

The Catholic Record.

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SUPERSTITIONS.

The ultra-Protestant polemical papers are very persistent in accusing the Catholic Church of encouraging and Catholic nations of practising superstitious observances.

The honor paid by Catholics to the Saints of God, the respect shown to the images and relics of Christ and His Saints, and other Catholic observances are particularized as being peculiarly superstitious practices.

The practices of honoring the relics of the Saints, of showing respect for the Saints themselves in person, are fully justified in Holy Scripture.

The example of Abraham who received respectfully the blessing of "Melchisedec, King of Salem," and "Priest of the Most High God" is given in regard to God's Saints.

It will suffice to add one text from the New Testament. St. John in the beginning of the Apocalypse (or Revelation) prays for grace and peace from God, and "from the seven spirits which are before His throne." (Ap. 1. 4.)

Reverence for the relics of Saints is inculcated by Moses when he brings from Egypt the bones of Joseph in obedience to Joseph's injunction to the children of Israel before death: "God shall visit you; carry out my bones from hence with you." (Ex. xlii. 19.)

On the propitiatory, by God's command, two cherubim angels were placed with wings spread. (Ex. xxxvii.) Miracles were wrought by the use of the mantle of Elias. (1 Kings xiii. 20-21.) (P. Bible 2 Ki.)

Under the New Law miracles were also wrought by means of St. Peter's shadow, (Acts v. 15-16) and of handkerchiefs and aprons which had merely touched the body of St. Paul.

The Abbe Bertrand in his dictionary of religions makes the caustic remark that the heretics and unbelievers who indecently ridicule Catholics for respecting relics, are the most earnest seekers of relics of celebrated personages, and are ready to pay a high price for the same, such as a pen with which Napoleon once signed his name, the walking-stick of Voltaire, a rose from a bush planted by Jean Jacques Rousseau, a fragment of the dress of some thief or assassin, the moustache of a King, etc.

But it was not to retort upon Pro-

testants the charge of honoring the relics of saints, real or hypothetical, that we began this article. It was rather to mention a few facts which show that really superstitious practices have spread enormously among American Protestants during the last few years.

What is superstition? It is certainly not superstitious to honor God or His saints in a becoming manner, but it is a religious reverence shown to an object which is not deserving of it, or an unbecoming reverence shown to an object which ought to be religiously revered.

Fortune-telling, astrology, palmistry, are also forms of superstition which are common in Protestant countries, but are almost unknown among Catholics; for Catholics know that their religion does not tolerate these frauds.

"A madam comes to New York at intervals, and stays just forty-eight hours—I do not know whether the police won't permit a longer stay—but she comes at specified periods, and a large number of prominent women flock to her, pay exorbitant fees to obtain a so-called solution to their various problems, and to be informed of events to come. They are crammed with a stock of predictions, and go away happy. This is a form of superstition that is becoming dangerous."

RAILWAY RATES FOR CLERGYMEN.

We have received from several quarters complaints that the railway companies have refused of late years to issue tickets to the clergy at a reduced rate, as was done in the past. We fully agree with our correspondents on this subject that the companies should reconsider their action on this matter.

Theological performers whose exhibitions are frequently of evil tendency, even to the corruption of public morals, are allowed to travel at a fare one-third less than God's minister, who has often to go about to correct the evils which these companies have caused by their performances. We know that there are instances where priests have to spend \$100 or \$200 on railway fares during the course of each year, in order to attend their missions properly.

FATHER DE COSTA HONORED.

At the last meeting of the Catholic Converts' League held in New York the following resolution, beautifully engrossed, was read and accepted. It will be presented to Rev. Father De Costa on his return from Rome, where he has recently been raised to the dignity of the priesthood:

The Catholic Converts' League of New York in meeting assembled December 9, 1903, tender to the Reverend Benjamin Francis De Costa the well beloved Associate and its First President, on the occasion of his elevation to the priesthood of the one holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, their heartfelt congratulations on the fruition of his most ardent hopes; and with him, in gratitude to Almighty God, voice the converts' hymn:

I give Thee thanks, O God, My enlight'ner and deliverer; For that Thou hast opened the eyes of my soul to know Thee, O Ancient and Eternal Truth!

JESSE ALBERT LOCKE, President. MARY L. BURRITT, Secretary.

The editor of the CATHOLIC RECORD also begs leave to offer heartiest congratulations to Father De Costa, coupled with the prayer that he may be spared many years to fulfill the sacred duties of a priest of God's Holy Church.

THE STORM IN THE FAR EAST.

The war which has been so long expected between Russia and Japan has at length broken out, and we need not say it has been a surprise to the world how easily Japan scored the first victory, which has undoubtedly given certainty, for the present, and probably for a long time to come, the supremacy of the Eastern Seas to the weaker power.

