

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

Rev. J. F. McDermott, D.D., in the Ave Maria.

This year of the Immaculate Mary's golden jubilee will give a very distinct prominence to Mary's miraculous medal. Indeed from the beginning all the significance of that medal is found in its relation to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In the liturgy of the Church the supernatural origin of the medal in 1830 is identified with the dogmatic definition of 1854. The fourth lesson of the special office with which the Holy See has dignified the medal declares that its first and evident purpose, as manifested by the Mother of God, was to assert in a pointed manner the revealed truth of the Immaculate Conception, and to popularize the divine exception which constituted Mary "our tainted nature's solitary boast." In the sixth lesson of the same office in the Roman Breviary, it is stated that the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII. stamps the medal with the seal of the apostolic authority, in the hope of spreading and consolidating the devotion of the faithful toward the Immaculate Conception, and of drawing Christian nations to the purity of Mary conceived without sin.

In the supernatural order facts do not stand isolated. The chain of cause and effect is always discoverable. Purpose marks the acts of Providence. A supernatural apparition ever points to some precise end. It always has a motive, and it is only in the apprehension of the motive that the apparition itself becomes fully intelligible. Sometimes the end is hidden, the motive is not manifest; and, consequently, the fact loses some of its point and force. But in the instance of the miraculous medal there is no place for doubt or uncertainty. The very voice of heaven speaks and gives clear, direct testimony, establishing the truth that the miraculous medal is an effect having as its cause the sublime dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

On the 18th of July, 1850, the peerless Queen of Heaven, in a radiant vision, stood before Sister Catharine (a member of the Community of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul), and for several hours engaged the lowly Sister in familiar conversation. Among other things, she said to her: "My child, I am going to charge you with a mission. You will suffer many trials on account of it; but you will surmount them, knowing that you endure them for the love of God." In the month of November of the same year the Immaculate Virgin again appeared to Sister Catharine, and in striking detail specified the work she wished to be done. In 1836 the subject of Sister Catharine's apparitions was formally brought before the ecclesiastical authorities, and in the official investigation that made the following account of this second apparition is given:

"At half-past five in the evening, when the Sisters were in the chapel making their meditation, the Blessed Virgin appeared to a young Sister as if in an oval picture. She was standing on a globe only one half of which was visible; she was clothed in a white robe and a mantle of shining blue, having her hands covered, as it were, with diamonds, whence emanated luminous rays falling upon the earth, but more abundantly upon one portion of it. A voice seemed to say: 'These rays are symbolic of the graces Mary obtains for men, and the point upon which they fall most abundantly is France.' Around the picture, written in golden letters, were these words: 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!' This prayer, traced in a semi-circle, began at the Blessed Virgin's right hand and, passing over her head, terminated at her left hand. The reverse of the picture bore the letter M, surrounded by a cross having a bar at its base; and beneath the monogram of Mary were the hearts of Jesus and Mary—the first surrounded with a crown of thorns, the other transpierced with a sword. Then the Sister seemed to hear these words: 'A medal must be struck upon upon this model; those who wear it indulgenced, and repeat this prayer with devotion, will be in an especial manner under the protection of the Mother of God.' At that instant the vision disappeared."

Thus does the miraculous medal come direct from heaven's inspiration; thus does it come as an instrument created by the Mother of God to fill the world with the glory of her exalted prerogative of the Immaculate Conception.

The authenticity of the vision revealing the medal has been placed beyond the bounds of rational doubt. During six months of the year 1836 a learned, critical commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Paris and directed by the Vicar-General, subjected to a most searching investigation every feature and every detail of the asserted visions of Sister Catharine. Nothing was taken for granted; at every step proof was demanded; and proof was given to satisfy even that body of keen, deliberate thinkers. The Sister's character, her profound humility, her genuine piety, her well-balanced mind, her determination to conceal her identity; the prudence of her director; the director's dread of deception, his hesitancy at giving publicity to the revelations made to him by Sister Catharine, his final determination to act, prompted solely by the fear of offending the Blessed Virgin and by the advice of learned superiors; the nature of the apparitions, their harmony with the Catholic sense, their consistent repetition, pointing to fact and removing suspicion of fancy; the marvelous graces obtained through the medal; the numerous cures and conversions legally attested by reliable witnesses—all these facts and considerations stood before the investigating commission as solid proofs necessitating the normal conclusion, addressed in a report to the Archbishop, that the miraculous medal was, beyond doubt, of divine origin.

