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CURRENT COMMENT

An occasional contributor sends us a valuable summary of a lecture lately delivered in Montreal by the Very Rev. Father Lecoq, Superior General of the Sulpicians in this country. Knowing on the one hand our contributor's ability to give a faithful and interesting report, and, on the other, the supreme competency of Abbe Lecoq, we have no hesitation in printing this communication as an editorial, and in commending it warmly to our readers. No such masterly sketch of the late Pontiff's work has yet appeared elsewhere. It is a fitting monument to the genius of Leo XIII.

We begin this week the first encyclical of our dearly beloved Pope Pius X. With all his gentleness and warmth of heart, the Holy Father manages to turn the tables on the enemies of the Church in a very effective way. Without alluding to the common ultra-Protestant belief that the Pope is antichrist, he gives as his opinion that the present tendency to ignore God is the real Antichrist, or at least the forerunner of the Man of Sin.

This first encyclical of our winsome Pope is a touching message to his helpers in the vineyard of the Lord. It is eminently practical, too. It strikes, with no uncertain sound, a note of warning to some minimizing Catholics. "As to us, venerable brethren. We shall see to it, by every precaution,"—a quiet, but resolute declaration—"that the members of the clergy be not overcome by the insidious manoeuvres of a certain new science which masquerades as truth, but which savors not of the things of Christ—a false science, which by means of fallacious and pertidious arguments opens the way to the errors of rationalism or semi-rationalism."

The Rome correspondent of the English "Catholic Times" brings out clearly the way in which an overruling Providence adapts each Pope to the needs of the hour.

Possessing gifts beyond those displayed by any of these Popes, Leo, amidst differences created by new conditions, played a part not unlike to that of a Sixtus or a Julius, just as these Pontiffs had been world-suzerains amidst, it is true, conditions made different by the development of nationalities, but after the manner of an Alexander, an Innocent, or a Gregory. Foes called him "a political Pope," because there would not have been a semblance of justification for describing him by a worse name, and because a rag of pretext could be found for this here and there, since he was imperial in soul, of eagle gaze in outlook over the troubled world, a ruler to the manner born, and on these accounts and others a Pontiff of social inspirations, intentions, and teachings. But he had failed in much of this as Pius II. had failed, resembling whom he was to die with all too tragic fittingness in point of time; or as Gregory VII. had failed, or Pope after Pope during the struggle in which Hildebrand emerged and wrought until a success, which never came, seemed near. So the world—if we read events aright—got its long-desired, simply spiritual Pontiff, a high-priest clad in the vesture of holiness, who would preach and soothe, and console and alleviate misery. He was given as truly as expectation could have pictured, as fully as desire could have made hope swell high. His past, his character, the story of his election, his first pontifical acts, his

brief but frequent utterances, all betokened the encyclical which has come, and which is as much as it could be an expression of the pure spirit of the Gospel. But the encyclical has surpassed even the expectations permitted by the new Pope's life and acts and utterances. Less lengthily than an ordinary document of the kind, it is strikingly, decisively, exclusively religious. The Gospel through the Church it preaches and teaches in every line, but its dominant note—the setting-up of all things anew and in Christ—should come as near to the sympathy of Protestants as any general programme of a newly-elected Pontiff could.

What could be more persuasive than the following passage in the present encyclical, which breathes so merciful a spirit?

"This charity, 'patient and kind' (I Cor. xiii, 4), will extend itself also to those who are hostile to us and persecute us. 'We are reviled,' thus did St. Paul protest, 'and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are blasphemed, and we entreat' (I Cor. v, 12, s.). They perhaps seem to be worse than they really are. Their associations with others, prejudice, the counsel, advice and example of others, and finally an ill-advised shame, have dragged them to the side of the impious; but their wills are not so depraved as they themselves would seek to make people believe. Who will prevent us from hoping that the flame of Christian charity may dispel the darkness from their minds and bring to them light and the peace of God? It may be the fruits of our labors may be slow in coming, but charity wearies not with waiting, knowing that God prepares His rewards not for the results of toil, but for the good-will shown in it."

Last week the displays of aurora borealis were truly magnificent. On Saturday, the 31st ult., the shimmering panorama was particularly fascinating. Two local students of meteorological phenomena, who had read up pretty nearly all that is known about auroras, had come to the conclusion that the whole thing was a tantalizing mystery, when suddenly, as if in answer to their thoughts, about nine in the evening, one continuous band of pale greenish light, covering nearly half the sky from low down in the northwest to high up in the east, formed itself into a perfectly rounded interrogation mark. The regulation curves, including that curve of double flexure which is called by painters "the line of beauty," were all there; the only thing wanting for a complete interrogation mark was the dot. The outer rim of the figure appeared quite continuous, and from it hung those parallel lines of light which remind one of a curtain of beams. This curious, questioning figure did not last more than five minutes; then the hook of the question mark filled up with milky white light, and the tail flew off into space.

