

Our Weekly Sermon

PROBLEMS OF MODERN LIFE.

"The Church and the Employer."

Rev. Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., professor of ethics and political economy at Boston College, delivered the fourth of his conferences on "The Church and Modern Problems in the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The sermon treated of the relations between the employer and the employe. The text of his discourse was taken from Ecclesi. iv., 33: "For thy soul strives for justice, and even unto death fights for justice." The following is a synopsis:

"Among all the problems that vex modern, social and industrial life, none claims our consideration so forcibly as the labor question. The misery and want found among the working-classes in many districts is so appalling that no thoughtful man can view these scenes of misfortune without coming to the conclusion that there is something radically wrong in our religious life. To discuss the questions fully would require many weeks of patient investigation, but we may glean certain directive measures from the teachings and examples of our blessed Lord. What, then, is the message of Christ to those who sit enthroned upon the pillars of power, of wealth, of affluence, of lordly display, of dazzling magnificence? What is the code of laws the Redeemer of the world has enacted for the dealings between employer and employe, between master and servant? We detect the clear and direct outline of this legislation in the words of our Lord, in the message implied in the cure graciously wrought for a servant at the entreaty of his pagan master, and in the epistles of St. Paul, notably in the brief, but exquisitely touching, letter to Philemon.

"From all this we justly infer in the first place that the relations between master and servant, between employer and employe, must be marked by Christian respect for the toiler's manhood. Our blessed Lord plainly teaches that no man, no matter how lowly the office he fills, can be regarded as a chattel, an agricultural implement, a beast of burden. Infall the kaleidoscopic phenomena of industrial life, the laborer must be treated as a human being, with a distinct personality, and invested with all the rights which flow from this sublime prerogative, namely, with the right to life, to integrity of limb, to health, to surroundings favorable to morality, and, in general, to those aids which a man needs in order to work out his destiny, and, in general, to those aids which a man needs in order to work out his destiny, and of which he cannot be deprived without directly infringing God's claim upon his service. Hence the bread winner must not be treated as a patient drudge, as a mere numerical expression, as a piece of machinery, as a mass of cartilage or a bundle of quivering nerves. To treat laborers as though they were lifeless figures of a chess board is to forfeit the title to membership in the universal church of Christ, and to violate the fundamental principles of Christian humanity.

"Moreover, the dealings between owner and laborer must be stamped by Christian friendliness, by loyal service on the one hand, and by sympathetic appreciation on the other. Master and servant, employer and employe, are not natural enemies, official antagonists. Employers are entitled to exact service, but they are forbidden by Christ's teaching to make use of tyrannical measures or of insulting language. Words, manners and measures which are unbefitting a Christian must be rigorously refrained from; inspectors, foremen and underlings who treat the laborers with contumely must be dismissed from office; the feelings of those whose lot it is to serve must not be unnecessarily wounded; and demands must be tempered with discretion and kindness. The conduct of an employer is not a matter outside the law of Christ, and whoever fails to mould his actions according to the principles of the Saviour of mankind will inevitably stop the harmonious feelings that ought to exist between superiors and inferiors. The brutal language of modern overseers, their imperious demands, their haughty bearing would be deemed disgraceful in the worst times of Roman slavery; in a Christian community they are foul blot upon our social life.

"In the third place, the laborer must be treated with justice. Masters do to your servants that which is right and just, knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven," writes St. Paul, to the rich men of Colosse. A fair return must be made for a fair day's work. There is a stamp of sacredness about the wages of labor, for they have been earned by expenditure of human energy. So high was the esteem placed by the Mosaic law

upon wage money, that the employer was commanded to pay the hired man upon the completion of his day's work. The wages of him that hath been hired by thee shall not abide with thee until the morning. That which a man earns by the sweat of his brow must be regarded as a treasure which no profane hand may rudely touch or lightly handle.

"It cannot be denied, however, that it is a difficult and complex question to decide what is a fair return for labor given. How shall we keep within the bounds of justice? Some philosophers assert that since wages are fixed by free consent, whenever the employer pays what was agreed upon he may flatter himself that he has acted with justice. The supposition is decidedly false, because many toilers are compelled by hunger and by want to agree to terms clearly unjust. A workman having a wife and family dependent upon him is not free to do as he pleases, and, consequently under the pressure of poverty and starvation, at home, he will be forced to accept any terms that may be offered to him. But this fact does not justify the starvation wages given by many wealthy capitalists. To take advantage of another's need is to fail in equity, and contracts made under pressure of this nature can no more be classed as just than the action of the robber who demands the wayfarer's purse or his life, or the action of the kidnapper who claims a large ransom for a stolen child. Who is there who does not condemn in vigorous phrase the deeds of the highwaymen and of the child stealer - but where are the strong condemnations of those secret thieves who defraud the laborer of his just wage?

