

CHURCH ATTENDANCE.

Last week we closed our article upon this subject with the statement that we would continue it in future issues; for the present number we will say a few words about the general excuse for not attending the parish church, viz., that other churches are more attractive. That may be so, and in some cases it is so. For example, there is generally grander music at the Gesù, the church is brighter, the frescoed walls are more beautiful. So many attractions that are really wanting in St. Patrick's. There is no doubt of it, the sombre aspect of that temple is not of the most inviting. Again, you can get a seat in other churches (by paying for them), while in St. Patrick's, if you go into a pew, in nine cases out of ten, you will be ordered out of it by some individual who probably is the lessee of that seat, but who has no one except himself in a pew that holds three. Still this does not exactly apply to regular parishioners—for they have their own pews.

However, we are on the question of attractiveness. We stated last week that this had to do with the pastors. It certainly should be their work to see that, in as far as is possible, the different elements that constitute the attractiveness of other churches should find place in their temple. As a matter of fact we know that it is the intention of the good priests of St. Patrick's, in the very near future, to renovate, polish up and brighten the appearance of the edifice. They also contemplate steps towards the improvement in the other attractive elements—singing, music, ceremonies and so forth. Of this we are very glad to hear; but justice suggests some remarks on the point.

When the fathers took the church in hands it had a debt of \$174,000 upon it. A nice sum indeed to undertake liquidating. By great efforts and economies that debt is considerably reduced; still, over the building hangs a debt of between \$60,000 and \$70,000. It will take some time to pay off that amount with its interest. It would be very unfair to ask of these pastors the same embellishments and attractions in a church as they certainly would have were it free of such a load. And this brings us back to our argument of last week. Surely the honest parishioner, who has a care for his own church, should be the last to shun it because it did not present frescoes and classic music to greet eye and ear, but struggled to clear off the weight which prevented it from rising to the level of, or even superior to others. The church of the parish does not belong to the individual priest who happens to be in charge of it; it belongs to the members of the congregation. Each one is a child of that great family, and the temple is their father's home. We might illustrate our meaning by a comparison.

Here is a young man whose father is a well-to-do workingman, or mechanic. That father has a large family, and in order to educate them and see them safely upon the road of life, he is obliged to raise some money upon his property. Meanwhile his sons grow up, and as they begin to earn they bring in their shares and thus help to pay off the debt contracted for their sake, and resting upon a property destined to be one day their own. Some fine morning one of the sons chances to gain admittance to a splendid residence; let us say into Sir Donald A. Smith's. He is struck with the wealth of attractiveness that fills the place, flashes from the walls, and hangs from the ceilings, covers the floors and decorates the tables. The young man is dazzled. He asks if he may come there from time to time; he is told he may, but it can never be his home. He then

decides to offer all his earnings to the owner of that palace, to buy pictures or costly ornaments, or to aid in paying the caretaker of such wealth. He forgets his father's more humble and mortgaged home; he leaves the other brother to pay off the debt; he squanders his small earnings where they are not wanted; but when he finds that some day in the millionaire's palace he is not wanted, he turns to the ransomed home, since made beautiful and attractive by the labor and savings of his brother; and he has the audacity to ask that he be taken in to enjoy it. Study this well; it is no fiction.

THE JESUIT ESTATE CLAIM.

Mr. Baylis, at the meeting in the Academy, last week, saw fit to allude to the \$400,000 paid for the Jesuit Estate claim by the late government of this province. Last week we said that this tax should be a lesson to electors from which they may learn that it is the business of every voter to study well for whom he uses his franchise. But as far as the question of these four hundred thousand dollars is concerned, it is one of the few praiseworthy and publicly beneficial acts of the Mercier administration. The debt was a legalized one; and moreover, it was even subject to bear interest. Had it not been such, why was it not legally contested? The courts of the land were there, and could have been used were the claim unjust. In the next place, the Protestant element, in accepting the \$60,000 from the same source, and on the same grounds, was a tacit admission that the debt was legally due and was rightfully paid.

Had Mr. Mercier not paid that just debt, it would have still remained upon the list of our provincial liabilities, and either this government or some future one would have to pay it. Eventually it should be settled, as a just claim; and the payment of the amount by Mercier relieved the province of so much more of a debt for which taxes would have to be imposed. Again, had he not settled that matter, the money would have gone where all the other thousands went, and the present tax would be still necessary. So that instead of the payment of the Jesuit Estate claim being a cause of the tax against which so much outcry is heard, it actually leaves the province \$460,000 less in debt than it would be had the amount been squandered by the ex-Premier. We must be just, and "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar." Mr. Baylis' argument, which he imagined was a bright hit, was actually the most illogical statement made by any one of the speakers upon that important occasion. Let the Jesuits alone, attend to your votes, and your pockets will be the fuller in the long run.

By a vote of twenty to nine the city fathers accorded the contract for lighting the city to the "Royal"; this contract is granted without public tenders being called for. In spite of every protest, in spite of resolutions passed, letters sent, deputations heard, in spite of public opinion the majority of the aldermen established a precedent that is an outrage. We have no hesitation in saying that as each one of the twenty-five cast his vote he virtually voted himself out of the council at the next municipal election. Never, perhaps, before in the history of the city hall transactions was such a general interest taken in a question that so deeply affects the public interest, and never before was the public (which elected these aldermen) so boldly set at defiance. They would do well, between this and the end of their present term, to vote away everything they can, for their chances of re-election are decidedly slim.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

