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CURRENT COMMENT

Mgr. Vay de Vaya, the Hungarian prelate-count who gave so remarkable a lecture here on the 4th of May, was at St. John, N.B., on the 26th of the same month. The "New Freeman" of that city devotes two columns to a sketch of his career and his recent journey across Canada, during which, in the six days of Holy Week, he travelled 800 miles by night, visited seven different townships and delivered nineteen sermons. Our St. John contemporary also gives many of his impressions of the eastern countries he visited. Most of these thoughtful views are to be found in our extended report of his lecture (Northwest Review, May 13,); but the following are new and certainly worth recording.

Speaking of China, Mgr. Vay de Vaya said it was the most interesting of all Eastern Asiatic nations, and the Chinese mind was the most perplexing to him. He believed western people judged the Chinese one-sidedly, and from the lowest class only, so that very rarely do they get an insight into the national mind. Those who had the widest experience of the country were the different orders of the Catholic Church, which had been established for 300 years. In spite of cruelties wrought by savage instincts, they could not help admiring many of the qualities of the Chinese,—notably a remarkable strength of self-control and an even greater strength of endurance. He saw 2000 boys at an orphanage training school at Zi Ka Wei as artisans and skilled workmen; others showed promise as sculptors and painters, and some studying in classics.

The racial question, he thought, was at the root of all puzzling problems of the Far East. There have been many wars, and others are threatening. There is war to-day, and I dare say if they settle a few questions dealing with boundaries and frontiers, and even if certain strips of land are painted in different colors upon the map, many of the real difficulties will not be settled as soon as most people expect. If the powers advocate, as a duty, to re-establish order and develop civilization on far-away continents, they must not forget that the foundations of our civilization is before all a Christian one, and only when firmly based on Christian virtue can be raised the moral and the ethical standard of the people.

A stock argument used continually by Protestants against us is that Catholic countries are less prosperous than Protestant ones. If the word "prosperity" is taken in its best sense as connoting the happiness and true contentment of a nation, the charge is utterly false. There is far more cheerfulness and peace of mind in the Catholic than in the Protestant districts of Canada and the United States, in Catholic than in Protestant Germany, in Italy and Spain than in Scandinavian Europe. If, on the other hand, "prosperity" is taken to mean an imposing sum total of wealth, so unevenly distributed that a few persons are very rich and vast multitudes on the verge of starvation, this fictitious prosperity is as common in Protestant as it is rare in Catholic countries. But material prosperity, even at its best, that is to say, even when it means a general diffusion of comfort, is no test of religious truth; still less is it a criterion of true Christianity. Christ's promises and beatitudes are quite other. He praised poverty and condemned wealth. This idea is expressed in another way by the "Casket" in its issue of June 1st:

Fifty years ago Dr. Brownson answered those who argue the superiority of Protestantism from the material prosperity of Protestant countries, by declaring that in point of material civilization Japan was superior to any Christian nation on earth. His statement was pooh-poohed then; it would be difficult to pooh-pooh it now. The testimony of English and American writers, notably George Kennan, is that the Japanese transportation, commissariat, hospital and intelligence departments of the army

surpass anything that Europe or America has yet seen, just as completely as the soldiers of the Mikado have surpassed those of the Czar on the field of battle. Emperor William thinks it necessary to say that this does not mean that Buddha is superior to Christ. Of course it does not. But it would if the popular Protestant argument against Catholics were sound.

What a relief the present revelation of Russia's military weakness must be to the British Government of India! For well nigh seventy years the spectre of Russia's steady advance towards Northern India has haunted the slumbers of every Indian governor-general or viceroy. This it was that led to the first Afghan war of 1839, so fatal in its issue. This it is that has ever since led to successive annexations or protectorates in northern territory to act as a buffer between Russia and England. Of late years especially, British fear of Russian invasion of Hindostan has dominated all Anglo-Indian literature. The question ever was, not 'Is Russia formidable?' but 'Can we check her?' That she was our most formidable enemy no one doubted. In fact, Russia was the only real danger ahead. This apprehension, universal throughout the British Empire, was kept alive and daily increased by highly colored descriptions of Russia's resistless march of conquest through Central Asia. Unstinted praise was lavished on the splendid organization of the Tsar's army. Contrasts were drawn between the British government's blundering interference with Asiatics and the Muscovite diplomacy winning allegiance in virtue of a common Asiatic origin. Gloomy indeed were the forecasts of England's wisest sons and doughtiest defenders. And now all this imaginary fabric clatters to the ground. The colossus of the North has proved to be a giant with feet of clay. Not only he cannot advance but he cannot hold his own against a power whose audacity in attacking him single-handed was, but sixteen months ago, deemed ridiculous. Whatever internal dangers may threaten British rule in India, the spectre of Russian invasion is laid for ever.

