

The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname.)—St. Paclian, 4th Century.

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CATHOLIC COLLEGES SUPERIOR.

Now is the time for parents to decide to send their boys to Catholic colleges. We have said before, and we say again, that no parent can, if conscious of all of his responsibility, entrust his children to the care of non-Catholic institutions.

In many instances they who disregard the warnings of their ecclesiastical superiors on this point do so through contemptible worldly pride. They imagine their boys will mingle with "better people." While many without the fold are anxious to have their offspring enjoy the training as understood by our educators, these poor-fibred ones of the household have never a scruple about placing their children in an atmosphere of indifference. We do not say that the professors of non-Catholic institutions pose as enemies of Catholicity. That is not in fashion. It is not business because colleges must live, but far more reaching in its influence is the complaisant attitude towards all creeds and the association with cultured gentlemen who have their own ideas about the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. This is the danger. It hodes no evil to the inexperienced youth and may hurt him before he is aware of its presence. The very kindness and tolerance may throw him off his guard and transform him into a mushy sentimentalist. The contact with companions who do not see over the rim of the world may blind him to his true interests.

A Catholic indeed may come unscathed from such a college, but he is the exception. We admit that a student may be grounded by them in the knowledge and practice of the amenities of life. But is this the whole duty of a Catholic? What we need is strong faith—obedience and humility in the presence of the Church—a generation that will preach love and truth to those around them. What the world needs is character. You may, as it has been said, dazzle the mind with a thousand brilliant discoveries of natural science; you may open new worlds of knowledge which were never dreamed of before; yet if you have not developed in the soul of the pupil strong habits of virtue which will sustain him in the struggle of life, you have not educated him but only put in his hand a powerful instrument of self-destruction.

WHO ARE THEY?
Now the Catholics who talk about the "better people" being in non-Catholic colleges are victims to narrow-minded prejudice. And some of them are descendants of those who were forbidden to acquire the elements of education at home or abroad, and who, tempted and hunted, kept ever their grip on the supernatural force that has changed the face of the earth. It is a queer phrase—"better people." Who are they? Is man with a bank account or woman who happens to have her name in the society column of the "better people." A man may be a poor and a woman a degenerate however high their standing in social and financial circles. In a democratic country like Canada merit is based on honor and virtue, which may be had in goodly measure by individuals who have neither dollars nor dresses. The "better people" phrase may be on the lips of toadying Catholics, but it is not in the dictionary of any self-respecting Canadian. Moreover, our worldly brethren should not run away with the idea that our colleges cannot boast of students who are in the "better class" category. We have a few of them and it does not cause us undue elation. And should they ever condescend to visit our institutions they may be reassured on this point. But the only college for a Catholic boy is a Catholic college. This is the belief of the parents who understand that their children have been given to them to be made citizens of heaven.

THE BLESSINGS OF POVERTY.

We think it was Andrew Carnegie who wrote a little preachment on the blessings of poverty. Most people thought he was indulging in persiflage—"jollyng" the multitude. Mayhap the serred was penned after exhausting interviews with solicitors for various objects. But at all events the words of the millionaire have fallen on barren ground. Bucket shops thrive of yore, and the philanthropic stock-broker still sends forth his dazzling circulars prom-

ising enormous profits on this or that investment to the oft-duped multitude. The men who are in the fore-front of the financial army loom large in the public eye and their exploits and extravagances are daily chronicled.

It is doubtless all vanity. But it is passing strange that so many are wearing out brain and body in pursuit of it and that we stand cap in hand before those who have it. And it is discouraging to see those who are supposed to be striving after high ideals servilely obsequious before it. We may yet have sufficient culture to understand that the simple things of the world can give enduring happiness. To watch the corn grow and the blossoms set, to draw hard breath over plough-share or spade; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray—these are the things that make men happy. The world's prosperity or adversity depends upon our knowing and teaching these few things; but upon iron, or glass, or electricity, or steam, in no wise. And long years before the lesson of poverty was taught not by a millionaire but by a Man who had nothing but a poor mother and a few fisher folk as friends. Men and women have and do hear His words in mind and keep His example before the world.

WHERE WERE THE PARENTS?

It is an ungracious subject to bring up, but there are some parents hereabouts who seem to have no idea of their responsibility. But a short time ago we noticed at a certain function a few Catholic girls acting in a manner in no wise connotative of the modesty and dignity that are the characteristics of self-respecting womanhood. Now let us admit they were helping to make the function a success. But was it necessary for this to submit to be ogled and talked to by every dudelet? However, they were rated as being very popular, but if they ever get any sense this side of the grave they may discover that a popularity based on an easy manner, and a disposition to make merry with utter strangers, is not a very enviable possession. We said before that these young women place a poor valuation on themselves. We may be narrow-minded and cynical, but if these people could hear how they are rated by the man about town they might believe that we are not unreasonable in this respect. Better keep their eyes on their stand-off sisters who are respected. Also, they should understand that a good man who wants a life companion has no eyes for the simpering and effusive and stylishly dressed specimen of frivolity and empty-headedness. But where were their parents?

