

OCTOBER 5, 1912

means that will help us should be eagerly seized. How are we to do this work? And what motives ought to move us to action? The promise of Heaven and fear of eternal retribution are the most powerful incentives. These are developed for us in the sermons and discourses we receive from our spiritual shepherds who, by the living word spoken from the pulpit, not merely explain the laws of God but urge us to observe them as well.

This would seem to be enough, and in fact, was enough for centuries; but while the spoken word, falling from eloquent lips, has an efficacy all its own in inspiring souls to observe God's laws and to practise virtue, one sometimes wonders whether or no the living voice is not nowadays yielding its place to the printed page. Evidently spiritual reading should not take the place of sermons, seeing that preaching is the use of the living word, and that the printed page is not the living voice. But we must admit it is no longer the only means; the power of the press must be recognized. It were folly to ignore the tremendous influence books have on our lives for better or worse. Reading, in a passage in a spiritual book which impresses us may be just as we look upon sermons as the Word of God transmitted by the living voice to be heard, so should we look on spiritual books as letters sent from heaven to be read.

Nay more, the written page has advantages that sermons have not. While we cannot always have a preacher to instruct us when we need him, we can always have a spiritual book. Again, no matter how eloquent a preacher may be, his lessons and appeals fade from memory all too soon, very often before they have taken root; but a passage in a spiritual book which impresses us may dwell upon, read and re-read; and the author's words may penetrate our souls so thoroughly that the impression becomes lasting. Finally the printed page need not take infinite precautions to tell us plain, even unpleasant, truths, its very frankness in this respect is for us a great blessing. So prone are we to rebel at the logic of plain facts, especially the conclusions that may be drawn from them, that the living word must oftentimes be uttered in tones calculated to save our feelings. A spiritual book, on the other hand, does not fear to wound feelings; if it cuts deeply it is only to cure; if it humbles it is only to uplift.

A spiritual book is a ladder laden with rich and wholesome viands, the partaking whereof is, the saints tell us, true food for the soul. It is a food that strengthens us in temptations, inspires us to heroic deeds, discards worldly joys and sorrows, and replaces them by solid consolations. If these words of the saints be true—and who will gainsay?—should we not make more frequent use of this spiritual nourishment? The physical food which we assimilate forming our flesh and bone and keeping up our bodily strength; in the same way the good thoughts and inspirations that come to us in our spiritual reading remain in our memory, and excite our will to salutary acts.

Is not this our experience? After half an hour's spiritual reading, in which, for us to make some heroic sacrifice or to practise some virtue more intensively, are developed, our mind becomes convinced of the justice of the author's plea and our will is more disposed to act. "Following of Christ" is not a mere name to us; it is a reality. We feel that a special message for us, that his earnest words must not be ignored. This is also the experience of those who apply themselves to the pages of the "Christian Perfection" of Rodriguez, Scaramelli's "Directory," and other works, well known to those who try to lead a spiritual life.

Similar considerations may be put forward regarding the reading of the "Lives of the Saints," for herein the power of the printed page, if you will, the influence of good books, is illustrated in all its intensity. After a perusal of the life of one of those heroes of God, the beauty of his virtues impresses us so deeply that we feel drawn to imitate him. We see the view he took of this transitory life, the rights he made of his free will; and seizing the reasonableness of it all, we resolve to follow his example. From admiration to imitation there is only a step.

Another charm that accompanies the reading of the Lives of the Saints in the intellectual satisfaction it gives. In novels and romances we look for life, color exciting situations, dramatic incidents, and so on; but what romance can rival in captivating interest the life of a saint? What, in fact, are the various incidents detailed in the life of a popular hero when compared with the upward struggle of a hero of Christ? The development of some passion or other which forms the basis for the greater amount of popular fiction, the obstacles to the end intended, and the means employed to surmount them, keep us breathless until the happy denouement arrives; but we have all this and more in the Lives of the Saints. Their lives, their difficulties in their way; they, with obstacles to surmount; but the love of God which influenced their every action make them capable of marvellous exploits.

