

# OLD LETTERS.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

I have always had a great love for the "True Witness," principally because it was in my father's home when I was a boy and I had learned to look upon it as the most solid defender of our faith in Canada. In after years I followed it through all its changes and vicissitudes, and not only read it every week, but sent it to friends living far away from Canada. Some years ago I had a very dear friend, and relative by marriage, living in Hong Kong, China. He used to send me the "Hong Kong Gazette," printed half in English and half in Chinese. In return I posted him, each week a copy of the "True Witness." It appears that he used to send the paper on to a friend of his in the Holy Land. Finally I was requested to send two copies of the paper to a given address in the far Orient. I did so for a time; but, not knowing whether the paper was ever received or not, I was about to discontinue when I received the exceptionally interesting and somewhat surprising letter which I give this week.

I repeat that these letters are not selected either according to dates, or to their character, or to the subjects upon which they were written; I just take them as they come to hand. I am occupied in assorting them for future reference, and I merely skip those that can have no interest for the readers. The following letter I transcribe just as it is written, but I must remark that the writer was evidently more conversant with French and with Eastern languages than with English. Whether he is yet amongst the living is more than I can tell; but if he is, he will probably read his reproduced letter, and will excuse me for the liberty I have taken with it. Here is the letter:

"Church of St. Ann,  
Jerusalem,  
Sept. 14, '93.

"Dear Sir:—  
"Just on leaving Jerusalem I deem it opportune simply to write you a few lines of gratitude. I must congratulate the paper you sent me for the good, religious, intelligent, and energetic spirit with which its articles are written. That recalls to my mind the words of Pope Pius IX. to the 'Tablet' of London: 'Dum vobis gratulamur, animos etiam addimus ut in inceptis vestris constanter maneatis.'"

"With my congratulations to the paper please accept my gratitude to you for the pleasure I often felt in reading the 'True Witness'; a pleasure I trust I shall still have, though removing from the Holy City; for I beg you to address me henceforth to our 'Novitiate of Maison-Carrée, near Algiers.' If I had stood (remained) any longer in Jerusalem I would have sent you now and then letters about the Holy Land and especially made you know our Apostolic work, at St. Ann's Seminary, for the restoration of the Catholic faith in the East, by the formation of a good and learned Greek Catholic clergy. I would also have written to you about the Pool of Bethesda, which we have to raise from its ruins, and which is far (removed) in time and situation, from its ancient splendor (S. John C. V.) Such letters from Jerusalem would have perhaps interested you, and may be you could have had them in the 'True Witness.' I regret that I did not do anything in that way while here, for I am very interested in the paper you sent. The reason, you know perhaps already, is that I am a Canadian, from Montreal; I am brother of Father G. Forbes of Caughnawaga, and it is a legitimate pleasure for me to communicate with my fellow-countrymen.

"Now I am called away to Africa, after five years of mission in the East. I do not yet know what will be my functions there. It may happen that in a few years I go to Canada for begging purposes. Our missions are so extending that a journey of that kind will become necessary. There is good to be done everywhere, but money is wanted; and when money fails the realization of the good, too often, also fails. So then, if I go back to Montreal, I promise you a visit and I know you will see your good offices with those in charge of the 'True Witness' to secure for me its assistance in my enterprise.

"Wishing you every good gift, I remain, dear sir, truly yours,

"FATHER JOHN FORBES,

"Of Cardinal Lavigerie's Algerian Missionaries.

"Written from the Church of St. Ann, Jerusalem."

