

Thomas A Kempis.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

It will be remembered that a few weeks ago we analyzed part of the admirable lecture on Thomas A Kempis, by Dom Gilbert, Higgins, C.R.L., and that we also reproduced sections of the same. We have just come upon the closing part of that lecture, and we cannot feel that what we have given is complete unless it receive the addition of the instructive matter that constituted the end of that masterly review of a great life. He had been speaking of the period when Thomas was placed in charge of the accounts of the convent, and had shown us that the position was one at variance with the tastes of the good monk. When relieved of those duties and his novices, Thomas composed a book entitled "On the Faithful Steward," full of wholesome, pithy maxims of great wisdom.

The lecturer thus tells of the next step in the career of Thomas:—"But the period of Thomas's freedom was not destined to continue long. Prior Clive, after twenty-three years of ruling, tendered his resignation, which was accepted. His place was taken by William of Devener, sub-prior of Mount St. Agnes. The sub-priorship was transferred to a Kempis, who doubtless received with it a second time the charge of the novices, for whom he wrote thirty sermons fraught with a common-sense piety which has made them favorites in hundreds of novitiates. He has also left us some conferences which he preached to the professed religious, and thirty-six sermons delivered to the people. Thomas had no little fame as a preacher. Crowds flocked to the Mount to listen to earnest words flowing readily from his lips, touched with the fire of Divine love. His sermons were always prepared, and we learn that before mounting the pulpit he would retire to his cell and sleep there a while. The practice is not unknown to the preachers of the present day—I mean those who do not sleep in the pulpit."

We might here introduce a few characteristic remarks of this remarkable and saintly man. Says the lecturer:—

"The remaining years of the life of a Kempis were no doubt full of important incidents in the spiritual order, but we have no mere earthly event to chronicle. He was preparing for the day which would reunite him to Master Florence and his brother John. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Holy Cross, to our Lady, to his beloved patroness St. Agnes went on ever increasing. Up to the close of his life he kept up his reverence in the Church, his delight in liturgical functions, his practice of living always in the presence of God. His characteristic love for solitude and silence, embalm in his favorite motto, 'In all things I have sought rest,' but have not found it except in little nooks and little books," increased, without lessening his interest in the community, or impairing his spirit of affability towards his brethren. He would join in their common recreations—but when these were prolonged on feast days he would say, after awhile, with touching simplicity: 'My brethren, I must go; for there is someone waiting to converse with me in my cell! The Canons knew well the reason of his hasty departure, and gazed after his retreating form with mingled love and reverence.'

It was in his ninetieth year that Thomas became afflicted with dropsy. He bore the sufferings for over a year with great patience. In 1471, on the feast of St. James the Less, after Compline, he departed this life, in the 92nd year of his age, the 63rd of his clothing, and the 58th of his priesthood. He was buried in the eastern cloister of his priory, Protestantism, in the name of enlightenment, under the fanatical Gueux, devastated Mount St. Agnes, and left not one stone on another. The spot where Thomas was buried became lost, as it were, till, in 1572, this remains were discovered and his bones lie to-day in a splendid monument raised in 1897 in the Church of St. Michael at Zwolle.

A writer in the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," thus speaks of him:—"In Thomas we see the gathered wisdom of that idea of a quest for pardon by imitation of Christ, which began with Anselm and came down through Franciscan revivals and mystical movement, through Tauler

and his imitation by renunciation through Ruysbroeck and Groot to Thomas a Kempis. But Thomas is far more than Ruysbroeck or Groot. He is wider and more sympathetic. He includes Ruysbroeck, Tauler, Bonaventure, the Franciscans, Bernard, and the old Victorines. He sums up in his little books the heart religion of Latin Christianity."

It is thus that the late Brother Azarias, in his "Culture of the spiritual sense," tells of the subject of this sketch:—"Here is the secret of the magic influence wielded by the 'Imitation.' Pick it up when or where we may, open it any page we will, we always find something to suit our frame of mind. The author's genius has such complete control of the subject, and handles it with so firm a grasp, that in every sentence we find condensed the experience of ages. It is humanity finding in this simple man an adequate mouthpiece for the utterance of its spiritual wants and soul yearnings. And his expression is so full and adequate because he regarded things in the white light of God's truth, and saw their nature and their worth clearly and distinctly, as divested of the hues and tints flung around them by passion and unison."

