

LIFE IN THE CHURCH IN FRANCE.

(It is often claimed nowadays that the people of France have become irreligious—that not only have they deserted the Catholic Faith but all religion. The current issue of the Congregationalist contains an article on actual conditions which shows that a great awakening is taking place. The writer is a Protestant minister who spent months in France last summer, as he says "trudging leisurely through her cities and villages, sleeping in the homes of her peasants, conversing with her soldiers, sailors, farmers, mechanics and students." Since he knew France in other years, and, as a Protestant minister, cannot be accused of partiality to the church, it must be admitted that his words bring hope that a better day is dawning.)

It was a round dozen of years since I visited France save for a hurried day or two in her cosmopolitan capital, and yet, because Europe changes so slowly, I was not prepared for any wide or deep spiritual renewal among this in some ways conservative people. The French Church, indeed, had left a disagreeable impression on my mind. Such dry-as-dust sermons, worthy of Duns Scotus himself, in their arid scholasticism, with a spirit as hoarse as the pulpits from which they came droning down! Such cold-hearted worship! I recalled it all with a touch almost of disgust.

The change leaped upon me unexpected. That the French Church is passing along the way of the cross all the world knows. Every provincial town is filled with the disconsolate forms of the teaching orders, monks and nuns. Men and women, they are cultured, scholarly, lovable, who, to borrow a phrase from Le Petit Parisien, have been "kicked out upon the pavement" and into the homes of their peasant brothers and sisters, where they find a grudging welcome and a penury to which they have long been unaccustomed. That thousands more of faithful, pure-hearted, earnest parish priests are menaced with poverty and even starvation if the government presses on its radical and ill-judged forcing of an evolutionary development towards disestablishment no one can doubt. O, the French Church is walking the way of the cross assuredly! And M. Combes is in a fair way to prove her Annas, so bent is he on execution.

But the result is—O, what it has always been! When the robe of worldly success is stripped from the shoulders of the Church, when the lash of persecution falls, she ever shows beneath that robe the ageless image of the Master. With the terror of the future and the horror of the present there is observable from one end of France to the other a deep spiritual awakening. The old sloth, the old lack of zeal, earnestness and vigor have disappeared; the glow of a new life shines on the face of the whole body religious from Normandy to Burgundy and from Burgundy back to Brittany. The way of the cross is leading to a resurrection profound, immeasurable.

It showed in the sermons; they were real. The first Sabbath I sat conscience-compelled in the cathedral at Evreux, expecting the rattle of dry bones all over again. But the Spirit of God has passed by and this was life. I know not the preacher's name or office. He was young and simply clad; his sermon was from the heart of a man—let that suffice. The subject was Confession, and if his insistence on the confessional did prove a bit unpleasant to Protestant prejudices, the whole thing soared. "What good," he cried, "is it to confess to a priest when your heart is not right towards God? What avails speaking to a man unless your soul is fully bent to serve Lord Jesus Christ? O sometimes," he added, almost bitterly, "we priests overburdened by the hideousness of your confessions, long to slip clean out of the way and leave your souls face to face with God. Then you must repent."

I sat dumfounded. The like had I never heard in a Catholic church. Yet next Sunday the Cardinal of Rheims took up the same note. A magnificent picture he made in his clear red robe, frosted over with the gleaming white of lace, set there beneath the blue glow of those huge clerestory windows in the framework of all that soaring stone, that carved and blackened oak. His regular features, halo of snowy hair, huge black eyes; his wrinkled hands, fine as parchment, gripping the pulpit edge; even the dull gleam of his great ring and huge cross made him seem

a picture by Nattier rather than a man living in this year of our Lord 1904. However, this man was of to-day. He spoke to his priests, who sat in ordered rows below the pulpit, and dealt entirely with the recent crisis. He was ennobled with the spirit of Christ. "To their reproaches oppose deeds, not words," he counselled, "show how glad you are to suffer abuse, hunger, cold and nakedness; nay, if need be, how glad you are to starve and die in the service of Him who was pierced for your sakes."

He turned to the people for a moment and his voice rang with eagerness: "You charge us with mistakes. Yes, we have made mistakes, we priests, for we are human. But have we not championed your rights, fed your poor, comforted your dying? Nay, haven't we willingly died in your lazar houses since the Church first began to preach the gospel of the Saviour she loves?"

But I have no further space to dwell on this. The main thing isn't the sermon, after all, or even the response from the people. France is responding. The services were not only well attended, but attended by all ages and both sexes. It is a common saying in Paris: "Women and children go to church; men don't." Never was a lie more transparently false. Trusting that I was doing good service in the cause of truth, I snapped a Sabbath-morning audience. If the masculinity of that audience wouldn't make glad the heart of any New England pastor, with what could he be satisfied?

