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# True AND CHRONICLE Witness

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## AT THE ABBEY OF GROTTAFERRATA

Writing from Rome on June 29th, Mr. P. L. Connellan, in the Dublin Freeman's Journal, says:

The Sun shown down through the hot sirocco atmosphere as we reached the station of Frascati. In all the Latin land, perhaps in all Italy, there is not a more attractive station, with its pleasant flower-covered bank facing you as you descend from the train. The high bank which slopes down from the level of the town to the railway is cut steeply, and on its face is a sort of hanging garden, full of the choicest flowers of the season, forming an exquisite introduction to this little town set amidst magnificent villas. Another sort of introduction is that with which the cabmen around the station greet you, each cracking his whip, shouting and gesticulating wildly to attract your attention to his more or less shabby turnout. Finally one is chosen, and the journey to Grottaferrata begins.

The road lies on the side of the Tusculan hills, with villas bearing grand mediaeval names spreading on either hand. The eye ranges over the wide Campagna, with its varied colors and its strange, dreamy aspect, to the distant city, where the great dome of St. Peter's rises pale against the paler sky like a great captive halloon.

Scarcely were we half an hour on the road when our cab driver pulled up in the courtyard of a great fortress-like building surrounded by trenches and formidable walls, and strong towers at the angles of the building. You might imagine you had entered the courtyard of a mediaeval castle instead of that of a monastery—for this is the Abbey of Grottaferrata—did not the bronze statue of Saint Nilus standing in the centre of the courtyard reassure you. Such fortifications were not constructed for adornment; their presence here suggests that the dwellers within these walls were attacked by their neighbors, and had provided themselves with means of defence.

In the tenth century of the Christian era this place enters into history. Greek monks of the Rule of St. Basil, driven out of their monastery in Calabria by the Saracens, sought a refuge here. At their head was the Abbot Nilus. He, seeing how charming was this spot, with the Alban Hills in the background, and away in the distance, across the sun-lighted plain, the City of Rome, settled down here. Since then nine centuries have passed over the Abbey of Grottaferrata, and it may be said that every one of them has left its traces in this monastic retreat.

Among the historical memoirs of the place, one that is not readily forgotten is associated with that paginating Emperor Frederick II., of the thirteenth century. He and his followers sacked the Abbey, and among other precious objects which they carried off to Lucera, in the south of Italy, was a bronze cow which adorned the fountain. This is supposed to have been the work of the celebrated Greek sculptor Myron, who lived three centuries before Christ. It was given to the Abbey by one of the Counts of Tusculum, who found it in one of the ancient villas of this neighborhood, where it was brought by one of the generals who conquered Greece and carried off its treasures to Italy. This exquisite work of sculpture was held in such esteem that the Abbots had it copied into their seal as the distinctive device of the place. People believed that the symbol of the cow in the seal was the symbol of the Church, or the Abbey, which supplies nourishment to the poor; whereas the real fact is that it was a record of the ancient Greek sculptor's work. In the centre of the architrave over the door of the church a bas-relief in marble of that work is still to be seen; and this is probably the only existing memorial of Myron's cow.

Three centuries later Cardinal della Rovere, who was afterwards Pope Julius II., was appointed Abbot Comendatary of Grottaferrata. He was by nature a warrior and by grace a priest. Following his bellicose instincts, he arranged the outer part of this Abbey as a fortification, and the inner part—the courtyard—

was reconstructed, a magnificent portico according to the designs of Bramante being begun. One of the sides of this splendid work—arches supported on tall and elegant columns—was completed when Cardinal della Rovere was elected Pope in 1503, and since then it has remained unfinished. The walls, the towers, and the vedettes, which look so warlike and capable of resisting siege, date from that period; and the great ditch or moat which surrounds the Abbey, except on one side where a stone bridge has replaced a wooden drawbridge, are also the constructions carried out by the Cardinal's direction. Within the walls of this old castellated building, constructed for the peaceful prayers of pious monks, yet with full provision for defence against marauders and church robbers, you feel as if transported back into the age of the Renaissance with its troubles and its triumphs.

That you are in the presence of an order of things different from what you meet with in Rome, becomes apparent when you enter the church. The names of the saints painted on the walls are written in gold letters, but in the Greek tongue. The sweet chant of the office which the Fathers are singing in choir is strange both in its music and in the words chanted, for both words and music are Greek. Here within fifteen miles of Rome, the centre of the Latin Church there is a community of monks using the Greek rite, with the consent and authority of the Holy See. Another unfamiliar feature is the concealment of the altar behind a richly adorned stone screen, in which there are two arches, with curtains, which are drawn at certain periods of the service, when the celebrant is seen.