It is this ever-changing aspect of the aurora that constitutes its incomparable charm. Sunsets, sunrises, halos and mock-suns are no doubt very interesting and beautiful; but they lack the life and motion, the pyrotechnic display of a fine aurora. On the other hand, the play of vivid lightning is too rapid, too dazzling and often too terrible for real enjoyment. Awe and terror rather than delight accompany a thunderstorm. But the lambent lusciousness of those seemingly living streamers, the silent march of those serried hosts of angelic wings, the flash and quiver of those weird and fanciful shapes fill the soul of the beholder with restful and yet eager joy. Coming as

they did on Halloween, the eve of All Saints', the day when our thoughts dwell with our dear departed ones who have entered their everlasting home, these "merry dancers" reminded us of the mending surprises reserved for us in heaven by Him who energizes in the aurora, and who gives us in this plaything of his might a faint foretaste of the unfathomable riches of His uncreated splendors, ever infinitely new.

But last Saturday's aurora turned out to be no mere plaything, except in the sense that it played havoc with the electric wires and demoralized the telegraphic service. In Geneva, Switzerland, it went so far as to stop the electric cars. However, our American cousins, with their usual keen scent of practical advantage, harnessed the aurora borealis. Mr. Green, superintendent of the Northern Pacific telegraph department, thus describes this unique experience:

A wire leading from St. Paul, Minn., to Dickinson, N.D., was cleared of all battery and other artificial current and subjected to the atmospheric tests. This line is 666 miles long and was successfully operated numerous times by using the electricity which descended from the skies. A pale green light shot forth at stated intervals toward the earth. Each time these points descended it charged the electric wires all over the country to such a degree that communication was stopped for a time and disturbed for many hours.

The electric waves came with the regularity of pendulum movements. They lasted about three minutes each. They swung from negative to positive polarity, in almost perfect rhythm, and our instruments showed a maximum intensity of 370 volts. When the current was at its maximum, positive polarity, we could talk to Dickinson very easily by using the regular Morse code. As the pendulum swung back to the negative pole the sounds from the instruments used became fainter and fainter until the pressure came back. Our voltmeter was not of a high register, 300 volts being its limit. How much higher it would have registered can only be conjectured. The disturbance commenced at two o'clock Saturday morning and lasted until midnight on Sunday, a total duration of twenty hours. It was one of the most remarkable atmospheric disturbances that has come within my knowledge for 30 years.

We are delighted to hear from Rev. A. G. Suffa, O. M. I., whose headquarters are at the Holy Ghost Church in this city, that the entire debt, amounting to \$1,300, on the Catholic church at Gretna, has been paid off. Father Suffa wishes us to convey his hearty thanks to all the members of that small but devoted congregation, who have so nobly done their duty; but we cannot help thinking that much of this great success is due to the enlightened and kindly zeal of Father Suffa himself. In another of his missions, Morden, we understand that the church debt has also been materially diminished, Father Suffa having recently paid off nine hundred dollars. This speaks volumes for the administrative ability of both pastor and people.

Up to the date of writing, Wednesday, Nov. 4, the weather has remained astonishingly mild and beautiful. Flowers are springing up, bees humming, human beings basking in the sunshine. Foster predicts, under date of October 31, that this genial temperature will last till about the 10th of this month, after which great fluctuations may be expected to the end

of November, very warm about the 20th, and the last week very cold, with killing frosts far south in the cotton belt. The most dangerous storms of the month will cluster around the 16th. Here, without the usual neck and neck race between hot and cold waves galloping helterskelter across the continent, we have definite dates. That is why we set them down, so that our readers may see if they come true.

The St. Boniface cars are of no use, so far, except to take people to Winnipeg, and even then the passengers have to pay toll on the Norwood bridge. The return journey from Winnipeg to St. Boniface should be undertaken only by those who have plenty of leisure, since the only car that connects with the Norwood bridge is the Fort Rouge car which, at the busiest hour, between six and seven in the evening, is so crowded that it is often impossible to hang on to the lowest step of the entrance vestibule, and which, although supposed to run every five minutes, last Wednesday, when the Osborne bridge section was under repair, kept people waiting in the sudden cold wave for fifteen minutes. We cannot help admiring the patience of the Fort Rouge residents who submit tamely to this insufficient and overcrowded service. When shall we, on this side of the Atlantic, learn to claim our rights in street car and railway transportation, and insist on the enforcing of laws such as are observed in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe, obliging common carriers to provide enough cars to seat the passengers?

