

TESTIS IN CÆLO FIDELIS

The True Witness

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THE GREY NUNS.

Their Foundress and Her History—Fires, War and Desolation—Death of Madame De Youville—The Ship Fever—Fearsful Ravages—The Hospital on Guy Street.

The traveller, the tourist and the seekers after information, the strangers from distant parts and sometimes even the citizens of Montreal itself may stand in front of a noble pile of buildings on Guy street and wonder what it was erected for. He judges that it is a Catholic institution because it bears the cross on its highest pinnacle. This building is at once the Grey Nunnery and the Hospital for the aged and infirm, the foundling infant and the centenarian equally as helpless, in a word, it is an institution where ladies of education and refinement sacrifice themselves to suffering humanity, where they imprison themselves to ameliorate the condition of those whom civilization has rejected, where they administer to the wants of the body, while at the same time they carefully remember that the same poor body contains an immortal soul. Of late much has been spoken and written of the Grey Nuns; they take rank as one of the foremost institutions of Canada, and as such a short history collected from authentic sources and personal examination may prove of interest to the general public.

Some two hundred and sixty years ago, when what is now the great commercial city of Montreal was part of a vast forest, the heroic Champlain established a trading post at Pointe Calière, the site of the present St. Ann's market, and eighty years or so later—in 1694—three gentlemen of fortune, M.M. Charon, Le Ber and Fredin, erected an establishment which they intended as a school and hospital for boys and men. This institution lasted upwards of forty years, and then ceased to exist through lack of means and good management. Forty years later still—in 1737—Madame De Youville, a widow lady of Montreal, possessing a benevolent heart, talents of no mean order and a moderate fortune, resolved to dedicate herself to the poor, and with this object in view hired a house, which she converted into a hospital for the aged and infirm, poor of both sexes. In this undertaking she was assisted by three young ladies who also threw their means in the common fund and helped the enterprise with all their ability. After ten years of up hill work and various vicissitudes of fortune, this establishment was burned to the ground, together with everything it contained. But Madame was a brave and resolute woman, and nothing daunted she immediately commenced the erection of another house for her poor and finished and entered it in 1747 with five assistants, the first "Grey Nuns." But Madame De Youville was not content with what she had already accomplished, her benevolence extended in proportion to her increased means, and she soon admitted wounded soldiers, incurables, orphans, foundlings and the insane, in a word she opened her hospital to the poor and homeless, the sick and the infirm of all ages, sexes and conditions. Twice was the hospital destroyed by fire, and as often was it rebuilt by the indefatigable efforts of its foundress. In 1756 while the war for supremacy of North America was raging between France and England, a pestilence called small-pox broke out among the Lake of Two Mountains Indians, which soon extended to the hostile forces to whom Madame De Youville indiscriminately threw open her establishment reserving one large ward for the English soldiers, styled therefrom "La Salle des Anglais," and in 1776 the account books of the Grey Nunnery showed the sum of \$18,000 expended for the relief and the support of English prisoners of war, not one cent of which was ever made good by either the French or English Governments. In 1757, this magnanimous woman, on learning that an English soldier was about being put to the torture, paid two hundred francs to the savages for his ransom. This man became afterwards keeper of the English infirmary, and was known as Jean l'Anglais. The year following the Rev. Father Lavalinier ransomed a Mr. O'Flaherty and his daughter, whom they found bound to the stake. The child was educated in the establishment, and in the course of time became a Grey Nun. Numerous well-authenticated stories are preserved in the records of the Grey Nunnery of how, time and again, they saved soldiers from the reckless fury of the Indians. The savages respected the Sisters, while hostile to every one else. On one occasion the red men pursued a party of scouts into the very convent, and the nuns had to hide them in the vaults. The Indians departed after a fruitless search, but the next trouble was to hide them from those of the wounded savages in the hospital. This they accomplished by dressing them in the cloak and hood of the Sisterhood, and passing them through the ward. One day, however, while one of them was being thus smuggled out, a wounded Indian discovered the benevolent cheat by his keenness of scent, and it was with difficulty his rage was restrained. Madame De Youville saved a good many individuals by her bravery, presence of mind, and the hold she exercised over the Indians in 1760, when Montreal was invested by an army of 32,000 English General seeing a large building in the suburbs, thought it was one of the out-works of the besieged, and ordered the artillery to open fire upon it. A soldier hearing the order given cast himself at the feet of the General, and telling him it was a hospital and refuge of the needy, at the same time how he had at one time found refuge there, and been saved from the Indians. The General sent a party of six under command of an officer to reconnoitre, and Madame De Youville being apprised of their coming, went to meet them, and taking them through the building offered them refreshments. The officers were pleased with what they saw, and the institution was saved.