If all the naval force of Russia had been concentrated in the far East, Russia's superiority at sea would have exceeded that of Japan in the number of war vessels of almost every class, as also in tonnage, guns, and the number of men engaged. But even so, the battle does not always depend upon the numbers engaged on one side or the other.

But neither Russia's fleet nor army could be all sent to the far East, as there were other interests to be guarded nearer home which kept occupied a large portion of its available military force. The troubles in the Balkans, including the danger of war between Turkey and Bulgaria, and possibly other Balkan States, together with the revolutionary movements in Macedonia and Russia itself, all required that a certain powerful armed force should remain at home, and thus the available forces in Manchuria and at the Russian ports of the sea of war were much reduced below what might have been expected, and were very little superior, if any, to those which Japan could throw into the area of contest.

It is positively stated that the great Siberia railway which connects Vladivostok and Port Arthur with St. Petersburg, a distance of 5,000 miles, would not supply an army of more than 200,000 men in the far East, even if it were kept in constant operation to its fullest extent, as it is but poorly constructed, and, at its best, not more than 20 miles an hour can be made by trains running over it.

These were great disadvantages to contend against, in spite of the immense resources of Russia; and in their face the discrepancy between the forces of the contending powers available for the beginning of the war was not at all so great as might have been anticipated from the populations of the two countries, which are 135,000,000 on the side of Russia to 47,000,000 in Japan.

Yet, in the beginning, the Russian fleet at the seat of war was stronger in numbers than that of its adversary, and it was Russia's plan to keep that fleet under the protection of its forts at Port Arthur and Vladivostok so as to keep the Japanese in check, and to interrupt their communications by sea, and the transport of their troops. But in the very beginning the Russians made an egregious blunder. It is stated that on the very night of the first attack by the Japanese on the Port Arthur fleet, the Russian officers had said they expected the Japanese in three or four days. The officers were even amusing themselves at a circus when the attack was made! That fatal circus may have been even a Japanese ruse! At all events, but a poor lookout was kept by the Russians, and the presence of the enemy was not discovered until one of the Russian battleships was disabled by the stroke of a torpedo under the water line whereby a large hole was made in the ship's bottom, and she sunk within a few minutes, there being only time to draw near the shore and sink in shallow water. Two other first class battle ships were sunk in a similar way, and two cruisers. Two cruisers were also destroyed in a naval battle of Chemulpo, which lasted 34 minutes, and other vessels were sunk next day making altogether a total of eleven warships of various strength disabled or destroyed within 36 hours.

It is true, we are told, that two Japanese ships were injured in a later encounter, but this will not compensate for the loss already sustained by the Russians. Before the attack by the Japanese, Russia had 7 battleships of the first class, each costing about \$4,000,000, whereas Japan had 6. Japan has now 6, while Russia has only 4 of this class, while of inferior grade, her armament is also proportionately reduced, so that now Russia's fleet available in the war is rendered greatly inferior to that of Japan, and unless there is some blunder made by the Japanese, as gross as that which the Russians have already made, there will be nothing easier than for the Japanese to destroy utterly the rest of the Russian fleet before reinforcements can possibly be brought to their relief. Already, Japan has used the advantage gained. She has at her disposal 1,300 transport ships, and she is using them to land troops by the thousand in Corea to enable her to meet effectually the

Russian land forces who are massed at various points in Manchuria, and along the Yalu River, which is the boundary line between Corea and Manchuria. Russia cannot now use the sea for transport purposes, the more especially as Japan has taken Maseampo, which is regarded as the Eastern Gibraltar, commanding the straits of Corea, and enabling her to interrupt communication between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The Russians have the railway between these two points, but already the Japanese have done mischief here by blowing up an important bridge on the line at Newchang. This is a foretaste of what will still be done in the same direction toward interrupting the Russian communications over the great Russian railway both in Manchuria and Siberia, and at other points further West toward European Russia.

The question now remains whether Japan or Russia will win in the land fight which must inevitably follow. A naval success on the part of Russia such as that which Japan has gained would have settled this war at once, as Japan could not then have made a move on the mainland which is what she would need absolutely to do in order to attain her end, which is to preserve the integrity of China, and to prevent Russia's advance in Corea and Chinese territory, whereby Japan's existence as an independent country would be threatened. But as the case stands, the fight must be continued on land.