Some unknown writer has penned the following lines, which form a fitting closing to this instructive lecture. The lines were written on the fly-leaf of a "De Imitatione."

When thou art weary of life's dust and heat,
Blinded by streaming light on sleepless eyes,
Spent with pursuing hope that ever flies,
Into this garden stray with lingering feet.
For here for every ill and ache and smart
There grows a mystic herb of healing balm,
Oh! lay it, odorless, on thy wounded heart,
And own in every nerve its power to calm!
Forget both rose and laurel, all the flowers
That stood so bravely in the gates of day;
Seek in the eventide these peaceful bowers,
But ere thou enter in, turn, cast away,
If thou within those thymy haunts would rest,
The treasured pansies fading on thy breast.

MONTH OF MARY

(Written For The True Witness.)

Gentle, smiling spring has come and brings to us the balmy month of May. Nature is robed in her gay attire of violet and green; birds sing gaily over meadow and grove, and soar on high through the deep blue sky; babbling brooks and rivulets float noiselessly on; while the rose-trees are in full bloom.

"Tis in this festive season that the Church calls her children together, to do honor to the Queen of Heaven, in that beautiful devotion of the 'Month of May.' In each Church or chapel her sculptured figure stands; and see amidst the blossoms bright her loving hands outstretched; and to each weary heart that gesture seems to say, 'I am the Mother of all Sorrows.' It matters not whether her statue stands; whether on the lone hill-side or in some grand edifice her gaze seems just as calm, just as sweet."

What a touching sight it is to see the little first communicants kneeling before the shrine with clasped hands, beseeching that fond mother, to prepare their little wondering hearts, to receive our Blessed Lord. Dear little ones, when you have grown older oft will memories of this bright day be recalled, and force you to exclaim, "O Day of First Communion, O happiest of my life! Sweet childhood, spring time's bloom, Oh, age of innocence bright, unmarred by storms of cares and trials, undimmed by clouds of sin hasten then fond ones, our sinless hands can fashion best, those spotless wreaths of prayer."

Before the shrine once more we behold the young convent girl, who is about to quit the peace and charms of convent life. Onward she must go to struggle with the crosses and temptations which hover about on all sides. Pray on, fair maiden, and gaze on the pictured face, the veiled head, and tender eyes of this Immaculate Queen, imploring her to guide the trembling, tossing bark, back to the haven of safety.
Again, let us turn to that aged

man who kneels with bowed head. See his drooping frame as he clasps his rosary. Those blessed beads they tell the history of one's life from a cross to a crown.

At length, when the evening shades are falling, the faithful mingle together and with the priest recite their decades, and also that most beautiful of prayers—"The Litany." There we portray her glorious titles. Let me recall a few: Mother of Sorrows—many a heart weighed down with grief has laid its burden at her feet and found relief there.

Refuge of sinners oft when souls were stained with sin and came in tears to her, have learned by that sweet name pardon and peace to win.

Gate of Heaven—yes, she is truly the gate of Heaven, for without Mary sinners would despair. But that loving mother stretches forth a helping hand and leads the wanderer home.

"Mary the dearest name of all,
The holiest, and the best;
The first low word, that Jesus
Lisped,
Laid on his mother's breast.
Mary our comfort, and our hope,
O may that word be given;
To be the last we sigh on earth,
The first, we breathe in Heaven."
—LUCY A. COLLINS.
178 Richardson street,
Point St. Charles,
May 12th, 1903.

Making Gentlemen

Rev. Dr. Rainsford, of New York, writing about the work he has been doing at St. George's Church, in that city, tells how he would undertake to make gentlemen. We do not see much in all his lengthy article that would appear as a prescription for the creating of gentlemen, but there are a few decidedly wise remarks in the course of his correspondence. We would draw the attention of some Montreals, and especially of the "Daily Witness" to the following remark of the reverend gentleman:—

"I have studied the needs of the people and have tried to meet them. I wish rich men would give the people more opportunities for pleasure—innocent pleasure. I do not specially endorse Mr. Carnegie's gifts to libraries. Libraries are good things, but in New York there are things we need more. We need pleasure houses far more in New York; places of amusement that will not degrade."

