

THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

"A Happy New Year to all!" Sincerely and heartily do we express this wish and we add thereto the hope that all our friends and readers may live to enjoy many another Happy New Year.

In a few days old 1893 will be no more. Already do we catch the heaving and sighing that indicate the approaching end. In a very few hours the cold form of the dead year will be wrapped in its shroud of snow, and its spirit will have gone over into that great abyss called the Past. Before many more revolutions of the hour hand, on the dial of time, a young, bright, innocent year, all beautiful in the white baptismal robes that nature has prepared for her, will come tripping over the hills, scattering on all sides fair promises and great hopes. At this season we always experience a twilight feeling—half sadness and half joy—clouds of the past and sunbeams of the future; it is a feeling of holy regret for the year that is no more, and yet a feeling of not unalloyed pleasure in presence of the year that approaches. How appropriate the touching lines of the Poet Priest! At the close of each year they come to us like friends we have ever loved but who have long been absent.

Let the New Year sing
At the Old Year's grave;
Will the New Year bring
What the Old Year gave?

Ah! The Stranger-year trips over the snows,
And his brow is wreathed with many a rose;
But how many thorns do the roses conceal
Which the roses, when withered, shall soon reveal?

Let the New Year smile
When the Old Year dies;
In how short a while
Shall the smiles be sighs?

Yea! Stranger-year, thou hast many a charm,
And thy face is fair and thy greeting warm,
But, dearer than thou—in his shroud of snows—
Is the furrowed face of the Year that goes.

Yea! Bright New Year,
O'er all the earth,
With song and cheer,
They will hail thy birth;

They will trust thy words in a single hour,
They will love thy face, they will laud thy power;
For the New has charms which the Old has not,
And the Stranger's face makes the Friend's forgot."

Before we bury old 1893 and before we join in the jubilation over the advent of young 1894, let us take a hurried glance at the twelve months just elapsed. The new year may be pregnant with great events, but important indeed were many of those that mark the path of yesterday. Each individual can look back and count many smiles and many tears. Not one of us but has felt some amount of happiness and experienced a share of pain during the year that is gone. In every household in the land there have been changes—some perhaps very slight, others very marked. There are to-night many little cribs, in cosy nurseries, that, a year ago were not in their present places; there are many little mounds to-night up in "God's Acre," that a year

ago did not exist. There are seats around the family board this year that were not there when 1893 dawned; there are vacant chairs by many a hearth-fire this evening that were filled with beloved forms twelve months ago. Faces that were weary and sad at the birth of 1893 wear smiles of contentment as the year expires; faces that were aglow with hope and joy last New Year's Day are worn with sorrow's wrinkles and beam with no glow of pleasure as 1894 draws near. The world constantly changes, and yet life is ever the same great blending of bitter and sweet, of shade and light.

Looking beyond the family circle, and out upon the great world, we behold wonderful events that dot the record of 1893. Foremost amongst the first of these is the jubilee celebrations in honor of the Vicar of Christ, the Sovereign Pontiff, the immortal Leo XIII. Centuries hence will the Catholic children of other generations read with delight and admiration the story of the great Pope's struggles against his enemies, and the account of the wonderful unanimity of all the Christian world in doing honor to the successor of St. Peter, the crowned prisoner of the Vatican. It is merely necessary that we should refer to this important event—or rather series of events—in order that its wonderful significance may flash upon the minds of our readers. Next in importance, but in the social or political sphere, is the World's Fair at Chicago. This gathering together of the nations, this collecting of all that nature, art and science could present from every land beneath the sun, this extraordinary reunion of all the finest elements of the world to-day, will stand—as a great landmark—upon the rim of the nineteenth century, and as a beacon-light it will cast its rays down the distances of the future. These two celebrations—one in the religious, the other in the social realm—would suffice to lend an imperishability to the story of 1893.

As every system of planets has its central orb around which the minor, but yet brilliant, bodies revolve, so around each of these central events there cluster a number of others less universal, but still very important. The Church has mourned the loss of many eminent cardinals, bishops and priests during the past year; and, beginning with Cardinal Gibbons and ending with a host of worthy and zealous pastors, the silver and golden jubilees of many true servants of God have been celebrated. Of the dead, two we might mention, each in his own sphere a master and an apostle—Cardinal Lavigerie, the African missionary, and Father Sorin, the venerable founder of Notre Dame. In the ranks of the statesmen of the world several gaps have been left; the Angel of Death cut down not a few of the children of science; and in the field of literature there are a good many blank spots but recently occupied by world-respected figures. To run over the list would be outside our present scope, and to do justice to them all would require many a volume.

But if the dying year saw great changes it has also left many of the most important and most conspicuous individuals of our age to mourn over its tomb and to welcome in its youthful successor. It is wonderful how impartial the old spectre with the scythe has always been! Rich and poor, great and lowly, old and young, are all the same to him; the weed and the stalk of grain must both go down when they stand in the swath that he intends cutting. There are, however, in every age and in every land a small number of towering personages whose forms arise like the pines on the mountain and appear con-

spicuously against the sky of the past, even when all the forest around them is laid low. Of these there are a few that will attract the attention of 1894, as they have challenged the fear, respect, admiration, love or some other sentiment of 1893. Grim old Kossuth, with his vague memories of the far away past and his still more vague ideas about the present: iron-framed, strong-willed Bismarck, with his stubborn adherence to obsolete methods and his love of a power that has forever left him; grand, energetic, high-souled Gladstone, with his determination to see justice done to an injured people before his eagle spirit soars to its reward; and finally, the glorious, sublime, and inimitable form of Leo XIII. pouring forth his mandates of wisdom and truth to the listening nations of the world. But we must check this review or we may be drawn into a subject that as far exceeds our powers, at present, of adequately treating, as does the year that is going exceed the moment in which we write.

