasteries of their Order, until 40 years later, we find the few surviving Members of the Broadway Community joining forces with their Brethren at Fort Augustus.

The Broadway Foundation of humble beginnings, and of such short duration, may well rejoice in the claim of having been the only canonical link between the historic Abbey of SS. Denis and Adrian, (one of the principal centres of Benedictine activity for well nigh two centuries), and that of St. Benedict's ever prospering Foundation at Fort Augustus.

For ten years, after the withdrawal of the Benedictines, the little Church could only be served once a month by a member of the same Order from Cheltenham.

Coming of Passionists.

In 1850 the Passionists, seeking a quiet home for their Novices, purchased the Church and Monastery from the Benedictines. The choice was a happy one for even their Founder's

love of solitude could not have discovered in this England of his dreams, for whose conversion he had prayed for over fifty years, a more fitting site for those destined to put on the armour of his spirit. Here indeed was a "Retreat" after the heart of St. Paul of the Cross.

The Laity's Directory of 1834 describes Broadway as "a village between Oxford and Worcester, through which three London coaches pass daily." The Broadway of 1850 was more solitary; the stage coach had all but gone, its service being more than half curtailed. Indeed, no better description of Broadway in those early days could be found than that given by one who has grown old in its life and service, "a village asleep in the sun."

In the heart of this solitude were founded the hopes of the infant Province of the Congregation introduced into England by Venerable Father Dominic Barberi. It may be worthy of record that the association of Father Dominic with his great convert, John Henry Newman, is expressed in the many volumes which grace the library of St. Saviour's, tokens of gratitude, bestowed by Newman through the years, in memory of him who had such "a great part in my own Conversion, and in that of others."

Though called to his reward, almost a year before his Brethren entered into possession of their Broadway Retreat, Father Dominic's interest in it's welfare was signalled by his two-fold apparition to the then Rector, in the Spring of 1851.

Novitiate.

It is not surprising that the Foundation thus blest should have prospered. Soon the Monastery, but so short a time before unoccupied, was filled with fervent Novices, prepared to renounce all earthly joys, to lead the mortified life of the Passionist.

The monastery bell tolled out its call to prayer by night and day, while within "the tender plants" as St. Paul of the

Cross loved to call his Novices, were zealously trained, that in due season they might yield in labour and sacrifice fruit worthy of their high vocation.

It was while kneeling in this Church of St. Saviour's that the Hon. Charles Pakenham, nephew of the Duke of Wellington, (later known to the world as Father Paul Mary, first Rector of St. Paul's, Mount Argus, Dublin,) when staying with his uncle General Lygon at Springhill, received the gift of Faith, and later the gift of Vocation. He had left much, but counted not the cost: indeed, in the divinely accurate balancing of things, he was heard to exclaim:— "How little I have given up to gain so much?" His joy at his new found fortune was shared by none other than the illustrious Henry Manning, later Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. At the close of a retreat made at Broadway, the latter on being introduced to Pakenham expressed his holy envy at the peace found by this young Guardsman in renouncing the joys of this world for a life of solitude and sacrifice.

Building of School.

While Monastic life flourished in these peaceful surroundings, no effort was spared on the flock in the extensive parish committed to the Fathers' charge. A school must be provided at all costs. The building of this School was the very first work undertaken by the Passionists on their arrival. It was a task of much difficulty as the financial pressure of those early days was unceasing, but the present school with its inscription: "To the Virgin Mother of God," and dated 1851, bears witness to the zeal and self denial of those Pioneers, who gave Catholic education to the children of Broadway for over three quarters of a century.

Under the energetic guidance of the first Rector of St. Saviours, Father Vincent Grotti, the new Order soon made its presence felt in the parish of Broadway and the surrounding districts. The Catholic community quickly increased from an

original forty to almost two hundred, while the number of converts made in those early years—as many as sixteen names being inscribed in one day in a treasured Register of 1854—gives evidence of the untiring efforts of those early Passionists to win back to the Faith the inhabitants of this ancient "Maryland," for such was the name given to this hallowed district in the Doomsday book.

The Appeal.

This leaflet, "A Forgotten Foundation," might well have borrowed its title from a hundred others throughout the land. It is in the human order of things in which the present counts as all important to gloss over past efforts or to take too readily for granted the fruits of past labours and self-sacrifice. True, those pioneers of the Faith, of a century or even less ago, have entered into their reward, but ours it is to treasure with love and gratitude the memory of their long years of patient toil.

Thirty years have passed since an appeal was made for the repair and redecoration of the Church. Alterations have been found necessary: its hundred year old fabric needs attention, and much more must be done to make it a fitting home for the Blessed Sacrament.

To Friends of the Passionists, for whom Broadway is more than a name, this appeal, we hope, will be strengthened by the fact that many Sons of St. Paul of the Cross, to one or other of whom they may owe more than money can ever repay, were schooled in the Charity of Christ within the walls of this Broadway Foundation, and made the sacrifice of their lives in holy profession, before the Altar in this village Church.

It is therefore, with much confidence, that the present Rector appeals through this leaflet, to a wider public than is possible in this small Parish, for the funds necessary to renew and beautify the unpretentious Dwelling, raised with so much effort in darker days, to house Him, who had been so long without a Home in Broadway.