The Catholic Register.

"Truth is Catholic, proclaim it over, and God will effect the rest." BALMEZ.

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Current Topics.

The Boer War. Since the three successive repulses of the British advances to the relief of the beleaguered places, Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking, there has ensued what may be looked upon as practically a suspension of hostilities. The British are waiting for reinforcements before making any further attempts to advance, while the Boers, by their inactivity, plainly show that they do not consider themselves strong enough to assume the offensive. The fact that these fortified places still held by the British proves that, however skilful the Boers may be in art of defensive warfare, they lack the dash and determination necessary to capture fortified positions. It is thought by military experts that Kimberley at least will capitulate or be stormed before assistance can arrive. In the meantime, Generals Roberts and Kitchener are hastening, and strong reinforcements are being hurried to the scene of action. Never, perhaps, has England met with such a stunning surprise; but public opinion appears to be solid for the prosecution of the war. No interference would be tolerated, no offers of mediation would be accepted. The stake being played for us, practically speaking, the British Empire, and there will be no cessation until the Union Jack waves at Pretoria, unless some twist or turn of events should draw or precipitate some of the European powers into the struggle. Whatever diversity of opinion there may be about the cause of the war, there can be only one end to it, and that will be the subjugation or conquest of the Transvaal. Britain has advanced too far to think of retreat, but the cost has yet to be counted. The Queen's health is said to be greatly affected by her grief, at the terrible losses sustained by her troops, while many homes in the Kingdom are mourning the death of loved ones in battle. The position at present offers no hope of a speedy termination of the war, which will be resumed with greater vigor than ever, with bloodier battles and more awful losses. Much is expected of Roberts and Kitchener by the British people.

The Religious Outlook. The close of the nineteenth century promises to be a time of unusual interest in the religious world. The religious press has been fairly well occupied for several weeks past in peering into the future, and in trying to read the signs of the times. Non-Catholic religious writers in this direction seem to be divided into two classes—the optimists and pessimists. The former claim that there is sure to be a great religious revival, reaching out to the non-church-going classes; the latter, that the churches are "flat, stale and unprofitable"—dead so far as their influence over the masses is concerned. These opposite views are, of course, extreme, and the truth concerning the religious situation seems to lie somewhere between them.

In the world of Protestant belief today the people appear to have arrived at the age of doubt, uncertainty and criticism—the natural and logical outcome of the Reformation, and of subsequent centuries of unstable, changeable and indefinite religious forms, due to the casting off of authority and the recognition of the right of every man to map out his own religion.

The Catholic Church, too, is thoroughly alive to the spirit and possibilities of the times, and bound by her Divine mission will make every effort to preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and bring individuals, nations and peoples into the one true fold. The celebration of the Holy Year inaugurated by the Pope, the special crusade to be commenced in England for the conversion of the English people, the marvelous life and activity displayed by the Catholic Church all over the world, go to show that she at least, is confident of her destiny, her teachings, and her place in the religious world.

Municipal Elections. The near approach of the Municipal elections, will for the moment to some extent divert public attention from the all absorbing topic of the war. The possibility of the right or wrong spending of large sums of public money should arouse every citizen to a clear sense of duty,—to vote for such candidates as he really believes will administer municipal affairs fairly, honestly and economically. Out of twenty-four Aldermen in this city, twenty are seeking re-election. It should not be a very difficult matter for the citizens of Toronto, who have the past year's record of the twenty gentlemen before them, to determine who are worthy of future confidence, and who are not. In the Mayoralty contest there are three candidates, Alderman Hallam, Mr. E. F. Clarke and Mr. E. A. Macdonald, each of whom is well known to his fellow citizens. As a recent cartoon in the Toronto World ably illustrates it, "You pay your taxes and you takes your choice." But every honest citizen should see to it that the taxes taken are faithfully and usefully expended. May the best men win!

