

NORTHWEST REVIEW.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY, AT WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.

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Subscription, in advance, \$1.00 a year. Six months...\$0.60.

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WEDNESDAY, DEC. 26, 1900.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT WEEK.

- 30—Sunday within the octave of Christmas.
- 31—Monday—St. Sylvester, Pope, January, 1901.
- 1—Tuesday—The Circumcision.
- 2—Wednesday—Octave of St. Stephen.
- 3—Thursday—Octave of St. John the Evangelist.
- 4—Friday—Octave of the Holy Innocents.
- 5—Saturday—Virgil of the Epiphany.

CURRENT COMMENT.

We have received from the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, of Montreal, which has just moved into its palatial new building, a Christmas supplement fully in keeping with that 500,000-dollar edifice. This supplement consists of two splendid chromo lithographs, "Home from the War" and Hoffman's "Christ in the Temple." In point of artistic finish and close imitation of oil paintings, both these pictures are superior to anything we have ever seen. But, of course, the reproduction of Hoffman's celebrated painting, with the radiant face of the boy Christ and the masterly differentiation of the five Jewish doctors' faces, is indefinitely the more valuable of the two. The coloring is exquisite.

Next Saturday occurs the anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. This we had announced in our weekly calendar, and a would-be purist objected that our printer had forgotten the "à" between Thomas and Becket. But he had not. We left it out on purpose, because it ought not to be there. Father Morris, S.J., who wrote the best life of the great martyr, proved therein that the insertion of the "à" was simply an unscholarly reproduction of the Latin form, "a Beckettis," i. e. of the family of the Becketts. Though there may be some reason for preserving that form in the case of a name like "a Kempis," which is not English and which signifies "from the town of Kempin," near Cologne, there is surely no excuse for transferring the preposition to a thoroughly Anglicized name like Becket. It was because Tennyson realized this that, in the *dramatis personae* of his tragedy, he writes "Thomas Becket, chancellor of England, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury." However, it takes a long time for the general reader to "catch on" to such fine points, and so that brilliant Catholic writer, J. J. A. Becket, still adds lustre to his talent by writing his third initial in lower case with a grave accent.

It seems that the rumor about the conversion of Lord Halifax is unfounded; but, as the *Tablet* remarks, those who think it preposterous to suppose that the President of the English Church Union should become a Catholic are evidently not aware that his predecessor in that presidential office, the Hon. Colin Lindsay, took the very step which seems to them incredible on the part of the "lay Pope of Anglicanism."

Eight weeks from to-morrow will be the hundredth anniversary of New-

man's birth. We have not seen elsewhere any allusion to this great centenary, and it is probably too late now to organize any suitable celebration for February 21, 1901; but the whole first year of the twentieth century might very properly be illumined with memories of the rising of this star in the firmament of humanity. John Henry Newman was one out of the seven greatest minds that have ever been known; the others being Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare and Bossuet. In them alone was genius not only universal in its all-compelling sweep, but also perfectly balanced, without any of those eccentricities which have become the indications of lesser genius. Their influence is undiminished by the lapse of time. Aristotle is more carefully studied now than he ever was before, and so it is of all the others. Newman's influence, in particular, has grown markedly since his death eight years ago. Five of the seven were peerless classics in point of style, and the two remaining ones, Augustine and Aquinas, were the best writers of their day and in their chosen field of philosophy. Almost unapproachable as is Bossuet's mastery of French prose that most perfect instrument of human thought, it is fully matched by Newman's Kingship of English prose. The witchery of his style never falls upon one as does too often the excessive luxuriance or the exaggeration of Ruskin.

We are not maintaining that these seven greatest minds revolutionized the world; else some or all of them would have to make room for Newton, Descartes, Gutenberg, Watt or Franklin. But great as these men undoubtedly were in certain spheres, the stamp of their genius was not universality, and, as regards Descartes in particular, the trend of his philosophic works is unwholesome. The men we have chosen are supreme in their power of provoking and stimulating correct thought of the highest and widest range. By "correct thought" we exclude such subtle dreamers as Kant or Hegel. By thought of the "highest and widest range" we exclude Confucius, Gautama and all Orientals, whose minds travel in one narrow groove.

And so it has come to pass necessarily that five of the seven were fervent Catholics, a sixth, Shakespeare, was probably a Catholic at heart, and the seventh, Aristotle, is, on the whole, so mentally sound that the Church has made him her henchman, the servant of her divine theology.

