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A GOOD CONFESSION.

The chains that have bound me are cast to the wind,
By the mercy of God the poor slave is set free;
And the strong breath of heaven breathes fresh o'er the mind,
Like the bright winds of summer that gladden the sea.

There was naught in God's world half so dark or so vile
As the sin and the bondage that fettered my soul;
There was naught half so base as the malice and guile
Of my own sordid passions or Satan's control.

For years I have borne about hell in my breast—
When I thought of my God it was nothing but gloom—
Day brought me no pleasure, night gave me no rest;
There was still the grim shadow of horrible doom.

It seemed as if nothing less likely could be
As that light should break in on a dungeon so deep;
To create a new world was less hard than to free
The slave from its bondage, the soul from its sleep.

But the word has gone forth and said let there be light,
And it flashed through my soul like a sharp passing smart;
One look to my Saviour and all the dark night,
Like a dream, scarce remembered, was gone from my heart.

I cried out for mercy, and fell on my knees,
And confessed, while my heart with keen sorrow was rung;
'Twas the labor of minutes, and years of disease
Fell as fast from my soul, as the words from my tongue.

And now blest be God and the sweet Lord who died!
No deer on the mountain, no bird in sky,
No bright wave that leaps o'er the dark bounding tide,
Is a creature so free or so happy as I.

All hail, then all hail, to the dear Precious Blood,
That hath worked these sweet wonders of mercy in me;
May each day countless numbers throng down to its flood,
And God have His glory, and sinners go free.

—F. W. Faber.

General Intention of the League of the Sacred Heart for August.

The discovery and colonization of Iceland are narrated at length in a famous book written at the beginning of the twelfth century by the Icelandic Catholic priest, Ari hiun frodi. "Ari the Sage." He died in 1148 at the age of eighty-one, and is regarded as the father of Icelandic literature. His work is entitled *Landnamabok*, "Book on the Occupation of the Country." In the preface he speaks as follows of Venerable Bede: "Bede was the first, after the fall of the Roman Empire, to recall the accounts of Pytheas, the famous Marseilles navigator and astronomer, as well as those let by Strabo and Pliny, concerning the existence of an island in the Arctic seas, which they called Ultima Thule. This island, wrote Bede, is a six day's journey to the north of Great Britain. Now Bede the priest died in the 735th year after the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that his account was written 100 years before the colonization of the island by the Normans. But before the arrival of the Normans in Iceland there were there already a people whom the colonists called *Papar*. It is thought that these earlier settlers came from the West, for in their possession were found Irish books, bells, crosses, and other articles from which it is inferred that they were *Westmenn*, Irishmen. English books also make mention of frequent relations between the two countries at this epoch. Historians accept this narrative of the Icelandic historian as exact. In the eighth century some Irish monks went to Iceland to find peace and solitude; they remained there till the invading Normans came to drive them out. The newcomers established themselves on the island towards the end of the ninth century, founded a flourishing republic, and for many years in their piratical excursions harassed all the seas round about. This first occupation of the island by the Norwegian Vikings took place in 874. They began to emigrate from Norway to the lovely isle in crowds, and soon nearly 100,000 men, the very elite of this hardy race, had left the Scandinavian peninsula for Iceland. For two centuries after the occupation of Iceland, the isle was given to the pagan worship of Odin, Thor and other deities of Valhalla. In the beginning of the eleventh century, however, the whole nation en masse was converted to Christianity. The General Assembly, *Althing*, though a pagan body, decided by a small majority to embrace the religion of Christ. This decision was not reached without great opposition, but once the vote was taken, all submitted to it. In the eleventh century a French Bishop, Rudolph of Roner, went to Iceland and for nineteen years labored as a missionary among the new converts and confirmed them in the faith.

