

JANUARY 20, 1900.

A POPULAR DISEASE.

Absence of Religion in the Civic Life of Americans.

The Rev. John Talbot Smith, of New York, the well known Catholic writer, delivered a lecture before the Azarias Reading Circle, of Bridgeport, Conn., last Wednesday evening upon "A Popular Disease."

The lecture was a lucid and masterly arraignment of "Nothingarianism," a term used by the late Father Hecker to express the absence of religious sentiment in our public life.

The second popular disease was when Luther inculcated the germs of Protestantism. Men took it to mean freedom, and the liberty-loving imagined that it broke the fetters of the tyranny of Rome.

Sixty years ago the now popular disease of "Nothingarianism" was not known. The disease spread, and it was tacitly agreed that all reference to religion be eliminated in our civic life.

"Nothingarianism" has become so ingrained in public system that any attempt toward the cultivation of Christian art in this country is a failure by discouragement.

Let us look further into the department of our public art. There is not a single example of Christian art in Central Park, New York.

Father Smith also spoke of pictures. He paid his respects to that famous painting by a French artist called "The Story of the Missionary."

The prevalence of "Nothingarianism" was also treated of in the department of literature. In all the writings of William Dean Howells, the first American man of letters, there is no trace of the religious sentiment of the people of the United States.

The lecturer said that the popular disease had attacked even public charities, and for a long time the poor

Catholic was denied the consolation of his religion. Father Smith was very emphatic in his denunciation of the brood of solemn-faced ministers who prevented the appointment of Catholic chaplains in the army.

In concluding, Father Smith said that "Nothingarianism" was one of the greatest frauds ever perpetrated on a public, and would only terminate in the end by eradicating religion from our civic life.

A COLORED PRIEST AND A REV. DOCTOR.

While Dr. England, Bishop of Charleston, was on a visit to his native city, Cork, he became acquainted with an exceedingly intelligent negro, an Irishman by birth.

The servant informed him that the Doctor was at breakfast, and pointing to the basement said: "If you wish to see the Doctor, go down there."

Having closed the hall door, the servant ran down to the Doctor, and told him that a very conceited looking black "man" was coming down to see him on important business.

"Tell him to come in here," said the Doctor. When our friend entered the room, the Doctor, without rising from the table, bowed politely to the man and said, with a rich Cork accent:

"Good morning, sir," replied our friend with just as rich a brogue. The Doctor, surprised at the accent, looked carefully at the man, and said to him very inquiringly:

"What countryman are you, sir?" "I'm an Irishman, sir," said the man. "An Irishman?" said the Doctor, still more surprised.

"Then what part of Ireland are you from?" "I'm from Cork, sir," said the Doctor, perfectly astonished. "I was sir," replied our friend.

"What is your occupation?" said the Doctor. "I have the honor of being a clergyman—a priest."

"A priest!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Yes, sir," was the answer. "Who, in the name of God, tell me, ordained you?"

"Bishop England, sir," said our friend. "This was too much for the Doctor, so he called the servant to show the man the door, and said: 'Clear off; you are a base impostor!'"

"Allow me to show you my credentials," replied our friend, proceeding to unlock his valise. So having produced the documents, together with some letters of recommendation and his exeat from Bishop England, he was permitted to sit down and explain matters.

Even the Doctor was not altogether convinced till he had questioned him in Latin and on certain theological points. Having received correct answers, in classical Latin, to his questions, he excused himself for his incontinuity: "but," said he, "I'm afraid to allow you to say Mass in the Church; these New Yorkers are very unruly people, and I'm afraid they would do some damage to you, as they are not at all friendly to the black man. However, I have no objection to allow you to say Mass privately in the basement of the church, or in the house here, whichever you choose."

Our friend, seeing the great prejudice that existed, thought his policy would be to keep "dark," so he thanked the doctor for the privilege and proceeded very quietly to the chapel in the basement, the doctor having told him that he would send over two or three boys to serve his Mass.

When our friend had left, the doctor called the servant and told her to send for boys to serve that man's Mass.

altar, boys. After allowing the man sufficient time to vest and get on the altar her curiosity was so excited she resolved to hear the Mass. She heard the poor man saying Mass so devoutly, and in tone as sweet and correct as any priest she heard in the "old dart."

AT THE CLOSE OF A CENTURY.

Examination of Conscience.

By MONSIGNOR LE ROY.

