

The Charlottetown Herald.

NEW SERIES

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 1912

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Aug. 15, 1906—3m

ROME LETTER.

(From our own Correspondent.)

Rome, March 9th, 1912. Since the first whisper was given of the approaching publication of a Papal decree regulating the discipline of ecclesiastics, the news has made a tour of the world. "Liberal" journals have enlarged on the decree in a grotesque manner, and one pretends even to have found out that the Pope will recur to the secular arm to obtain civil punishment for clerics upon whom spiritual penalties may have been inflicted. How truly absurd all this may be gathered from the fact that no one, outside the officials engaged in drawing up the document, have anything but vague and uncertain knowledge of its contents.

All that is known is that the Holy Father may not wait for the publication of the Code of Canon Law to promulgate the important decree that is expected. Just as in the case of the decree issued on the causes that justify a Bishop to deprive a priest of his parish without going through the tedious legal process and other similar documents, the new decree may be promulgated now on trial so that the change which experience may bring can be made on its incorporation with the new Code which is drawing to a termination. Probably the new decree may be published about the 15th inst.

At the present time the Superior Council named to take charge of the celebration in honor of the sixteenth century of the Peace of Constantine is considering the appointment of sub-committees throughout Italy to help in the series of festivals that are due to such an historic event. Whether such bodies may be formed in other countries is uncertain at present. Of course the representatives on the Council of each tongue will do all that is necessary for those who desire to participate in the festivals. It is unnecessary to say that Mgr. Prior of the English College, who, though born in England, is to be regarded as Irish, as his father and mother hailed from Connaught.

Preparations are being made in Rome by the Irish residents to celebrate the Feast of the Apostle of Ireland. Invitations have been already sent out for the annual banquet in the Irish College to the clerical and lay dignitaries of Rome, and at which the United States, Canada, France, Italy, Australia, Scotland and England will be represented. Pontifical High Mass will take place in S. Isidore's of the Irish Franciscans, and the panegyric of St. Patrick will be preached by the great orator, Rev. Dr. Keane, O. P., of Dublin, who has come to Rome to deliver the Lenten course of sermons in S. Silvestro in Capite, the Church for English-speaking Catholics. And in the new Church of S. Patrick, on the feast of the Apostle, there will be High Mass, the panegyric to be preached by the Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Rippon, who arrives from Ireland on the previous morning. As in other years the ancient Basilica of S. Agatha of the Ghiblins, which is attached to the Irish College, will be a place of pilgrimage for many on S. Patrick's Day, for there the embalmed heart of O'Donnell is preserved. The urn containing the Liberator's heart is kept within the magnificent marble monument which stands in the left aisle, and on which bas-reliefs of Bonzoni represent the Angel of Hope bidding Erin to throw off her chains and arise. The inscription, which must interest every lover of liberty, runs as follows:—This monument contains the heart of O'Donnell, who, dying at Genoa on his way to the Eternal City, bequeathed his soul to God, and his body to Ireland, and his heart to Rome. He is represented at the Bar of the British House of Commons in M.D. CCXXXIII, when he refused to take the anti-Catholic Declaration, in these remarkable words: "I at once reject the declaration; part of it I believe to be untrue, and the rest I know to be false." He was born 6th August, MDCCLXXVI, and died 5th May, MDCCLXXVIII. Elected by Omas, Bianconi, the faithful friend of the immortal Liberator, and of Ireland, the land of his adoption.

Quite a number of features contained in the latest issue of the Acta Apostolicae Sedis, the bulletin of the Vatican, are of unusual interest, especially that decree of the S. Congregational Congregation on the oath which must be taken by synodal examiners and parish priests who are called to confer with their Bishop as to the removal of a pastor from his parish for reasons specified in the Papal decree, Maxima Cura, without entering on the legal trial Rome. The decree now issued commands that both synodal examiners and parish priests shall take the subscribed

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oath at the first session on every occasion they may have to adjudicate in either of these capacities, and this under pain of the nullity of their decisions. The following is the translation of the formula of the oath to be taken—*I, N. N., synodal (or prosynodal) examiner (or parish counsel) make promise, vow and swear that I will faithfully and sincerely perform the office and charge entrusted to me as far as in me lies and without any regard to human affection; that I will religiously keep the official secret regarding all I may learn in charge of this my duty, especially concerning secret documents, the discussions held in council and the number and the reasons for votes also that I will receive nothing in connection with my duty, even under the appearance of a gift or offering, either before or afterwards. So help me God and these Holy Gospels of God, which I touch with my hands.*