In the grandest temple of the universe, in presence of the assembled Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the world, over the spot where the Prince of the Apostles suffered martyrdom, in the heart of eternal Rome, surrounded by all the pomp and splendor of the immortal Church of Christ, seated upon the throne of the Popes, gorgeous with the accumulated dignity of ages, with every knee bending and every eye blessing the prince of one world and the prophet of another, on the eighth day of December, 1854, the majestic figure of the great Pontiff Pius IX. appeared to the eyes of the world and before the gaze of the generations, past and to come, as he proclaimed *ex-cathedra* the consoling, loving, lovely dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Heretofore our reason, as well as our Faith, taught that the Mother of the Son of God must have been conceived without sin; but henceforth not only "all generations shall call her blessed," but all the Catholic world must accept the truth of that most beautiful and most rational of all the dogma of our immortal Faith. The news reverberated among the seven hills and across the Tiber; the news resounded from the Adriatic eastward to the Jordan, from the Pillar of Hercules westward over the Atlantic, around the world; the words flashed back through the ages, forward through the cycles of time; the diapason struck, by the Pontiff, with the keys of Peter upon the Rock of Ages, sounded away beyond the starry dome into the regions of eternal glory, and the choirs of heaven joined the chorus of the universe, as they chanted:

Immaculate! Immaculate! Loud swells the angel's song;
Immaculate! Immaculate! The heavenly aisles prolong;
Immaculate! Immaculate! Like lark above the sod,
The chorus wings its flight to the very throne of God.
Immaculate! Immaculate! The virgins raptur'd sing;
Immaculate! Immaculate! Now the universe doth ring!

With Catholics we will not pause to argue the reasonableness of that splendid belief; with real Christians it is unnecessary to go into the evidence that the Divine One must have come to us through the most perfect of created beings; with the one who believes that the Saviour of men is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, co-Eternal with the Father, it would be superfluous to bring evidence to show that His Mother must have been free from all taint of sin. No! From cold reasoning, on such an occasion, we turn to the unalloyed contemplation of the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, the Tower of Ivory, the House of Gold, the Comforter of the Afflicted and the Help of Christians, seated upon a throne, only a degree below that of the Eternal, Her Divine Son placing upon her brow the crown of undying glory, and her purity, like a jewel of untold value, glistening, radiating, flashing the scintillations of its perfection and matchless brilliancy upon the chancel of Heaven, and "like the light that left the distant stars ten thousand years ago," stealing through infinite space and lending to frail humanity the less intense, but yet wonderful aid of its sheen, to guide the race of man through all the darkness of sin and all the blackness of temptation, safely to God.

Such is the picture that all Catholics should contemplate upon to-morrow's feast! Painted with the pencil of the imagination upon the canvass of the mind, and lit with the perfect light of Truth, that grand fresco of Faith should hang in the gallery of the soul, and the heart should kneel before it, to admire, love, and adore; admire the beauty of Mary's

perfection; love her as our Mother for all the graces she ever obtains for us; and adore the Creator in gratitude for the boon of such a resplendent creation as that of the Blessed Virgin.

Let Masses be sung and hymns resound; bring out all the beauty and splendor of the Holy Sacrifice; let flowers adorn the altar, and let censers fling their wreaths of vapor around the deep-pealing organ; it is a feast when all humanity should rejoice, and join with all pure created beings in their hymns of jubilation.

"Triumphant the Church, all thy glory revealing;
Militant the Church is wrapped in thy fame;
Suffering the Church, all thy beauty is feeling
Mary, we hail thy Immaculate name!
Pine, our Pontiff King,
Unveil the Jewelling,
Gloriously set in thy bright diadem;
Mary, thy Holy Face
Mirrors the Saviour's grace,
Mary, our pure, our Immaculate gem!"

May this grand dogma of our Faith be the means of bringing thousands into the fold of Christ, as it has already attracted many to the Faith of Ages! And on this eighth of December, may all our readers rejoice; may they participate in the heavenly joys of that great day, and may Mary, conceived without sin, shed the rays of her maternal love upon their earthly path and guide them to the home of the blessed that surround her throne in Heaven.

HOME RULE.

Elsewhere we publish an account of the meeting held in St. Patrick's Hall on the 29th of November, to push forward the movement recently set on foot to raise a fund to assist the Irish Home Rule Party. Some weeks ago the TRUE WITNESS suggested this move and called upon the societies to take it up. The St. Patrick's society set the ball in motion, and we understand that the efforts of Mr. Curran, the President, and the members of the society, are having effect. The meeting held a week ago Tuesday night was very successful under the circumstances that surround the project. We know it is a hard season and that money is scarce; still the response to the appeal made has been very satisfactory, and it is expected that the final result will be worthy of Montreal's proverbial patriotism and generosity.

But there is always a tear to blend with the smile when the cause of the grand Old Land is on the tapis. We regret, and regret most bitterly the unfortunate, the infatuated course of men at home, who seem to reck not how they jeopardize the cause for the sake of party ends. This unfortunate contestation of seats is something that we cannot understand. Why men who pretend to have the Home Rule cause at heart can possibly seek to unseat Home Rule members of Parliament, in face of the inevitable crisis that is hourly approaching, is beyond our powers of comprehension. Surely it must be patent to every man—provided he is not blinded by the dust of prejudice, the fumes of passion, or the pangs of jealousy—that every stone placed in the path of an Irish nationalist member is liable to become a block in the monument over Ireland's defeated hopes! But the case is one that can allow of no argument. All we can do is to pause, to look on and to pray that no national catastrophe may be the result.

Meanwhile what is the duty of every generous Irishman in this city? We think it is to continue on the work; to collect all that can be got; to swell the fund; to send it to Hon. Edward Blake, for the purposes of the cause; and it, through the folly of others the parties cannot be contented, if the hands of Gladstone are disarmed, then, at least, no blame will be attached to the Irishmen of Canada and of Montreal in particular. They will have done their share nobly and despite all personal differences, and Ireland will owe them a debt of gratitude, be her cause a lost one or a glorious triumph.