

Striking Sermon of A Protestant Minister.

The Rev. Benjamin F. De Costa, who last week resigned the rectory of the Protestant Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist, New York, preached the following sermon last Sunday before a large congregation. It took for its text, Mark iv, 26: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." and spoke in part as follows:

"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. Yet the manifestation of Christ in the garden of Eden is not the same as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Christ is ever the same in His nature and redemptive work, but from the commencement of the work down to the present day there has been a gradual evolution in its manifestation.

"This evolutionary movement will go on and on, increasing throughout the ages in its nature, the law is evolution that is development. The type of church growth is found in the progress from blade to ear, from the grain of mustard seed to the full ear of wheat. This is equally true in sociology. Society obeys this law. Nevertheless, an opposite law is urged for the Church. It might be defined in evolution as opposed to 'evolution,' or in terms of shallow compliment, 'simplicity,' as opposed to 'complexity.'

The minimizing of Christianity. This story of 'simplicity' calls for the minimizing of Christianity, by a theory of 'teleology,' causing the full corn to slide back into the ear, and the shrinking of the tall tree into the grain of mustard seed. By this process man would reach the 'simplest elements.' They would reduce the great and noble to the simple, and the noble and magnificent to the simple. This is the theory which men are urging both without and within the Episcopal Church. The work is to get back to essential Christianity and to destroy all that is 'superfluous.' Infidelity's hold on the Episcopal Church.

"This is the scheme of that infidelity now so strongly entrenched in the Episcopal body. It would strip the bough from the branch, and the branch from the tree. We have seen trees that have undergone this process and they stand bare, bleached and dead. It is a violation of the law of nature, and death must be the inevitable result. We have the full type of this tree in the barren dead stump of unitarianism. The plea for 'simplicity' is merely a plea for denial and doubt, and would rest satisfied with nothing short of agnosticism.

"The so-called 'Blessed Reformation' has been gradually working toward this result from the time of Henry VIII. 'Private Judgment,' dispensing with Divine Inspiration, inevitably tends to judge God out of His own world. Let us turn from this ghastly conspiracy to consider briefly evolution, which would shrink all belief into nothingness, leaving the soul in the blackness of moral right.

"The course of nature followed by the Church in the days of our Lord's words, indicating the steps from blade and ear to corn. His words formed a prophecy of the future progress of Christianity and the growth of the Church, which, from the simple like society and the simple interest has proceeded to the complex.

Simple Creed Means No Creed. In opposing a complex religion the simple opposes nature. He projects war equally against theology and sociology. A "simple creed" means no creed and the simple rule for society means no rule, "simplicity," on the one hand, leading to agnosticism, and, on the other, to "anarchy." This is the last analysis of "simplicity," and simple rule and no creed.

In opposition to this trend of thought which might be described as the agnostic aspiration of all true disciples of the Protestant Reformation—we have the aspiration of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, which, from a grain of mustard seed, has grown to be a splendid tree, new leaves and boughs continually adding to the magnificent spectacle. From the days of the Apostles this work of development has been going on.

The notion that this tree attained its perfection in the days of the Apostles has no support in the Bible or history. Besides, if perfection was accomplished in the days of the Apostles, why do even many of those who exalt the Bible call themselves Orthodox now ask for perfection and a Creed even more perfect than the "Apostles' Creed"? Indeed, so far as dogmatic statement may be concerned, there was no perfection of belief, even in the age of the blessed Apostles. It was the work of Councils to unfold the belief in fuller statements as exigencies in the Church required. By degrees, Christianity received its present dogmatic form, following the order of a true evolution, in accordance with the advance made in sociology, national development, scientific discovery, learning and general intelligence.

The inadequacy of the New Testament. It is idle to suppose that we are to restrict ourselves to what is found in the New Testament. The disciples who laid the foundation of the Church had no New Testament, and when years afterwards, the New Testament was completed, authorized, and added to the old, the world saw that practically, there were two Bibles, two sources of guidance, the written and the spoken word. That speaking word was the Church, the living guide and teacher of mankind. The Church now speaks, and ever must speak, in harmony with the Written Word. From the Apostles' days until now the Church has been speaking, and the same rule will be heard and obeyed until the end of time. The Age of Inspiration has not passed. The Age of Councils has not passed. Generation after generation of Councils will speak to the world. The age of dogmatic definition, no more than that of scientific definition, has passed. Science and Theology will go on together in the development of their respective defini-

tions. Dogma declared by authority will take on, not fewer, not lesser, but, rather, more inclusive and even grander forms. Exploitation is the genius of Christianity, but outgrowth is its law. seen in the blade, the ear and full corn. All the things in the world will not stop this growth. It must increase in richness and variety and complexity to the end of time. It will grow in intellectual power, for neither is the age of intellect a thing of the past. (Invitation itself is a miracle. The whole course of what we call the "miracle," the constitution of things in its very nature is miraculous, and the Church of God is founded there.