Turning, then, from 1893, before bidding the old year a fond adieu, let us thank Providence for all the blessings, the graces, the temporal and spiritual gifts that we received and enjoyed during those twelve months. Not one of us can say that he has not been the recipient of some boon and the participator in some joy; and as all that we have of good comes directly from God, let us be grateful to the Giver and return Him our thanks for His bounty during the year that goes! Welcome, now, to 1894! May it bring us all fresh hopes, new joys, abundant blessings; may its record be one undimmed by any great calamity; may universal peace reign throughout its stay; may the Angel of Death be sparing of our friends; may the trials of the Church and of the Holy Father be reduced and, if possible, effaced forever; may the smiles chase away the frowns; may the joys outnumber the sorrows; and may each and all our readers participate fully in the happiness of the New Year, and may there not be a vacant chair at any of their firesides, when old Father Time comes to ring the knell of 1894 and the christening chime for 1895!

Such is our sincere and fervent prayer. In the year to come we also wish to see union and tranquility reign; we desire that all foolish differences, that only tend to darken life, be drowned in the stream of true and honest tolerance; we trust that a harmony and mutual understanding may exist between the different races and different creeds that go to make up our Canadian population. And, if our desires are realized, as we trust they may be, we will see this country advance one more giant stride along the highway of national prosperity, and approach one station nearer to the goal of her destiny, the position of Queen of this new world, home of good principles and shrine of the civilization of true Christianity. Once more, to all, "A Happy New Year" and we will add "many happy returns of the same."

STUDY OF SCRIPTURE.

In this issue we commence the grand encyclical of Leo XIII., on the important subject of "The Study of the Sacred Scriptures." So exhaustive is the document with which the Sovereign Pontiff closes this memorable year that any comments of ours would be merely superfluous. However, in drawing attention to this most extraordinary communication we cannot help remarking that the great mind of Rome's aged statesman has furnished one of the most positive, powerful and complete refuta-

tions of the accusation that the Church is opposed to the Scriptures, that could possibly be given. It must be a very perverted and insincere spirit that can constantly repeat this slander against the Catholic Church, and in the teeth of historical evidence to the contrary and in the face of countless positive refutations that have been made during the last half century. We invite our Protestant readers—and we count many non-Catholics amongst our subscribers and friends—to peruse most carefully these pages of wisdom from the pen of the foremost genius of our age. They will learn that our Church does not oppose the study of the Scriptures. On the contrary the Catholic Church has preserved and transmitted from age to age the writings that to-day go to make up the Bible. Even several books of the Holy Scriptures, which Protestantism has found it expedient to suppress, exist in the Catholic Bible. We study the Scriptures; we are taught, from childhood, the beauties and wisdom of that sacred volume.

The difference between the Catholic and the non-Catholic is in the importance given to the Bible and manner in which it should be read. The non-Catholic considers that the Bible is all sufficient for our salvation—that is to say, that it is the only rule of Faith; the Catholic looks upon the Bible as a volume of Truth, written under the influence of Divine inspiration, and a collection of principles that are calculated to guide man through the divers ways of life and to the haven of salvation. The non-Catholic considers this code of Truth has been given to the world to be read by each individual and interpreted according to each one's special lights; the Catholic recognizes that there must be some infallible guide capable of giving the proper and exact interpretation to each expression in that wonderful volume. The non-Catholic, as a rule, learns whole chapters of the Bible by heart and proceeds to explain everything that pertains to religion by a text—regardless of the context; the Catholic studies the scriptures and goes, as far as his un-inspired intelligence will permit, in drawing lessons from their chapters; but the moment there is question of principles of faith or morals, he at once looks up to the infallible interpreter for an unerring assistance.

We feel confident that this splendid encyclical, coming as it does at this particular juncture, and from a Pontiff of such universally acknowledged superiority as ruler, statesman, philosopher, litterateur, and theologian, must have considerable influence in disabusing the minds of our non-Catholic friends of the false and vulgar impression that the Catholic Church is opposed to the Bible and seeks to keep the faithful in ignorance of the scriptures. What a crushing reply to the Ministerial Association that talks so much rank nonsense about "evangelizing the French Canadians," "bringing the light of the gospel to the poor Romanists!" One thing, however, we prophecy, not one in every five non-Catholics who may read this encyclical, but will be ready, an hour later, to accuse the Church of opposition to the Bible.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

"What is Truth?" said jesting Pilate, and paused not for a reply." This same question has been asked by thousands who, like Pilate, did not want to hear the answer; it has been asked by thousands of others, who listened, and hearing the true reply, accepted it. The old Chaldean astrologer went up to his tower at night, and asked of the silent, distant