Curiously enough, even now when Moderatism has been completely unmasked and solemnly condemned by the Holy Father, his devotees rarely lose an opportunity of attacking those who gave special assistance in showing up in its true colors the upholders of what Plus termed "the synthesis of all heresies." In its issue of the 8th inst. the *Osservatore Romano* has the following:—"We read in the 'Augsburger Postzeitung' a so-called correspondence from Rome, in which a distinguished Roman prelate is attacked in a really unworthy manner by means of fantastic and injurious accusations. Such a publication does not merit even the honor of a denial; it is sufficient to mark it out for the reproaches of the good." It is interesting to know that the prelate in question is the Right Rev. Mgr. Benigni, who is attached to the office of the Papal Secretary of State, and at whom the Moderatists have aimed many a missile, and that one of the accusations made against him in the article condemned by the *Osservatore* is that he is nothing less than a Freemason!

When Maximilian Massimo, son of Prince Massimo of the great Roman family which played so important a part in the history of ancient Rome, abandoned wealth and title some forty five years ago to enter the Company of Jesus, few expected he should be able to achieve such a degree of success in educating so many young men of the Eternal City. The wealth which belonged to him as scion of a great patrician family is said to have been used by him in building and endowing the large technical school which is throughout Italy known as the "Massimo Institute," to which representatives of the learned professions and various pursuits in life owe so much. Here Father Massimo lived in retirement, devoting his time to the education of youth. Over and over again Leo XIII offered to make the princely educationist a Cardinal, but no argument was found strong enough to induce him to enter the Sacred College; and so he lived and died in obscurity. And now the demonstration of affection and respect which so many thousands of the Roman aristocracy, of the learned professions, of business and laboring men made a few months ago at the burial of the aged priest is to have its complement in the erection of a monument to their benefactor in Rome. How spontaneous is the effort to make this a fitting commemoration of a great life is seen from the number of Roman princes, professors of universities, medical doctors, lawyers and business men who have eagerly come together to honor their father and friend.

In the list of Papal honors promulgation is given to the nomination of Right Rev. George W. Herr, parish priest of S. Mary's, Dubuque, U. S. A., as Prorogatory Apostolic; of Very Rev. D. M. McDonald, P. P., Tignish, Canada, as Domestic Prelate of His Holiness; and of Signor Ariadne Leonardi, Roman architect, who is so well known in America, Italy and Ireland in connection with ecclesiastical buildings.

From the tribunal of the Sacred Rota come decisions relative to two American matrimonial cases which have engaged almost universal attention for some time. The first of these is the celebrated Boni-Gould case, in which a declaration of nullity of marriage was asked between Count Boni da Castellina, a Catholic, and Anna Gould, a Protestant, of New York, who were married by dispensation in March 1895. In 1905 the latter applied for and obtained a divorce in the civil courts, and then contracted a civil marriage, after which Count Boni claimed his marriage had been null from the very beginning by reason of his wife's lack of consent, necessary for the marriage contract. However, after mature deliberation on the evidence brought before it, the parish priests shall take the subscribed

the Catholic party by declaring that the nullity of marriage is not evident. It also condemns him to all the legal expenses. The second decision relates to the famous Rosignoli Reid-Parkhurst case, which has been going on for twelve years, and has been tried and decided twice already by the Propaganda and the Rota against Mrs. Parkhurst (nee Reid of Baltimore). The divorce from her husband was obtained on the ground that the dispensation for her marriage with Mr. Parkhurst did not apply to the case; she was supposed to marry a Protestant, whereas he was not even a Christian. She then married Prince Rosignoli of Rome, and sought to have the Church confirm the marriage. The present decision of the Rota holds there is no solid evidence to warrant a new trial, so that the case of Mrs. Parkhurst, or Princess Rosignoli as the lady is known, is as it was a dozen years before. If fresh material evidence can be produced by the petitioners the case will naturally be reopened.

