CONVERTS AND BORN CATHOLICS.

Some Useful Lessons Drawn From a Publication of the Former's Grievances.

We have received a very large number of letters from converts, giving their experience since they entered the Church, says the Liverpool Catholic Times. Some few writers have expressed surprise and regret that we should have allowed complaints from converts to be published in our columns. We can only say that we have done it purposely and from a settled policy. In our view the space devoted to correspondence in a newspaper cannot be better employed than in ventilating grievances. If the grievances are legitimate there is a probability of redress when they are made known, and even if they cannot be redressed it is well to remember they are less dangerous and trying when they are no longer, so to speak, beneath the surface. If the grievances are groundless and mere fictions of the imagination, then they are convincingly exposed, and those who have been entertaining them are led to abandon them. But in any case it is not our business to produce false impressions by painting rosy pictures and ignoring everything which is distasteful. That, in our opinion, would be an absolutely baleful course. Converts coming into the Church might form to themselves the conviction that they were taking their place amongst people who were almost free from human imperfections, and when they discovered that the true state of affairs was by no means what they had believed it to be there would undoubtedly be a strong reaction in their minds. Better is it converts should recognize that Catholics, like non Catholics, fall far short of the high standard of conduct laid down by their religion, that they have their weaknesses and imperfections, and that some show a remarkable insensibility to the precepts and beauties of the creed they profess. Catholics are in fact much like other folk around them so far as mere external acts are concerned.

But we think that, on the whole, the testimony of converts is creditable to the born Catholics. They are, as a rule, genuinely kind, and besides bearing their own trials with patient resignation to the Divine will, gladly afford to their neighbors such practical sympathy as they can tender. To this various correspondents bear witness. The converts, on their part, are, according to the statements of the majority of our correspondents, conspicuous for fervor and zeal, and bring with them into the Church many qualities which must powerfully tend to its advantage. But the correspondence rightly considered conveys a few useful lessons to both born Catholics and converts. In the first place, the born Catholics should always bear in mind that converts living in a new atmosphere and amidst new surroundings are sometimes peculiarly sensitive. Having done that which is always to be deemed heroic—having renounced the creed in which they were brought up and sacrificed worldly prospects for the purpose of following Christ—they certainly have a right to expect that they will be received by Catholics with gladness and sympathy, and we are pleased to observe from the unanimous testimony of converts who have written to us that this kindness they invariably meet with from the clergy.

The laity have not been so universally helpful. But it cannot be forgotten that Catholics are only a small minority in this country, and that in every-day life many of them feel it would not be right to draw distinctions between Catholics and non-Catholics. Moreover, whilst converts deserve more than can possibly be done to compensate them for their sacrifices, it would be a misfortune if through the belief that the path of life was made easy for them unworthy people without actual faith were drawn into the Catholic body. That there are not many who would thus abuse the forms of religion we are firmly persuaded, but even a few might do much mischief.

Again, born Catholics are perhaps too much inclined to disapprove of the converts' energy with regard to church affairs. Now it is certain that this energy to be effective should be wisely exercised, but under any circumstances it is a sign of interest in religion, and even when it goes beyond the bounds of discretion should be patiently borne with. Indeed it would be no small blessing if it could find a solution of a difficulty causes which causes grave inconvenience in this country—the difficulty of bringing the members of the various congregations into close touch and sympathy with one another. But it is a difficulty in the Church of England as well as in the Catholic Church, and it is to be feared it will only disappear gradually with the disappearance of class distinctions and the growth of a sense of the dignity of human nature.

Meanwhile every effort should be made by pastors and people to prevent the isolation felt by converts and others who become members of congregations where they have no personal friends. It is, we believe, no exaggeration to say that there are some districts where a man may frequent the services in the Church from year's end to year's end without being spoken to by a fellow-Catholic, except perhaps the priest. He may possess ideas and accomplishments which might be used with great profit for the advancement of religion, but no one suggests that they be so used, and they go to waste. It seems to us that both born Catholics and converts should unite in carrying out some broad scheme for putting an end to this chilling reserve, which is retarding the progress of the Church. For the rest, we would advise Catholics of every type not to be afraid of honest criticism. We all need it. Born Catholics are not all saints, but creatures in whose lives the most human elements are frequently visible. Theirs, however, is a religion which imparts hopes and consolations ineffably sweet; yea, fountains of grace in the sacraments and nothing less than the presence of the Saviour Himself in the sacrament of His love. It is for this manifestation of God's goodness through His Church, the pillar and ground of truth, that converts join the Church, and though the road they travel may be rough, and the struggle for the means of existence may be severe, and tribulations may be many, yet, amid the spiritual joys vouchsafed to them by God, they cannot help feeling that they have chosen the better way.

