

The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname.)—St. Pacian, 4th Century.

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RENE VILATTE.

Rene Vilatte has turned up again this time as a "recanter." The old humbug has played a great many roles in life, and in fact you "never know what he'll be up to next." He has, as many a worthier man, promised to do better for the future, and we sincerely hope that the old gentleman's strength may be proof against temptation. We do not, however, believe in advertising him or in chronicling his recantation as something to be wondered at and for which to rejoice. Put him into a monastery—keep him at his prayers and teach him, what he has not known, that silence is golden.

Bishop Messner says that entirely too much attention is given to this conversation. After all, who is Vilatte? No genius, no leader of men, no brilliant mind, no great man, possessing not even an elementary clerical education. His conversion is no greater gain for the Catholic Church than that of any other poor sinner, the gain of an immortal soul redeemed by Christ.

What is his following? A Roman paper stated last week that he had some 50,000 followers in the United States. Whatever the number of Independent Poles may be they certainly are not Vilatte's followers since they got the so-called Bishops of their own nationality. Of French or Belgians he never at any time had a round one-hundred families.

CLERICAL AND LAY EDITORS.

The editor of the New World of Chicago has some strange utterances on clerical and lay editors. We have read the article carefully, and came to the conclusion that he thought the destinies of a journal devoted to an independent consideration of broad general issues and current topics should be guided by a layman; and one dealing with religious and moral questions should be in the hands of a clerical editor.

We do not believe for one moment that a Catholic paper should be a budget of pious platitudes or a compendium of sermons or moral disquisitions. We fall to see, however, why a journal such as referred to cannot be edited by a priest. One need not be an active politician to understand political questions, or to be in the whirl and rush of the world to give a solution to social problems. The one thing necessary is the knowledge of sound principles, and this, it seems to us, comes more easily to the clerical than to the lay editor.

We have no intention of belittling the efforts of many noble editors of our time, and we do not forget that the names of McMaster and Hickey are names not writ in water on the pages of the history of Catholic journalism.

FATHER HECKER.

In reply to a correspondent who wishes to know something about Father Hecker, we beg to state that he was born in New York in 1819. He was obliged to leave school at an early age, but his ambition and desire for knowledge urged him always to increase his meagre store of learning. He was a singularly earnest lad with a taste for social questions, which was in after years shown more plainly by his efforts to improve the condition of the working classes. Later on he came under the influence of Brownson, who advised him to seek his fortune with Nathaniel Hawthorne and the other inmates of Brook Farm. Soon, however, he left that community of delightful though eccentric individuals and became a Catholic in 1844. He entered the Redemptorist novitiate, and was ordained priest in 1848. Somehow or other he differed from his superiors, and, with unbounded confidence in his own judgment, decided he was right, and resolved to leave them, and to found a community which should be the reflex of his ideas. Thus we have the Paulists—a band of ecclesiastical sharpshooters who have rendered much valuable service to the Church. But Father Hecker was no half-converted Protestant, as the Abbe Maignen would have us think. He was zealous for the salvation of souls, and a priest of spotless character. We do not think the works which have come from his pen are of permanent value, but they

breathe a spirit of earnestness and manifest a desire to have all enjoy the peace of mind and heart of the author.

OUR BOYS.

One very serious charge that can be brought against some parents is that the boys are taken from school at too early an age and are consequently doomed in all probability to be hewers of wood and carriers of water, to serve and to slave in Poverty's shabbiest livery during their lives.

Why not give them an opportunity to acquire knowledge that may prevent them from being thrust into the mass where everyone is fighting for a living? We know of some who do make sacrifices for their children; but we know also of others—and they are in the majority—who are content to walk in the rut traced out for them by ignorant sloth and who transmit to their offspring the heritage of either a stolid indifference to anything that can ameliorate their condition or a cowardice that restrains them from making the best of themselves. It seems to us that many of the boys who leave school just as their minds are being opened out could, without much suffering to the family, be kept at their books a few years more. It would necessitate a less expensive dress for the girls, a curtailment of entertainments, etc., but this will not be grudged by sensible parents. Our standing as a social power depends upon our education, and social power in this work-a-day world counts for much. We do not wish to appear pessimistic, but we cannot help thinking, when we see the crowds of half-trained youths, their growing indifference to their eternal interests and their sudden apathy with regard to things temporal, that a serious danger menaces us. It is very well to say that a young lad energetic and determined will always succeed. He may make an invaluable book-keeper to a syndicate or may possibly employ a book-keeper, but he is the exception. The rule is that a man's success depends on his start in life. Give him the tools to fashion his life, and he will meet with some measure of success; send him empty-handed and he will be found away in the rear, broken upon the wheel of labor. It may be necessary sometime—but it is the saddest thing on earth—the spectacle of a keen-witted boy plunged, just as the dormant faculties of the soul are springing up into life, into a factory or shop, to see and to hear nothing and to have his energies and talents assigned to unprofitable waste.

