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CURRENT COMMENT

A constant reader, whose watchful eye no single line of the Review escapes, expresses his surprise that the "President of an Episcopal College" should have assisted at the conferring of the monastic habit on Miss Dorothy Howard, Mr. J. J. Redmond's niece. This item, which appeared on our second page last week, is easily explained. At Ypres, in Belgium, where this ceremony took place, the Bishop's college is called "le college episcopal," and the English Catholic paper, from which this item was taken, translated the title literally, without any suspicion that the word "episcopal," (which, by the way ought not to have begun with a capital letter), might be misinterpreted as "Anglican," a misconception which could not occur in England, where the Church by law established is never called, as it often is in the United States, "the Episcopal Church."

We had a visit last week from an energetic and able French priest, the Abbe Dubourg, from the diocese of Agen, France, who intends organizing in this country a system of rural banks for lending money to farmers at a low rate of interest. If there is one dark spot in this country's future it assuredly is the prevalence of usury with the indescribable misery it causes. There are in this city and in rural districts all over the Northwest human sharks who fatten upon the struggling farmer. Agriculture often needs credit, and these usurers take advantage of this need to lend money at exorbitant rates. When payments are delayed by inevitable accidents the usurers foreclose and distract everything they can lay their hands on. Against this inhuman cruelty, which is unfortunately supported by unwise legislation, associations for mutual lending, especially among small farmers, have proved most effectual. They provide needful credit without the injury that so often accompanies it. For example, in Germany during the last forty years the associations known by the name of their founder, Raffessen, have been of utmost benefit to the peasantry, enabling them to borrow on easy terms and on fitting occasions, because the unlimited liability of the members has allowed each association to get credit easily, while the mutual control of the members has prevented foolish borrowing. It is precisely this system of rural banks—caisses rurales—that Abbe Dubourg, invited to this country by His Lordship the Bishop of St. Albert for this purpose, is going to introduce here. He has already formed organizing committees in different places, and all who have the farmer's real interest at heart, all who do not seek to rob the farmers by process of law, gladly welcome this deliverance from the insatiable usurer. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to whom Father Dubourg submitted his scheme, was so delighted with it that he promised him every assistance in his power, even to the extent of getting special legislation passed in support of the Raffessen country banks.

This week we begin the publication of a hitherto unpublished letter written by the late Archbishop, then Bishop, Tache, more than 45 years ago. This letter was lately discovered by Father Poitras, O. M. I., and Mr. Justice Prudhomme in the course of their historical researches through the Members' Library at Parliament Buildings in this city. Being buried away in a little known report, it has hitherto escaped the attention of all historians of Manitoba and the Northwest. It is an extremely valuable document, written with all Mgr.

Tache's eloquence and humor. This latter quality is very evident in the way he makes up for Professor Hind's omissions in his report. That gentleman, who is already on record as a deliberate falsifier of events and facts, had nothing to say about the St. Boniface Convent, then by far the most important educational establishment for girls in the Red River, except that it was very spacious and that the garden was well cultivated. The Bishop delicately roasts him for suppressing all mention of the great educational value of that institution, which "even those who are afraid to acknowledge it openly, are fully aware of." While reading this beautiful letter, it is essential to remember that it was written twelve years before Manitoba joined Confederation, at a time when Winnipeg had no existence even as a village. Future instalments of this letter will be still more interesting.

"The Holy Family," a monthly illustrated magazine published at Jenkintown, Pa., describes in its August number an Irish colony in the Shenandoah Valley, Pennsylvania, where the Irish or Gaelic tongue is the ordinary medium of intercourse. The place, which is called The Lost Creeks, consists of two villages, Lost Creek proper and Lost Creek No. 2, numbering about 300 families from the west of Ireland. The curious feature of their preservation of the old tongue is that it is not due to recent immigration. Most of the families have been there for three generations. Thus the credit of keeping alive the Irish language belongs not to recent Gaelic revivalists, but to the faithful Irish mothers who taught their children its use, so that it remains even now a living heritage. Mr. Ian J. McGarvey, the author of this article on "The Lost Creeks and their Celtic Colony," spoke Irish with the people there and found that their accent was very pure. So are their lives. They cling to their religion with all the tenacity of their forefathers in the penal days, and are devoted to their pastor, Father Dooley. Yet they are thorough Americans, as they proved during the Civil War, when they sent many of their brave sons to defend the Union.

