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To Erin.

Rev. Edmund Hill, C. P., in Donahoe's Magazine.

I.

The Passion-Flower of nations, thou,
O Erin, Isle of Sorrow!
Yet ever shines about thy brow
The light of Faith's to-morrow.

Where'er thine exiled children go,
Heav'n smiles benignly o'er them;
Where'er they turn, in weal, in woe,
The Cross leads on before them.

O "Populus Apostolus"
(As Rome's great Council call'd thee!)
'Tis God's high purpose guides thee thus,
His will that hath enthral'd thee.

II.

When Jesus died, His back was turn'd
On Salem's thankless city;
While toward the West his bosom yearn'd
With love's forgiving pity.

From age to age before Him spread
The future's wondrous story;
His eyes each people's annals read—
Its more of shame than glory.

His Church would conquer far and wide,
Yet oft the while defeated;
The scornful robber at His side
Again, again repeated.

III.

He saw His Rome, from Satan's rest,
Her empire stronger, vaster,
Than arms and cunning skill had weft
For earth's now vanquish'd master.

He saw new kingdoms rise and fall,
Republics thrive and perish,
But one dear spot from out them all
A fonder love should cherish.

A land by rough seas virgin-istled
'Tis North's half-mythic regions;
Nor, like her sister shore, denied
Be tramp of Caesar's legions.

IV.

He call'd attendant angels three,
And sent them swiftly winging
O'er mount and vale and pleasant lea
Where April green was springing.

"Go, sow my Blood for after years—
Seven drops of ruby treasure;
And gather from my Mother's tears
Of pearls an equal measure."

"Go, shed them o'er you chosen soil:
The Isle of Martyrs make it,
My grace shall there find richest spoil;
My mercy ne'er forsake it."

THE BLIND WEAVER.

A blind boy stood beside the loom
And wove a fabric. To and fro
Beneath his firm and steady touch
He made the busy shuttle go.

And oft the teacher passed that way
And gave the colors, thread by thread;
But by the boy the pattern fair
Was all unseen. Its hues were dead,

"How can you weave?" we, pitying, cried:
The blind boy smiled. "I do my best;
I make the fabric firm and strong,
And one who sees does all the rest."

Oh, happy thought! beside life's loom
We blindly strive our best to do,
And He Who marked the pattern out,
And holds the threads, will make it true.
Beth Day, in Youth's Companion.

LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR AUGUST.

Catholic Missions in Iceland.

Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

Iceland is the largest island in Europe after Great Britain, and is situated one hundred and fifty miles north of Scotland and seventy-three west of Greenland. This isolation away in the Arctic Ocean, together with Iceland's comparatively uneventful history, is perhaps the chief reason we hear so little about it.

But its religious history is a glorious one, and the fact that it is going to occupy the attention of our twenty-three millions of Associates during the whole month of August, will give it, from a Catholic standpoint, an importance it has not hitherto known.

Iceland is the land of contrasts; a land of midnight sunlight and noonday darkness; carrying eternal snows on its surface, while its surface hides great streams of boiling water. A feature in every landscape in Iceland is some volcano, glowing or extinct, or a mountain range of solidified lava, hidden under shining glaciers as old as the history of man.

The island was discovered in the year 860 by Naddoddr, a Norwegian Viking who called it Snajland or Snowland. The earliest monument of Icelandic literature that we possess, the *Islandinga Bok*,

tells us that the Viking colonists had been preceded by Culdee anchorites and Irish settlers about 725, who abandoned the island on the arrival of the Pagan Norsemen. The existence of bells, croziers and Irish books, left behind attests the presence of the children of Erin.

It was only in 878 that the Norwegians formed the first permanent settlement at Reykiavik, the present capital. A further increase of Norse population took place when the tyrant Barold Haarfagr drove a large number of chiefs and their families into Iceland and this was further increased under the reign of St. Olaf. About the year 928, Iceland became a republic, and remained so for three hundred years. After having tried various forms of government and become a prey to intestine strife the Icelanders, in 1261, fell under the power of Haco VI., King of Norway. In 1387, it was subjugated to Denmark, and the union of the Danish and Norwegian monarchies brought Iceland definitely under the crown of Denmark.

