

JULY 1, 1893.

CATHOLICITY IN THE MARITIME PROVINCES.

JOHN BODEN IN DONOHUE'S MAGAZINE FOR JUNE.

Canada claims a large share of public attention to-day. With her future the entire continent is concerned. What it may be must almost necessarily for years remain problematical. There is a feeling, however, that in the hands of the citizens the country will make history that will never need an apologist. In the discussion which has recently occupied the space of the daily press on this side of the line there have here and there dropped out innuendoes that Canada is an undesirable place, because, it is claimed, it is largely dominated by the members and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is true the Roman Catholics of Canada stand well to-day in the esteem of their fellow-citizens, but it is only because of their acknowledged patriotism, their industry, talents and ambition. Years ago and there was but one Province in the entire Dominion in which they were not regarded as absolute aliens. It to-day they fill high places in public, social and professional life it is because they have scaled the barricades that opposed their progress, and in spite of sternest opposition scaled heights that once were held by the exclusive few. Every milestone made in their march is a monument to an ambition that refused to bow to the barriers it met on its way.

Their triumphs were peaceful ones. Even in provinces in which they have gained an ascendancy in numbers there are no captives at their chariot wheels, there are no heart-burnings in the communities in which they live, there is no man between the oceans who can point to an act done by the Catholics which any citizen might blush for. The right to an honest competence, an honorable fame and the liberty to worship God in the faith of their fathers have been all they struggled for, all that any of them has achieved and more than many have yet accomplished.

Catholicism in general in Canada this brief sketch does not profess to even outline. It will merely refer to it in the Maritime Provinces of the Dominion, composed of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island—three provinces blessed with wealth of forest, mine and sea. Rugged in natural beauty, bracing in climate, rich in harvests, they are provinces in which one expects to see men hardy in body, healthy in mind, of large heart and wholesome expression. It is a land in which the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to a large extent prevails. It is yet in the early stages of its development and drones and weak men in any branch are not encouraged.

Years ago the bulk of the good lands of these provinces, or at least the town sites, were parcelled out among the men known to history as United Empire Loyalists. They remain them still to a very great extent. The rest of the provinces in which homes had to be hewn out of the forests by the sweat of the immigrant's brow were laid open to settlers. After the famine of '47 many of the Irish were glad to find a home anywhere far from the sad scenes of their native land. They, bound they knew not where, but confident that no fate could be worse than the one they were leaving. Their consignors were Englishmen of rank, and they shipped them to the Maritime Provinces of Canada, where they might do the traditional hewing of wood and carrying of water for the distinguished Loyalists.

What these immigrants suffered on the fever-laden ships into which they were huddled, parallels some of the worst atrocities committed in the days of the slave trade on African coasts. Down on Partridge Island, at the entrance to the harbor of St. John, the traveller yet may see the remains of the great deep trenches into which the immigrant was flung who had died in the very sight of the land of promise. There was no choice for the living but to accept the situation.

These immigrants formed practically the nucleus of the Catholic colony. They were not the first Catholics by any means to settle, but they were the first of any considerable number. Poor they were in pocket, but resourceful and industrious. They brought with them the Faith from Connaught where it was ever pure, and from Ulster where it had become confirmed. It was a living faith, deep and simple. It marked their lives and left its impress on the land of their adoption. Fertile fields attracted the thrifty Scot, mainly to Prince Edward Island, but to the Irish principally, the famine immigrants, their friends and their children, is the progress of Catholicity due.

Wherever they went, their first care was to have a priest to bless their work and comfort them with the sacraments. Their religion travelled with them, and grew as they grew in numbers and in influence. The priest advanced with the pioneer and shared with him the privations of his life. People born within the brick walls of a crowded city, or they who know life only as it comes blessed in pleasant towns, can form no adequate idea of either the sacrifices of a priest in a country mission, or of a people in settlements only sparsely inhabited. There are trials for both and hardships that we can scarcely understand. Less than forty years ago, for example, the present

venerable Bishop of the diocese of St. John, Right Rev. Dr. Sweeney, than whom the Church has no more zealous prelate, was a humble missionary who had frequently to drive over rough country roads in biting wintry weather twelve and sometimes as many as twenty miles, to reach his flock. After that ride, to reach his flock—for in those days there were no railroads in that country and the young priest was too poor to have a servant—he would hear confessions, then say Mass and subsequently preach in both French and English. It took men of iron constitution as well as of heart bound up in their work to stand the strain, but the Catholic priest, true soldier of the Church, counted not the sacrifices he made. His flock had to make some too. They would come in to hear Mass from distances ranging more than a score of miles, those of them who had horses driving, and those of them who had not, walking. The priest was to them the representative of the Faith for whose sake they and their fathers had been chastened in persecution. He was their adviser, spiritually and temporally, receiving their children into the Church and preparing themselves for the fateful journey which all must take through the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. Nor is the work of the missionary over. Outside the large towns good priests continue their labors in sunshine and in storm, doing a work that can only be adequately recognized by those who know what it means to drive over rough roads in the heart of a Canadian winter. Whatever of comfort there is in the life of a missionary priest in the Maritime Provinces comes solely from the inner consciousness of work well done.