THE WORD FROM THE ALTAR.

One cannot fail to notice that too many of us neglect to hear sermons and instructions. Perhaps we have fostered the idea that we have no need of them. For if there be any one idea more prevalent than another in this generation for it is that a man is sufficient to himself and must resort only to other means to guide him. This is not so in other departments. The novice in speculation is inclined to hearken to the counsel of a stock veteran, and the tyro in politics is not unmindful of the advice of those who are burdened with the cares of state. But in religion it is different. Anyone can manufacture a creed and impose it upon a bungling-mind, and even the editor of even the meanest sheet unloads his crude opinions upon his public or spins airy fancies about a morality divorced from dogma. We ourselves have more than once noticed in Canadian journals which pose as fair-minded, rapid utterances on the tendency to outgrow creeds, and flings against the Church. And we have waited, but vainly, for a rejoinder from Catholic laymen. Within the last few years also there has grown up a spirit of what is called "tolerance." Not a word have we to say against it. On the contrary, we are glad that discord and rancour are on the wane, and that religious strife, fomented oftentimes by individuals for selfish ends, is disappearing. But let us be careful that it does not degenerate into cowardice, nor let it close our lips when we should speak even though we may offend good old spineless "prudents." And there are factors, too, at work which tend to enfeeble our virility in things Catholic. We are in many sections of the country connected with non-Catholics by social and business ties, and are more or less subject to their influence. We do not mean to say that this renders us disloyal to the Church, but there is a danger. And this danger is accentuated when we are deficient in

EMPTY PHILOSOPHY.

The Futility of a Great Man's Life Work.

In reading the last chapter of Herbert Spencer's book, "Facts and Comments," entitled "Ultimate Questions," one is impressed with the futility of the life-work of a great man, says Thomas J. Britt, in the St. Louis Mirror, and questions naturally arise. Has he said or done anything conducive to the benefit of mankind? Is the world any better for his having lived? Has the mentality of the race been uplifted by anything he said or written? Has the working of his mighty brain, through long years of study and research, produced anything that tends to make men happier, to nerve them to their daily tasks, or to make their lives more beautiful?

To the writer of this article, the picture presented by this gifted man, standing upon the brink of the Great Unknown, with the one thought uppermost in his mind that the end is very near, and that end, perhaps, nothingness, is truly pathetic. He may look with pity upon the superstitious reverence of the little mother, in her declining years, and sitting beside her hearth with the Bible on her lap, gathering the sweetest solace earth can know from the, to her, inspired pages; but is not he, with all his worldly wisdom, all his greater learning, unsupported by her simple faith, shrinking at life's ending, from the blow that shall hurl him to oblivion, an object more pitiable?

Having abandoned the idea of an afterlife, save the conclusion which the savage draws from the notion suggested by dreams, Mr. Spencer is no nearer a solution of the great enigma of existence than was the original savage who first conceived the thought. And the desire for immortality, so universal and entertained by every class and condition of man, is no more unreasonable, no more impossible with common sense and modern science, than is the idea that the mentality of "man is a specialized and individualized form of that infinite and Eternal Energy which transcends both our knowledge and our imagination, whose elements of death lapse into the Infinite Energy whence they were derived."

Concerning both the outer and the inner world, the same unanswerable questions are forced upon the Christian and Agnostic. Each sees around him a system of order and beauty controlled by a power that transcends his comprehension. The astronomer penetrates the upper air, counts the stars, discovers their size, determines their distances and explains the order of their revolutions. The ordinary man notes the return of the seasons, with the unfolding of bud and blossom, the ripening grain waving in the fields, the maturing fruits, the growth and development of animal life, each unable to explain the origin or the ultimate. The Christian contemplates his mode of terms for expressing that which he cannot explain, to "God" and "Soul." The Agnostic indulges in abstract phrases of "Great Enigma," "Eternal Energy," "The Why," "The Which" and the "Wherefore." Neither, so far as one can see, has much advantage of the other in choice of expression. The Christian endorses his belief into a simple faith in God, and a firm hope of immortality; the Agnostic grips blindly among the material things which surround him in search of something he does not expect to find, and tremble at the thought of the dissolution that shall bring him to nothingness.