But some parents are half Bourbons—they learn nothing and they forget everything. They forget that the days of persecution are over, and that, with our opportunities for self-improvement, and with the every-day object lesson of the paramount influence of intelligence, they are, in depriving their children of more than a rudimentary education, condemning them, so far as this life goes, to the lowest places.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

Many of our readers will be grieved to hear that the distinguished historian, Rev. Father Bridgett, C. S. R., has passed to his reward. Like so many other converts, he rendered valuable service to the Church by his accurate exposition of her teaching and by portraying them eloquently and practically in a truly Catholic life. He has gone from the sphere of worldly work, but he will speak to them who loved and admired him, from the many works which have come from his pen.

The letter of the Holy Father on "Americanism" has stilled the storm of controversy. While it was raging, many bitter words were spoken, and many charges, as false as they were groundless, were proffered against men who love their faith beyond aught else in the world; but the luminous words of Leo have dispelled the darkness of re-ordination and silenced the tongue of the partizan. It seemed to outsiders there were two parties amongst our cousins. Little men championed one side or the other, and found an echo in their friends. But we were mistaken. It was simply a case of a man dabbling in a language of which he had, to say the least, an imperfect knowledge. The one thing the letter has shown is that loyalty and submission to the Church are not on the

wane. From every quarter came cries of joy over this late pronouncement of the Holy Father because he alone has the power to guide and to govern and to protect us from error. "Americanism," meaning certain characteristics of government, etc., may be talked about *ad nauseam*, but "Americanism" in a religious sense has, if it ever existed, passed away forever.

And the loyalty manifested will have an effect upon those outside the fold, who imagined that a revolution was brewing. It brings up before us the words of St. Irenaeus: "For to this church on account of its more powerful principality it behoves every Church to come—that is, the faithful everywhere." It reminds us of St. Jerome, who declared that "whosoever gathereth not with the successor of St. Peter scattereth," and of St. Augustine, who, when he received from Rome the confirmation of the Acts of the Council against the Pelagians uttered the famous words, "The case is decided: would that once for all error would cease;" and of the Bishop of Ravenna writing to Eutyches, "We exhort thee, honored brother, to attend obediently to what has been written by the most blessed Pope of the city of Rome; for blessed Peter who lives and presides in his own chair gives to those who seek it the truth of faith."

CLERICAL CULPABILITY.

The neglect of the observance of Sunday is only one of many indications of the decay of religious faith among the people of this country. There is a notable loss of spiritual fervor everywhere. The ministers tell us that it is harder than ever to rouse enthusiasm among their flocks—even the most energetic revivalists frequently fall to do so—and that the evangelistic efforts of the churches in recent years have been very largely without adequate results. The complaints are loud and they are universal. The ministers in large cities like Chicago and in the smaller towns of Connecticut have the same sad story to tell. There seems to be creeping over the land a sort of moral paralysis, which they are powerless to arrest.

This state of things is accounted for in various ways. The laity say it is largely the fault of the clergy—that the ministers have no salt in them; and the clergy declare that they are doing all in their power to stem the tide of immorality and infidelity—that lay folk are to blame for the spiritual sloth that has come over the churches.

