

NORTHWEST REVIEW

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED EVERY
TUESDAY

WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
AUTHORITY.

At St. Boniface, Man.

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Editor-in-Chief.

Subscription, - - - - \$2.00 a year.
Six months, - - - - - \$1.00.

The NORTHWEST REVIEW is on
sale at R. Vendome, Stationer, 290
Main St., opposite Manitoba Hotel, and
at The Winnipeg Stationery & Book Co.,
144, 364 Main Street.

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Northwest Review.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21 1899

CURRENT COMMENT

The death of President Faure is one of those unexpected events that upset all human calculations. Coming, as it does, in the midst of a great national it may open up the most sinister complications.

A hybrid contribution, which is a cross between a bona fide correspondence and an editorial, appeared in last Friday's Free Press, signed "Science Student." It was meant to be a strong protest against the troublesome minority's supposed treatment of University students. The querulous, henpecked tone of the production suggests the inspiration of a well-known professor.

Does it never strike our educationists, who are always upsetting and innovating under the pretext of reform, that putting the only holiday of the week on Saturday is a most lopsided, unhealthy arrangement? Both body and mind would receive more benefit from two half holidays a week than from one whole holiday at the end of the week. Several Catholic colleges in the United States keep the whole holiday, but they put it on Thursday, which affords a rest in the middle of the week. Most of the Catholic colleges in Canada have two half holidays, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. This, together with the Sunday, gives three periods of rest each week.

Rev. Father Michael Fallon, O. M. I., who begins next Sunday a mission in St. Mary's Church, Winnipeg, is one of the most distinguished priests in the Canadian clergy. Born in Kingston, Ont., of Irish parentage, he was educated first at the Catholic University and Seminary of Ottawa, and afterwards in Rome where he made his noviceship as an Oblate and completed his theology. As editor of the Owl, the organ of the Ottawa University, he made his mark among the literary lights of Canada; but his oratorical talents are still more remarkable. Those who will be privileged to hear him

next week will be sure of an intellectual treat as well as of solid comfort for their souls.

It took the Telephone Company between nine and ten days to restore communication between its central office and some of its St. Boniface subscribers, although the gap made in the wires by the Hotel Manitoba fire was only about 150 feet long. Is this Western enterprise?

THE DOUKHOBORS.

Three weeks ago we remarked that "if the Doukhobors were Catholics they would never have received so warm a welcome and their virtues would have been carefully ignored." Thereupon a distant correspondent comments as follows:—

"What have Catholics done that a parallel should be drawn between them and the Doukhobors, people who don't even believe in the Trinity? Shall we, the heirs of all the ages" in faith and grace, be jealous of them? Let them flourish on Sifton's pap; it is well that, having starved the souls of our children during so many years, he should feed the bodies of unbelievers."

That last touch is not half bad. But as for the rest of our valued correspondent's remarks we consider they fall quite wide of the mark. We did not hint at any feeling of jealousy with regard to the Doukhobors; we simply pointed out a very obvious contrast. The backbone of Canada, its historic founders, its steadiest and most persevering colonists are Catholics, and yet those who promote their increase in this country find it well nigh impossible to get for them the same privileges which are freely showered on a race of settlers whose past history affords no guarantee of permanent settlement.

Then, from the Hon. Clifford Sifton's point of view, these "Spirit-Wrestlers" are not unbelievers. With that vague perception of religious truth which is the common heritage of Protestants, he no doubt thinks the Doukhobors a rather superior kind of Christians, because they pray ostentatiously and profess to be guided by the Holy Spirit. To be sure, far from being Christians in any sense, they are not even as near the truth as the Jews are since they neither baptize nor believe in the inspiration of the Bible. In point of fact they are much nearer to downright unbelief and heathendom than to any other form of religion. But, we repeat, to the incoherent, confused Protestant mind, a people that speaks so glibly the jargon of lip-Christianity must appear to be a very beautiful outgrowth of "the Blessed Reformation." Why, the Doukhobors hold certain opinions which are distinctly Catholic: for instance, they esteem celibacy chosen for the love of God as a higher state of virtue than matrimony. No wonder Protestants, who cannot rise to the understanding of this undeniable truth, should look up to them as superior beings. To the heretic, one atom of truth in a mass of error leavens the whole mass. To the Catholic, one atom of error in a mass of truth corrupts and nullifies the truth.