In December, 1771, this peerless lady de-

parted this life, and went to a better world to receive her reward. Before leaving she had the supreme consolation that the hospital she had founded was an established success, and also that it was in excellent hands. One of the spiritual daughters succeeded her as second Superior of the Grey Nunnery.

The following anecdote is told relative to the death of this great and excellent woman:—The night of her death the people living in the vicinity remarked a large luminous cross in the heavens, immediately over the establishment, which it in a manner covered. Six years previous to this the hospital had been burned, and now as each fresh observer saw the phenomenon, he remarked to his neighbor: "What new misfortune is about to befall the Grey Nuns?" The tolling of the chapel bells next morning, announcing the death of the first Grey Nun, gave the answer, for on

It was the hour of recess. The Sisters, young and old, were gathered in the community room, the conversation was animated, and from time to time peals of laughter issued from one group or the other. It was at this time the Superior entered, and the Sisters rose to receive her. Taking her seat, she signalled for general attention, and after a short pause, said:—"Sisters, I have seen a sight to-day that I shall never forget. I have been at Point St. Charles, and seen hundreds of sick and dying huddled together. The stench emanating from them is too horrible for the strongest constitution. The air is impregnated with it as well as filled with the groans of the sufferers. Death is there in its most appalling aspect. Those who thus cry aloud in their agony are strangers, but their hands are outstretched for relief. Sisters, the plague is contagious." Here the

sheds, lay the inanimate forms of men, women and children, once the personification of health and beauty, with loving and ardent heart, now waiting for a nameless grave. More sick emigrants arriving from day to day new sheds had to be erected, till at last 24 of these temporary hospitals stood side by side, each one containing about 180 common cots, or rather plank boxes, littered with straw, in which often three poor fever-stricken victims lay down to rise no more. Eleven hundred human beings tossed and writhed in agony at the same time on these hard couches. The hearse could hardly suffice to carry the dead away. From eight sisters the number increased till none save the principal officers, the superannuated and those absolutely necessary to maintain the good order of the establishment remained at the Grey Nunnery. The ardor of the Sisterhood continued un-

let us state that the American visitor is always courteous and inquisitive, while the English are generally sullen or reserved, and too proud to ask questions. The former confesses that he has heard awful stories of convents in general, and perhaps of the Grey Nunneries in particular, and would like to judge for himself. He sees everything; he asks a thousand questions; he goes away satisfied, and is ever after free from prejudice, if not a fast friend of Catholic institutions. With the Englishmen it is different. He takes a cursory view of things, imagines there is some one concealed in every room which he does not enter, is polite and freezing, and marches off as impetuously wrapped up in his ignorance and bigotry as before. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon when our reporter called at the Grey Nunnery, and he was first shown over the base-

