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BOOKS AND READING

Reading opens the treasure houses of human knowledge, places at our disposal all the thought of the philosophers, all the discoveries of science, all the glories and beauties of literature. To be able to read is an Aladdin's Lamp, the Open Sesame to the accumulated wisdom of all the ages.

Have you not heard or read—heard and read—that sort of buncombe? Few escape it. It comes sometimes from those who talk of "education," of public libraries and of schools; sometimes from men who would, if compelled off hand to define their terms, give pathetically amusing definitions of the very terms they use so glibly; sometimes from men who in spite of their reading are narrow-minded and shallow egotists who profess infinite pity for "illiterates." It is characteristic of the age. It suggests the intolerant zealot who would impose by law his peculiar tenets while prating of liberty and of the profane—before he is found out—expressing with teardimmed eyes his profane scorn for profits; or the Unionist statesman with high resolve and heroic purpose proclaiming inalienable rights which he denies to Ireland; or the fervid orator and facile writer who could find no adequate expression to characterize Prussian brutality in invading Belgium, but who now coolly pleads as full and final, in the case of Ireland, the Prussian justification—military necessity.

When you go into a fruit store do you stand and say, "I can never eat all that fruit; crates and crates of it, and cartloads more in the warehouse?" Of course you don't. You eat enough for the good of your system, and let it go at that. Now, just apply the same sense to your reading. Read enough to keep your mind fresh, and alert, and vigorous; give it one new thought to wrestle with every day, and let the rest go.

Oh, I know that there is a certain school which holds that unless you have read this author or that author, or this book or that book, you are hopelessly uninformed or behind the times. That's literary snobbishness. Let them talk. A mind that consumes more than it can assimilate is morally on a par with a stomach that swallows more than it can digest. Gluttons, both of them. Read as much as you can think about, and no more. The trouble with many of our people is that they do not read to think, but to save themselves the trouble of thinking. The mind, left to itself, insists upon activity. So they chloroform it.

And that precisely is what a great many people do. The statistics of public libraries show that the great preponderance of the reading of their patrons is fiction. Now we would not be understood as condemning the reading of fiction. Recreation and relaxation are as necessary to the mind as to the body; and the wisdom of our ancestors is enshrined in the proverb: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." That understood, it will be conceded that there is here great danger of abuse. Many read fiction merely for the stimulating effect on the imagination and the emotions; they revel in the play of human passions, they become excited over the action and feel that all the interest of life centres on that development of the plot; through with one novel they become immersed in another; they are dull and listless without their accustomed stimulant. And such stimulants are in many cases much more harmful than the moral uplift legislation now makes it difficult and dangerous to procure. In fact the late Goldwin Smith characterized such reading as "intellectual intoxication." Perhaps in the good time coming we shall have by legal enactment all such reading prohibited! Once we start in to make the people moral by act of parliament there opens up a wonderful vista of legislation. For ourselves we have no faith in the plan to eliminate by legislation God's most precious gift to man—free-will. And the necessity of training the will in the matter of reading is as great and pressing as in other things. What we have said does not imply that the books in themselves are bad, that is another story. To reinforce our argument let us quote for those who may be inclined to think us too severe the opinion of two brothers, distinguished scholars, who in collaboration published a book, "Guesses at Truth," nearly a hundred years ago when the evil complained was infinitesimal compared with what it is to-day. The Hare brothers were Anglicans, and while we don't mean to commit ourselves to the approval of all their writings we heartily

endorse the quotation which follows and which will be as true a hundred years hence as it was a hundred years ago, and is to-day:

"Desultory reading is indeed very mischievous, by fostering habits of loose, discontinuous thought, by turning the memory into a common sewer for all sorts of rubbish to float through, and by relaxing the power of attention, which of all our faculties most needs care and is most improved by care. But a well-regulated course of study will no more weaken the mind than hard exercise will weaken the body; nor will a strong understanding be weighed down by its knowledge, any more than an oak by its leaves, or than Samson by his locks."

Mere reading then, instead of opening up to us the treasures of thought, the beauties of literature, the wisdom of the ages, may be only a chloroforming of the mind; very mischievous, turning the memory into a common sewer; intellectual intoxication; an evil from which the illiterate are preserved by their very illiteracy.