If it be true, as we have heard, that the City Council has exempted from all municipal taxes the new Y. M. C. A. building, we think it would be well for the rulers of Winnipeg to reconsider their decision to tax the Maternity Hospital of the Sisters of Mercy. The former is a comparatively wealthy institution, which has absolutely nothing to do with the relief of want and misery; the latter is a most needful home for suffering women, almost entirely supported by charitable contributions. We say "almost," because a few ladies, who can afford to pay for a room, have discovered that they can get better and more successful treatment, when their time comes, at the Sisters' Maternity than anywhere else; but the poverty of the Sisters is extreme, and surely it would not be fair to tax them when the Y. M. C. A. goes free.

THE NEW CENTURY.

This is the only time we shall ever be able, in mortal flesh, to wish our readers, or anyone else for that matter, "A Happy New Century;" and in immortal flesh, or in the spirit, before the General Resurrection, centuries will have lost their present absorbing interest. In very cordially expressing that wish for a happy twentieth century to all who shall be privileged to see it, far be it from us to desire that each and all of those who read that wish should spend a hundred other twelvemonths in this vale of tears. We are made for better things. If the poet could exclaim, "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay," how much more should we Catholics, the only real seers of the future, prefer the eternal soul-satisfying reality to the unsatisfactory shadows of the present.

No, "gentle reader," we do not wish you a hundred more years on this earth, unless you particularly hanker after them with full knowledge of the consequences; but we do wish you a very happy first year and hope that the other years of your experience of the coming century may be happy, too. And by happiness we mean the best speci-

men of that article in the human market; not the happiness of the unpractical dreamer who prates of progress and reform, while he neither advances nor reforms himself, but the happiness of a good conscience that is ever purifying itself and becoming more and more like unto the Divine Lawgiver of whose voice it is the echo.

We had better not delude ourselves with groundless hopes. The dying century has not, except for the followers of Christ in spirit and in truth, contributed much to the real happiness of mankind. It began with a great flourish of "the dawn of a new era," "the progress of the race," "liberty, fraternity, equality," and other similar shibboleths. The light that shone in darker ages was to be darkness in this dazzling nineteenth century. Old systems of thought were outworn and must make way for "modern thought." These popular watchwords were kept up more or less until the last years of this century. Now, however, with the evidence of increasing lawlessness and unrest, with the triumph of public mendacity, with the experience of wars due to manifest lies, with the threatening spectres of social convulsions in the near future, all this empty boast of our fathers falls very flat and stale. We have more comfort, but less happiness; more activity and change, but less peace; more excitement and novelty, but less joy.

Yet joy is what we long for. And even in the whirl and turmoil of the present time we may compass that joy if only we draw near to Him whose coming was heralded by the Angels as "tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." We shall have happiness, peace and joy if we begin the New Year with the Midnight Homage to Jesus Christ the Redeemer, as His Vicar bids us do, if afterwards we follow in His footsteps by keeping his commandments. This is the only true reform we can reasonably hope for. The new century will be to each one of us what he makes it for himself with the help of God's grace. If we reform ourselves, we shall be contributing in the best way to the reform, and consequently to the happiness of all the world. May we all be "up and doing with a heart for any fate," because that heart is set onward and upward.

BLUNDERING CRITICISM.

In the interests of the most elementary scholarship the writer of the article on "Bossuet" in the *True Witness* of Dec. 15 ought really to be taught the art of verifying quotations. While attempting to criticize others, he himself makes absurd blunders from which a little trouble in consulting his library would have saved him.

"If Bossuet stands foremost," he writes, "amongst the pulpit orators of the wonderful seventeenth century, and if his productions have passed into the realm of the classics, still few great speakers or writers are as often misquoted, especially by those who read him in translation. The other day, in one of our most prominent Catholic weeklies, we met with a line quoted from Bossuet. It was inserted, as often are tit-bits of news, to fill up a space. It was taken from an English translation of the 'Funeral Orations,' which appeared some fifty years ago. What Bossuet really said was sublime; what the translator makes him say is very good, but inexact and commonplace. The line runs thus:

"There is nothing great but goodness." Now, we would be tempted to question this statement. In fact, the real words of Bossuet show that greater than goodness is the author of goodness. It was the opening sentence of his funeral oration over Queen Henrietta of England; the scene was in the historic Church of Notre Dame; the audience consisted of royalty, the nobility, and the elite of French society. It was a solemn moment, with a salutary example of human insignificance and of the vanity of all worldly honors before the congregated thousands. Looking up, as if to draw inspiration from the crucifix over the High Altar, and raising his magnificent voice to a pitch that sent every accent reverberating throughout that immense edifice, the sacred orator cried out: "God alone is great, my brethren;—'Dieu seul est grand, mes frères.'"