I would have passed this letter over, and merely placed it amongst the scores of relics that I have placed aside and which the public eye will never behold, were it not that it constitutes an evidence of the wide circle of a Catholic publication's influence. Possibly ninety-nine out of every hundred persons who take the "True Witness" are under the impression that its circulation is limited to Montreal, or this province, or Canada, or Canada and the United States. They would be surprised to know that the old Catholic organ has found its way into almost every civilized land on earth. An English Catholic military engineer told me, in 1886, that he found the "True Witness" at Singapore, at Suez, in Cairo, at Malta, at Gibraltar, and in the Island of Alderney—in the Channel Islands. At all these places he had been engaged professionally, and in all of them he had seen the same paper. Sir Joseph Thompson, the famous explorer of Masailand, when in the vicinity of Kilimanjaro, met a caravan that had coffee, tea, salt, pepper, and other commodities wrapped up in what he calls "European and American newspapers," and of the American papers he mentions three "The Herald" (I suppose the New York "Herald") "The World" (possibly also the New York organ), and the "True Witness." There are several "Heralds" and several "Worlds" on this continent; but I have never heard or read of any "True Witness" other than that of Montreal. Consequently one may be justified in concluding that by the hands of some missionaries the Canadian Catholic organ found its way into the heart of the Dark Continent. A young gentleman, who has been engaged in the brokerage business in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the past ten years, spent some months in Canada, in 1889. He was then on his way home to England from a sojourn of two years in South Africa. He told me that the only two publications, in the English language, which he saw during his two years in Ecuador—between Esmeraldas and Quito—were the "Cork Examiner" and the Montreal "True Witness;" the former was received by a young employee of a German nut company, who was a native of Bantry in Ireland, and who got the paper from home; the latter was sent to a Captain J. Lyons, who ran a boat from Tomaco to Esmeraldas, and who was either a subscriber, or else had relatives in Canada who sent him the paper. I mention these few facts simply to show how very remote must be the place that knows not a Catholic paper and its influence.

## Lessons and Examples

UNITED STATES AND CANADA.  
—That Catholics enjoy more freedom in Canada than in the United States is proved by two broad, clear, plain and public facts. One is that, although no specific law exists forbidding a Catholic to be president of the United States, yet anti-Catholic prejudice is so strong that it is a matter of general knowledge that no Catholic, however

great, and however popular he might be, would stand a chance of being elected to that position today in the so-called "land of the free." In Canada to-day we have a Catholic Premier—a French-Canadian. Not many years ago we had another Catholic Premier—the late Sir John Thompson, an Irish Catholic. The other respect in which Catholics enjoy a much larger measure of justice than their co-religionists in the neighboring republic, is that of education. In Ontario there is what is known as the separate schools. In Quebec Catholic schools

are supported by the rates, as are non-Catholic schools. In the United States not one cent of public money is permitted to be expended on Catholic schools, although Catholics, who number about a dozen millions, contribute largely to the general taxes of the country. In the course of a lecture which he recently delivered at Chicago, the Rev. Father O'Brien Pardon, S.J., stated that the amount of money which American Catholics are annually paying into the national treasury, beyond their rightful share of taxation is \$25,000,000. That sum goes to the edu-

cation of Protestant children in the public schools. In addition, Catholics pay for the education of over one million Catholic in their own primary schools, the cost of which should, in strict justice be borne by the State. It is no wonder that the Catholics of the United States have started an agitation for fair play in this very important matter of primary education.

MIXED MARRIAGES.—Asked by a representative of a New York daily newspaper to state his opinions on the subject of mixed marriages, a well known priest of that archdiocese said:—

"Of all the mixed marriages that I have performed, say from thirty to thirty-five, I have not known more than two to have happy results. Two people have a hard enough time to get along together all their lives without the added burden of religious differences. Most decidedly we set our faces against them; we do not prohibit them absolutely, but we make it as difficult as possible. Persuasion is our best weapon. But what would you have? I have known cases where the priest and the whole family have gone down on their knees to beg the young person to reflect on what he or she was about to do, and all with no effect. And then very likely in a year or a month, or even a week—I have known it so—the same young person will come to the priest for advice or consolation, praying to be released; then it is too late. It is easy for young persons to make all manner of promises in the view of marriage, and no doubt they are sincere at the time, but such promises are unfortunately as often broken as not, and I know of one unhappy case where a young man boasted to me that he had never had any intention of keeping the things he swore to.