The Japanese are intelligent, patriotic and resolute. The Russians lack the intelligence and patriotism of their foes, but their staying qualities are so great that they scarcely know when they are beaten. There will, therefore, be many a hard battle before the final triumph will be decided. Russia does not concede that the war is at all decided by what has already occurred, and it remains to be seen whether she can make up by land for what she has lost on the waters. We shall not presume to take the role of a prophet by predicting what is going to happen; but we may quote the opinion of the military correspondent of the London Times who makes a statement in regard to the recent Japanese victories. He declares that these do not demonstrate that torpedoes are of very great value in naval warfare. He thinks that under like circumstances all that the Japanese effected might have been accomplished by the old-fashioned freshets, or triremes and catapults. "The action at Port Arthur," he says, "proves absolutely nothing but the fact that modern science has outstripped the capacity of certain nations to make intelligent use of the new weapons."

It was not an affair in which intelligence and experience combatted similar qualities, but rather a case where skillful, courageous sailors took advantage of stupidity, negligence and incapacity. War is an art; and if the artist is not a master, he will produce nothing that will live."

Should this appreciation of the situation prove correct we may hear before long of Japanese successes by land, equal to those already achieved by sea. In addition to the havoc in Russia's navy the Japanese have also captured a large number of Russian merchant vessels, some of which are rich prizes. During the second week of the Russo-Japanese war, there were events enough of importance to be recorded, but they are involved in so much secrecy on the part of the two powers chiefly concerned, and so much contradiction in the reports which have passed the news censors, that it is nearly impossible to give an intelligent summary of what has taken place.

It is confirmed that the Russian torpedo transport and gunboat Yenesel was blown up through the carelessness of its own officers who allowed it to run against one of their own torpedoes. All on board were lost, namely, four officers and ninety one men. As the Yenesel was loaded with mines, the explosion was terrific. This loss, it is said will entail very serious consequences, as it, understood that the captain had placed many torpedoes in and outside the harbor of Port Arthur laying down their location on a map which was destroyed with the ship itself, so that these torpedoes are scattered over a large area without any possibility of knowing to any certainty where they are. It is to be expected that some of the ships will be destroyed by striking against these dangerous explosives. What may avert this result to some extent is that duplicates of this map are in the hands of the

Admirals, but there is reason to believe that the lost map contained corrections and modifications of which the Admirals have no knowledge.

Another cruiser in addition to the two already mentioned as having been destroyed at Chemulpo is to be added to the list already given of Russian vessels lost. One despatch states that this was the Bayan, which is the fastest and strongest cruiser of the fleet at Port Arthur. Another says it was the Bayarin, which was also a powerful vessel being 384 feet long and of 3300 tons displacement. The Bayarin carried 19 powerful guns and 6 torpedo tubes. This vessel, whichever it may have been, was lost on Saturday, 13th inst., by striking a Russian mine. From such casualties it will be seen that the Russians have not learned from their previous misfortunes to exercise due care in the management of their fleet.

Four Russian warships from Vladivostok are cruising in the Sea of Japan, and between the islands, but their exact whereabouts has not been reported, nor have they come into contact with any of the Japanese fleet. One of their exploits has been to sink wantonly a Japanese merchant vessel of 710 tons with all its crew. The Japanese are naturally indignant at this barbarous violation of international law, which is contrary to the usages of civilized warfare, while it must be said that the Japanese, who have only recently been classed with civilized nations, have learned their lesson well, as they have punctiliously observed the civilized code for the carrying on of warfare. So far they have treated Russian prisoners well, and even with more courtesy than might have been expected. It is also said that the Vladivostok fleet have bombarded the Japanese port Hakodate.

Since the decisive Russian defeat at Port Arthur the Japanese have been reinforced by the two warships which were purchased from the Argentine Republic. These are prepared to go to work at once. A Russian despatch states that the injured Russian vessels at Port Arthur have been repaired, but this news has not been confirmed, and it was already admitted in a despatch from Admiral Alexieff that at least two weeks would be needed to repair them. It is very doubtful that they have been put into working order in the short time which has elapsed since they were so seriously injured.

On Sunday, Feb. 14, another attack, which was the fourth, was made by the Japanese fleet upon the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. Owing to a terrible snow storm, only two torpedo boats were able to do any damage, but these two succeeded in striking two Russian ships and inflicting serious injury, but the amount of damage done is not reported.

By land, several encounters are said by Russian despatches to have occurred between detachments of the army, the Japanese being worsted each time, but reports from Tokio deny that any such encounters have taken place. There is, however, great activity on both sides in the way of moving troops to positions of advantage, and within a very short time there must be a trial of strength between the opposing armies.

It is said that the Japanese have already 120,000 troops in Corea, and they have also a strong force in the neighborhood of New Chang, where they have greatly damaged the railway between Port Arthur and Vladivostok. An important bridge at New Chang has been destroyed. This will be a serious interruption to the Russian communications.

