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POST-PAID

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The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname)—St. Paclan, 4th Century.
LONDON, ONTARIO, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1909

The Catholic Record

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1909

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

These are the days when nearly every man and woman goes about with a secret—the best kept secret in the world, and since it is shared by so many and divulged by none. It could be unfeelingly, badly put into words as follows: Christmas is a bore, an ordeal to be endured and lived through, an interruption to winter's peace, a tax upon strength, patience, purse, conscience—an epidemic of misdoing with but one redeeming feature—the fact that children do not know the truth about it. The day of gladness and good-will. The day of days to all the world for its blotted significance. What have we done with it? How is it lost to many of us? It is easily told. We have commercialized it. We have resolved it into a nicely calculated game of give and take, an annual "sight unseen" trade with friends and foes—that mild class of foes, who in a candid reckoning, come under the head of "social rivals." Who has not meekly, at least, made out a "list" in heaviness of heart rather than in gladness. Even with means unlimited there is yet cause for groaning or chafing because of the taxing effort. And where the purse is slender how much pathos in scheming is done as to what one may do without, all to reconcile imaginary demands or ambition, to forestall imitations. No charge can be brought against self-denial in order to give to loved ones; nor can there be excuse for not remembering those of whom some one has said, "the incidents of their lives are drama, the events tragedies." But is any condemnation too great for the unwarranted interchange of gifts which now prevails among all classes—an interchange which marks a fashion, not a sentiment.

Every one knows, deep down in the heart where honesty dwells, that a gift is a gift only when given with pleasure, with no thought of obligation, of debt and credit, or with no troubled conscience follows it; also that no one really receives a gift who counts its cost instead of its message. That Christmas should have any aftermath, all of worry, sorrow, or physical depression, is proof in itself that both its spirit and rightful observance are lost. Happiness is pursued in ways as many almost as there are men. In Dante's famous sentence, nothing is sadder than past joys remembered in unhappy days. To others such memories have seemed the consolations of a dismal old age. Goethe spoke the central truth when he said that it comes most surely to those who live in other lives as fully as in their own. Many have said this, also, but the Divine Christ Child proved it in the truths that underlie what is most alive in Christianity to-day.

Christmas is the gladdest day of the year and it should be observed not only with joy but also in a holy spirit, for it is the birthday of One Who alone can make us happy.

ON THE RAMPAGE

The Christian Guardian must have an abiding faith in the credulity of its public when it says: "Who is it that Protestantism and free schools seem to go together? Why is it that no schools and Romanism seem so closely allied?" And why, we may add, do editors repeat accusations which have been disproved by facts and repudiated by the non-Catholic scholar? Why do serious, writing for the Protestant cause, lend themselves to the cause of calumny? Why not be in touch with scholarship instead of wandering on the arid wastes of prejudice? Why not be fair in dealing with Catholics? Does the editor know that Rome is the founder of the Free School system? Did he ever read that at the third Council of Lateran, 1179, a decree was passed to send the wandering to those poor children who cannot be aided by their parents, let a competent benefice be founded in every cathedral church and assigned to a teacher whose duty it shall be to teach the clerks and poor scholars of the same church gratuitously.

Does the editor who so complacently stands sponsor for the calumny that Rome is the friend of ignorance and opposed to education know that Draper, no apologist for the Church, admits that such is the authoritative demand of the Papacy for supremacy that in any survey of the present religious condition of Christendom regard must be mainly had to its acts. Its movements are guided by the highest intelligence and skill. How is it that the "advanced thinkers" take no account of Protestantism as such as a factor against infidelity. We ex-

pect no answer to these questions, but we have a right to hear, from a man pledged to truth, words that are not saturated with falsehood. He should make an attempt to fight us without weapons that have long since been thrown on the rubbish-heap.

UNFAIR AND IGNORANT

The editor of the Christian Guardian is the type of the man who constrained Dr. Schaff to bewail that the Roman Church is benighted from day to day with all possible accusations and calumnies; and combated with Scripture-quotations, arguments, mockery, witticisms, horrible stories and misrepresentations. As an evidence of this the Christian Guardian, with the most shameful ignorance or unfairness, ridicules the Church's stand in France against the atheistic tendencies of the public schools. He is disposed to gloat over the cold-blooded attempt to uproot every vestige of religion in the coming generation. The rulers, however, of the Church are not the only ones who prefer to obey God rather than man; the thoughtful non-Catholic is against the non-Christian policy. French families of good old Huguenot stock, writes the correspondent of the Daily Post, of Birmingham, Eng., "are as grieved at what is going on as Roman Catholics themselves."