There was a meeting of clergymen last week in the Nutmeg State, the object of which was to inquire into the causes of this moral decadence, and to discuss the subject, "What the Ministers Can Do to Bring about a Spiritual Awakening." We have felt much interest in the work of this conference. The members were all frank and fervent, as the reports of their addresses go to show. The Rev. Mr. Richard said that the people have hazy ideas about sin; the Rev. Magee Pratt recalled his own early experience, when he had a loathing of sin as a result of a belief in hell-fire; another minister declared that nowadays people did not realize what was meant by the loss of a soul; still another (the Rev. W. A. Carr) contended that there was a great deal of fault to be found with prevalent preaching. "The clergy," he said, "should preach repentance, faith in Christ, and kindred subjects." He thought the work should begin in Lent. We think Brother Carr hit the nail squarely on the head. The reason why men do not go to church is because they have lost religious faith, which it is the business of ministers of the Gospel to stir up. They are powerless to do this unless their own faith is lively. It is useless for a clergyman who lives luxuriously to preach repentance. A sermon on the happiness of heaven is without effect from a pastor who is known to be very much attached to the pleasures of earth. If, as Brother Richard said, the people have hazy ideas about sin, it is because the ministers who preach to them are so theologically confused of themselves. Methodist ministers consider it a sin to use tobacco, but many of them seem to have no scruple about reviling the Catholic faith. We praise the clergy of the Methodist denomination for their spirit of mortification, but they should not lose sight of divine precepts in following human traditions. They ought to know that it were better for all the ministers that ever lived to smoke everlastingly than that even one should only once, knowingly, bear false witness against the truth that is in Christ.

The clergy have two serious faults which they ought to acknowledge and correct; and, as Brother Carr said, now is the time to begin. In the first place, they ought to cultivate consistency. When the daily walk and conversation of a religious guide are in nowise different from those of the ungodly, when he is distinguished from worldlylings only by the cut of his coat or of his hair, the righteous blush for shame and "the wicked man

hardeneth his face." (Prov., xxi., 29.) There is a rude sense of logic among the people, and respect for the cloth is always lessened when a parson who is piling up a bank account exhorts his people to lay up treasures in heaven; or when a minister whose hands are never extended except with palms upward preaches to poor people on the omnipotence of loving-kindness; or yet again when a sermon on the art of always rejoicing is delivered by one who is always bemoaning the faults and failings of lay people.

Clergymen cannot be too firmly persuaded that their power for good depends upon the example they set to their people and the zeal with which they exercise their high calling. A minister of the Gospel who shows greater interest in things political or atheistical than in things ascetical; who is conspicuous where he ought not to appear, and often absent where duty calls him; who does what he exhorts the laity not to do; whose preaching in any particular is at variance with his practice,—such a minister can not command popular respect, and ought not to complain when his salary falls short, or his exhortations fail to rouse either sleepers or sinners.

Daniel Webster once said of the clergymen of his day: "If they would return to the simplicity of the Gospel, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many ministers take their text from Paul and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than to listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the Gospel, saying: 'You are mortal; your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal, too; you are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge even now standeth at the door.' When I am thus admonished I have no disposition either to muse or to sleep." Mr. Webster expressed a sentiment that was probably general at the time; it is certainly general now.

We share the opinion of the New York Sun, that if clergymen would give people essential religion instead of sentimental and unphilosophical philanthropy, the churches would be unable to hold one-half of those who would rush to them to hear the Word of life. We are convinced also that if in the preparation of their sermons preachers were to read the religious editorials that appear occasionally in our metropolitan luminary, their discourses would be all the more popular, practical and persuasive.—Ave Maria.

HOW TO BEAR PERSECUTION.

Patience and Forbearance After the Model of Christ.—Sermon by His Eminence.

Baltimore Mirror.

Cardinal Gibbons preached on Sunday last at the cathedral upon the Gospel of the day, which stated how Christ was accused of using the powers of evil to cast out devils. His Eminence said in part:

"Christ set an example for all men to follow in going about and doing good works, certainly without the hope of reward. He relieved the miseries of the suffering, gave sight to the blind and restored speech and hearing to the dumb and deaf. In the face of all this it is, to say the least, peculiar that He should be jeered at by the very people He was helping when, exercising His supernatural powers, He cast out devils.

"We have the testimony of the Apostles that the high priests and Pharisees were forever dogging Him in the hope of hearing a word or seeing Him do something that would give them cause to bring Him to trial. They scorned and jeered Him, but were ever watchful for some overt act. Not discovering any, they were at length compelled to prefer trumped up charges.

"Christ did not come into the world to disarrange the existing order of things, He proclaimed His creed: 'Render unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's.' He counseled peace, preached the Gospel of morality and minded His own business. Though He had no thought but to do good to all men, either spiritually or physically, these calumniators imputed all manner of vile things against Him, and their spite was satisfied only by the sight of His blood.