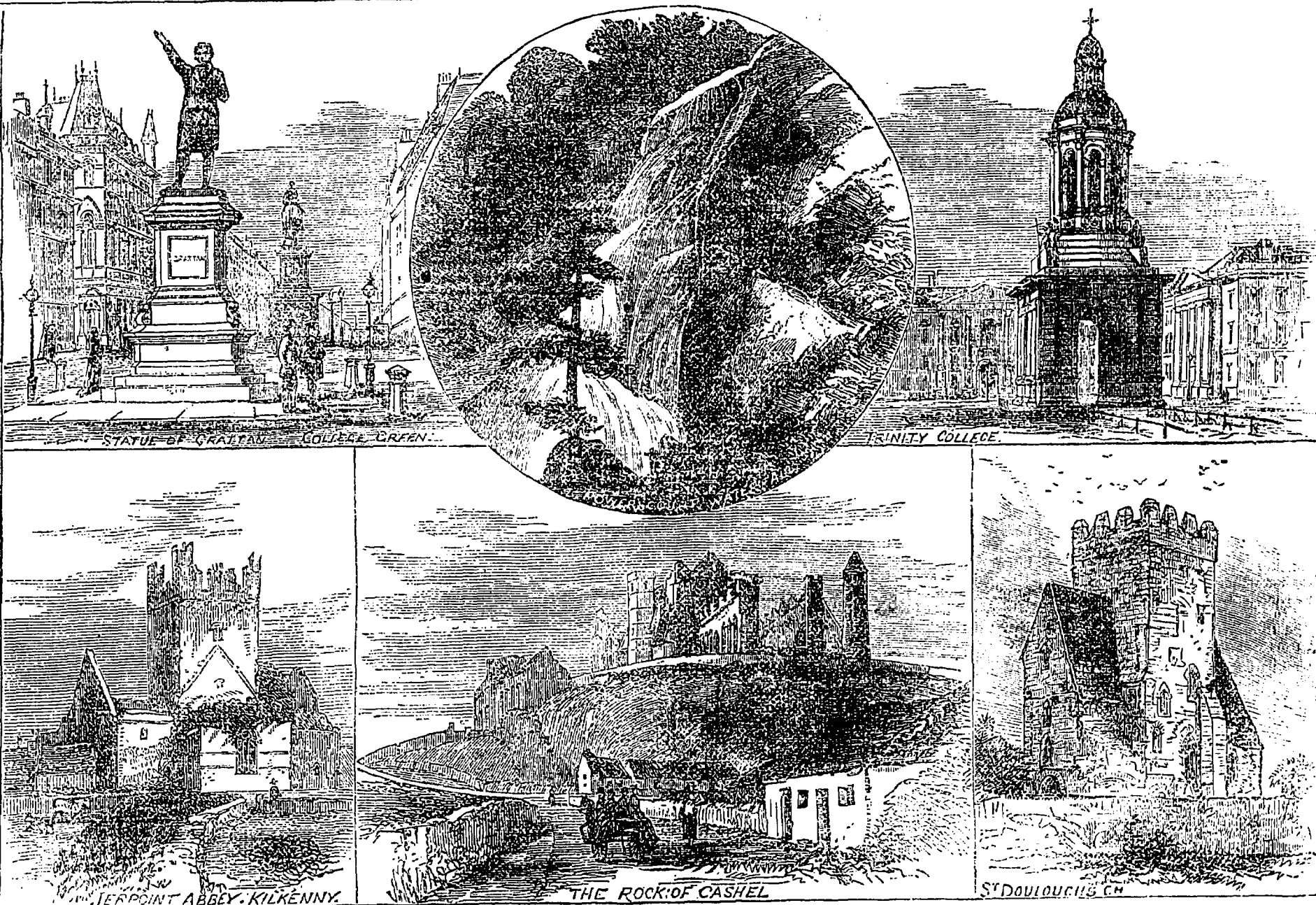
Interesting Ceremony at Coughinawaga.

(From an Occasional Correspondent.)

FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION.

