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**Northwest Review.**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 22, 1899

**ARCHIEPISCOPAL NOTICE.**

By order of His Grace the Archbishop of St. Boniface the triduum in preparation for the Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was to have taken place the 5th, 6th and 7th September is now definitively transferred to the 7th, 8th and 9th of the same month, and the solemn consecration of all the faithful, in which the Holy Father lately so earnestly exhorted us all to take part, will take place on Sunday, the tenth of September.

ARTHUR BÉLIVEAU, Priest,  
Secretary.

**CURRENT COMMENT**

In reproducing the Free Press well written report of the laying of the corner stone we have had to correct a multitude of the most ridiculous misprints. One sentence, which, as printed in our contemporary, was sheer nonsense, we have restored conjecturally to something like sense; but it still seems to us very unsatisfactory. The Free Press can afford and generally has good proofreaders, but this was Sunday work and we all know how the Lord's work is liable to be scamped.

We have just received the artistic prospectus of "Le Vieux Paris," that is to say, the reproduction, on the bank of the Seine, in the Exposition grounds, of fourteenth and eighteenth century buildings and costumes. Those who have seen "Old London" at the Healtheries and Fisheries exhibitions in the metropolis of the Empire will have some idea of what they may expect in 1900. But this restoration of old and quaint houses and churches will be, like all Parisian art, very much better than anything else of its kind. Similar reproductions have been attempted everywhere; we have had Old Amsterdam, Old Antwerp, Old Berlin, Old Buda, Old Brussels, etc.; everywhere except, of course, at Chicago. Who could possibly take any interest in Old Chicago? But this Parisian revival adds many new

features, one of them being that most of the ancient city is built out on piles into the Seine, and another that all the turreted, machicolated, gabled, mullioned, corbelled, half-timbered, latticed and oriel-windowed structures will be habitable in all their storeys, clear up to the roof, and not mere foregrounds painted stereoscopically so as to deceive the spectator, as have hitherto been, except on the ground floor, all former restorations of this kind.

The Free Press of Saturday morning last published a masterly letter from Mr. J. P. Tardivel, defending himself against the slanderous misrepresentations of "Onlooker," the Free Press Montreal correspondent. Mr. Tardivel's style and mode of thought is thoroughly English of old England, and when we consider that he is at the same time the best authority on French in Canadian journalism and probably the very best French writer in Canada, his having preserved such a command of English idioms is an extremely rare phenomenon. There are certainly not three editorial writers in the Dominion who could pen such a letter. The Free Press editorial note, tacked on as a perfunctory protest, cuts a sorry figure indeed.

This is all well and good for those who like exhibitions, monster shows and such brain-wearing glitter. They will have their fill in the Paris exhibition of 1900, provided, of course, war does not make it impossible. But is there not matter for serious reflection in the fact that the greatest commercial nation in the world, after initiating in 1851 those international exhibitions which have since become so common, never thinks of giving another in its own capital, the largest city in the world? England has long turned her back on world's fairs. There must be some reason for this calculated abstention. No doubt British business men, being more far-sighted than any others, see that in the long run these pageants do not pay. A small dose of them like the Health Exhibition, may do; but huge undertakings like the Chicago financial fizzle seem to breed hard times rather than prosperity.

**SOCIALISTIC COMMUNITIES**

Frequent comment has been made in the local secular press on the recently reported collapse of the Ruskin socialistic community in Tennessee. Correspondents, clerical and lay, have aired their views pro and con. One of the most thoughtful articles appeared in the Free Press of the 10th inst. As its oracular tone is fully representative of what the more respectable non-Catholic journals would say, we venture to bring to bear upon it the searchlight of Catholic experience.

In the first place we are in complete agreement with this conclusion of the Free Press writer:

Neither the plan of socialists nor any other plan will ever enable mankind to alter the fundamental conditions of its being, by doing away with the inequalities, greater even than those of

wealth, which are fixed not by human law givers, but by nature—[i. e., God. Ed. N. W. R.] inequalities such as those of health, strength and intellectual power. When we speak of injustice we speak of something human, and it is idle to assail, as injustice, the inequalities which are decreed by a power above man's control.

Socialists, who sincerely expect the whole human race ultimately to practise their wild theories, betray a profound ignorance of past history and of present and future human nature. On the other hand, as the Free Press points out (but with an inadequate enumeration of causes), "thrift, good government," and, we would add, honesty, Christian charity and the true faith have already often brought about still more generally "the nearest approach to equality of wealth in this world."

The most remarkable example of a whole people transformed and exalted through Christianity that has been known since the middle ages is the Paraguay Reductions or colonies of Indians. They lasted for more than 150 years. In 1717 the Christian Indians numbered 120,000. Crime was almost unknown, thrift and artistic workmanship were universal, and a community of goods was established as in the apostolic age.