If we are looking for mental food that will move us to deeds worthy of the name of Catholic, let us go to our own Catholic historians, biographers and anecdotal writers. In their works—and surely they are numerous enough—we shall find everything we require to inform our minds and influence our hearts. But reading of this character will produce its effects only when certain conditions are observed. If we read a spiritual book piously and perseveringly, with sentiments that we bring to it, and for much spiritual profit. Reading such and reading in haste will have the same effect on us as the sudden cloudburst has on the parched fields when it rushes rapidly down the mountain-side and evaporates just as rapidly. It is not the slow, continuous rain that penetrates the earth and makes it fertile. So reading out of a spiritual book, made calmly and with reflection, will move the heart to its very depths and bring forth fruits of virtue. But this is not enough. While reading slowly let us pause over those passages that impress us; let us reflect on what we read, but to be impressed again with the old, and to see how they are influencing our lives. We do not read spiritual books simply for instruction; knowledge in itself is sterile if it does not react for the better on our daily lives. Let us therefore, aim at the inflaming of the will that counts. In the final reckoning the Great Judge will hold us accountable not for what we know but for the way we use our knowledge.

AN EDITOR TAKEN TO TASK

CATHOLIC LAYMAN OF SIOUX CITY PROTESTS AGAINST POLICY OF THE LITERARY DIGEST IN REPUBLISHING SLANDERS

A few weeks ago the Literary Digest republished, from the Monaca, a vile, anti-Catholic paper, which claims "a million circulation," a bitter attack upon the Catholic church. The following letters speak for themselves in explanation of the fruitless attempt of a Catholic layman to secure any adequate apology or redress from the Literary Digest for its insult to its Catholic readers:

SIOUX CITY, Ia., Aug. 5th, 1912. Editor True Voice, Omaha, Neb. The Literary Digest, issue of July 20th, contained an article entitled "What the Monaca Fears." It contained quotations from an editorial signed by C. Bradway, imputing to our political leaders subservience to the Catholic vote. The editor of the Digest introduced his subject as follows: "Our readers have heard of a paper issuing from Aurora, Mo., which aims to combat the menace of the Catholic hierarchy in this country. As report places its circulation well toward the million mark, its utterances are of interest and importance to all observers of religious thought, and our readers are entitled to a specimen of its opinion."

The enclosed letter was sent to the Literary Digest and in a friendly spirit, but without publication. As the writer has been advised that it might be of interest to your readers it is herewith respectfully submitted.

Respectfully yours, Wm. L. STEELE, July 23rd, 1912.

To the Editor of the Literary Digest New York, N. Y.

To a reader of your weekly clippings from the press it would appear that

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either there is much being written in criticism of the Catholic Church or "ye Editor" has an eye keen to observe such "literary" manifestations. I am a Catholic, and though it may seem strange to you in the light of some of the articles which you print about the Church, Catholics are firm believers in free speech and the liberty of the press. They would prefer the abuse of these privileges to their denial.

To lie and to slander are certain abuses of free speech. The liar and the slanderer may have their say; and then, if the injured party can afford it, a libel suit is brought. In some cases membership in the Ananias club has been freely bestowed.

It has not been the policy of your magazine during the few years I have followed it to spread slander and calumny. It has avoided delicate subjects deftly. It has spread before its readers weekly a fairly just survey of events and current opinion.

It does seem to me, however, that when it comes to matters concerning the Catholic Church your selections betray an animus in the editorial mind which is directed toward possible weaknesses, apparent abuses, anything which would seem to indicate failure on the part of the Catholic Church to fulfil her divinely appointed mission.

You have doubtless a great many Catholics among your readers. The first copy of the Literary Digest I ever saw was on the study table of a Catholic priest. We do not expect you to publish complimentary articles about us, but we would like you to be fair.