Quebec and the War. The controversy in Quebec concerning the war and Canadian participation therein is occupying considerable space in the French-Canadian press; but it is difficult to say whether the hostility to and the open condemnation of Britain's policy in South Africa is from and of the people themselves, or an issue forced into public view for merely party purposes. It will be well for Canada and her future welfare if the latter be the case,—well, if the people of the Province of Quebec remain true and steadfast to their traditions. If the majority of the chief French-Canadian papers express the sentiments of the Quebec people, then, such appears to be the strength of public opinion in favor of Great Britian in the other Provinces, that a very serious question threatens to confront the Canadian people in the near future, we fail to see, however, in view of what has been done by the Federal government towards assisting in the war, how any charge against Sir Wilfrid Laurier of disloyalty or even of coolness towards the mother country can be seriously entertained certainly not sustained. It is all very well to say that he did not act before opinion had compelled him to act. But if it is the duty of a representative government to carry into effect the will of the people, is it not also its duty to first ascertain what that will is? The only error—if error it be—committed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier was in not summoning parliament before sending the first contingent. The imperative demand of the people as expressed by the press was duly obeyed and that at the risk of future criticism and possible condemnation.

Catholic Truth Society and Wholesome Literature.

It may be interesting to the members of the Catholic Truth Society in Canada to know that the Society has been established in Ireland, and is now in active operation. On the suggestion of his Eminence, Cardinal Logue, steps were taken for its establishment, and the movement received the approbation of the Bishops of Ireland. At a meeting in Dublin, on the 12th of October, the Society was formerly constituted, and its staff organized.

In England and in Canada, this Society has taken deep root, and is doing a great deal of valuable work in the interests of the Catholic religion. Its object is two-fold, to spread Catholic literature for the purpose of refuting error, as well as for the dissemination of the truth. In countries of mixed creeds, its usefulness to the cause of Catholic truth cannot be well over-estimated. The following detailed statement of the objects and aims of the Society, as set forth by the Bishops of Clonfert, will be read with interest by Canadian readers.

"The main object of the Society is, as its name implies, the diffusion by means of cheap publications of sound Catholic literature in popular form, so as to give instruction and edification in a manner most likely to interest and attract the general reader. It is well known that various printing presses in Great Britain daily pour out a flood of infidel and immoral publications, some of which overflow to this country. We have a confident hope that the Society's publications will remove the temptation of having recourse to such filthy garbage, will create a taste for a pure and wholesome literature, and will also serve as an antidote against the poison of dangerous and immoral writings.

The Catholic Truth Society of England has, for several years past, been doing excellent work of this character, not only in Great Britain, but in this country also—a fact which we greatly recognize. We intend to co-operate cordially with its members, who have already given us valuable guidance and assistance. But in literature, as in other things, every people has its own national needs and tastes, for which native sources alone can make adequate provision.

In undertaking to carry on the work of this Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, the Managing Committee most earnestly solicit the cordial co-operation of all their fellow-country men, but particularly of the clergy and of the influential Catholic laymen, without whose assistance we could never hope to make this project a permanent success. First of all, money is necessary to give the Society a fair start, and provide some working capital. The initial expenses will be considerable, and for some time the returns will be small. Hence the committee invite subscriptions from all the clergy and laity who take an interest in carrying out this great work for the glory of God and for the general diffusion of Catholic truth, the most effectual barrier against the rising tide of immoral and infidel literature.

The annual subscription for membership of the Society, has been fixed at the small sum of five shillings, which entitles the member to receive the Society's publications on specially favourable terms. A subscription of five pounds entitles the donor to life membership, with the same privilege in regard to the Society's publications. But for the initial fund special donations are necessary, and we most earnestly appeal both to the clergy and to the laity for a sum of money that will enable us not only to start a good work, but also to invest some small capital for future contingencies. For this purpose a number of life subscriptions at the present time would be most desirable. The members may rest satisfied that everything will be done with the utmost regard to economy; and at the same time we shall seek to issue our publications at the smallest possible cost, so that they may find their way into the homes of the poorest people.