"LES CIERGES."

The following item appeared last Tuesday evening in the Winnipeg Tribune:—

The electric lights about 10 o'clock last evening assumed a very peculiar appearance. From each lamp a long line of light extended up toward the centre of the heavens. The appearance in some parts of the city was that of a ghostly forest of tall white trees. The only explanation that has been advanced to account for this beautiful phenomenon is that there was a fine powdery snow in the air, and that the light shining on these particles was reflected in a line into the air.

What seems to impress our Winnipeg contemporary as an unusual phenomenon, probably because Winnipeggers are too near it, is so often witnessed from this side of the river that our French-speaking population have given it a name. They call it "Les Cierges"—The Church tapers. Here we seem to be just at the proper distance to take in the phenomenon.

In our issue of November 29th last, a contributor, after describing the varying hues with which in the still winter air the sunset paints the city's columns of smoke, added: "Wait a little longer and each arc-light in the streets of the Prairie Capital will send up, almost to the zenith, a straight slender shaft of steely brightness like the spears of the sentinels of a mighty host keeping watch and ward with the sparkling, silent stars."

This, we venture to think, is a rather more apt simile than the Tribune's "ghostly forest of tall white trees," no trees known to science being sufficiently slender. True to the reality, too, is the popular name, "Les Cierges," and this is one of the many instances where Catholic habits enlarge, enrich and specialize the vocabulary of artistic metaphor. Nothing could be more appropriate than this comparison of a shaft of light to the slenderest of pure white wax tapers used as a symbol of celestial light.

The Tribune's explanation of the phenomenon does not go quite far enough. No doubt all such meteorological phenomena, halos, mock-suns, visible beams of light, etc., are due to the presence in the atmosphere of fine particles of dust, water, ice or snow. But why in this case is the light reflected upward in a straight line, while in the case of a halo the reflection or refraction appears to us as a circle? The reason probably is that the source of light, in this case the electric light, is below the fine particles of ice or snow and that, as these particles are mostly hexagonal prisms falling in a vertical position as offering least resistance to the air their horizontal faces reflect the light to the spectator's eye in a series of points which at a distance merge into a straight line.

In connection with this beautiful phenomenon we may recall the fact that those who went to early Mass on Sunday the 12th inst. had a glimpse of an unusually splendid aurora borealis. It is not often that the northern lights are so brilliant just at dawn, the sun's aurora. This time there was but one band of light, but its colors were almost as vivid as those of the rainbow, and it kept folding and rippling upon itself so

rapidly that the eye was ever witnessing some new marvel of shimmering iridescence. Even little children called out to their parents saying how charming was the sight.

THE ESSENCE OF WEDLOCK.

A clerical friend writes anent an article we reproduced last week:—

"Let me tell you that I was amazed to see you reprint without comment what the True Witness says of the marriage customs of the Doukhobors. It is surprising that the editor of the Montreal Catholic paper should have allowed such a manifest theological error to pass uncorrected; but it is still more surprising that you, who have such a keen scent for false doctrine, should not have either eliminated this passage or corrected its teaching. The True Witness writer says that the Doukhobors have no real marriage because with them matrimony "is accomplished merely by the mutual consent of the young couple;" without any marriage rites or ceremonies. Well, and what more does he want? Is not "the mere consent of the two and the promise to live together" the all-sufficient essence of wedlock according to Catholic theology?"