We shall continue to discuss this subject in the hope of benefiting at least the younger, more ambitious and energetic section of our readers

MRS. PHILIP GIBBS

A correspondent thinking in a recent article we "implied" that Mrs. Philip Gibbs is a Protestant, writes the information that she is a Catholic. We were quite well aware of the fact; she is not only a Catholic but a prominent and zealous participant in many public Catholic activities; she organized social study amongst Catholics, especially in Catholic schools; is on Committees of the Catholic Truth Society, Catholic Social Guild and several other such organizations.

In the article in question we questioned the statement that Philip Gibbs and his wife were converts in so far as Philip Gibbs himself is concerned; but we "implied" that Mrs. Gibbs was probably a convert since she is the daughter of Rev. W. Rowland, Rector of Middle Chinnock. But it does not necessarily follow that she is a convert; her parents may have been converted before she was born or in her infancy and consequently she herself may have been baptized and brought up in the faith. She was educated abroad; and the Catholic Who's Who, from which we get our information, makes no mention of the fact or date of her conversion.

She is not only an ardent Catholic worker but a prolific Catholic writer, having published many books and contributed articles to such periodicals as that excellent Jesuit publication, The Month. Yes, the evidence is quite overwhelming that Mrs. Gibbs is a Catholic, and we never meant to imply anything else.

IRISH CATHOLIC FREE MASONS

The Calgary Albertan of March 18th reports that the Very Worshipful Brother Johnson gave a very interesting lecture on the growth of the Grand Lodge of Ireland in the Masonic Hall on St. Patrick's Day in the evening. The Very Worshipful Brother was more modest in his assertions than some of the reverend ministers; he did not claim that St. Patrick was a Free Mason. But he is reported to have said this:

"The peculiarity of the Irish lodge is that Roman Catholics are enrolled, and when they die are buried with full Masonic honors in a Roman Catholic cemetery."

That is a very peculiar peculiarity indeed. As every Catholic knows a Catholic cannot be a Free Mason and remain a Catholic; nor will the Catholic Church in Ireland or elsewhere willingly permit such a "Roman Catholic" to be buried in a "Roman Catholic cemetery" with or without "full Masonic honors." Of course a Catholic may join the Masons or the Mormons; nothing hinders a Catholic from legally divorcing his wife or marrying the divorced wife of another living man. But by any of these things he ipso facto excommunicates himself; he is no longer a Catholic.

Now the Very Worshipful Brother Johnson may have thought he was telling the truth; no form or degree of ignorance of the Catholic Church, her practice or teaching, can surprise us any more.

That some Catholics in Ireland join the Free Masons is probably true. The vastly disproportionate and overpaid official class in Ireland are mostly Protestants, and in some departments promotion is difficult or impossible to others than Free Masons. There is an old trait of human nature of which the Bible records many instances, and human

nature is always and everywhere fundamentally the same. There was a time when Protestant Ascendancy was the policy and practice of British rule in Ireland; if not acknowledged now with such brutal candor as it used to be, the policy is the same, the practice in this age of democracy differs only in degree, and a very small degree at that. Catholics may be found even in Ireland who hanker after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and who are willing to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. But they cannot sell their birthright and retain it. They are either Free Masons or Catholics; they can't be both.

As for burial in Catholic cemeteries, it is well known that the cemeteries of Ireland, or at least many of them, are common to Protestants and Catholics, one part being reserved for Protestants, the other for Catholics. If the Very Worshipful Brother who is an authority on things Irish means that Catholics who have apostatized to Free Masonry are buried in this common cemetery his "peculiarity" vanishes; but if he means that they are buried as Catholics in the Catholic section, he is quite evidently wrong, unless there be some law, of which we are unaware, compelling the Church authorities to permit such apostates to be buried in consecrated ground.

THE CLEAR VISION AND WISE COUNSEL OF THE POPE

Four years ago next August the Holy Father issued his famous appeal for peace in which amongst many wise and weighty considerations he said:

"Nations do not die; humbled and oppressed they chafe under the yoke imposed upon them, preparing a renewal of the combat, and passing down from generation to generation the mournful heritage of hatred and revenge."