A number of well known writers have already promised their co-operation, with whose assistance we hope to be able, in a very short time, to issue booklets that will be at once interesting and instructive, truly National and truly Catholic."

The Drogheda Independent refers to the establishment of the Catholic Truth Society in Ireland, as follows:

The truth contained in the Shakesperian maxim that "the evil that men do lives after them," has greater force when the evil in question is embodied in printed books or papers than when the evil shapes itself in almost any other form of human action. As has been well said, "The Devil has no better ally than the Printing Press." The spoken word or the passing act, these pass away, leaving more or less of a vivid record as the mind or the senses of the hearer or the observer is impressed by what has been heard or seen: but, as the old proverb had it—Litera scripta manet.—What was written remained. At no period since the art of printing was invented has the danger from the output of an infidel and an agnostic Printing Press been so deadly as it is in our time. Week by week, day by day, aye, even hour by hour, a flood of printed matter, in the shape of books and periodicals, of vicious purport and evil design, is poured out from the printing presses of every civilized country, and, regrettable to say, a vast proportion of such publications finds readers even in Catholic Ireland. Some of the publications in question are worse than others. Some are openly written in opposition to the teachings of Faith and the principles of morality, while others veil their poison under the guise of a sentiment that is neither Christian or moral. The widespread character of the evil which this flood of vicious literature from over sea would be certain to effect amongst our people, if allowed to proceed unchecked, has long been recognized by the Catholic Pastors of Ireland, who have from time to time, in Pastoral letters and in exhortations from the pulpit, warned their flocks against this growing danger. But, despite of these salutary warnings, the evil has continued to grow, until it is seen that if a stay is to be put to a propaganda, which floods our news-sellers' shops and the homes of the people with a literature that is neither informing nor edifying, but for the most part only vicious, means must be taken to provide the people with reading matter at once entertaining and salutary. With a view to effecting this—to circulating amongst the people literature which will be racy of the soil as well as Catholic in tone—the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, whose appeal we publish elsewhere, has been started. This Society, which has its counterparts in Great Britain in the English and Scottish Catholic Truth Societies, which are rendering incalculable service in both countries to the cause of Catholic truth, deserves the support of every Catholic in this Country. Its aim is to do for the Catholic reading public of Ireland—and everyone reads now-a-days—what the Sister Societies are doing in England and Scotland; that is to say, to place in their hands, at popular prices, reading matter of an instructive and entertaining kind, which parents can without scruple give their children to read, and which "children of a larger growth" can read without danger of shipwreck to either their faith or their morals."

The New Year.

With blend upon my fingers and upon
my brow a frown,
I wiped my knife and took my way to
old Damascus town.

The saints of God in terror beneath my
feet went down,
I trod on angels on my way to old
Damascus town.

All hell came forth applauding as I
went marching down.
To crucify and persecute in old Damascus town.

I fell! And God stood o'er me, His
hand had put me down;
To-night they'll wait in vain for me in
old Damascus town.

—R. K. Kernighan in the Lamp.

The Pope's Protest against the Quirinal.

The text of the Pope's allocution at the consistory of Dec. 11th has been published. The Pontiff began by announcing the appointment of the Cardinal-delegate to open the sacred door of the Rotunda on the eve of the commencement of the Holy Year.

He said he could have wished that the Church enjoyed her former liberty in Rome, and that she might thus have been enabled to celebrate publicly the contemplated ceremonies with the solemn usages of bygone years.

His Holiness then referred to the fact that the Vatican was not invited to send a representative to the Peace Congress at The Hague, an omission which, he said, had been "censured by all impartial judges." The Czar, he continued, invited the representatives of the most powerful nations, with a view to establishing peace. Yet there was none more worthy of an invitation than the Pope who had ever desired to attain justice, to make peace and to prevent conflict—an office which by the Divine will, was within the attributes of the Papacy. The Holy See had desired a place in that conference, continued the Pontiff.