The very fact of the wonderful circulation of the medal appealed to the canonical commission as evidence indicating something beyond the natural. The same fact is noted by Leo XIII. in his letter of 1894 conferring on the medal the highest possible distinction, and giving it a place in the Roman Missal, with a special Mass assigned for November 27 of each year. The books of M. Vachette the manufacturer, who first materially realized the vision, show that in a very short time two million medals of silver and gold, and eighteen millions of a cheaper metal were placed in the hands of the clients of Mary. According to the same M. Vachette, eleven other manufacturers in Paris sold the same quantity; at Lyons, four others, with whom he was personally acquainted sold at least double the number; while in many other cities, both in France and other countries, the manufacture and sales were incalculable.

In 1836 the ecclesiastic charged with the canonical inquiry into Sister Catharine's visions, declared that the marvelous development of the devotion to the Immaculate Mary in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was directly traceable to the agency of the miraculous medal.

The mission entrusted to Sister Catharine was being fulfilled, and the watchword of piety throughout the Catholic world was the Immaculate Conception.

Cures, conversions and preservations, obtained in France and throughout the rest of the Christian world, made the medal of the Immaculate Conception and the miraculous medal terms popularly convertible.

The history of the medal is a series of authenticated miracles obtained through the intervention of the Queen conceived without sin.

The Roman Breviary, in noting the miraculous character of the medal, calls attention to the attested miracle of the conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne—a miracle hardly eclipsed by the conversion commemorated in the Breviary on January 25. Indeed, the conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne is, in many features, a reproduction of the conversion of the Apostle of the Gentiles. At one o'clock p.m., Thursday, January 20, 1842, blaspheming Christ, ridiculing Christianity, sneering at piety, boasting of Judaism, glorying in hatred of the Church, mocking the Cross, scorning the emblems of religion; at 12 minutes past 1—twelve minutes later—the same day, prostrate before the altar of the Crucified One, wrapt in the devotion, melted in tears tenderly kissing the medal again and again—the precious treasure which he, all unconscious, had been wearing for four days; rapturously exclaiming: "I have seen her! I have seen her!"—crying out: "Lead me, lead me, where you will! After what I have seen I can but obey." Such was the instantaneous conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne—a conversion which Cardinal Patrizi, Vicar of Rome, officially pronounced "a true and incontrovertible miracle, wrought by the blessed and most powerful God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

But the prodigies wrought were merely means to an end. The revealed truth of the Immaculate Conception was the purpose of Sister Catharine's vision and the explanation of the medal's place in religion. The pious impulse created by the apparition of 1830, and the miracles consequent thereon, stirred the Catholic world to its utmost bounds. The medal held aloft as heaven's gift, in its silent language proclaiming God's estimate of the Immaculate Conception, thrilled the people with the one controlling desire that the Great Queen should at length receive the crown so long denied her. Her divine maternity had raised her above men and brightest angels; but even with this incomparable prerogative something was lacking to her grandeur. Her absolute victory over Satan and her entire freedom from all taint of sin must be proclaimed. Until the Church, in manner formal and official, had declared Mary Immaculate—conceived without sin—the children had not given to the Mother honor full and just.

The work of preparation was at an end; and how well that work had been done is attested by the fact that the 8th December, 1854, was the day that witnessed the first definition of faith which had not been preceded by dissension and followed by heresy. During twenty-four years the medal had unceasingly kept before the eyes of the faithful the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception, the masses had become familiar with the truth; it had entered as a practical element into their daily Christian life. The old and the young, the learned and the ignorant had come to look upon Mary's Immaculate Conception as a matter of fact. The prayer of the medal dropped as easily from the lips of the pious as the Angelic Salutation itself. The Catholic sense had brushed aside theological difficulties. The truth had been operating through the medal as only God could operate. Heaven had spoken—spoken again and again. The humble virgin had proclaimed her desire. 'Twas God's will. The world felt the truth. The millions waited the defining word of the Vicar of Christ.

The word went forth from Rome, and the Catholic world gave way to a very ecstasy of exultation. Instantly cities and villages were enwreathed in illuminations, crowned with inscriptions and transparencies, filled with joyous music. Above the Pater and the Ave arose the invocation: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!" The prayer of the medal was the triumphant chant of the hour. The vision of 1830 and the promises of Mary to Sister Catharine were magnificently realized. The miraculous medal was the emblem of Mary's victory.

In this golden year Catholic hearts the world over will throb in gladness at the memory of the event of fifty years ago. Surely the great part played by the miraculous medal in bringing about the event will not be forgotten. It is meet and just that much of the golden glory of this jubilee year be reflected on the medal given by Mary Immaculate to Sister Catharine Laboure.