Iceland's history after the establishment of Christianity is very interesting for it attained a high degree of refinement and civilization, far superior, in fact, to that of other countries of the North. Nearly everything that is known of the history of Northern Europe is derived from the Icelandic historians of this epoch. The scalds of Iceland were in great demand at all the courts of the North, in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, England and Ireland: the Icelandic literature of that period is regarded as one of the most beautiful and most classical of all literatures. The Eddas and Sagas, the historical and poetical works of Snorro Sturlason, called the Thucydides of the North, the splendid productions of the numerous Icelandic scalds, are literary monuments which are worthy of the profoundest admiration. Besides their literary occupations, the Icelanders were given to long expeditions of surprising boldness: for instance, in the year 1000 they discovered America and established flourishing colonies, which, later on, were erected into several dioceses. In those times the Catholic bishops had great influence over the Icelanders. Many Benedictine and Augustinian monasteries were built in the isle and the Catholic religion had unrestrained liberty. There was not, so to speak, in the whole island, so say the Sagas, a house nor a family nor a community which was not devoted to some literary work. The first colonists drew up a code of laws, which gradually developed under the influence of Christianity, and at the time of which we are speaking constituted a system of remarkable perfection. Everything was foreseen and regulated in the Gragas, as this code was called. To cite one example: Very wise and detailed laws were laid down in regard to insurance against fire, plague and other accidents. This insurance was to a certain degree obligatory; every proprietor was bound to insure his herds and certain buildings named in the code. The other proprietors in the section where the accident occurred were obliged to repair the loss in accordance with a very rigorous system of taxation. No proprietor, however, had a right to this indemnification more than three times. The republic was rich and flourishing and had attained a high degree of civilization, but like all human institutions it bore within itself the germs of decay. For over a century a few families arrogated to themselves supreme power over the rest, and in consequence intestine wars broke out all over the country, torrents of blood were shed till the population was decimated, the license of the nobility knew no bounds; in a word this people, till then, so wisely governed and so happy, was making rapid strides to its ruin. In vain did the great Pope Innocent III. write to the Icelanders in 1198 two touching letters of exortation, one to the bishops, the other to the nobles. The Pontiffs counsels were unheeded; the horrors of civil war continued unabated till about 1264, when the unhappy people, already exhausted by so many disorders lost its independence, and lowered its neck under the yoke of kings of Norway. Later on the island passed under the sway of the kings of Denmark.

The greater number of Iceland's Catholic bishops were men distinguished for learning and sanctity. Some received their literary education in France. Two are canonized, Saint Jon (John) Ogmundarson, first bishop of the diocese of Holar and Saint Thorlak Thorlakson, sixth bishop of Skalholt. The last two bishops of the country both died for the faith, Ogmundar Palsson, a confessor of the faith, in a Danish prison, in 1542; Jon Arason, a martyr in Iceland itself. The King of Denmark, Christian III., was determined at all hazards to introduce the new doctrines of Luther into the island, but finding it impossible to conquer the fidelity of the people to the Catholic religion, finally sent two warships to subdue them. Jon Arason resisted with indomitable courage; he collected a small army and swore that he would die rather than submit to the heretic king. The Sovereign Pontiff, Paul III., on the eighth of March, 1548, sent him several valuable gifts which are preserved in Iceland to this day, and a Brief in which he commended his zeal and encouraged him to continue the struggle. This letter was as it were the parting adieu of the Vicar of Christ to Catholic Iceland. The Danish soldiers captured Ogmundar Palsson, whose see embraced the south of the island, and took him to Denmark, where he died in prison, as we said. A so-called Lutheran bishop was installed in his place in the king's name. As soon as Jon Arason, whose diocese embraced the northern part, learned this news, he set out at the head of his little army for the South. He succeeded in capturing the Protestant bishop, whom he treated with courtesy, and reconquered to the faith the greater part of the island; but in the midst of his success he was betrayed and fell into the hands of the followers of the king of Denmark. He decapitated him on November 7, 1550. Thus died a hero—and with him the Catholic hierarchy in Iceland became extinct. After Jon Arason's death begins a period of unheard-of sufferings and evils, which lasted from 1550 till the beginning of the present century. Their existence was a veritable martyrdom. No nation has suffered more, not even Poland or Ireland has passed through such a Purgatory. The first thing which the Danes did after the violent introduction of Protestantism was to plunder the Catholic churches and monasteries. Whole cargoes of personal property, gold, silver, ornaments, church utensils and valuable furniture were transported to Copenhagen. Moreover all the lands which had belonged to the bishops, priests and monasteries were confiscated to the crown. The population which formerly reached 100,000 free men, at the end of the last century was reduced to 38,000. It was a dying nation, "an heroic race debased," as Lord Dufferan calls it. All happiness had disappeared, and as the Government feared the utter extinction of the race, they sent at last a commission to investigate the causes of this national decline.