It is strange that this historical fact should not have occurred either to the Free Press editor or to Goldwin Smith, whom he quotes approvingly to this effect: "The utmost that religion or sentiment of any sort" (observe, by the way, his only notion of religion, a mere sentiment) "has done is to form the original bond of union, and invest the prophet-chief with the necessary power" But in the Reductions of Paraguay there was not merely one "prophet-chief," there were hundreds of apostolic men directing, during the successive generations of a century and a half, some fifty different colonies, and their success was so complete that even Southey, in his History of Brazil, which is full of prejudice against Catholics, could write: "The inhabitants, for many generations, enjoyed a greater exemption from physical and moral evil than any other inhabitants of the globe." Nor is there any reason to suppose that these model communities would not have subsisted till our own day, had not hungry adventurers from the outside plotted and brought about their ruin. The breaking up of the Reductions was due not to any internal dissensions or germs of social decay—for they were never so prosperous as when they were unjustly deprived of their rulers—but to the greed of the white colonists around them and the malignant policy of Pombal.

Thus religion has done what no other influence could do, and the religion that did this is no mere sentiment, as Goldwin Smith ignorantly calls it, but the only reasonable attitude of the creature towards his Creator. Nor could any ordinary amount of religious conviction operate such marvels. There was needed heroic abnegation and the most exalted virtue on the part of the Jesuits who founded and conducted the Reductions. Scores

of them were martyred by the very Indians whom their dauntless brethren afterwards transformed into the best Christian communities ever known.

However, this fact, that the Reductions were started and maintained only by dint of extraordinary self-denial on the part of the organizers proves that a community of goods, though not against nature, is so far above ordinary human nature that it can never become the lot of mankind in general. The mistake with all socialists, and with Bellamy in particular, is that they make no allowance for the consequences of original sin and for the constant struggle which the minimizing of those consequences entails. To come back to our first proposition, these dreamers are profoundly ignorant of human nature.

On the other hand, in the Catholic Church where alone, owing to the self-knowledge which the practice of auricular confession imparts, the possibilities both for good and evil of human nature are thoroughly understood, there is one other and a far more striking example of Christian communism. This case has lasted nearly nineteen hundred years. The members of this communistic body have steadily multiplied throughout succeeding ages. It is made up of representatives of all the toilers and peoples under the sun. Its aspects are as various as the needs of world-wide humanity. Its moving spirit, the mainspring of its undying life, is everywhere the same. And yet, oddly enough, neither the Free Press and Goldwin Smith nor the rest of non-Catholic socialists appear to be aware of its existence, and so they go on blindly spinning their systems and constructing their sociological theories in serene oblivion of the most marvellous and enduring social phenomenon that ever was.

"The so-called communion of the early Christians was short-lived," says the Free Press. This is true in the sense that a common ownership of goods soon ceased to be general. But it is not true in the sense that the communistic early Christians had no successors. When great multitudes entered the Church, it was soon found that this more perfect life was too painful for the ordinary Christian. But, all through the first three centuries of violent prosecution we catch glimpses of groups of clergy and laity here and there who were to all intents and purposes what we now designate by the noun substantive "religious," that is, persons specially consecrated to God and sharing their poverty in common. From the fourth century onward, under the various names of cenobites, monks, friars, regular canons and regular clerics, and religious societies and congregations, these Christian socialistic communities have never ceased to thrive both as to the variety of their forms and the multitude of their members.

Anyone who has read history at all knows how the religious orders flourished in the middle ages, more particularly in Ireland, England, Italy and France; but few even among well informed Protestants are aware how numerous the religious orders are at the present day. With

a tolerably wide knowledge of statistics we venture to assert that in this year of grace, 1899, there are as many Catholics following a religious community life as there ever were in the Ages of Faith. In that former period doubtless several religious orders numbered more members than any one order does now; but now the orders themselves are vastly more various and multiplied. Where formerly there were only a dozen great orders now there are literally hundreds of congregations. In Canada alone the Catholic Directory mentions 65 different orders of religious men and women, with a membership of about twelve thousand. In France the orders are far more numerous and the membership exceeds one hundred thousand. Though we have not been able to get at any general statistics of all the religious congregations in the world we feel well within the mark in affirming that there are at least five hundred thousand Catholic religious all over the globe. And it must be borne in mind that, however multiform are their costumes and however various the special objects of each institute, they all agree, not only in all the doctrines and practices of Catholicism, but also in that each individual has no private property, and that all form a perfect socialistic community, far more perfect, in fact, than any community that has ever existed outside of the Catholic Church. They all agree, for instance, that no member can spend one penny without leave from his or her superior, and that the superiors themselves are held to strict account and bound to use money or property only for the general good of the order. Moreover, the strict economy of their lives is something that would make a day-laborer shudder. We know of many communities of women in which the average annual cost of maintenance for each person, clothing, food and all other expenses included, is considerably less than one hundred dollars. Yet these religious are, all things considered, the most contented and cheerful of Christians. For them the future, even in this world, has no possibilities of hunger, old age no chance of desertion and no prospect of the workhouse.

As to their influence upon the outside world, they do a hundred times more good than all the non-Catholic charitable, philanthropic and world-reforming societies in the universe; only they don't get together and talk about it and have their talks printed in the newspapers. They educate millions of Catholic children at prices that defy competition; they care for millions of the poor, the sick and the aged, and they see in them all the person of Christ whom they truly follow.

Now it would seem that the presence in this nineteenth century of this great army of half a million of Christian communists ought to make thinkers reflect. It ought to prove to them that one religion at least can bring about "the nearest approach to equality of wealth." But they appear either deliberately to close their eyes to it as an insoluble problem or to explain it by those shameful suspicions which are always lurking in the lecher-