Our venerable correspondent is quite right. We plead guilty to having overlooked this passage. Had we noticed it in time we would have cut it out. Even in Catholic marriages, solemnized according to the strictest provisions of the Council of Trent, the mutual consent of the contracting parties is the essential part of the sacrament. So true is this that the bridegroom and bride are the ministers of the sacrament; it is they, and not the priest, who confer the sacrament of matrimony on each other. The priest is there as a witness and in order to bless the union, but he does not bring it about. None of the rites or ceremonies habitually used are essential; the only thing absolutely necessary is a sign from the contracting parties of their mutual consent; that sign need not even take the form of a spoken word: a nod, a pressure of the hand, any sign will do. Now, if this is the case when matrimony is a sacrament, which obtains only among baptized persons, how much more must it be the case among unbaptized people like the Doukhobors. With them matrimony, though not a sacrament, is a real, binding contract entered into essentially by the contracting parties alone. Therefore mutual consent, expressed in any intelligible way, is quite sufficient to make them truly married. They thus undoubtedly secure the essence of wedlock. No doubt, in a society constituted like ours, the provisions of the civil law must be observed; but these provisions merely witness to the existence of the marriage tie, they do not constitute the essence of that tie.

ROSE LEAVES GATHERED AT STE. ROSE.

We had a delightful sermon last Sunday treating of Matrimony—a great sacrament in Our Lord. Our pastor (BONE PASTOR) beautifully explained to us that when God created woman, He did not take her from

the head of Adam to be his intelligence, nor from his feet to be his slave, but from his side, that she might reign over his heart.

God has invented true love for the happiness of his children; love and happiness are the same word in many hearts. True love was born immortal in the groves of Eden and has been cherished and preserved through all the ages, in its frail, fond tabernacle, the human heart. It is all that remains to us of the earthly Paradise; our first parents brought it with them when they left; the Angel with the flaming sword took pity on them and let it pass.

What does Lacordaire, the great Dominican say? "Je vous aime—dix mille mots précédent ce mot là, mais aucun ne vient après dans aucune langue, et quand une fois on l'a dit à un homme, on n'a que le répéter à jamais." I love you—ten thousand words precede these words, but none come after, in any language and when once you have said them to a man, you have only to repeat them forever. Milton in "Paradise Lost" makes use of this expression:

"Hail wedded love; mysterious tie!" But, be it rightly understood, that the tie of marriage, should be a TRUE LOVER'S KNOT, no SLIP-KNOT, as some of our separated brethren seem to imagine. I think presently, all true lovers, as well as all lovers of Truth will have to come back to their long forsaken mother, Holy Church, who alone is the mother of fair love, and the guardian of happy homes.

And after all it is not so easy "to be happy though married," as some may think; the delicate plant of mutual love is wont to wither in our gardens, unless hedged round with tender and sweet observances.

St. Teresa used to say to her novices: "You think you have something to suffer, you say it is hard and complain. I can tell you, I know many ladies living in the world, who would gladly change places with you, who do not even venture to say that they are sick, for fear of offending their husbands. Believe me, if there were a novice for the other state of life, very few, of either sex, would go on to make final vows."

It is related by Ven. Bede, who, I believe lived in the 7th century and is the first reliable historian of the Anglo-Saxon Church, that, in his day, a virtuous father of a family died, or seemed to die. His spirit was taken away during a trance and he saw and felt therein all he would have to suffer in Purgatory, for the sins of his life, which seemed so good to men. When he returned to himself and recovered from sickness, he led a life of most rigorous penance and never complained of anything, hoping thus to escape future punishment. If anyone said: "It is too hot," he would say: "I have felt hotter." If anyone said: "It is too cold," he would say: "I have felt colder." If he suffered pain and they said: "Your pain is sharp," he would say: "I have felt sharper," and so on, with all troubles. I know a great many ladies of the 19th century who would be much obliged to the Guardian Angels of their husbands, if they would take them for the same little journey. What happiness