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AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1895

LENT.

Once more the Lenten season is at hand. To-day the ashes are sprinkled upon the heads of the faithful and those impressive words are pronounced: "memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris." "remember man that dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." This is the time of penance and mortification. To prepare for his public mission Christ retired and spent forty days in the wilderness, where He fasted and prayed. The great event of Easter is approaching and in imitation of her Divine Founder the Church ordains that for forty days the faithful should practise mortification and in humility and penance prepare for the celebration of the glorious day of Resurrection. There is something peculiarly impressive about the ceremonies of the Catholic Church—whether they tend to awaken sentiments of awe or delight—and there is an appropriateness in each of them that bespeaks the perfection of the Institution founded by Divinity. The warning words of the priest on Ash Wednesday and the solemn significance of the act of placing ashes upon the forehead, tend to awaken serious thoughts in the Christian. We learn at the altar rail that we are but dust and that the day is not very distant—much nearer than we may imagine—when back into dust we shall crumble. With that awful truth before us, the entry upon the season of sacrifice and mortification marks a most important period in our short careers.

Having felt, in all its truthfulness, that death is certain, the mind pauses in dread before that other fact—the uncertainty of the hour, place and manner of our exit from life. Perhaps this is to be a last Ash Wednesday for many of our readers; most positively for a few their last Lent commences to-day. It is impossible to tell how many of us and

which of us shall be dust again, when Ash Wednesday, 1896, dawns upon the world. Consequently it is wisdom to seize the opportunity that now presents itself; it may be the last.

In olden times the fasting, the mortifications, the sacrifice of Christians during the Lenten season were so severe that even the reading of them almost makes one feel inclined to believe that the accounts are exaggerated. In our age the prescribed penances are comparatively insignificant. According to circumstances the members of the hierarchy modify and change the rules and obligations of Lent in order to suit the health, the condition and the requirements of each individual. In times of epidemic the fast, and often the abstinence may be dispensed with. In fact the modern Lent is very easy of observance; and yet there are hundreds who complain of the severity of the Church's laws, and seek to avoid, by every imaginable excuse, the proper fulfilment of the few simple regulations that are imposed. It would be profitable for such Catholics were they to meditate seriously upon the words of the priest, when imposing the ashes on the heads of the people. A person finds it difficult to abstain from flesh meat, or to follow the rules of fasting, during a period of forty days; let us suppose that this is the last Ash Wednesday, the last Lent for that person; how very much more satisfactory would be the "returning to dust" when the soul would have a few sacrifices and voluntary penances to present before God! But, apart from the ordinary fasts and abstinences of the Lenten season there are many other acts of mortification and of merit which can be heaped up to one's credit in the treasury house of God. There are extra prayers to be said, special visits to the Church that can be made, fits of temper that may be curbed, evil thoughts to be banished, hot words to be left unsaid, cruel slanders to leave unuttered, and the creating of enmities to be avoided; there are also many extra acts of virtue to perform. There are charities to be given, soft words of consolation to be spoken, kind deeds to be performed, generous and holy thoughts to entertain. In fact there are a hundred and one ways in which a good Catholic can help to keep Lent. The will is all that is required; the opportunity is not wanting, nor is the capability. If you cannot fast, at least you can refrain from cursing, or lying, or slandering others, or using immoral language; if you cannot abstain, there is nothing to prevent you from saying a few extra prayers, or from omitting to give offence to the feelings of others. In a word the Catholic, who wishes to follow the example of the One who fasted during the forty days, can make Lent a season of countless blessings and graces, and even should it be his last one on earth, he can turn it into an autumn harvest of richest return.

LAST week we published a letter from "English Catholic"—whoever he is—in which the writer took the editor of the TRUE WITNESS severely to task on the question of education amongst the working classes of England. We have no objection to our anonymous correspondent airing his views, but we do not relish his slight-of-hand style of misrepresenting what we write. Amongst other things he wrote: "there being few Englishmen who cannot give, from memory, the leading facts in the history of their country, from the time of the ancient Druids until the present time, not forgetting William the Conqueror, who, by the way, was not a Saxon King, as we are led to infer by the article in question." (The italics

are ours). Either "English Catholic" did not read our article carefully, or else he is one of these small-minded critics who make it their business to distort meanings and cast reflections by insinuation. What we wrote was this: "Find us the Irish lad that has never heard of Brian Boru or Sarsfield; find us the Englishman, in the back streets or rural districts, who can talk intelligently about William the Conqueror or HAROLD the last of the Saxon Kings." Any school boy could see that in each case we pick out, at haphazard, two prominent names in the histories of the respective countries. Moreover, it requires a very short-sighted person not to notice that we mention the name of the last Saxon King, and there is a disjunctive between him and William. "English Catholic" would do well to complete his own education before defending the standard amongst his rural countrymen. If he turns up his Bulwer he may enjoy a pleasant hour in the company of that same Harold, and if he consults Dr. Whalley he may learn the meaning of argument by false insinuation.