Tuesday, December 3rd, and the feast of St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of the Indians, began the devotion of the forty hours' adoration of the most Blessed Sacrament. A solemn High Mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. Father Oero, Governor of the R. C. N. School; Rev. Father Blanchard, deacon; Rev. Father Brady, sub-deacon; Thomas Phillip, master of ceremonies; Mch. Beauvais, thurifer; Peter Macdonald and Dallibou, acolytes. Among the various Fathers who participated in the Feast were the following well known faces:—Very Rev. Father Bouriniall, cure de La Prairie; Very Rev. Father Boisime, O. M. I.; Rev. Father N. Piche, of Lachine. At the Communion the Temperance Society of St. John the Baptist went forward with lighted tapers in their hands to the sanctuary rails and kissed the Pax, which was held by the officiating priest, and offered to each member as he knelt by the rails. The Gloria, Credo, Communion and Offertory were sung in the native language by admirably trained chorists, the harmony of many passages of which would have reflected great credit on a community with more pretensions to civilization than the Iroquois. After the Mass was over crowds were seen gathering about the confessionals for the purpose of purging from their souls any stain which might defile the only relic on which depended their eternal salvation. At 8 p. m. the village was alive with the good Iroquois, all making their way to the house which contained the majestic presence of their Lord and King, and hastened to adore Him. The bells announced the hour from the commencement until the close, and the good Indians were told off in watches, so that the most Blessed Sacrament was not left alone day or night. Wednesday and Thursday mornings told how much the village profited by the devotion. Mrs. Gedeon Gussion, Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Fletcher are at all times to be found in acts of devotion, so that it is the inhabitants have nothing else left in remembrance of these good Christians they have their good example, which is much more pleasing to God than the councils of astronomers or philosophers. The origin of this holy devotion began in the year 1537 at Milan. A devout Capuchin Monk was preaching the Lenten service in one of the churches, when a fearful disorder made its way among the faithful, and it was feared that it would prove as fatal as one that had preceded it by twelve years, carrying off 120,000 inhabitants. The good Friar suggested to the people the necessity of imploring God to be merciful to them, and that the Blessed Sacrament be conspicuously exposed in the church for forty hours, and that the congregation visit the church and offer up prayers to God that He would spare the city. It is also to be borne in mind that civil dissensions existed throughout the city; that a foreign army was without the walls and threatened the city with all the rigors and horrors of a siege. The Cardinal approved of the suggestion; the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in all the churches; the faithful swarmed in thousands, and with hearts full of the love of God and the prosperity of the city, prostrated themselves in adoration, and offered up one continued prayer to the throne of the Most High God. The result was that the plague vanished, the civil dissensions ceased, and the city was delivered from its enemies. After the mass a procession was formed, which emerged from the sanctuary in the following order:—The sub-deacon, carrying the cross, then about six young Iroquois, in soutane and surplice, with lighted candles in their hands, followed. The Blessed Sacrament was carried by the Very Rev. Father Vero, under a silk canopy fringed and ornamented with gold, borne by four Indians. The procession went out by the epistle side and returned by the gospel side to the altar. During this time the Indian choir sang the *O Salutaris Hosti!* in the native dialect. The processions assembled in the sanctuary. Father Bouriniall led off with the litany of the saints, followed by the remainder of the fathers. The altar was most beautifully decorated with flowers. A large crown was tastefully arranged over the tabernacle, the whole brilliantly illuminated with candles and jets of glass. A High Mass was celebrated each day at 10 a. m. Father Burtin attended to the choir, which reflects great credit on the venerable gentleman for his devotional zeal in the service of his Divine Master, for it may be truly said that the Reverend Father has not only taught the Iroquois how to pray well, but he has taught them how to sing well. No one knows better how to carry out the ritual of the Church than our good Father Burtin. He inspires all with the same zeal, and stirs devotion in the hearts of his hearers.

Legislative Council Dec 5



SCENES IN IRELAND.

the previous evening she had expired. As the city increased in size and population, the number of those who, from their position and infirmities, had special claims on the hospital, increased in a like ratio, and required more ready hands and willing hearts to relieve their necessities.

Skipping with one bound the period of eighty years, during which the hospital grew and prospered, we arrive at 1847, the year of the terrible ship fever. It was useless to tell the readers of the past of the dreadful Irish famine artificially produced and the still more terrible plague which followed. Ireland was laid desolate, her beautiful green fields refused food for the children of the soil, but exhaled death instead, thousands and hundreds of thousands died on the road-sides or in their cabins "unknelt, uncouffed and unknown," and thousands and hundreds of thousands fled across the ocean to seek that peace, plenty and happiness denied them by the land of their nativity. They came to America to find an El Dorado, but a great many of them found graves instead. They carried, unknown to themselves, the seeds of a dangerous contagious disease; many of them died and were cast into the ocean, the foaming billows eternally rolling over their heads instead of the green grass that they fondly dreamt should wave over their sepulchres in the Western land when the toils of this life were over, while others merely landed on our Canadian shores to expire. On the 17th of June, 1847, the news reached the Grey Nunnery that hundreds were dying unaided and unattended on the shores and at Point St. Charles.

