

## MARTIN LUTHER'S OAK.

Protestantism Finds a Truly Allegorical Representation in This Tree.

The following letter written by an American gentleman travelling in Europe to the editor of the *Irish Catholic* can not fail to prove interesting. The oak tree of Martin Luther is famous in history. Protestants fell to believing its growth and vigor to be an allegorical emblem of the spread of their creed. So it was indeed. Now at the end of the nineteenth century, disintegrating Protestantism finds its truly allegorical representation in the decaying oak. The letter is as follows:

"In my travels on the Continent I have hit upon another chapter in the history of Martin, and I think it would interest the humorous faculties of your Irish readers. Outside the City of Worms there stands a tree which, at first sight—and in winter—presents the appearance of a truly majestic oak. It was planted, so the story runs, by the great Doctor himself, amid the plaudits of the populace and under the supervision and protection of the assembled nobles and princes. In planting it Martin is quoted as saying: 'As this shoot shall grow and expand its branches to the winds of heaven, so shall my doctrine grow and overshadow Romanism!' And truly it did grow to majestic proportions. The birds of the air, of the most diverse hues, came and nestled in its boughs. They had their little squabbles, but the oak outlived them. Persons from various lands and climes came, and saw, and were conquered by its towering stature. In their heated enthusiasm they declared that it was not an oak, but the gigantic tree that was to spring from the little mustard seed of the Gospel. Its preservation became an object of solicitude to all who made a penny from the visitors, but especially to the civil authorities. The punishment of the son of Hell, who unconsciously touched the Ark of the Covenant, was threatened to those who should lay profound hands on the *Lutherische*. Time, that waits for no man, passed on, and the princes having other matters to occupy their attention became lukewarm in their patronage. The avaricious inhabitants of the neighborhood began to lop off little branches and sold them to the visitors as souvenirs. At the skillful hands of Martin's admirers, who had acquired a world-wide reputation for carving and whittling down, these looped-off branches were made into pens, paper-knives, whistles, etc., etc. They assumed all conceivable fantastic forms to suit the arbitrary tastes of pilgrims who came from different nations. This barbarism increased when the worldly and greedy nineteenth century dawned on Worms, and the princes, engaged in devising measures against the advance of Socialism, persevered in their cruel negligence. But the process began to tell on the neglected oak. The winter's frost nipped its tender buds. In Spring it did not send forth so vigorously its verdant blossoms, and new branches failed to replace the old. But the worst was yet to come; for the trunk now began to show indications of a dry rot in the centre, and announced that the principle of interior life was fast receding. The princes now awoke to the danger. They assembled in Council. Was the Oak of Luther to perish? No. They swore by the memory of Martin himself that were there any virtue in the might and money of temporal power, it should never be allowed to decay. They bound it around with hoops of iron that are still pointed out to the pilgrims to Worms. Learned professors were hired from the universities, and they applied to it the inventions of modern science, but the clamps of power and the injections of science have availed nothing. The rot continues. The American and English travellers continue to buy the pens but returning home find their own pens of more practical utility, and the Luther pens are placed on the mantelpiece as an object of curiosity to visitors. Yet a few years and the present proud inscription will have to be changed to some thing like the following:

"This is the decaying trunk of the once famous tree planted by Dr. Martin Luther" or "On this spot, stood formerly the majestic *Lutherische*." Verily time and nature are unsparing in their sarcasm. If Alexander Pope lived to-day and visited Worms, he would, I fancy pen a pithy distich on the powers and satire of the great poetess Mother Nature. "Did it ever on that gala day enter into the sublime head of poor Dr. Martin that a scolding Yankee, of Romanish faith, from the sprays of Niagara would, in the year of grace 1894, contemplate with mixed feelings of amusement, pity and contempt the tree of his prophetic vision? Or did he dream at all that this scolding Yankee would communicate his impressions on the subject, in blasphemous manner, to a Catholic people on the West Coast of Europe, who, after centuries of enlightened Protestantism and refined torture, still proudly glory in the name of Papist, and laugh in their sleeves at the prophecy of Worms. "I must apologize for occupying so much of your valuable space; but to avert confusion from the minds of your readers, I deem it necessary to add that I have been describing the oak of Worms, and have said nothing of the doctrine of 'the great Reformer.' I am dear sir,

Yours truly,  
AMERICANUS.

Who has not seen how disagreeable and faulty characters will expand under kindness—Faber.

