

On the Passing of the Trees.

(By Our Curbstone Observer.)

ACH morning, of late, as I came along Craig street, in front of the Champ de Mars, I noticed the gradual vanishing of the tall, stately trees that for generations have stood like sentinels over the departed days of old Montreal. The earliest picture of Montreal that I have ever seen represented the field, or level space of ground, behind the present Court House and City Hall, and long recognized under the title of the Champ de Mars. When that drawing was made the popular trees were there; and it seems to me that in any illustration of our city we could readily recognize the military parade ground by that regular rank of lofty trees, that stood like giant grenadiers looking down on the place where smaller soldiers were wont to perform their evolutions. The last day I came that way there were only four remaining of those trees; and it was evident that the workmen were preparing to lop off their branches and to finally tear up their very roots. I suppose that the intention is to beautify that ground, and to render it more attractive. The sodding of the steep incline towards Craig street would indicate some such purpose. I do not know whether any value has been placed upon the trees, or whether the wood is to be used to relieve the strain for fuel that seems to be on the increase; but whatever the reason, the fact remains that the old and lordly poplars of the Champ de Mars will soon have disappeared.

PARTICULAR FEELINGS.—Amongst all the daily evidences of advancement along the highway of progress, I confess a certain feeling of melancholy whenever I read of or see the disappearing of old landmarks. It makes me conjure up memories of days that are no more and of faces that I shall never see again. I remember, a great many years ago, the delight with which I followed my father along "Little St. James street" as he took me to witness a review of soldiers on the Champ de Mars. It was a very warm and beautiful day in June, and we took our stand at the fence that then separated the parade ground from the descent to the street. I recollect how, in that vast concourse of citizens, we clung to the shade of the tall poplars behind us. As if it were yesterday I see the regiment marching into the field from the east end, and I remember how I compared, in my own mind, the thousands of spectators that had gathered upon the long steps opposite to the Romans of old in the Flavian Amphitheatre, tier above tier, cheering the gladiators in the arena. Not a very wonderful conception for a boy who had just read his first pages of history; but it comes back to me, out of the past, like a phantom of other days, and it was the sight the vanishing trees that awakened the recollection.

THE VANISHED ONES.—As I stood for a moment the other morning, looking up at a workman plying his axe and hewing off the branches of a doomed poplar, I asked myself where were all the hundreds who stood beneath those trees to witness that review in the years long ago. My father, whom I remember the best of all, has long since gone to his eternal rest. Of those whom he met and greeted that forenoon, not one is alive to behold the improvements now being carried on and the cutting down of the familiar trees. Of the scores with whom he shook hands I can only recall a few; but of that few there is not one left to read these lines. The late

Hon. Senator Murphy, then plain Mr. Edward Murphy, of Frothingham and Worman's, was the first we met; and I can well remember how he chatted about the former course of a stream that ran along Craig street in his school days. I thought it a queer story at that time; and I wondered why it was they had ever caused that stream to be converted into a street. I suppose, now, it was for the same reason that they are to-day cutting down the poplar trees. The next person we greeted was the late Mr. M. P. Ryan; and my recollection is of a man, at that time, so closely resembling my own father, that, as they stood side by side, one might have taken them for brothers. As we turned back, after walking half way down the field, we met a slight, tall, elegantly-dressed young man, with peculiar grey eyes, a wealth of black hair, and the merest excuse for a moustache, who bowed to my father and passed on with all the grace of French nobility. He appeared to me to be rather young for a lawyer, and, to tell the truth, I had the impression that he must have been an actor. An actor was then my beau ideal of a great man; and this young man, with his ashen complexion, and his elegant gesture, might have been a Beau Nash, a rising Booth, or a Paris exquisite. As he passed beyond reach of our voices my father said to me: "That man is Mr. Chapleau; I heard him defending Tranchemontagne, and he is the most eloquent speaker I ever heard address a jury." Just as we came out, by the little gate that opened on St. Gabriel street, a tall, clean-shaven, dignified gentleman—one who might have sat for an artist desirous of reproducing the features and exterior of some members of the old noblesse—walked over to us and held a few moments of conversation with my father. As he turned to go away he asked if I were a good boy, and my father said "yes," and added laughingly, "we will make a lawyer of him, I think, and you will not be too hard on him when he comes to plead before you." The tall gentleman touched me on the head, and said: "Don't make a lawyer of him, we have too many lawyers; just have him study civil engineering—there is a great future for that profession in Canada." That gentleman was the late Hon. Mr. Justice Monk.

JUST REMINDERS.—Again, as I stood looking at the cutting down of the trees on the Champ de Mars I thought of these men whom I had first met, as a boy, under their shadows. In commerce, in politics, at the Bar, on the Bench, in whatever spheres they moved, these men made names for themselves; and they, and the men with whom they lived, and fraternized, and struggled, and moved upward and onward through life, are all gone, and have passed from the attention of the great throbbing world of our city, just as the trees are passing—never again to stand erect, never again to point upwards to those around them, never again to attract the gaze of the public as they towered over their surroundings, never again to mark with an appearance of familiarity the scenes that knew them for so many long years and the city whose ground was their native soil and whose scenery and general exterior were marked in a special manner by their presence. Strange memories arose from out the past as I witnessed the passing of the trees; and these memories have their grateful sweetness as well as their mournful bitterness.

been enjoying perfect health of late, and, besides granting numerous audiences has spent several hours every day in the Vatican Gardens. One of the most notable audiences of the week took place on Sunday last, when the Holy Father received Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier, who were charmed with the cordial welcome extended to them by His Holiness. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whom I saw after the audience, expressed the greatest delight and surprise at finding the Holy Father looking well and strong.

