



CURRENT COMMENT

The "Xaverian," published by the students of St. Francis Xavier's College, Antigonish, N.S., in the March number, has an excellent article entitled "The Apostle of the Wild West," in which is sketched the heroic labors of the saintly Archbishop Tache. We congratulate the managers of this college journal on its general excellence. Although not quite up to the high standard of last year it is nevertheless second to none in the field of college journalism.

Dr. Windthorst, the great Catholic leader in Germany, had he lived to this day, would have rejoiced to see his prophecy verified in the expulsion of the Jesuits from Germany. "The Jesuits," he declared, "may have to leave the country like foxes, but, mark my words, they will return like eagles." While it is true that the repeal of paragraph 2 of the law of 1872 does not give to the members of that order absolute freedom, yet it is a stride in the right direction. The German Emperor who, despite the adverse criticisms of his many critics, has proved himself a statesman—albeit a windy one—can be depended on, backed by the Centrist party, to agitate still further for the total repeal of the iniquitous Falk laws. He is shrewd enough to realize that if the twin evils Socialism and anarchy are to be successfully combated in his country, the aid of the Catholic Church to that end is absolutely necessary. Alas for the hopes of the once powerful Iron Chancellor! The hunted Jesuit will yet be held in high esteem in Germany, whilst the name of the persecutor Bismarck, the one time autocrat of that land, will seldom be heard. O, that in unhappy France a Windthorst would arise to put to flight the atheistic hosts that now misrule that land!

At a meeting of the University Council last week there was a pretty lively discussion which was imperfectly reported by the daily papers. While the proposed ordinance for the special course of modern languages was under consideration, Dr. Patrick and Canon Murray found there was too much poetry and too little prose in the English part of this course. Father Drummond also objected to the quality of the prose chosen for direct study, there being nothing but a selection of DeQuincey's essays. He would have liked to see selections from Ruskin and Newman, who were far superior to DeQuincey.

In the French part of the course the only authors named in the first section were Madame de Stael, Victor Hugo and Balzac. Father Drummond said he thought this choice unfortunate. He did not make any specific objection against Madame de Stael, though he considered Chateaubriand preferable and also suggested Lamartine and Veuillot; but he did object to Victor Hugo on the score of his lack of taste and judgment. However, Father Drummond's chief objection was to Balzac, one of the most immoral writers of the 19th century, and, in the collateral reading prescribed, he also objected strongly to A. C. Swinburne's study of Victor Hugo, which was altogether anti-Christian, and therefore contrary to one of the clauses of the University statutes. His purpose in protesting against these prescribed texts was to dissociate himself from any apparently joint responsibility in the framing of this ordinance.

Professor Osborne warmly defending the authors prescribed,

island that, since the St. Boniface professors were allowed a free rein in the selection of authors for their special course, they should accord the same courtesy to other special courses which none of their students followed. Thereupon Father Cherrier said—and this very remark was omitted in all the reports of the daily press—that our objections arose not from any desire to interfere with the freedom of any other college, but simply and solely from a wish to maintain the honor of the University. One of the non-Catholic members of the Council having asked Professor Osborne point-blank if there were many immoral passages in the prescribed works of Balzac, the Professor made no direct reply, but pointed out that these books were not read in public, nor were they meant to be read privately line by line, and said that similar objection might be made to Othello, which was also in the course. In this weak defence he overlooked the fact that objectionable passages in Othello could be shipped without marring the general drift of this tragedy while it is impossible to read Balzac without continually floundering in the mire. After the meeting several of the most influential members of the Council came privately to the St. Boniface representatives and thanked them for their determined stand on the side of morality. One of them said with evident feeling that he strongly objected to putting such books into the hands of innocent girls. Balzac and Swinburne were referred back to the committee.

Japanese news of great interest to Catholics comes through an Australian paper, which says that Catholics get more fair play in Japan than in Ireland. Though the percentage of Catholics to the whole Japanese population is not more than one in five hundred, there are several Catholics in the Parliament and on the judicial bench of Japan. Just about this time, when the Japanese navy is doing such wonders, it is interesting to learn that Japan's two largest battleships have two Catholic captains.

The Chinese Catholic element is also asserting itself on this continent. Not long ago we read of a dozen Chinese converts received into the Church in the diocese of St. Paul, and now we learn that the Archbishop of Montreal hopes to secure a Jesuit Missionary from China to attend to the spiritual needs of Chinese Catholics in Montreal. Conversions of Chinamen have been frequent in that city of late years; most of them are due to the zeal of the priests in St. Patrick's Church, but several have been received in the Jesuit church on Rachel street.

