

THE WRECK OF THE ATLANTIC AND NORTHEAST.

FROM SHORT HAND NOTES OF SERMON BY THE REV. C. MOFFAT.

Text:—Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, when thou shalt not know.

On the night of the 22nd of January, the emigrant ship Northfleet was run down, and three hundred and twenty souls were swept into eternity.

Had some fierce wintry storm tossed these ships upon its billows, and then with masts gone and boats swept, dashed them upon rocky shore, far from help, the world could have understood the awful story.

First.—Sudden desolation comes every where. Death is ever busy on land and sea. We know of no shore without its wrecks; of no ocean without its curied mysteries.

Second.—Sudden desolation reveals human character as it is. Yes, and in a way the word has never dreamed of. The flaming fire, the sinking wreck may reveal in a moment the most utter selfishness, or the noblest heroism.

The Northfleet is struck, in a moment the wildest panic. Selfishness in every form bursts forth in the disorder of the hour.

There stands the brave Knowles yet what care these craven souls for his bullets. They miserably perish, but he dies at his post, a martyr to Christian duty.

Sharp strikes the bell, on with full head of steam, away into darkness, the world will never know who did the reckless, heartless deed.

Third.—Sudden desolation may come as we begin the voyage. The Northfleet has not even entered the broad ocean. No, she lies at anchor waiting for a fair wind to waft her on to her far away shore.

wrecks on every street, fast youth, but fast not to manhood's glory but to wreck and ruin. Sad are the memorials left behind; broken hearts, dishonoured graves.

Is this the way to begin new life in a new land. Where is the solemnity of a last farewell with every sacred tie sundered.

Fourth.—Sudden Desolation may come as we near the other shore. With the Atlantic all has gone well, the ocean is safely crossed, all danger seems past, home is drawing nearer to soaze, a new life opens to others in the great land before them.

Oh God, the ship fills, and there is nought but the lush of death below these decks. What a struggle for life in these long dark hours of morning; how the chill hands grasp rail and mast and rigging; how soul sheers soul; how heartrending the separations from those helpless to help or save.

Reading then the sacred books with that attention with which the Lord has made me capable, I do not find one single chapter, or one little verse, in which Jesus Christ gives to St. Peter the mastery over the apostles, his fellow-workers.

When Christ sent the apostles to convert the world, to all He gave equally the power to bind and to loose, and to all He gave the promise of the Holy Spirit. Permit me to repeat it: If he had wished to constitute Peter His Vicar, He would have given him chief command over His spiritual army.

Christ, so says Holy Scripture, forbade Peter and his colleagues to reign, or to exercise lordship, or to have authority over the faithful, like the kings of the Gentiles (St. Luk. xxi. 25).

But here is another still more important fact. An oecumenical council is assembled at Jerusalem to decide on the questions which divide the faithful. Who would have called together this council if St. Peter had been Pope? St. Peter. Who would have presided at it? St. Peter or his legates.

RELIGION A HELP IN LIFE.

How it helps a man to suffer and to toil! How it calms his temper and soothes his spirit! How it heals his wounds and anoints him with joy.

A slight and momentary expression of trouble appeared on his countenance, but the cloud soon passed away. He clasped his hands and looked upward, while his lips moved as if uttering a silent and fervent prayer; the expression of trouble disappeared—he resumed his work.

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful. Beauty is God's handwriting, a wayside sacrament; welcome it in every fair face, every fair sky, every fair flower, and thank him for it the fountain of loveliness; and drink it in, simple and earnestly, with your eyes; it is a charmed draught, a cup of blessing.

SCRIPTURE v. ROMANISM.

The following remarkable statement of the Scripture argument against Romanism is taken from the speech of Bishop Strossmayer at the late Vatican Council:—

Penetrated by the feelings of responsibility, of which God will demand of me an account, I have set myself to study with the most serious attention the writings of the Old and New Testaments, and I have asked these venerable monuments of truth to make me know if the Holy Pontiff, who presides there, is truly the successor of St. Peter, Vicar of Jesus Christ, and infallible doctor of the Church.

To resolve this great question, I have been obliged to ignore the present state of things, and to transport myself in mind, with the Evangelical torch in my hand, to the days when there was no Ultramontanism or Gallicanism, and in which the Church had for doctors St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John—doctors to whom no one can deny the divine authority without putting in doubt that which the Holy Bible, which is here before me, teaches us, and which the Council of Trent has proclaimed the rule of faith and of morals.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

I have, then, opened these sacred pages. Well shall I dare to say it?—I have found nothing either near or far which sanctions the opinion of the Ultramontanes. And still more, to my very great surprise, I find no mention in the apostolic days of a Pope successor to St. Peter and Vicar of Jesus Christ, no more than of Mahomet, who did not then exist.

WAS ST. PETER EVER CREATED HEAD OF THE APOSTLES?

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THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH.