I submit that it is distinctly unfair to quote as you do from an editorial published in a scurrilous paper which shall be nameless so far as I am concerned. It is a sheet whose makeup and character ought to bar it from the exchange lists of any respectable paper. I have been assailed by sample copies of this sheet on several different occasions. In all there was printed matter which, to say the least, was indecent. In all there were articles which, to say the least, were libelous. In all there were slanders, innuendoes, slurs, insults directed against the Catholic Church. In all there were printed lists of the most vile degraded and nauseating books that ever disgraced so-called "religious" controversy.

If, in the interests of truth and honesty, you must repeat the low gossip of the tap-room and servants' quarters, one should be careful to apologize in the same breath for the infringement of etiquette committed. One would hardly attempt to dignify a representative of a phase of religious thought. It is a poor excuse to say: "As report places its circulation well along toward the million mark, its utterances of interest and importance to all observers of religious thought, and our readers are entitled to a specimen of its opinion."

I have asked two different Protestant ministers and one Protestant layman, all of whom are representative men in their respective denominations of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist, they thought of the paper, which you dignify by your mention. None of them had ever heard of it. They said: "I have never since the days of Brann's 'Iconoclast' there have been free periodicals and papers; and if a review of these you ought to enlarge your magazine and give room for a sample of them. The reputed circulation of the circulation should not be the test."

We who pay for our paper I assume do so with a view to getting above the level of the ordinary newspaper. We would seek a quiet hall where thoughtful minds are assembled to exchange their ideas, to gather a comprehensive knowledge of the trend of real literature. The merely ephemeral is of no concern. The merely low and violently partisan should be barred out of such assemblies.

Bishop Spalding once said: "The newspaper is the sewer of public opinion. It is well this should have issue, but when we drink or bathe we seek pure fountains and clear streams."

You can hardly avoid some mention of the Catholic church for its presence among us is a real and a vital thing. It will not do to ignore her, and yet how much more dignified such a policy than to clear your rostrum for space in which to advertise those whose method of earning a living is by slandering the Catholic Church. I venture to say that you and our contributors, and your friend, The Independent, do not ever give a serious thought to the spiritual side of the Catholic Church. How few the Catholic books which you review! How seldom you mention a Catholic paper!

Let me say this one thing to you, and, if you please, to your readers. There is one very important fact underlying the activity of the Catholic Church which critics and reviewers are ignorant of, or seeing do not understand. We Catholics are trying to save our souls. The Church in her work with the souls of men has been carrying out her Christ-given mission. She goes on through the ages, helped rather than hindered by the persecutions of all kinds which have assailed her. She has to expect persecution. Christ said to his disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues. Yea, the hour cometh when whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God."

The Catholic Church is praying, unceasingly praying for the coming of God's kingdom. Israel Zangwill in his "Italian Fantasies" says:

"There are two torments that amaze me—the one is Niagara, and the other the outpouring of reverent prayer falling perpetually in the Catholic church. What, with Masses, and the exposition of the Host, there is no day nor moment of the day in which the praises of God are not being sung somewhere; in no noble churches, in dim crypts and underground chapels, in cells and oratories. Niagara is indifferent to spectators, and so the ever-falling stream of prayer. As steadfastly and unremittently as God sustains the universe, so steadfastly and unceasingly is He acknowledged and glorified in the human antiphony answering the divine strophe. There he those who cannot bear that Niagara should fall and thunder in mere sublimity, but only to such will this falling thunder of prayer seem waste."

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NOT TO OBEY LAWS

Twenty-five thousand Irish Presbyterians in Belfast made a demonstration the other day against Home Rule. A dozen halls and churches were filled with enthusiasts, who voted their undying determination not to obey the laws of an Irish parliament, and to throw all tax bills into the fire. The religious and industrial interests of Ireland, they declared, would be imperiled by Home Rule.