The close of a year is the opportune time for all to take an account of their affairs. We are at the close of a century: how do the affairs of the world stand?

It is often said that humanity is on the road of progress: this is the theme of most writers, especially when their own condition is improving. How is it? Truly, humanity is progressing; and despite all macontents, all laggards, all the indifferent, all the unbelieving, all its enemies, the mysterious cloud directs it: Providence spurs it onward, always.

See Christianity at its beginning. It numbered only a group of sinners, plus women and brave men. But with this group God deposited religious truth and supernatural life, saying, "Go and teach it to all nations, and I will be with you to the end."

The group dispersed, and in dispersing multiplied. If St. Peter had stayed in Jerusalem and kept all his bishops and priests with him, Christianity—humanum dico—would not have been known in other countries or outlived the century. But St. Peter had a Guide Whom he followed.

In the face of opposition, difficulties, persecutions, defections, revolutions, and transient obscurity, the Christian idea did not cease to develop and expand; the column of cloud that rejoins earth to heaven and guides progressing humanity, lighting up darkness, had shed its light, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, over Europe and parts of Asia and America.

But after the lamentable Protestant separation, followed by the ruin caused by the "philosophy" of the eighteenth century, and culminating in the violent upheaval of the French Revolution, an alarming calm prevailed.

The Catholic Church, deprived of her missionaries, withdrew within herself and awaited. In the meantime, her Founder had not abandoned her, and the spirit whom he had sent to abide with her was not long in raising the world and setting it again in motion.

With this century a new order of things began for the evangelization of the world. The official action of governments whose interests were one with those of the Church has been replaced by the voluntary action of individuals. The fact must be accepted: it is not states, or even Catholic Bishops of any one country, that, separately or together, recognize that three-quarters of the world are without the pale of truth and life that must be preached to them; but simple, humble Christians, who, in the midst of business and distractions, see that the work of the Saviour is not being carried on, and so form societies uniting those of like devotion to say to the vicar of Jesus Christ: "Permit us to go beyond the Christian frontiers to carry light and life there."

Such has been the event of the nineteenth century. Thanks to the personal inspiration of generous and truly Christian hearts, the year 1900 will find us with an army of missionaries, priests, brothers and religious spread throughout the world, everywhere active, everywhere ready to die rather than to retrace one step.

But that is not all. At the same time that the Apostolic spirit of the Church was clothed with new energy, Providence brought the world under its influence by giving up to it the first of all nations, the European, which accepted Christianity when others refused it, and made it the foundation of civilization. What if they be called French, German, Anglo-Saxon, Slavic, Greek, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese? They are Christian, and as such are masters of the world. This is the modern event in the history of humanity; for only at the beginning of this century Europe had no secure colonies but those in America. Nearly the whole of Africa was lost to it as well as Oceania and a part of India and Asia. At the present day no other country is so entirely independent; and if other nations seem so we know to whose influence to attribute their independence.

M. BRUNETIERE A CONVERT.

Rome Correspondent of the Baltimore Sun.

Among the distinguished visitors who are spoken of as coming to Rome early in the year of jubilee one of the most interesting is M. Ferdinand Brunetiere, the eminent director of the Revue des Deux Mondes, perhaps the most influential of European reviews.

It is rumored that this visit will coincide with the official announcement of his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. It will be a new phase in the modern periodical literature of France to find the director of the Revue des Deux Mondes a Catholic. Its original founder, M. Buloz, had no religion as that word is ordinarily understood.

WHY WE ARE CATHOLICS.

In the new century all Catholics should be able to render an account of "the faith that is in them." They can answer, with St. Augustine, that they are Catholics, because "in the Catholic Church the succession of priests from the See itself of the Apostle Peter (Rome) even to the present episcopate, holds them."

She must last, therefore, as long as there are souls to save. She is built on a rock and "the gates of hell shall never prevail against her." Hence it is impossible for her ever to become corrupt in her faith, in her sacraments, or in her government.

She should fall in any of these that moment the gates of hell would have prevailed against her. To assert that at any time the Church of Christ failed to deny the truth of Christ's promise to His Church. "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

There are some, St. Augustine tells us, "who say some that was the Church of all nations is already no more; she has perished. This they say who are not in her. 'I'm impudent assertion!' If, therefore, the Church cannot fall or become corrupt, there can be no reason for any reformation in her faith, her sacraments, or her government. Every attempt at such reformation is an explicit denial of her indefectibility.—American Herald.

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