THE AGED PONTIFF.

Text of the Will He Made in 1837—Has No Chronic Disease.

It is very probable that Leo XIII., like Pius IX. and like the greater number of Roman old men, will leave this earth when his time comes without long suffering, writes "Innominato" in the New York Sun. His illness and the fatal result will become known almost simultaneously. That is one of the virtues of this (Rome's) climate that is so much maligned; it acts sharply and quickly.

Leo XIII. is suffering this year, as in years past, the inconveniences of the warm season, with the added aggravation that this is his eighty-eighth summer. His extreme thinness is increasing steadily, but contrary to the statement made lately by a journalist, age has not affected the clearness of his mind nor the firmness of his will. He still sleeps little and spends his hours of waking in political and poetical meditation. No change has been made in the order that keeps the Pope's bed-room closed at night and which removes from him during the hours of rest his chamberlains and his closest servants, even his valet Centra, a native of Carpineto, the home of the Peccis, who alone has in his possession the key to the Pope's bed room.

According to the physicians' reports, the Pope is free from any chronic disease and all his organs are in perfect condition. It was not always thus. At the school of Viterbo, where Joachim Pecci spent his early youth, he suffered from a serious malady of the intestines of which it was feared he would never be cured. About his twentieth year he believed that he was wasting with phthisis and wrote an eloquent piece of Latin verse on his approaching end. "Why flatter thyself? Why promise thyself long years? Fate urges thee on in the dreadful path of death." Ten years later, when he was Apostolic Delegate at Benevento, he came near dying of a pernicious fever. It was thought that he was lost. He was saved by the act, then thought foolhardy, of Dr. Volpis, physician to the King of Naples, of plunging him into a bath of cold water at the moment of the most violent attack of the fever.

Joachim Pecci made his will as long ago as September 14, 1837. This is the text of it. It may offer a curious material for comparison when the definitive last will of the reigning Pontig becomes public:

"I leave my soul in the hands of God and of Blessed Mary. * * *

"I institute as heirs of my property my very dear brothers Charles and John Baptist, in equal shares, enjoining on them however, to have fifty Masses a year said for the space of five years for the benefit of my soul. After that time they will be freed from the burden, though I recommend myself to their charity to help my soul still further. My heirs are to be bound also to distribute once for all twenty scudi to the most needy poor of Carpineto, my native town.

"I bequeath to my Uncle Anthony as a slight token of my respectful affection the porcelain service which His Eminence Cardinal Sala has presented to me."

It is not at all likely that Leo XIII. will be able to bequeath to his family much more ready money now than then, for his personal fortune has not increased. It consists of about 3,000 francs a year, arising from some agricultural property near Carpineto. His nephews will receive something better than a porcelain service; they will doubtless have the greater part of the jubilee presents sent to the Pontiff by the whole world. The poor, too, will be better treated.

The climate of Belgium was cruel to the Nuncio sent by Gregory XVI., in 1843 to King Leopold. It was therefore not easy to forsee that Leo XIII. would reach such an advanced age. He always seemed weak and frail, and the great responsibilities of his office appeared to crush him down. It is, however, from the time of his becoming Pope that his health has become stronger. Shut up in the vast Vatican inclosure, he has so regulated his life according to the advice of the doctors that he has made himself in a manner invulnerable to the accidents that afflict other mortals. His time for work, for rest, for exercise, the quantity and quality of his food, all is measured. There is no reason why he should ever die.

The greatest danger Leo XIII., has incurred came from the famous Canon Kneipp, who tried to convert him to his method, taking away his protecting flannels, trying to stuff him with his heavy bread and malt, and recommending him to keep his feet for a long time in cold water. The Pope quickly gave up that regimen and granted a prelacy to the terrible empiric. Ever since returning to healthy habits he has continued to keep well, and he has not yet missed any duty of his office. There is, therefore, no reason for alarm at any of the periodic rumors that are spread about the health of Leo XIII. His disease is age, and he bears that cheerfully.