The Catholic Church operates in accordance with this order, which is the Divine order. It has special works of saints and holy men who move the arm of God will be scorned by ignorance and in vain.

Thus we return to the Blessed Saviour's word: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Men who desire to go back from the corn to the blade and to put a mustard seed—and a dead one at that—in the place of the grand overhauling tree have something to learn. The Faculty of the Sorbonne for "Simplicity of Religion."

This class of men, doubtless, includes many who have no enmity to Christianity, but merely desire to have some little scheme that they think they can grasp, and when one speaks of the loss of an eye, the loss of a limb, the loss of a bit of literary expression, to put in the place of the Church's creeds and council declarations, he may be treated to an oration. Nevertheless, all this is idle. They might as well ask for an expression of science or society in a nutshell.

Therefore the Church stands forth to interpret the Divine. Generation on generation the Catholic Church has been engaged in showing the world in one and more of trial, and interpreting the greatest of all events in history—the Incarnation, and exhibiting its demands.

There is not a little attraction in connection with the schemes to minimize, and sectarian are tempted to enter upon the work of producing the "universal denomination" by inventing a plan for accomplishing unity. Whether it be the case of an ambitious Protestantism or an aspiring Judaism, the plan is the same.

The Uselessness and Worthlessness of "Pruning," "Cutting," Etc. It is illustrated by a character in "Daniel Deronda," whose words have recently been quoted, speaking of Judaism, he said, "Pruning is a form of useless rite and literal interpretations, and our religion is the simplest of all religions, and makes no barrier, but a union between us and the rest of the world." Thus really do men hope to invent a religion by the cutting of the leaves and bark, shave off the knots, and smooth it at top and bottom, put it where you will, it will do no harm. It is the work of the Father, and the Frothinghams, with others of their kind, found it so, and finally resigned from the pulpit. All Protestantism will find it so at last. Wise men will prefer the Catholic and Apostolic Church, with its fullness, its complexity, its universality and authority.

THE CIRCULATION OF GOOD BOOKS.

The Liverpool Catholic Times says: Just at the present Madame Mabco, a Catholic lady, in travelling through Italy for the purpose of promoting an association of an international character. It is called, "The International Catholic Society for the Circulation of Good Books." Two years ago Madame Mabco founded it at Bordeaux, with the blessing of the Father, and the encouragement of several Cardinals and other ecclesiastical dignitaries. The objects in view are to provide Catholic libraries in towns where they do not exist, to distribute books among Catholic societies, and to give them to prison chaplains for the use of those under their charge, to found Catholic libraries in rural districts and at military stations, to supply books to the hospitals and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and to bring Catholic publications to the notice of the working classes. A society of this kind working energetically must prove of immense benefit, provided it is directed with good judgment. And in the first place care must be taken not to confound good books with those that are merely gooey-good. Unfortunately this is too often done on the continent. Well-meaning people, failing to take account of the diversity of talents, tastes, and habits, and helped to imagine that all men should be content with literary fare if it have a moral flavour, even though wanting in substance and vigor. Thus the moralizers in our opinion created weakness by their method, and helped to produce that indifference which prevails so extensively in some of the continental countries. For a Catholic literature on such narrow lines there is no reason beyond needless timidity. French literature was never more flourishing than when France was most strongly Catholic. The names of Bossuet, Fénelon, Bourdaloue, Cornelle, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine and Boileau are in themselves synonyms for strength and vigor. The tradition to which they lent such a halo has never been quite broken, but it became weak, and too much of the intellectual force of authors was adverse to the faith. Of late Catholic vitality has been re-animating itself in literary publications, and the enemies of the Church have found its influence more difficult to resist.

INCENSE IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES.

