

A PASTORAL LETTER.

READ IN ALL THE CHURCHES IN THE CITY.

On the Subject of the Destruction of the Villa Maria Convent and Asking a Generous Assistance in the Rebuilding of that Institution.

On Sunday last, in all the Churches of the Archdiocese, a pastoral letter was read from Mgr. Fabre, calling the attention of the faithful to the great catastrophe which has fallen upon the Congregation of Notre Dame by the destruction by fire of the Mother House of the Order at Villa Maria. His Grace feelingly refers to the great trials which are sent him in the decline of his episcopal career, and all Catholics to give according to their means to assist the Order in restoring the mother house. He recalls the fact that the remains of the venerable Sister Bourgeois, the foundress, have been saved, and hopes that the day is not far distant when they may be venerated. He invites all parish priests to forward what they can in effects and money to the convent on St. Jean Baptiste street. The Congregation to-day numbers 1,040 professed nuns, 79 novices and thirty postulantes. The Order has 95 establishments in the various Canadian provinces and 11 in the United States. Most of these convents belong to the episcopal corporations of fabriques of the different places where they are situated. The number of pupils in the Institute is 24,336, half of whom are educated gratuitously. The collection is to be taken up in most of the churches on Sunday next.

The following is a portion of the text of that admirable letter:

"Scarcely three years ago, a fearful catastrophe cast consternation and mourning over the whole country; the St. Jean de Dieu Asylum had become, in a few hours, a prey to the flames. At the sunset of our career it has pleased God to reserve for us, amongst others, a none the less painful trial. The Mother House of the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame is to-day a mere heap of ruins. Despite the most persistent efforts, the most active assistance, and the heroic devotedness of the firemen, the fire swept from top to bottom that immense building, the product of two long centuries of privations and sacrifices.

"The disaster is a complete one; the material loss is enormous, and the insurance only covers a very small portion. The autograph writings of the Venerable Mother Bourgeois, the biographies of her first companions, the annals and the greater part of the archives, are all destroyed. Seated upon the ruins of that beloved home, of that magnificent temple raised to the glory of God, the good nuns, with hearts bowed in submission, can only repeat with Job stricken in his goods and the affections of all dear to him: 'The Lord gaveth me all, the Lord took all from me, blessed be the name of the Lord.'

"The ways of Providence, dearly beloved brethren, are truly impenetrable. God governs the worlds as He sees fit, and it would be temerity on our part to try and learn the object of certain events which often astonish and scandalize the weak, please the wicked, and cause the unbelieving to smile. But one thing remains certain, that in all His power and wisdom, God knows how to draw from all that happens the diffusion of His glory and the good of His elect: *omnia propter electos*. What matters it to Him, the ruin of individuals, of families, of institutions, even of races, provided His reign comes, His will is fulfilled, and His name is blessed and sanctified? What matters the sufferings, the tears, the sorrows with which earth is filled, if souls can find in any of them a means of conversion, expiation, purification and salvation?

"And, such, dearly beloved brethren, is one of the objects taught by the mercy of God in the public calamities even as in individual trials and punishments. To see in them only an accidental effect of blind causes, or a freak of nature, is to break away from the general belief of the universal race of man, it is to belie every Christian tradition, it is depriving at once the liberty of God and the prayers of man of a domain in which it is their right to exist."—Words of Mgr. Pie.

"Once having admitted the intervention of God in the affairs of this world,

let us be careful not to think that He strikes only to punish, and that He only grants temporal prosperity to those He loves. History shows on the contrary, the just often stricken with afflictions and misery, while sinners divided the honors, dignities and riches of earth. In all that there is nothing to shake our faith; it suffices that we know that God has so arranged everything for our submission and not that we may be scandalized. Moreover, do we not know that this unequal division is the undoubted evidence of another life beyond the present one, of other goods to be hoped for? Without that, said Guillaume of Paris, 'where would be God's wisdom and goodness toward the elect? Without that we might say that the just are senseless and the impious are the real sages.' 'Do not be troubled,' says St. Augustine, 'the impious has his time, which is very short, but you will have yours, which shall be eternal.'

His Grace, after pointing out the great law of expiation whereby the just are punished to appease the anger of God on account of the sins of the wicked, gives the examples of the innocent Able and of our Saviour Himself. At times whole nations have fallen beneath the stroke of Divine justice on account of the public crimes of the people. He then continues:

"We do not wish, Dearly Beloved Brethren, to fathom the intentions of Providence in regard to these recent disasters. We leave to your faith the comprehension of their lessons. Only they, who believe that they have merited and drawn upon their brethren the effects of God's wrath, should bend, repent, and beg with humility that any fresh calamities may be averted.

