

The CATHOLIC CHRONICLE...

DEVOTED TO... FOREIGN NEWS

ROME THE PAINTINGS OF THE CATACOMBS.

Mr. P. L. Connellan writes to the Dublin Freeman as follows: On the 31st of May, 1878—wrote De Rossi, the great master of Christian Archaeology, in the beginning of the first volume of his grand work, "Roma Sotterranea"...

Since that distant date they have been studied now with curiosity rather than carelessness, and again, as De Rossi's case, with scientific accuracy and severe method. And now, after a lapse of 25 years of observation and study, it may be asserted that the last word regarding the paintings of the Catacombs—the first of which was brought to light on 31st May, 1878—has been said by Monsignor Joseph Wilpert, in his great work recently published on "The Paintings of the Roman Catacombs."

Rome has frequently witnessed the publication of great and valuable books, and this is one of them. There is little rashness in predicting that this book will take rank among the greatest of recent productions in Rome. It is fitting that a pupil of the renowned master of Christian Archaeology should undertake the task of tracing the history of the paintings of the Catacombs, and that the first rule is to collect and arrange the public every authentic memorial of antiquity in utter disregard of its bearing upon forensic conclusions. De Rossi avoided conjectures, and never ventured on supplying plausible links in a chain of evidence when facts were not forthcoming. Monsignor Wilpert, following and imitating this one of action, has brought to his studies the accuracy, patience, and proverbial thoroughness of the German mind. Year in, year out, he labours were continuing unremittently for fifteen years, and at a large cost of money as well as thought. The result is to be seen and studied in the two splendid volumes, one of text and the other of plates, which have recently been issued by the publishing house of Delessis, Lefebvre and Co., Roma.

place in which he wrought was not, indeed, favorable to the development of artistic fantasies and picturesque ornaments. Yet in spite of all these drawbacks, the Christian painter told his story clearly, and the artistic character of his work kept pace, in a certain measure, with the progress of retrogression of the arts in the upper world of his contemporaries. "According to every probability," writes Mgr. Wilpert, "from the earliest times certain painters were assigned, if not to the individual Catacombs, to those at least which were not being distant from each other were met with on the same road." He is led to this conclusion, not only by the fact that the painters of the Catacombs belonged to the Corporation of fossors, or grave-diggers, but also from the fact that in one Catacomb there are found paintings which betray the manner of the same family or artist, even of one individual artist. Up till the present time there have been discovered only two sepulchral inscriptions which expressly mention painters. One bears the consular date of 383 A.D.; Aurelius Felix, painter (was buried here) in the year in which Claudius Antonius and Siliacus were the form of its composition...

The fresco paintings—and they are fresco—as distinguished from other methods of painting—that adorn the Roman Catacombs begin in the first century of the Christian era. The gallery of the Flavian family in the Catacomb of Domitilla contains almost the only paintings of the first century still left to us. "Here in the vault," writes Mgr. Wilpert, "a life is seen animated by winged genii and by birds; genii alternating with fantastic landscapes follow; then garlands, ornaments of branches, the guise of caducabra and dolphins swimming." Of the paintings in the later walls there are preserved only a banquet scene, Noah in the Ark (fragmentary), and Daniel in the den of lions the other pictures were destroyed either by sepulchres excavated at a posterior date, or were detached from the walls, together with the plaster, by collectors of antiquities. Nearly all the paintings of this century are of different sizes. Fifteen cubiti, one arcossolium, and one common sepulchre are adorned with paintings dating from A.D. 101 to A.D. 201. The special subjects of the Catacombs are now met with—Moses striking the rock; the healing of the paralytic; a baptismal scene (these are all in the Greek Chapel in the Catacomb of Driacilla); the four seasons; the three Hebrew children in the furnace of Babylon; the Adoration of the Magi; three scenes from the life of Samsunah; Noah in the Ark; Daniel in the lions' den; the sacrifice of Abraham; the fractio panis, or celebration of the Eucharist; the resurrection of Lazarus; two Orantes or figures of persons praying standing with hands raised up, accompanied by two vases of fruit.

