

The Canadian Independent.

"ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN."

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Topics of the Week.

SWEEPING conclusions are drawn from mere isolated facts. Because a prominent church member here and there proves dishonest, men impute it to the teachings of orthodoxy. The tens of thousands of Christian professors, who walk in the fear of God and bring no dishonour to their profession, are not taken into account. The reasoning is based solely upon the score or two who prove recreant. It is as if it should be urged that the teachings of Christ produced treachery, because there was one traitor among the apostles; or that Peter, John and James must have been traitors because Judas was. It reminds us of a law student, who was disclaiming against all ministers as hypocrites; and upon being asked how far his acquaintance with ministers extended, confessed that he was only well acquainted with a single one, and that he was a very good man.

BISHOP HERZOG had a sad report to make to the Swiss Old Catholic Synod at Geneva of the condition of the Church. In the Canton of Berne twelve parishes and ten priests were lost the past year, through the operation of the parish election laws, the Roman Catholics electing their priests and thus getting the State subvention. In three of these parishes, where the minority is strong, Old Catholic priests are supported by voluntary contributions. In two cases where elections were held the Old Catholics were victorious. It is expected other parishes will be lost during the coming year. The whole number of priests is now fifty-nine, against seventy-three last year; but five students are ready for ordination. There are forty-eight parishes in possession of the Old Catholics. The Synod adopted a Book of Common Prayer, compiled by Bishop Herzog from an Anglican manual, and made it the official manual of the Christian Catholic Church. An Anglican states that the book is "essentially both orthodox and evangelical, purged from Romish superstition and never for a moment favouring sceptical or unbelieving negations."

DEAN STANLEY asserts that what are in Scotland called irregular marriages—which by many persons are regarded as excessive instances of Protestant laxity—are in fact the relics of the ancient Catholic system. In modern times what is called civil marriage (that is, a marriage before witnesses without religious services) has been condemned by high Roman authorities as hardly deserving the name of marriage at all. But this form of matrimony is that which before the Council of Trent, in all Continental Christendom, was regarded by the Catholic Church not only as a *bona fide* union of man and wife, but as a sacrament. The consent of two persons in the presence of a witness was sufficient to constitute a valid marriage. It was not till the Council of Trent that the intervention of the parish priest was considered necessary; and even then, not as himself performing the marriage, but as a witness. The celebration of the sacrament is not vested even now in the person of the priest who gives the benediction, but in the person of the man and woman who makes the solemn agreements in his presence. Scotland merely followed the practice of the Continent, where any witness was sufficient.

THE St. Petersburg correspondent of the "Daily News" writes: "Not the least interesting among the signs of the times is the new religious movement in St. Petersburg. This movement, which has made a marked advance during the last winter, dates back some seven years to the summer travels of certain

Russian ladies in Switzerland. There they attended evangelical services conducted by Lord Radstock and other Englishmen, and by the French pastors, M. Monod and M. de Pressensé. Some of these ladies invited Lord Radstock to visit St. Petersburg during the following winter. He came in the winter of 1874, and renewed his visits in 1875, 1876, and 1877. The evangelical meetings thus commenced have been well sustained by M. Pashkoff, Count Bobrinsky, and Count Korff at the house of M. Pashkoff and others. Meetings of a more or less public character have been held during the past winter several times each week, with preaching on Sunday evenings. They terminated for the present season at the end of May. The interest they excited is shewn by the fact that at the last meeting upwards of a thousand persons assembled in the mansion of M. Pashkoff on the Gagarin Quay. On this and several occasions overflow meetings were held, and many hundreds were unable to obtain admission."

A CIRCULAR is being issued by the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association in opposition to the two motions now before Parliament for opening museums on Sabbath, which gives the opinions of the late and the present Prime Ministers on this question as follows. The Earl of Beaconsfield, in voting against the Sunday opening of museums, said in the House of Lords: "Of all divine institutions, the most divine is that which secures a day of rest for man. I hold it to be the most valuable blessing ever conceded to man. It is the corner stone of civilization, and its removal might even affect the health of the people. It (the opening of museums on Sabbath) is a great change, and those who suppose for a moment that it could be limited to the proposal of the noble baron to open museums will find they are mistaken." The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., has always voted against the Sabbath opening of the British Museum, etc., and in reply to a deputation in March, 1869, he said: "The religious observance of Sunday is a main prop of the religious character of the country. From a moral, social, and physical point of view, the observance of Sunday is a duty of absolute consequence." In a letter dated 13th January, 1876, Mr. Gladstone wrote as follows to Mr. C. Hill: "Believing in the authority of the Lord's day as a religious institution, I must as a matter of course desire the recognition of that authority by others. But, over and above this, I have myself, in the course of a laborious life, signally experienced both its mental and its physical benefits. I can hardly overstate its value in this view, and for the interest of the working men of this country, alike in these and in other yet higher respects, there is nothing I more anxiously desire than that they should more and more highly appreciate the Christian day of rest."