"God, who measures the wind for the shorn sheep, saw proper, in the midst of a cruel trial, to conserve for us some great consolations. The precious remains of the venerable Marguerite Bourgeois were untouched by the flames, and the wooden cross, planted on that blessed grave, has remained uninjured amidst ruins and fire. The possession of those dear relics, which we hope the Church will yet permit us to kiss with love and venerate with joy, shall be for the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame a deep source of strength and encouragement.

"Moreover, God has already visibly poured into the souls of His servants a superabundance of grace and courage, and the diocese has been edified by their perfect submission to the Divine will, their spirit of faith, their boundless confidence in Him, who, after having sent the fires of trial to overthrow, can fan the flames of charity to reconstruct, after having taken all can return all. They have shown how sorrows are to be borne, and how in them are to be found a means of practical faith, of greater hope, of purified intentions, and of more absolute and supernatural devotion to duty.

"None-the-less admirable was the example of charity given by the other communities. One would imagine they were the members of the same family, stricken with the same afflictions, and placing at the feet of the same cross their prayers and tears. In fine, numerous and touching evidences of sympathy come from all parts of the diocese and of Canada. We heartily rejoice, Our Dear Brethren, We thank God, and We hope, that assisted with your powerful aid and your generous alms, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame may soon be able to raise from the ruins of the fire their institution.

"With that object in view, We ask the Pastors to kindly organize in their respective parishes, either a collection in the church, or voluntary subscriptions, also to receive whatever may be offered in the way of sheets, blankets, clothing etc., and to send the same to the former Mother House, on St. Jean Baptiste street.

"Give Our Dear Brethren, give that God may bless you and your families; give that your sins may be forgiven, give, and God who does not leave unrewarded a glass of water given in His name, will return you a hundred-fold, even here below, what you have taken from a fortune of which He is master and which He could snatch from you to-morrow."

The letter closes with the history of the Congregation and that of Villa Maria; both of which we published a few weeks ago in connection with the exhibit sent by the Sisters to Chicago.

Love is best known by what it suffers,

HOME RULE HOPES.

New Life Infused Into the Proceedings by Mr. Gladstone.

London, July 3.—New life has been put into the Home Rule campaign by Mr. Gladstone's rather long delayed attack upon his designing enemies. New heart has been put into the Irish and Liberal ranks by a new plan of aggression and there is now a reasonable prospect of turning the measure out of the House in some shape about the end of the summer. The opposition to the new closure rule, while bitter, has had little logical basis and the stories are just now thoroughly discomfited, in shape contrast to the almost triumphant attitude of a week ago. Some government majorities have been small this week and the opposition of the handful of Parnellites if insisted upon will cut the margin down to a small figure, but Mr. Gladstone is thoroughly confident that he will send the bill to the house of lords in due course.

There is some danger of accidents, as was learned this week. A division was called on an amendment which Gladstone opposed. The members flocked in when the Liberal whip suddenly rushed to the treasury branches, with the result a moment later that the amendment was quietly accepted by the Government. It had become a little lax in attendance and a vote might have shown the Government defeated. The desperate condition in which the Government has been placed by Unionist obstruction and Chairman Mellor's incapacity by Mr. Gladstone's announcement that summary action could be no longer deferred. The resolution intended to hasten the progress of the Home Rule bill has come too late to satisfy all the Gladstonians, but not too late to prevent the catastrophe which threatened the bill last week. Liberals and Radicals have regained their courage and the Irish members, although still troubling the government with their domestic bickering, have suppressed temporarily their mutinous protests.

The Tories are writhing in unreasonable exasperation under Mr. Gladstone's closure resolution. Many of them demanded at first that the unionist leaders withdraw from further debate on the bill in committee and leave the government free hand to do as it might please. The expediency of this course of action was discussed earnestly in Conservative circles last evening. As a dramatic and sensational form of protest it found not a few supporters among the ultra-Conservative members. It was rejected, however, by Joseph Chamberlain, whose judgement is accepted now as virtually beyond appeal. Mr. Chamberlain advised that no change of tactics be made by the unionists. They should act, he said, in utter disregard of Mr. Gladstone's proposal. They should proceed in the case of each section of the bill as if no vote had been taken and should allow the government to closure every stage of the debate, whether the clause in question had been discussed or not. Mr. Chamberlain's plan has been approved by the other unionist leaders. Their object obviously is to proclaim to the country that clauses have been forced through without debate, and to exploit this so-called "Gladstonean tyranny," as an irritant among the British voters.