It is something very remarkable and very consoling to see how these islanders preserved a spirit of piety through their trials in spite of their forced Lutheranism. The love of our Lord, particularly of Jesus suffering, has always been conspicuous among them and displayed itself in a most touching manner. A magnificent poem in fifty cantos, on the passion of our Lord was composed by the leper scald, the minister Hallgirmer Peturrson. It is one of the most beautiful poems of its kind extant. At the present time it is chanted throughout the island by every family during Lent. The Catholic faith was utterly obliterated from Iceland in the sixteenth century. From 1550 to 1854 no attempt was made to win back the isle to the true faith. The first effort was made in 1854 by two French priests, the Abbe Bernard of the diocese of Cambrai, and the Abbe Baudoin of Rheims. At that time liberty of conscience had not been accorded to the people, and the missionaries succeeded in converting only one person, Gunnar Einarsson, a young man of good standing, who is now the father of a family. His family is the only Catholic family in Iceland. In 1874 liberty of conscience was granted, but the brave Abbe Baudoin died immediately after the concession, and his colleague, the Abbe Bernard had long before been named Vicar Apostolic of Norway. No one succeeded the Abbe Baudoin as missionary to Iceland till 1895, when our Holy Father, Leo XIII., requested Monsignor Von Euch, Vicar Apostolic of Denmark to send two of his Danish missionaries to Iceland. During the summer of that year two young missionaries left Copenhagen for Reykjavik, the capital of the island. They were received with great kindness. They intended to learn the language before beginning to preach, but the inhabitants made such earnest petition that they begin immediately in Danish, that they had to yield to their entreaties. So far their little chapel is filled every Sunday, they have about 150 at each sermon. On the first of last June four sisters of the congregation of St. Joseph of Chambery went from Copenhagen to the new mission. Two of these heroic religious are Frenchwomen, and while devoting their lives to the Icelanders, they will at the same time be of service to their fellow countrymen, the French sailors, who every summer take up their station in these waters. One of the undertakings which will have to occupy the missionaries and sisters, and which of itself alone presents to us a glimpse of a world of misery, is the care of the lepers, those unfortunate victims of the most horrible of maladies. Leprosy, which seemed to have almost disappeared from Europe, has made its dismal appearance in Iceland. The frightful fact has been ascertained that out of a population of 75,000 there are several hundreds of lepers. What a fearful scourge for the Continent if leprosy were to spread in the same proportion as in Iceland! In 1894 Copenhagan was horror-struck on hearing that there were fifty lepers in Iceland The Danish Government immediately sent out an expedition to Iceland under the leadership of Doctor Ehlers, to ascertain the progress made by the disease. They visited only a third of the island and found 149 victims of the disease. The following year they resumed their investigations and made an authentic report, which declares that there are several hundred lepers in the island and that the disease is spreading, and moreover that the only means of arresting the progress of the evil is to build a leper hospital large enough to accommodate all the lepers in the island. The Reverend J. Sveinsson, a priest of the Society of Jesus, who is a native of Iceland, but who has received his education in France and is at present a missionary in Denmark has taken upon himself the task of trying to execute this plan under the patronage of the Sacred Heart. It is true a number of brave souls have offered to consecrate their lives to the care of these unfortunate beings. We can mention among others five young women, three French, one Belgian, one Dane, (this last being of a very prominent family of Copenhagen,) who have made the heroic sacrifice of leaving all in exchange for the care of the afflicted in the icy isle. Of late other devoted souls have volunteered, but success depends on one condition, namely, sufficient contributions from private charity to enable them to build a leper hospital. The new mission of Iceland is under the special patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Father Sveinsson, who visited his native isle in 1894, was filled with joyful surprise when he entered for the first time the little Catholic chapel of Reykjavik, which had been abandoned since the death of the last missionary to find there behind the altar a beautiful painting of the Sacred Heart sent no doubt long ago by some unknown friend of our Lord, to the brave Abbe Baudoin.

May the Heart of Jesus be pleased to pour out His richest blessings upon the new iceland mission and upon his lepers.

PRAYER FOR THE INTENTION OF THE MONTH.

O Jesus, through the immaculate heart of Mary, I offer Thee all the prayers, works and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in reparation for all sins and for all requests presented through the Apostleship of Prayer, in particular for the mission in Iceland.—Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

Letters Come.

Letters come day by day telling us that this person has been cured of dyspepsia, that person of Bad Blood, and another of Headache, still another of Biliousness, and yet others of various complaints of the Stomach, Liver, Bowels or Blood, all through the intelligent use of Burdock Blood Bitters.

It is the voice of the people recognizing the fact that Burdock Blood Bitters cures all diseases of the Stomach, Liver, Bowels and Blood.

Mr. T. G. Ludlow, 334 Colborne Street, Brantford, Ont., says: During seven years prior to 1886, my wife was sick all the time with violent headaches. Her head was so hot that it felt like burning up. She was weak, run down, and so feeble that she could hardly do anything, and so nervous that the least noise startled her. Night or day she could not rest and life was a misery to her. I tried all kinds of medicines and treatment for her but she steadily grew worse until I bought six bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters from C. Stork & Son, of Brampton, Ont., for which I paid $5.00, and it was the best investment I ever made in my life. Mrs. Ludlow took four out of the six bottles—there was no need of the other two, for those four bottles made her a strong, healthy woman, and removed every ailment from which she had suffered, and she enjoyed the most vigorous health. That five dollars saved me lots of money in medicine and attendance thereafter, and better than that it made home a comfort to me.

