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## THE CATHOLIC.

Hamilton, G. D.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21.

TO

### AGENTS AND SUBSCRIBERS.

We begin to fear in earnest that we shall be forced to discontinue our paper for want of adequate support; and then our enemies may say of us, uncontradicted, whatever they please. Is it possible that the Catholics in all the Canadas, and, except Nova Scotia, in all America, are not able to save from sinking the only English paper in this Province edited in defence of their so much calumniated religion? Had we the means ourselves of keeping it afloat, we would not begrudge the so necessary and meritorious outlay, without taxing the careless, niggard, or unwilling portion of our people. But with all we can command and receive, we find ourselves greatly in arrears of payment for printing, paper, &c., and we are under the disagreeable necessity of warning our reverend and other agents, that if more assistance cannot be afforded us, than what we receive at present, we must, however reluctantly, give up the concern. Numbers of our subscribers, pleading poverty, have withdrawn their names from our list; and no new names appear to be forthcoming. We had been led to believe, indeed we had flattering promises made us by several of our reverend friends, that increasing numbers would be added to our list. But where are they? Have their endeavours proved unavailing with their flocks to strengthen and uphold our righteous cause? Our enemies and calumniators may now shout victory without fighting, should we be forced to beat our retreat for want of what with them is abounding, the common, more indeed the promised portion of worldlings, than of "the children of light." We covet it not for our own personal advantage, nor otherwise than as the Saviour exhorts us, "to make with it for ourselves friends, who when we fail, may some day receive us into everlasting dwellings."

### MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS.

Monasteries and Convents are as ancient as Catholicity; they are the sweet and halcyon retreats, where the wounded of the flock may flee for repose—may indulge in the luxury of silence, and the peaceful fruition of solitude—a solitude with God. When Christianity first revealed her beauty in the Holy Land, diffusing herself throughout all Asia, the zeal of the catechumen knew no limit. The soul became alienated from earth, and allied to Heaven; and so impressed were the zealous Christians, of those days of sanctity, that the light of faith would be extinguished in the great flood of Pagan life, that they chose nature for their shield, and solitude for their protector. Oft has the saintly anchorite celebrated the Christian rites amid the hecatombs of the Egyp-

tian Necropolis, or beneath the shadow of some verdant mount, beyond the confines of the Memphian city.... When the devastating sword of the Pagan would sweep the budding mind of Christianity from earth, leaving not a solitary representative of the religion of Jesus, a fervid recluse would appear from some oasis of the Libyan sands, and sow again the precious seed. Thus, in the sacred retirements of a religious life, was always found a blooming branch of the Christian tree, which, returning from its shade, would plant its root in the common soil, spread out its foliage, and where religion had not a solitary bloom remaining, she would again appear in all the plenitude of her hallowed beauty. The anchorite was the primitive ascetic. He reared his monastery upon the bright spots of the desert. Nature was then the only champion of revealed revelation; for the cross was the mockery of man and the signal of extermination. But when the zeal of the apostles had spread the new faith throughout the world, until imperial Rome became its metropolis, the gothic temple upraised, the gilded cross glittered in the sunbeam, and the monk and the nun offered up their orisons and chanted their anthems in the monastic cell. Profound, indeed, was the bliss of this retirement. Isolated from the sinfulness of the world, the mind would imbibe the purest thought, and reflect but to luxuriate in visions of heaven. Within the consecrated walls was ever heard the prayer of the suppliant, or the praise of the Deity by the "pure of heart." The matin bell would wake the solitaries from their peaceful slumbers, and soon assemble in the monastic chapel, which even in its littleness wore an impressive grandeur, homage to the Creator would be the first act of the soul. The chapel was also the tomb of the departed, and the echo of the hollow aisles spoke to the heart as the voice of the dead; banishing all thoughts of earth and its mockeries, investing the spirit with an appropriate solemnity, and telling with a most impressive eloquence, that the universe, with all its gay and animated life, was sadly mutable. Yes, 'twas a voice from the coffined ashes beneath; humbling was the tale it told to the heart. The morning prayer ended, a ramble among the beautiful parterres of the garden, would offer a thousand themes for pious reflection, and the blushing rose, or the modest lily, which for the world would have no claim but their fragrance, was to the pious recluse an evidence of the power of the God-head. The requisite and fragile tendril, with its almost imperceptible veins, was a proof of heavenly perfection, and if the gay and beautiful in their loves expressed the hearts emotion in the language of flowers, this chaste and unborn jewelry of earth, was to the monk and nun a vernal lexicon of virtue. Oh! surely sainted must have been the dwellers of these pious haunts, where all was God, and his soulless works were eulogists of his glory! The day was consecrated to charity; visitation of the sick, the dying and the poor. The humble monk would bear to the soul its immortal sustenance, and to the body its corporal wants. And kind-

ness would infuse an ethereal sweetness into every act, the heart of the dying would lose its obduracy in gratitude, and where sin had built its throne upon the ruins of virtue, the incarnate Jesus would find a fitting temple.