Persons and Facts

University examinations in the faculties of arts and law are now being held in Winnipeg and Brandon. The examinations are held in the Baptist College. Examinations began on Monday last and will end next Thursday.

The Brandon convent has as many boarders as it can accommodate.

The Redemptorist Fathers, at Brandon have added, since last summer, to their residence, a two storey wing, 50x50.

Mr. Egbert Cleave, formerly a Protestant minister, and lately identified with the movement to start a reformed Episcopal church in Columbus, O., has entered the Catholic Church.

William R. Grace, former mayor of New York, who died a few days ago, was a remarkable man, in many respects. To the rising generation it might be pointed out that he began life poor and friendless. He made his own way in the world leaving an untarnished name and the record of a life well spent. Endowed with great strength of character, gifted with a superior intellectual equipment, he stood forth prominently among the foremost men of New York. His rise to political power and civic distinction was not the accident of politics. It was due to his extraordinary ability for dealing with affairs—and with men. William R. Grace was a fine type of man, one of the kind unspoiled by wealth or power. The young man about starting in life may well model his conduct after that of William R. Grace. He was a practical Catholic.

The case against Bishop Casey, of St. John, N.B., who was sued by the heirs of Bishop Sweeney the former incumbent of the See, and who left all his property to his successor in office for religious and charitable purposes, was dismissed last week in the Dominion Supreme Court at Ottawa. The case was an appeal from the Equity Court, where Bishop Casey won.

Mr. John Oliver, formerly curate of St. Mark's Episcopal church, Philadelphia, and son of the United States Assistant Secretary of war, Robert Shaw Oliver, was received into the Roman Catholic Church recently, at the English church of San Silvestro, Rome.

What may be regarded as the late Cardinal Vaughan's last literary work is shortly to be published. It is entitled "The Young Priest," and deals with that period of the young ecclesiastic's life which the Cardinal regarded as the most anxious or critical of his career. The MS. was finished a short time before the cardinal's death, and he devoted it to his brother, Mgr. John S. Vaughan.

Advices from Rome dated March 18 speak of a slight improvement in the health of Rev. Dr. De Costa, but not enough to warrant his taking the voyage home with Archbishop Farley, who reluctantly had to come away without him.

There is no absorbent nationalism in the Catholic Church, no Pharisaic consciousness of the "white man's burden." She sedulously respects the nationalities of all the peoples whom she evangelizes, and as soon as possible, enlists representatives of each and all in her apostolic work. In the present popular interest in Japan, it is good to know how she stands where long ago, she made such a glorious beginning under St. Francis Xavier. She has now a Catholic population of 57,195; with one Archbishop, five Bishops, 150 priests, and 325 nuns. But 32 of these priests are native Japanese, or in the Seminaries, there are 57 native ecclesiastical students. Moreover, there are 267 native catechists, and a fair proportion of the nuns above noted are also natives.

Clerical News.

Rev. M. Kugener, lately arrived from France, has been appointed Vicar of St. Norbert to succeed Rev. Father Mireault.

Rev. Father Dumolin, missionary at Pinewood, has been nominated Vicar of St. Jean Baptiste.

Rev. Sister Hamill, of Montreal, Superioress-general of the Grey

Nuns in Canada, arrived in St. Boniface on Thursday last. She will visit the different institutions of her order throughout this province. The Rev. Sister was for twenty five years Superioress of the Grey Nuns at St. Boniface.

Rev. T. E. Kostorz, P.P., of Huns Valley, was a recent visitor at the Archbishop's palace.

Rev. Father Drummond, S.J., of St. Boniface College, is in Brandon conducting the University examinations at that place.

Dr. Trudel, the Archbishop's Secretary, is on a visit to Joliette, N.D.

The "Viatorian" published by the students of St. Viator's College, Illinois, has this to say of Archbishop Langevin's visit to Chicago:

"Les Cloches de St. Boniface," of Manitoba, has been publishing an interesting detailed account of the visit of His Grace Most Rev. A. Langevin, to Chicago, and to several of the important centres of French Canadian population in Northern Illinois. This modest publication is right when it declares that the Archbishop's sermon produced a lively impression upon the Canadians of Chicago. But we are sure that both those who heard that masterpiece of eloquence, and especially those who only heard about it, will feel disappointed in not being afforded the advantage of reading the text of the entire oration. We respectfully suggest to the editors of "Les Cloches" that they desist not from their efforts in this direction until they have supplied their many readers with the verbatim text, or at least a long resume of that stirring sermon."

