

The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle



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EPISCOPAL APPROBATION.

"If the English-speaking Catholics of Montreal and of this Province consulted their best interests, they would soon make of the 'True Witness' one of the most prosperous and powerful Catholic papers in this country. I heartily bless those who encourage this excellent work."
—PAUL, Archbishop of Montreal.

NOTES OF THE WEEK.

CUSTOMS OF THE COUNTRY.

A writer signing Norman Duncan, in the publication called "The World's Work," has given a species of story intended to cast a slur not only upon the Irish Catholic, but also upon his religious and, above all, his practice of that religion. There is no wit, nor the shadow of humor in the concoction; nor is it true, nor does the insinuation that it is intended to express savor of the natural. But we find such organs as the New York "Tribune" reproducing it, and as it is one of those silly and vicious little literary insects that buzz about and poison wherever they sting, the best way to deal with it is to catch it up and stamp it out of existence. This is what Norman Duncan tells:—

There was once a Newfoundland fisherman—he chanced to be a Catholic—who, in old age, came to die. He had lived in debt all his life, and, no doubt, had never once given his whole catch to the dealer who supplied him, but had wrongfully slipped many a quintal over the side of a rival schooner and traded it out on the spot.

"Send for Fawther Rafferty," he said. "Send immediate!" He wanted to confess his sins, to be forgiven, and to depart in peace, but his old priest had been transferred to Trinity Bay—a young man, just back from Rome, was now the spiritual head of the parish.

"Sure, 'tis Fawther Codlin," they told him. "No, no!" the old man protested. "Fawther Codlin's a fine young man—a clever young man, I doubt me not; but 'tis old Fawther Rafferty I wants 't' hear me confession."

"An' why?" they asked. "Sure," the dying man gasped, "he knows the customs o' the country."

What will the general reader conclude from this story? Simply that the Newfoundland fisherman was an Irishman (for the attempt at a brogue that does not exist shows the intention to paint a man of that race); that he was a Catholic, (or happened to be one); that he was a cheat and a thief (for such is told in the introduction); that he wanted to make a confession to a priest whom he knew, from experience, would shut his eyes to the wrong things that he had to confess; that the old Irish priest heard confessions, and as it was a general practice for fishermen to cheat, he gave absolution without demanding restoration; finally that the priest, envious at sacrilege, and that the dying man wanted to add another sacrilege to all those of his lifetime. And that all this was due to ignorance.

This, in very plain terms, is the meaning of the story, and it suffices to brand it as false and Norman Duncan as a mean slanderer. No matter what the Irish Catholics other shortcomings may be, disregard for the sanctity of the sacrament is not of the number. In fact, no people on earth are more precise and scrupulous on this head. Then, no priests on earth are more exacting as far as the confessional goes and its duties and obligations, than the Irish priest. The consequence is that the whole story is the fabrication of a small mind, and the point sought to be made can only be designated by one term, a harsh one, but the only one suitable—it is a lie.

IRISH LAND BILL.—The session draws to a close and there is now every prospect of the Irish Land Bill becoming law when the Parliament is prorogued. The hitch that threat-

ened both the Bill and the Government has been successfully overcome, and matters of detail that remain to be considered cannot constitute, any grave impediment. That the Bill passed its second reading, with what may be practically called the unanimous consent of the House, is a fact too significant to be overlooked or ignored.

We have at hand a brief and apparently correct view of the situation as it was at the close of last week and the beginning of this one. But we cannot, at this distance, afford to pronounce or to enter into details until we are in possession of our Irish exchanges of this week. They will give us the inside workings of the entire proceedings. But from what we can judge, the Irish Parliamentary Party and its leaders have played a grand game of high and statesmanlike politics.

Here is the statement made by a correspondent of last Saturday (via France), and it seems to us to cover the situation fairly well:—

"The Government by an artificial compromise succeeds temporarily. The Irish Land Bill has been saved by concessions so large that Mr. Wyndham is accused by the men of his own party of surrendering unconditionally to the Nationalists. The effect of the amendments cannot be stated with precision, but the gift of £12,000,000 has not been increased to £20,000,000, as the Nationalists had demanded. Borrowing operations have been enlarged, however, from £100,000,000 to £150,000,000. The Nationalists, who are the best politicians in the Commons, are jubilant, and the ministerialists are relieved, and the rapid passage of the Land Bill now seems assured. Taxpayers will be freely bled, but the Government will have credit for dealing in a large way with a most troublesome and intricate question. The ministers can also wind up the session promptly and postpone the general election until the new fiscal policy has been cut and dried."