The founder of this Abbey, Saint Nilus, born in 910, at Rossano, in Calabria, was of Greek origin. The great spirit of the hermits of Egypt and Palestine—of Antony, Saba, and Hilarion—lived in him also. How well he laid the foundations of his rule may be judged from the fact that it has endured all these ages. The church as it is to-day is the result of several restorations, each showing its own traces. The latest is perhaps the worst of all.

A side chapel, richly adorned at the expense of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, is celebrated for its art in this land of art. Domenichino painted its walls with splendid frescoes, the subjects being chosen from the lives of St. Nilus and the second Abbot of the monastery, St. Bartholomus. People come from Rome to visit this chapel, attracted solely by the renown of its works of art, and romantic legends have grown around the figures in one of the pictures—that of St. Nilus receiving the visit of the Emperor Otho III. Apart altogether from the splendid arrangement of the picture, which shows the Emperor wearing his crown, advancing to meet the aged monk, and their cordial embrace, the fact that in St. Nilus the monk Filippo Morotti, contemporary with the artist, is portrayed, heightens popular interest in the picture. That interest is increased when it is said that the personage holding the Emperor's horse is a portrait of Domenichino himself; and that the one leaning on the horse is Guido Reni; and that Guercino is beside him carrying a lance. Romance reaches its height when we learn that the amazon seen in the middle of the picture is the lady that Domenichino loved—a certain Fallani of Frascati, where the family still reside.

Interesting as all these things are, it is not here that the attraction of Grottaferrata now lies. In a series of halls there is an exhibition of Italo-Byzantine art which is unique. This exhibition is held on occasion of the commemoration of the ninth century of this noteworthy Abbey. The objects exhibited here have been gathered together from many private collections, from churches and cathedral chapters, and from towns never visited by the Baedeker-guided tourist. This art, which takes its origin in the East, has in it something of the gorgeousness of color and richness of material associated with the mysterious Orient. Strange-ly wrought goldsmith's work, quaint-

ly colored enamels, many hued mosaics all glittering with gold borders and backgrounds, magnificently carved ivory diptychs and silver reliquaries, and richly woven textiles, constitute a variety of artistic objects all brought together as beautiful as they are rare.

How, you ask yourself, have these fragile objects endured through the centuries; how did they escape the thieving hands of the French revolutionary troops that ransacked convents and carried off church treasures in their raids into Italy at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century? There is scarcely a grand work of art in church or gallery in Italy that has not made "the grand tour" to Paris, and the story of some of the migrations of celebrated pictures would were they related, prove as interesting as a nowadays novel.

The gem of the collection is a manuscript copy of a portion of the New Testament containing the Gospel of St. Mark and a portion of that of St. Matthew. It contains 188 leaves. It is a magnificent volume, written in silver letters on purple stained parchment. Enclosed in a glass-covered case, over which a green silk curtain is drawn when visitors are not inspecting it, there are two pages open to view. These are changed every few days, so that frequent visitors to the abbey might in time study the whole of the illustrative pictures or illuminations which adorn this beautiful book.

For the first time in history this "Codex Rossanensis," or manuscript of Rossano, has been removed from the little city in Calabria from which it takes its name, and which also claims to be the birthplace of St. Nilus, the founder of Grottaferrata. It is in Greek, and where the silver letters are still fresh and clear on the bluish-purple of the parchment the sense of richness is brought home to the mind. It dates from the sixth century, and is one of the five or six purple parchment documents with silver letters in existence. There are seventeen illustrations in it of New Testament scenes, and forty figures of Prophets. Here the student of early art will find the first steps in the development of the art of the Catacombs into that of the Middle Ages. The figure of Christ in the several scenes is so grand and so expressive of what one imagines Christ to have been in His earthly appearance, that one is surprised at the height the artist reached. This excellent painter, whose name is lost to us, has grouped his figures with effect, and his crowds, as in the picture of the entrance into Jerusalem, when the people came forth to meet the Saviour, and carried palm branches in their hands and laid their garments beneath His feet, are treated with a mastery that is rare. Such a book is a treasure worthy of its high theme.

There are other manuscripts of beauty and value here, but one has scarcely eyes for them after seeing this of Rossano. There are a few specimens of palimpsests, or parchments written twice over, the first writing being erased and a second written on the space thus cleared. The art of bringing back the original script sufficiently clear so that it might be read, was invented by Cardinal Mai early in the nineteenth century. These documents have a blue look from the acids employed in restoring the lost writing. In those palimpsests of Grottaferrata fragments of the Geography of Strabo were found, and the Abbe Battifol found in a Vatican manuscript some years ago two palimpsests with additional fragments of Strabo. Father Cozza Luxi, Abbot of Grottaferrata, who died a few weeks ago, was the discoverer of other important fragments of Strabo, and he held that all these came from Calabrian monasteries. Abbe Battifol is convinced that all the manuscripts of the series came from the Basilian monasteries of Calabria, and the greater number of them from Carbone and Rossano. So far as Greek palimpsests are concerned, Rossano seems to occupy a position similar to that of Bobbio, the Irish monastery in the Apennines founded by St. Columbanus, whence came all the existing Latin palimpsests to be met with in the libraries of Europe.