The decrease of the Government majority to twenty-six or twenty-eight in recent divisions of the House has provoked Tory comments to the effect that the Government is nearing its end. The Ministerialists, however, are not apprehensive. The decrease has been due merely to passing events, which have necessitated the absence of a dozen or more Gladstonians from the house. The near prospect of a split in the Irish party on the financial clause is a much more serious matter. From this source will come the most considerable obstacle, that has yet been laid in Mr. Gladstone's path. The amendments proposed by John Redmond, leader of the Parnellites, raise directly the issue: No home rule unless Ireland control her own finances. John Clancy, Parnellite, will offer an amendment that Ireland's contribution to the imperial exchequer shall be one-fourth of her general revenue, instead of one-third, as proposed by Mr. Gladstone. Timothy Harrington, Parnellite will propose that an Anglo-Irish commission be appointed to determine the size of Ireland's just contribution.

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There seems to be little doubt that the Parnellites will accomplish their purpose if the concessions demanded by them be not granted, they will be ready to bolt to the unionists. They would carry nine votes and thus made a difference of eighteen in divisions. Such a loss the government could not stand. Mr. Gladstone must save himself by yielding again. The moment seems to be near when John Redmond with his nine votes will be master of the parliamentary situation. His dictation will hardly be accepted with pleasure by the Liberals and Radicals, and may be the cause of difficulties more embarrassing than any before experience.

Replying to a question asked in the Commons to-day by Mr. John Redmond, (Parnellite), Mr. Gladstone intimated that it was the intention of the Government to appoint a joint commission to enquire into the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland. Mr. Gladstone added that the sittings of the commission would not begin until the excitement in connection with the passage of the Home Rule Bill had subsided.

ENGLISH COLLEGE COURSES.

(The writer of the following letter will notice that by our editorial on this subject we give credit to St. Laurent College in the matter. The editorial was written on Saturday and we received the following on Monday, which we publish with pleasure.—ED. T. W.)

To the Editor of THE TRUE WITNESS:

SIR,—In the last issue of THE TRUE WITNESS, your correspondent "Common Sense" is decidedly in error when he states that there is no Catholic classical college in the Province of Quebec, where the students can obtain a thorough knowledge of English. To this sweeping statement, there is, at least, one exception; namely, St. Laurent College, which is about five miles from Montreal. Here, for many years, have been, and are, at present, two courses—commercial and classical—in which instruction in the ordinary English branches, as well as in Latin, Greek, Mathematics, etc., is imparted entirely in the English language. The commercial course consists of five (5) classes, the classical of seven. The professor of each class claims English as his mother-tongue and as the language of his education. This would easily be surmised by a perusal of the names of the members of the Faculty of the College-catalogue of the present year. Parallel with these English courses, and, as regards instruction, entirely separate from them, are two similar courses as distinctively French.

To verify these statements, I take pleasure in mailing you, Sir, the catalogue of the scholastic year just ended, in which you will see the list of the Faculty, the programme of studies, and the prize lists of the English courses. "Common Sense," too, may procure a copy of the same on application. Yours, respectfully,

J. McG.

Catholic Sailors' Concert.

The second weekly concert, which was held last Thursday night at the Catholic Sailors' Club, on St. Paul street, was a great success, the hall being well filled long before Mr. P. J. Gordon took the chair. There was a very large muster of sailors, representatives being present from nearly every ship in port, and the president and the committee heartily welcomed them. As the club becomes more known amongst the sailors in every section of the globe, and the sailor lads realize what a boon such a club is to them, they will soon rally around it and make it one of the most prominent institutions in the Dominion. The programme gone through last Thursday night was an attractive one and was greatly appreciated. Much credit is due to Prof. Fowler and the members of St. Patrick's choir for the grand selection of vocal music with which they favored the visitors. Mr. M. O. Hare, of the Vancouver, made a few remarks for the benefit of the club, which were well received. The concert closed with a hymn, "O, Jesus Saviour of My Soul," which all present joined in singing.

Rev. Darius Hubert, S. J., died at his home in Macon, Ga., on Wednesday of last week. Father Hubert was the chaplain of the Louisiana troops in the Army of Northern Virginia during the war, and was one of the most widely known priests in the South.