The compliment here paid to the Irish members as the "best politicians in the Commons" is not only well deserved, but is one of the brightest harbingers of future success. By thus proving the metal of which they are made and the superior legislative talents that they possess they are paving the way, all unconsciously, for legislative autonomy in the near future. To our mind it would seem that the entire British Parliament would have unbounded confidence in an Irish Local Government with John Redmond as Prime Minister, and his leading supporters in the Cabinet.

THE SEAT OF DEATH.—If the old time gallows had its terrors there seems to us something more fearfully solemn in the silent execution of the human being who is seated in the Death Chair, to receive there the electric shock that will drive his soul, in a twinkling, into eternity. Some thirteen years ago electricity was substituted for the rope in the State of New York, and it has, apparently, proved a success. But never before were such a scene witnessed as that which take place some time during next week in the Clinton prison, at Dannemora, N.Y. It is the custom there to condemn the criminal to be executed "during the week beginning the — day of — month — next." These blanks filled in read, in this case; "during the week beginning the 6th day of July next." This option of an hour in the day, or of a day in that week, is given to the officials, who are in a position to judge to what extent

a prisoner is prepared to meet death. Sometimes a day, or a few hours, more or less, may affect him and his spirit of resignation very materially.

On this occasion the three Van Wormer brothers—Willis, Burton and Fred, aged respectively only 27, 23 and 21 years—will be led, one by one, from their condemned cells in the death house to the execution chamber, and there be put to death for the murder of their uncle, Peter Hallenbeck, a farmer, of Greenpoint, Columbia County, on Christmas Eve, 1901.

It is not for us to enter into the details of the murder. All we need say is that the boys claimed they had "gone out on a good time," and "merely wanted to have fun with the old man," and "never wanted to kill him." In the report of the case and account of the prison we are told of the many privileges accorded those who are condemned to die. Amongst others we select the following:—

"They are permitted to smoke, and each one is allowed a daily paper. Willis takes the Albany Argus and Burton gets one of the Hudson (N.Y.) dailies. Then they have about all the monthly magazines and they have read a good share of the books in the little prison library. Among the books they have read are Shakespeare's complete works, nearly all of Mark Twain's books, a few of Henty's one or two of Herbert Spencer's, besides "Daniel Deronda," "Oliver Twist," "David Copperfield," "Adam Bede," "David Copperfield" and a number of works on physiology, of which they are very fond."

Here is a text in two divisions for a sermon that should stir up the very soul of the nation and draw the scales from the eyes of those who do not see the ruin that awaits the generation largely composed of young men who have been educated to such tastes as those above indicated—tastes that fashion habits, habits that lead to the Death Chair, and to something more terrible to contemplate beyond it.

Here we have three young men; on Christmas Eve, 1901, they were 19, 21 and 25 years of age respectively. Instead of preparing, for the manner of all Christians, for the great day that was to be celebrated, they go forth to perform pranks of a character that indicates lack of reflection, lack of education, lack of heart, and lack of everything that is noble or good in our human nature. We are putting the very best construction upon their conduct; we are supposing that they did not go to kill their aged uncle; that they merely wanted annoy him, to frighten him, to make him afford them "sport" or "fun" as they call it. It never flashed in the mind of one of them to go there and help to make the old man's Christmas less lonely, to join him in some kind of pleasure on such an occasion. Not one of them conceived the idea of surprising him with a Christmas gift, or playing the good Samaritan for him. Yet that would be so in harmony with the occasion. On that very eve, when angels sang "Glory to God," these three, like fallen angels go forth to do harm to the aged and lonely soul; when the hymn was "Peace on earth to men of good will," they bring death, desolation and crime—in its monstrous deformity—upon the scene. What a lesson for the young! And let it be remembered that all such deeds have their punishment. In this case it came swiftly and in a fearful form. From that unchristian celebration of that Christmas Eve they proceeded directly to the cells, whence they will next week walk to the fatal chairs that await them.

What kind of education do such as these receive? Ah, there is the question. Read the list of books that they select for their amusement during the few short days that bridge their lives in this world from the gulf of eternity. What preparations for the fearful ordeal of stepping into the presence of God. From an educational standpoint, and to prepare for a life that each of them should, in the natural course, have ahead of him. Shakespeare's works are admirable; but they will never awaken the soul to the needs of the hour, when that hour is so short and its end is so certain. Worse still the books of Mark Twain. Even in the life of a student, with a long career ahead of him, they do not constitute the most healthy and use-

ful literature. But when we find them pondering over Herbert Spencer, seeking to lull themselves into the belief that death means the end of the soul, or following the spirit of George Eliot in its perverted course through the dazzling sophistry of "Daniel Deronda," we cannot but trace, to its proper source the fate that has befallen these three victims of a pernicious system.