It may be said even that so little flesh, so little body is left to him that suffering and disease have no longer any hold on this humanity, to which only the soul and will are left.

THEY ARE COMING HOME.

The Catholic Sun.

The Church is always willing and ready to receive converts. She is always open for inspection to the honest seeker of religious truth. She helps him on in his religious troubles and never falters on her part to bring a troubled soul home to rest. But she does not do so by prejudicing him against his former belief; nor does she use fanaticism in her missionary work.

The ministers of the Church and every individual who believes in the teachings of the Church have a conscientious obligation imposed upon them to assist, to the best of their ability, their non-Catholic friends who may be anxious to know what are the teachings of the Church. Every Catholic is a missionary in his own sphere. There are hundreds of honest non-Catholics who are always ready to be instructed on Catholic teachings, and Catholics are altogether too backward in coming to their assistance. There are hundreds and even thousands of converts to the Church in this country every year, but the conversions are largely from the higher intellectual circles and in those large centres of the population where the strength of the Church itself, without the aid of any individual missionary work, impresses the non-Catholic and makes him think.

The Church rejoices at all times over a conversion, but she never proclaims her conversions by a flourish of trumpets.

Converts from any of the Protestant sects have never dared, when they came into the Catholic Church, to malign their former creed or brethren. They instinctively feel that such a procedure would not be tolerated by Catholics. It is contrary to the practice and belief of the Church. Then again converts are usually sincere and have respect for the prejudices of their former religious alliances.

A leading Protestant journal recently acknowledged that perversions from Catholicity to Protestantism were invariably the rag tag and bob-tail Cathlics, who were either ignominiously kicked out of the Church or were so lost to their faith that they became ranters against Catholicism for mercenary motives. This is honest and true. Thinking Protestants cannot fail but see the insincerity of such people. The Catholic Church will not tolerate revilers of any creed. She applauds the good work of honest adherents of every religious belief. Conversions to Catholicity are not occasions for jubilee. The Lutheran Reformation caused many to fall away from the old Church, but it will be remembered that the Aryan heresy in the early days of Christianity drew treble the number of perverts, but they all returned to the faith of their fathers.

The present influx to the Church in England is merely the coming home of the prodigals.

DEGREES OF BIGOTRY.

Says the Boston Pilot in a recent issue: "We have often said, and cannot say too often, that no Catholic priest or layman makes a living by insulting Protestants. No Protestant minister converted to Catholicity ever devotes himself to abusing his former coreligionists. He would find it hard to get an audience, if he did." This is very true, and, as the Pilot observes, it is a truth which cannot be too often repeated. It is to the credit of Protestants that we never find any lecturers of the converted priest or escaped nun variety amongst those who come over to the Catholic Church. But it is to the credit of Catholics that, even if there should happen to be such a thing as a convert to Catholicity who desired to lecture on the immoralities of Protestant clergymen, he would find no audience among Catholics. No doubt there are narrow-minded bigots among Catholics as well as among Protestants; but there is a peculiar form of venomous bigotry, which goes the length of eagerly believing everything that is evil of those who differ from it in religious belief. This extreme form of bigotry has little or no existence among Catholics.—New World.

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Remarkable results have been obtained from the use of Maltine with Cod Liver Oil in cases of emaciation associated with bronchial irritation and cough. The efficacy of cod liver oil in this class of affections has long been conceded, and combined as it is in this preparation with the maltine (itself a food and reconstructive of the greatest value), its usefulness is vastly increased. Furthermore, by the action of maltine starchy foods are more easily digested and in larger quantities, affording additional nourishment for the replacement of the waste of the body and for reconstructive purposes. If you are now using cod liver oil or any of the emulsions of this agent, weigh yourself, use Maltine for two weeks and observe the results. You will have gained both weight and strength, and relief from cough, bronchial irritation, and the distress these occasion.

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CLEARING THE AIR ON THE CATHOLIC QUESTION.

"Spain and the Catholic Church" is the title of a well intentioned article by the Rev. Henry A. Stimson, D. D., in the Independent. Mr. Stimson notes the disposition of many non-Catholics to lay upon the Catholic Church the blame of the political state of affairs in Cuba and Porto Rico, which the United States felt compelled to end by armed intervention.