The Superior at this time—the venerable Sister Elizabeth Forbes, of Glengarry—called Sister McMullen, believing there was some truth in the report, and selecting Sister St. Croix to accompany her, started at once for the locality specified, and found, to her sorrow and astonishment, that for once report fell short of the truth. The action of Sister Elizabeth was prompt and decisive. She collected all the facts and laid them, in the shape of a report, before the Emigration Agent, requesting powers to act as she thought proper for the amelioration of the unfortunate Irish immigrants. These powers were at once and cheerfully given, and she had authority to do exactly as she pleased in the premises, and to hire as many men and women as she deemed necessary to aid in her noble work, and those assistants were paid by the department upon the signature of the Sisters. Sister McMullen, having now put things on train, returned home with a heavy heart, like Abraham of old. She had gathered the faggots and prepared the funeral pile; the victims only were wanting.

venerable Superior burst into tears, and, with a broken voice, continued:—"On sending you there, I am signing your death warrant; but you are free to accept or to refuse." There was a pause of a few seconds, during which, rapid as the lightning flash, each Sister saw herself kneeling once more before the altar steps, harkening to the solemn demand made by the Bishop, before she pronounced the irrevocable vows:—"Have you considered attentively and reflected seriously on the step you are now going to take? That from this time, your life must be one of sacrifice, and even of death, if the glory of God or the good of your neighbor requires it?" "Yes, My Lord, and I am willing to undertake the task, with God's help." Such were the words once uttered by each of those who now were called on to prove their fidelity. There was no hesitation, no demur, for all arose and stood before their superior while the same exclamation escaped from every lip, "I am ready." Sister McMullen knew the courage of her spiritual daughters as Madame De Youville knew that of her companions. Out of this willing number eight were chosen, and the following morning saw these Sisters cheerfully depart to fulfil the task allotted them.

On arriving at Point St. Charles three large sheds of from 150 to 200 feet long, by from 40 to 50 feet wide, met their view. Separating, the little band of pioneers entered the sheds with the persons they had engaged to assist in the work of resuscitation or of death. What a sight before them! "I almost fainted," said one of the Sisters, in relating her emotions on that eventful day, "when approaching the entrance of this sepulchre, the stench suffocated me, and I saw the number of beings with distorted features and discolored bodies lying huddled and heaped together on the ground, looking like so many corpses. I knew not what to do. I could not advance without treading on one or other of the helpless beings in my path. While in this perplexity my senses were recalled into action on seeing the frantic efforts of a poor being among the prostrate crowd trying to raise himself, while his features expressed an intensity of horror. Treading with precaution, placing the point of one foot where a small space could be found, and then so on with the other, I managed to get near the patient, who, exhausted after the efforts made to call our attention, now lay back pillowed on the Good God, what a sight! Two discolored corpses already in a state of decomposition. "We set to work quickly enough now," said the sister. Clearing a small passage we first carried out the dead bodies, and then replaced thereon the living, who soon had to be removed in their turn. In the open space, near

abated, and until the 24th of the month, (June) no Sister had been absent from the master roll. On this eventful morning two young Sisters could no longer rise at the sound of the matin bell. The plague had chosen its first victims and shortly more were to follow, till 30 lay at the point of death. The professed Sisters of the establishment amounting only to 40, this number could not suffice to superintend their institution, to tend their sick Sisters, 30 of whom now had the fever and to assist at the sheds. There were at this time 25 novices, who now ardently requested to be allowed to fill up the vacancies in the ranks. Their offer was accepted and side by side with the professed Sisters did they toil and triumph—for what else is death, when it gives the martyr's crown? Years were entertained for the safety of the establishment, which fears increased still more when eight Sisters were called to receive their reward. The service at the sheds continued as usual, although the number of nuns had visibly decreased. Twenty-two Sisters were still suffering from the dread disease—some dangerously ill, others convalescent. The former had to be strictly guarded during the days of delirium, for they would rise in their beds and crawl away, saying they were going to the sheds, for the poor people wanted them.