When we published, the week before last, Father Bonnard's long delayed but most interesting strictures on a Methodist missionary report, we little thought he would so soon be among us on a short business visit. We are happy to learn that our appeal for contributions to his own successful evangelization of the Cross Lake Indians brought him timely pecuniary assistance, and we now repeat that appeal in order that many other generous souls may contribute their mite to the conversion of the heathen. Contributions may be addressed to Rev. Stephen (or Etienne) Bonnard, O.M.I., Cross Lake, Norway House, Keewatin Territory; but, as Norway House post office has no money order facilities, perhaps some would prefer to confide their aims to Very Rev. Father Magnan, O.M.I., (to be forwarded to Father Bonnard at Cross Lake), St. Mary's Presbytery, Winnipeg.

During his short stay here the venerable Cross Lake missionary revealed to us with admirable humility, the secret of his astonishing success in converting the Indians of that district. He had often marvelled within himself what could be the cause of so many sincere conversions, more than he had ever obtained in so short a time among the Indians of the far north, and yet these latter, uncontaminated by heresy, are generally easier to convert than Indians like those at Cross Lake, whose untutored minds had been poisoned by heretical preachers. The mystery was solved quite lately. A fervent Carmelite nun, from his own native town of Mende, in France, wrote to him that, being in the habit of offering up her prayers and penances for the conversion of the heathen in various parts of the globe, she had been moved, during the last two or three years, to concentrate this prayerful offering upon his mission at Cross Lake. Unaware of this powerful intercession, the humble missionary was casting about for some sufficient

reason of his success, since he could find none in his own unworthiness, when lo and behold! all becomes clear as day. That holy Carmelite nun has proved once again that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

At a meeting of the council of the University of Manitoba last week all the members admitted that the English of our matriculants was wretched, especially their spelling, grammar and composition, and yet much time was supposed to be devoted to the study of the English Language. Where was the remedy? Archbishop Matheson said our school and college boys learned a great deal about English, but very little English. They read long histories of literature and learned criticisms of Shakespearean plays, but they learned not to speak or write their own language. Mr. Ashdown complained bitterly of the large amount of home work imposed upon his children; they were overworked and consequently their minds could assimilate nothing. Father Drummond concurred in this complaint of overwork and too voluminous text-books. But he thought there was another and deeper reason for the pupil's ignorance of their own language viz., the total absence of translation. A child that learns no other language than English never can know English perfectly. Nothing tests one's knowledge of the meaning of words like translation. If the habit of translation is not in the pupil it must at least be found in those who have trained that pupil's teacher. This is the case in the British Isles, where all school-teachers are more or less influenced by college or university men. There traditions of culture flow, as they ought, from the head downwards. Here the reverse process is attempted, according to the favorite popular recipe: Let the tail wag the dog. The moving spirits of our public school system would scorn any tradition from above. They have made themselves. Why should they not make others? True, at one stage of their mature lives they secured a university degree, as a useful decoy, by doing a very small amount of Latin translation; but that amount was so small that translation never became a habit with them, and so they fail to appreciate its benefits. Instead of multiplying exercises on shades of meaning and the proper use of words they increase the quantity of the reading matter. There never was a more egregious blunder. The pupil skims over everything and learns nothing well. Moreover, the teachers trained in this topsy-turvy method, because they never learnt their language from the good usage of gentlemen, seldom use it properly themselves, but prefer to oscillate between pedantic insistence on rules and occasional outbursts of slang. Such teachers, having no fixed standards of excellence, and being always swayed by the ignorant and superficial public opinion of the half educated masses, will never have the courage to make the reforms which are absolutely necessary if we ever hope to see our children attain the level of English spelling and grammar so universal in past generations. These reforms would consist, first, in a ruthless cutting down of subjects; secondly, in an equally ruthless cutting down of texts, keeping none but the masterpieces, even if one has to use anthologies; thirdly, applying to those choice English texts the methods of minute analysis, grammatical, rhetorical and logical, employed by the best classical teachers, resuming the neglected cultivation of the memory of words, preferring twenty lines thoroughly taught to two hundred lines read at a gallop; and finally, raising the standard of pass work by insisting on details, such as penmanship, spelling and the wording of the candidate's answers. All-round thoroughness and accuracy in everything are the only effectual remedies to the slipshod pertness of our young sciolists, and these remedies must be applied in the early training of school boys and girls. Later on, when once they are well grounded, they may safely indulge in more copious reading of the English classics. But to continue the present pretentious system of voluminous texts for collegiate and matricula-

tion examinations, and at the same time to inveigh against the slovenly English of the candidates is either to be extremely inconsistent and illogical or to entertain the illusory hope that children's minds are indefinitely expandible.

The Pope's kindly forethought was made manifest in connection with the recent amputation of the Jesuit General's right arm. The Holy Father was continually inquiring about him. Once he said to two Jesuits Fathers that they must pray hard that Father General's life might be saved, adding: "Fr. General is a man of extraordinary ability and great sanctity. His judgments are always correct, and he never makes a mistake." When the Pope heard of the amputation, he was greatly distressed, he sent blessing after blessing, and said, without being asked, that there would be no difficulty about allowing Fr. General to say Mass, and that, for the present, he gave him leave to receive Holy Communion every morning without fasting. But the most astonishing act of thoughtfulness was this. A fortnight after the amputation Pius X. went through all the ceremonies of the Mass with his left hand, to see how Fr. General could manage them. No wonder all those who come in contact with Pius X. love him.