There seems to be an impression, says "The Record," that only a very small number of churches are affected by the decision of the archbishop on the liturgical use of incense. So also is there being so few the history will be easily able to bring the clergy up to the point of obedience. But so far from the churches concerned with the decision being few, there are 259 churches in the diocese of London, and these where incense is used, and these are therefore vitally affected by it. The chief seat of the mischief is, of course, London, but every English diocese (except Carlisle) is tinged with it to a greater or less degree. So also is the diocese of London; the other Welsh dioceses are, however, happily free from it. A return, diocese by diocese, has been compiled by The Record, of the churches where incense is used, and it publishes two tables, one giving the summary of the result, and the other a list of the churches affected. The following is the diocesan summary:—Canterbury, 3; York, 21; Bath and Wells, 10; Bristol, 5; Chester, 5; Chichester, 11; Durham, 1; Ely, 2; Exeter, 14; Gloucester, 13; Hereford, 2; Lichfield, 5; Lincoln, 10; Liverpool, 5; Llandaff, 8; London, 48; Manchester, 2; Newcastle, 6; Norwich, 13; Oxford, 12; Peterborough, 5; Ripon, 4; Rochester, 2; St. Albans, 17; Salisbury, 4; Sodor and Man, 1; Southwell, 12; Truro, 8; Wakefield, 4; Winchester, 12; Worcester, 10; total, 289.

THE JESUITS AGAIN—A SCARE FOR THE ENGLISH.

M. Urbain Gohier, author of L'Armée Contre la Nation, contributes a remarkable article to the 18th September National Review, entitled, "Anglophobia—A French Warning to England." M. Gohier says:—"It is the fact that Germany, satisfied with her victories over Austria and France, and ambitious of becoming a great continental colonial power, seeks to range under her hegemony the states of Continental Europe, at any rate, of Central Europe, and to direct them against the British Empire.

to this end she has devoted the last fifteen years to effecting a reconciliation with France. It is likewise true that her skillful and persevering propagandists have appreciably modified French opinion. It is also true that this modification takes the form of a direct attack on England rather than the direct form of attachment to Germany." M. Gohier thinks that—"The key to the European situation is obtained by a rapprochement of three facts—in the first place, the result of what we call the 'war of reaction,' were recently officially recalled and reinstated in Germany by William II.; in the second place, the French Jesuits control the Army, the money power, and the social and political forces of France; in the third place all the writers and politicians working for the Jesuits are striving to reconcile France with Germany, and in kindling French hatred against England.

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AMERICANS AND THE DREYFUS CASE

Bystander, (Dr. Goldwin Smith), in the Weekly Sun says: "The verdict at Rennes, which has not only excited the world, but is evidently not judicial, but political. It is intended to combine regard for the character of the army with mercy to Dreyfus, whose sufferings will now surely end. This is not justice. Justice would require that the world should be made to understand the circumstances of a secret understanding between Dreyfus and the Germans seems to have passed unexplained, though capable of explanation, and to have given grounds for the conviction. It could, however, be really nothing that could be dignified with the name of evidence against the prisoner. Of the spuriousness of the incriminating document, though one or two experts appear to hold belief in its genuineness, there can be no real doubt. There has been a perversion of justice, deplorable in itself, and profoundly injurious to the honor of France. When this is admitted, though it has been said, there is no use in raving, or in treating France as if she were the only nation that had ever been swept by a storm of unreasoning and unjust passion. Mr. Levy, the American Congressman who has proposed to boycott the French Exposition. Has he ever heard of a nation, which allowed itself to be hurried into an iniquitous war by the belief, not only unsupported by evidence, but on the face of its proposition, that the French Government had blown up the Maine? Has he ever heard of a nation in which a man, without trial, can not only with perfect impunity, but with the applause of thousands, be first mutilated, then burnt alive? The mercenaries of St. Louis, it seems, are filled with passionate sympathy for Dreyfus, and unanimously resolve to boycott France. It was in their States was it not, that the other day the black women, merely on suspicion as to their character, were flogged till their clothes were saturated with blood? If the French truly sympathized with Dreyfus, they would not have let him be whipped and tortured with hot irons, and poured with carbolic acid into his wounds. Nor was there in France a total absence of public protest or of any proof of national feeling against the iniquity. Supporting Dreyfus had been a black man."

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