The thirteenth volume of the Catholic Encyclopedia contains several hundreds of excellent articles on a great variety of subjects, just as did its predecessors. For that reason one hesitates to single out any particular article for special praise; special praise implies comparison, and comparisons may be invidious. As we particularly wish, however, to remark one or two points in the article "Shakespeare: The Religion of," it becomes necessary to run these risks. Let it be enough, therefore, to enter a protest, at the outset, against any such imputation. Let no one suppose that we fail to appreciate the merits of the other articles, by the same and other authors, in the same volume; only, we venture to assert of this particular two columns and a half that they represent the perfection of encyclopedic writing. In the first place, every article in an encyclopedia ought to "fill a long-felt want"; it should tell something which many people have long been wanting to know; and if the subject is likely to interest many people for generations to come, so much the better, for an encyclopedia is a monumental affair and should be built on a plan that cannot soon become superannated. Now this question of Shakespeare's religion seems to answer these requirements most exactly. Every intelligent English-speaking person, whether to be what is called "literary" in bias or not, is interested in the work of Shakespeare. The bridging intelligence of a boy or girl might almost be judged by some test of his or her interest in the best of Shakespeare's plays. And every intelligent Catholic, more especially every Catholic who knows something about the changing religious conditions of Shakespeare's times, must wonder how much of all that poetic intuition, the mysteriously profound knowledge of human nature, and that sympathy with all nature, come from the Catholic, and how much from the semi-pagan Protestant mind of Elizabethan England. I have been the boast of Protestantism for many generations; that the age in which the Reformation triumphed in England was the golden age of English literature; that Edmund Spenser was the poetical champion of Elizabeth against Rome; that Bacon was the philosopher of Protestantism long before Kant; that there could have been no Shakespeare if there had been no revolt against Rome. All such sectarian crowing is apt to irritate the Catholic who reads and who cares, so that he looks for someone to produce substantial proof of what has been so often asserted; that Shakespeare, the poet far greater than Spenser, the greatest dramatist since Euripides, the brightest star save one in the intellectual firmament of "the spacious days of great Elizabeth," himself "died a Papist."

This makes the topic eminently interesting for an encyclopedia article and especially so when the encyclopedia is particularly intended for Catholics. It remains that the treatment should be as perfect as the subject is apt. Here is the difficult thing to achieve, and the triumphant achievement makes this page of the thirteenth volume a source of pure delight. For some people, the use of an encyclopedia is to decide bias; an encyclopedia article ought to be finally authoritative. To be sure, when no certainty exists on the subject of the matter, then there can be no decision but that very same impossibility of decision needs to be authoritatively decided, in such a case the encyclopedia article ought to give the last word of all that is known on one side or the other. And this is just what

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Father Thurston has done in regard to Shakespeare's religious belief, and done it in about 1500 words. He begins with the classical statement of the Anglican archdeacon Davies that "Shakespeare died a Papist" and reviews in admirably logical order every argument on either side—rom external evidence and from the evidence of the plays—without the slightest apparent bias in way or the other. Reading the article one cannot help thinking what a brilliant success this good Jesuit would have made on the bench of the Supreme Court; he deals with his question really as though it were of no consequence to him personally whether Shakespeare was a Catholic or a Shinister, thereby displaying that critical poise which makes him one of the most potent historical controversialists since Newman. Summing up the whole condensed series, pro and con, the conclusion appears to be that Shakespeare, the poet, was the son of a Catholic father and mother, but that he lived his life outside of the Church. As to whether he died, as Archdeacon Davies asserts, "a Papist," very likely he did, and quite possible he did not. But the great question is this: in case of a dispute as to whether Shakespeare was a Catholic or a Protestant—which is indeed a very interesting question—here is where the dispute can be settled with genuine substantial benefit, so that the disputants shall really be much better off, intellectually, than when they first brushed the subject.

The Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. XIII Shakespeare's Religion

It is an interesting example of the value of the Catholic Encyclopedia, for, as we took laborious care to remark at the outset, this is not the only perfect article even in this one volume; it is only a particularly brilliant example of the kind of perfection which the articles in the Encyclopedia attain when the subject is important enough and yet not so wide in scope as absolutely to defy condensation. But a thoughtful discussion of such an example leads to the question: How can any man, with other duties besides the study of Shakespeare, find time to read all the books, the pamphlets, the heavy articles in learned reviews, and then to study and weigh all the evidence in such fashion as must be necessary for the preparation of a page of matter like this? The result is like a few drops of triple-distilled extract of arduous, and one is lost in astonishment at immense proportion of preparation to so material, small a display. Truly there are, in the world of print, values immensely greater than the value of bulk.

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