The Episcopal Ring.

The ring, as part of the insignia of the episcopal dignity, is of very early origin, and its history presents many points of interest. At the Council of Orleans, held in 511, a rescript of Clodovic is referred to, promising to leave certain captives at the disposal of the Gallican bishops, "si vestras epistolas de annulo vestro signatas sic ad nos dirigatis," and the Sacramentary of Saint Gregory compiled in the same century, prescribes for the bishop the use of the ring and pastoral staff. The Council of Toledo, 633, ordained by one of its canons that a bishop condemned unjustly, and afterwards declared innocent in a subsequent Synod, cannot perform the episcopal functions till restored to his dignity by the re-delivery of the stole, ring and staff. St. Isidore of Seville, who died in 636, in his work *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, when treating of the episcopal dignity, says: "Datur et annulus propter signum pontificalis honoris, vel signaculum secretarum." The large official seals did not come into general use till the eleventh century, and prior to that date most of the episcopal rings were signets. The subject to be engraved on the ring appears to have been left to the discretion and taste of each individual bishop. St. Agustine mentions the sealing of one of his letters with his ring, "qui exprimit faciem hominis attendentis in latus," and Avitus, Archbishop of Vienne, in the sixth century, writing to the Bishop of Valence, begs him to send the seal or signet he had promised, with instructions that a monogram should be engraved on the bezel. The Benedictine annals mention that Ebregislaus, Bishop of Meaux in 660, wore in his ring an intaglio representing St. Paul, the first hermit, kneeling before the crucifix, and above his head the crow by which he was miraculously fed. In 1194 Pope Innocent III. definitely settled the fashion of the episcopal ring, which was to be of solid gold and set with a precious stone on which nothing was to be incribed, and in conformity with this pontifical precept any of the episcopal rings of the thirteenth century were of very rude fashion, the stones being set as they were found, merely having the surface polished, and the bezel adapted to the shape of the gem. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the episcopal ring was enriched by the addition of precious stones, which were set around the principal one.

In the Wardrobe Book of Edward I. the entry occurs of "Annulus auricum quatuor rubettis magnis, qui fuit Fratris J. de Feecham nuper Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi," and in an inventory of Church Ornments at Canterbury, taken in 1315, one of the pontifical rings is described as "Annulus quadratus magnus, cum smaragdine oblongo, et quatuor pramis, et quartuor garnetis." The precious stones appear to have been preferred to episcopal rings were the sapphire and ruby, and often these gems were of great value. Durantus says that a bishop's ring should be made of pure gold, and set "cum gemma pretiosiori." The following formula is given in the old *Ordo Romanus* for the blessing of the Ring: "Creator humani generis dator gratiæ spiritualis, largitor eternæ salutis, Tu Domine, emmitte tuam benedictionem super hunc annulum, ut quicunque hoc sacrosancto fidei signo insignitus incedat, in virtute cælestis defensioris ad æternam vitam sibi proficiat." The formula used by the consecrating prelate in investing the bishop-elect with the pontifical ring, appears to have varied at different periods. The following is that described in the Pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York: "Accipe annulum pontificalis honoris, ut sis fidei integritate munitus," while the Anglo-Saxon Pontifical at Rouen and that of St. Dunstan at Paris, both have the following: "Accipe ergo annulum discretionis et honoris, ut quæ signanda sunt signes, et quæ aperienda sunt podas." The form now prescribed by the Roman Pontifical is: "Accipe annulum fidei scilicet signaculum, quatenus spon am Dei, Sanctum videlicet Ecclesiam, intemerate fide illibate custodias." The ring was formerely worn by bishops on the index finger of their right hand, the middle of the three which are extended in giving the blessing. This has been explained as indicative of silence, as they ought to communicate the divine mysteries only to the worthy; or as the Canonists interpret it, that it is the bishop's duty to point out to his flock the way of salvation. The ring is now worn on the annular finger of the right hand, and bishops never wear more than one, although in pictures of the early masters, and on sepulchral effigies they are often represented with several rings. The *Ceremoniale S. Romanæ Ecclesiæ*, the first edition of which was published in 1516, contains the following directions at the robing of the Pope: "Accedit primus Diaconorum Cardinalium assistens, et imponit Papæ jam mitram tenenti, annulum pontificalem et alois quos voluerit."