For the past six months Miss Martha S. Bensley has been publishing in Everybody's Magazine her experiences as a nursery governess, the people with whom she fulfilled her generally arduous duties being described under assumed names. Most of her experiences show how lamentable is the home training or rather the absence of home training in the case of the majority of well to do families in the United States. Miss Bensley's own observations are for the most part singularly judicious, though she is occasionally too views and though she always lacks the finely balanced sanity of a Catholic outlook. In the June number she describes a family that are, apart from religion, of which they seem to have nothing but the husks, almost perfect. "If there were any adverse criticism due Mr. and Mrs. Burton from the community, it was that they had not four children instead of two." Six or ten would be still better. The girl was nine, the boy seven. "The mother did not want them to be too adult in manner. The following incident illustrates her anxiety to prevent them from becoming self-conscious. Mildred could easily memorize, and Mr. Burton's sister, who had studied elocution, gave the little girl some instruction from time to time, so that she really recited very well. Several times she had, with her mother's consent, spoken at church entertainments and at school. One day the superintendent of the Sunday school called to see if she would repeat some verses at a special service the next week and the mother called her in from the grass-plot to talk it over. After the gentleman had gone, the girl turned to her mother and said:

"Mamma, why do they always ask ME to recite?"

"Mrs. Burton looked at Mildred thoughtfully, and, after a pause, replied:

"Perhaps it is because your aunt has been so good to you and taught you to speak distinctly, so that people can understand; but they are not likely to do it again."

"We will stop this business of reciting in public right here," she said later to me; "I will not have her grow into a self-conscious little pig." And Miss Mildred's public elocutionary performances were discontinued."

We know several silly mothers who positively relish their girls and boys growing up into self-conscious little pigs. Such mothers will never read Miss Bensley's very instructive experiences; but others, who have more sense, could learn much from the hints thrown off so naturally by this shrewd and devoted teacher. Her general conclusions are promised for the July number, due about the 20th of this month. The whole series would form a valuable manual for newly married people.

Sunday cars for Winnipeg are within sight, the city council having passed a

motion in their favor; but the Protestant ministers, going on the false principle that a good thing must be prevented because it may be abused, are agitating against that humane and church filling measure. The labor party, too, sacrificing the general advantage of their own class to a mistaken zeal for the street car employees, are also putting spokes in the wheel of progress, as if Sunday shifts might not easily be arranged so that no one need miss going to church at least once on the Lord's Day.

Here are a couple of recent anecdotes illustrating Pius X.'s playful geniality and thoughtful kindness. Lady Edmund Talbot, when she had an audience of the Holy Father, toward the end of April, told the Pope about a brass crucifix which the late Cardinal Vaughan had worn on his breast for fifty years. One day when the Cardinal was approaching his end, Lady Edmund begged to be allowed to kiss his crucifix, and immediately after asked that it might pass to her when he was gone. The Cardinal made the promise. But when she went to claim her legacy she was informed that it had already been taken away by Father Bernard Vaughan, brother of the late Cardinal, and just here Pius X. interrupted her: "Si sa," he remarked, nodding his head, "si sa, quel padre Vaughan piglia tutto." (Of course, of course, that Father Vaughan takes everything.) His Holiness was alluding to the way in which the celebrated Jesuit recently relieved him of a zucchetto (skull-cap), a handkerchief and other objects too numerous to mention. However, Lady Edmund eventually recovered her crucifix and now she presented it to the Pope, asking as a special privilege that it might be blessed and indulged by Pius X., as it had been formerly by Gregory XVI., Pius IX. and Leo XIII. The Holy Father graciously granted an indulgence of three hundred days 'toties quoties' to all who kissed it.

Clerical News

His Grace, the Archbishop of St. Boniface will be absent for several weeks performing the official visitation of his diocese.

Rev. Father Molurier has been appointed curate of the cathedral in succession to Rev. Father Camirand who has become pastor of Ile des Chenes.

Rev. Father Bonnard, O.M.I., who came here last week from Cross Lake, 70 miles northwest from Norway House, returned north on Friday, the 9th inst.

Rev. Father Jolys, of St. Pierre, was here on Tuesday to witness the profession as a Grey Nun, of one of his parishioners. He reports the crop prospects as very good.

A letter from Rome to the Jesuit Fathers of St. Boniface College, under date of May 17, says that the Very Reverend Father General is doing wonderfully well. At that date he had already said Mass on four consecutive days. There is at present no sign of the return of the cancer, but it will be several months before all cause of anxiety will have disappeared. All the priests in the Society of Jesus have been requested to offer up, for their General's complete recovery, the Mass they say on nine successive first Fridays, beginning with the first Friday of June.

That three brothers should in succession become bishops of their native diocese, and afterwards in succession be raised to the Archiepiscopal See of their province and Primate See of their native town, is a most remarkable family record, and is probably unique in the history of the Catholic Church in any country. Such has been the record of the three brothers, Hugh, Bernard and Roche McMahon. They were bishops in succession of their native diocese of Clogher, in Ulster, and Archbishops of Armagh, the Primate See of Ireland, whose first occupant was St. Patrick.