"In that one sentence, or exclamation, we have a whole sermon. Not so in the distorted translation. To appreciate fully such a genius as Bossuet is absolutely necessary to study him in the original, and to be possessed of a perfect knowledge of French. As well attempt Shakespeare in French as Bossuet in English." From the superior air and lofty tone of this criticism the casual reader, not

being well up in French literature, would naturally suppose that the facts were as stated therein. Yet they are all wrong. In the first place, the famous words, 'God alone is great,' were not uttered by Bossuet at all. He had been dead eleven years when Massillon said them. Secondly, that was the opening sentence of the funeral oration, not over Queen Henrietta of England, but over Louis XIV. Thirdly, this oration was delivered, not "in the historic Church of Notre Dame," but in "La Sainte Chapelle." Fourthly, Queen Henrietta of England is always called "Henrietta Anne" to distinguish her from her mother, Queen "Henrietta Maria" of France, both of whom were honored by a panegyric from Bossuet. Fifthly, in neither of these two cases did he preach the funeral oration "in the historic Church of Notre Dame," but the mother's praises were uttered in the church of the nuns of Sainte-Mairie de Chaillot, and those of the daughter in the church of Saint-Denis.

In an earlier portion of the *True Witness* article the writer betrays his inaccuracy in giving the title of one of Bossuet's grandest works. While rightly styling it a "wonderful work," he wrongly names it "The Variations of Christianity." The Eagle of Meaux would turn in his grave, if he knew that true Christianity never varies. The title he chose was "The History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches."

Evidently the *True Witness* writer ought to follow the advice he so loftily imparts to others. He should study Bossuet in the original and look up the titles of his discourses and other works, or else not venture upon such subjects.

FATHER LACOMBE Speaks of His Travels—The Pope and The Emperor.

After an absence of nine months, the venerable and beloved missionary, Rev. Father Lacombe, O. M. I., returned here last Friday, looking better than when we saw him last in March. Since that time he has visited Belgium in the interests of immigration, Austria for spiritual ministrations to the Galicians, and Rome, where he spent two months attending to various matters with which His Grace the Archbishop and the suffragan bishops of this ecclesiastical province had charged him.

A representative of the NORTHWEST REVIEW called on Father Lacombe last Friday evening and was granted a long interview, too long to insert it all this time. We have only space for a few points.

"So you saw the Holy Father in private?"

"Yes; I had almost despaired of doing so during the Jubilee Year, when Rome is crowded with visitors. The Pope's physician regulates all visits. If he says 'No,' even a cardinal cannot get in. However, Monsignor Merry del Val kindly managed that I should be presented to the Sovereign Pontiff together with about a dozen young ecclesiastics belonging to the Academy of Nobles which Archbishop Merry del Val directs. This being lumped with a lot of young men who had not yet done a stroke of work for the Church was not exactly what I had hoped for; but it was better than nothing. Just as I was resigning myself to this semi-public audience, the Pope's major domo opened the door of the hall in which we were waiting, and said, in a clear loud tone: 'The Holy Father wants to see Father Lacombe.' I had him all to myself for seventeen minutes. Many archbishops have had to leave Rome with nothing but a couple of minutes' interview, sometimes two or three bishops together. I reminded the Pope that I had had the honor of a private audience twenty-one years ago, and I added that he had not changed a bit. When I insisted on his not having aged, he threw back his head and laughed outright."

"Is he really much broken down?"

"When his head is bowed in silence, he looks very old, but when he raises his head, looks you through with that piercing eye of his and speaks in resonant tones, especially when he appears in public, you forget that he is ninety-one. I had the privilege of seeing him five times in public. Once in particular, at a great canonization in St. Peter's, when I was standing with a dense crowd of American visitors in one of the small galleries attached to the great pillars of the dome, his appearance, as he turned towards us and blessed us with outstretched hand was so majestic and so winning that I heard a Protestant near me say, 'That's enough to make one a Catholic.'"

"Did the Holy Father give you any special blessing?"

"O, yes. After conferring with him about the affairs that brought me to Rome, with which affairs I found him quite conversant, I was about to with-

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