

FATHER RYAN AT PETERBOROUGH.

The Catholic Church and Conscience.

A large congregation assembled in St. Peter's Cathedral on the evening of the 8th inst. to listen to a lecture by Rev. Father Ryan, of St. Michael's Cathedral, Toronto, under the auspices of the Young Men's Catholic Association. The lecture was delivered in a clear and forcible manner, the lecturer being an eloquent speaker, and he received from the large congregation the closest attention.

The musical service, which preceded and followed the lecture, was excellently rendered and impressive. Labillotte's "Magnificat" was sung by the choir before the lecture and for the benediction "Ora Pro Me" was sung in good voice by Miss Annie Dunn, "O Salutaris" was rendered by Mr. McDonough and "Tantum Ergo" was sung by the choir.

Rev. Father Ryan, in opening, said he was glad to accept the invitation to deliver a lecture for the benefit of the Young Men's Catholic Association, for he took a great interest in these associations and considered them one of the social needs and great social powers of the time. Taking up his subject, "The Catholic Church and Freedom of Conscience," he said it was a difficult one because it was important and because it was a large subject. The Catholic Church was not the Catholic people, although it was a Church of and for the people and dear to their hearts. This was a democratic age, but the Church had not been afraid of emperors, kings and princes, and was not afraid of the people. It welcomed the age of the people. The Catholic people, press, princes, the priests, bishops or Pope, were not the Catholic Church. The Pope as a man, a statesman or writer, or in any individual capacity was not the Catholic Church. For persecutions, massacres or inquisitions the Church was not accountable; they were not done by it, but by princes, kings or courts, and none of these, or all of these together, was not the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was the Church of Christ, of the living God, a

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coming down from the mind of the Father and out of the heart of Christ and perfected by the Holy Spirit. It was a divine organization—a divinely constituted and preserved society, as a guardian and interpreter of the revelation of God, and was destined by God to go on forever. Conscience, too, was divine creation. Its home was in the heart, it was a mirror of the majesty of God, a tablet of flesh on which was written God's law by God's own hand. It was there telling what was right and what was wrong. Conscience and the Church were creatures of God, and these, and including liberty, were one. The Church came down from God, not to oppose conscience, but to develop it. They were both the guide and controller of man and go on with liberty. Slavery and coercion came in when the power that controlled had not authority, but when it had authority and was just, good and from God there could be no slavery or coercion, but it was the largest freedom to submit. When man felt that he was subject to no created power but only to God, then was he in his royalty. So they saw that the Catholic church of its very nature was the defender of the real freedom and rights of conscience. They would take a few actions of the church in this regard as illustrations. It was said that the church sometimes coerced conscience, that it coerced converts. Why? Well, they had to begin as little children, to begin with the catechism. Unless they became as little children they could not enter the kingdom of Christ on earth. Was that coercion? It would be if it was the action of man, but not if coming

from God, for it was not coercion for any man to humble himself to God. When a convert came he was asked at the threshold if he wished to be a Catholic desired it with his whole heart and soul. There was his freedom; it made him respect his own liberty. Conscience could not be coerced because God had made it divinely free. The Catholic church did not want converts driven or coerced into her. Similarly when infants were brought to be baptized the church by its questions insisted on freedom. It was also said that the church was dogmatic. It was dogmatic and it must be, because it was divine and whatever was divine must be dogmatic—which was teaching the truth and being sure of it. Some said Catholics could not believe what they liked. There was the fallacy of the day, that liberty consisted in thinking and doing what they liked. Man was a rational creature and had a Creator, and was a subject with a rule of action given him. Man's liberty was to act according to reason. It was not to think or do as he liked, but as he ought, and his conscience told him that. Man had to believe someone and something and was free in his faith when he was not subject to error. Slavery of mind was subjection to error, which was followed by worse slavery, slavery of the heart. Reason told them they must have divine authority to believe in, for only it was infallible. Their separated brethren believed in a divine book, as a need of their intellectual nature. But were they sure of it? The lecturer referred to a recent meeting of clergymen in Toronto who met to discuss church union. They all believed in the same book, but, although honest and intelligent, they found it impossible to unite. If they believed the book they should unite, but each believed his own interpretation of it. Two men holding opposite views could not both be right, and the one that was believing an error was subject to a lie, and there was slavery. Here came in the Catholic church. God never intended the book to settle these differences. "As the Father sent me I send you, go and teach the nations." Here was the divine authority that guarded that book. They said to this divine authority, what is the meaning of the book? and were given authoritative interpretation. It was submitting the intellect to God, and He they knew was truth. There was the security of the Catholic church for freedom—no submission to man. But it was said they had a Pope and priests and submitted to them. They submitted to the Pope as the Vicar of Christ and only as such, and to the priests only as ministers of Christ. But in Ireland were not the priests coercing the people? There was one thing about Ireland, the priests knew the people and the people knew the priests. The love of the people for the priests, who showed them so much kindness, was the reason they were loyal to the priests. Then they were asked, had they not the confessional? Catholics went to confession because God commanded it. When Christ gave the power of remission of sins to the Apostles He gave the principle of confession, for without confession the power would be useless. Priests would not have invented the confessional, because they had to go to it themselves and hearing confessions was their hardest task. If God had not instituted it, no one would go to confession. Was that interfering with freedom? Confession was the unfolding of conscience, and when a man does that freely how can anyone say he is coerced? Never does he exercise his freedom with such excellent effect. Confession supposes contrition, honesty and sincerity, and could only be made by penitents. There was perfect freedom of conscience. It might also be asked if there was not slavery at the altar?

