

**A FEW WORDS ON THE CONFESSIONAL.**

Now equally, or rather much more, is this the case with regard to the confessional. It will be plain to any one who takes the trouble really to think, instead of joining a popular clamour, that if souls are to be treated at all, they must be treated on a system, and with a knowledge of particulars. You would not give port-wine and quinine to a patient in a burning fever, nor would you bleed one who was suffering chiefly from exhaustion. A tertian ague is not usually treated like chronic inflammation, though both are intermittent; nor delirium tremens like neuralgia, though both are on the nerves. How then is my case sufficiently provided for, if I am of a scrupulous turn, and have a spiritual dose administered to me which is just the corrective for a lax and rather obdurate conscience, but which only aggravates my symptoms, or if I am hot-tempered, and light upon a counsel that was meant for the over-pleasid and indolent? or inclined to excess at my meals, and am taught that one should moderate indiscreet austerities? All this is carrying into spiritual things the fatal mistake which the apothecary's boy makes in temporal things, when he sticks the wrong label on the wrong bottle, or leaves the wrong bottle at the wrong door. And yet it is the necessary result of trying to prescribe for the soul's need without a system of moral theology individually applied.

For, ask any zealous Protestant clergyman whose duties have led him much among the poor and ill-instructed, or among the timid and scrupulous, of whatever amount of education. He will tell you how often he has had to remove (or try to remove) the most fatal ignorance and the most distressing alarms from the minds of his flock: ignorances that have been doing them a mischief, ay, during long years of their lives, unsuspected, and therefore unremedied. Persons of devout life, really desirous of loving and serving their Lord, are tormented and hindered by the idea (e. g.) that they have committed the unpardonable sin. It robs them not only of peace, but of energy in well-doing and faith in prayer: it seems to come in like a chill cloud between their souls and all perception of the Divine love. Their minds rest upon some one or more sins of their past lives, which may seem to them to have been so deliberate, committed against such light, and with such special aggravation, that they cannot but give a verdict against themselves.

We are neither exaggerating nor speaking without some experience, when we say that such dreadful and depressing states of mind may weigh down the spirit for years, like a disease preying upon some vital organ of the frame, and making sure advances, because no aid has been called in to its relief. And when at length the intolerable agony of such a secret, no longer to be suppressed, forces the avowal (we cannot term it confession) to a minister of religion, perhaps when the best years of life are gone and the best energies of the spirit have been sapped; or on the very death-bed—what does the Protestant system supply to combat the deep-seated disease? It can but point to passages of holy Scripture, which the sufferer is unable to appropriate to himself because they are counterbalanced by the other texts, which are the very foundation of his alarm. Or the minister speaks in general of the Divine mercies; but what is such a declaration, as an offset against the personal, individual fear? What is it to me to know that there is a paradise, if when I would approach it, the flaming sword, turning every way against me, guards the entrance? All such saying 'peace, peace,' where there is no peace, is but a cruel mockery, as holy Scripture itself describes it to be.

But now take the Catholic under similar distress. First, it is by no means so likely that he would find himself thus. From his earliest years he has been catechised in the true nature of sin. He has been made aware of the difference between mortal and venial sin; not that he may remain at ease under the commission of venial sins, or forget that they tend to mortal, but that he may know something of his present position in the covenant of grace, and not lie under the dreadful apprehension of being without, when by God's mercy he is still within. Then again, he has known, ever since he learnt his catechism, what is the divinely-appointed remedy for sin, and where he can find council under his doubtfulness as well as strength against temptations. He knows where to find the Gospel individualised to him; its precious promises, its warnings, its practical rules, applied to his own case. And in the very beginnings of such a state of mind, he could at once have gone to his spiritual physician, without waiting till the disease had gained head. Under the seal of an inviolable secrecy,—not merely the secrecy of honor, sympathy, or human trust, but such as bears the image and superscription of the Heavenly King, and is impressed by the divine force of a Sacrament, that vexed and tempted soul makes known all its state. There is no reserve, for it is a supernatural act. There is no shrinking which grace does not enable him to overcome; for it is anticipating the future tribunal of the justice of Christ by the present tribunal of His compassion. He details, not only his present distress for the sake of relief, but all its causes, antecedents, accompaniments, in order to a permanent remedy. It is the complete unbosoming of the pent-up sorrows of a solitary spirit, which could not be adequately provided for by the kindest and most tender treatment of earth, and therefore comes with a truer sense of the fulness of the relief afforded by heaven. He learns to distinguish between what was merely a vexation from the enemy, and might safely be despised, and what was a temptation to be guarded against, or a fall to be repented of. He learns by the aid of a discreet and charitable guide