One voice had obstinately opposed itself to this desire, and had gained the point. It was the voice of those who, with the conquest of Rome, had deprived the Pope of his powers.

"What hostility," asked the Pontiff, "have we to fear from them when, even in the face of Europe, they do not hesitate to violate the sanctity of the rights and duties which naturally flow from apostolic powers! Nevertheless, whatever the future may bring, we should certainly never, by God's help, be found on the side of those who are afraid."

The American Herald deals with this protest of the Pope, against the Italian government in the subjoined very able article:

We give all the prominence we can to the manly protest of Pope Leo XIII. against the injustice of the Italian Government. The Holy Father, as the Vicar on earth of the "Prince of Peace," should have had a voice in the Peace Conference at the Hague, and would have had if the Quirinal had not objected. The recent allocution of the Pope, and the every day history of wars show that we have entered on dark and evil days. Storm-whispers are on air, and it may be that evil days are in store for the Church; but who fears for her? Woe to those who live in houses of sand, for they shall go down in the coming crash; and woe are they, if, hearkening to the voice of God, to the voice of the Church, to the voice of their own conscience, they seek shelter in the rock-built house, while yet they may. For, however wildly the tempest may rage, the storm blast shall dash in vain against that Church which Christ Himself has planted on a rock—which has outlasted the tempests of well nigh 2,000 years—and which, when all things earthly cease to be, will be merged into the Church triumphant, and live on for all eternity!

The Church of which Leo XIII. is head, will live and flourish on earth till the sound of the last trumpet, and after it she will reign forever triumphant in heaven. In her hour of direct persecution when she was shut up in the Catacombs—while the iron hand of the hostile Cæsars of ancient Rome was pressing heavily upon her—while the majority of her Bishops were in chains, and many of her most generous sons were on the eve of martyrdom—while day by day hundreds of her confessors were led forth into the arena—when no one ventured to lift up a voice in her behalf, save only her own children—even then the consciousness of her immorality glowed as brightly as in any hour of her grand and glorious existence. She knew that she would never come to an end—she knew that she could never be deprived by any combination of human circumstances, by any assaults of hell, by either treachery from within, or opposition from without, of any one of her essential articles—she knew that she could never be robbed of her unity, never be divested of her Catholicity, never be shorn of her sanctity, never be deprived of her apostolicity. Is not this absolute and never absent consciousness of her own immortality of itself a proof that the Catholic Church will never come to an end, but that she shall go on fulfilling her mission of evangelizing the nations until time itself shall cease to be?

Nations may go forth from the Church their doing so is a grief to her, a loss to themselves. But while she sorrows over their wilfulness, she knows perfectly well that they cannot take from her any one of those doctrines which Christ Himself has placed in her sanctuary. Individuals may leave her, whole nations may prove recreant, but she remains the same. Their going forth no more severs her unity than the passage of the keel of a ship severs the waters of a great ocean. Her own consciousness of her immorality, the Church has communicated to her children, and there is not to-day a true Catholic to be anywhere found who does not believe with the most perfect certainty that the Bride of the Lamb shall never be repudiated by her Heavenly Spouse. If those who lived in the infancy of the Church, believed in the immortality of the Church, how can we doubt it—we who can look back among the vista of nearly two thousand years, during which she has been in existence. She has seen kingdoms rise from obscurity, flourish in their pride, and then disappear, like the grass that springs up in the morning and then withers. She has seen the face of the world change a hundred times, she has seen her children march through the centuries, nations assume prominence and rank, dynasties rise and fall, and she has the monuments over our heads. The earnest words of the Pope last allocution will go down the ages, and the world will resound to the voice of Christ's vicar on earth.

Are Homes Waste of Time.