We have commented before upon these strange actions of Irish Protestants, but we cannot forbear saying something more. If the Irish Protestants feel so badly over the prospect of an Irish parliament, they ought to realize how badly a majority of the Irish people feel over being governed from London. These Irish Protestants will certainly be represented as well in any Irish legislative assembly as the Catholics, and probably they will be much better represented. And all of their talk about the religious and industrial interests of Ireland being imperiled by Home Rule in nothing but poppycock, as they ought to know. Certainly, Irish Catholics are as much interested in the industrial interests of Ireland as the Irish Protestants are, and it is known that the new Home Rule bill which Mr. Asquith will introduce in the house of Commons will provide against the religious discrimination.

The trouble with the average Irish Protestant is that he lacks patriotism. Protestant is not Irish soil, in the first place as a colonist and an alien. But he lived, in the bad old days, with the undying conviction that an Irish Catholic was a man who had no rights which a Scottish Presbyterian was bound to respect.

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respect. His ancestors had no great affection for England. With the English they fought, and to the English they were never quite conquered. Carlyle was proud, down to his dying day of the heroic deeds of Sir William Wallace and King Robert Bruce, which, he said, compelled England to join with Scotland on equal terms. But when the Scotchman went over to Ireland he left some of his heroic traits behind him, and he began to cringe and crawl. He retained his bigotry, and little else.

If the Irish Protestants rebel against Home Rule, they will get a taste of English bullets. It will be a startling phenomenon to see the Irish Catholics on the side of the British government and their opponents rebels. We may be destined to witness this phenomenon. But we think that in time the Irish Protestants themselves will learn to rejoice in Home Rule. They will learn that their fears were groundless, and that their neighbors of another creed have no desire to molest them, or to do them any kind of harm. The light of day will penetrate into the darkness of their fears and prejudices and illumine their souls.—Rochester Herald. (non-Catholic.)

THE BUSINESS OF THE DAY

A superlatively innocent writer in the last issue of the Outlook informs the world that the Catholic Church, "which some suppose to be immutable," is now changing. The reason adduced is that certain Sisters in Brooklyn are preparing their girls for business life. Could anything be more painfully insane? Evidently the author of this nonsense is unaware that it was the monks and nuns of former times who persuaded his painted ancestors to come out of their caverns and forests, to wash themselves, wear clothes and live in houses like human beings. Those monks and nuns were addressing themselves to the business of those days, and the Church which "some suppose to be immutable" did not change an iota.

Later on those same active agents of the Church laboured incessantly to teach their rude pupils to drain marshes, cultivate fields, plant trees, build roads, construct bridges and erect the splendid edifices, civil and ecclesiastical, which after long centuries are still the glory of all the countries in Europe.

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That was the business of the day. It was these monks and nuns who gave the modern world its language, its literature, its law, its music, its architecture, its art, its cities, its nations. It was the business of the day. When Europe was in danger of becoming another Asia or Africa under the rule of the Crescent, it was the monks who organized Military Orders and showed the people how to fight for God, for country, and for civilization. They even took the place of the captives in the galleys of the infidels. It was the business of the day. And so on through all the changing centuries of time.

To come now with the startling information that the Church is changing because a few nuns in Brooklyn are preparing their girls for business life, is like telling us that the Fire Department is in a process of transformation because one day it turns on a third alarm, and the next uses its axe and bucket; or that a physician is a suspect who applies poultices to one patient and gives another pills; or that an old gentleman in a rain storm loses his personality when he puts up his umbrella which he closed when the weather was fair.

It might be remarked that the business of the day for a paper, especially for one that calls itself the Outlook, is to chronicle every incident in the business of the day when it happens; but this startling revolution in the Church that is occurring in Brooklyn because of the determination of the nuns to prepare their girls for business life, was inaugurated by this special community at least ten years ago, and it has only now entered into the all absorbing gaze of the Outlook. Had proper vigilance been exercised other preparations for business life might have been observed long ago in all the Catholic schools of the country. But there need be no fear. Catholic activity will be exercised in an infinite number of directions to meet the constantly shifting conditions in which mankind will ever find itself, but the Church will not and cannot change. Its doctrine and constitution will remain the same forever. Its outlook is divine truth and the good of humanity.—America.

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