(Continued on Page 8.)

## THE POWER OF THE PRESS.

(By Rev. Father Sykes, S.J., in Canadian Messenger for August.)

It was Edmund Burke, who, more than a hundred years ago, called the Press in England the Fourth Estate of the realm, adding that it was the most powerful of them all. What would he have said, I wonder, if he had lived in the opening days of the present century, and been a witness of the gigantic and ubiquitous importance to which the modern Press has attained, eclipsing with its fiercer light those inferior orbs, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons, and causing them to "pale their uneffective fire"? Generally speaking, it may be said that a country is blessed or cursed with a Press which it deserves to have; and if a civilized country loves order, moderation, liberty, as opposed to license, justice and decency, its journals, which are a reflex of the prevailing public tone and sentiment, will be the organs that will voice the common feelings and virtues of the people. Even in the best-ordered communities there will be, of course, journals and newspapers which do not reach so high a level, as well as disreputable prints which disgrace a respectable profession and calling, but these will not be representative of the true spirit and the better-class elements of the community; and they will have to hide themselves away from the full light of day, as guilty men steal out only after dusk, and the night birds love the shelter of the darkness.

One of the most useful and valuable functions of an honest public press is the exposure of abuses. There is no doubt that even the fear of exposure by the newspapers often acts as a wholesome deterrent to people who might otherwise be indifferent to conscience or justice. It is precisely here, to my mind, and not alone in the purveying of news to their readers, which is generally regarded as the most important function of the daily newspapers, that the existence of our journals is justified. Abuses, systems, conduct, which are worthy of reprobation, and which might otherwise continue to flourish, can be dragged to the light of day, without trenching on the reticences of private life, can be pilloried and driven out of existence. But this presupposes a healthy public opinion, a love of justice, freedom from corruption and other suitable conditions in the community concerned. The public Press in England has often rendered invaluable service to the welfare and interests of the country by representing, by fearlessly fulfilling this part of its duty, and by circulating a sound and healthy public opinion on many important matters, and has thus earned the undying gratitude of those who really love the land of which they are citizens.

It is the object of this paper to say and to maintain that Catholics as Catholics underrate the immense power for good or evil of the public Press. Will any one assert that the disgraceful proceedings now enacting in France would have been possible if the Catholics of that country had at their back a powerful, a popular and a thoroughly representative Press? The same thing is true of other countries in which measures inimical to the Church's interests have been passed, though the majority of the population is Catholic. There the Press is either in the hands of the anti-religious minority or under the management of those who are at least indifferent to the interests of the Church and of Catholicism. It may be urged that if Catholics, in the instances referred to, had a strong public sentiment behind them, they would find it easy to obtain effective representation of their interests and principles in the great and influential organs of public opinion. But I do not think that their failure to secure such backing and support in the public press is owing to the weakness of their cause. It is rather owing to their policy of laissez faire, to apathy, to timidity, to a want of energy, of enthusiasm for their cause, and especially to a lack of appreciation of the great forces, intellectual and political as well as social, which are moving the world, and to a lack of union for

effective purposes. No doubt there would have to be wise and wide-minded management in the conduct of their journals; but I feel sure that ability, enthusiasm, intellectual force, liberal-mindedness and a bold prudence would secure for a Catholic in a Catholic country a newspaper Press which would effectively advocate their policy and principles, and find support amongst a large and important section of the community. By this means they would raise up for themselves a strong wall of defence, which could stand them in stead in times of difficulty, when they would not be left as they are at the present moment—"naked to their enemies."

Of one thing I am persuaded, and that is, that we entirely underrate the power of the Press, and that Catholic interests in many lands are suffering thereby. It is all very well to say that we must trust to supernatural means and leave aside all carnal weapons. On the contrary, we are to make use of all natural means first; and surely the public Press is a thing at least indifferent in itself, and can be turned into an engine for effecting untold good. Why should we not recognize facts? Is the cause of Christ, of His truth, of His Church to be allowed to go by default? Is it not worth every effort, and deserving of our warmest enthusiasm? Surely Catholic newspapers—not necessarily what we call religious journals, but journals conducted by loyal and intellectual Catholics for the world at large as well as for Catholics themselves, would have a large field of endeavor and effective good before them, a career of precious usefulness! Would it not be their function in all things honest and honorable to compete with secular journals, and with fairness and ability to explain, or if need be to defend, Catholic faith and Catholic practices from ignorant and mendacious attack? How can Catholics be said to love the Church of which they are members (those of them who have the necessary equipment, if they will not step down into the arena and do their devoir for the noblest cause that can nerve the hand or the brain, or stir the devotion and enthusiasm of the heart of man? If we would move the world we must have our hand on the mighty lever which directs its motions, or else we must step aside and with folded arms see it turn in the direction contrary to that in which we wish it to revolve.

