

The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1894.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

This being the month of the Holy Angels, as well as that of the Holy Rosary, and having referred last week to each of these devotions, we think it well to write a few lines, in this issue, upon the subject of the Precious Blood. It is a subject that is of perpetual interest to Catholics, and should equally be one of moment to non-Catholics. Every Christian knows that the seal of his redemption is the Blood of Christ; but all do not equally acknowledge the debt due to that sacred flood; nor do all seek to leave their troubles in its waves. In the opening of a little volume, issued by the Sisters of the Precious Blood, at St. Hyacinthe, and entitled, "Devotion to St. Michael the Archangel and to the Holy Angels," there are a few lines, the most touchingly beautiful of their kind that we have ever read; they contain a whole sermon in themselves:—

"L'ange, au ciel, ébloui de ta gloire ineffable,
T'adore et te beault, Sang trois fois adorable;
Il te doit sa beauté, son éclat immortel,
Qui le fait resplendir comme un astre au ciel.
Il sait bien quel trésor nous cachent tes mer-
veilles,
Et, découvrant son Dieu sous tes gouttes ver-
meilles,
Il emprunte aux élus leur chant toujours nou-
veau;
"Honneur, louange, amour, a toi, Sang de
l'Agneau."

We will not attempt a literal translation of these lines, but we will seize upon the sense of them, and ask our readers to grasp it. The angel in heaven, the pure spirit that came from the hand of God in all its perfection, is dazzled by the unspeakable glory of the thrice blessed Blood, and at once adores and praises that source of so much happiness. From that Blood does the angel draw the brilliancy and grandeur that cause it to glitter, as a star, in the firmament of God's glory. Knowing all the riches that are hidden in that stream of divine bounty, and beholding God Himself in each of its crimson drops, the spirit teaches the elect to unceasingly repeat that undying canticle, "Honor, praise, love, to Thee, Blood of the Lamb."

What a glorious conception was that of Father Faber; a procession in which we behold the Blood of Christ coming forth from the eternal thought of God, circulating through all time, and re-ascending to heaven, after having, in its passage, taken up or absorbed each creature of the Almighty that owes its beauty and perfection to Him!

In the physical order is it not the blood, circulating freely through the system, that imparts life and sustains the human frame? So is it in the spiritual order; the Blood of Christ gushing through the soul keeps alive that animating portion of our being and gives to

it all the beauty, grandeur, strength and glory that it possesses. From the hour of the circumcision to that of the agony in the garden, from Pilate's scourging pillar to Calvary's cross-crowned summit, the Blood of Christ was shed, in one way or another, for the redemption of man. And on the top of Golgotha it not only trickled down the cross, bedewed the soil and stained the implements of death, but it gushed forth over the world, washed the centuries to come, penetrated every artery of humanity, rushed through every system that the ages were to know, and imparted an eternal vitality, or immortality to the race of man. It surged around the base of the Roman Empire, and soon flooded the palaces of pagan power, obliterating the might of the Cæsars, even as the waters of the deluge effaced the mountain ranges of the world. It arose, as a barrier, against the tide of barbarism that swept down upon Christendom, and turned back the billows of destruction even in the hour of its greatest strength. It leaped in crimson glory down the hill-slopes of time, and kept expanding, fructifying, invigorating, and saving the soil of generations. In the wake of the pilgrim's vessel it reddened the seas; on the path of the missionary it assumed the form of a pillar to guide his footsteps; over the ruins of the past it glowed in triumph; upon the highway of the future it shone in splendor. And, to-day, all over the great Catholic world, from thousands of sacred altars, does it ascend to its source, carrying with it the needs of humanity and depositing them before the throne of all graces.

Not only is that Blood universal in its workings, but it also permeates each particular soul on earth. Countless are the miracles performed by that mighty instrument of redemption, and unnumbered are the favors received through its medium. Knowing, then, how much is due to that fountain of happiness, it is no wonder that the Catholic Church—which owes its origin and strength to the Blood of Christ—should call upon the faithful to practise a special devotion in honor of that Precious Blood. While, during the month of October, special honor is paid to the Angels who sing God's unending *Glorias*, and special attention is paid to the prayers of the Holy Rosary, it must not be forgotten that the Precious Blood is the source of the Angels' beauty and of the Rosary's power. Let your barque of life float out upon that mighty crimson stream of Divine bounty, and it will be wafted, infallibly, into the great ocean of eternal happiness. Let the sunset of your life—come when it may—be reddened with the tinges imparted from that source, and it will surely be the forerunner of a day-dawn of glory.

READING CIRCLES.

We understand that in a couple of sections of Montreal serious steps have been taken to establish Reading Circles. Nothing could be more praiseworthy and profitable. All over the United States to-day have the Catholics commenced to thus bind themselves together by literary and refining links, and the immense chain of Reading Circles that is gradually extending over the Republic has for its central point the grand institution of the Catholic Summer School. We have not space, this week, to say much upon this subject; but we would like to fling out a few hints for the benefit of all interested.