Is it to be believed, my venerable brethren, that St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, would have forgotten the first of these offices, the Papacy, if the Papacy had been of divine institution? This forgetfulness appeared to me to be as impossible as if an historian of this Council were not to mention one word of his Holiness Pius IX.

The Apostle Paul makes no mention in any of his letters directed to the various Churches of the Primacy of Peter. If this Primacy has existed—if, in one word, the Church had had in its body a supreme head, infallible in teaching—would the great Apostle of the Gentiles have forgotten to mention it? What do I say? He would have written a long letter on this all-important subject. Then when, as he has actually done, the edifice of the Christian doctrine is erected, would the foundation, the key of the arch, be forgotten? Now, unless you hold that the Church of the Apostles was heretical, which none of us would either desire or dare to say, we are obliged to confess that the Church has never been more beautiful, more pure, or more holy, than in the days when there was no Pope.

Neither in the writings of St. Paul, St. John, or St. James, have I found a trace or germ of the Papal power. St. Luke, the historian of the missionary labours of the apostles, is silent on this all-important point.

THE SILENCE OF ST. PETER.

That which has surprised me most, and which moreover, is capable of demonstration, is—if the apostle had been what we claim him (that is, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on the earth), he surely would have

known it; if he had known it, how is it that not once did he act as Pope? He might have done it on the day of Pentecost, when he pronounced his first sermon, and he did not do it; at the council of Jerusalem, and he did not do it; at Antioch, and he did not do it; neither in the two letters he directed to the Church. Can you imagine such a Pope, my venerable brethren, if St. Peter had been the Pope?

Now, if you wish to maintain that he was the Pope, the natural consequence arises that you must maintain that he was ignorant of the fact. Now I ask whoever has a head to think and a mind to reflect, are these two suppositions possible?

WAS ST. PETER EVER IN ROME?

But I hear it said on all sides, Was not St. Peter at Rome? Was he not crucified with his head down? Are the seats on which he taught, and the altars at which he said the Mass, not in this eternal city?

St. Peter having been at Rome, my venerable brethren, rests only on tradition; but if he had been Bishop of Rome, how can you from that episcopate prove his supremacy? Scalligero, one of the most learned of men, has not hesitated to say that Peter's episcopate and residence at Rome ought to be classed with ridiculous legends. I wish to present you with the result of my historical researches. Finding

NO TRACE OF THE PAPACY

in the days of the apostles, I said to myself, I shall find what I am search of in the annals of the Church. Well, I say it frankly—I have sought for a Pope in the first four centuries, and I have not found him.

GOD'S WORK GOES ON.

It is not optional with you, my friend, whether you shall live on a redeemed earth, and in times in which the ends of the age are come; it is only optional with you how you shall live here. It cannot be with you as if your Saviour had not sanctified the world with His feet, and sweetened its air with His charity, and judged it by His Cross. These supernatural facts are a part of the estate you occupy. Neither your ingratitude nor your caprice can root them out, or clear you of the accountability they bind upon you. Your indifference may blind your eyes or paralyze your limbs; it does not shoo you out of the range of the mediatorial ministry, or of the reckoning that must follow it. In any case, therefore, the seals of the choice do not hang evenly balanced. Your right decision is already weighted with the coming of the Son of Man. The way of life has His light upon it. Choose you this day whether you will serve, in joy, the Master of the house, or turn your back upon it and upon Him! If you have wandered some distance away, turn you, for your place is kept for you, and you are yet within the borders of the King's country! If you have fallen into the slumber of unconcern, awake and arise, and Christ shall give you light!—Bishop Huntington.

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Wherever it comes, Christianity works amelioration in literature and laws, in social institutions, in family and social life. Christian men themselves have often been unfaithful to their faith, they have corrupted its truths, and abused its influences; and on the principle that the best things are capable of the grossest perversions, they have often become worse than the heathen; but in proportion as they have maintained its principles and realized its spirit, it has been a power that no form of human evil could withstand.

Now, the proof is in every church, in every social circle, almost in every family; the phenomena of religious conversions are as indisputable as they are unaccountable, save on the supernatural theory of Christianity. The truths of Christianity read in the Bible, or listened to from a preacher, work the most marvellous transformations; they put an arrest upon sinful habit and feeling, and often in a single day change the entire life of a man. Conversions as sudden and as radical as that of Saul of Tarsus are continually occurring. A godless, profligate, hardened man, whose life has been given up to evil, and whose mind has scarcely ever been troubled about religion, is suddenly arrested by some truth of Christianity, subdued into thoughtfulness and penitence for sin. Those who yesterday heard him blaspheme, to-day hear him pray. The impure has become chaste, the unprincipled has become upright, the harsh speaks the truth, and the hard, grasping, selfish man becomes pitiful and benevolent; the sinner has become a saint; and between his old life and new there has come to be in a few hours "a great gulfix-ed." And the reality and thoroughness of the change are attested by a long subsequent life of humble holiness, consecrated service, patient endurance, and grateful love.