Never did man so exercise freedom as when he bowed before the bread and wine and adored God really present. True, it seemed above reason, though not contrary to reason. It took the intellect and sense, and all bowed down to God. Then was man not only superior to all around him, but he was superior to himself, and having exercised in his freedom that sublime faith he gets as his reward his God at the altar. Only God was king of his conscience—that was the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was the divinely constituted guardian of freedom of conscience, as it was of all freedom worth having. There was other freedom, as social freedom—freedom from ignorance, malice and prejudice, which permitted all to unite in harmony. Thank God, they saw more of it, because they saw more of each other. The more civil and social harmony they had the better. The Young Men's Association helped towards that end, and the lecturer eulogised and commended the association. Freedom, he said in conclusion, was ruling themselves here in the kingdom of heart and conscience under God and serving Him well, and his prayer was that they might be worthy to rule with and under Him in His kingdom above forever hereafter. —Peterborough Evening Review.

Right Rev. Dr. Howley.

The *Globe* of Monday says: The Right Rev. Dr. Howley, Bishop of St. George's, West Newfoundland, is in the city on a visit, and is a guest at St. Michael's palace on Church street. Last evening after the service at the cathedral, at which Dr. Howley delivered the discourse, a *Globe* representative called upon him and was very courteously received. During the course of the conversation the chief topic of interest touched upon was the question of federation with the Dominion of Canada. In this the bishop expressed his own belief that it would be the best thing for Newfoundland, and said that the element of the population opposed to it, and which prevented its consummation, was confined to St. John's and the district immediately surrounding that city. Even there, however, the feeling of hostility was weak compared to what it had been a few years ago. The opposition to it was sustained by politicians. That portion of the population which did not interfere in politics—and the bishop here intimated that it was the most respectable portion—were favorable to confederation. The business community, too, if at all opposed, were not violently opposed to the movement. Even in the legislature it had many adherents, and, though these were in the minority, they included perhaps most of the prominent men, among them being the leaders both of the government and of the opposition. However, the question could not now be brought up as a government measure without suffering defeat. The feeling in favor of federation was strongest just after the great fire at St. John's, when the generous sympathy shown by the people of the Dominion with the suffering citizens filled the islanders' breasts with a feeling of grateful emotion. Had the question been put to the issue then it would have won. The time, however, had now gone by, and while the calculating business views of the people were turning more and more in favor of Confederation, or at least becoming less and less opposed to it, that sentiment which was so strong after the fire had now waned. He instanced the change of view which had taken place in so many by a reference to the *Telegraph* newspaper of St. John's, which had for years been violently hostile, and which a short time ago became as ardent on the other side. Dr. Howley in leaving the subject said that the question of annexation of Newfoundland to the United States was absurd, as it would leave the island in a ridiculous position with regard to trade. She would cease to be an integral part of North America. Dr. Howley said that the people in St. John's were now as prosperous as ever. The insurance money which had been paid, the contributions and the amount of building had placed the people in comfort. One thousand buildings were now in course of erection. The bishop, speaking of St. George's, where he resides and which is on the west coast and 400 miles in a bee line from St. John's, said that a line of railway was being constructed between the two places. If it 150 miles had already been built, and when it was completed they expected to get a new and perfected steamship service, making a round trip daily between Cape Ray and Sydney, Cape Breton. If this were accomplished it would put travellers from Europe much nearer the big Canadian cities in time than they now are. The trade with Canada, the bishop said, was increasing, but as yet the chief business was with the United States and