The first care of the priest is to have a church, no matter how humble it be; and alongside that church and beneath the shadow of the cross which crown it, rises the school. Where you see one you see the other. There is scarce a village in the three provinces where you cannot find the church and the school. To build them the good Father may be obliged to draw on the generosity of his personal friends, or pinch himself by contributions from his own meagre little stipend; but they are built and paid for. From one end of the country to the other the crosses on the steeples of the churches tell the traveller the stories of the faith of the people and the zeal of the priesthood. Religion comes first; and next, and walking hand in hand with it, is education. This accounts for the progress of the race. Religion makes of them good citizens, and education places them the peers of any men in the land. Illiterate some of the immigrants, through no fault of their own, came to Canada. They realize the handicap it was upon them, and they now are seeing that their children are fitted to cope in the arena of life with any that may care to break a lance with them.

It is a matter susceptible of absolute demonstration that the Roman Catholics have made more sacrifices in the cause of education than those of any other creed in the country. Ambition was ever a distinguishing quality of the Irish in the old land and it is a characteristic that has stood the transplanting and thriven well in the new one. There is scarce a family that has not sought to make all its children educated to select some one for some line of life in which talent would shine as conspicuously. In consequence, all along the field of legitimate endeavor you find the Catholic laboring with intelligence and success. Some years ago there may have been some professions in which, were a call made for a Catholic to lead, there might be hesitancy in filling the place. There is none to-day. And this state of affairs has been brought about, not by an untoward rivalry—not by any assertions of mere numbers—not through any favor—but by the force of talent, pluck, industry and ambition. The labors of the Catholic priest in establishing the schoolhouses were the seeds from which this glorious harvest sprung.

In writing thus of the Irish there is no discrimination intended against the Scotch and English Catholics who have prospered equally, but the Irish so overwhelmingly predominate in numbers that they may be taken as an evidence of the whole. Nor is there any intention of withholding admiration for the Acadians, who have suffered much in the years gone by both for their religion and their loved La Belle France. In Nova Scotia and in Eastern New Brunswick their villages are a distinct feature of the land. The people are quiet and deeply religious, living in themselves and by themselves. The shadow of their great sadness seems to lie over them still. They are industrious—and not without excellent reason—of the great world that lies beyond their village boundaries and are content in their pastoral pursuits to pass away the years. The men clothe themselves in the homespun of the flax they grow, the women dress in the simplest of plain black gowns worn by themselves, with a deep snow-white collar falling half-way to their shoulders which seems to intensify the color of the costume.

The traveller who enters the valleys in which they dwell may well believe himself in peasant France. Morning, noon and night the Angelus is chimed from the belfry of the church, which is never absent, however poor the community. It matters not where the Acadian may be—at work in the field or the shop, at home or by the roadside—at the first sound of the bell the head is bared and bowed and the

Angelus piously said. On great feast days, such as Corpus Christi, the Blessed Eucharist is carried in public procession through the main road of the village or the chief street of the town, about whose sides in reverent homage kneel the simple peasants. No man can see these scenes and not feel his heart touched with the faith of the Acadian.

And this exhibition of faith is very rarely found wanting among Catholics in any part of the Maritime Provinces. There is no display of it, but neither is there any hiding. Nor is there cause to be any. Starting with nothing but faith, the Catholic Church is richer by far in the number of its churches, its schools, its orphanages, its hospitals and general charitable institutions than any other church in the three provinces. Its cathedrals in Halifax, St. John, Charlottetown and Antigonish are magnificent testimonials to the generosity of its members. Its churches everywhere attest the devotion of the people and command the admiration of every one. There is not a city in the three provinces to-day in which the institutions under the direct control of the Catholics, are not invariably pointed to the visitor with pride by his host as among the evidences of material prosperity as well as religious influences.