Writing to the Corinthian Christians, the apostle Paul speaks of "thieves, and covetous, drunkards, revellers, and extortioners," and says, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And there is scarcely a Christian pastor who could not speak of similar transformations in some members of his flock.

How are these to be accounted for? No other truths, no other books produce radical changes of spiritual character. Read to a man Plato, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Bacon, they affect him but little; read to him the New Testament, he becomes "a new creature in Christ Jesus. In the light of these phenomena, are we not justified in applying to the assaults of Christianity the wise words of a calm observer of its earlier phenomena, "Refrain from those men, and let them alone; for, if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."—Rev. Henry Allon, D. D.

The only way for a man to escape being found out is to pass for what he is. The only way to maintain a good character is to deserve it. It is easier to correct our faults than to conceal them.

IS IT PRESBYTERIAN.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Mr. Editor,—As I notice my last contribution in your columns I venture to continue my remarks on the Answers to Dissent. I have already gone over their arguments I now take up their apologies.

These are, in effect, "that congregations, by the finding of the Assembly, are not required to use Instruments of music in their worship, that the granting permission to such congregations as so desire to use them will be the cutting off of strife, and that the introduction of this kind of strife and confusion is not of the Assembly's doing, but has frequently been the subject of discussion in the Supreme Court." To these three points or statements I wish to draw attention—had the first been the action of a congregational Union, I could have understood it, but when issued as an ordinance of a Presbyterian Assembly I must say I am somewhat surprised. One of the objects thought to be attained by Presbyterian Church government is, not only that there be a uniformity of Doctrine in all our pulpits, but that there be such a uniformity of worship in all our churches, as that the members of the church shall, whatever church they may visit, or unite themselves to, find not only the same Gospel truth proclaimed, but the same mode of worship in use to which they had been accustomed. But this finding of the General Assembly fails to carry out this principle, and leaves the congregation to act as it did the Israelites when there was no king in the land, every one doing what seemed good in his own eyes. Our Church Courts are intended to rule the church, and when these give forth an uncertain sound, unarchy and confusion are the inevitable results. Suppose I, a resident of Toronto should require to reside in one of our country villages, where only one Presbyterian Congregation existed, and that congregation should have corrupted the service by the introduction of unauthorized machinery, am I as a true Presbyterian to violate my conscience by sanctioning such evil-worship by my presence. Am I thus to be deprived of the ordinances of God's House, because the Church Courts have tolerated what I deem a breach of the Second Commandment in our congregations. It is not Presbyterian! It is not ruling well the House of God! What I complain of here is not that they do not require congregations to use Instrumental Music, but that they tolerate it all. They should either have ordered its use, or stopped it at once. In a matter so deeply affecting the purity of worship there should have been no indifference, and however much the subject may appear to some to be a mere matter of debate and argument, the history of the church must satisfy every intelligent mind, that it is free from being so, but on the contrary involves mighty and important principles, which once snapped, open the door to all forms of error and superstition. This first apology has too much of the nature of Cain's when he said "am I my brother's keeper," too little of the spirit of Elijah's, when he said "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts" to be satisfactory. The second is equally so.

The assertion that by declining to Legislate upon the subject at all, is the best method of restoring peace to the church, is so absurd that I really must suppose the drawers up of these Answers, as blushing whilst making it, than the opening of the door to disputations in congregations can be the means of renewing a cause of strife from the church I fail to see, unless by the Church is meant the General Assembly alone, and, not to speak of the cowardice evinced, by thus fearing to grapple with a difficulty; what are we to think of the abnegation of duty involved in refusing to seek the peace of Jerusalem by firmly resisting all dangerous innovation; had the evil been boldly met on its first appearance in the body, by decisive action, even as would be the case of heresy in doctrine, the plague would have been stayed; but I need not remind you Sir how utterly this gallico policy has failed to promote the peace of the Church. Montreal, Toronto, London, Port Elgyn, and other places have already been made the scene of strife and confusion by it. Congregations are divided, distrust of the future created, lack of zeal for the promotion of the objects of the church engendered. Every where weakness and apathy appearing—many looking forward to a separation from that church, which they fondly believed to be the purest representative of the Apostolic model—truly "they have healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace." I admit Mr. Editor that their third analogy "that the Assembly did not introduce the matter" is true, but where the legislation of that venerable body to be confined to such matters has had their inception in that Court—her legislation would be small, as I understand the constitution thereof, it is a Court of Appeal, and Revision, and final judgment and as such should have decided. And the fact that the subject was not new to the Supreme Court but had frequently been before it, instead of forming any excuse for neglect of final action, only renders it the more inexcusable. Previous decisions form a good precedent in settling cases before Courts of Law, and there was no lack of precedents for at once deciding this case before the General Assembly, but I must stop.

Such Mr. Editor are the apologies of the organists for a proceeding, which has led to the question put by many Was it Presbyterian?