More than once through his Secretary of State he warned the world against forcing the control of affairs out of the more conservative democratic elements into the hands of the extremists of anarchistic tendencies. We pass over his advocacy of the principles sought to be established by the League of Nations until another time.

All of which at the time provoked the old traditional and unreasoning hatred and suspicion of the Pope in many quarters in the English-speaking world, not, however, without notable and numerous exceptions.

Again, quite recently the Holy Father, evidently following the same enlightened line of thought and anxious for an ultimate and stable peace, requested the plenipotentiaries not to impose on Germany terms so humiliating as to provoke those very dangers against which he had consistently warned the belligerent powers.

The no-Popery spirit was far less in evidence than on the previous occasions; but there were shallow and petty little jibes in several of our Canadian papers.

This morning in the Globe Richard V. Oulahan asserts that the American and British plenipotentiaries at Paris have taken the very same attitude that the Pope has long maintained, for the very same reasons, expressed in almost identical terms.

Here is the paragraph from Oulahan's letter:

"Some of those informed do not hesitate to express the fear that the imposition of too harsh terms on Germany may give strength to the Bolshevist elements in that country. The American and British plenipotentiaries have been preaching to their foreign associates that it would be unwise to impose conditions on Germany which would serve to intensify hatred and lay the foundation for another war."

Pity 'tis that they did not take the Pope's wise counsel to heart years, even months, or weeks ago; and not wait until the very brink of the abyss which yawns before them.

OUR ALTAR BOYS

By THE GLEANER

There is one diminutive individual in every parish who is frequently scolded and blamed for a lot of things, not always without reason, but who seldom receives the recognition that is his due. He is the altar boy. We do not mean the Sunday variety, the one that sits in the stalls at High Mass in the full glory of his neatly pleated surplice or carries a candle in the Corpus Christi procession. No, the one we have in mind is the little chap who serves an early Mass on week days; he is always at his post notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather and the natural repugnance

at leaving the warm blankets before sunrise.

One of these youngsters, who boasts that he can serve the whole Mass except the "Orate, fratres," recently confided to us that he liked to be on the altar because he was so near to God. We wonder if all view the honor that is conferred upon them in the same light. An altar boy really exercises the functions of one of the minor orders, viz., that of acolyte. He occupies an intermediate position between the people and the sacrificing priest. He answers for the people the responses of the Mass. At the Offertory he presents to the celebrant the bread and wine which formerly were collected from the faithful at that particular stage in the sacrifice. On the approach of the solemn part of the Mass he sounds the warning bell, and at the Consecration, when he takes hold of the chalice; he represents the congregation who in conjunction with the priest offer the sacrifice. Truly he is very near to God. He is in the company of the unseen angels that surround their Eucharistic Lord, and fulfils a duty that they themselves might envy.

Altar boys should go frequently to Communion, because their proximity to the altar demands innocence of heart. A boy who serves Mass and who puts off going to Communion from month to month is scarcely worthy of being permitted to perform the duties of an acolyte.

Since all eyes are upon them they should avoid any levity or irreverence that might be a source of distraction or perhaps a scandal to the congregation. Some very good boys sometimes fail in this latter regard. This story is told of an altar boy who afterwards became a Cardinal. While serving Mass he undertook to try out a new top. It slipped from his fingers and went buzzing across the sanctuary floor. "Bring me that," said the priest; and he added, "I will attend to you after Mass."

When it came to the Offertory the boy remained standing at the credence table. "Come, Come," said the priest as he reached for the wine and water. "Will you promise not to whip me, and will you give me back my top?" said the embryo diplomat. That boy certainly deserved to lose his top, albeit he subsequently atoned for his youthful indiscretion by helping another little boy to get back his ball.

The first Friday of the month is general Communion day for our altar boys as well as for the other children of the parish; but many of them go more frequently. We have struck upon an expedient for increasing the number of Communions among the children on the first Friday that might prove of interest to others similarly situated. Many who lived at some distance from the church and could not return home for breakfast before the opening of school, used to bring their lunches with them and partake of a dry morsel in the basement of the building. This proved embarrassing for them as some of the non-Catholic children became aware of the strange procedure and asked them why they did not take their breakfasts at home. As a consequence they ceased going to Communion on that day. To remedy this it was arranged to have the children supplied with hot coffee in the church hall. As a result this first Friday breakfast has become a very popular institution. The hubbub that accompanies this ceremony is, we admit, more suggestive of a band of little Indians than of a lot of little angels, but to us it has seemed that the noise does not prove an inappropriate accompaniment to the older people's thanksgiving.