The question occurs: which cult is of the greater benefit to mankind? Could the belief entertained by Mr. Spencer, and enunciated in his writings, produce that quality in man which wins the approval of his fellow-man? Is it of a kind that would transform a human being, under stress of circumstances on in great crises, into the hero, willing to sacrifice everything he holds dear, even life itself, to benefit his fellows? Note the effect produced upon the entire country by the simple trusting faith of President McKinley in his last hours upon earth, his firm belief in God, his unyielding hope of immortality. His last words, "They will be done," impressed Christian and Agnostic alike, at least for the time being, with his sincerity. All classes stood with bowed head, business and pleasure being suspended at the time of his funeral, and lips unshed to utter sacred themes, sang, reverently, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Think, also, of the utterances of General Garfield, at the time of the assassination of President Lincoln, when the angry populace was surging in a maelstrom of passion, quelling the turbulent stream with "God reigns and the Government at Washington still lives!" Could anything in the writings of Spencer produce effects such as these?

Negro Priest Extols the Priesthood

An interesting sermon was preached at the Church of St. Benedict the Moor in New York on last Sunday by the Rev. Henry Dorsey, who was ordained by Cardinal Gibbons in the Cathedral at Baltimore last June. After the completion of the Mass, Father Dorsey, in words of burning eloquence, said in part:

"Never till the day of my ordination in the old Cathedral at Baltimore by Cardinal Gibbons, did it become so plain to me that a priest of the Roman Catholic Church is surrounded with a reverence which is overpowering. I shall never forget the scene after the ceremony was finished, thousands of people crowding forward to get my blessing. No longer a question whether I was white or colored, rich or poor, learned or ignorant—simply I was a priest, and as such I had a blessing to impart, and the good, simple people of all grades, classes and colors were anxious to kneel and have me place my hands, as yet moist with the holy oils, on their heads in benediction. The most affecting incident of the day was the kneeling before me of an old white-haired priest—eighty years or more of age—and his kissing my hands after I had given him the blessing."

Father Dorsey was the second negro priest ordained in this country.—New Century.

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

Changes of the Personality of the Author of the Imitation.

The century in which Thomas Haemken of Kempen, commonly known as Thomas a Kempis, saw the light (1380-1471) was the transition period between the medieval and the modern world. The Crusaders had done their work; the Gothic Cathedral had been built; the Miracle Play had ceased to instruct; Thomas of Aquin had put the finishing hand to scholastic philosophy and left it a scientific monument worthy of its genius and the age; Dante had crystallized the faith and science, the fierce hate and the strong love, the poetry, the politics and the theology, the whole spirit of medievalism in his sublime allegory. And now that old order was breaking up, and in the awakening of the new, much anarchy prevailed. In the general crumbling away of institutions, the human intellect seemed bewildered. A groping and a restlessness existed throughout; there was a yearning of men after they knew not what, for the night was upon them and they were impatient for the coming of the dawn. Where were they to seek the light?

ABUSE OF FLOWERS AT FUNERALS.

While we would not, if we could, abate one jot of the respect paid by friends and relatives to the dead, we protest against the growing custom of heaping flowers upon a coffin. As a distinguished writer in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record remarks: "Now it seems the moment death enters a house, or a funeral is ordered for wreaths and bouquets. Every one, near relations or simple acquaintances, is expected to pay the deceased a tribute of flowers. Vanity coming in, every one strives to surpass his neighbor by the size of ostentation of his wreath, taking care to attach a card which shall indicate the giver. The coffin is often hidden beneath the mass of flowers, tokens of so many varied sentiments. The custom seems to have stamped on it a clear expression of the naturalism of our day, and is, so far, anti-Christian. It is a custom intended not to suggest Christian ideas, but to rob death of its best lessons, i. e., its bitterness and penitential side."

In so far as these floral offerings can be said to be a measure of the vanity or the pretentiousness of the living they are admittedly to be condemned, but are they less objectionable when, as we suspect is often the case, they serve as an easy excuse for the avoidance of some more difficult tribute to the memory of the dead? Many a man hesitating whether he must put himself to the inconvenience of going to a funeral makes a cheap compromise, and sends a wreath. And there is a real danger lest this facile service should make men forget the true help they might do to the deceased by praying, and obtaining prayers, for the repose of his soul. The flowers, however rare and costly, are wasted on the uncaring dead, while Masses for his soul would be as a king's ransom.

The writer in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record, while condemning this immoderate use of flowers at funerals, is careful to give his reasons for considering the practice as out of harmony with the Liturgy of the Church: "The death of a Christian is not exclusively a subject for tears; the very prayers of the Church preach confidence. But their dominant note is fear and supplication, and an acknowledgement of the awful rigors of God's inscrutable justice, tempered with confidence in the merits of His dolorous passion. So long as the Church is not certain that her children have arrived in heaven's gate, she has not the heart to rejoice. And, therefore, it is that the flowers which figure so conspicuously at modern interments are in flagrant contradiction with the spirit of the Liturgy. It would be different were she certain of the salvation of the defunct."