French Protestants and French Catholics have been brought into sympathetic contact with one another by the anti-Christian wave. And as a deterrent to the unholy gleam at the Church's difficulties Dr. Henry Van Dike is of the opinion that "the outlook for the Catholic Church in France is brighter than it has been in many a long year. The very hardships which the Church is suffering in the hearts of the peasantry which will be the Church's strength in years to come." To show how lightly the editor holds the canons of social amenities, he says, in a comment on "The History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada," that it is "hardly likely that Father Morice (the author) can write without prejudice on such a subject." The unblinking candour of this remark is bewildering. To say that an author, because he is a Catholic priest, cannot write without prejudice is worthy of The Christian Guardian.

A FEW DONT'S

The pilot looks straight ahead and does not turn about and look behind him to see if he is keeping a straight course. If we are crossing an abyss over a narrow plank it is wise to keep one's eyes straight ahead; otherwise we may become dizzy and unable to proceed, and don't let us do that. It is discouraging. We make mistakes, but don't let us stop to look at them till we lose courage. Don't let us see all the annoying things on either hand or worry about those behind us. If we get out of the right course, let us fix our eyes upon the guiding star and try to get back again, but don't stop to lament. For it takes from the strength, the hope, the brightness that we need. Don't brood over the past, nor dream of the future; but grip the instant and get your lesson for the hour. Find your purpose and fling your life out to it. Try to be someone. "Ponder the path of thy feet," but "Let thine eyes look right out."

THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

It is fitting that we owe the most beautiful of Christmas devotions to St. Francis of Assisi, the brown robed mendicant whose passage through the hills and valleys of Umbria has left a golden memory in the hearts of the world for seven hundred years. He was the apostle of simplicity, this gentle saint, who could speak so wisely to his little brothers, the birds, who could learn such wonderful lessons from his little friends, the fishes. He found God everywhere, and saw His likeness in everything. He sanctified the commonplace, seeing the symbol of the Creator in the leaf of His works, blessing the beasts, praising God in the flowers, loving every creature of His hand. He loved the lambs because they reminded him of the Lamb without spot, and we read that when he met them being led to the shambles he wept tenderly and would not go away until he had redeemed them from death. One day, seeing a poor little sheep walking in the midst of a troop of goats, he said sadly to his brethren, "It was this that our Saviour walked in the midst of a troop of goats when with the Jews and Pharisees." His triars wished to buy the sheep to save their gentle master from distress, but they had no money. A passing doctor—one of those opportune providences that follow in the footsteps of Francis—seeing the embarrassment of the Brothers paid for the sheep. It is any wonder that such a man should have been seized at once with the idea of human beauty of the incarnation? Is it any wonder that he should have seen in the Nativity not the coming of the King, but the un-

speakable mystery of the redemption, but the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem? St. Francis may not have originated the devotion of the crib—it is one of those beautiful growths by which Christianity has nourished the human soul from the beginning—but he has popularized it in Italy. Christmas was his spiritual holiday. It was the feast of love and St. Francis is the world's greatest preacher of the love of God. His brothers asked him one day if it was right to eat meat on Christmas when the feast fell on Friday. "Assuredly," answered Francis, he of all saints the closest to the Passion, he of the Stigmata—"assuredly, I would even wish that the princes and great ones of the earth strewed the countries and the highroads with meat and cheese in order that the birds and the beasts of the field should have their share in so great a feast."

And he began to consider how he should bring the Christmas-tide near to the hearts and eyes of the simple and the peasant folk of his country. It was only a genius, one whose mind was as quick as his heart in the service of his Master, who could have hit upon an idea so universal, an appeal so irresistible as the cradle of infancy. From a purely human point of view the Nativity is one of the great master-strokes which make Christianity as a human life so incomparable, so magnificently daring. To evoke the utmost abject helplessness to weigh down a little creature, Ebie with the omnipotence of the Creator of the world—that conception of human genius could be at once so bold and so beautiful, so awful and so winning?