"To ascertain what will be an equitable compensation for a man's toil we must bear in mind that justice demands an equality between what is given and what is received. What does the breadwinner give the employer? The best that earth can supply, namely, strength, energy, ability and knowledge, and the constant wear and tear of life, all these generously and unstintedly spent for the master. There must, then, be a proportionate return, and this proportion can only be kept by giving the toiler not only what is absolutely necessary for the bare support of life, but also what is required to repair the lost strength and to win back the spent life. This happy result can only be obtained by giving that remuneration which will enable the workman to support himself and his family in reasonable and frugal comfort."

SPEAKER POWER.

Biographical Sketch of Hon. Senator Lawrence Geoffrey Power, LL.B.

Speaker of the Canadian Senate.

The task that falls to the lot of the biographical writer is a pleasant one when he has to deal with the career of distinguished Canadians, who have risen to professional and political prominence through their own native ability, industry and integrity. We say the task is made easy, because Canada has furnished plenty of material to choose from. In this instance, we have selected Senator Power, as it seems fitting that, on his elevation to the Speakership of the Canadian Senate, he should be widely known, not so much perhaps for his own sake, as for an example to the rising generation of young men, as to the heights of fortune that may be obtained by the proper exercise of the mental and physical faculties which God bestows upon us for our good and the benefit of our fellow men.

In his early youth the future Senator had the best of moral and Catholic religious training, as in riper years he had the highest of college and university scholastic instruction. These great advantages are, of course, powerful factors in shaping a young man's after-course in life. They open the door of preferment to the worthy aspirant for high ideals, and they give him a prestige at the start, which less fortunate young men have to contend for in their onward career.

It is universally admitted, however, by men who have made their mark that their most fruitful and lasting lessons were obtained at their mother's knee.

The salutary instructions given her children by a virtuous Irish-Catholic mother are hardly ever forgotten, and we venture to say that Honorable Mr. Power would agree to this if questioned upon the subject.

When to this good home training is added the best that could be got out of the colleges and universities, when young manhood's intellectual powers are wide awake and perceptive, the foundations of success are already laid, assuming always that the young man makes the best use of his time and opportunities, and earnestly devotes himself to the duties of his profession or calling.

With this, again, must be combined

the sterling principles of purity and honesty in all dealings with our fellow men. This moral code, of course, includes the "Golden Rule," which injunction requires of all men that they should treat others as they would wish to be treated themselves.

The subject of this all too short sketch, Hon. Lawrence Geoffrey Power, LL.B., and Speaker of the Canadian Senate, was born at Halifax, N. S., in 1841, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Power, of that city. Mr. Power, Sr., was one of the leading merchants of Halifax, and on the inauguration of Confederation in 1867, was elected to represent the County of Halifax in the Canadian Parliament, which he did until '78.

Young Master Power commenced his preparatory studies at St. Mary's College in his native city. Passing from there in due course he entered Carlow College, and later passed to the Catholic University, Ireland. Re-crossing the Atlantic, he continued his legal studies at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass., where he took the degree of L. L. B., and was admitted in '66 to the Bar of his native Province. Henceforward his career is well-known in Canada, for from the day he handled his first brief he showed legal aptitudes which drew him legal patronage, and step by step he rose in his profession, and has for many years been recognized as one of the leaders of the Bar of Nova Scotia, a body which has produced some of the most eminent of colonial lawyers. The secret of his rise at the Bar was chiefly due to his close study of every client's interests, confided to him and his clear knowledge of the law bearing upon the case, it being his characteristic to master details and go to the root of all business he undertook to conduct. His sure judgment and grasp of public affairs brought him more prominently before the public and he became alderman of his native city, whose civic interests he helped to promote for six years; and for ten years he satisfactorily filled the position of a member of the Board of School Commissioners; was Clerk-Assistant, and Clerk of Bills of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia; member of the Senate of the University of Halifax, and one of the examiners in its law faculty, besides lending a helping hand to Catholic and charitable institutions, and other social functions that fall to the lot of every prominent citizen. All these different occupations helped Mr. Power to gain a wider experience of the real practical concerns of life, and they stood him in good stead for the higher honors and responsibilities that awaited him in his call to the Senate, which promotion was conferred upon him by the MacKenzie Government in 1877. He entered that body with a ripe knowledge of men and the different human interests that sway them in their ambitions and worldly strivings, and once getting connected with political life he made a study of it, so that his utterances in that chamber have always been well-reasoned, logical, deeply interesting and instructive, as bearing upon all questions of State concerns.