In this vicinity are found the Good Shepherd. In the Catacomb of Pretextatus are the coronation of Christ with thorns; the resurrection of Lazarus; Christ and the woman of Samaria; the healing of the woman who kissed the hem of Christ's garment; and the Good Shepherd between ornaments of flowers and birds. On the wall of a sepulchre near the Greek Chapel in the Catacomb of Priscilla is that most interesting of frescoes, which represents the Prophet Isaiah standing before the Blessed Virgin, who is seated with the Child Jesus on her lap. It would be a long task to trace out here the arguments on which archaeologists have based their conclusions regarding this picture. The conclusion with regard to the standing figure who holds a volume in his right hand and with his left points to a star above the head of the Mother of Christ is supported by his own words. He points to the star of Balaam: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel." He seems to repeat the words of his own prophecy, "For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the Government is upon his shoulder." The painting, writes Dr. Shaban, of Washington University, in a very interesting work on the Blessed Virgin in the Catacombs, is of the highest antiquity, and by common consent, not later than the age of Antonines. Its artistic conception is bold and free execution, the accurate drawing, the anatomical skill, the large and accurate treatment of its details, strike the transient observer. Then, too, he continues, we are attracted by the simple but meaningful symbolism, the unconstrained pose, and graceful dignity of the prophet, the gentle, thoughtful attitude of the Virgin Mother, the tender, almost arch regard of the Divine Infant. Even after

eighteen centuries of exposure to all the enemies of early Christian art, this fresco fascinates the beholder. It goes to show besides, as the same author has it, that "the affectionate veneration of the Virgin Mother of Our Lord is a fact which meets us at the very threshold of Christian history." So, through the centuries in which the Catacombs were used as places of sepulture Mgr. Wilpert conducts his readers, pointing out to them and describing and explaining in a way never before achieved, in its completeness and accuracy of knowledge. The number and variety of subjects which the art of the Catacombs furnish to study are surprising. Under the careful investigation and keen observation of Mgr. Wilpert, scenes, the meanings of which were mistaken by previous authors, have been recognized for what they really are. The meanings of individual and obscure subjects have been made plain and many neglected works have been illuminated by his extraordinary talent. He has brought to light pictures which were lost for centuries and of which no record existed. A most important example of this was his discovery of the fresco known as "fractio panis," which time and the damp that percolated through the earth had covered and hidden beneath a crust of stalactite-like formation. With the employment of an acid that dissolved the calcareous incrustations—a work continued for many days—he was fortunate enough to bring to light this important Eucharistic picture.

Such are the merits of this work in which he has exposed the labor of long years, that it is difficult to know what to select for praise. Every student of the early Christian history of Rome must take it into account; the student of the art of the Catacombs will find in it all that is essential to him and the historian of art cannot neglect it for it supplies him with the true key to a most important phase of art, characteristic and complete, full of beauty and symbolism, expressive of doctrines and customs and costumes, and a host of other interesting facts connected with the lives of the early Christians in Rome. In this author's hands the faded frescoes, in the gloomy corridors of the Catacombs, become bright and expressive and reveal their story and purpose. With him to lead us we can picture to ourselves what manner of men were our early ancestors in the faith. "When history is silent," said a celebrated Italian writer, "the tombs speak." In the learning of Mgr. Wilpert the graves have become eloquent, and they tell their story in "The Paintings of the Roman Catacombs."

FRANCE Dr. Max Nordau, the Austrian Israeli author and journalist, is in very troubled waters at present. After having been loaded with ridicule in Maurice Donnay's play, "The Return from Jerusalem," which was a Roman land for an Oliver on Donnay's part, as he was fearfully slated in Nordau's latest book, the doctor has given offence to his Zionist co-religionists, one of whom nearly shot him dead at a ball last week. It appears that Max Nordau, at the last Zionist Congress held at Basle, in Switzerland, advised the Jews to accept Mr. Chamberlain's offer to have the sources of the White Nile, while awaiting the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple and the return of all good Hebrews to Jerusalem. Nearly two hundred Russian Jews positively refused to be dumped down anywhere out of Palestine, and they turned on Max Nordau for having "sold them to Chamberlain." The young Loban, the Russian Zionist student, fired at the doctor, who dodged the bullet, which then lodged in the leg of another Hebrew.

Endless controversy continues over the cases of Professor Loisy and of other priests in France who have been reviving methods of Biblical criticism which are by no means new. Loisy is now hotly attacked by competent Biblical scholars, and notably by Father Prat in the "Etudes," published by the Jesuits. Father Prat chiefly takes up M. Loisy's views on Revelation and on Dogma. Two priests of Lyons, the Rev. Canons Lemann, have also published a special reply to M. Loisy, entitled "St. John and the Fourth Gospel." They show that even Roman admitted the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, not to speak of the Fathers of the Church, who have been most explicit on the subject, and whose testimony, it may be added, is most carefully quoted by Protestant divines who have defended St. John, such as Dr. Priestley, Dr. Westcott, Bishop Wordsworth, and especially Canon Liddon, formerly Ireland Professor at Oxford. M. Loisy has been raking up a very old controversy, of which we shall probably read more in the English reviews. Three other French ecclesiastical writers have been following in M. Loisy's footsteps, and are in trouble like him with the Congregation of the Index. They are the Rev. Chas. Denis, Director of the "Annals of Philosophy"; Rev. M. Gergel, and the Rev. M. Siffert.