We are extremely grateful to the Very Rev. H. Leduc for his kind letter in praise of our journal. The public, we are happy to say, endorses the improvement which he so highly appreciates in our recent issues, for the circulation has notably increased since we raised the subscription price.

Our offer of "The Life of Pope Leo XIII." for two years' subscription has met with very general and practical approval. One correspondent in particular sends us \$24 for eight such subscriptions. The book is all that it claims to be, in the first place, an eminently readable biography, and secondly, a beautifully printed and illustrated volume fit to grace any drawing-room. This offer holds good only till the 1st of next January. Consequently, those who wish to take advantage of it should write us before the end of next month.

We regret that our interesting Regina correspondent is momentarily prevented, by illness in her own home, from sending in her much valued contributions. We bespeak for her the sympathy and prayers of our readers.

In many things Winnipeg has not yet got beyond the village stage, street numbers for instance. Even on Main street it is often very difficult to discover the number of a store. This is a real hardship to new arrivals who, after hunting for the number in the directory, fail to find it on the front of the building. Storekeepers seem to think they are so well known that street numbers are superfluous. Meanwhile the inquiring stranger gives up the wild goose chase and goes in to make his purchase anywhere. In the residential streets the quest for numbers is still more disheartening; they are often not to be found, and when they exist, they are so small that one has to walk up to many front doors before hitting on the right one; all which is painful to the ordinarily undemonstrative citizen.

Last Monday the Tribune published a three-column advertisement of an American race-betting firm, which boasted of its ability to spot winners and to make \$50 net \$201.75 in less than a month. Next morning the "Telegram" published many interviews with prominent citizens who deplored this scandalous advertisement. On Tuesday evening the Tribune came out with a most amusing article, getting back at the Telegram in fine style, and incidentally mentioning that "the advt. in question was put in the paper in the ordinary way, and without being submitted to the management . . . and when our attention was called to the advt. yesterday we gave instruction to have it discontinued." The very same day our publisher was asked to print the same advertisement. Although he had not seen or heard anything of the Tribune-Telegram tempest, he felt it would not be morally right to throw such temptation in the path of would-be gamblers, and accordingly refused the highly lucrative offer.

Persons and Facts

The cold wave came on Wednesday afternoon, and during the following night the mercury registered twelve degrees of frost. However, the weather remained fair and bright on Thursday morning.

The clerks at the office of the Superintendent of the Winnipeg Street Car Railway do not know when the rails will be laid on the Norwood bridge.

As the Street Car people have not yet reached the point of progress, where double transfers are considered workable, they instruct passengers to and from St. Boniface, if they have to change cars twice, to ask for a transfer to their last objective point, and they promise that the intermediate conductor will honor these transfers. Thus a passenger from St. Boniface to some place on the Portage Ave. line should, before leaving the car at Norwood bridge, ask for a transfer, not to the Fort Rouge car, but to the Portage Ave. car.

For her farewell tour of America, the Chicago Tribune suggests the following programme for Adelina Patti: "Farewell Forever," "Say Au Revoir, but Not Good-by," "How Can I Bear to Leave Thee?" "She Said Good-by," "Bid Me Good-by and Go," "I Don't Care if You Never Come Back," Tosti's "Good-by," "Fare Thee Well for I Must Leave Thee," "Take Your Clothes and Go," and "I Will Return Again."

Doubtless in order to meet the literal requirements of its contract, on Saturday, the last day of October, the Winnipeg Street Railway ran a single car once to and fro over the St. Boniface spur, beginning at the St. Boniface end of the Norwood bridge, for the rails were not yet laid on the bridge, although the heavy copper wire transmitted the necessary power. As we go to press, the cars are running regularly, but not yet over the bridge.

Rev. Sister Lamoureux, Superior of St. Boniface Hospital, who returned lately from Montreal, where she had gone to consult the Mother General of the Grey Nuns, says that work on the new wing will be begun next spring. A wing 150 feet long will be added to the south of the present building and in the same direction, and then that new wing will be crossed by another, also 150 feet long, running at right angles east and west of it. This will more than treble the present hospital.