CONCERNING BALZAC.

The French novelist, Honore De Balzac was baptised a Catholic, and was, throughout life, a nominal one, but, like many other French writers he practically laid aside his Catholicity in his writings to gain the favor of those who delight in prurient reading. He possessed a passion for the portraiture of vicious characters, which characters he himself admired according as they were violently portrayed. This passion he indulged with an utter disregard for morality. In all his novels he consistently panders to the morbid passions of his readers. Even Taine, a contemporary of Balzac, although usually no stickler for morality, condemned Balzac's works as highly immoral. Father Longhaye, the eminent Jesuit, who for his erudition was honored by the French Academy, in a review of Balzac's works gives the leading characteristics of the characters found therein as rapacity, jealousy, hatred, revenge, cowardice, hypocrisy and debauchery—the super-inducing cause of crime of every kind, the details of which the novelist worked out with diabolical persistency.

De Balzac idealizes vice. Morality, as well as elegance of style, is looked for in vain in his writings; and in their place we find gross coarseness, a pandering to what is base and ignoble, and a style whose chief characteristic is slovenliness. His genius is confined to vulgarity and vice, and he is happiest when in the company of the vicious. All this may be gleaned from his writings. The language he puts into the mouths of his characters is coarse and indecent, as witness his "Physiologie du Mariage." Even the titles of his books are, in many cases, an index to the sensuality to be found therein. For example take his "Fille aux yeux d'or, or Cousine Bette," "that epic of evil, of luxury, and of vice" to quote

Pontmartin. Even "Seraphitus" (or shall we say Seraphita?) one of the best of his works, is open to grave objections.

In one case he elevates to the position of Prime Minister a profligate young nobleman, distinguished for nothing save violent intrigue. In another, the heroine is a woman, Madame de Espart, also of noble birth, but corrupted by intrigue; a woman of loose morals, whose very conversation betrays this looseness. And these, his hero and his heroine, are but types of the characters usually found in Balzac. "Do not wonder," says Father Longhaye, "if Balzac's women characters show but little respect for themselves, for he certainly despises them" as he despised all humanity. Alas for the times and the morals, this picture of degraded womanhood, as revealed in Balzac's novels, is to many women of the present day those novels greatest charm.

Mr. Thureau-Daugin, a member of the French Academy has written a work "Histoire de la Monarchie de Guillet" which obtained the "Grand Prix Gobert." In the first volume of that important work he consecrates a chapter to the writings of Balzac which he condemns as being immoral and revolutionary. It may be interesting to quote some of his judgments.

"In the greater part of his novels adultery appears unmasked, without any shame or remorse. There is not, perhaps, one of his women that has not a paramour to whom she sacrifices her fortune, her husband and even her children, "Balzac," continues the same author, "is incapable of creating a pure type of woman, especially that of a young girl. The most virtuous have always villainous stains."

Balzac is also one of the greatest delamers of the ancient nobility. Yielding to the mania which was then reigning, not only does he degrade what is high and exalted, but also he attempts to exalt everything that is low and base.

He portrays society with such ugly colors that he gives reason to its most bitter enemies. If one was to believe him society would be but an assemblage of baseness, fraud, hypocrisy, villainess, a kind of hell with no other law than egotism, no other skill than ruse, no other moral law than success, no other evil than poverty, no other authority than strength, no other end than the satisfaction of sensual appetites, and the possession of riches whose vision has besieged and perpetually tormented that novel writer."

Ampere used to say "when I have read these books it seems to me that I need to wash my hands and brush my clothes."

Godefray, the eminent French litterateur, says of "Pere Goriot" —"in this strange novel, of which the conception is false and the details repulsive, Balzac has made the paternal love unreasonable and impossible, by substituting for chaste and holy love disordered sentiment—the outcome of unbridled passion."

Had we the space at our command we might be tempted to review "Peau de Chagrin," a novel thought by many to be even more objectionable than "Pere Goriot."

Will the reading of Balzac be of injury or of benefit to the young? This is the all-important, practical question for us to consider. To my mind the question admits of but one reply—to his very great injury. What says Jules Vales the noted French author? He declares that he had been a student of Balzac and been the worse for it. He went further and ascribes all that was evil in his life to the pernicious influence of Balzac's novels. "How many