He dissociates himself from this idea. He is too just a man to assert that Spain had to be driven from the Western Hemisphere because her Catholic faith made her not merely indifferent, but cruelly hostile to the liberties of her colonies.

But, he says:

Spain is unquestionably an anachronism, and there is no country in which the Catholic Church has had such unlimited control for more than a thousand years.

It might have been well to add that less than four centuries ago, when the Church was at the height of its influence, Spain was leading the world in discoveries and colonization, and was in the forefront of civilized peoples in the arts and sciences. Even the higher education of women was considered and provided for under Ferdinand and Isabella, as it has not been until very recent years in distinctively Protestant countries.

The decadence of Spain is due very largely to the fact that the Church is not as powerful as once it was within her borders; to the lack of real, practical Catholicity among men who have come to the front in politics. This state of affairs is found in other countries in Europe, even in progressive France, where we see the extraordinary spectacle of a purely Catholic nation governed by a handful of infidels. It is difficult for American Catholics, used to a voice in the government, to keep their tempers, in view of such conditions, and the popular lethargy which it implies. But Catholicity is not responsible for this lethargy.

There are periods of growth and decadence, of sickness and health, in the lives of nations. There are national as there are individual temperaments. A people brought up for centuries in the monarchial tradition look with fear on the Republic. No Catholic sovereign in Europe makes the extravagant claims for his office that the Protestant William III. of Germany makes.

The old French aristocrats do not welcome the command of Pope Leo XIII. to give their loyalty to the Republic.

We are glad of Doctor Stimson's disposition to recognize even vaguely the difference between the divine and the human side of the Church, and the power within herself to expel the errors and iniquities of the latter.

He bids his own co-religionists look to their own record:

The Protestants are facing responsibility for facts which have grown up in communities wholly our own, too alarming and altogether too reprehensible to leave us free to condemn others. The canvas lately in progress in this city under the conduct of the Federation of Churches revealed whole blocks of American and Protestant families of the well-to-do classes who are as utterly ignoring religion, so far as church attendance goes as if there were no such thing; two hundred and thirty three families out of one group of three hundred and sixty-five, for example, admitting that they had no church connection of any kind, not even a child in any Sunday school; while all around them the Catholic families present hardly a precentage of non church attendants. I hold no brief for the Catholic Church, and I am sufficiently heavy hearted over the burden which religious work in the city lays upon us all; but we must all bear witness to the success with which these, our Catholic neighbors, retain a hold upon their own people, to the immense audiences they secure, to the extent to which they exert oversight and care of their children, to their attitude toward divorce and the maintenance of the family, and to the revival now among them of the pulpit and the purely spiritual function of the Church.

We may fairly claim an unbroken succession of men who stood for the spirit of Christ and the Church, even in the most evil days, as preachers of the Gospel to the poor; and that the Church politic has been largely a figment of over-excited Protestant imagination; but we are glad of Dr. Stimson's brave admissions, nevertheless.

The Independent itself rejoices that one of our Peace Commissioners is a Catholic—Justice White of the United States Supreme Court. Says our e. c.:

He is from California, and he is a Democrat and a Catholic. Each of these facts is a qualification in his favor. There ought to be at least one Democrat on the Commission; we had hoped it might be ex-Secretary Olney, but it is understood that he declined. This is not a partisan war, and the Commission should not be a partisan one. It is especially happy that one of the Commissioners should be a Catholic. The territory that comes to us is all Catholic territory. One-fifth of our population was already Catholic. The five Spanish Commissioners will all be Catholics, and questions of the treatment of the Catholic religion will be likely to come up in the discussion of the terms of peace. Of course as a Government we shall know no difference between Catholic and Protestant; but it is well that a Catholic should be on the Commission, and a justice of a Supreme Court at that, to explain to them that no injury will be done to Catholic interests, only equal justice, and that this is not a war against the Catholic Church.

Indeed it seems that a war which, if the anti Catholic bigots could have had their way, would have revived all the old-time knownothing spirit, is destined to have an effect directly opposite. Undoubtedly this is due in large part to the splendid response of the Catholics to the call to arms; but, also, in some degree to the better knowledge of the character of our opponents.—Boston Pilot.

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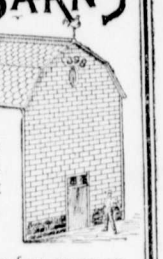

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