In a warmly worded appeal to his readers, Father D. S. Phelan, editor of the Western Watchman, exhorts those who have not yet seen the St. Louis Exposition not to fail to come. With his usual extremist penchant, he writes: "We have been at all the World's Fairs for the past thirty years; and we hesitate not to say that the St. Louis Exposition not only eclipses them all, but is more than all the others combined." This is decidedly not the opinion of Mr. A. W. Harvey Bellingham, as interviewed by the Telegram last Tuesday. He, who is the chief engineer of the British Municipality of Tientsin, China, and has seen a good many great sights also, says:

In the States I went to St. Louis. It is a poor exhibition and a great failure. It reminded me of the Old Country fairs in England 20 years ago and is by no means a big exhibition. If I had known what it was like and been sure that Manitoba was so interesting as I find it, I would have spent more time here instead of going to the States.

That the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition is a financial failure even Father Phelan admits. "Up to the present" (August 25), he says, "the attendance has been disappointing. The crowds that were expected did not come and those who did come were affected by the prevailing indifference and went away without seeing one-hundredth of what was to be seen." He tries to account for this by the fact that

St. Louis is a Western city, and that "for one-half of the people of this country, the United States lies entirely east of the Alleghamies." But Chicago is not east of the Alleghamies, it is almost as far west as St. Louis; and yet its World's Fair was pretty crowded. No; the real cause of the general apathy is that the exhibition business is played out. Over fifty years of it is about as much as the civilized world can stand. The first Universal Exhibition in London in 1851, being an unheard-of novelty, was to people then living one of the greatest wonders in the world, though the exhibits and attendance were far inferior to subsequent exhibitions. At the Paris Exposition of 1867 the novelty had not yet worn off and there was the added zest of rivalry between the two nations that were then the wealthiest and the most interesting on this planet. But for each of the exhibitions in Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Paris (1889), Chicago (1893), Paris (1900), and St. Louis (1904), there has been a distinct falling off in general interest all over the world. People who had seen one or two of them felt immeasurably weary. Economists began to doubt if these vast exhibitions were really a benefit to trade; many think them a positive waste of time and money. Perhaps the world's interest may revive if the next Great Exhibition is put off for a quarter of a century.

Two incidents that occurred lately in the United States show how one man or woman is enough to voice the cowardly dormant feelings of a crowd or to do what that timid crowd should have done. One of our American exchanges relates the following deserved rebuke to a minstrel company that attempted some sacrilegious jests at the opening of the Bijou Theatre, Pittsburg.

In an effort to be humorous one of the end men propounded certain problems, belief in which, it was said, insured salvation. The stories of Daniel in the lion's den and Jonah and the whale were told. The interlocutor referred to the parable of the loaves and fishes, using almost the language of the scriptural text.

While this was being told there was not a sound in the theatre. The audience waited as if stunned for the denouement.

At last an old man in the audience said excitedly: "Beg pardon, gentlemen, please cut that out," which request was echoed from all parts of the theatre.

Further irreverence was eliminated and the management promised that no repetition of the offence would be allowed.

Well done, Pittsburg. The Milwaukee Catholic citizen tells the other tale, which redounds to the credit of at least one brave woman in Chicago.

An incident occurred on an afternoon train on the Consolidated road, Chicago, last week, that ought to have found its way into print before this. It has numerous lessons. Among the passengers were three sweet and quiet Sisters of Charity in their characteristic dress. A drunken man, very drunk and annoying, entered the car and sat down beside one of them. He talked persistently, drank from a big bottle that he carried, and finally stuck his disagreeable face repeatedly into the long bonnet of a sister in a most insulting way. She was evidently much frightened. The conductor had already been told of the man's conduct, but did nothing. The other passengers, in true passenger fashion, sat and looked on. No man stirred.

Finally a woman, white as a sheet, and full of suppressed indignation, got up from her seat and went to the rescue. She grabbed the fellow's bottle,

wrested it from his hands and flung it out of the window, and then took hold of him, and after a lively and unassisted struggle, got him out of the seat. "I'm no Catholic," she said excitedly to the spectators, "but I will not sit still and see a Sister of Charity insulted."