His views concerning the Carnegie library mania are in strict accord with those we have entertained all along.

Here is another statement that may have its application:—"I have been criticised for starting a dancing class; that was a new thing not many years ago. I did it because I found that the girls were going to bad dances. Then, when we started the dramatic society, some people said I wanted to turn St. George's into a theatre. My boys and girls want to go to the theatre; they ought to go. The drama has a great influence; that influence will increase, not decrease; it has an immense place in human life, and so we started the dramatic society; they take up good plays, and it is a great success. At first, when we started the dancing class, there were always three or four of the clergy and half a dozen ladies present to look after things; the boys would spit in the corners and throw cigarettes on the floor; now there is nothing of the sort; you could not find better behavior in Sherry's, and there are often no clergy or deaconesses present. Ten years ago, if one of these boys met me in the street he would scarcely notice me; now there is hardly one who does not take off his hat when he meets me, and I have never asked them to do it. Boys like brass bands; they want to join organizations, and so we started the battalion; we have 120 in the battalion. St. George's sent seventy-one men to the Spanish war; four were killed; our battalion is a great power for good."

We have no intention of going into any commentary upon this clergyman's plans or ideas—and both might well serve as the basis of a very interesting article. We, however, would call the attention of all those who are opposed to the legitimate amusements and sports that are furnished to the youth of our day, by our own educational institutions, that these establishments are governed by men of experience, and that their views chime in well with those of the clergyman from St. George's New York. The young must have amusement, and to save them from that which is injurious, they should be afforded that which is innocent and attractive.

The Irish Land Bill

Now that the long-expected, and much discussed Irish Land Purchase Bill is on its way to realization, and has reached the committee stage in the House, it is timely to glean any comments of a striking nature that may have been made regarding the whole subject. Of course we, no more than any one else, cannot at this moment tell what may, or may not, be the outcome. Only when the Select Committee shall have reported the Bill to the House and it comes up for its third reading, will any person be in a position to pass judgment on its details. Meanwhile we take the following from an English correspondent, one not likely, under ordinary circumstances, to lean towards Ireland and her cause; and we consider this statement to be one of the most concise and explicit that could be made in regard to the subject. It is an analysis of the situation from the pen of one who is evidently an observer and a thinker. It is thus the writer tells his views:—

"Parliamentary opposition has practically disappeared. The second reading of the Irish Land Bill, incomparably the most important measure of the session, was carried on Thursday night by a majority of 413 votes against 26.

This may just be described as one of the most startling and puzzling events in the Parliamentary history of England.

The bill, as Mr. Morley said in his powerful and interesting speech, is a social revolution. It aims at nothing less than the transference of agricultural Ireland from the rent receiving landlord to the rent paying tenants.

In form, no doubt, it is a voluntary measure, but the position of the landlord who refuses to sell will not be a happy one, and unless he be a man of iron resolution, he will soon fall in with the wishes of his tenants.

The sum of twelve millions sterling (\$60,000,000), which will be advanced from the treasury on the credit of the United Kingdom, will be increased on the lowest estimate to the extent of a hundred millions. There will be nothing between the state, and the purchasing tenant paying his annual instalments for a period of nearly seventy years.

Mr. Gladstone's Land Bill of 1886, denounced from every Tory and Liberal-Unionist platform in England, made the Irish Legislature responsible for every shilling. There is no such responsibility here. Mr. Balfour's act of 1891, which almost the whole Liberal party opposed, dealt with sums infinitesimal in comparison with those now involved; yet the leader of the Opposition with some reluctance supports this bill. Mr. John Morley supports it with enthusiasm; Sir Edward Grey, on behalf of those Liberals who have abandoned Home Rule, pleads for it with as much earnestness as Mr. Redmond himself, and only a handful of Radicals, scarcely one of whom had ever been in office, had the courage to vote against it.