Only one man in Paris has had the courage to condemn M. Victorien Sardou's travesty of the Inquisition, and of Cardinal Ximenes in the "Societe," now running at Madame Bernhardt's Theatre. The man is M. Drumont, editor of the "Libre Parole," but he is not vigorous enough. M. Victorien Sardou and Sarah Bernhardt are such national institutions that all seem to be afraid of saying anything against them. Even papers that are favorably disposed towards the Church publish pages of fulsome laudation of them.

ENGLAND The appearance of Madame De Navarero, better known as Miss Mary Anderson, at Father Bernard Vaughan's concert in aid of the East End poor, excited a vast amount of interest. A considerable portion of the audience was composed of residents of the West End, who were anxious not to miss such a unique

opportunity of hearing the distinguished actress, and there was gathered round the people's place, where the entertainment was held, a collection of carriages such as the East End seldom sees. The reception accorded to Miss Anderson was enthusiastic in the extreme. She looks if possible even more handsome than when she left the stage, now fourteen years ago, and she at once claimed the hearts by her sweet singing of Maude Valerie White's "Throstle Song." The public has hitherto known her as an actress of the first class but her voice is of such sweetness and sympathy that had she lingered on the stage, and the applause at the close of each item was tremendous. Madame De Navarero is, of course, a Catholic, and it was her keen sympathy for the suffering of the East End poor, amongst whom Father Bernard Vaughan labors, that accomplished in her reappearance on the platform what so many tempting offers both in England and America had failed to bring about.

AUSTRALIA Australian papers received by mail publish an interesting interview with Cardinal Moran on his arrival at Fremantle from Rome. His Eminence said, "I am pleased to be back in Australia once more, and I will never leave it again. Much as I would like to see Ireland, my beloved native country, once more, I have made up my mind never to quit these shores again. This has been my last trip across the Equator, for when a man reaches 74 he does not want much travelling about. My visit to Rome was exceedingly pleasant. The election of the Holy Father passed off with the greatest smoothness, and the result was pleasing to all concerned. In regard to the administration or policy of the Church no change is needed. The Church is a Divine institution and as such needs no reform. We are not bringing out any extra priests, as the Church in Australia is now full. Asked if there was any truth in the statement that he had been desirous of staying in Rome, the Cardinal replied, "None whatever. There was not the slightest ground for the story. I never had such an idea in my head."

The Pope and Newspapermen The editor of the "Univers," M. Eugene Veullot, has been honoured with a special letter from the Pope. The letter is in reply to one which he sent to his Holiness. In his communication to the Pope, M. Veullot stated that it was sixty years since he had joined the staff of the "Univers" under his brother Louis, and devoted himself to the defence of the Church. The Holy Father writes: "Dignus certe gratulatione eventus summe tibi laudis qui assuescens Christiani nominis communitate servandis Ecclesiae iuribus tam mundum aetatis laboriose dedisti." A very graceful passage complimenting M. Veullot by remarking that the event is worthy of congratulations, and that it is a source of joy for one who has so long laboured in upholding the interests of the Christian name and in upholding the rights of the Church.

Crusade Against Religion Premier Combes of France has thought fit to inflict a published collection of his speeches on long-suffering humanity, and he has got the Corinthian flute-player, Anatole France, to write an enormous and elaborate preface to the tedious volume. Now, France is a French style, possesses a very fine French style, and he has written some very true things about society and life in general. It is a pity to see a writer of his acute mind endeavoring to please the persecutor by cynically upholding the expulsion of the Religious Orders, and by delivering an attack on the Church, in which he reproduces all the absurd arguments and all the silly statements which have been appearing in the anti-clerical press since the beginning of the Dreyfus agitation. He has absolutely nothing new to say, and is forced to go back, in order to condemn religious instruction on old-time-worn and threadbare objections to dogma and to the alleged domination of priests and monks. Apparently enough, M. France seems to be answered by the Bishop of St. Die, Mgr. Foucault, who, in a pastoral on the subject of the Sovereign Pontiff's Encyclical, "E Supremi Apostolatus Cathedra," writes: "Catholicism has arrived at one of those hours that strike regularly in each century, when the struggle against the Church, her dogmas, and her ministers, is renewed with the greatest intensity."