The first advantage of a Reading Circle is that it brings persons of congenial taste together and affords an opportunity of a constant interchange of ideas. In the next place, it is a source of amusing instruction; it aids in developing a taste

for higher literature and serves to establish mutual educational facilities. Then the members of the Circle enjoy the benefits of each others reading; the comments made upon chosen authors, the essays written and read for the circle, the criticism—of a friendly and emulating nature—all go to add interest to the beneficial assemblies. Then, again, the Reading Circle will fan into activity the latent ambitions of the cultured and of those who seek a greater culture than they yet enjoy. As a rule, a library—small as it may be, but select—is the natural outcome of those reunions. And what is richer and more profitable than a choice library; be it ever so humble? In one of his admirable essays, in the columns of the Dublin Nation, Thomas Davis thus speaks enthusiastically of libraries. And of course he means libraries for use, not for ornament:

"Beside a library, how poor are all the other great deeds of man—his constitution, brigade, factory, man-of-war,—how poor are all miracles in comparison! Look at that wall of motley calfskin, open those slips of inked rags—who would fancy them as valuable as the rows of stamped cloth in a warehouse? Yet Alladin's lamp was a child's kaliedoscope in comparison. There the thoughts and deeds of the most efficient men during three thousand years are accumulated, and every one who will learn a few conventional signs—24 (magic) letters—can pass at pleasure from Plato to Napoleon, from the Argonauts to the Affghans, from the woven mathematics of La Place to the mythology of Egypt and the lyrics of Burns. Young reader! pause steadily and look at this fact till it blaze before you; look till your imagination summon up even the few acts and thoughts named in the last sentence; and when these visions—from the Greek pirate to the fiery-eyed Scotchman—have begun to dim, solemnly resolve to use these glorious opportunities, as one whose breast has been sobbing at the far sight of a mountain, resolves to climb it, and already strains and exults in the purposed toil."

This simple quotation should inspire the organizers and proposed members of our Reading Circle to go into the work with a heart and an ambition. There is one thing above all to which attention should be paid, and that is to the selection and purchase of books. Next week we will drop a few hints upon this subject, and they may prove of use to all who are ambitious of establishing this splendid means of self-improvement. Meanwhile we wish every imaginable success to the Reading Circles, be they on a larger or smaller scale. Keep them up and all will benefit ultimately—both the members of the circles and the whole community.

It will be seen by our columns that the number and importance of our advertisements are considerably augmented. We desire to thank, individually and collectively, all our friends who seek the medium of THE TRUE WITNESS to make known their business to the public. And we particularly ask of our readers and subscribers in general to assist us by encouraging the people who encourage this paper. Read our columns carefully and you will find that almost every branch of business is advertised in them. We can go further and say that we are in a position to heartily and conscientiously recommend all whose establishments are noticed in our pages. We trust that the old saying, "one good turn deserves another," will find an illustration in the patronage our advertisers shall receive.

THE CZAR.

The rumor is abroad, and is strongly confirmed, that the Ruler of Russia is lying under his death-stroke. In any case it is not probable that the present Czar can see many more days of power or life. The event of his death must be considered as of great importance both to Russia and to Europe. The peaceful disposition of the present Autocrat of all the Russias has served to keep away the European war-cloud that has so often loomed upon the horizon during the past ten years or more. Many a serious complication has been obviated by the suffering monarch, and it has been better so. There is considerable press speculation regarding the probable attitude that the Czar will assume when the moment comes that power shall fall into his hands. It is well known that he is not of as peaceful and tame a disposition as his father, yet it is questionable whether he would find it advisable to precipitate a great conflict. Taking it for granted that the days of the Czar are numbered, we cannot afford to jump to any conclusion regarding his successor.

As far as the Czar will be concerned there are many things to be taken into consideration. As a rule the Russian potentates have been more or less circumscribed in their actions and limited in their experience of the world. Between the duties of a Czar's high post, that necessitate an almost constant attention on his part, and the continuous fear of violence in which he lives, and on account of which he is hedged in from his subjects to a great extent, he has little opportunity of taking personal cognizance of affairs going on around him. He rules according to traditional practice, more than through observation. He hears of the systems in other lands, of the freedom enjoyed by subjects or citizens, of the power of the *vox populi*, and he reflects upon all, learns in this indirect manner just as one would reflect upon a novel—but never with the idea of putting into practice what the fiction or the story contains. Provided Nihilists can be kept down, bombs captured and the personal safety of the ruler secured, it matters little how the great mass of the Russian population may get along, or how the world abroad may be governed. Of course all this is due to that spirit of barbarism that clings ever to the skirts of Russian civilization. It is true—as the conquering Corsican said—"if you scratch a Russian you will find a Tartar."

But the century draws to a close, civilization is advancing with giant strides, invention and progress are revolutionizing the earth, and the means of international communication are becoming daily more perfect; Russia, no more than any other nation, can afford to keep outside the ever growing circle of modern influence, of democratic sentiment. Considering all these facts we must also remember that the future Czar, although yet a young man, has seen a great deal of the world. Besides the very liberal education which he has received, he has sojourned in almost every civilized land. With his deep interest in the subject of statescraft, and his natural ability, he must have had his eyes opened and his mind considerably enlarged, when passing through monarchies, republics and constitutionally governed countries of almost every kind. He has seen, and felt, and experienced what freedom means; he has also had ample opportunity of judging of the effects of the different systems of government. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, it might not be improbable that, on assuming the helm of state, the young Czar, instead of turning