## THE CHURCHES OF THE EAST.

Surely all good Catholics who desire the prosperity of Holy Church should be ready to sympathize deeply with our Holy Father, Leo XIII., in his earnest efforts for the restoration of the separated Churches of the East to the unity of the Holy Roman Church, from which they have been so long needlessly separated. In proposing the general intention of the League of the Sacred Heart for September the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* gives a resume of the various divisions of schismatical churches scattered through the East, amounting in all to some 15,000,000. On this the *Messenger* remarks:

"Vast as the numbers still included in these separated churches may appear, it is consoling to know that there is also a vast and ever increasing movement towards union with the Holy See. Now that it is understood by West and East that their differences of rite and discipline offer no insuperable obstacle to this union, as many Popes, among others Benedict XIV., Pius IX., and Leo XIII., have so clearly stated; and above all since the apparent doctrinal errors of the East are due rather to misunderstandings or their lack of opportunities for theological study, than to wilfully accept error on their part, we may justly assume that the greatest number of these people live and die in good faith, and that they have for that very reason a more urgent claim on our prayers, since all they need is light to know and embrace the one dogma which they have not yet willingly accepted because they have not yet fully recognized the authority on which it has been declared." Let all good Catholics pray earnestly for the restoration of unity among the Churches of the East.—N. Y. Catholic Review.

## HEROISM OF A FIREMAN.

A Thrilling Spectacle Witnessed at a Fire in New York City.

New York, Sept. 4.—The flat house, 376 Park avenue, caught fire this morning at 3:30 o'clock, and the whole building was soon ablaze. The tenants had all fled, except the Donohue family on the fourth floor. John Donohue, the husband, was away, and his wife and two children were alone in the house. Mrs. Donohue was aroused by hammering on the door. Wrapping her children in the blankets in which they slept and herself in another, she hurried down. But at the second door she was met by flames shooting upward, and, from the crashing at the foot of the stairway, she knew it had been burned away, and that escape that way was impossible. Dreadfully frightened she returned the way she had come carrying her babies, flames following her up the stairs almost as fast as she ran. She got to the door first, however, and setting the children down, she locked and bolted it and stepped to the window. There she saw the street below crowded by a dense mass of people, but no ladders, no firemen in sight. The flames broke through the door. Mrs. Donohue hesitated no longer, but kissing her 2-year-old Herbert, she held him clear of the sill, and with averted face, dropped him. Next she dropped Julia, four years old. But dropped upon a canvas awning. Their bodies made a rent in the canvas as they dropped through safe without a scratch. They were held up to encourage the mother. Just then the firemen came rushing into the street, and Mrs. Donohue, who had prepared to jump, clung to the sill and hung there somehow. Up went a big ladder in a flash. A brave fireman sprang ahead of all his fellows, ran up the rounds and caught Mrs. Donohue in his arms and carried her safely down, while the crowd below were crying, slapping each other's backs and cheering their wild ecstasy over the heroic deed so quickly and bravely done.

## Imperative Need of Intelligent Faith.

Rev. J. A. Zahm in September Donahoe's.

The arguments advanced against religion are more plausible now than formerly, because urged in the name and with the authority of science; the poison of error is more subtle and most potent where its existence is least suspected. It is found in books, newspapers, magazines; in works of art, history, literature, philosophy, and religion, as well as science; it is concealed in sermons and public discourse, and oftentimes plays havoc in the simplest social gatherings. Everything that comes under the magic spell of science—and here I mean infidel and agnostic science—is affected by the ubiquitous poison. The whole intellectual atmosphere is polluted with it, and the only saving antidote is a strong, healthy, intelligent faith.

I lay special stress on intelligent faith, because this it is which is often, alas! so sadly lacking. If our people were better instructed in the errors and methods of the dominant teachings of the day, they would not be so exposed as they now are. Forewarned, it is said, is forearmed, but forewarned in the present crisis is not sufficient. We must arm those who look to us for help and guidance with the helmet of faith and the shield of impregnable truth. We must meet the enemy on their own ground, and assail them in their chosen coigne of vantage. We must show that the science on which the enemies of the Church are wont to rest their case is sham science, or a science misapplied; that their proofs are but assertions without foundation in fact; that their premises are fallacious, or that their conclusions are false and unwarranted.