"As I say, our order is firmly opposed to such marriages, not from any antagonism to Protestants, but wholly on account of the miserable results which have come in the experience of every priest. This sentiment is not growing; it has always been the same, and the laws which govern such cases have come down from time immemorial and are quite adequate to present needs. It is not so much a question of regulation as of the discretion of the spiritual father of the party concerned.

"Perhaps the greatest sufferers are the children of such marriages. The first disagreement of married life will often be over the christening of the first babe. The poor child, in the unhappy dissensions of their parents, will, as like as not, grow up without any religion at all.

## SENATOR O'DONOHUE DEAD.

A well known and venerable figure has been removed from the political circles of Ontario and from the legislative arena at Ottawa, by the death of Senator John O'Donohue. News comes to us from Toronto to the effect that the death of Senator O'Donohue occurred at his home there on last Sunday. Bright's disease was the immediate cause of his demise. He had been in failing health for some time and on Friday suffered a more severe attack, which caused death. He was born at Tuam, Galway, and came to Toronto in 1839. He was appointed to the Senate in 1882. In 1871 he unsuccessfully contested East Peterboro for the Provincial Legislature, and in 1872 East Toronto for the Commons. He was elected for the latter constituency in 1874, but was unseated and defeated. He leaves one daughter, Mrs. John Rennie, and a niece, Miss O'Reilly, who always attended him.

Some thirty years ago Senator O'Donohue's name was constantly before the public, and he played a most important part in the political as well as in the national struggles that marked that period in Ontario. Since his appointment to the Senate, some twenty years ago, Mr. O'Donohue has confined his public labors to the fulfillment of his duties as member of the Upper House, and consequently was not as conspicuous in public affairs as he had been when still in the more turbulent arena of the elective section of the legislature. Still he always manifested a keen interest in all that affected the Irish cause, and he was ever ready to aid in promoting the welfare of his fellow-countrymen—collectively, or individually, at home, or abroad. He was a fervent Catholic, and one who had accomplished much in the interests of the Church, especially in the Province of Ontario. May his soul enjoy eternal repose.

## THE TIBER'S ANCIENT BED.

(By a Subscriber.)

Some of the Saturday editions of our French newspapers contain very interesting and sometimes highly instructive contributions. In "La Patrie," of the 6th instant, there appeared a very important piece of information from Rome, and as the translation of it might interest the readers of the "True Witness," I have taken the liberty of sending the same to you. The article is entitled "Researches for Treasures of Ancient Art in the Tiber," and the text runs as follows:—

"It is announced from Rome that minute researches will be immediately made to find the precious relics of ancient Rome that are believed to be hidden away in the muddy bed of the Tiber. These excavations will be carried on under the superintendence of Professor Nisplinandri, with the aid of the Italian Government and of some wealthy citizens who are interested in archeology. It is believed that the Tiber holds inestimable treasures, curiosities, antiquities and master-pieces of great value. But how are they to be recovered? That is the question.

"The ancient Romans considered the Tiber to be their savior, as it barred on more than one occasion the incursions of their enemies. Macaulay has immortalized Horatius the brave, with two others who, victoriously defended the bridge over the Tiber against thousands of Etruscans, and it is possible that in the olden times thousands of foreign soldiers, as well as Romans were buried, with their armor, in the waters of the Tiber.

"Moreover, the Tiber was looked upon as a divine stream, and the ancient Romans came to its banks to pray and to make offerings to its deity. There can be no doubt that in the fervor of their superstition the Romans cast into those venerated waters their most precious jewels, statues, and works of art.

"The discoveries made in modern times, when bridges were built over the Tiber, to facilitate the communication between the two banks have proven to be a demonstration that in ancient days the Tiber was the object of a special religious devotion. In digging the foundations for the piers of the bridges, a great quantity of statues, pieces of jewelry and precious ornaments were brought to light, the value of which, when sold, exceeded the entire cost of construction. The museum of the Diocletian Baths was at once filled with these olden relics.