Let us hope that more of those who have enjoyed the privilege of serving at the altar will aspire to the priesthood. It is the natural order of procedure, but strange to say, it has not always been the rule. On investigation it will be found that a large percentage of our priests never served Mass in their youth. If those among the altar boys who show a lack of appreciation of the sacredness of their office were weeded out before the poison of their example infected the others, and if the frequent opportunities that present themselves were availed of to foster the apostolic spirit in young hearts, our sanctuary boys would, no doubt, furnish a larger percentage of volunteers to fill up the depleted ranks of the clergy.

Measure the appreciation you bestow by that which you desire.

A man who talks to himself always has an interested listener.

Most of the fun we have in life isn't the kind we are looking for.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

HIS EFFORTS in Guelph as chief organizer of the anti-Jesuit campaign having produced nothing more substantial than a lot of noisy declamation and some unsought notoriety for that least obtrusive of institutions, a religious novice, the Rev. W. D. Spence is about to seek pastures new in British Columbia. Let us hope that the balmy breezes off the Pacific will clear the cobwebs from his brain and give him a saner view of the pastoral office.

THE RETURN of Canada's soldiers from overseas having, in the judgment of sundry Ontario critics, put Henri Bourassa for the time being out of a job, they are now determined to make him a monk. As the father of eight children, still in the state of adolescence, the much-advertised Nationalist can scarcely be called a promising candidate for the Dominican Order. Suppose they invite him to Toronto and give him a seat in the Provincial Legislature? Despite his "extravagances" that body as at present constituted might learn something even from Henri Bourassa.

A RECENT event of great interest in Rome was the inauguration of a new Irish Province of the Carmelite Order, and the arrival of seven novices to man the new foundation. The project was really set on foot a year ago, but the disturbed state of Europe and the difficulties of traveling delayed its opening. Now, thanks to facilities granted by the Holy Father, a practical beginning has been made and a new chapter opened in the history of Carmel.

THE NOVITIATE with the Church of St. Celsus and Julian attached to it, stand near the Castle end bridge of St. Angelo on the Tiber. To this church the bodies of the two Martyrs (done to death for the Faith at Antioch in 304 A. D.) were transferred from St. Paul's by Pope Clement VIII. Nearby is an open space, formerly a market, where St. Ignazio Loyola used to send his Jesuit scholastics and novices to preach to the people. The connection of the Irish Carmelites with the Eternal City is a long and intimate one, and the new institute, therefore, inherits traditions as rich as they are venerable.

"SOON THE delegates of the various nations will meet in solemn congress to give the world a just and lasting peace," wrote His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV. soon after the signing of the Armistice. "Such grave and complex decisions will have to be taken as no human assembly ever took before. Therefore, it is impossible to overstate the need of divine guidance on the part of those participating in the Congress. Their decisions will affect in the highest degree the welfare of the whole human race for centuries to come."

WISE AND weighty words, as became the Father of Christendom, who though himself excluded from the deliberations of the Congress, gave assurance that as the representative of Christ, the Prince of Peace, on earth, nothing would be wanting on his part to ensure loyal acceptance of its decisions on the part of Catholics everywhere. Beginning with the Pope's exclusion, however, the one thing conspicuously lacking in the Conference, at least officially, is the recognition of God's supreme sovereignty over all, and the need of His guidance if a true and lasting peace is to be realized. Without such recognition, the Peace to be declared will be as an arch without a keystone.

A HOPEFUL augury of Italy's future lies in the fervor with which the feast at St. Francis of Assisi was observed throughout the country on October 14th, details of which have only now reached us. One correspondent writes of the "extraordinary devotion" of the populace, particularly in Rome where there are so many memories of the great Patriarch. One place stands out with special prominence, namely, the Church of St. Francisco a Ripa, where may still be seen the little cell where the Poor Man of Assisi slept.