It seems that Italy, quite as much as France, has a title to call itself the modern "Land of Miracles." The Roman correspondent of the "Deutscher Merkur" says that he was assured by a Cardinal that no week passed in which not less than two or three new miracles, at least, were reported to the special Roman Congregation which is entrusted with the examination and verification of such phenomena, and that the accounts are always signed by a number of clergymen of out-of-the-way parishes. How inventive the agricultural clerical mind is in this province may be gathered from the amazing story of the "Madonna of the Vians"—*Madonna delle Galline*. Three years ago at Pagani—a significant name for the village not far from Naples, on the 4th of April, the day dedicated to "The Seven Sorrows of Mary," a hen belonging to the family of Tortora laid an egg which exhibited an

unusual and noticeable unevenness of surface upon its shell. The family conceded that there was a sign of supernatural intervention in this perfectly natural phenomenon, and called a priest to their counsel. This worthy cleric, after carefully scrutinizing the egg-shell, perceived that the roughened surface was nothing more or less than a bas relief, not very artistically executed, of the Lady of Sorrows holding the infant Jesus in her arms. Such a piece of supernatural sculpture could not remain in private possession; it was taken to the church and laid upon the altar for the veneration of the faithful. Each succeeding year the parish has held a three days' devotion in honour of the *Madonna delle Galline*, and the miraculous egg laid by Signora Tortora's hen has been exposed for the consolidation of the faith of Roman Catholics in an age of unbelief and revolution. This year, for the first time, a great procession in honour of the marvellous egg was organized. The peasantry flocked to Pagani from the surrounding neighbourhood, and a number of offerings were made to "Our Lady of the Egg."

WE are not to suppose that the danger to Republican institutions in France, from the presence and teaching of the Jesuits in that country, is merely imaginary. Jules Ferry in a recent debate in the French Senate gave a summary of the works, especially the historical ones, put into the hands of Jesuit pupils. Among others he cited the writings of Père Courval who "arranged" "The History of France" by Père Loricquet, and the works of Père Gazeau who imitated Père Courval. The school inspectors find these books distributed and taught everywhere as standard classical works. They attack the Revolution and glorify the revocation of the edict of Nantes. They abuse such moderate men as Necker and Turgot; protest against the idea of national sovereignty and proclaim in the most forcible manner that France was beaten in the last war because she deserted the Pope. In fact their books and the whole course of Jesuit teaching attacks the very foundations on which the present state of things in France rests, and wish to be countenanced in teaching what, if believed and followed, would overturn the Republic. The struggle, in short, is between the lay spirit and the theocratic; between the Syllabus and the Revolution, and in such a life and death struggle it is not surprising that the black soldiers of Loyola should, as in other days, receive notice to go and at once. If an organized and powerful body of ecclesiastics were to proclaim to all their pupils, and in all their text-books, that Queen Victoria was a usurper and that whoever assassinated her would do a work excellent and meritorious in the eye of Heaven, we doubt if either Canada or Britain would be at all a comfortable place for the permanent residence of these ghostly fathers. The Jesuit opposition to, and hatred of, all Republican institutions in France are practically not much less than would be implied in the case we have supposed. When it is a struggle for existence, nations, like individuals, may be excused if they take measures of a degree of vigour which in less exciting times might be thought extreme. Still the very life of popular institutions is free discussion, and it is a risky business to resort to physical force, when as Guizot used to say, "those who stand by the tongue ought to be put down by the tongue." It is said that there are 158,040 members of different monastic orders in France. Of these there are 127,753 women and 30,287 men. Of 416 associations of men only thirty-two are authorized, but the latter are by far most numerous. Only 21,000 persons belong to these unauthorized fraternities, and these must either submit or leave France. But the Jesuits must leave in any case.