"The Master's course teaches us a lesson which should be taken to heart. Even while they persecuted Him He prayed for them. 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' he cried on Mount Calvary. But He did not let their words and acts interfere with His work, for He continued to the end to teach and heal and pray, while a weaker man would have given up in despair. He violated the traditions by healing the sick on the Sabbath—a monstrous crime in the eyes of the Pharisees—and He also went on casting out devils.

"We are all followers of Christ, and we must make up our minds that we cannot get along in this world without occasionally feeling the sting of calumny. The more upright your life and the more steadfast you are to the principles of religion, or to the business—be it what it may—the greater will be the calumnies and slanders of the envious. A small, mean man takes great delight in attacking the promi-

nent, that some of their glory may be temporarily reflected on him.

"Now it is well to consider how we shall act when thus attacked. The easiest and safest way is to take no notice, avoid losing your peace of mind, and above all, pray for the slanderers. It is heroic, I will admit, but it was an innovation of Christ, and in following in His footsteps you cannot go far wrong. Your peace of mind is of as much value to you as the jewels and money you so securely guard. Why not, therefore, bar out those calumnies and slanders and not let every little tale disturb you? The words of men are fleeting; the judgment of God is final and just. Rest content in this knowledge.

"All men are liable to be misrepresented. Even Paul was the victim of the tales of the envious, not only among the heathens but also among the Christians. He bore his trials with saintly fortitude. He did not grow angry; he did not cry out from the house tops his innocence. He rested his case on the knowledge of God's justice.

"It was Shakespeare, I believe, who said, 'Conscience makes cowards of us all,' but I believe that the fear of public censure makes greater cowards of us than conscience. Would that conscience had more place in our daily life! When the calumniator assails you and your conscience tells you the charges are false, remember that this same still voice may remind you of other misdeeds unknown to men, but known to God.

"God in His wisdom may often permit us to be unjustly assailed in order to rouse within us the spirit of religion and humanity, and to cause us to listen offener to conscience. Make it a rule of life, my brethren, always to disregard the unjust censures of men, but tune your ears to the faintest whisper of conscience."

THE FIRST SORROW OF THE BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD.

The prophecy of St. Simeon, though it did not lay bare to her for the first time, brought formally before her, for her acceptance, manifold dispositions of God regarding Jesus, herself and us sinners.

These dispositions were by no means such as a Mother's heart would naturally have desired. They involved terrible sacrifices. . . . Into these dispositions, and with the most perfect intelligence of them which a creature could have, she entered heroically. . . . With us, generosity in spiritual things is often to be measured by the degree to which the virtue forces its way. But it was not so with our Blessed Lady. . . . There was no conflict in her will; there could have been, but there was not.

But let us now consider the lessons which this first dolor teaches to ourselves. It was a life long unhappiness. . . . Almost every heart on earth is a sanctuary of secret sorrow. . . . Now what is to be done with this lifelong sorrow? Let Our Lady teach us out of the depths of her first dolor. She had no suffering which was dissociated from the Passion of Jesus. We can make our sorrows in a measure like hers by continually uniting them to the sorrows of our dearest Lord. If our sorrow comes from sin, of course it cannot be like Mary's sorrows; but it can be just as easily, just as acceptably united with the Passion of Our Lord. He will not despise the offerings. The fact of our griefs being a consequence of sin need not even increase the measure of our grieving. Happy they, and true sons, whom Our Father punishes in this life. Like Mary, we must be loving, sweet and patient with those who cause us any unhappiness, and, laying our head with un-restrained and unashamed tears on Our Lord's Bosom, let us think quietly of God and heaven. . . . Let us look our great sorrow in the face, and say to it, 'You have made up your mind not to part with me till I go down to the grave; be, then, a second Guardian Angel to me; be a shadow of God, hindering the heat and glare of the world from drying up the fountains of prayer within my heart.' All of us, even if we have not a life-long sorrow, have a guardian Angel of this description. . . . With confidence, then, we may seek the Mother of Sorrows, and ask her to be the Mother of our sorrow. Jesus has a special love for the unhappy. The longest day has its evening, the hardest work its ending, and the sharpest pain its contented and everlasting rest.—'The Foot of the Cross' (Father F. W. Faber).

THE ABBE KLEIN'S RETRACT-ION.