## AN IRISH BARD.

It is rather doubtful if there is another poet who can boast of as romantic a career as that of Colun Wallace, who at the age of 108 years is now living and writing in a modest cottage in Oughterard, in County Galway, Ireland. Probably Colun Wallace is absolutely unknown on this continent, but in his own land his reputation as a verse writer is no mean one, and a new collection of his poems has just been published by the Gaelic League of Dublin.

## A BISHOP'S VIEW.

"The editing of a religious paper has its many disadvantages," says the Right Rev. John B. Delaney, D.D., Bishop of Manchester, N.H., in his valedictory editorial in the *Guidon*. "We preach doctrine and morality, but if ever there was a case of 'casting bread upon the waters' it is just here. Again and again the editor questions himself: Who will read it? What good will it do? Is it not lost after all? The effect of his preaching is always remote. He knows not, and may never know, the souls he has influenced for good. Yet such consolation was not always denied us. Many a time when discouragement assailed us, some little word reached us, like a sweet-scented summer breeze to tell us of good accomplished for a weary-laden soul, and that too in most unexpected places."

## PICTURES IN THE HOME.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

Time was, and not very long ago, when every Catholic home, and especially every Irish Catholic home, had a number of pictures that were universally in use. In almost every house you found a crucifix, a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and then one of St. Joseph, or some other patron saint. In Irish homes invariably did you meet with a St. Patrick, especially in the act of chasing reptiles out of the land, an Emmet, a Lord Edward, and other religious and patriotic emblems. Even coming down to more modern times you found pictures of Meagher, Smith, O'Brien, McManus, O'Gorman, Duffy, Davis, Dillon, and all the great patriots of their day. O'Connell and Father Matthew found their places there; Father Tom Burke, and possibly Tom Moore, were to be seen upon the walls. Whether it be that these inspiring effigies of Ireland's great and distinguished sons are now looked upon as too commonplace, or whether the spirit of the race is dying out, is more than I can tell. But if it be the latter cause there is ample room for regret and pity for the coming generation; while if it be the former cause, I can only say that the artistic world will never be shaken by the sense of the appropriate displayed.

The other day I visited the house of a fellow-countryman and co-religionist, and I found that his parlor was decorated in a most untasteful and meaningless style. There were a couple of cheap landscapes, that meant nothing, represented no place, in particular, and were not worth the frames around them. These were set off by a half dozen chromos, principally of that class that denotes advertisement pictures. Some ten years ago I stood in the same room, I had gone there on business with the father of the present proprietor, where to-day hangs a senseless and most unartistic water-fall—more like a toboggan slide than aught else—there was a large picture of St. Patrick; near it was one of St. Brendan, on the ocean; and a little piece apart from these was an Immaculate Conception. These three, I am told, would not have been surprised had they told me they were out in the shed, or else that they had been traded off for the artistic monstrosities that now replaced them. It is that the head of the family to-day has fallen so far away from the patriotic and religious spirit of his fathers that he is ashamed of the very objects best suited to inspire his children with a desire to know all about his country's people, the historic glories of the Old Land? I cannot answer this question for lack of information, but I no know that there is nothing conspicuous in that home to tell the younger generation of their race, of the past story of the country whence they came. Ireland, like fabled Atlantis, might have disappeared from the world's map, as far as they are concerned, and as far as they seem to care. All this is more significant to me than I could easily tell.

I will just tell what I saw in a somewhat wealthy Irish Catholic home in this city. Having a few moments to wait while the persons I had called to see were getting ready to come to the parlor, I noticed two magnificent Irish scenes: one a mountain in the County of Tipperary; the other a picture of the horses hauling empty coal boats along the River Suir. In the dining room of the same house hung George Washington, William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, Terrence Bellew McManus, Thomas Davis, Richard O'Gorman, John Mitchell, John Martin, and Gavan Duffy. These surrounded a very elegant crucifix. My very first impression was favorable. And the words of Moore, I know not why, kept flashing—like shuttle—backwards and forwards in my mind:

"And I said, 'if there's peace to be found in the world,'  
For the heart that is humble it surely is here."

In another home, not many months ago, I saw an allegorical picture; it represented a ship about to weigh anchor in an Irish port; a young Celt was standing, satchel in hand, little word reached us, like a sweet-scented summer breeze to tell us of good accomplished for a weary-laden soul, and that too in most unexpected places."

picture I read a few lines, from a poem by Richard Dalton Williams. The picture was entitled "An Invitation," and the lines ran thus:

"Come with me to Ohio,  
Or to the vines of Indiana;  
Or where the greater waters flow;  
Midst gorgeous plumes and vast  
bananas:  
Desert a land of corpse and slave,  
Of pauper woe and tinsel splendor—  
Poor Erin is all a grave,  
And gone the few who dare defend  
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It seems to me that in these last four lines do we find a reason why some would willingly let olden traditions gradually vanish, while in the indifference too frequently displayed do we perceive the cause, to a certain degree, of the sad condition of things depicted by the poet.