England. All their flour they bought from the United States and all their dry goods from England. Their cloth for garments was very much cheaper than in any place out of England.

Rev. Dr. Howley is a literary man of considerable distinction, having published a volume of poems and work on the ecclesiastical history of Newfoundland.

In his sermon at St. Michael's cathedral last evening he touched on the question of education. In speaking on this subject he gave the reasons why the Roman Catholic church stands out so strongly for religious education in the schools. The Roman Catholics regarded as primarily necessary a belief in the doctrines of Christianity. The position taken by some Protestants, he argued, that all that was necessary was morality, was a false one. Christianity meant much more than morality. Morality was common to all civilized peoples and ages. Christianity included morality, but the Christian by the command of Christ must do more than be honest, virtuous, truthful. He must believe in Christ or he would be condemned. This was the reason why children from their infancy should be taught the faith. They should be taught it, for otherwise how could they gain the knowledge of these things, and if they should be taught how could this portion of instruction be excluded from the schools? The general attitude of those beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic church was that people were not bound to believe; that there were many acceptable people who did not. The church would not judge those people, but it did not want its flock so brought up. It was contended that if the Roman Catholics wanted schools in which they taught their religion they should pay for them, and it might come to that. It was so in the United States and in Ireland, and it might probably have to be so in Manitoba.

Charity Sermon.

A charity sermon was delivered by Rev. Father Brennan, C.S.B., of Toronto, in St. Peter's Cathedral, London, on which occasion a very liberal collection was taken for the benefit of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Reverend lecturer said he regarded the invitation to come and beg for the Society in behalf of the poor of this city as one of the finest compliments that could be paid him. He had knowledge and experience of the large and generous charity of the congregation of St. Peter's, and felt confident in appealing to them. He pointed out that giving to the poor was a duty laid on every Christian by God, and that the command disobeyed, was a mortal sin; for no sin so grievous or mortal could cast us down from the high place of our aspirations after immortality, yet in Holy Writ were found many instances where men lost their salvation by refusing to give alms to the poor. After directing the attention of his hearers to the lessons taught in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the reverend father dwelt on the grand opportunities which this new country offered to the poor man. Perhaps nowhere else in the world were the bounties and riches of nature poured forth with so free a hand, and the opportunities for independence, or even riches, so many to the poor man who would devote his energies to the task of getting wealth. There was always work to do, he believed, and no man with health and strength ought to be a beggar. But the words of our saviour are as true now as when they were first uttered—"The poor ye shall always have with you." He knew how hard it was for a poor laboring man to get along with four or five hungry children to provide for out of his daily pittance, and when sickness struck him down there was actual distress in his house. Then also, poor, insufficient and irregularly served food was a cause of disease, and often what was only a simple cold developed into consumption, and then the father and breadwinner was taken away. He could tell of some sad and heartbreaking experiences of this kind. We were all too ready with excuses for not giving. To a male applicant we say, "You ought to go to work; there is always work for the willing man." In other cases it is: "Oh, I have been deceived and defrauded too often." Fraud was the worst enemy of Christ—the thing that went nearer than anything else to severing the divine bond that connected rich and poor. Here the preacher related a couple of his own experiences, that caused a smile. In one case a poor widow was unable to pay for a coffin for her dead husband, and he accompanied some ladies of his congregation to her cabin. As they came away one of the ladies went back for her glove, and found the corpse sitting up and counting the money that was left to buy his coffin, and give him a decent burial. But the Society for which he pleaded was designed to prevent such frauds. It was a careful, prudent, and intelligent almoner of their bounty, and in the name of Him who went about doing good, he commended the Society to their consideration, and asked them to be generous.

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