Catholic Church in England The English Catholic Directory for 1904 shows that there are 1,592 Catholic churches, chapels, and mission stations in England and Wales, and that there are 1,956 Catholic public elementary schools under the inspection of the Government. There are 1,223 regular priests.

A Wide Sphere of Usefulness—The consumption of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil has grown to great proportions. Notwithstanding the fact that it has now been on the market for over twenty-one years, its popularity is as great as ever and the demand for it in that period has very greatly increased. It is beneficial in all countries, and wherever introduced fresh supplies are constantly asked for.

Interesting Interview with the Pope

One of the prominent features in the first issue of Mr. Stead's new London journal is an account written by Mr. George Lynch of his recent interview with the Pope. Mr. Lynch was introduced to His Holiness by Mgr. Murphy, the head of the Irish College in Rome. The Pope's reception of him was, says Mr. Lynch, "as simple as if he were still a plain parish priest. A marvellous charm and attractiveness, however emanated as a halo from his presence, which held and fascinated me from the moment of entering the little room. Never before have I experienced the influence of such personal magnetism, and I quite failed to analyze the reason of that feeling when I looked at the old man sitting in front of me, our knees almost touching. A tuft of rather dishevelled grey hair from beneath the white skull cap straggled across his forehead, a forehead wrinkled along its lower half by many lines, from underneath which his deepest, wonderful dark eyes gleamed out. Expressive as they are, they gazed out benignly, lovingly, and then will suddenly look with a keen, searching earnestness into the back of yours, like the steel touch of crossing swords." The conversation was chiefly about the condition of the Macedonian Christians, amongst whom Mr. Lynch has recently been travelling, and in whom Pope Pius displayed the keenest interest. Other subjects were also touched upon, and in leaving, His Holiness accepted a copy of his visitor's latest book, "The Path of Empire," and presented him with a medal. "Not as a politician," says Mr. Lynch, in conclusion, "not as a diplomat will he, I think, be remembered; but as the people's Pope—true successor of the Fisherman—ruling by love and kindness over a Kingdom that is not of this world."

A Condemned Catholic Author

One of the most discussed men in Paris at the present moment is the Rev. Professor Loisy, owing to the condemnation of his books by the Congregation of the Index. Crowds are flocking to his lectures at the Sorbonne, whether he went south after the Archbishop of Bordeaux obliged him to leave the Catholic Institute, where he was Professor of Hebrew and Scripture History, on account of his lamentable unorthodoxy. His photograph is now published, his books are being translated in Berlin and Munich, and he is lauded by the Protestant and Socialist Press of France and Belgium. All the turncoats are claiming him as one of themselves, so far he has not evinced any disposition to become a Methodist or an Anglican, nor to follow in the footsteps of Renan, Loysen, or Doctor von Dollinger, whom he equals in his historical knowledge. The following is the full list of books by French ecclesiastical writers recently condemned by the Sacred Congregation of the Index: "La Question Biblique," "Les Catholiques de France au XIX. Siecle," "Mes difficultes avec mon eveque," "La Religion d'Israel," "L'Evangelie et l'Eglise," "Etudes Evangeliques," "Autour d'un Petit Livre," "Le Quatrieme Evangelie."

Missionary France

In spite of all the iniquitous edicts of the rampant anti-clericalism of those in power and the waves of irreligion and depravity constantly sweeping over the country, it is marvellous to note that France remains a fertile field of apostles and missionaries, who, disdaining the world's pleasures, and its rewards, continue the work of evangelization. From a list just published by the Paris Gaulois, a secular and fashionable paper, it appears that during last year France again and the large number of missionaries "dead on the field of honor," as the compiler of the list writes. Out of 161 missionaries who thus died 85 were French. Two missionary bishops out of five dead were French—namely, Mgr. Grandin, O.M.I., Bishop of St. Albert, Canada, who came from the Diocese of Le Mans in the West of France; and Mgr. Progeorge, Vicar Apostolic of Cambodia, who was born near the German frontier. Out of the priests who died 25 were of the Society of Foreign Missions, 19 of the Congregation of the Saint Esprit, 12 of the Society of Jesus, 9 of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 5 of the Marists, and the remainder were Assumptionists and Pious Missionaries.

