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Northwest Review.

TUESDAY, JULY, 25 1899

CURRENT COMMENT

We congratulate the editor of the Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart on the early issue of the August number. It reached us last Saturday. This will enable promoters to distribute it easily everywhere several days before the beginning of the month. Our people here generally prefer our Canadian Messenger to the American one, although the latter is more sumptuously got up; but, when the Canadian Messenger came to hand on the very last days of the preceding month, they were sometimes obliged to resort to the U. S. edition, which is always out in the first half of the month preceding the date it bears. Now, however, that our Montreal edition can be delivered here a full week before the end of the month, we anticipate a decided increase in its circulation.

The General Intention for August is "Trust in the ultimate triumph of the Papacy." An effective parallel is drawn, in the Canadian Messenger, between the state of Catholicism on the 29th of August, 1899, date of Pius VI.'s death in exile, and the present condition of the Church. The centenary of Pius VI.'s death serves thus to point the moral of the Church's recuperative power. A sketch is given of each of the six Pontiffs who have filled the chair of Peter during the last hundred years, and the remarkable growth, among Catholics themselves, of truly Roman doctrine, is dwelt upon.

The death of Ingersoll relieves America of its greatest scandal. The United States is the only civilized country in the world that could have made so much of so shallow a reasoner as the irrepressible and self-sufficient atheist. He had absolutely nothing to recommend him but tricks of rhetoric and a fine voice. The Winnipeg Free Press appositely remarks that he was "a sort of bold, dashing Bedouin of unbelief who brandished his lance brilliantly in the desert of agnosticism, to the huge delight

of many imperfectly educated people, but to the regret of all thoughtful ones." He was not even an agnostic—a term which may designate a sincere doubter, many agnostics having ultimately been converted to the true faith—he was simply a blaspheming mountebank. His sophisms did, however, serve one good purpose: they gave occasion to that unanswerable masterpiece of Father L.A. Lambert's, "Notes on Ingersoll," one of the cleverest defences of Christianity that was ever written.

This morning's Free Press prints another long letter from its Indian Commission correspondent, dated Lesser Slave Lake, June 25th. It seems the Indians there have accepted the proposed treaty. A fine speech by Father Lacombe is given.

FATHER LACOMBE'S JUBILEE.

Last week we were obliged, by uncontrollable circumstances, to omit a brief sketch of the venerable Father Lacombe's golden jubilee celebrated under the tents of the Indian Commission. The delay has, fortunately, enabled the Free Press to forestall us by a much fuller and more interesting account which we are happy to reproduce. Our morning contemporary's correspondent places the scene of that memorable day on the banks of the Sauteur (probably Sauteux) River, whereas our correspondent calls it Shaw River, adds that it flows into Lesser Slave Lake and that there is some question of henceforth changing the name to Jubilee River in honor of this great event.

What feelings must have welled up in the great heart of Père Lacombe, whom the half-breeds call "L'ancien des prairies" and "Le vieux connaisseur," when he that morning offered up the Holy Sacrifice at the completion of his fiftieth priestly year! Hymns were sung in French and Cree. His Lordship Bishop Grouard himself intoned canticles of praise and thanksgiving.

After the evening dinner or supper the missionary bishop presented to his venerable brother a box of cigars especially reserved for the occasion. This explains how Father Lacombe could, as the Free Press correspondent writes, hand them round to every one.

A more solemn celebration of Père Lacombe's jubilee will take place on the 25th of next September, at St. Albert. This will take on almost a national aspect, the name of the great Oblate missionary being, throughout the whole continent, a symbol of apostolic zeal and unceasing kindness. But we doubt very much if any public pageant will have half the charm of that prairie feast of chosen friends and great hearts chastened by weeks of hardship cheerfully borne.

MILTON AND NEWMAN.

Having lately reread Paradise Lost and the Dream of Gerontius, we have been impressed with the superiority of Newman over Milton in the handling of supernatural themes. The latter's angels—to take one instance—would be grotesque, were not

the language in which they are described so melodious. We read of Satan

With head uplift above the wave, and eyes That sparkling blazed: his other parts besides, Prone on the flood extended long and large, Lay floating many a rood; in bulk as huge As whom the fables name of monstrous size, Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove—

And then we have twelve lines more of this diffuse and melodious development of the idea of great bulk. We realize the bigness but we find no grandeur.

Then, with expanded wings he steers his flight Aloft incumbent on the dusky air, That felt unusual weight.

Why should it feel unusual weight? The largest winged creatures we see about us are those that soar best and longest. Nor does the notion of unusual weight add to our conception of Satan's power. And of course it is not theological. Even a wicked spirit has lost nothing of his nimbleness.

Milton is evidently smitten beforehand with this distinctively nineteenth-century, American admiration for mere size. The "broad circumference" of Satan's shield "hung on his shoulders like the moon;" "his spear, to equal which the tallest pine Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast Of some great admiral, were but a wand."

Forgetting that he has already emphasized the unusual weight of the fallen Archangel's wings he seeks to etherealize the physical structure of these spirits: "for spirits," he sings,

When they please, Can either sex assume, or both; so soft And uncompounded is their essence pure; Not tied or manacled with joint or limb, Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones, Like cumbrous flesh; but, in what shape they choose, Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure, Can execute their airy purposes.

In modern scientific parlance the poet seems to view them as gases contracting and expanding at will, but does not rise to the clear concept of an absolutely non-material substance, though the phrase "uncompounded in their essence pure" would mean precisely that to a Catholic theologian.