WHEN FRANCIS went to Rome in 1219, he found hospitality at the Benedictine Hospice, which stood on the site now occupied by this church, which was erected in 1281, after Pope Gregory IX. had given the Hospice as a gift to the new Order. Here, or rather in the adjoining

SIR WILFRID LAURIER

"LOVE FOR HIS BROTHER MAN A SALIENT CHARACTERISTIC"

IMPRESSIONS SERMON PREACHED BY FATHER DRUMMOND AT MEMORIAL SERVICE

Edmonton Bulletin, March 4

The special service at St. Joseph's church Monday morning in memory of the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier was attended by an unusually large number of the prominent people of the city and district, and one and all carried away an impression of the occasion which will live long in the memory. The church was crowded and in addition to excellent special music the addresses delivered by Fr. Celestion and Rev. Father Drummond were masterpieces of eloquence which the congregation appreciated to the utmost.

Fr. Celestion, of the Franciscan order, of North Edmonton, delivered a brilliant sermon in French, dwelling with deep understanding and sympathy on the life and work of the great statesman in whose memory the services were held.

Rev. Fr. Drummond spoke in English in reviewing the career of one of Canada's most notable sons showing a close and intimate knowledge of the public life of the departed Liberal chieftain. The address was a striking tribute, worthy in every sense of the inspiring subject with which it dealt, and of the cultured personality from whose mind it came.

A large number of the members of the provincial legislature were in attendance, these including Premier Stewart, Hon. J. R. Boyle, Hon. A. G. MacKay, Hon. Duncan Marshall, Hon. Jean Ote, Hon. A. J. McLean, Hon. G. P. Smith, Hon. Wilfred Garfield, A. F. Ewing, P. E. Lessard, Martin Woolf, Wm. Rae and others. Also present were Mayor Clarke and members of the city council. Chief Justice Harvey, Judge Back, Judge Taylor, Rev. Dr. McQueen and many other prominent people of the city.

FATHER DRUMMOND'S SERMON

Father Drummond's sermon was as follows:

"O Kings III., 5, 9, 11, 12. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night saying: Ask what thou wilt that I shall give thee. And Solomon said Give to Thy servant an understanding heart, to discern between good and evil. And the Lord said to Solomon: Behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart."

My Lord Archbishop, Your Honor, Lieut. Gov. Brett, dear brethren—The most dramatic of all scenes are those that are staged by God. To our finite natures the complexity of coincident events presents itself as an inextricable labyrinth out of which we can hold no Ariadne's thread nor find a rational issue. Some weak minds dismiss all such coincidences as insoluble puzzles or freaks of blind chance. But chance explains nothing to reason or faith. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing and not one of them shall fall off the ground without your father's Nay, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Modern science affirms or, at least, used to echo Herbert Spencer's oracular definition of evolution—that the simplest things were the lowest and the most complex the highest. This is not even true of human beings; still less is it true of angelo spirits and of the Greatest of all spirits. What do we understand by a man genius? Surely, a man of great but simple thoughts, a man who condenses into one great idea the complex observations of others. The sight of one apple falling from a tree seems to have been enough for the genius of Newton to apprehend the law of gravity which rules the wheeling universe. Catholic theology teaches that the higher an angel is in the nine hierarchies, the simpler and the more comprehensive is his intellect, till we come to God whose very essence is one pure act without potentiality or futurity, one omnipotent. Now, "in whom we live and move and have our being." Is it any wonder that such a Being could bring about the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier at what we poor, short sighted men would call the most dramatic moment?

"Had the great leader died at the height of his power, prime minister, the customary eulogies would have been counterbalanced by his opponents' recital of shortcomings which they would have exaggeratingly deplored. Had he, as might have been expected at his age, succumbed to his astounding and seemingly inexplicable defeat fourteen months ago, the triumph of the victors would have obscured the merits of the vanquished. But he lived long enough to celebrate a few months ago the golden jubilee of his happy marriage with a lady worthy of him, and to celebrate it, not, as many of his

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monastery, the Seraphic Saint lived for years in constant attendance upon the sick. In no other place save Assisi itself is his memory so all-pervading as here. The recrudescence of Franciscan fervor in the Italy of to-day is, as we have said, a most hopeful and significant sign for the nation's future. In the cultivation of the Franciscan spirit in rich and poor, employer and employed alike, lies the true solution of the social and industrial problems of our time.