"In laying the foundations of the Garibaldi Bridge, bronze statues of Bacchus and Venus, were unearthed, and during the construction of the Palatine Bridge statues of gems were gathered to the value of several million dollars. That custom of sacrifice to the river-gods dates back over three thousand years. And how many such sacrifices have not been made! cast all their treasures into the Tiber? It is certain that ancient Rome contained innumerable treasures no trace of which has ever been found. Where are they? The archeologists say they are in the bottom of the Tiber, as they prepare now to search the bed of that historic river.

"The treasures that Titus took from the Jewish temple at Jerusalem have never been found, although the arch of Titus contains the seven-branched golden candlestick and the other vessels brought in triumph from the Holy Land. It is claimed that all these precious objects were cast into the Tiber and that they will certainly be recovered by digging the river-bed near the Island of Tiberius.

"When Christianity triumphed over idolatry, the old gods were cast into the river where for centuries they have remained. It is also hoped that art treasures of ancient Greece will be found, the famous statue of Minerva by Phidias, as well as those of Hercules, Mars, and Venus. In the depths of the Tiber also lies the golden statue of Claudius that adorned the Capitol, and that was cast into the river to save it from the Goths.

"To carry out the works of excavation the Tiber will be divided into nine or ten sections that will be explored separately. By the use of pneumatic reservoirs and steam pumps it is calculated that all objects worthy of conservation will be brought to light. The work will take years, for the Tiber has changed its course, in several places, since the distant epoch the relics of which are hoped to be recovered; however, near Rome the stream has scarcely altered its bed, and follows about the same course as formerly.

"The exploration of the Tiber is

not a new project; as far back as the thirteenth century excavations took place for the recovery of Etruscan relics, near the Sicilian Bridge. Cardinal de Polignac, and after him Garibaldi, proposed to change the course of the Tiber, so as to leave its olden bed dry, in the hope of finding therein the most precious objects that antiquity possessed, but the undertaking had to be abandoned in face of a powerful opposition. Several fruitless attempts, in the same direction, were made at other times, especially in 1773 and 1815. It is to be hoped that Professor Nisplinandri will be more successful than his predecessors. It would be one of the great achievements of the twentieth century."

## The Basis of Religion

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

It is always the same old story of seeking the truth and possessing the truth. Others are anxious about their faith; they think, or they hope, or they believe that they possess the truth; we Catholics, on the contrary, know that we possess it. Rev. Dr. James Stalker, of Glasgow, recently delivered an address, published in the London "Expositor," for November, in which he deals with the subject of religion and its basis. "How can we be sure that our religion is true?" asks the "Literary Digest," in commenting on Dr. Stalker's address. In reply to its own question that organ says:—

"The answer of Protestantism has been that the Bible is the impregnable rock. The disposition among Roman Catholics has been to regard the authority of their church as the basis of Christian certainty. Among the radical schools of religious thinkers the tendency is to accept the individual consciousness as the seat of authority in religion. Which of these answers is true?"

Dr. Stalker takes the position that each of the three points of view thus stated contains part of the truth. And in his summing up Dr. Stalker contends that:—

"The certainty on which religion is suspended is a threefold cord, and it is a mistake to attempt to hang all the weight on a single strand." Religious truth is "revealed in Scripture, borne witness to by the church, and realized in individual experience."

Here we have two distinct questions confronting us. The first is that of the uncertainty of all non-Catholic Christians as to the foundation of their belief, as contrasted with the certainty of Catholics upon that all-important point. The second is the attitude assumed by the eminent Presbyterian preacher above quoted.