"In the case of baptized children who die before the age of reason, the Church calls for flowers, requiring a wreath of them to be laid at the head of the table, in token of the virginity it has preserved, and the glory which it has attained. Where there is no sin, there is no death." Finally, the case is summed up thus: "After all, these attentions to the mortal remains of our dear ones are, according to St. Augustine, a consolation to the living rather than relief to the dead, and the Church would have us remember that the departed expect something else from our friendship. If her suggestions are disregarded, and practices initially praiseworthy stand in the way of duty and true service, then the Church protests, and sometimes launches forth a prohibition." As illustrating this last statement we may mention that the Archbishop of Cologne has prohibited the use of flowers at funerals in his diocese.

The Fruit of Good Work.

The German Catholic societies always do one thing well, and set an example worthy of imitation to other societies. They emphasize the need of a Catholic press. The New York German societies, at their convention during the first week of June, 1902, resolved:

"We urgently request Catholics to shun all literature and products of the press which, under the mask of neutrality, seeks to undermine their faith, and we urgently impress upon the mind of every Catholic to support the Catholic press, which has come to be an absolute necessity."

Three things to love—courage, gentleness and affection.

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This was the period when Gerhard Groote established the Brothers of the Common Life. The mystical spirit entered into their rule of living, but in so new and practical a form that they became known as Brothers of the New Devotion. It pervades the books they wrote; its spirit was in the very atmosphere of their schools. The children attending them became imbued with it. Amongst those children was Thomas a Kempis. He afterward became a member of the order, was ordained priest, and lived to the advanced age of ninety-one years.

We read nothing eventful in his life. Like the venerable Bede, from his youth up he had the sweet yoke of religion. Like Bede also, it had been a pleasure for him to read and teach and write and transcribe what he found best in sacred and profane literature. And that the intellect might not grow barren in the mechanical exercise of transcribing the thoughts of others, it was made a rule that the Brothers should cull, each for himself and according to his taste, some of the beautiful sayings and maxims of the Fathers and saints, and add thereto pious reflections. This was a labor of love for Thomas, and in performing it he was sowing and fertilizing the seeds of that special book that was to be the child of his genius.

Another source of inspiration for that book was the beautiful example of his Brothers. His convent was a spiritual garden in which were tended with great care all the virtues of the religious life. He need only remember and record. Not only in his great work but in the numerous lives of the Brothers that he has left us, he never tires of expressing his appreciation of their devotion, regularity and spirit of faith. And they were equally edified by his amiable character and great humility. They held him in honor and esteem and his influence among them was great.

Nor was he less appreciated outside his convent walls. The Cistercian monk, Adrien de But, stops the chronicle of political events to say how he edified by his writings, especially his masterpiece, which the good monk not inappropriately styles "a metrical volume."

And so his fame has continued to grow broader, ripple after ripple, till it fills the whole world. And yet he shrank from notoriety; he loved retirement; he dreaded gossip. On, on, through the years of his long life, through the rigor of youth, through the maturity of manhood, through the gathering shadows of old age, he plied his pen and scattered broadcast devout books.

Figure to yourself a man of less than medium height, rather stout in body, with forehead broad, and a strong Flemish cast of features, massive and thoughtful, bespeaking a man of meditative habits; his chosen tints of slightly brown; his large and lustrous eyes looking with a grave and far-off look, as though gazing into the world of spiritual life in which his soul dwelt. This is Thomas a Kempis as he appeared to his contemporaries. We are not surprised to learn that a great many, being attracted by his reputation for science and sanctity, flocked around him to cultivate his acquaintance and to pursue their studies under his guidance.

What was the inner life of this attractive soul? What were the trials, the struggles with self, the temptations through which he passed? Surely, he who is both philosopher and poet of the interior life in all its phases must have traversed the rugged path leading up to perfection with an observant eye for the dangerous turns and treacherous pitfalls that lurk on the way. Above all, he must have loved much. "The passion," says Michelet, "which we meet in this work, is grand as the object which it forsakes." And in this love he found strength to overcome every obstacle.

Such was Thomas a Kempis. He had learned to repress every inordinate desire or emotion, until in his old age he was content with solitude and a book. "I have sought rest everywhere," he was wont to say, "but I have found it nowhere except in a little corner with a little book."

When one will walk always on the verge which separates us from precipices on the specious pretext that one still remains on firm ground, it would be a miracle not to make a false step sometimes, and fall into the abyss.—Mgr. Lanerit.