"When I visit the Pope," exclaimed

ed Sir Wilfrid, "I come away with the impression that, by some special dispensation of Providence, he is actually getting younger instead of ageing."

On the same day the Holy Father granted a special audience to the newly-appointed Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Mgr. Guidi, who had just been consecrated Archbishop of Stanropolis by Cardinal Rampolla. Before leaving for his destination Mgr. Guidi, whose absence from Rome is likely to be of a protracted nature, will again be received by the Holy Father.

Premier Laurier And the Pope.

A Roman correspondent writes:—Some alarm was caused a couple of days ago by reports as to the Pope's health, wired by Rome correspondents hungering after sensational paragraphs. Needless to say that these alarmist rumors were wholly unfounded, as the Venerable Pontiff has

Catholic Magazines for October

THE "AMERICAN CATHOLIC Quarterly Review" for October contains the usual number of scholarly and philosophical articles on a variety of subjects. It opens with a clever paper on the self-confessed failure of Mr. Herbert Spencer to perform the great task which he set out for himself half a century ago to reconstruct human thought on a purely scientific basis; to fuse all the facts, all the experience, and all the knowledge of all time in one molten mass, and from it fashion a new image of truth; in a word, to solve the riddle of life. Father S. Fitzsimmons, in "The Last Words of an Agnostic," shows how utterly Mr. Spencer has failed in his self-imposed mission. The evidence of the failure is set forth in Mr. Spencer's latest and last book, "Facts and Comments." Father Fitzsimmons handles Mr. Spencer with merciless logic. "Now that the end is not likely to be long postponed," says Mr. Spencer, regarding his own life, "there results an increasing tendency to meditate upon ultimate questions. It is commonly supposed that those who have relinquished the creed of Christendom occupy themselves exclusively with material activities—thinking nothing of the How and Why, of the Whence and the Whither. It may be so with many of the uncultured. In the minds of those intimately known to me the riddle of existence fills spaces far larger than the current conception fills in the minds of men in general." But why are these questions still conundrums with Mr. Spencer? Are they not, as Father Fitzsimmons asks, the problems which he set out to solve for the world? Have we not just seen that when "First Principles" was first given to the world it was pre-faced with the information that it was to "strike down to the profoundest basis of human thought," that it was to deal with "the deepest questions upon which the intellect of man has entered," and that moreover it was to furnish "a knowledge of the truths which it is most important for man to know?" Can it be that such magnificent promises are to fall short of fulfillment? Nay; did not Mr. Spencer himself unhesitatingly tell us that his vast work was to deal with problems which concern "each and all of us more than any other matter whatever?" Did he not inform us that it would "affect us in all our relations?" Did he not assure us that it would, nay, "must determine our conception of the Universe, of Life, of Human Nature" (all of them, too, capitalized), and that it even would and "must influence our ideas of right and wrong?" What then means this "increasing tendency to meditate on ultimate questions?" What means this language about the "riddle of existence?" Has not Mr. Spencer solved those questions for us? Was not this the scope and end of his work? Can it be possible that he has failed to answer them satisfactorily? And can it be that Mr. Spencer at the end of life is still seeking for answers to questions which he started out to solve once and forever for the rest of mankind?

But alas! the truth must be confessed. Upon these all-important questions it is, with the agnostic at last—question, perplexity, doubt, and doubt, perplexity, question. Indeed there is not in history so striking or instructive a tableau as that of Mr. Spencer, the "great philosopher" of evolution and the great founder of agnosticism, at the end of life with the volume "Hell Opened to Christians" in his hands, seeking in the despaired and discarded cred answers to the questions which he spent his life in solving and which nevertheless continue to perplex his last days. Not Prometheus with the vulture pecking at his liver, not Job seated in his royal misery upon a dung hill; not the Prodigal vainly trying to suck life's sustenance from the discarded husks, presents a sadder picture than the "great philosopher" endeavoring in vain to find answers to his questions in the very overfervence of the cred which he so long despised. It seems like another instance of the irony of fate. Of course it would be strange if Mr. Spencer should find the clamors in his mind appeased by the volume he has in hand; for the simple reason that he cannot understand it. He has spent his life in ignoring and depreciating the value of the fundamental doctrines on which the volume is based, to be able now to grasp the meaning of the work.

The Rev. Daniel discusses learnedly on "Pre-Hellenic Writing in Aegaeon," and the other articles are "The Conquest of the Caucasus by Russia," by Donat Sampson; "Jesuits at Court," by M. Stone; "The Sea of Cahel and its Late Archship," by John J. O'Shea; "Native Americanism," by H. J. Desmond; "Spanish Friars in California," by Bryan J. Clinch; and "Education by the State," by Lorenzo J. Markoa.

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