

The Catholic Weekly Review.

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CANADA

Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari; et quæ sunt Dei, Deo.—Matt 22: 21.

Vol V

Toronto, Saturday, Aug. 29, 1891.

No 29

THE HOLY COAT OF TREVES.

From the London Universe.

THE Protestant and infidel press are at this moment busy over the pilgrims who are about to visit Treves, and also over what they will see and what they will do when they get there.

The heretical scenery has been thoroughly patched up, and all the old ricketty fixings cobbled together for the purpose of reproduction.

The impiety, the scoffing, and the inventions of 1844 will be repeated in 1891, though the blaspheming will perhaps be coarser and the wit more feeble and more dull, for the invention of your habitual mocker does not improve with age.

We have scarcely any time at present to waste upon the wicked trash of puzzle headed penny-a-liners, who, of course, find their interest in putting together as much as they can upon a subject which they know will be sure to set Protestantism staring with eyes and mouth wide open.

However, we will stop an instant to notice that the lie which appeared in the *Standard* as to the sacristan making difficulties when its correspondent wished to see the Holy Coat has been repeated in the *Rock*, and will probably do service in all the journals of the same intellectual calibre throughout the country.

The *Standard* quotes in depreciation of the evidence in support of the relic the phrase of Gibbon, "Abulfargius vouches for Abulfeda, but who will vouch for Abulfargius?"

The quotation has not the least applicability in the present instance, but what does that signify when shallow smartness and not truth is what is most desired in the first place?

We venture to think, however, that this same sort of reasoning is little short of conclusive against this offending journal itself. For instance, if we put it thus:

The *Standard* vouches for its Berlin correspondent, but who will vouch for the *Standard*!

And now to brush aside all these water flies, and to do our best to forget them, while we bestow our attention upon a subject for which they are neither intellectually nor morally ready.

The towns of Treves and Argenteuil possess each of them a tunic which tradition maintains was worn by our Blessed Lord.

Minute investigations made some thirty years ago proved that each of these garments may well be held in veneration as having belonged to Christ.

It is certain that the long robe preserved and venerated at Treves is not similar in make to that at Argenteuil.

The former was the first to be brought to Europe, being sent by St. Helena to Agritius, Bishop of Treves, then one of the first cities of the empire, and the place of residence of the Western Emperors until the end of the fourth century.

Tradition from the earliest times, and written evidence from the eleventh century, which records the fact of the constancy of the tradition, agree as to the authenticity of this relic.

Professor Marx, at the request of the Archbishop of Treves, published a voluminous work containing the history of the holy robe, in which he explains the absence of ancient documents in regard to it by the fact that formerly in the Western Church it was not usual to transfer relics, or even to touch them, but that, as a rule, they were carefully hidden up.

He alludes, however, to a diptych in ivory—a work of the period known as the "decline"—which represents the introduction of this relic into Treves and its reception by St. Helena.

In the year 1196 the Archbishop John, during some repairs in the cathedral, discovered the casket containing the Holy Coat. He caused it to be placed under the high altar, where it remained until 1512. During the French and German wars it was

carefully hidden at Ehrenbreitstein and elsewhere, and finally was restored to Treves in 1810.

At that date more than 200,000 pilgrims flocked to the city, and in 1844, when it was again exposed to the veneration of the faithful, the number of pilgrims exceeded a million.

The following are the chief particulars relating to the second robe—that preserved at Argenteuil.

St. Gregory of Tours (sixth century) tells us that this tunic was carried to a city of Galatia, a province of Asia Minor. It was there placed in the Basilica of the Archangels. From thence it was carried to Jaffa, when the Persian Monarch invaded Armenia, destroying all the churches.

St. Gregory received these details from a Bishop, Simeon, who came to Tours in the year 591.

Three years later the relic was carried with much solemnity to Jerusalem by the three patriarchs—Thomas of Jerusalem, John of Constantinople, and Gregory of Antioch. Twenty years afterwards it was borne off to Persia, together with the true cross, by Chosroes II. (614).

Heraclius recovered it, and in 627 transferred it first to Constantinople, then to Jerusalem, where, fearing a further profanation, he at length sent it once more to Constantinople.

The Empress Irene, on the occasion of sending some rich presents to Charlemagne, enclosed amongst them the Holy Tunic.

The Emperor, who had a sister and niece in the convent at Argenteuil (a dependency of the Abbey of St. Denis) resolved to enrich this religious house with the treasure sent him from the East. The relic was accordingly translated with all solemnity to Argenteuil in August, 800.

We may observe here that Charlemagne, so far from being a weak, credulous character, more than once in his *capitularies* is found forbidding the veneration of the relics of martyrs which were doubtful (Gaerin.)

In 857, at the Norman invasion, the convent was deserted by the nuns, who took the precaution to conceal the relic within the wall of their chapel.

It was recovered in 1156, and the writings attesting its authenticity and detailing its history were verified by Louis VII., the clergy, and the chief civil authorities. In 1435 the herald of Alphonse, King of Arragon, wrote: "I have seen the garment which is preserved at Argenteuil, a place near Paris."

In 1529 this holy relic was the object of a public solemnity described by Dom Michael Felibren. In 1680 Mary of Lorraine presented a silver-gilt casket covered with precious stones, in which the relic was enclosed.

In 1854, at the command of Pius IX., the cure of Argenteuil carried to Rome a small portion of this relic (about fifteen centimetres).

Both Treves and Argenteuil possess the garments worn by our Blessed Lord—the one the long, outside robe woven of fine linen; the other the tunic without seam woven of camel's hair. Here we must pause for the present.

A document going by the name of the diploma of Pope Sylvester, is discussed by all writers on the relic. In it Pope Sylvester (314-335) confers on the Archbishop of Treves ecclesiastical pre-eminence over the Gauls and Germans, "in honor of this city being the home of Empress Helena, who enriched its church by precious relics, amongst them the *tunica* of our Lord." Now, no original of such a document is known to exist, but it is mentioned in the above named *Gesta Trevirorum* about the year 1100, and what there is given as a verbatim copy of the diploma, is now taken by the best authorities as being written by one Bishop Valasian, who occupied the See of Treves in the 11th century, and as giving the original, not word for word, but only in substance. This being so, it would be a valuable proof that in the fifth century it was a general tradition that the *tunica* was at Treves.