The religious history of the first centuries of this northern people is full of magnificent traits. In the year 1,000, when Iceland was still a republic, and pagan, the representatives of the people met on the lovely plains of Thingvalla, and proclaimed the religion of the Catholic Church the national religion. The Church of Christ flourished and brought forth admirable fruits of science and sanctity. Two Icelandic Bishops are to be found in the Roman calendar, and the Benedictines and Augustinians raised monasteries over the island. The Benedictine monastery at Thingeyra belongs to Iceland's Golden Age, the age wherein Icelandic poets and chroniclers were consigning to imperishable parchment the noble deeds of their fellow-countrymen. Some of these Sagas are masterpieces of style, and show what a marvellous attention was paid to the culture of letters in a remote corner of the world at a time when a large portion of Europe was sunk in barbarism.

In 1551, Christian III, King of Denmark, after having vainly attempted to plant Protestantism in the island by the softer arts of persuasion, tried the sterner method of sending men-of-war. The Bishop, Jon Arason, put himself at the head of a small army and swore to meet death rather than abandon to the heretics the cause of God's Church, he was successful in several engagements, but was finally handed over to the enemy by a traitor, and was beheaded on the 7th November, 1550. He died a hero, and with him died the Catholic hierarchy in Iceland. The Lutheran religion was then proclaimed the only religion of the State.

But the people of that northern island, as if loath to yield up the old faith, retained much of the ancient Catholic ceremonial and Catholic spirit. The Lutheran morning service is still known after three hundred and fifty years as the Mass, and at various places may be seen crucifixes, triptychs and pictures of saints, to recall bygone Catholic days. Devotion to the suffering Saviour is still retained in vigor amongst them. A Protestant minister, Hallgrmur Pekerson, a Scald of remarkable genius, composed a magnificent poem of fifty books on the Passion of Our Lord. It is one of the most beautiful works ever written on the subject. Every Icelander possesses a copy, and knows it almost by heart. During the season of Lent it is sung in every family, one book every day. Still more striking, perhaps, is that the cold worship of Lutheranism could not extinguish among those poor people the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of the most celebrated Protestant bishops of the island, Beyjolf Sveinsson, a poet of merit, composed in honor of Mary a noble book of poems. The book was never printed but it still exists in Iceland and at Copenhagen.

It was towards this unfortunate people, hidden in the Arctic seas, and separated from the true Church for three hundred years, that Leo XIII. turned his eye last year. From 1554 to 1854 no attempt had been made to convert this distant and lonely island. In 1854 two French priests undertook the difficult task. Only one family was converted, and this is still the only Catholic family on the island. In 1895 the Sovereign Pontiff gave orders to the Vicar-Apostolic of

Denmark, Mgr. Van Each, to establish a Catholic mission in Iceland, and last autumn two secular priests were sent thither to begin the work.

Private letters received since mention the cordial reception they met with at Reykiavik. They opened a small chapel for public worship, and at the first Mass the crowd was so great that many had to return home, being unable to find room. In the evening, at the Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, which was followed by a sermon, the chapel was filled long before the appointed hour, and the crowd outside was four times as large as that within. A family presented itself at once for instruction, and the urgency of building a church became evident. For this purpose it would be necessary to collect alms.

There have been found among the population of seventy-five thousand, some three hundred lepers who are sorely in need of being cared for. Father Sveinsson, an Icelandic Jesuit, has undertaken the work of collecting from generous Catholics throughout the world the wherewithal to build a leper-house. It is consoling to learn that heroic souls are not wanting to nurse those poor afflicted people: for besides the Sisters of Saint Joseph, who are preparing to open a school as well as take care of the lepers, six secular ladies have already offered themselves for the charitable work.

The Associates of the League of the Sacred Heart are earnestly requested to pray for the success of this mission which our Holy Father has undertaken to resuscitate. There is every reason to believe that the generous, hospitable, religious nature of the Icelandic race will readily accept again the true faith which was wrested from it over three hundred years ago.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer Thee all the prayers, work and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in reparation of all sins, and for all requests presented through the Apostleship of Prayer, in particular for the return to Catholicism of Iceland, which has for so long a time been separated from the true Church.