the dominant fault of his own character, so as to attack the evil at its root. And he leaves the confessional with the lightness of one who has had the burden of some crushing weight removed from his shoulders; with the comfort of having submitted the difficulties of his own case to a treatment of tenderness and patient skill; and with the peace resulting from the courage by which he has gained a victory over his pride, reserve, and hardness of heart.

Oh, let those who have never experienced these things, for once believe those who have! Say that confession had no such distinct foundation in the revealed law of God as a duty, as the appointed remedy after mortal sin. Yet as a comfort for the faint-hearted, as a safeguard against dangers, and a chair of teaching for the maxims of the spiritual life, and a standard for the practical application and a fountain of cleansing and health, where lesser stains and infirmities that darken and weaken without destroying the soul may be done away; it would still remain a boon of unspeakable mercy to His erring and deluded creatures. To say that the confessional tends to an indifference regarding sin, and that the benefit of absolution so repeatedly afforded dismisses people without a firm purpose to "go and sin no more," is like saying that to apply some long-needed remedy to a malignant disorder, and then to brace up the enervated frame by a judicious course of tonics and wholesome exercise, is the very way to perpetuate the disorder itself.

"But then these questions,"—you will persist, with the copy of Dens or Liguori in your hand, which you have brought on purpose to make out a case against us. Well, we answer, as to these questions—let us join issue upon them. What do they amount to? Very distressing many of them are, doubtless, as many parts of holy Scripture itself are very distressing, and as all warning against particular forms of human sin must needs be, if not vague and pointless. But do you imagine that these questions are applied at random to the first comer? Do you believe their application to be frequent, not rare? or sudden, or matter of fact, instead of most discreet and gradual, with a wary fear of teaching evil unknown, instead of eliciting what has been both known and practiced? Let us go back to our old parallel of medical science. What tremendous diseases do you find on the recognised list, besides extraordinary symptoms combinations of ailments, aggravated cases, operations such as might make one swoon to witness! There is elephantiasis, opisthotonus, plica polonica, bronchotomy, lithotomy, extirpation of the eyeball, trepanning of the skull, &c. And yet, what soberminded person would own to be afflicted with such horrible disorders, or are going to submit to such terrific cures? You are suffering from indigestion, or have the remains of influenza, and you knock at his door. You would certainly be shocked as well as astonished, and immediately take your leave with a low estimate of his medical skill and of himself, should he begin with, Well, sir, I suppose you have brought me a case of elephantiasis; or, Pray, ma'am, how long have you been afflicted with plica polonica? And yet priests, men consecrated to God, whose daily lives are prayer, whose hands have that very morning lifted the spotless Sacrifice toward heaven, are to be supposed habitually, and in a far graver subject-matter, to tamper with the feelings and moral condition of those who come to consult them, in a way that would not be tolerated in any general practitioner who ever walked the hospitals!