St. Francis saw the possibilities of the Nativity devotion to his dear Master that would follow the emphasizing, humanizing, of this idea. He determined to have a great Christmas feast, of which the Nativity should be the centre, through the length and breadth of Italy. He went to Rome—it was already close to the end of the year 1223—and, going to the Holy Father, he laid before the Supreme Pontiff his idea of the Christmas crib and his desire to celebrate the birth of the Saviour with his brethren, to gather together the populations from all the neighbouring hill towns and to make the underlying mercy and love of the Incarnation so patent to all that no heart in Italy should be able to resist it.

With the Pontiff's blessing and god speed he started forth, his joy of Christmas already singing in his breast. It was the vigil of the last before he arrived in Greccio. The children of the village of the Christmas crib and his desire to celebrate the birth of the Saviour with his brethren, to gather together the populations from all the neighbouring hill towns and to make the underlying mercy and love of the Incarnation so patent to all that no heart in Italy should be able to resist it.

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As they proceeded they broke the mysterious silence with song, repeating over and over again the words of the Umbrian Christ's carols, their liquid Italian religious melody compared to their harsher northern hymns of a colder Christmas sound hard and conventional.

Francis was jubilant. We are told that he could not refrain from shedding tears of joy. One suspected that he had a touch of the dramatic instinct, or at least had well-developed that sense of the picturesque which is so strong in all true scenes of life. He had seen in the street groups his ideas into pictures, he had seen seize upon the right artistic moment to perpetuate an emotion. It is for this reason that faith in Francis flows into so many lovely fancies and that Italy has been the world's inspiration and the world's teacher in art.

A LEGEND OF CHRISTMAS EVE

ST. BRIGID'S WELL

I never pass Greague Castle and its holy well but I think of its legends and its ghost; yet, though I've gone by late and early, I have never seen the unique spirit of its repentant squire. It is Cromwell's reign of terror that the owner of the castle abandoned his faith in order to save his estates, and in those days all the marsh and swamp ground round one now sees trailing along the Atlantic shore to the village of Seelick field red meadows filled in their rich green and gold, smiling as they were, with outcrops of daisies and poppies, and the fields on which grazed numerous cattle and sheep.

Years before, had left the country and gone to Austria, and his descendants are there to this day—wino, when he discovered that her husband had given up his religion, would have gone back to her own people with her children. But this she would not permit; and neither would he suffer priests to come to the castle. His serving men and maids were all adherents of the new creed, and on them he imposed the task of watching their mistress and her children.

The lady herself seemed to be always bright and contented, though the squire could not allow her to go unattended beyond the castle grounds. But almost daily she and her children took their midday meal at the seashore; and from there she would return until a certain hour. And each day a saintly priest who lived—like many another in those wild times—concealed in a neighboring cave, came and instructed the children, and gave to their mother the consolations of her faith. The viands they brought with them sufficed not only for their own meal, but for the necessities of the neighboring peasants put off in their oracles, and came to the seashore where the poor, devoted priest said Mass at the risk of his life and where by his ministrations he helped them to keep their faith, and to bear the hardships and troubles put upon them.

The squire had invited many guests to the castle, and in those days the festivities were kept up until the sixth of January. The lady told the servant that she, too, expected a guest—a royal one—the Holy Father, and that she had stroke of twelve the gates and the main door of the castle should be thrown open in anticipation of his coming; that all the candles should be lighted, and that the minstrels should play.

Great was the excitement prevailing throughout the household that day. Many visitors were arriving, but the servants were awaiting the coming of the squire's guest. The children were very eager for the appointed hour, but for a different reason. And yet their joy was somewhat dashed with sadness for they considered that the Holy Father would still be an infant that could be accounted a worthy gift. They were consoled by their mother, who told them of the poor shepherds of Nazareth, who, on Christmas eve, were giving the gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, wept because she had nothing. And God pitying her sent His angel to tell her to look in the stable and there she found growing the pure white flower, fringed with a delicate pink, known as Helibore; and plucking it she entered the stable and gave it to the Christ Child. This is the only flower that blows through the snow of Christmas-tide, and it is called the Christmas rose. It is said that it blooms only for the twelve days.

So the children were full of joy and beautiful weeds, to lay at the feet of the Baby-King. The holy night arrived, and the lady's orders were strictly obeyed. This is the only flower that blows through the snow of Christmas-tide, and it is called the Christmas rose. It is said that it blooms only for the twelve days.

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country of her people, and even consented to his children being educated in Austria. His only son became a monk, and his wife and daughters made many pious pilgrimages, and were unceasing in their prayers for his conversion.