## The Church of the Poor.

There is one reproach cast upon the Church by a certain class of people which it can never cease to deserve,—a reproach that is in reality a tribute to her divinity. "The work of the Catholic Church," it is said, "lies largely among a poor, illiterate and morally degraded class, and therefore it naturally shares in the odium of their faults." Mr. Frederic R. Couder, of the New York Bar, in an article on the American Protective Association published in the *Forum*, has a reply to this statement well worthy of quotation. "If this be true," he says, "then indeed so long as the Church retains the slightest claim to a divine origin and a divine purpose, so long must that reproach be imputed to her. She is, it is true, and has always been, the Church of the poor and the illiterate. She alone has preached the Gospel to them; she alone has won their confidence; and she alone has sought, and often with triumphant success, to raise them from degradation to a higher standard. She has in this followed the example of her Master and Founder. His walks were among the poor, the illiterate, and the morally degraded. His hands did not shrink from touching the leper, from blessing the sinner; they were raised to Heaven in favor of those who had no friends on earth. He sent His Apostles for the express purpose of doing that which, if we credit the statement, brings odium upon the Church! Perhaps this may be so. Then let her continue to earn that odium in the largest sense. The hatred which good works bring with them, and the contempt which humble charity may create, will not long endure, and certainly will not spread far among our people."—Ave Maria.

## "ABBE" MCMMASTER.

Rev. Mark Gross' Interesting Description of the Incidents of His Conversion.

The *Carmelite Review* gives the following interesting account of the conversion of McMaster: "Although leading, apparently, a gay life in the fashionable society of New York at that period, he practiced great austerities and corporal penances, in hopes of subduing by this means the pride of his heart. About this time the movement towards Catholicity in England was making itself felt even in this country. McMaster, urged by his own yearning for the true faith, wrote to Cardinal, then Dr. Newman, on the subject of his own doubts and fears, etc. He received a very kind letter in return, and desiring to confer with him still further in this question so dear to him, yet shrinking from imposing on the time of so busy and celebrated a man, who besides, was his senior by many years, asked if there were not some younger hand that could convey his thoughts. In this way a most interesting correspondence was started between Dalgrains and McMaster. Some of the former's letters are still preserved. He urged McMaster not to delay to 'go over to Rome,' as he called it, saying, that if he viewed matters as he did, he could no longer hesitate.

Although McMaster was fully convinced of the truth, yet his proud heart rebelled. He had long before said to himself: 'Either the Messiah is yet to come and the Jews are right; or he has come and the Catholic Church is right.'

How often in after years he bitterly bewailed that it was his "miserable pride that had kept him without so long." "I used to say," he would add, "that if God Almighty had not cared enough about me to put me in His Church why should I go through all it would cost me to get there?" Confession was no stumbling block, as he was accustomed to go since his entrance into Episcopalianism. The most difficult mountain he had to climb was the beautiful mount that had held within her Him whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain. He could not pray to the Virgin. And yet his longing to do so increased as the days went by and he became more and more familiar with the praise that had been written in her honor. The following is his own account of the moment when grace touched his heart and Mary became to him his queen and mother forever. He was reading a treatise of the great St. Ephrem, so devoted a servant to our Blessed Lady. His whole soul was stirred by its wonderful beauty as he read, growing each moment more intense, until he cried out to her: "Oh, if I could only pray to you!" A cold sweat covered him from head to foot, his whole frame shook with emotion. He said, "I will." He knelt and prayed to her. From that moment he never had a doubt. He had found his Mother and ever afterwards he styled himself "Blessed Lady's boy."

He placed himself immediately under the care of the Rev. Gabriel Rumpier, C. SS. R., then rector of the convent in 3rd street, New York, attached to the church of the Most Holy Redeemer, for instructions in the Catholic faith. He was enchanted with the abruptness with which this good Father received him. "If you are sure you are in earnest I will instruct you, but if you are not, you had better stay as you would be worse damned as a bad Catholic."

Now that McMaster had, at length, overcome all obstacles (that is all that had swayed him) in the conquest of his own heart, his ardent impulsive nature was impatient of the happy moment which would admit him to the one true fold.

Father Rumpier gave him at first the small catechism. He returned with

it the next morning assuring him that he knew it from cover to cover. But the good Father (perhaps to try him) only shook his head and said: "What you learn so fast, you forget just so fast," and insisted on his studying it longer. McMaster was received into the Church on the eve of Corpus Christi, which fell that year, 1845, on the 8th of June. He could not have the happiness of being even conditionally baptized, but judging from his own expressions with regard to himself at that time, his soul must have been well cleansed by his hearty sorrow for the sins of his whole life, of which he of course made a general confession. "While he was kneeling at the altar, candle in hand, piously reading his profession of faith to Father Rumpier, he accidentally set fire to Father Tschenn's hair, one of the Fathers who assisted at the ceremony. Walking together afterwards in the little garden of the convent, Father Rumpier, said to him: 'Mr. McMaster, you begin well, setting fire to a priest.' "Oh," answered he, "if I don't set fire to something more than that, it will be a pity."