There were exceptions. Along the valley of the Loire and at Laon, church-going was not so much in evidence. At the Cathedral of Rheims women predominated. On the other hand, Notre Dame at Paris was well filled, and, by actual reckoning, the men distinctly outnumbered the women. When I saw that I thanked God and took courage. Furthermore, among the daily worshippers in the churches, devout and humble in their faith, were many men. And the men were young! In France the young man wears a uniform and the flare of scarlet everywhere lit up the sombre pillars and long gray naves of churches and cathedrals alike. Even the old Huguenot congregation in the Faubourg St. Germain counted three soldiers in its scanty flock the day we worshipped there.

Moreover, the whole land to-day is giving its best into the priesthood. It has been reiterated for decades that the French clergy is gathered from the peasants, to whom even the pitiful pension of a parish priest proves an allurements. That such has been the truth is indubitable. The rough hewn faces, clumsy build and huge hands of the older fathers still bear a silent but convincing witness. On this background the younger men and the theologues stand out sharply. Persecution has raised up friends for the Church in the house of her enemies and I saw numbers of youthful pastors and students with the clear-cut profiles, and long, well-modeled hands of the gentler classes.

The French are a nation of scribblers and lampoon on every conceivable piece of blank wall their vehement convictions. After the first few days I read every one of these with care. Here and there was a "Long live Combes!" "To the guillotine with our parish priests!" But that was the socialistic sentiment of mill cities. In Paris even, and all over the larger towns and down to the tiny villages it was: "Long live our well-beloved fathers," "The Church forever," "Combes is the friend of his Sataanic Majesty," Combes is the friend of the priests, is he? — O you hypocrite!" Besides all this there was a mass of doggerel, whose weird jumble of street-slang made incomprehensible to me anything beyond the fact that the Church on the cross was shining her way into the hearts of the people.

I had grown weary of the wayside crosses, the hideous barbarisms of Brittany, the painted monstrosities of Champagne, the ridiculous dolls of Loire Valley. Coming out from La Croix, a farming village near Tours, I stopped suddenly beneath a great cross looming from the wayside. On it hung a life-size Jesus. No garish glare of paint, no clumsy cutting of an unskilled tombstone maker; it was the Christ of Hofmann. A modern Jesus, more human than that Master of men who guards the portal at Amiens, more tender and loving than the Majestic Judge, who gazes out from above the rose window at Sens, the crucified Nazarene, the Son of God who lived a man's life, the suffering Saviour of the

world was here. As I stood beneath that gentle, down-dropped face, I seemed to hear an ageless voice crying across the centuries, "I am in my Church, I lead my Church ever by the way of the cross to the resurrection, even I, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever, the crucified."—(Rev.) James Church Alvord.

"FATHER PROUT."

Poet, Humorist, Scholar and Journalist—Father Russell's Tribute.

As I stood one morning, in Cork, Ireland, listening to the "Shandon Bells," made immortal by that great journalist, poet, humorist and scholar, Father Frank Mahoney, or "Father Prout," I could not help to repeat his lines:

"The Bells of Shandon, They sound so grand on The glorious waters of the River Lee.

On the 31st of next December will be the centenary of the birth of Francis Sylvester Mahoney (Father Prout). Francis Mahoney was born in Cork in 1804. His classical education was obtained at the Jesuit College at Amiens, and after reading theology in Paris, he received clerical ordination. In London he officiated for some time in the chapel of a Bavarian legation and while there he fell into a society of Bohemians of literature. About 1834, Father Prout began to contribute to an English publication, Fraser's Magazine. His contributions consisted chiefly of translations from the Latin, Greek and Italian verse which he humorously "represents as being the true originals from which the English authors had merely plagiarized them," says a magazine writer.

John Francis Mahoney, in his "Bells of Shandon," has immortalized himself. Over the waters of the River Lee the "Bells of Shandon" still echo their memory of "Father Prout," his genius and his scholarship. The Rev. Father Russell, S. J., editor of the Irish Monthly, pays the following tribute to "Father Prout":

"In deep dejection, but with affection, I often think of those pleasant times, In the days of Fraser, ere I touched a razor, How I read and revelled in thy rhymes; When in wine and wassail we to thee were vassal, Of Watergrass-Hill, O. renowned P.P. May the bells of Shandon Toll blithe and bland on The pleasant waters of thy memory. The songs melodious—which a new Harmonious—

"Young Ireland" wreathed round its rebel sword, With the deep vibrations and aspirations, Flung a glorious madness o'er a festive board; But to me seems sweeter the melodious metre Of the simple lyric that we owe to thee— Of the Bells of Shandon, That sound so grand on The pleasant waters of the River Lee."

Father Prout, born in the Munster, Ireland, that has given to Ireland and to the Irish world distinguished men, will live in the memory of all those who have read: Those Shandon Bells, that "sound so grand on the glorious waters of the River Lee."

And when those Bells of Shandon peal out over the waters of the Lee, to the glory and the universality of Catholicity and every true Irishman, who visits the "Rebel Town," and who listens to their peal, he should lift his hat first to God—next to Father Prout, who made the "Bells of Shandon" famous.