These are points that can scarcely be dealt upon without that degree of indignation which makes it difficult to treat them patiently. But we wish such persons as possess that "dangerous thing"—"a little knowledge" of our moral theology, an who quote our books just where they chance to open them, would give themselves the trouble to read the rules laid down by the authorities followed in the confessional on the subject of "Interrogations." Or let them turn to the solemn warnings wherewith the Doctors and Saints of the Church have prefaced their expositions of such portions of the decalogue as extended over ground perilous to the human weakness of the student. They will see, if they are candid judges, that with such a preparation of heart as is there implied, and with the glory of God and the good of souls proposed as the simple end to be aimed at, and unholo curiosity must die on the threshold of the confessional, or live only in such sons of Eli as choose to aggravate their own perdition by an unhallowed use of sacred things, and the possible ruin of the souls of God's people.

One brief word more. Statistics would give a return of the prevalence of insanity in Protestant as compared in Catholic countries. But we will not appeal to the statistics: we will call in as evidences those ominously extensive lunatic asylums in our country and commercial towns,—not to mention the metropolis. It is worthy of a thought to the statesman or the philanthropist, whether any means have been neglected to check this fearful evil, as well as the numerous suicides which decimate the candidates for admission. To a Catholic, the answer would be easy: Multiply your confessionals, and you may pull down the wings of your asylums. Insanity is in many cases the result of a solitary mind. The thoughts brood and prey upon themselves: phantoms of the past take every frightful shape, because you keep the shutters tightly bolted, and no ray of light penetrates from without to lay the ghost, and show things in their true colors and bearings. Your silent system, your solitary confinement, has ended again and again in madness; and you yourselves begin to say, No wonder. "It is not good for man to be alone:" and if

there be a divinely-appointed channel through which he is invited to unburden his pent-up spirit, communicate with unerring Truth, make known the sorrow he would never endure to breathe humanly, and receive a supernatural comfort and guidance through the lips of anointed man—what human hand shall dare to close that channel? Would you heal the demoniac, still his ravings, and see him "sitting, clothed, and in his right mind?" Then bring him to the feet of his Saviour as his Saviour has ordained. But what is Protestantism itself but one vast solitary confinement: a silent system, in which souls remain couped up, apart, self-centered, self destroying? Depend upon it, Saint Alphonsus is the diviner Howard, and the dreaded tribunal of penance might go far to depopulate Bedlam.

**WANDERING WHIMSCALITIES.**

A poetess sighs: "I sit all alone, I sit by myself, I sit all alone." If she would stop writing she might have more company.

A Kansas Prohibitionist wants maple sugar included in the list of intoxicating drinks, because it is a product of the flowing bole.

Visitor: "Waiter, I saw your thumb in this soup as you were bringing it to me."—"Oh, it's of no consequence sir. It wasn't hot enough to scald me."

A news item says that "sharks have appeared off the coast at Long Branch." This seems like a rather impolite way of announcing that landlords have opened their hotels for the season.

"Drunk again, James?" said a minister to his beadle whom he met on the road, evidently much the worse of liquor. "Ay, man!" responded James in a tone of inebriate sympathy. "So am I."

"What's the matter?" called a mother, turning to her little boy, who "set up" a howl. "What are you crying about?" "I want something." "What do you want?" "I have forgotten what it is, an' that's what makes me cry."

It is said that bees and wasps will not sting a person whose skin is smeared with honey. This, of course, may be perfectly true; but the trouble with the insects is that they won't always wait until a fellow can smear himself.

Senator Palmer, of Michigan, says "the happiest man is the one who has the most illusions." It appears that an impression has got abroad that the happiest man is the one who has the most money. We may be very happy yet.

Oh, no, indeed, it can't be an ordinary colander that they use in Congress, for the bottom of a colander is full of holes. A calendar must be something entirely different, for the papers say that it is full of important measures which cannot be got through.

"How do you loike the new school, Mickey, my son?" "Purty well; but, mother, that makes the boys at school think I'm Oirish?" "Its meself doesn't know; but I've been suspected av bein' Oirish meself, when 'niver a hint av it they iver had from me."