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## CATHOLIC LAYMEN OF FRANCE.

Contemporary history in France does not make the most pleasant reading for the Catholic world outside the republic. For several years now the record of the administration of Waldeck-Rousseau, and then of Combes, has been merely a chronicle of successive steps in a bitter campaign against the Church and all she stands for, says the *Ave Maria*. The rapidity with which of late months the government has been achieving new and notable victories in its aggressive campaign has seemed to us, however, not an unmixed evil. The sooner France reaches the logical conclusion of her warfare against religion, the sooner will come the inevitable reaction that will re-establish the congregations on a firmer basis than ever, and will free the Bishops and secular clergy from a number of vexatious restrictions to which they have been subjected ever since the Concordat was signed.

In the meantime the chronicle of current events in France is, as has been said, rather disheartening reading. All the more gratifying, in consequence, do we find an interesting article, "The Lay Apostolate," published in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Viviers. The hopeful tone in which it treats of organized Catholic effort and unswerving Catholic faith in the future of France, is a pleasant relief from the dreary tale of expelled religious, condemned Catholic instruction, vacant bishoprics, clerical salaries withheld, and the like incidents with which our French exchanges are usually filled.

Rightly or wrongly, the Catholic laity of France are blamed by their fellow-Catholics throughout the world for the present disastrous state of affairs in their misgoverned country. To their own supineness and criminal indifference are imputed the parliamentary victories of the anti-clerical fanatics who are oppressing them. It is encouraging, therefore, to learn that there are some few at least of the French laity who have shaken off the prevalent lethargy and are fighting for their liberties with combined zeal and discretion. "A little heaven leaveneth the whole lump," and one may indulge in the pleasing hope that the lay apostles whom our contemporary mentions will succeed in arousing their Catholic countrymen to such a degree of well-ordered enthusiasm as will sweep Combes and all his kind from power within the next decade—as, personally, we believe will be the case. Says the *Semaine* of Viviers:

"The recent congress of Catholic youth held at Besancon has given a magnificent example and has darted a ray of hope through the gloom of our sorrows. Voices recognized as among the most authoritative and eloquent, respected by all but especially dear to Catholics, have addressed a superb phalanx of 'the young' in words which, while elevating the souls of their hearers, gave at the same time practical counsels, and provoked generous outbursts of enthusiasm."

"Since the congress the press has carried its echoes throughout the whole country; and hearts have been stirred by the spirit of the purest and most ardent Catholic patriotism—a spirit aroused by genuine love of the people. We have seen—let us use the word—apostolic figures such as are needed at present and such as Providence knows how to raise up, here and there, in the midst of our misfortunes."

A lay apostle: F. Brunetiere, this modern philosopher who knows so well the spirit and the tendencies of the age even in their most secret folds. It was in that same town of Besancon that he began a few years ago, in his famous address on "The Need to Believe," that ascent toward integral truth, which he has

so firmly and so splendidly achieved. Apostles from the very hour in which he became convinced, he has never ceased since then to keep up the good fight, often before the most distinguished audiences; piercing with his trenchant logic the sophisms of his adversaries, coolly and implacably analyzing their errors, contemptuously disdainful of those who attack him with personalities, constantly appealing for energetic defense as well as attack. "Let us not be dismayed," he wrote the other day by the number or the fury of those who attack us; let us rather dare to felicitate ourselves thereon. They know what they are doing and know that we are what is called 'a power.' Their fury proceeds from the consciousness that they can neither contempt, disdain, nor especially ignore us."

"A lay apostle: Albert de Mun, laying aside thirty years ago his noble sword, taking up in its stead the work of an apostle in the full sense of the term, and wielding this more effective weapon ever since without relaxation, in the service of the working classes and of all our great causes—wielding it with a magnanimity, a vigor, and a brilliancy that forced Clemenceau himself to declare that 'M. de Mun is the most eloquent of living Frenchmen.' He, a patrician of a noble race, has pleaded the cause of the workers and the lowly as perhaps no other has thus far done. On the other hand, who among us has not present in his memory those incomparable discourses on the liberty of teaching—discourses which, all impotent as they were to sway sectarian passions from its predetermined course, remain nevertheless both the brilliant vengeance of outraged truth and violated justice and the everlasting honor of the parliamentary tribune of France?"

