

CATHOLIC CIVILIZATION.

Bishop Stang, the lately-appointed ordinary of the new diocese of Fall River, Mass., in the course of a long and interesting article in the Ecclesiastical Review, entitled "Social Order Before and After the Reformation," says:

What is civilization? Not many years ago an American ambassador to a foreign court defined civilization as perfectly symbolized by the two words "a railroad station and a telegraph pole." There is truth in the definition, but it is not one that might be put in the dictionary.

By civilization we mean a condition of social well-being. That society or nation is civilized in which the universal welfare is recognized and respected, and where trades and arts and sciences find an orderly and natural development for the moral and physical benefit of the people at large. Civilization is based on morality. When men of the twentieth century speak and write about civilization we suppose them to mean the Christian civilization, the highest in the history of mankind—a civilization founded on Christian morality as proclaimed by the divinely appointed teacher, the Church of Christ.

Christian morality demands such distribution of wealth that all may live comfortably; it moderates the desire for riches, because it looks upon wealth not as an end to be aimed at for its own sake, but as the means to a higher end; it teaches the right and proper use of wealth, and enjoins the giving of assistance to the poor by teaching that the superfluities of wealth are the patrimony of the needy. The maxims of Christian morality, underlying all Christian civilization, are: men are brothers; labor is the duty of every one, and has a purifying and elevating effect upon all; idleness is a vice; talents must not be buried, they should be employed for the good of all; we must have the oil of good works in our lamps if we wish to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

The diffusion of such moral principles among men is the greatest benefit that can be bestowed on society. The Catholic Church had inculcated these principles among the nations which she formed and truly civilized in the Middle Ages; her doctrine was the very foundation on which the whole structure of mediæval society was reared. He who ignores the constitution and history of the Catholic Church cannot comprehend how the Christian religion is both the keynote of mediæval intellectual life, and the basis of the entire mediæval system. All social unions whether for agricultural pursuits or for trade and commerce, all guilds and convivial fraternities were of a religious character and part of the Church system.

"A higher, spiritual side was thus given to the most every-day transactions of both business and pleasure. It was the Church which formed a link between man and man, between class and class, between nation and nation. The Church in the Middle Ages produced a unity of feeling among all men, by fostering a certain cosmopolitanism which is hard for us to conceive in these days of individualism and strongly marked nationalism. So long as the Church was powerful, so long as it could make its laws respected, it stood between workman and master, between peasant and lord, dealing out equity and binding oppression."

A healthy and happy condition of society is utterly impossible where two things are lacking, namely (1) stability of work, and provision for the temporal wants of the future; (2) a moral conviction that we shall enjoy a blissful eternity after life's troubles are ended. Nothing will satisfy the individual or society but the assurance of temporal and everlasting peace, and this boon was extended by the Church and accepted by society of the Middle Ages. Men could surely perform their daily task and confidently look into the future, fully convinced that ample provision was made by the Church for all possible wants of soul and body. Their transgressions were blotted out by priestly absolution, and their last hours were brightened with the

consolation of religion, and a safe landing in the haven of eternity was promised to the faithful servants of Christ.

Those blessed with an abundance of earthly things were not regarded with jealousy as the fortunate rich, but as trusted stewards of the good things which God had given them for distribution among the needy. The care of the helpless poor was considered to be the sacred duty of all. The benefices and goods of Holy Church belonged, as a birthright to the poorer classes. The members of the Church were imbued with the principle that all are the children of the same Father in heaven, all are descended from a common stock, all are members of the mystical body of Christ, who came to unite us all in one grand brotherhood. The Angel of the Schools, St. Thomas of Aquin, was not merely theorizing, but stating a living, actuating principle, when he taught: "Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty, when others are in need."

Another living principle which influenced the daily life of the rich in the ages of faith, was the bounden exercise of Christian charity in the service of the sick and poor, and helpless, according to the new commandment of the Lord: "Love one another." Through the observance of this precept, the Church became the greatest charitable organization in the world; her history is the history of Christian charity. She abolished slavery, ransomed captives, sheltered widows and orphans, built hospitals and asylums for the sick and abandoned, erected homes for the aged poor—in short, she provided means for the relief of every human misery.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE CATHOLIC ORDER OF FORESTERS.

We are requested by one of the chief officers of the Catholic Order of Foresters in Chicago to reprint the following announcement from the "Catholic Columbian" of the 12th inst.

"The members of the Catholic Order of Foresters of Iowa, under the guidance of State Chief Ranger Joseph Ott and State Secretary Edward J. McLaughlin, both of Dubuque, Ia., have arranged to celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of the founding of the Order by the grandest celebration ever undertaken either by the C.O.F. or any other Order. They will have a joint initiation of at least 1,000 candidates, and possibly 1,500, at Oelwein, Ia., on Sunday, April 24. It is expected that at least 5,000 visiting Foresters from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Nebraska and Minnesota and Iowa will participate in this grand event.

At a recent meeting of seventy-five chief rangers from all parts of Iowa, held at Oelwein, plans for this stupendous undertaking were arranged and perfected. There will be special trains from Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Omaha, Kansas City and St. Joseph, and all intermediate points.

The officers of the High Court and neighboring state courts are invited, and many will attend.

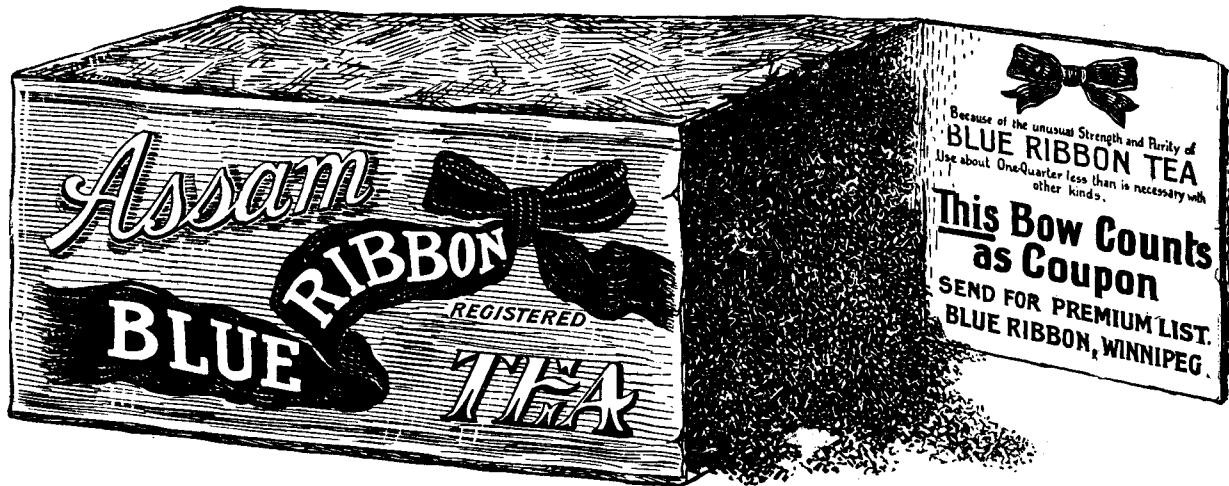
The officers and members of the Order in Iowa will leave nothing undone to make the event the "red letter day" of our beloved Order.

Mr. F. F. Schmitt, recording secretary, of Holy Martyr's court, Chicago, was mainly instrumental in arranging the mammoth celebration."

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