The Pope's letter on "Americanism" has elicited many protestations of submission and loyalty to the Holy See, but none more gratifying than that of the French priest, whose small knowledge of the English language led him into error. Our readers will be glad to learn that the Osservatore Romano publishes a letter to the Pope from the Abbe Klein, author of the French edition of "The Life of Father Hecker," declaring adherence without reserve to the Pope's views expressed in his letter to Cardinal Gibbons, announcing the suppression of the sale of the book and

adding that he rejects without exception or reservation the errors in the book the Pope condemns.—American Herald.

A DEVOTION FOR PASSIONTIDE.

While it is far from obvious that Christians of our day stand less in need than did their predecessors in other centuries of the salutary discipline of fasting and mortification, it is clearly manifest that the old-time severity of Lenten practices has of late years become notably mitigated. For one reason or another—wise and just reasons, we may not doubt—the Church has in many countries relaxed the stringency of her former precepts on this point; and in actual practice, the number of Catholics duly exempted nowadays from fasting is perhaps greater than the aggregate of those who still incur that obligation. Possibly also there are a few Catholics who constitute themselves their own judges as to the question whether they are bound to fast or are exempted from so doing. Concerning these last, it is needless to say that they arrogate to themselves a right, an authority, which is distinctly not theirs. One's pastor or confessor is the proper judge to determine whether in our particular case the general law to fast holds or ceases to apply; and it is rash, to say no more, to dispense with his opinion thereon.

In any case, the holy season of Lent is still, in the mind and intent of the Church, a time of unusual penance, additional prayer, and multiplied mortifications; and if, in compassion for the weakness of some of her children, she excuses them from the Lenten fast, it is, nevertheless, her purpose and wish that, instead of fasting, they substitute some other form of penance—some prayers of supererogation, some pious practice of devotion. Perhaps no better or more congruous devotion for the approaching Passiontide can be commended to such Catholics—or, for that matter, to all Catholics—than the Stations or Way of the Cross.

While the erection of the Fourteen Stations, or pictures representing the sorrowful journey of our Divine Lord to Golgotha, is never omitted now in the case of any new church or chapel, it is doubtful whether the mass of the congregation attending such church or chapel make it a practice to "go around the Stations" at all as frequently as is desirable. Without taking a pessimistic view of our latter-day Catholicity, or becoming an immoderate praiser of the past, one may perhaps question whether this special devotion is as generally practised at present as it was some few decades ago. It is just possible that, in the multitude of new devotions that have sprung up, the Way of the Cross has been to some extent lost sight of.

If so, it is assuredly a misfortune; for, if we except attendance at Holy Mass and the reception of the sacraments, it is difficult to specify a more salutary practice of piety. Quite apart from the many Indulgences, partial and plenary, with which the Stations are applicable to the holy souls in purgatory as well as to the individual follower of Our Lord's sorrowful way—can one overestimate the advantages accruing to the Christian soul from the meditation on the various phases of Christ's Passion which the performance of this exercise presupposes?

Making full allowance for whatever pious exaggeration there may be in the opinion of Blosius, that "to think devoutly of the Passion, even for a short time, is a more profitable and meritorious work than to fast on bread and water, to give oneself the discipline till the blood comes, and to recite the entire Psalms," we can not deny that such thinking or meditating must be both an effectual extant of genuine contrition for past transgressions and a potent preservative against future lapses. If pride and sensuality be the fruitful sources of all our sins, where else do both ignoble passions stand so thoroughly convicted of criminality and folly as before the Stations that represent the God-Man in the profoundest depths of humiliation and in the most cruel straits of mental and physical suffering?

What more vivid lesson can be given to one who is puffed up with self-conceit than the spectacle of our Divine Redeemer abject, despised, hated, calumniated, and abandoned by all! What more effective means for vanquishing the manifold temptations of the flesh can be imagined than the contemplation of that same Redeemer stripped naked, scourged unto blood, beaten and bruised, crowned with thorns, nailed to the ignominious cross, and crucified as a common malefactor! Works of penance and mortification there are of many kinds and of varying degrees of efficacy; but few—very few—penitential practices are more productive of beneficial results, direct and indirect, than is the pious custom of daily making the Way of the Cross—or, as the old people say, "going around the Stations."—Ave Maria.

Truth walks slowly and even then some people can't keep up with it.

In proportion as Mary's power with God exceeds that of all the saints, so is she, in the same proportion, our most loving advocate, and the one who is the most solicitous for our welfare.—St. Bonaventura.