"Major" Archibald on Toronto Children

Major Archibald in his report to the Board of Control on the Prison Gate section of the work of the Salvation Army, says: "Opposite where I live is a school. Not one, but many evenings, in fact, almost every evening in the summer, the boys congregate from 8 o'clock till ten, for their games and play, many of which are harmless. But I cannot say that of their associations. Their talk is often obscene and vulgar, putting to shame the most hardened criminals I have ever met within penitentiaries. I have seen some 15 or 20 boys sit along the curbstone from 10 to 14 years of age, producing their cigarettes and smoking by the hour uncollected by anybody." The directory gives Mr. Archibald's address as 32 Argyle street. Yes, let us watch over all. A thought, a look, a smile, a pulsation of the heart, a mere nothing can defile or purify us.

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Misfortunes of Michael Balfe's Only Son

Mr. J. Spencer Curwen, the well-known musician, has written to the London Daily Telegraph to appeal for help for Michael William Balfe, the only son of the celebrated composer. Balfe is 66, and for years, in Mr. Curwen's phrase, has been "a homeless wanderer in London." He is now a candidate for admission to the Charter House, and it is almost certain that he will enter at an early vacancy. Meanwhile lovers of Balfe's music are invited to provide the composer's son with enough for food and shelter till the Charter House receives him. Mr. Curwen, who has known him from childhood, says that Balfe's present position is due to misfortune on misfortune, everything indeed seeming to have gone wrong with him in life. His relatives cannot assist him to any considerable extent—some of them indeed, says Mr. Curwen, will not. One of his sisters married a former British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, and subsequently a Spanish grandee, but appeals to the Spanish members of the family remain unanswered. Another sister married a wealthy Baltic corn merchant, but his fortune failed.

A Famous Woman

Princess Mathilde, whose death is announced between eighty and ninety years of age, and with one exception the last survivor of the brilliant days of the old and the new Royalty. Her father was Jerome King of Westphalia, her mother a Princess of the House of Wurtemberg, her brother was married to the daughter of the King of Italy. Sixty or seventy years ago the Princess Mathilde, young, clever, and beautiful, had many suitors for her hand. She refused the offer of her cousin Louis, afterwards Napoleon the Third. Old Guizot suggested her as a wife for the Duke of Orleans, the eldest son of King Louis Philippe, the wily old statesman thinking that this would bring Bonapartist support to the dynasty of his master. Louis Philippe, who was a fearful "screw," acted in a characteristic way. "She has no dot," replied Guizot, "the Chamber will vote her a good fortune." "Her old father is in debt," answered the King, "and I would have to pay the debts." And thus the matter dropped. The Princess married Prince Demidoff, from whom she soon separated. Witty and learned, she was the centre of the famous group of men of genius who clustered round the Court at Compiègne. This included some very great names—Dumas fils, Sainte Beuve, Leverrier, Pastur, Gounod, Verdi, Merimee, and Janin. When the Princess passed away the last survivor of the women of the Second Empire will be the Empress Eugenie.

Monument to Priest in the Klondike

In the Catholic Church of Dawson, Yukon Territory, a marble monument has now been placed over the grave of the Rev. Father Judge, S.J., the first priest who worked for the pioneers of the Klondike. The base of the monument bears, in engraved gilt letters, a Latin inscription to this effect: "Here lies the body of Father: W. H. Judge, S.J., a man full of charity, who, with the co-operation of all, here first erected a house for the sick and a temple of God; and who being mourned by all, died piously in the Lord, the 18th of January, 1899." The monument to Father Judge is not the only evidence of gratitude to the pioneer priest. The "Yukon Catholic," published at Dawson, announces that in the course of last summer four new churches were built "on the creeks" by the efforts of Fathers Eichelsbacher and Lefebvre, O.M.I. These churches take the place of old tents, and other temporary structures, at Lower Dominion Creek, Hunker, Last Chance and Gold Bottom.

The Next Consistory

Rome, Jan. 14.—At the Vatican it is believed that the next Consistory has been definitely postponed until June. It is not considered likely that Archbishop Bourne will be among the new Cardinals owing to his comparative youth, and the existing vacancies in the Sacred College are required for other candidates. Mgr. Cagiano de Azevedo, Major Domo of the Vatican; Mgr. Lorenzelli, Papal Nuncio in Paris; and Mgr. Rinaldini, Papal Nuncio in Madrid, are spoken of as sure of being raised to the rank of cardinal. Mgr. Bisleti, the Pope's Master of the Chamber, will then become Major Domo, while Mgr. Dellachiesa, now Deputy Secretary of State, will be appointed Nuncio of Spain. The Pope has created a new Apostolic Delegation to Mexico, and has appointed Mgr. Serafino, Archbishop of Spoleto, to fill the post of Apostolic Delegate. The Vatican authorities hope that the appointment will be the first step towards the resumption of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Holy See, which have been interrupted since the dethronement and execution of the Emperor Maximilian in 1867.

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