The facts are the best tribute that can be paid to Archbishop O'Brien, of Halifax, the cultured and zealous head of the hierarchy, patriot as well as priest; to "the learned Cameron," the Right Reverend and venerated Bishop of Antigonish; to Bishop Sweeney, the beloved head of the diocese of St. John; to the memory of the late Bishop McIntyre, and to his successor, Bishop McDonald, to whose efforts the Church owes the great advancement it has made in lovely Prince Edward Island; to Bishop Rogers, of Chatham, never tiring in his endeavors that have made his school flourish in the wilds of Northern New Brunswick. They are the heads that have directed every effort and watched after every detail. Their work whenever that sustains the flock due debt threatened, and to them is due a debt of gratitude that words can never tell.

They have guided not merely the youth of the land in spiritual ways, but by their counsel and their charity have aided many young men in achieving ambitions for the attainment of which friendly co-operation was essential. Once education ended, however, there ended as well all things temporal save good wishes. Except and only when the issues were forced upon them in the days of the school troubles in New Brunswick did the Catholic priest ever venture into the domain of politics. In Canada the priesthood has too high an appreciation of its sacred office to mix in politics. When it has aided in securing the advantages of a liberal education to the members of the Church, it believes they are qualified to act by themselves and for themselves in the exercise of their franchise as their conscience and best judgment dictate.

In politics there is no such thing as a Catholic party. They are divided on economic questions as they are in this country, and refrain most carefully from ever dragging religion to the polls. Occasionally the cry about the Catholic vote is raised, but in an experience covering some years of more or less intimate relationship with elections in the Province of New Brunswick the writer never once knew a Catholic to refuse to vote for any man who was of his political faith, but who did not worship at his altar. They who cry out against the Catholic vote, as they term it, are petty little political time servers driven to their very last ditch and who, in their extremity, shriek against the Catholic vote that they may rally to their aid the intolerant. Sometimes snap elections are gained thereby, but, after elections, they who raised these cries are among the first to acknowledge they had no ground for so doing and no reason save the desire of self-preservation.

Bigotry is dying rather than dead. Evidence of it are growing less frequent with the years for the all-sufficient reason that when they rear their heads they are stamped upon. This is done in neither hostile nor aggressive manner, but in a spirit of manly self-assertion. Many of the people had their right cheek slapped by bigotry in the older land from which they emigrated and their left one smote by the early intolerance of the newer one to which they came. In the fulness of time they wearied of this periodical chastisement, and their children grew up indisposed to submit, without protest, to the popular delusion that they were of an alien race that might labor, but never lead.

They sought only an equal chance with their fellows in the forum and about the workshop and resolved to have it. Theoretically it was always theirs, but in the Maritime Provinces, as in all the world over, conditions were not necessarily harmonious with the theory. The constitution barred no one, but majorities did, and the struggle for recognition was a long and bitter uphill one, not quite won yet, but still so close at hand as to be almost within grasp. There are no positions to-day to which the Catholic may not aspire and but comparatively few that he may not attain. It would be a grievous injustice not to admit cheerfully that the present generation of Protestants are broader far in their views and more charitable than were their forefathers, but the bulk of the Catholic population is Irish and from these forefathers even this generation have a heritage of almost contempt for them.

Education and business have done much to disabuse them of their prejudice. Education on their part has broadened them to an appreciation of merit in others, and intercourse in business has made them recognize the worth of their Irish Catholic fellow-citizen. They have gradually learned that the better the Catholic the better the citizen. In matters where talent would win the day they have had practical experience that in solving the problem of success a man's faith is no shadow on the brightness of his intellect. In places reached alone by favor there is yet a disposition to make of the Catholic only the foster child of the state; but that does not worry the prescribed ones at all. Their fathers lived without state aid in the past and the children of these fathers are not utterly dependent upon it. In fact it would seem unnatural for an Irish Catholic to earn his bread through the taxes produced by the sweat of other people's brows.

Some of them are in office both appointive and elective, and more would be, perhaps, but that the earth and the best products thereof are supposed to be the rightful inheritance of those whose blood traces backward to the men who left New England in the early days of the Revolution. One thing to the credit of the Catholics, he said, they do not barter their franchise for office. They repudiate the idea that their Faith is a barrier to advancement in any walk of life, and resent any attempt on the part of others to consider it so; but there it ends. Oft-times they have been punished for it, but they bore it without grumbling. Loyal themselves to the parties of their choice, they have seen men break their allegiances and wreck their party in their anger that merit in a Catholic had been recognized, but they await in silence and in confidence the reckoning that surely comes for prejudice so mad as this.