One of our Galician subscribers in Assiniboia writes that he likes our paper very much because it is "full of Catholic news." He is right. Although our space is limited—a fact which we do not at all consider a misfortune—our careful readers, who read every line of the Review, tell us that they find in our pages more important and interesting Catholic news, properly boiled down and therefore more impressive, than in other more voluminous and pretentious journals. Our correspondent admits that the reading of our paper is a "little hard for me in some places," but he hopes that "Our Lord God, the Father and Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Ghost our light-giver, with the intercession of the Mother of God, Blessed Mary ever Virgin, will help me to read and understand those hard places soon." No doubt they will, especially as most of what appears in the Northwest Review is as good English as any body needs. When, however, our pious Galician friend goes on to express the hope "that the Protestants will all read Catholic papers and will be all turned to good strong faithful Catholics," while admiring his zeal we do not feel quite so hopeful. His letter, which contains some other matters of no interest to the public, is written in a clear, legible hand and contains less mistakes in spelling than many an examination paper written by public school graduates.

By the way, now that the public schools of this city are going to discontinue their exercises in manual training for lack of funds, the teachers will have more time to enforce those much needed regulations lately passed by the Advisory Board with regard to spelling. More insistence on intelligent reading, knowledge of the meaning of words, extension of vocabulary, grammar, penmanship and spelling is the great desideratum. If as much care were bestowed on drill in these subjects as is bestowed on arithmetic, algebra and geometry there would not be so many complaints that eighth grade pupils cannot write a decent letter nor avoid the most obvious blunders against grammar. Mathematical training is all very good in its way, which is the way of accurate and consecutive thinking in a narrow sphere; but it imparts no accuracy of multiform human speech and implies not even a beginning of scholarship.

The Sacred Heart Review thus disposes of one of the classic authorities upon which most Protestant popular history text-books were based some 25 years ago, before non-Catholic historians had begun to tell the truth.

An item in a non-Catholic contemporary tells of the death of an earnest woman who "never lost her taste for historical reading." D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation," was, it seems, her favorite book. Why didn't she read "Jack the Giant Killer?" According to our friend, the Rev. Mr. Starbuck, D'Aubigne's so-called history is on a par, so far as historical accuracy goes, with the "bluggy" tale which horrified our childish ears.

Nothing could be more tasty than the "Souvenir of the laying of the corner-stone of the new Arts Building of the University of Ottawa." The illustrations are excellent

especially the large photo which instantaneously reproduces the exact moment of laying the corner stone, May 24, 1904, and the two photos showing the ruins of the fire. Imposing, indeed, is the perspective view of the new Arts Building, now in course of erection. The general plan resembles the capitol in Washington. Unquestionably, however, the most interesting feature of this splendid publication is the verbatim report of the speeches delivered on that occasion. They body forth the noble and dauntless spirit of this great institution and augur well for its future success.

"Love of Catholic Doctrine" is the September intention for the Apostleship of prayer. The study of Catholic doctrine, begun in the catechetical instructions of youth, ought to be pursued as a labor of love throughout life. In this respect, as well as in many others, our education is never stationary, never complete, but always progressive, always discovering new beauties in the splendors of divine faith. A great French Bishop has said that ignorance in religious matters was one of the principal causes of the blatant atheism that is now laying waste the fair land of France. He deplored that ignorance not only in the lower classes, among whom he found it sometimes "profound and absolute," but also among the highly cultivated leaders of men. This ignorance leads first to indifference, then to neglect of the sacraments, those sources of light and love, afterward to impatience of church government, finally to unbelief, and open apostasy. Such baneful tendencies we should counteract in ourselves by eager attention to instructive sermons, by reading explanations of Catholic doctrine, by a constant perusal of first-class Catholic journals, and in others, by combating error verbally or in writing whenever the opportunity offers.

As may be seen from a notice in our advertising columns a drawing will take place on the 21st inst. for the beautiful "Obediencia" engraving after Thaddeus. The winner of this highly prized work of art will indeed be fortunate. Speaking under correction, we think we are safe in saying that it is the only one in Western Canada. The number of these engravings struck off before the great original left for Sydney was very limited, and that number was exhausted before the date fixed for the end of the sale, namely, October, 1903. It is a splendid souvenir of the great Pope Leo XIII., who is represented surrounded by members of his court, and receiving the oath of fidelity from a Cardinal kneeling before him.

"The Technical World" tells a story so appropriate for the opening of schools, when parents hesitate between a long and thorough course of mental training and a short and unsatisfactory course, that we are glad to give it wider circulation.

Last year a young man made application to enter a certain Western college, and, in talking over the studies with the Dean, asked if there were no shorter way to get through and graduate than the course prescribed. "That depends entirely on what you want to be," replied the Dean. "When God wants to make an oak, He takes fifty years; but when He wants to make a squash, He takes six weeks." What a lot of squashes we find in every trade and profession—half baked, underdone people, who seldom succeed, because they refuse to give the time and thought to equip the brain and hand with the training the world is always ready to pay for.