In consequence of the isolated condition of Port Arthur Admiral Alexieff, who is in supreme command, has already determined to move his headquarters to Kharbin, four hundred miles North of Port Arthur. Here he will gather a strong force which he expects to be irresistible in the spring as soon as the weather will allow of successful military operations. It is said he will have by that time an army of 400,000 men; but it can scarcely be believed that from the land side only, he can keep so large a force supplied with the necessities of life. With Japan supreme at sea, it cannot be expected that he will be furnished with supplies by way of either Port Arthur or Vladivostok; and it is believed that Japan will hold the supremacy of the sea, even should the Baltic fleet reach the scene of action in the course of six weeks or two months. Besides, it is not at all improbable that the fleet at present in the Eastern waters may be utterly destroyed before the Baltic fleet can come to its relief. In this case the reinforcing fleet may be destroyed also, as it will certainly be intercepted by the Japanese.

It is reported that 600 Russian soldiers were drowned in crossing the ice at Lake Baikal, while on their way to the scene of action. From this one fact, which appears to be well authenticated, the nature of the difficulties of supplying men and food to the army

in Manchuria may be imagined; and Lake Baikal is only one of the difficulties which lie in the way of Russia's final success.

A despatch from Paris states that General Kroupatkin will assume the supreme command of the Russian forces instead of Admiral Alexieff, who is now commander-in-chief as well as Governor of Manchuria and all territory which the Russians may occupy.

MIXED MARRIAGES.

"Rev. E. A. Henry, of Knox Presbyterian Church (Hamilton), criticized Bishop Dowling, in a talk last evening, for preaching against mixed marriages."

So runs the telegraphic despatch sent all over the country from Hamilton, Ont.

It would have been well for the Rev. Mr. Henry to have remembered what the Westminster Confession of Faith, the standard of the Presbyterian Church, has to say on the same point, now here reproduced:

CHAP. XXIV. — OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

Art. III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgment to give their consent; yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And, therefore, such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, Papists, or other idolaters; neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.

CARDINAL DEL VAL SUCCESSFUL.

Referring to the action brought to His Eminence Cardinal del Val against the Italian Government and the municipality of Rome for the recovery of certain buildings, etc., which he claimed was Church property which was mentioned in the issue of the CATHOLIC RECORD of the 20th inst., Vox Urbis, the Roman correspondent of the New York Freeman's Journal, says in the issue of that paper of the 13th inst.:

Cardinal Merry del Val has won his case against the Italian Government and the Municipality of Rome. He sued them for illegal possession of the building attached to his titular church of St. Praxedes, and they had not the courage to face the music in a court of law, but preferred to compromise the matter out of court, admitting that the Cardinal was perfectly entitled to the building in question. On this decision hangs an immense amount of property which has been unlawfully appropriated from the Church by the Italian Government.

MISSION AT THE CATHEDRAL.

It was announced from the pulpit on last Sunday that a mission will begin in the Cathedral in three weeks' time—that is, on Sunday, March 13. It will be placed under the patronage of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and will be conducted by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

During a Mission Almighty God is most lavish with His graces and blessings; and may we not fondly hope that this will be particularly the case during this year, when we commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

We ask our readers to join us in the prayer that this Mission may be eminently fruitful.

ON SPURIOUS AND DOUBTFUL RELICS.

We have received from Mr. W. P. P. Stockley a letter which will throw light upon the manner in which relics of saints are to be regarded by Catholics. Some people suppose that all relics which are kept in shrines or churches are part of the faith of the Church, but this is not the case. As a rule such relics would not be exposed in churches or shrines for the veneration of the people, unless there were very strong and satisfactory evidence of their authenticity, but no one is bound to believe in their authenticity further than the testimony thereto is historically satisfactory and clear. Mr. Stockley writes as follows:

To the Editor of the CATHOLIC RECORD. "Sir—I happened to be re-reading 'Church History and the Critical Spirit,' by Father Grisar, S. J., (one penny); Catholic Truth Society, the day I saw in the CATHOLIC RECORD (Jan. 30) that Father Grisar refers only to old-time superstitions among Catholics. No so.

On page 14. "To this day crosses exist, whose design stamps them at once a thirteenth or fourteenth century work, and yet which claim to have been made almost immediately after the Crucifixion. 'I myself have often been ashamed,' he adds, 'to hear priests and sacristans tell educated people of other religions their traditional errors about the holy things of the churches under their care.'"

"The mistaken traditions of which I speak do not, of course (as every well-taught Catholic should know), belong to Revelation; but all the same, many people think that they are a part of the Church's teaching, protected by her authority; and so they cause much needless distress." (p. 28.)

For instance: "Even if the difficulties