

It is hard for a certain large number of Catholics to understand the danger ever hiding in the cheap reading which floods the country. Apart from the reptile press, whose filth and venom are easily seen, there are thousands of books, papers and innocent-looking articles sent out every day into the world whose poisonous properties are deftly hidden from the sense by careful wording, and yet the effects are the same as if the intention were evident. The untrained eye can see nothing harmful about them. The elegant pages of the "Atlantic Monthly," the literary department of the dailies, the more respectable weekly sensationals, are very moral and respectable for the most part. The people wonder at the authorities who show them disfavor. They can see nothing bad or indecent in their pages, and know of no other reasons which would make them hurtful.

In a recent number of the "Overland Monthly" a story was published which illustrates the matter in hand. It was a very harmless and common-place incident, and has been used by writers for half a century. There was no mention of religious matters, no bigotry, no politics, no indecency. But in one corner of an insignificant paragraph was stuck this gilded heresy: "Man's best religion comes from his intercourse with nature in her wildness as well as her gentlest moods."

This is an old and well-known traveler in the literary world, and is the one and only dogma of infidelity. Colonel Ingersoll has varied its dreadful sameness by introducing the particular things of nature, and weeping over daisies, lilies and dafodils, and pantheists like Emerson have concealed its nonsense by the glamour of poetry. In whatever shape it comes before the intelligent reader, its delicious vagueness impresses him as a distant cloud-bank which takes the shape of mountains or as something seen at night, which might be a ghost. And the harm which it and its kind inflict on the youthful or untrained mind is easily seen by examining the heresy closely.

Nature, which men are supposed to be intimate with as with their mothers, as if it were a human being or an angel, or god, is best represented on paper by a cipher. It is simply an idea which stands to a man for all those beneficent courses of life and existence that give us so much happiness and pain. It is not a human being. You can't have any intercourse with it. It hasn't any moods, wild or gentle. It hasn't the intelligence of the meanest creature that ever breathed. As far as man is concerned, it is a deaf and dumb idiot. A wooden idol, made in man's image, has more religion in it than all nature. You can't have any association with it more beneficial than ploughing, or doctoring, or planting, or in any other way assisting its courses. As these story writers and tricksters regard it, it is the greatest fraud of any age.

Loose-thinking, careless people who believe and pen ridiculous sayings about nature want to make a religion whose chief dogmas shall be a pretty city, a fine painting, a noble river, a melancholy forest, a sounding ocean, a solemn mountain, a moon shining on water, and its practical work to languish and dawdle over them, and say beautiful things about them and your own feelings, and make a fool of yourself generally, for nature's sake.

Now, if nature isn't anything at all what good can come of intercourse with it? And if an idol in man's shape has more religion in it than nature, would it not be better and more elevating to turn idolator? And still more, if the meanest insect is nobler than nature, would it not be more honorable to turn naturalist and have intercourse with bees and bugs and such things? We commend these remarks to the writer in the "Overland Monthly" and to the crowd of scribblers whose ill-trained minds can produce nothing, after all their intercourse with nature, but nonsense or venom. We are certain they will be benefited.

But what shall be said of the unfortunate Catholics who drink in the sweet poison from their early childhood? They grow up with the secret but irresistible conviction that there is something wrong with the religion of Christ. They have often wept over the fate of Jim Bludso, and been thrilled by pantheistical and natural poetry, but have never shed a tear over the suffering of the Saviour or His saints, or been thrilled by the story of those sweet, simple, divine lives.

When you have fed for a long time on arsenic you must die on it, and because of it. The same devilish property belongs to the religion of nature, which the press of to day professes. And still Catholics will ask, "What harm in reading or supporting it?"—Catholic Review.

Conversion at Midnight Mass.

A young Parisian, educated in a materialistic school of medicine, had let himself be carried away by the torrents of bad example. He absolutely gave up the practices of religion, and logical-minded, soon renounced the glorious faith of his father, a hero who fell under the standard of the Sacred Heart.

The mother, sorely afflicted by the death of the head of the family, was suffering with a disease that was bringing her to the grave; and she was all the more inconsolable and sick as she felt herself powerless to restrain her son's excess of impiety.

The daughter, who understood the full extent of the poor mother's grief and saw her unfortunate brother hastening on to damnation, approached the sick woman's bedside on Christmas eve.

"Mamma," she said, "If I could go at midnight to mass at Our Lady of Victories, something tells me that the Infant of the crib would there grant me the conversion of my brother."

"My poor-child! who will go with you? I shall never go again with you to midnight mass."

"Well, my brother."

"You brotner, do you think so? He who has such a great horror for the church that at funerals he won't go in but waits at the door, have you any hope that he will go with you?"

"I shall try to induce him."

"I don't ask anything better, but I am afraid that your eloquence, like your caresses, will be unavailing."