The Godless school, that secular education, that discards the sacred and all-salutary influences of religion, is the cause of the moral as well as life ruin of the generation to which these young men belong. And yet the Church preaches, she prays, she begs, and the world listens not, the State is deaf, the great society of to-day is heedless. But a terrible awakening is at hand, and it will rock the whole social structure to its basis even as the electric shock will shatter the lives of these three unfortunate boys.

COLLEGE RESOLUTIONS.

There is something refreshing in the vision of the students of a Catholic college and the members of its Alumni Association uniting to raise their voices in protest against the wrongs inflicted upon the consecrated teachers of youth by the so-called Government of France. The event that has caused so much general delight throughout the land is the meeting of the olden students of Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass., on the occasion of the annual graduating exercises. This year's graduating class is the sixtieth that Holy Cross has sent into the world to do battle for God, the Church, and the cause of Truth. It was at the annual dinner of the Holy Cross alumni that the resolutions which we publish were moved and carried. The report of the event says:—

"It was just before the annual meeting of the alumni broke up that Thomas B. Lawler, president of the New York Alumni Association of Holy Cross, spoke of the passage of the recent association law, so called, by the French Government and he moved that a committee of three to represent the faculty, the alumni and the student body be appointed to draft resolutions protesting against the action of the French government."

His motion was carried by a unanimous vote, and Rev. Joseph F. Hanselman, S.J., who was presiding at the after dinner exercises, appointed as the committee Rev. Thomas E. Murphy, S.J., prefect of studies at the college, Thomas B. Lawler and Maurice J. Lacey of the class of 1904.

After a conference, the committee reported the following resolutions which were adopted by a unanimous vote and ordered sent to France for publication:—

Whereas, we, the faculty, alumni and students of the College of the Holy Cross, in Worcester, Mass., assembled on the occasion of our 60th annual commencement, have heard with almost incredulous amazement of the outrages perpetrated by the Government of France against the students, alumni and faculties, of the French Catholic colleges, against the pupils and teachers of all Catholic academies and schools, for girls as well as boys, and against even the aged and infirm, by the closing of Catholic colleges, convents, academies, schools, asylums and hospitals, the forced exile of thousands of French citizens innocent of any crime, the prohibition even of the preaching of the word of God and in some cases, even of private religious instruction and administration of the sacraments, the secularizing of Catholic houses of worship and even the profanation and desecration of shrines and temples; be it

Resolved, That as liberty-loving American citizens, quite apart from our feelings as Roman Catholics, we deem it a duty which we owe to ourselves and to our non-Catholic fellow-citizens as well as to all the Catholics of France, to call public attention to this travesty on "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity;" and we denounce and condemn the conduct of the French Premier and all those associated with him in this intolerant persecution, as subversive of all liberty, inconsistent with all equality and destructive of all fraternity.

Resolved also that we heartily sympathize with all French Catholic educators and students, with members of the teaching congregations of

men and women, with pastors and parents, with the 1,600,000 boys and girls deprived of schools and teachers, with the 250,000 aged and infirm formerly cared for by the members of Catholic congregations, and with all the Catholics of France, in this their hour of bitter trial; and we implore for them from the God of Infinite Justice the grace of patience and self-restraint."

This was the last action of the alumni, faculty and student body in an eventful day and the expression is to be sent to France in common with similar expressions from other Catholic colleges throughout the United States. The action was taken after Holy Cross had received the congratulations and well wishes of some of her sister institutions of learning, not of the Catholic faith, and after many expressions of loyalty from alumni who have won high honors since graduating from the Worcester college.

It is thus that the young voice of the men of the coming day, united with that of men who are already advanced on life's path, goes across the ocean to protest against a tyranny that has disgraced the splendid civilization of a most cultivated nation.

A JUST REBUKE.—Somewhere we came upon a passage in an exchange which seem to us to be full of common sense. We know that the Jewish population of the entire civilized world has been stirred into a state of abnormal excitement on account of the fearful treatment to which their people have been subjected in Russia. We have no sympathy with persecution under any guise—our ancestors have left us an inheritance of detestation for all such methods—yet we cannot but look around us and wonder where is the sympathy to our co-religionists when they are persecuted by so-called civilized nations. The Hebrews have appealed to the President of the United States, and asked him to take one of two courses: To send a petition to the Czar of Russia pleading for religious liberty, or else to invite the nations of the world to send representatives to an international conference to pronounce upon persecution growing out of racial or religious prejudice. Commenting upon this action of the Hebrews the organ referred to says:—

"There is no more and no less reason for the United States interfering in the internal affairs of Russia now in behalf of the Jews than there would be for similar interference in the domestic affairs of France in behalf of the persecuted Catholic orders who are suffering such grievous wrongs there through religious prejudice or for the interference of Russia in the domestic affairs of the United States in behalf of the negroes in the southern states who have long been the victims of racial prejudice."