Probably the most remarkable sense of humour ever known was that of a German soldier who laughed uproariously all the time he was being flogged, and when the officer, at the end, inquired the cause of his mirth, broke out in a fresh fit of laughter, and cried, "Why, I'm the wrong man."

**The Editor's Quae.**

"Met with an accident?" said a subscriber who was two or three years in arrears, as he entered the sanctum of a rural editor. "I see your face is bruised, and you have got a black eye."

"Well, said the editor, with a sigh, as he arose and began to roll up his sleeves, "delinquent subscribers must be made to pay up somehow, but I sometimes come out second best as you see."

"Ha!" laughed the visitor as he took out his wallet, "I just dropped in to pay my bill."

And the editor chuckled softly to himself after the visitor's departure: "Life is full of compensations. Falling over that wood-box was a blessing to me."

**What Her Bank Was.**

A certain widow who flourished in the city of Cork, and who did a little banking/business on her own account, cashing bills for gentlemen in distress, made her appearance at Bath in the height of the season, and her stylish dress and impressive manners made her an object of interest. "She must be a lady of quality," said one gentleman. "A marchioness," said another. "A duchess," said a third. "Faith, ye are all wrong!" said an Irish officer. "I know the lady well—she is not even a countess." "What is she, then?" was the simultaneous question. "Why, gentlemen, the fact is she is a discountess."

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Its course of studies comprises the Greek, Latin, French and English languages and literature; History, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, higher Mathematics, mental Philosophy, Natural Sciences and Theology. Although chiefly intended to prepare young men for the study of the liberal professions and divinity, it is also calculated to fit them for commercial pursuits. Its large and spacious grounds, secluded from the city, offers all the advantages of a country site, and are so near the city of St. Boniface and Winnipeg as to secure all the advantages of a town residence.

The College can accommodate a hundred students, of whom eighty may be boarders. The terms have been made as easy as possible. \$15 a month for boarding, and \$3 a month for those who take their meals in town and sleep in the college, beside a small additional fee, for a few dormitory articles, of \$2 a year; the whole to be paid half yearly in advance.

The uniform consists of a frock coat, with trousers, necktie and felt hat, all black. Each student is to be sufficiently provided with other articles of clothing.

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The scholastic year opens on the third Wednesday of August and ends about the 20th of June.

ST. BONIFACE, AUGUST 28TH, 1885.

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Claims of Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers, Province of Manitoba

WHEREAS since the completion of the allotment of the 1,400,000 acres of and set a Part under the Manitoba Act to extinguish the Indian title of the Children of 200 Half-breed heads of families resident in the Province of Manitoba, on the 15th July, 1870, a large number of additional claimants have come and some are still coming forward with the evidence necessary to prove that they are children of Half-breed heads of families and were residents of Manitoba at the date mentioned:

And whereas, the 1,400,000 acres set apart under the Manitoba Act aforesaid have been exhausted by such allotment, and by Order in Council, dated the 29th April, 1885, it has been decided to extinguish such additional claims, known as "Supplementary Claims," by an issue of \$240.00 in scrip to each Half-breed child entitled;

And whereas, by the Act 37 Vic., Cap. 20, the Half-breed heads of families resident in the said Province on the date mentioned, and the "Original White Settlers," and the children of such settlers, as defined in said act, are each entitled to receive scrip to the extent of \$150.00

And whereas, His Excellency the Governor General in Council has deemed it expedient to limit the time within which all claims of the nature aforesaid may be presented, herefore:

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that under the authority contained in the Order in Council above mentioned, bearing date the 20th April, 1885, all claims under and by virtue of the provisions of the said Order in Council, and the Act 37 Vic., Cap. 20, to Half-breed and "Original White Settlers," scrip that are not filed on or before the 1st of May, 1885, with the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, together with the necessary proof therefor, shall cease and determine.

By order, A. M. BURGESS, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, May 23, 1885.