BACK TO THE FAITH.

VICTORY OF THE CHURCH OVER INFIDELITY IN FRANCE.

The Reign of Indecency is at an End—Remarkable Change in the Literary and Art World—What Has Been Accomplished by Religious Men in the Army.

From the American Catholic News.

When the victorious Germans placed their iron heels on prostrate France twenty-five years ago, and demanded the largest indemnity ever exacted by a conquering host, it was believed by statesmen of all the countries of Europe and America that the burden of her woes was greater than France could bear, and that she was crushed to the earth never to rise again. At that time all the infidels and agnostics of France were in the slough of despond, without hope. On the other hand, the Christians of France, who through the long night of doubt and sorrow had never lost hope nor faith, remembered the words of the saintly Fenelon, "Despondency is the vexation and despair of cowardice—nothing is worse. Whether we stumble or whether we fall, we must only think of rising again and going on in our course. We follow God when we fight bravely against evils, and march upward and onward."

Strong in the ancient faith which had during nearly eighteen hundred years combated the evils of paganism and atheism, the religious men and women of France won the admiration of the world, not excluding the Germans themselves, by paying the war indemnity, repressing anarchy, and re-organizing the nation. Since then there has been going on in France the most notable national regeneration in the annals of history. The national character has been purged of the dross of materialism in the fire of affliction, and never was a test more splendidly sustained. It is on the spiritual and moral side that the regeneration has been most notable. The Germans were hardly off French soil before the French began to ask themselves: What is responsible for the

appalling calamities which overwhelmed us; for the corruption, incompetency and treachery which demoralized the army and left France practically defenseless against her foes and deeply conscious of her spiritual needs? It was recalled that Bazaine, the traitor was an infidel; that all the generals who had fought manfully and often victoriously were Christians; that the greatest sacrifice of men and money were made in Christian communes, and that the traitors, shirkers and fomenters of the anarchist carnivals of murder and arson were infidels. It dawned upon the people who had flouted the Church, that Atheism was the curse of France and the root of every evil in the land. A great wave of re-action against the barrenness and dryness of man-made philanthropies without God began to arise, and to-day it is sweeping away the barriers of Voltairism, Renanism and Hegelism, the three rotten relay stations on the highway to perdition.

So great is the victory of the Church over the forces of the atheists, agnostics, writers of obscene books, and painters of obscene pictures, that Paris, once the spring from which rivers of vicious literature flowed to all parts of France, is now clamoring for stringent laws against writers, teachers or painters who corrupt the youth of the nation. The attendance at churches is larger than at any time since the Middle Ages. Young men who profess themselves agnostics seek in marriage the hands of Christian women, and everywhere parents tainted with infidelity send their children to Christian schools. So strong is the movement toward the Church that an eminent critic, and author of high standing, Mons. Edward Rod, takes note of the trend toward higher living in France in the following words, in the last chapter in "Les Idees morales du temps present":

"Many ideas and beliefs of the Catholic Church, which we might have thought fallen into discredit, resume their old place throughout France. The cultus of the ideal, banished as absurd, re-appears in its ancient forms, and the young men and women of to-day are celebrating religion and morality with the same enthusiasm with which the young men of 1792 and 1848 celebrated free thought."

In the domain of morality right-minded public opinion is making itself felt in the laws for the suppression of panderers to vice, following hard upon the statements of the first surgeon of France, that 94 per cent. of the cases of specific forms of disease treated in certain French hospitals afflict men and women who were led astray by reading impure novels written by infidels. Mons. Ferdinand Brunetiere, a distinguished critic and writer, handles the immoral writers without gloves, and sees in the falling off of the sales of M. Zola's works a happy augury of the good time coming when none but good books will be placed on sale. Mons. Jules Claretie has lately written a magnificent work against divorce, and Mons. de Vogue has published several works on right living and thinking, which are doing a world of good, by demonstrating that materialism is a quagmire of filth which has engulfed millions of Frenchmen. Mons. Charles Wagner, an Alsatian Protestant writer, long resident in Paris, notes the revival of faith in the following words:

"The Roman Catholic Church is winning great victories in all parts of France especially in Paris. Her clergy are working with great intelligence, for which their largeness of spirit and culture fit them. Few there are outside France who can understand the difficulties experienced by those who have lost religious faith in rising again to the position of religious beliefs, but though the seekers for the faith once universal in France turn toward Catholicism instead of Protestantism, I do not complain, when I recall that thirty years ago when I became a resident of Paris, the Christian religion was flouted by thousands who to-day are Catholic Christians. So long as the infidels continue to decrease in numbers, and the believers in God increase I shall rejoice for France."

One of the best proofs of a practical result of the good resulting from the right living which began after the end of the Prussian war, is noted by the Chief of Staff of the French army, who notes in

a report that the young conscripts, sons of Christian parents and themselves of Christian belief and life, are larger, healthier and brighter than were the men of infidel parentage and training, who went down like bruised reeds before the onset of the Prussians in 1870-1871. So tenderly are the officers of the French army guarding the morals of their men, that vice is being repressed in all garrison towns. A fortnight ago the General in command of Chalons notified the Town Council that several resorts near the barracks must be closed. One of the councillors, an atheist, voted against the proposed reform, and denounced the General as "a Church purist." When this was brought to the ears of the General he demanded an apology for the insult, and the immediate closing of the dens of vice, stating that in the event of a refusal, he would permanently close the garrison and march the 10,000 men away to another station. In one hour after the receipt of the ultimatum the imprudent councillor made an abject and personal apology and the dens were closed. During the evening the clergy and laity marched to the General's headquarters and presented a congratulatory address. In responding the General said it was the duty and intention of every commander of the French troops to safeguard the soldiers from vice, irreligion and drunkenness; and to promote religion, patriotism, temperance and fidelity to duty. He thanked the local clergy for their spiritual care of the troops, and the laity for lending good books and newspapers to the regimental clubs. This is an instance of the tone of army sentiment toward religion.

In the art world of France the exponents of the so-called realistic school, which produced vile pictures for the resorts of disreputable persons, are regarded as pariahs by real artists of clean lives. "Sewer rats," or "Zola's filth daubers," are the names applied by artists to the decaying painters of the nude, who flourished from the time of the Second Empire until two years ago, when public opinion turned against them on account of the shameful orgies, when the model, Sarah Brown, was carried through the streets of Paris to pose at the Moulin Rouge, in defiance of the order of the Minister of public Instruction, whom the dissolute students termed "Pure as the Lily." That night's orgy caused the death from delirium tremens and quick consumption of Sarah Brown, the model, and thirty-seven French and foreign art students who participated in that Saturnalia. From that night dates the moral renaissance of arts in Paris, so far as painting is concerned, for be it said to the credit of sculptors, that none of that profession ever pandered to the depraved tastes of the buyers of obscene works of art. Sanity, cleanliness and real art are now demanded of painters. So in literature, purity, right intention, sweetness and light are required in novels; truth and decency in journalism, and purity of language on the stage. Mons. Zola, shifty weather-cock that he is, sees the way the wind is blowing, observes that the booksellers are rejecting his productions, convulses Paris by stating that it is his intention to write a novel deeply religious in its tone. Nothing funnier than this has happened since Leon Cardier condemned to death for murdering his father and mother, asked to be reprieved from death on the ground that he was a poor orphan who wanted to weep a while longer for the loss of his parents.

G. WILFRED PEARCE.

One Lord, One Faith, One Church

If Leo XIII. had only penned the majestic encyclical of which we publish the first part this week, this alone would serve to make his reign memorable in the history of the Church. The Pontiff's hand has lifted the great question of Christian unity above all petty, ephemeral controversy into the clear atmosphere of faith, history and reason. No Catholic who would have a ground for the faith that is in him can refuse to give this encyclical his earnest study; no non-Catholic who desires the realization of the unity of mankind in Christ can

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