At the opening of the Spalding Institute the new High School for boys at Peoria Bishop Spalding delivered a lengthy but masterly address on the subject of "Opportunity." He touched upon a variety of practical subjects, and as he has few if any intellectual superiors on this continent his words, although they may not meet with the approval of many who stand in the van of progress, are nevertheless worthy of the most serious consideration. We reproduce for the benefit of our readers the passage in his address dealing with recreation and work:

Bishop Spalding said,—"The man finds or makes his opportunities and in my thoughts he make him.

The multitude will not lay hold on opportunity unless it is thrust upon them; and even then they are listless and unresolved; and therefore are they condemned to remain inferior. Few who rise above the crowd are ever alert to discover how they may improve themselves an become helpers and leaders.

We are born to grow—this is the word religion, philosophy, literature and art ceaselessly utter—and we can grow only by keeping ourselves in vital communion with the world within and without us. Use or lose is nature's law; also, use and improve. If a little money is taken from us we make ourselves miserable, and all the while we are permitting the wealth which enriches the mind to slip from us as though it were the dirt from which the gold has been sifted.

There are few whom routine work keeps busy more than ten hours in the twenty-four. Allow eight hours for sleep and two for meals, and there remain four for self-improvement. How is it possible, you ask, to live without recreation and amusements? Find them in the effort to upbuild your being, and joyfulness of life shall be your's beyond the reach of kings. Learn to think, and you shall never lack pleasant occupation. Bring your mind into union with the currents of thought which are found in the books of power, and you need be neither idly nor depressed. The transfusion of thought is more quickening than the transfusion of blood. As in the midst of battle the soldier is often unconscious of his wounds, so they who have a purpose, and seriously pursue it, easily become indifferent to the troubles which make weaker men tremble.

Games and other amusements doubtless have their uses, especially for the young, and for all who are feeble in body or mind, but when we consider that they are generally occasions for wasting time, and a cheap obstacle to human advancement, it is difficult not to condemn the apathy, the indifference to the meaning and worthy of life which makes possible their universal prevalence. They are least harmful in the home, and even there, what irreparable loss they involve! Economy of time is more indispensable than economy of money; for it is a means not only of getting money but of getting what is vastly higher and more precious—wisdom and virtue. All else may be good, but time misspent is lost forever. It is the element in which life exists, and to squander it is to dissipate vital force. What increases health and strength of body is good, unless it diminishes vigor of mind or weakens the will to devote one's self to right human ends. The passion and persistence with which athletic sports are followed in our colleges and universities undermine moral and intellectual ambition just as the time when the formation of character and the acquisition of knowledge are of the highest importance. Those whose ideal is athletic are in danger of not looking higher than the prize ring. True human power is not physical; its seat is in the mind, in the will, in the conscience. Let our school boys be happy and joyous, let them divert themselves, in a free spirit, like gentlemen, but let them not lay the stress on their attention and admiration on rowing or leaping or kicking a ball or hitting it with a bat, nor imagine that great skill of this kind is helpful or desirable. It is generally an accomplishment of those whose spiritual being is callous or superficial. These sports are not the best means even for promoting health and physical culture, which are the result of moderate, not violent, exercise, of temperance, cleanliness, sleep, cheerful thoughts and worthy aims followed in a brave and generous spirit. Mere strength of body is not a test either of endurance or of vitality. We die from sensual excess or from despondency or from both. Indulgence and disappointment kill more than work, which, if it be full of joy and hope, brings length of days. Worry, whatever its source, weakens, takes aways courage and shortens life. Our sons murder us, said a rich man, speaking of a friend who had just died.

The sweet idleness praised by poets and lovers is not idleness, but leisure to give one's self to high thoughts and lofty moods. The really idle are oppressed by a sense of fatigue, and therefore tiresome to themselves and others. Let those who complain of having to work undertake to do nothing. If this does not convert them, nothing will. Those who live in inaction on the fruits of the labor of others lose the power to enjoy, come to feel existence to be a burden, and fall a prey to life-weariness. Hear ye, my sons of the future, who think of the service, for we not comfort that of life over beside who remember the poor who have none. To know the life regard one must be conscious that he is helping to make a good of it for a few.