To this we might add the recent course taken by the representatives of the United States in regard to the Catholic natives of the Philippines, and, in fact, of all the lands that the suddenly grasping Republic to the south of us has of recent years undertaken to subjugate and annex. In fact, the calling together of such a congress would be a delightful fiasco. What nation to-day could honestly send representatives to an assembly gathered for the purpose of discussing the subject of persecution? What nation, of any importance or strength, is free from the stain of persecution—be it on account of racial or of religious prejudices? Is Russia to be represented? We need not answer the question. Is Italy one; we have only to point to the Prisoner of the Vatican. Is it France; her story is yet in the daily press. Is it Prussia; remember the Bismarckian laws. Is it England; then surely the memory Ireland must have faded. Is it America; her day of persecution is yet at its noon. No. There is scarcely a power on earth that has not persecuted our Church, and yet she has had no sympathy from the world.

A NEW MOVEMENT.—It is wonderful to contemplate how exact nature and all laws governing it, as well as all laws governing each part of creation are perfectly balanced. Everything that emanates from the Creator bears the same unmistakable seal. In our human individual lives it is the same thing, and equally so

in regard to that great association, or organization, the Church. There is a perpetual law of compensations at work.

To-day we have in France a steady drifting away from the old Catholic moorings, and in Germany a return, just as visible to the same. In Europe untold efforts are being made to efface all religious education, and in America, while the student voices of a rising generation are raised in protest, we find older and more experienced heads, but of different creeds, devising means for the restoration and propagation of a system of religious education. An example of this we have had during the closing weeks of last month in Chicago. With the avowed purpose of maintaining a position in the field of religious education, corresponding to that of the National Teachers' Association in the field of education in general, the Religious Association has been incorporated by William R. Harper, president of the University of Chicago; Charles L. Hutchinson, vice-president of the Corn Exchange National Bank; Professor George A. Coe, of Northwestern University; L. Wilbur, secretary of the State Y. M. C. A., and George L. Robinson, of McCormick Theological Seminary. Dean Frank Knight Sanders of Yale Divinity School, is president, and the vice-presidents, sixteen in number, represent the leading religious educational institutions of the United States, regardless of creed. The objects of the Association, as stated in the official hand-book, will be:—

"1. To unify the efforts of the different agencies already engaged in various lines of work and to coordinate the work of these agencies to the end that they may accomplish wider results.

"2. To stimulate, through the publication of the information concerning the work, and by conference, the efforts of present agencies.

"3. To create new agencies where at present no agencies exist and for special lines of work in which as yet no united effort has been exerted.

"This last point would include, it is said, such branches as Church art and architecture and Church music. Efforts will also be made from a new standpoint to secure religious and moral education in the public schools."

While this Association is declared to be "regardless of creeds," it is quite evident that the Catholic Church is not included in the various branches of Christianity that are comprised in the Association. Still that does not prevent us from feeling very pleased to see such a movement on foot. The Catholic Church is all sufficient to herself in this regard and she has ever and will ever consider religious and moral education as primary requisites in all institutions for the training of the young. But, of late it has been otherwise with the divers branches of Protestantism. They have, through the system of State education, and the secularization of schools, and the steady growth of antipathy towards all religious teaching in such establishments, been drifting rapidly into irrelevance and all the sad consequences of that hopeless social state.

This movement is but the practical result—as a stern necessity for Protestant Christianity—of the attitude of the Catholic Church. In the inverse ratio of her advancement along the pathway of religious instruction do we behold the other Christian elements falling behind. Some effort must be made if they will not be eventually effaced as far as any educational influence of a religious character is concerned. This movement will fan the smoldering embers into a new life; and that is exactly the life that is calculated to lead on towards final Catholicity. It is thus that compensation operates and in the end the Church triumphs, and all the powers of either direct enemies or of opponents combine in securing her ultimate victory—the victory of Truth.

NO FREE TEXT BOOKS.

Judge Burke, of Chicago, has delivered an opinion on behalf of the branch Appellate Court sustaining the decree of the Circuit Court, which perpetually enjoins the Board of Education from purchasing or distributing school books or text-books for the use of pupils of the first four grades of the elementary schools.