The medical student was in high dud. When he heard the proposition which he called ridiculous. So much wrath, however, generally denotes a remnant of faith, the prisoner of pitiless free thought.

The young girl insisted; and overcome by her persistence, towards midnight, an hour when a man of the world does not like to say that he prefers to go to bed, the student escorted his sister on the way to mass and sat near her so as to escort her on her return.

The very beautiful ceremony of our Lady of Victories seemed to interest him; he looked with a sort of avidity at this forgotten spectacle and did not get weary.

At communion, he was greatly astonished; everybody filed out to approach the holy table. His row was reached his neighbors started out, his sister too. He found himself alone. This loneliness made a strange impression on him.

Meanwhile his sister received the Infant Jesus into the crib of her heart and warmed Him with the ardor of her prayer for the young unbeliever. On his part, the freethinker, ready to proudly resist the solicitations of all the Christians assembled in the church, succumbed to the weight of the isolation in which his few neighbors had left him; let us say it—he was afraid.

A memory of childhood prevailed upon his mind; he fell on both knees and an outburst of sobs shook his frame. Meanwhile the young girl was returning devoutly. She saw this abundance of tears and her brother leaning over to whisper to her, "Sister, save me! A priest. I am crushed beneath the weight of my unworthiness. A priest. A priest."

It was the sister who had to moderate the impatience of the neophyte. At the close of the ceremony the priest was found; and soon the young man was embracing his mother and saying to her, "I give you back your son."

The father's portrait seemed to smile. No more rest was taken in that house that night, even as in the stable of Bethlehem; and at six o'clock in the morning both had returned to the same place in the church of Our Lady of Victories.

At communion everybody left his seat to go to the holy table, the student followed. A young girl remained alone kneeling, and the pavement which the night before had received tears of repentance, again was wet with tears; but they were tears of joy.—From the French by the Xr, K.

Gold Watch Free.

The publishers of the Capital City Home Guest, the well-known Illustrated Library and Family Magazine, make the following liberal offer for the New Year: The person selling us the longest verse in the Bible, before March 1st, will receive a Gold, Lady's Hunting Glass Watch, worth \$50; if there be more than one correct answer, the second will receive an elegant stem-winding Gentleman's Watch; the third a key-winding English Watch; and each person must send 25 cents with their answer, for which they will receive three months' subscription to the Home Guest, a 50 page illustrated New Year's Book, a case of 25 articles that the ladies will appreciate, and paper containing names of winners. Address: New Year's Book, P. O. Box 208, Hartford, Conn.

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WELLAND CANAL ENLARGEMENT.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS.

SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for the Welland Canal," will be received at this office until the arrival of the eastern and western mails on Monday, the 25th day of JANUARY next, 1886, for raising the walls of the locks, weirs, etc., and increasing the height of the banks of that part of the Welland Canal between Port Dalhousie and Thorold, and for deepening the Summit Level between Thorold and Ramey's Bend, near Hum-berston.

The works, throughout, will be let in sections.

Maps of the several localities, together with plans and descriptive specifications can be seen at this office, on and after MONDAY, the 11th day of JANUARY next, 1886, where printed forms of tender can be obtained. A like class of information, relative to the works north of Allanburg will be furnished at the Resident Engineer's Office, Thorold; and for works south of Allanburg, plans, specifications, etc., may be seen at the Resident Engineer's Office, Welland.

Contractors are requested to bear in mind that tenders will not be considered unless made strictly in accordance with the printed forms, and, in the case of firms, accept there are attached the actual signatures, the nature of the occupation and place of residence of each member of the same; and further, an accepted bank cheque for the sum of "Two Thousand Dollars" or more—according to the extent of the work on the section—must accompany the respective tenders, which sum shall be forfeited if the party tendering declines entering into contract for the works, at the rates stated in the offer submitted.

The amount required in each case will be stated on the form of tender.

The cheque or money thus sent in will be returned to the respective parties whose tenders are not accepted.

This Department does not, however, bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,
A. P. BRADLEY,
Secretary.
Department of Railways and Canals,
Ottawa, 9th December, 1885.

MAIL CONTRACT.

SEALED TENDERS, addressed to the Post Master General will be received at Ottawa until noon, on Friday the 19th of February, 1886, for the conveyance of Her Majesty's Mails, on a proposed Contract for four years, six times per week each way, between Stonewall Post Office and Railway Station, from the 1st of April next.

The conveyance to be made on foot or in a suitable vehicle.

The courier to leave the Post Office and Railway Station with the mails, on such days and at such hours as may be from time to time required to deliver the mails at the Railway Station within ten minutes after leaving the Post Office and at the Post Office within ten minutes after the arrival of the mail trains.

Printed notices containing further information as to conditions of proposed Contract may be seen and blank forms of Tender may be obtained at the Post Office of Stonewall and at this office.

W. W. McLeod,
Post Office Inspector.
Post Office Inspector's Office,
Winnipeg, 8th Jan., 1886.

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