

## THE ARCHBISHOP'S CASE.

Some months ago we were asked why it was that we made no reference to the famous case between the defunct Canada Revue and His Grace Archbishop Fabre of Montreal. We had very good reasons for not commenting upon that now completed action, especially at that particular time. In the first place THE TRUE WITNESS had been one of the hardest strikers at the Canada-Revue, and its editorials, we are informed, served to a great extent to draw the mask from the face of a journal that under the guise of Catholicity and reform was doing more harm to the Church than the most open enemies of our religion could possibly perpetrate. This alone might give rise to a suspicion of animus on our part. In the second place, THE TRUE WITNESS, as is well known, was and is approved of—in its spirit—by the venerable head of our archdiocese, and by the clergy in general. It thus might be suspected—although wrongly—that any comments from our pen were suggested or sanctioned directly by those in ecclesiastical authority. And finally, the case was then pending before the courts, and an Irish-Catholic judge was deliberating upon its merits. We deemed it, consequently, advisable to be silent and await the judgment before expressing the opinion which most naturally might have been expected of us. Not that we imagined for a moment that our arguments or criticisms would have any effect direct or indirect upon a case that was placed in the hands of the Civil Court and that would be decided without any consideration other than that which the law alone dictated; but like Cæsar's wife, we felt it right "to be above suspicion," and we curbed our indignation for the time and ventured no expression on a subject that had become very delicate in view of all those connected with its solution.

Now that the judgment has been given and given in a masterly, erudite, calm, exhaustive and coldly impartial manner, now that the law which obtains in our Province, whether drawn from French sources of principle or English sources of precedent, has been clearly shown to support the contentions of His Grace and to confirm the rights, privileges and prerogatives of all persons occupying positions similar before the state to his; now that it has been declared, in a manner so exact that even the sympathizers with the defeated Plaintiff are obliged to acknowledge the justice and equity of the judgment that His Grace, in forbidding the reading, buying or selling, of the Canada-Revue by members of his flock, only exercised his legitimate jurisdiction, and took advantage of his right, without in any way infringing upon the right of the Plaintiff, we can heartily and openly congratulate His Grace upon the triumph he has scored, congratulate the Catholic clergy and laity of this Province upon the happy termination of that vexatious suit, congratulate the judge upon his magnificent and lucid exposition of the different questions that arose from the action, and congratulate the non-Catholic clergy as well, upon a decision that is to their future advantage as well as to that of the Catholic Church.

If the judgment in this case had been otherwise, then the Congregation of the Index would be perpetually open to actions at law, by the authors of books, pamphlets or publications of any class that might fall under its censure; and every priest, bishop or archbishop who sought to enforce the decisions of that Sacred Congregation would be equally actionable for similar causes. In fact a judgment contrary to the one given would set the seal of legality upon the most dangerous of publications, and

would render it morally impossible for the guardians of souls to prevent the ever increasing plague of immoral or otherwise dangerous literature. Moreover, a judgment that would present the reverse conclusions of the present one, would be flying in the face of the French law, the authorities and principles that obtain in our Province, while it would be disregarding the most pronounced and emphatic decisions of English tribunals, which precedents, when in harmony with the French civil authorities, not only strengthen the latter, but render them invulnerable.

To-day it is the Catholic Archbishop whose right is disputed in matters that most positively pertain to his jurisdiction; to-morrow it might be the Lord Bishop of Montreal, or the Moderator of some scotarian synod, whose privileges and rights—as such—might be brought into legal question. In any and in all cases the judgment in this cause applies. In itself that pronouncement is not merely a settling of the Canada Revue's action against Archbishop Fabre, but it is a judgment that will for all time stand as a precedent in similar matters before the courts of our country. Free from all religious or other bias, based solely upon the law as interpreted by the authorities and confirmed by the decisions, the voice of the State—speaking through the medium of a sworn judge—meting out justice between subject and subject, the judgment is a grand exemplification of the justice that characterizes our tribunals. Once more we extend our congratulations to His Grace, and trust that the day is far distant when he will be troubled again in such an outrageous manner, and that God may grant him many years to continue his noble work as guardian of the interests of his flock.

## NINETEEN CENTURIES.

We are rapidly approaching the close of the nineteenth century; already are we far advanced in the terminal decade of that wonderful epoch. It has been a century of changes, of transformations and of innovations. Along the mountain range of its years, many giant peaks of individual greatness tower sublimely aloft. From Napoleon, at the commencement, to Leo XIII, at the close, in politics, war, church affairs, and in every sphere great minds have flashed upon its sky, and we question whether the sunset of the age is not more magnificent than its dawn.

Standing upon the verge of this remarkable period and looking back over the centuries now dead, it is interesting to note all the grand human institutions and powers that have arisen, flourished, decayed and disappeared. A way back on the rim of the distant horizon appears the phantom form of the Roman Empire. It was so solid in its foundation, so ubiquitous in its influence, so mighty in its power, that men had visions of its immortality. Yet long ages have gone since the days of the Cæsars, and the crumbling ruins of a once magnificent civilization alone tell that the Empire once existed. On its debris arise the different continental powers, and, one by one, they have passed into a semi-oblivion, leaving no trace behind, save their works of art or their architectural monuments, which in turn have crumbled to a great extent. Hun, Vandal, Goth and Visigoth has overrun Europe, and under their coursers' hoofs have been crushed the glories of the past and from the dust have arisen wonderful structures of nationality to surprise the future. The New World dawned upon the vision of humanity and the Genoese traveller opened out mighty vistas of speculation for coming historians. Empire, King-

dom, Republic, followed each other in rapid succession; revolutions ploughed up the fields of Empire and sowed the seeds of a modern democracy; old systems vanished, as the stars disappear at sunrise, and new constitutions appeared in panoramic succession. Nothing permanent, nothing stable, nothing certain of perpetuity. Thus do we behold the generations moving off the scene, even as Arabian caravans are seen from the summit of the Great Pyramid. A moment ago—and years are only moments in presence of "Time's all devastating flight"—and we beheld the procession appearing upon the horizon; it moved swiftly past us, and now it is just upon the verge of the opposite sky; and the sandy plain spreads out, silent, fevered, and inanimate. For ages the Sphinx has gazed upon that ever varied and yet similar picture. Still the grim features of that stony monster have not relaxed for one second—smile has never disturbed its placidness, nor has frown wrinkled its brow.