"A lay apostle: Jacques Piu, quitting without regret the parliamentary theatre wherein his character had won him so high a place, to consecrate himself entirely to the gigantic enterprise—the expression is M. de Mun's—of 'popular liberal action,' covering France to-day with the network of its committees and its 150,000 adherents. He is the soul of the work, its energizing principle. "A lay apostle: Marc Sangnier, the young polytechnic student, voluntarily abandoning a career that promised to be brilliant to devote himself wholly to the material, moral and Christian uplifting of the popular classes. Around his sillon he is grouping young men in ever-increasing legions. Literary circles, popular institutes, public reunions—he conducts them all abreast, vigorously opposing adversaries who employ brutal weapons, but carrying into hostile reunions, with his virile judgment and his ardent spirit, a loyalty which only yesterday one of his most noted opponents, M. Buisson himself, could not refrain from applauding."

"A lay apostle—could we omit him from the list? Francois Coppee, his brow girdled with the fairest aureole of the poets. Extricating himself almost in the evening of life from the bewitching pleasures of a glory without rivals and almost without a shadow, who does not know with what noble disinterestedness, what generous ardor, and what indefatigable perseverance he threw himself into the struggle to defend the cause of justice, religion and his country?"

"We salute with all our gratitude and all our respect these valiant laymen who are giving such splendid examples to all Catholics, to those especially who are tempted to shrink from determined effort. May these legions of young men that are rising in the various quarters of Christian France follow with discipline, with union, and with courage, the way traced out for them by the hardy initiators whom we have mentioned!"

## JESUITS IN GERMANY.

At the great conference of German Catholics at Regensburg, Germany, a few days ago, Count Droste von Vischering, applauded by thousands of enthusiastic delegates and spectators, demanded the repeal of paragraph No 1 of the law against the Jesuits.

## CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AT WASHINGTON.

Wagging tongues have tried to make much of the unfortunate failure of Thomas E. Waggaman, treasurer of the Catholic University at Washington. The gossips have had the great institution closed tighter than a drum, with no prospect of ever opening again. Dr. O'Connell, rector of the university, however, is emphatic in his statement that all this is idle talk not warranted by the conditions—and he knows. *Catholic Union* and *Times*.

## Archbishop On Ca

To the Clergy and Laity of the diocese of Cincinnati:

Dear Beloved—

As the Catholic schools are to open, we consider it opportune to address you on the important question of parents to provide for the education of their children. There are, we regret to be sure, some fathers and mothers who, for the sake of fancied savings, or through indifference to the account of feelings against a teacher, send their children to Catholic schools.

It is undeniable that as a Catholic teaching is excluded from non-Catholic schools, and that there is usually present in such a system of education for the Catholic faith and the education of the Church are excluded. The Church considers it vital to faith, that the spirit of should animate every scholar's task, and influence the hour of his time in school. Children should be good Catholics, instructed in their faith, able to thoroughly drill their religion. The Church recognizes this necessity has always separation of education and hence has condemned to advocate it. Plus IX. proscribes the proposition of laity, which reads as follows: Catholic may approve a education for the young provided from the Catholic from the power of the Church entirely confines itself to secular and to things affecting and social life, or which is concerned with these things same Pontiff in a letter of 1864, to the Archbishop of strongly intimated that secular learning should go hand, and points out the effects resulting from the course. We are told by the divorce of education and system which is a source of harm to society; that it is pernicious system, especially in elementary schools; young are thereby exposed greatest danger; that in such a system the Church will spare no pains to provide education, and will be compelled to warn the fathers of such schools cannot in co-attendance. These words, letter to the Archbishop are repeated with slight variations in numerous instructions.

Leo XIII., in 1885, addressed to the Bishops a teaches that there is hard more essential at the pre than that education should be accompanied by cation of true doctrine in morals. He reminds heads of the solitude which they should avoid sending their children to these schools in cannot be taught the religion. In the *Encyclical* XIII. "Nobilissima" of February, 1884, occurring words: "The Church and over again loudly these schools which are or neutral, warning parents careful in a thing so momentous."

These pronouncements. See are the law for all. tion of the III. Plenary Baltimore is based upon evident, then, that the the Church, which it more, roneous, scandalous and ing of heresy to contradi attend a non-Catholic substitutes usually a grave ent danger to faith, and fore, it is a mortal sin rents to send their children to school, except where other suitable school, and precautions are taken as danger remote.

In applying this teaching life, there are difficulties often met with parents to sending their children to schools on account of tures which they dislike for non-Catholic schools of certain advantages. that, if they take due have their children protected and brought up in piety not justly be interfered such a claim can not. This is a religious question, therefore, within the Church authority. In it belongs to the Church pronounce on the prin