A few months ago Mr. Wyndham was putting Irish members of Parliament in prison, and those who remained in attendance at Westminster were cheering the victories of the Boers. The excuse for the Chief Secretary's prosecutions was that Nationalist members invited Nationalist farmers to withhold payment of their just debts. This bill proceeds on the assumption that every Irish farmer is perfectly honest. The assumption rests upon solid ground.

Mr. Gladstone once described the Irish tenant as the champion rent payer, and the best defence for this bill, against which only four Unionists voted, is that in the transactions under former land purchase acts there have been virtually no arrears.

Mr. Wyndham's personal triumph will be grudged by no one. Although at this moment the Nationalists are his particular friends, he is deservedly popular with all sections of the House of Commons.

There are doubtless many causes for this amazing change in the political situation, but the principal reason for it appears to be two-fold. Those who dislike Home Rule believe the bill will be fatal to it. Those who like Home Rule believe the bill makes it certain. Which view is the right one time alone can show.

For the moment the Irish party

are the masters of British politics. They have tied to their chariot wheels both the Government and the Opposition. Both are equally committed to universal purchase, which will be compulsory in fact, though not in name.

If Mr. Redmond and his followers can do this in a House where they form an insignificant minority, what will they do when they hold the balance of power?"

A Terrible Menace

The cry of Cicero, "How long! how long! Ah, Cataline, wilt thou abuse of our patience?" seems to rise to the lips of every advocate of order and social safety, when new manifestations of Mafia, Atheistic, Nihilistic and other like criminal outrages are reported. The worst that we have yet read of is that of the recent attempt in New York to place a box of dynamite, with fuse attached, on board a vessel about to sail. The letter that reported the incident to the authorities, and by means of which the discovery was made, threatens that this sort of thing will be repeated. The object itself consisted of a rough pine box, containing one hundred pounds of dynamite, or enough, if exploded, to unodge ninety thousand pounds of rock. The vessel was the Cunard line steamship Umbria, and she had on board over four hundred passengers, including a number of people of prominence. The box had been left on the wharf by two Italians, and was placed amongst the baggage. The matter was in the hands of the police, just in time to save the vessel. The aim of the Mafia is stated to be the driving of the English vessels off the ocean. It is their intention, say the members of this organization, to blow up every ship, carrying the British flag, and coming into the port of New York.

The following is the letter that gave the police an idea that there was such a plot about to be executed:—

"Dear Sir,—The Mafia greets you and wishes you well.

"At the Cunard dock is a box containing one hundred pounds of dynamite. Inside of that is a machine, that, properly set, can explode the stuff any time within thirty-six hours.

The society has declared war against England and has ordered the destruction of every steamer flying the British flag that sails out of New York harbor.

"The undersigned received orders to begin operations by sinking the Oceanic, but so many women and children took passage on that boat that the society's plans were changed at the last minute.

"The machine in the box, the first made, and a crude affair, is enclosed simply to show how easy it is to sink a steamer and to convince those interested that the society is not making idle threats.

"The society has undertaken to clear New York harbor of British ships, and it will succeed.

"The reason for this movement the society does not wish to disclose. Suffice it to say that the society, in order to protect itself, must carry the war into the enemy's country; and it goes without saying that it proposes to wage it as fiercely as it knows how.

"This is the society's first and last warning, and those who purpose to patronize British steamers must take their chances in the future.

"The society asks and give no quarters; so, Lay on! lay on! Macduff, and damn'd be he that first cries 'Hold! enough!'"

PIETRO DEMARTIN.

"P.S.—The battery is not attached, fuses without caps and lighter not set, consequently there is no danger in handling the box."

As a rule, little attention is paid to such sensational communications; but this time the matter was in dead earnest, and the results, if the discovery had not been made, would have been most lamentable.

"If the infernal machine had not been discovered the entire charge of 100 pounds of dynamite would have exploded within one minute," said Inspector Murray, of the Bureau of Combustibles, this afternoon, after he had returned from the Umbria's pier.