Nor was the nun less Heavenly in her occupation. The orphan would know a mother's gentleness, care and instruction; the poor would know a love and assiduity which the gold of the affluent could not purchase; and expiring nature would receive the blissful soothing of an angel, ere yet in Heaven. There would earthly beauty shine in its native sphere; for, the cheek, in its pale transparence or blushing hue, the eye in its blue or dark brilliance, were gifts of God to guide to Heaven. There does beauty receive a ray from the angels; it glows with the expression of religious intellect; and with the silent pathos of a holy heart.

Monastic institutions are the grafted branches of Catholic religion; they are Catholic in their deep and sincere piety, in their charity and in their blissful solitude.

In modern times they were not so numerous; they were peculiar in their number and their excellence to the bright days of the church, when christendom knew but one faith. When the gilded cross threw back the sunbeams from every spire, and the same hosanna rose to Heaven from every christian heart. But, yet, we possess them, though not in such plenitudes as did our fathers; therefore should they by us be cherished. They are the exhaustless fountains of charity, gentleness and love; they are the store-house where is garnered the purest piety, and virtue, which would shed a lustre on the seraphim; for within their precincts, there is no lure, no taint for the heart. All things are made to yield their tribute of pious reflection; and from the smallest bud, though arrayed in thorns, they will extract, with the dexterity of the bee, the sweets of Heaven. Let us, Catholics, upraise them in our pilgrimage, until those treasures of the best created nobleness, cultured intellect arrayed in the divinity of religion, shall stud the earth like myriad jewels, crowned with the brilliance of the sacred cross, and earth seems but a reflection of the starry heavens.

### JAMES II AND DISSENTERS.

Among the addresses presented to the king on his accession came one from the Society of Friends. "We are told," they said, "that thou art not of the persuasion of the church of England, no more than we; wherefore we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself." The penal laws which had been fabricated by the church and aristocracy during the previous reign permitted liberty of worship to neither. By numerous acts of parliament, all Quakers, Papists, and Non-conformists of every hue were made criminals, and the magistracy were charged to hunt them out and drag them to the felon's bar. It stands recorded on the highest authority of the time—that of William Penn—that from the "blessed restoration" of Charles II. to the declaration in favour of liberty

of conscience by James in 1687, fifteen thousand families had been brought to ruin, and five thousand individuals had perished in the dungeon, for accusations relative exclusively to points of conscience before God. (1)

Was it strange that James should exercise the power, which he undoubtedly believed himself lawfully to possess, of dispensing with these inhuman laws? Was he more or less than man, that having the means of sheltering his persecuted fellow-churchmen, he should not use them? He may have been a bigot in heart, he may have been a despot in design he may have done, as doubtless he did, many unjust and arbitrary things; but let him be judged justly; let it be remembered that his dispensing edicts put a stop to this brutal havoc, which the high church and aristocracy had carried on for five and twenty years, and which when they had dethroned James, they recommenced under "the faithful Willeam." They viewed the progress of toleration with dismay. Numbers whom fear had for a long time departed from attending public worship in the way that their consciences approved, or whom it had induced to conform to the established ritual availed themselves of this new liberty. Evelyn, a zealous churchman, saw "a wonderful concourse of people at the Dissenters' meeting house at Deptford, and the church exceeding thin; what this will end in God only knows." (2)

By the dissenters and Catholics these merciful measures were received with unbounded joy. "As our sufferings would have moved stones to compassion, so should we be harder than stones if we were not moved to gratitude." (3) To many of them the dispensing power was thoroughly odious, it is true. They had been taught to associate prerogative with all that was sanguinary and tyrannical; and they could not forget that if royalty at its whim could open the gates of their prison-house to-day, it might of its caprice close them again to-morrow. We may even suppose that not a few of the Dissenters might have been persuaded to wait for a more constitutional enfranchisement, had any reasonable hope of such appeared, rather than accept so dangerous a boon from the absolute hand of the King. But the men who were now leagued in implacable hostility to James were the same who had forged the chains of the non-conformists after the restoration, and who had answered every cry for mercy by adding weight thereto. No man believed their feelings changed. James was sincerely anxious to obtain some modification of the penal laws from parliament. He wearied himself in personal argument with the men of leading influence, to try and move their intolerant resolves, but without effect. Even the concurrence of his treacherous son-in-law in the repeal of the test act, had been made the object of reiterated solicitation, but all to no purpose. William

(1) See "Good Advice, &c." quoted by Wallace Hist. viii. p. 79.

(2) Penn's Diary; 10 April, 1687.—iii. 228.

(3) Penn's Speech on behalf of the Quakers to the King.—Somers Tracts.—ix. 34.