In the fullness of time Lady Gerald died, exhorting her children to guard their faith and to return to their father. Back once more in Ireland, they were pained to notice how miserable the old squire had become. Even the solace of sleep was denied him, and he was utterly wretched.

In the grey dawn of a chill November morning, some time after his wife's death, he heard a noise, which he thought proceeded from her room. He went in, and stood irresolutely in the corridor, with his hand on the door-knob, but dreaded to enter. Conscience held him fast. He had a superstitious fear that he would see some visible form, would meet his gaze if he should open that door. The old courage that he strove to call to his aid had vanished, and he stood, afraid to stir, in the shadowy corridor. Suddenly he saw his daughters move noiselessly down the stairs at the further end, and at once the sense of human companionship broke the spell. He followed them to the door, and, from the great window on the landing, saw them hasten across the park, and take the path that led to the beach.

He remembered that it was the anniversary of his wife's death, and he shrewdly guessed that his daughters had been secretly attending Mass in the morning. He was determined to follow the following week, though he waited morning after morning, they never left the castle.

But Christmas was approaching, and he was convinced that if the opportunity occurred they would attend midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, so when that night came he slipped unperceived from the castle, and made his way to the beach. The moon had not yet risen, and as he had yet some time to wait, he sought shelter in a little cave. Warned only as he was, the numbing cold soon brought on a feeling of drowsiness, and the squire fell asleep.

He was awakened from his slumber by the sound of oars, and through the mist he saw numerous caravels gliding across the bay toward Seelick. One was moored near his feet, and casting off the rope, he took up the oars and followed them. Just round the headland he saw a brilliantly lighted cave, and to it all the caravels steered. Leaving their little boats on the beach the people silently entered the cave, and the squire, who had been watching, went in to see what was going on. He saw a priest saying Mass, and the squire was impelled to kneel on the rocky floor in a veneration with his fellow worshippers—a vast, silent crowd, seemingly from two hundred miles away. Gradually he became aware that those about him had been long dead. There were the friends of his children and youth, and there, in the farthest distance, he saw his father and mother kneeling absorbed in devotion.

As the Mass proceeded contrition overwhelmed him, and his early piety and faith came back to him. At the closing of the Mass the squire struck his breast with the earnestness of the publican of old, and cried, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The priest received holy communion but him, and then they knelt in reverent thanksgiving. As the priest left the altar Gerald moved across to speak to his parents, who suddenly, as if by magic, went out, and he was left groping in total darkness. Even the entrance to the cave was invisible to him, though he could hear the noise of the water as it broke in ripples on the strand.

by the breeze from the sea; the echo of the surf as it tumbles on the sands; the scent of the lilac, the woodbine and the briar; and the drip, drip, drip of the crystal water, as it falls on its bed of green moss.

And the pansy fair and near declare that Squire Gerald's spirit is seen still praying at still "doing his purgatory" at St. Brigid's Holy Well—Sydney Catholic Press.

From The Casket, Antigonish, N. S., December 1909.

A SHARP REPRIMAND OF MONTEFIORE PAPERS

Views of His Excellency the Papal Delegate

The director of Evangelina having neither published nor acknowledged receipt of the letter addressed to him a few months ago by His Excellency Mgr. Sbarretti, Apostolic Delegate to Canada, Le Monde has been requested to publish for the information of those interested the following document:

Ottawa, August 30, 1909. Mr. F. A. Laundry, Director of Evangelina, Montreal, N. B. Sir,—Many numbers of the journal under your direction have been forwarded to me, and I have noticed with regret that various articles contain regrettable insinuations against religious authority, which it is the bounden duty of all Catholics to respect, and to cause to be respected so far as they can. The Catholic journal at cannot depart from the rules laid down on many occasions by Sovereign Pontiffs for the guidance of public writers. In the Encyclical "Longinum" of January 6, 1896, Leo XIII. declared that "Catholic writers, instead of doing a work that is useful and beneficial, on the contrary, do harm whenever they undertake to sit in judgment on the decisions of their Bishops; and when putting aside the respect due to them, they criticize and censure them, overlooking the confusion and disorder resulting from such conduct. These writers should be mindful of their duty and not pass the bounds of moderation. Bishops are invested with great authority, and are entitled to the honor which belongs to the majesty and sanctity of their functions. No one should fail to show this respect, but it is especially incumbent on Catholic journalists to manifest and proclaim it."

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Face the world with your heart forward and your backbone straight.

THE CATHOLIC RECORD