In view of his nearly 24 years' experience in the Senate, it is quite needless to say that he is a master in political and Parliamentary usages, and that his qualifications for the office of Speaker - to which he has just been appointed - are beyond doubt, and, in a word, are admitted on all sides. His well-earned promotion will be duly appreciated by the Irish Catholics of the Dominion, of which body he is a loyal, truly practical, and distinguished member.

Catholics in the United States and in Ireland will also rejoice to know that one of their race and creed has justly earned such distinction in Canada.

Taken as a whole, the career of the honorable Senator, if rightly interpreted, will act as an inspiration to a worthy effort on the part of the young men of this Dominion, because it contains real living proof of what an active and clever young man of good education and high moral principles may attain to, if he will only act out his part well and truly, and turn to good account his opportunities and personal advantages placed in his way. True enough, young Mr. Power had, as is already remarked, the best of moral and educational equipment in beginning public and professional life, but many others have started with equal advantages, and yet misused or nullified them all for want of sound judgment, proper application of mental faculties, legitimate ambition, and a firm determination to succeed, despite some, or all, drawbacks, at the outset, or, in current American phrase, a sufficient supply of the thing called "git up and git."

In 1890 Mr. Power married Susan, daughter of Mr. M. O'Leary, of West Quoddy. The happy marriage proved to be one of perfect domestic bliss, both husband and wife being models of the type of good Catholic Christians, who love order and regularity, and are ever ready to relieve distress among the needy, not only of their own creed and race, but of all who may have to suffer from the stroke of

ill-fortune.

In the high position the Senator is now called upon to fill, and the customary social functions and responsibilities attached to it, he will be ably assisted by his wife, a lady who is well fitted by nature and grace to be a leader in society. While on this delicate subject, we may say that both the Senator and his lady are favorites in Ottawa, the latter being ranked amongst the banishest women that come to the Capital during the session. It requires, therefore, no stretch of the imagination to conceive the grace and tact with which she will preside at the entertainments that may be given by the new Speaker of the Senate.

Besides, Madame Power, will have a winning and charming assistant in the person of her daughter, Miss Mary Power, a tall, fair girl with her mother's grace of manners, but who has not yet made her debut in society.

Political and social circles in Ottawa and elsewhere, will be pleased at the choice made in the Speakership of the Senate:

WILLIAM ELLISON.

RELIGIOUS STATISTICS.

The Number of Catholics in America Underestimated.

The appearance of alleged statistics of the various religious denominations annually exploited by some of our sectarian contemporaries, emphasizes afresh the need of a careful and accurate census of the Catholics of the United States. It is not always apparent from what sources the figures in these tables representing Catholic Church membership are derived, but one is never left in doubt as to the purpose of the authors to minimize the showing as far as it affects that body. There is generally a footnote, or a marginal reference explaining that the excess of the Catholics over the strongest of the other denominations, numerically, is not what it appears to be on the face of things.

Usually, we are given to understand that the diocesan totals furnished by the Catholic Directories, form the basis of Catholic enumeration in these comparative denominational statistics. We know that the figures set forth in the respectable directories do not always agree, so that, at best, it is reasonable to conclude that very little reliance is to be placed on results obtained from that source. We do not say that the publishers of the directories are to blame. They depend upon the statements secured from diocesan authority, and their responsibility ceases with the publication of what they receive.

A very general and, we believe, fully warranted impression prevails among those who have given the subject any attention, that the Catholic population as indicated by the Catholic Directory totals, is greatly underestimated. The returns from the various dioceses of the country are, in nearly all cases, the merest guess-work. That is clearly demonstrated by the fact that no variation, or very little, is shown in the figures covering a period of ten, and, in some instances, twenty years. No matter how great has been the increase, naturally, or otherwise, of the general population in a given district, the Catholic total, as it appears in these year-books, remains about stationary. Dozens or scores of new churches may be erected and put in use in the interval to accommodate the surplus of congested parishes; but the grand total practically undergoes no change.

It is not too much to say that the officials of a diocese in which a systematic and complete census of Catholics is never taken, can not be expected to know any more definitely than other people, just what the movement of population of the country, as a whole, is prodigiously underrated even by Catholics themselves. Without going into any very elaborate argument to demonstrate its correctness, we venture to believe that if the matter were carefully tested by application to available official tables of vital statistics, the justice of this conviction would be fully borne out. We do not hesitate to affirm that an absolutely trustworthy count of Catholics in this country would show a total population of that faith much nearer fifteen than eight millions, with which we are usually credited. For very many reasons it is most desirable that there should be a full and accurate enumeration of the Catholics of the United States - San Francisco Monitor.

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