Work not play, is the divine opportunity. The outcome of civilization, if we continue to make progress, must be that to each man every one work shall be given to do which, while it provides the necessaries and comforts of life, will cheer, strengthen, console, purify and enlighten, and when the day comes the nineteenth century that appears to have been but little better than the ninth, for a society in which millions are condemned to do dehumanizing work or starve is barbarous.

The century which is now drawing to an end has been so filled with wonders, with progress in science and wealth, with discoveries and inventions, that it seems to illumine the pages of history with a blaze of glory. But it is not all light. The failure is as serious as the success is great. The individual has not risen as his knowledge has widened and his environment improved. What he is, is still held to be less important than what he possesses and uses. In the mad race for wealth multitudes are sacrificed as pitilessly as in warfare; they are dragged by competition to the verge of starvation; they are driven to work under conditions which debumanize. Greed has led to a world wide struggle as cruel as that of nature, in which only the strongest or the most cunning and conscienceless survive. Our society makes criminals, and our penal institutions harden them in wrongdoing. The people are taxed to support vast armies and to supply them with more and more expensive and effective instruments of murder, and wars are waged, not to liberate and lift up weaker races, but to rob and oppress them, and these crimes are committed in the name of religion and civilization. The great powers of Europe look on in stolid indifference while helpless populations are massacred; and America, which has always meant good will to men and opportunity for all, seems to be drifting away from what Americans have loved and lived for into the evil company of these old-world nations, drunken with lust for conquest and lust for gold. While knowledge grows, while man's control over the forces of nature increases, the individual seems to be losing his hold on the principles which underlie right life. The power of sustained thought, of preserving labor for high and unselfish ends, the spirit in sacrifice and devotion, faith and hope, the love of liberty and independence, are, it is to be feared, diminishing.

There is still evil enough in the world to save us from self complacency, from the foolish and vulgar habit of self-laudation, but the triumphs of the nineteenth century have been sufficiently real and great to inspire confidence and courage in the young who are preparing to take their place in the twentieth as strong and faithful workers in every righteous cause.

Here in America, above all, the new age approaches offering opportunity. Here only a beginning has been made; we have but felled the forest and drained the marsh, and bridged the river and built the road; but cleared the wildwood and made wholesome the atmosphere for a more fortunate race, whom occasion shall invite to greater thoughts and more godlike deeds. We stand in the front rank of those who face life, dowered with all the instruments of power which the labors of the strongest and wisest in all time and place have provided.

PRESCIENCE.

BY T. B. ALDRICH.

The moon hung in the sky,
The sun was low in the west,
When my betrothed and I
In the churchyard paused to rest;
Happy maid and lover,
Dreaming the old dream over.
The light winds wandered by,
And robins chirped from the nest.

And lo! in the meadow sweet
Was the grave of a little child,
With a crumbling stone at its feet,
And the ivy running wild,
Tangled ivy and clover
Folding it over and over;
Close to my sweetheart's feet
Was the little mound up-piled.

Stricken with nameless fears,
She shrank and clung to me,
And her eyes were filled with tears
For a sorrow I did not see;
Lightly the winds were blowing,
Softly her tears were flowing,
Tears for the unknown years,
And a sorrow that was to be.

There is worship in the forest, where
softly falling snow
Comes to touch in benediction the waiting
earth below;
The long, slim fingers of the wind, on
harp of barren trees
Plays Nature's Christmas Carol in a
multitude of keys!

—Intrepiden Ways.

Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most
wrong,
If it be His dear will.

—Faber.

The good hate evil, but not evil people; the evil abhor both good and good people.—Abbe Roux.