He received his First Communion the next day. The certificate of his reception into the Church and of his First Communion were found among his private papers.

McMaster took in confirmation the name Alphonsus, and dropped the "A" in "Mac" thinking McMaster more Catholic. Hence he was known as James A. McMaster.

In the midst of his great spiritual joy his poor heart had much to suffer. A most touching interview—of which, unfortunately, there appears no written record—occurred at this time between himself and his father. On becoming an Episcopalian McMaster had been cut off by his family. They regarded him, with much sorrow, as an outcast, who had deserted the faith which they firmly believed to be the only true one. But now that he had become a Papist, the poor father's heart smote him, lest his harsh treatment of his son had led him into what he held to be the worst of all creeds. He feared at the same time that his son was somewhat demented in taking such a step.

Accordingly, in spite of his age and infirmities, he undertook the then tedious journey to New York City, seeking for this son who was lost to him. The night before meeting him he spent at the house of a friend, and McMaster learned afterward that they had overheard him through the long silent hours, groaning and murmuring to himself, "Oh, my son! My son!" On approaching his son the next day the father was much moved, and said to him: "My poor boy, come home with me!" "Father," replied young McMaster, "you believe I am crazy." Then followed a long interview, during the course of which young McMaster declared, in loving words, that he owed his present happiness to him from his earliest years to seek after truth and justice and holiness. This was their last meeting on earth. Letters passed between them. His father's were written in a dignified and elevated style, penetrated with a deep religious spirit. He sighed over his poor "erring boy" bitterly reproached him that he was the sorrow of his old age—that he ever desired of him was that he might be holy.

Of the difficulties which McMaster had to overcome in becoming a Catholic, he says in his editorial of March 1, 1879:

"Thirty-four years ago, from the 8th of June coming, I became a Catholic. I had, two months before, the regard and companionship of many that were of the quiet old New Yorkers of that time. The promises of those, too honorable to break them, and too well established not to have been able fully to complete them, were offered me, if I would give up my purpose of becoming a Catholic, and pursue the profession of law, for which I had made my studies. Partly by inherited disregard of wealth as a condition of happiness, but, mostly, by the grace of our Lord, procured, I think, by prayers of some that knew of me, though I knew not them, I became a Catholic."

## The Value of One Mass.

If all the prayers of loving hearts from the beginning of the world, and all the seraphic worship of the thrones and principalities in heaven, and the burning devotion and love of the Virgin Mother of God, and the million voices of the universe, of all creatures of heaven and earth and sea were offered up in one universal and harmonious act of praise and adoration, they would not equal or even approach in value and efficacy the infinite worth of a single Mass.—Archbishop Walsh.

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## THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR.

In a brief notice of Mrs. Abel's book on the Little Sisters of the Poor, the *Dublin Review* thus summarizes one of the most remarkable of religious and philanthropic movements of modern times: The Little Sisters of the Poor is an institution which, founded less than fifty years ago by a young curate with no resources save his stipend of 880 a year, assisted by two poor seamstresses and a peasant woman, has covered the whole earth with its branches, and taken its place among the most beneficent creations of Catholic faith. It has now 250 houses, of which 29 are in the United Kingdom, and gives food and shelter to over 33,000 of the aged and indigent poor of both sexes. The name of the humble servant woman who was its first alms-gatherer is so deeply interwoven with its early history that its sisters through Brittany are still known as "Jeanne Jugans," and a street in Saint Servan is called after this lowliest of its inhabitants. Here in a wretched attic the Abbe Le Pailleur placed his two young novices with Jeanne as their matron and hither, in October, 1840, they brought the two old women who were the first pensioners of the Little Sisters of the Poor. During the time the two girls still pursued their calling as seamstresses, Jeanne, by various forms of service, earned wages which also went into the common fund. With every extension of the undertaking fresh help was forthcoming for it, and thus it progressed from a garret to a basement, and then to a house built for it by the charity of the public. Now the Little Sister, with her basket on her cart, is a familiar figure in every large city, and the Abbe Pailleur has lived to see the great idea with which heaven inspired him realized to an extent that prophetic vision alone could have foreseen.

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