J. McG.

Catholicism and the Negro.

"The Living Age" is the name of a negro magazine, published at Langston, Oklahoma. The November issue contains a striking editorial which earnest Catholics will read with interest. Says the writer:

"For twenty-five years this writer has been a watchful observer of the relation and conduct of the various Christian bodies or denominations toward the American negro. And we say unequivocally that no great religious sect or denomination among the whites come as near as the Catholic Church, in reaching that truly exalted Christian ideal of universal brotherhood of man without regard

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to color or previous conditions as the Holy Catholic Church.

"Catholicism is not an emotional religion, not a sect of splitters; but for ages past has been one united, divinely commissioned organization among the children of men to promote the highest human happiness on earth, and an eternal home with God and just men made perfect through trials and tribulations.

"The Catholic Church with its noble and broad Christianity knows no communication by reason of his color; but aims of charity and love are extended to any and all of earth's fallen children, be they black or white, rich or poor in Christ they are one. The Holy Father at Rome is continually making intercessions for all his flock, and color line never enters his pure and holy mind.

"We verily believe that if all negroes were communicants at the Catholic altar, the color line would be largely wiped out in America. Think for a moment—If His Holiness, the Pope, should send forth a loving message, directing the Catholic clergy of America to lift up their voices against lynching the negroes, against unjust Jim Crow cars and other race discrimination, there would in a few years be a wonderful change in American sentiment towards the negro. Why? The church is right in principle, right in doctrine and right in union of action; hence it is a mighty power for good throughout the world. Nay! the sun never goes down upon its millions of communicants.

"In Oklahoma, much good work is writin'.

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THE POPE'S BIOGRAPHY. Pius X. has given permission to one of his old friends, Monsignore Marchesa, of Treviso, to write his biography. The work is to contain many little known details of the life of the Pope as priest and Bishop in the Venetian provinces and will prove of great interest to Catholics. Arrangements have been made for its translation and publication in other countries, including the United States. The work will be illustrated. First Little Girl—Has your sister begun taking music lessons yet? Second Little Girl—She's takin' somef'n on th' piano, but I can't tell yet whether it's music or type-writin'.

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Vol. LIV., No. TESTIMONIAL BANG TO FATHER FALLON Buffalo Council K. of Its Beloved Cha

Very Rev. M. F. Fallon, D., Provincial, pastor of Church, Buffalo, was requested by Buffalo Council, Columbus, to signalize the occasion of the honor reception of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the First Province of the States.

Father Fallon has endeavored to his fellow-Knights of St. John, in diverse ways. He has been a champion of the season and out of season, was it fitting that Buffalo should in a special manner honor the man and priest never lost opportunity for them. Fully 300, including prominent members from the city, sat down to the elaborate banquet in the hall of Ellicott Club. The Diocese, a good friend of the Council, who is now near the end of his journey to the West, was represented by his Very Rev. Nelson H. Balch, J. F. McGloin, rector of St. Joseph's church, was present most of Father Fallon's laborers at Holy Angels' College. Others from the Hon. Frank R. Latchford, General of the Province of Ontario, a member of Ottawa Council, an old-time friend of Father Fallon's, M. J. Gorman, Ottawa, W. McKinnon, Kingston, Ont., J. Fallon, Cornwall, Ont., J. Fallon, Kingston, Ont.; a McDonald, Toronto, Ont. State Deputy John W. H. Berrone; Grand Deputies E. lan, Niagara Falls; M. S. rick, Olean; C. M. Harris, Toronto.

Mr. Latchford's address is 1000 Broad Street, Buffalo, N. Y. Mr. Latchford's address is 1000 Broad Street, Buffalo, N. Y. Mr. Latchford's address is 1000 Broad Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

"This great gathering demonstrates the high esteem in which Father Fallon is held by the members of the Knights of Columbus. It is a honor for the Buffalo Council of Knights of Columbus to have Father Fallon as its chaplain. Thank you for the honor conferred upon me by allowing to be present at a banquet in honor of a splendid man and great priest."

Mr. Latchford also spoke growing divorce evil in this and said that through the efforts of the clergy of the Province of Ontario there were but 100 divorces granted in that province, the fact that in this year the Dominion of Canada had but 69 divorces.

"If you wish to stem the increasing divorce evil in this country—an evil that will in time ruin and desolation to you commonwealth—you will have the aid of the clergy of the country," said the speaker. The clergy, and especially the Catholic clergy, that helped kindle the divorce evil of Canada, the governing divorces in our country are so stringent that few receive them. The evening closed with some remarks by Father Fallon which took his audience off their feet. He was eloquent, fervent, magnanimous and disclaimed for himself the ordinary honors and eulogies bestowed upon him. He laid them first upon his divine Master, and to the aged father and mother who watched his destiny with their responsibilities and prayed he will ever have divine guidance meeting them. To the K. of C. in an especial manner to his