WOMAN IN RELIGION.

In the report of the last session of the Women's National Council at Washington we find the following: "Mrs. E. B. Cheney, of Maine, a delegate of the National Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society, opened a discussion on Mrs. Stevenson's paper. She was loudly applauded when she said that as men had formed the religious creeds she did not see why women should follow in these creeds. Lady Henry Somerset made some brief remarks, in which she criticized Protestant Christianity in eliminating women from its doctrines, and she maintained that so long as the Virgin Mary was not recognized, so long would women not be recognized. Mrs. Mary Lowe Dickenson, of New York, leader of the King's Daughter's and Sons, also made some reference to the Virgin Mary, and this prompted President Sewall to remark to her audience that the fraternal delegate of the women of the Catholic Church would be present at the sessions before the triennial closed."

There is to us something very significant in these remarks. We have long wondered how pious Protestant mothers, good Protestant daughters, noble Protestant women could so coolly and contentedly accept teachings that are more or less insulting to the brightest creature that ever came forth from the Creator's hand. We have countless times felt astonished that persons who seem so anxious to preserve the respect that is due their sex and are so jealous of female prerogatives could submit, in silence, to the great wrongs perpetrated by professed Christians against the model *par excellence* of womanhood. Is there a virtue to be cherished, a grandeur of mind to be admired, a splendor of soul to be acknowledged, they are found all concentrated in the individuality of the Blessed Virgin. We say Blessed, because according to St. Luke, according to the very Protestant Bible, according to that wonderful hymn of humility and grandeur, "all generations shall call" her "Blessed." How then can a Christian woman—be she Catholic or Protestant—deliberately protest against the words of that same Sacred Scripture and refuse to the one who carried the Saviour of the world the title which belongs to her by every acknowledged right? There is not a woman in the world that would silently and meekly submit to the loss of one title that was her due, or to the neglect of, or disregard for, the courtesy that her rank or sex demanded.

And yet millions of high-minded women can pass through life without once protesting against the teachings of creeds in which the model of all women is cast aside, ignored and even reviled.

That the Eternal God, looking out from his abode of glory, and deigning to send down His Son,—the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity—to work out man's salvation, should have chosen a woman to become the immediate instrument of that redemption, is, in itself alone, a tribute to Mary, and through her to all women, the like of which could not be conceived or appreciated by any being other than the Omnipotent. That she should be stainless, as befitting the abode of the Saviour, should suffice to so exalt her in the minds of men that next only to the Divine One could she be considered. Through the Immaculate Virgin of Nazareth womanhood has been raised to the loftiest eminence to which God's power could exalt it. In her, and in her life, every Christian mother has the noblest and truest and safest example. To her can every mother point when directing the footsteps, moulding the heart and forming the character of her daughter. It seems to us that a woman should feel a glow of pride in looking up to that Queen of Angels and in claiming, through her, the rank and dignity which the Almighty gave to every member of her sex.

It was through the instrumentality of Mary that the head of the serpent was crushed, that "the Word was made flesh," that humanity was given a Redeemer; so will it be through the instrumentality of good women that the erring world will be brought back to the straight path of Truth and to the one and only fold of the Divine Founder of Christianity. In the Catholic Church alone is Mary "called Blessed," is she honored as her Son would have her honored, is she given all the merit and credit that are her due; in the Catholic Church alone are the laws protecting the woman uncompromising, is marriage indissoluble, is maternity sacred, is the union of wedlock a sacrament. And the women, who to-day see the ravages that loose divorce laws, secular marriage, State unions of wives and husbands, are causing, who notice the infidelity to the altar vows, the innocent sufferers in the offspring of unhallowed marriage, the domestic misery, the shattered hopes, the broken hearts, the quenched firesides, the degradation and worse than immoral licence on all sides, must soon arise in their just indignation, for the sake of self-preservation, and demand that men, legislators and teachers, cease crushing the lives and aspirations of the female world, cease the paganism of reducing women to the level of an instrument of male pleasure or of male convenience. Let the women of the world remember that until they demand that the respect due to the Mother of God be paid her, they need not expect for themselves the respect that they seek and cherish.

On the question of an Episcopalian Metropolitan for the United States, the Boston Republican has the following:

"The Episcopalians are somewhat divided on the question whether or not they shall have an archbishop for their church, with his residence at the national capital. It seems that the question cannot be finally decided before 1898, so that there is plenty of time ahead for a full discussion of it. It looks as if Bishop Potter of New York, in case it is decided to have an Episcopalian metropolitan, will be promoted to the new dignity. After he gets the rank, in case he ever does, the Episcopalians may begin agitating for a still higher ecclesiastical authority, that of a cardinal, perhaps, or, maybe, even a Pope."