Durandus, in his *Rationale*, enlarges on the mystical signification of the pontifical ring: "The ring," he says, "is the badge of fidelity with which Christ betrothed the Church, His Holy Bride, so that she can say: 'My Lord betrothed me with His ring,' whose guardians are the bishops and prelates who wear the ring as a mark and testimony of it. A bishops ring signifies *integritatem fidei*, that is to say, that he should love as himself the Church of God committed to him as his bride, and that he should keep it sober and chaste for the heavenly bridegroom, according to the words, 'I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.'" He proceeds to observe that a bishop wears a ring because it is his place to seal the mysteries of the Scriptures, and the Sacraments of the Church to the *perfides*, and to reveal them to the lowly. In England, on the death of every archbishop and bishop, the King claimed as of right his best horse and palfrey, with saddle and bridle, a cloak with a hood, a cup with the ewer, a gold ring, and a kennel of the hounds of the deceased. These rights, which appear to have been rigorously enforced, existed in the reign of Edward I., and probably earlier. The second best ring of a bishop, at least in the province of Canterbury, went to his Metropolitan or, *sede vacante*, to the Prior of Christ Church. In Archbishop Winchelsey's Register is a mandate directed to Richard de Oteringham, administrator of the temporalities of the see of Ely, after the death of Robert Oxford, in which he claims "the ring commonly called Pontifical, which of right and custom of our Church of Canterbury should belong to us." At the Consistory, at which the Pope opens the mouths of the new Cardinals, it is the custom to confer upon each a ring. This practice dates from about the twelfth century. On receiving the ring the Cardinal has to pay a fine of 500 ducats in gold. The revenue arising from this source was assigned by Paul IV. to the support of the fabric of the Lateran Basilica, and by succeeding Pontiffs to various objects, but finally, by Gregory XV., granted in *perpetuum* to the College of the Propaganda Fide, as recorded in an inscription in the College church A Cardinals ring is set with a sapphire denoting, as Sarnelli says, the high-priesthood and the regal dignity. It may be here mentioned that the Fisherman's Ring, familiar to us in the signature of Apostolic documents, although probably at a remote period a signet ring worn by the Pope, is now used only as a seal. It derives its name from the figure of St. Peter in a fisherman's boat, which forms the centre, round which is the name of the reigning Pontiff.—*Tablet*.

Cardinal Vaughan on the Papal Encyclical.

The following letter from His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan was published in the London Times, with a lengthy summary of the Papal Encyclical:

Sir—The Holy Father has just published an Encyclical on Christian Unity. Though addressed to the Bishops of the Church, it may be useful to point out that, like the *Ad Anglos*, it concerns all in England who take an active part in the movement for the Reunion of Christendom. A common basis of agreement is required. Some of our countrymen think that corporate reunion may be achieved on the basis of an amicable federation of independent communities calling themselves Christian. Others are for tying up what they call the Roman, Greek, and Anglican branches or obediences into one, yet so that each shall be independent of the others. Others believe that corporate reunion may be attained by professing all the doctrines taught by the See of Rome, with exceptions. Others again would regard the Church of Christ as an invisible creation, internally uniting all good men in bonds of faith and charity while externally all such bonds are cruelly torn asunder. How these and the like theories are admissible by Catholics may be gathered from this Encyclical, *De Unitate*. In his earnest desire to promote reunion the Holy Father last year invited all who seek the kingdom of God in the unity of faith to address prayers to God for light and guidance. This year he has carried the project a step further by publishing an authoritative statement to the basis on which reunion, whether of individuals or of corporate bodies, with the Catholic Church is possible. With true and considerate charity he has fully and clearly explained the grounds, founded in revelation and reason, of the terms or conditions which he deems essential. They will come as no surprise to Catholics and to the educated, by whom they were generally known. But some, perhaps a considerable number, have been under the strange delusion that it was in the power of the Holy Father to modify, or even to dispense altogether with, the ancient terms of communion, in order to bring about so desirable and blessed an end as the reunion of Christendom. Whatever be the reception accorded to this most important Letter *De Unitate*, all will admire its unreserved sincerity and its paternal charity. It will, no doubt, dispel vague and hazy theories, which are rich only in delusive hopes, while, by God's grace, it will make clear the path to all who believe they ought to walk in it.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Herbert Cardinal Vaughan,
Archbishop's House, June 29th.

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This first-class residence is in good order, has a slate roof, double windows with outside shutters in front, and iron shutters at back, a good, dry, frost-proof cellear, stone wall over nine feet, stables, etc.

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Nov 8, 1892—1y