Time is curing a lot of that. The Irish are a prolific as well as an ambitious race, with a talent for politics, and with the continued extension of the franchise it will not be many years until no man will care to antagonize them. They do not seek a preponderance of power, but there is no assurance that they may be always disposed to keep in the background when requested so to do. Thus far they have not asserted themselves, as they could do were they in a mood to be at times as intolerant as are some of their critics. I recall a constituency in which the Catholics formed a full one-half of the entire strength of the Liberal party. This constituency sent three members to the Commons and yet, from confederation, the Catholics were never represented by a man of their creed on the ticket. Whether Liberal or Conservative, the Catholic is so from conviction and votes his ballot even though in so doing he is obliged to rub elbows with men who do not know that the prejudices of the Old World can find no congenial soil in this.

The writer does not mean in referring to this particular instance that merely because the Catholics are numerically so strong they should have been honored by the nomination of a candidate of their creed, but merely to show that in politics principle guides them. The day may come when a Catholic will be nominated, and if it ever does, it will be interesting to note if the dissenting brethren will be as generous in supporting this nominee as his co-religionists now are in giving their suffrages to the choice of the party. If they are it will be a most pleasing and convincing proof of the advancement of the people in toleration. All wish that it may be so. The young country is surely too fair, too alert, too filled with the spirit of freedom to harbor the unnatural resentments of ages that have happily passed forever.

Imperfect, indeed, would be the briefest sketch of Catholicism in the Maritime Provinces that did not pay a word of tribute to St. Joseph's College, which nestles in the valley of the Memramcook, sweetest by far of all Acadian vales. Nearly thirty years ago it was founded by Very Rev. Father Lefebvre, of the Order of the Holy Cross, who had little else save the zeal of the missionary in Catholic education to aid him. To-day it is an institution of which the people of New Brunswick, irrespective of creed, may well be proud. Its graduates are in the forefront of public and professional life. They are in the Canadian senate, in the House of Commons and the provincial legislatures, on the bench and at the bar, winning their way in medicine and the arts. At the altars of every diocese in the entire Canada, and in the great archdioceses of Boston, New York and St. Paul, officiate priests who claim St. Joseph's as their Alma Mater. Age has grown apace with honors upon Father Lefebvre, but younger men are there taking up and continuing the good work. Among them the most distinguished is Father A. B. O'Neill, C. S. C., a contributor to Donohue's Magazine, a zealous priest and able scholar, the friend of every man who needs a friend, combining within him those qualities of heart and head which have always made the Irish priest the idol of his race. It was the proud privilege of the writer to be a student under Father O'Neill, and he knows that in this very inadequate tribute he is joined not merely by every graduate of St. Joseph's in the land and in Canada, but by every one who realizes that in Catholic education lies the future of our people.

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MISLEADING STATEMENTS.

The Philadelphia Methodist in speaking of a lecture on Mexico, lately delivered in this city by Dr. Bushrod W. James, seems to represent the latter as saying in Mexico: "A beautiful country cursed by three hundred years of hierarchical rule, but now open to the gospel of Christ in its purer forms, as preached by Protestantism." We have been assured by one who was present at the lecture that Dr. James made no such statement. Our contemporary therefore deserves all the credit of the discovery. What it should have said—if it desired to be correct—is, that Mexico was blessed by the preaching of the true faith there before Methodism had any existence. We have still another point against the Methodist. It prints what it calls "canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, as taught by Dr. G. F. Von Schulte, professor of canonical law at Prague." There is no "Dr. G. F. Schulte, professor of canonical law" at Prague. The teachers of canon law at that university are Emil Ott and Jiri Prazak, as may be seen in the *Minerva*, or address-book of university professors, for 1892.

There is a Professor J. F. Von Schulte, formerly at Prague, now at Bonn. Since 1870 he has been a virulent leader of the "Old Catholics," and is now a schismatic and heretic. He is, therefore, no longer qualified to speak for the Catholic Church, even if his passionate and partial utterances had not long since diminished his authority he once enjoyed among us. For years previous to 1870 Von Schulte belonged to the ultra-national German, like Dollinger, Friedrich, Huber, Reinkens and others, who got Romophobia on the brain because Rome would not let them have their ways in ecclesiastical matters and thereby commit suicide. The Methodist is wrong in supposing there is any chair of canon law in the Catholic Church. The introduction of that kind of law into Christendom dates from the year 1517.

As to the statements as quoted from Von Schulte, they are all either directly false and calumnious, without any authority, or are so maliciously stated as to mislead the leader unacquainted with such dishonest tactics. The whole document is in the style of those clumsy forgeries occasionally circulated under the caption of "Papal Bulls" and "Briefs." Our respectable contemporary should leave this kind of work to the disreputable and "low-down" A. P. A. organs of the West.—*Philadelphia Catholic Times*.

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