But why pursue this dismal narrative any further. Are the sufferings of the ship fever not written in the history of Canada, as well as the heroism and self-sacrifice of those who succored them? The bones of both lie mouldering "neath the turf of Point St. Charles, and their souls are with the saints we trust. Let us now turn to the Grey Nunnery on Guy street.

The first feeling of the visitor on entering is that he has just passed the threshold of a vast, deserted building, and as he looks down the long and lonely corridor in front of him and sees not a soul and listens attentively and hears not a sound, this feeling is further increased. If he is a Protestant, and especially one who reads the *Witness* and believes in its pious falsehoods, he will probably know that notwithstanding the profound silence maintained, there are nuns inside, but of course slow, slothful and sleeping the hours away, for are not inmates of convents and monasteries proverbial for their laziness. Let him, however, wait before he passes such a rash judgment. He is after ringing the bell, and it is while waiting for some one to answer his call that he has time to make the above reflections. In a short time one of the Sisters appears, and, on learning the object of his visit—to look over the establishment—she expresses herself ready to show him over it, and he follows. And here

This part of the hospital is damp, unwholesome, and therefore unhealthy, and it is from sheer necessity that patients are kept there—it is, in fact, for want of space, all parts of the establishment being occupied at present. In the first room to the right there were about thirty little boys, their ages varying from two to four, uniformly dressed in grey bib-and-tucker, clean and fat, with their hair cut short. They are playing in a circle, and look smiling and happy. Infants under the tender age of two are sent out to nurse, but are generally brought back in the winter. These children are foundlings for the most part, and some of them are left at the doors of the hospital by unnatural parents, who are, perhaps, loudest in their denunciations of the Grey Nunnery and "Papist" institutions generally.

(To be continued.)

Cardinal Manning on the British Empire.

Sneaking the other day at a great meeting of Catholic clergy and laity in Liverpool on behalf of St. Joseph's Foreign Mission Society, Cardinal Manning said that the missionaries were not intended to cope with heathenism beyond the bounds of Christendom, but within the boundaries of the British Empire? And here came a new obligation. Some would ask, What had they to do with the British Empire? But they had all helped to rear up that mighty fabric, the mightiest in the world. When God raised up a mighty empire he did it for a purpose. The old Roman Empire did its work, and it was crushed, crumbled, and utterly destroyed. The great Catholic empire of Spain had passed away like a shadow, and the greatest empire the world had ever seen for extent was the British Empire, which they had helped to build up. They had what Spain never had. They possessed at this time an eighteenth portion, at least, of the habitable globe, and had over two hundred and forty millions of fellow-subjects; and these two hundred and forty million of men, with their 160 princes and chieftains—these realms, and kingdoms and principalities—were all gathered under the sovereignty of the British Empire. Was this without a divine purpose? Was it to pass away as a shadow like Spain? Upon them it depended to give answer unto God if they were to be faithful to their duty. If they partook of the greatness of that empire, they partook of its responsibilities. If they partook of its wealth they partook of its duties. If they partook of its powers, they would partake of its doom. Empires were raised to be the servants of God, and if they would not fulfil this duty God would crush them.

E. R. A. F.
Coughinawaga, Dec. 5, 1879.

A Pain in the Side may be the Precursor of a pleuritic attack. It should not be neglected. If you have none at home send for our Druggist and buy a bottle of BROWN'S HOUSEHOLD PANACEA and Family Linctament, bathe with it frequently the parts affected, and the danger and pain are past.

RELIABLE.—No remedy has been more earnestly desired and none more diligently sought for by the medical profession throughout the world, than a reliable, efficient, and at the same time a safe and certain purgative. Dr. Harvey's Anti-Bilious and Purgative Pills supply this want.

IT WILL RELIEVE THE BABY.—There is no mistake about it. MRS. WINSLOWS SOOTHING SYRUP, for children teething, not only relieves the child from pain, but regulates the stomach and bowels, cures dysentery and diarrhoea, softens the gums, reduces all inflammation, and give rest, health and comfort to the mother and child. It is pleasant to take, and gives universal satisfaction.