As to the first of these issues we can simply say that the very question asked by the "Literary Digest" is sufficient evidence of the uncertainty of any section of Protestantism. It is all a mere matter of speculation. They all have some pretended ground work for their faith, but no two agree as to what it exactly is. The Bible is the most universally accepted source of Christianity by general Protestantism, and yet, the Protestant churches are rapidly drifting away from the Scriptures, are gradually beginning to doubt the inspiration of the Bible, and are at daggers-drawn between themselves upon almost every theory concerning Holy Writ. In contrast-distinction to this position we have the Catholic Church that is unchanged and immutable that is positive and infallible.

But what most interests us is Dr. Stalker's conclusion, that the three elements constitute the foundation of Christianity, or of the true Christian religion, with his views, as he describes them in detail, we cannot agree; but on the general proposition we are in accord with him. The Church, the Bible, and the Grace of Faith in the individual all go to make up the rock upon which our religion is built. The Church, because Christ established it as an institution to perpetuate His teachings and to give the order to go forth and preach and teach all nations. In addition, and as an auxiliary in that work of preaching and teaching, we have been given the Holy Scriptures—the value of which as estimated by the Church may be found in the last important encyclical of Leo XIII, establishing a commission for the special purpose of Biblical study and investigation. And in addition, again, the Church recognizes the gift of grace imparted by God to the individual, and obtained by such means as prayer and sincere desires to know the truth. In this sense we can say with Dr. Stalker that the three sources of our religion exist; but the rock-bottom foundation of our faith is nothing other than the word of Christ Himself, as spoken to Peter.

freedom, Catholic relative independence. In 1798 the "old a great victory—the Parliamentary 95 they demanded Parliament; and England first held out hopes demand, ultimately concession. In 1800 and the "old inhabitants beaten to the less, they fought on, wrung emancipation ministry, and de religious equality, ment of the Protest- the reform of the

fought in vain, but victory again crowned in 1869 the Church ed, in 1870 the first was passed. But the e "old inhabitants" er.

er great measure of b, which practically e laws of landed Ireland, was passed; measure of local gov- struck almost all the hands of the me law. Still the is furiously as ever, the machinery for ole absolute "propere has not yet been because the right of make laws for the n- hheld.

y be the "double dose" given to the Irish ing; and the remedy, of the island for hours under the e cause and the they may, there is no ct that Ireland is as r. English statesmen act. Church Acts have ace; Land Acts have ace; local government at peace.

Majesty's Government, bery apparently, ac- ble dose of original or the "submersion" both are apparently t there must be more to the Irish. What is e? Mr. Wyndham pro- duce a "final" Land on, and Lord Rose- collect rightly) speaks of the edifice of local Meanwhile, the Irish ated distinctly what lunately, the right to n laws in their own ally their claim is in- olitically, it has never ith greater force than bery himself. Speaking 1887, he said:—

place, Grattan's Par- what the Irish people e is no principle, gen- seems so simple, but somehow to need so g into some of our smen, as the fact that at one knows and likes a the truffle that one nor likes. And, there- u wish to give a bene- it, is better to give at it likes and under- than something that es nor understands."

Lord Rosebery now o? Will he give us the "like," or the "truffle ant?" He has said, I whatever has to be and should be done . The "step by step" be a good policy for the question of local England. It is not a for dealing with Ire- e Irish question is question of local re- a question of repairing of conquest, of reconcil- English connection, in- cy has driven to dislike form, a people whom partnership altogether. uth, the curse of Ire- fortune of England in- ment of Irish affairs, has up by step" policy—the slowly, grudgingly, im- elding to force; surren- ason.

t the subject from a ish point of view, ar- rd Rosebery must see rk which lies before the tesman in Ireland is the act which will gratify aspirations and touch heart.

onus of Irish govern- o Irish people; leave Ireland to Irish han- ation responsible for the all-being; restore the on whose existence on Irish one bring back the rec- the days when Irish free- shion honor were not inco- Irish loyalty to a com- —let England do these by them only can she tonement for the past, o y hopes for the future.

R. BARRY O'BRIEN.