I have heard the phrase "knights of the pen;" and, in truth, I think it not so ill chosen, for the pen may be turned into a mighty chivalrous weapon, and literature and the Press may do what the knights of old performed—stay injustice, defeat oppression, protect weakness and virtue, and fight the manly battle for all good causes. And I would say to all those who can safely wield this cunning weapon of the pen—"Gird ye to the fight and quit ye like men!" Put your spear in rest and splinter a chivalrous lance in behalf of Christ and His sacred Cause, His Church, His truth! No Paynim or Saracen opposes you, but sin and vice and guilt and injustice and oppression shall go down before your onslaught, and shall bite the dust. Wield your pen in behalf of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame." Shall it be said that pens shall be more busy and more cunningly handled for the opposite cause than for the best and holiest? Absit! Shall it be spoken that vice can be tricked out in more attractive colors than simple virtue? Again, God forbid, shall it be whispered that evil is more powerful than good, and that it is useless to combat it in the Press? Never! Are then the words of Lear, spoken in the excess of his bitterness, all truth?—

Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurt-  
less breaks!  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth  
pierce it!

Rather I would believe that that represents a great truth which is recorded in immortal story by another

great writer. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, though weak with his wound and loss of blood, overthrew in the lists, in behalf of the defenceless maiden, Rebecca, the proud and sensual Templar, in the fulness of his strength; and so it is decreed by Him, Who is greater than all evil and vice and sin, that the arm of virtue shall overcome the power of darkness. If the power of the Press is perverted to evil purposes, if books are written which undermine faith and virtue and morality, we must supply the antidote to the poison; we must show, especially to youth, that virtue is more lovely than vice, truth than falsehood. The devil should not be allowed to work his own sweet will even in books and pamphlets and newspapers; but we should endeavor by every means in our power to convert the Press from an engine of destruction into a mighty influence for good.

## Balfour's Government Dead.

London, July 23.—John Redmond, M.P., chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party, is the central figure in the present acute political crisis. He not only made the motion on which Balfour's ministry was defeated, but during the last fortnight he has made a series of parliamentary coups which paved the way for last Thursday's disaster. He is quoted as saying:

"It seems utterly impossible to me that Balfour can do other than resign in view of all the circumstances of his defeat. Perhaps for the convenience of both parties, neither of which desire a dissolution in August or September, an arrangement may be arrived at to defer actual resignation until October, but any way you look at it Balfour's government is dead."

"The corpse may be kept above the ground for a time, but decomposition has already set in. It has met the fate of every British Government in my memory in being defeated on the Irish question."

"Just consider the dramatic series of events. A few days ago Balfour introduced his redistribution scheme, the sole object of which was to satisfy the anti-Irish feeling of his followers by reducing the Irish representation in the House of Commons by 22 members."

"He intended to rush it through with a couple of days' discussion. Then he would have introduced his redistribution bill at the next session and kept his government alive until the autumn of 1906. By raising a crucial point of order I got a decision from the Speaker compelling Balfour to afford ample time for debating the redistribution scheme at this session."

"This was a staggering blow, and he was forced to drop his scheme. Following this up the Irish party reduced the government majority on a question directly affecting the Minister of War to such a low figure that Balfour was panic-stricken. He summoned a special meeting of his party members and appealed to them to support him by their votes, or, he said, he must dissolve. They pledged themselves, but within two days we have defeated them outright."

"The Irish Party naturally feels intensely gratified over this result. The other day Balfour proposed to his supporters to reduce our representation. Now we have destroyed his government. What more crushing retort could we have delivered?"

Peace is only to be found in reconciliation with destiny, when destiny seems, in the religious sense of the word, good; that is to say, when man feels himself directly in the presence of God. Then, and then only, does the will acquiesce.—Henry Frederic Amiel.

Knowledge cannot find or cannot prove religion. Religion is love. You cannot prove love,—but you can know its manifestations. A man's capacity for love is his capacity for religion.—"Lex Amandi"—The Dolphin.

Friendship improves happiness by the doubling of our joy; and it relieves misery by dividing our grief.