"There is not the slightest doubt but that scores of persons would have lost their lives. The force of the concussion alone would have been deadly. Dynamite exerts a downward and outward force, and that amount would have swept the pier and considerable space adjoining."

It certainly was providential that the discovery was made; but that does not change the fact that the awful menace still exists. For years and years the United States Government has been warned against

harboring the criminal output of European lands. Under the bravado-like declaration that America is the "home of the free," the American people seem to have ignored the fact that freedom does not consist in license to criminals to hatch their plots and to carry out their evil designs within the boundaries of a country.

For time out of mind the Catholic Church has been warning the world against the dangers of encouraging those secret and wicked societies, and her voice has been disregarded by those who are adverse to accepting anything from Rome. But Rome has suffered so much on account of these very organizations that she was able to talk to the world from experience. The day is at hand when the American Republic, if it is to last another century, must set a face against all that savors of old world criminal organizations. The State has within the last couple of years lost one of its greatest Presidents through the instrumentality of these very secret and deadly societies; here is an outrage perpetrated by a similar body, and that organization threatens to commit future deeds of a like character. Where or when is it all going to stop? That is the question that now is uppermost in the minds of the people.

It will stop only when the advice and warnings of the Catholic Church are hearkened to and the teachings that she has been given for long generations, and that have been disregarded by the non-Catholic world simply because they came from her.

CANNED GOODS A MENACE.

(By An Occasional Contributor.)

We have read during the past few months of a great many cases of poison from tinned vegetables and other eatables. The last and most striking example of the danger of these goods is told as follows:—

"Six-year-old Frank Anderson, who lived with his mother, father and sister at No. 238 Gold street, Brooklyn, died recently at the Brooklyn City Hospital of ptomaine poisoning, as a result of eating canned salmon. Mrs. Anderson on Thursday opened a can of salmon and served it for dinner. She left the can open and the family again consumed some of the salmon. With the two children later Mrs. Anderson went to visit a friend in Flint street. While there, Frank was taken with convulsions and became very ill. His mother took him to his home and called a physician, who advised her to have the boy taken to the Brooklyn City Hospital. Dr. McKitsney, of the hospital staff, said the boy had been poisoned by ptomaines. He took the boy to the hospital, where he suffered all night, and died. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson greatly fear they themselves will show signs of ptomaine poison, as they also ate of the salmon."

This story gives us a pretty broad hint with regard to the use of canned goods. Unless it be that the cans have stood for a long time exposed in shop windows, or down in damp cellars, there is not really a danger in them. Of course, we refer to fresh goods. Old stock is always more or less to be avoided, whether on account of the evaporation that has imperceptibly taken place, or of the actual poison engendered by the tin or solder.

Where the menace exists is when a can has been opened and allowed to remain standing for some time. Since it is not possible to do away entirely with the use of this class of goods, at least every reasonable precaution should be taken. The moment a can is opened its contents should be emptied into an earthen, or similar, vessel. Then the contents may last an indefinite time, according to the circumstances of weather, locality and the like; for none of the poison created by contact between the tin, the air and the acid, is carried away. It will be remarked that in the case above mentioned, they had allowed the goods to stand in the can, after it had been opened; for quite a while. It was during those few hours of exposure to the air and continuous contact with the tin that the damage was done.

A NEW LEGAL FIRM.

Messrs. Frank J. and Louis E. Curran, advocates, have formed a partnership, and will practice together under the name of Curran & Curran. The new firm will continue to occupy the offices of the senior member, in the Savings Bank Chambers, 180 St. James street, Montreal.

Percy Quinn.

promising young Irish chess men of Montreal, own active member of international organizations—in, whose recent appointment a more lucrative position of the company he had so successfully served his new field of labors.



PERCY QUINN

the members of the Amateur Athletic Association at their club house. Mr. Quinn with a dial occasion was made songs, music and Harry Trihey, president, and referred to the latter the retiring goal-keeper then called upon Mr. Quinn to make the prayer. He did with a word of congratulation, hoping would continue to the business field. Mr. Quinn's reply to his friends was, but enough was one and all that he a Shamrock Lacrosse were regret.