Sphinx-like the student—the cold and calm eyed historian—looks out over the desert of the nineteen centuries and he beholds but a kaleidoscopic series of changes; kingdoms arising and disappearing; giants of human power springing up and sinking beneath the sands of time. Alone amidst all that solitude one institution, one temple, one power towers sublimely aloft. Ages may whirl around it; tempests may lash its sides; suns of fury may scorch it; storms of opposition may attack it, yet there it remains erect, magnificent, only the more attractive from the ruins at its base, only the more solid from the sands heaped up against its foundations. It is the Roman Catholic Church. Petty minds may argue and dispute over ununderstood texts, sects may brandish the fragments of a broken creed against each other, empires and kingdoms, republics and independent States may grow grey in combat with the ever conquering enemy of humanity; but the Church has not lost one stone in its structure, has not become one iota less powerful as age advanced upon it, has not lost one atom of its vigor, its truth, its security, its infallibility, no matter how things may moulder or men disappear. And to-day, at the close of the nineteenth century, it is grander—proportionately to human advancement—than at any other epoch in its unbroken existence. If we require an evidence of the Divine origin of that Church, we have but to appeal to history, to contemplate the centuries, and to gaze upon the evident littleness of this world's power compared with the kingdom that is not of this earth.

We cannot conceive how Jew, Infidel, or Christian non-Catholic can possibly ignore this wonderful perpetuity of the Church. No matter how great or powerful, how exteriorly regal or mighty a Messiah might be, it is impossible to imagine that conqueror performing, with humbler means, a more stupendous work than that which has resulted from Christ's presence on earth. Even were the expected one to be endowed with all the attributes of Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon, still history shows us that his empire could, at best, only last a few hundred years. While here we behold a Kingdom—spiritual and indestructible—towering above the centuries and harmonizing with the peculiarities of every race, the accidents of every climate and the mutations of every age. No human creature—no matter how gifted, no matter how potent—could attempt to rival, let alone surpass, such an extraordinary work. And yet there are to be found men, claiming to be educated and thoroughly enlightened, with what they call a knowledge of the past, who seem

to ignore these potent evidences that stand forth in testimony of the Church's origin, glory, and imperishability. And even as we stand—towards the close of this great century—looking back over the past and striving to count the numberless triumphs of Catholicity, so shall the last man, on the extreme verge of time, contemplate the ages, and behold the same Church, in all her perfection of arrangement, organization and beauty, standing alone amidst the desolation of the vanished years, and pointing steadily to the unending haven of eternal triumph, that is the reward of all who have adhered to her precepts, obeyed the law, and "fought the good fight."

Glorious and magnificent relic of the past! Powerful and imperishable structure of the present! Immutable and Divinely founded edifice of the future! We thank God that we are of thy communion and participators in thy glories.

## THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

A "Reader" has sent us a card asking a few questions regarding this subject of books. It would not be possible to enter into all of them in one issue; but we will touch upon that of novels. It would be difficult, and we don't think it would be advisable, to give a list of the standard romances that might be read with profit. Of course there are the standard works that might be called classical—Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, Scott, and a couple of others—that are always safe, provided they are read judiciously and that the object is improvement, study of style and firm rather than mere pastime. But it is not safe to devour the works of these masters wholesale. All the novels from the pens of these prolific writers are not equally reliable or equally true in spirit. Under Dickens' touching humanity there is ever an undercurrent of materialism; virtues and vices are pictured in an inimitable manner, but the rewards or punishments seem to be all temporary; throughout there is nothing that speaks of God, of eternity, of the beauties of Faith, of the Christian's true Hope, of Divine Charity. Yet there are noble sentiments permeating almost every charmed story conceived by that extraordinary man. When you have read "Bleak House," "Nicholas Nickleby," "Little Dorrit," "David Copperfield," and "Oliver Twist," you may conclude you have read the best of Dickens, the works in which the most important and crying abuses have been exposed, the novels containing the truest morals, in a word, the books most calculated to display his style and to instruct the reader while immortalizing the author. In all his other novels Dickens is more or less careless, and too often he forgets the aim of the work in strained attempts to keep up a most unique and difficult style.

Thackeray is a master of caricature and a delineator of character unsurpassed in the English language; yet from "Pendennis" to the simplest sketch from his pen there is a spirit of cynical mistrust pervading his compositions that unhappily is somewhat contagious—and therefore fearfully dangerous. It would be impossible for any other man, no matter how gifted otherwise, to imitate this wonderful satirist. To attempt such a feat means immediate failure; still his style is one that spurs the youthful reader on to such attempts. And even though a person had no ambition or desire to copy the style, yet, almost imperceptibly one grows so accustomed to it, and becomes so charmed with its twilight-humor and poison-tipped shafts that the delight in reading grows into a natural desire to do likewise; this engenders a habit of practising in real life what