But Milton's theology, like the whole Protestant system, teems with contradictions. The fallen angels, whose fall has necessarily cut them off from all love, are said to "fulfil works of love." They, who necessarily dwell in everlasting unrest and disorder, unmitigated by the slightest touch of comfort or harmony, yet

In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood Of flutes and soft recorders.

Again they Moved on in silence to soft pipes, that charm'd Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil.

Can anything be more grotesquely unreal than Satan, when he meets "a vast vacuity" . . . "fluttering his pennons vain," dropping "plump down ten thousands fathoms deep" and then "o'er bog, or steep, through straight, rough, dense, or rare,

with head, hands, wings, or feet," pursuing "his way," as he "swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies?" In his anxiety to describe the approaches to the throne of Chaos, Milton here again loses sight of the "uncompounded essence pure" and makes his hero astonishingly ridiculous. Nothing but the blunting of the sense of humor by the habitual inconsistencies of religious error can explain the current non-Catholic infatuation for all the vagaries of the blind Puritan.

In "The Dream of Gerontius," on the other hand, Newman carefully avoids those positive material images which even Milton's genius could not rescue from their inherent absurdity when applied to spirits.

The Catholic poet proceeds, as the Church does, by a series of negations. A spirit is the negation of all matter, howsoever dilated or condensed. So Gerontius, when death makes him a disembodied spirit, says:

'Tis strange; I cannot stir a hand or foot,

I cannot make my fingers or my lips

By mutual pressure witness each to each,

Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke

Assure myself I have a body still

Nor do I know my very attitude,

Nor if I stand, or lie, or sit or kneel.

Vaguely this may remind us of Satan who "swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies," but as a beautiful, harmonious picture reminds us of its caricature. The latter raises a smile, the former fills us with mysterious awe. And the following lines intensify that truly poetic impression of the undefinably great.

So much I know, not knowing how I know,

That the vast universe, where I have dwelt,

Is quitting me, or I am quitting it.

Or I or it is rushing on the wings

Of light or lightning on an onward course,

And we e'en now are million miles apart.

Yet . . . is this peremptory severance

Wrought out in lengthening measurements of space,

Which grow and multiply by speed and me?

Or am I traversing infinity

By endless subdivision, hurrying back

From finite towards infinitesimal,

Thus dying out of the expanded world?

Instead of giving to angels, as Milton does, simply magnified human powers, Newman everywhere hints at and suggests with marvellous deftness mysterious powers, the nature of which is rather to be guessed than described. These glimpses of the supernatural are instinct with the highest kind of poetry and leave a lasting impression of sublimity which Milton's gorgeous but too sensuous and definite pictures fail to produce.

To be Continued.

TALES FROM THE MISSIONS

THE WORK AMONG NON-CATHOLICS IN THE SOUTH AND WEST.

The summer issue of The Missionary presents a fresh batch of reports from the zealous priests who are laboring in the non-Catholic mission field.

Rev. Thomas F. Price, with

his heart "singing the deep joy of a Te Deum," writes that he has just succeeded after several years of persistent effort in placing the non-Catholic mission work in North Carolina on a permanent basis.

"We possess now," he continues, "not merely a name, but also a local habitation, and such a habitation, gentle reader, as would make your heart swell with gladness and gratitude to God, if you love the salvation of these poor blind Protestant souls of North Carolina. Not indeed would you be attracted by the splendor of the buildings, for these consist at present of but two small, unpainted frame dwellings, such as even the middle class of people here would hardly occupy. But imagine the centre of this great non-Catholic state—the most Protestant of all the states in the Union—imagine the 'Apostolate of North Carolina' possessed of 300 acres of good land situated at this centre, occupying there the highest ground of and overlooking the capital city of this, the most Protestant of all the states, and you have something of a picture that ought to fill your heart with joy. In such a situation what incentive can be found to the most burning zeal for the conversion of these 2,000,000 of poor Protestant souls at our feet—with what fervor the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other prayers can be offered up for their conversion—we leave you to imagine!"

The history of the purchase of this property and the record of the uses to which it is to be put make an interesting story. Twice a desirable site was within grasp, when the agent employed in the transaction allowed it to become known that the property was for "the Catholics," and the price was run up far beyond the market value and purchase was made impossible. A final effort, however, was successful.

"As I stepped into the owner's office to make out the checks after the transaction had been completed," writes Father Price, "the seller looked as if he could have thrashed himself for not having caught on to the fact that the property was for 'the Catholics.' For the Catholics, however, it is, and to what glorious uses it is to be put I will in a few words now delineate.

"First of all, it is primarily and totally intended as a home for such secular priests as devote their lives to mission work for the conversion of non-Catholics in North Carolina as their chief object, and such work as these priests shall undertake for the purpose of carrying out this main object. For these purposes the 'apostolate' is to be incorporated under the laws of North Carolina. * * * The chief thing is to obtain suitable priests for the work, and efforts are now being made to that end. The 'apostolate' will furnish to these priests a home—a place for rest and recuperation. It is likely, too, that it will be able to aid in their support, and it is trusted that in the course of time this support will be made efficient.

"A secondary institution, to be started immediately at the 'apostolate' and on account of it, and for which all preparation is now in progress, is a convent of Sisters who will, in the first place, take in charge the routine work of 'Truth,' the circulation of which is constantly growing, and will, in connection with this, start the boys' orphan asylum in the vicariate—the boys of which will be taught to print 'Truth' and get out the missionary literature.

"At present there is no boys' orphan asylum in the vicariate, and the Right Rev. Bishop thinks this the proper time and