

THE CONFSSIONAL AND THE WITNESS BOX.

ABSOLUTE INVOLABILITY OF THE SEAL PROMOTES RATHER THAN REWARDS JUSTICE.

The confessional and the witness box is the subject of an interesting discussion now going on in the London press, says the Catholic Transcript.

The question was raised, apropos of the refusal of an Anglican minister to disclose the confession of a woman charged with theft. On examination the clergyman stood pat and was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment for contempt of court.

England is more drastic in this respect than certain of the commonwealth of this country. The law of several States, including New York, Missouri and Wisconsin, prescribes that "no minister of religion, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be allowed to disclose any confession made to him in his professional character, in the course of the discipline enjoined by the rites and practices of said denomination."

It has been urged that such exemption will work to the prejudice of justice. But nothing that a confessor is privy to the guilt of a penitent adds nothing to the evil done. It would be barbarous and inhuman to deprive an offender of the consolation and counsel to be found in confession. Moreover, the chief reason for making a confession at all is the hope of gaining pardon; and this cannot be had without a readiness, on the part of the offender to repair, as far as possible, the consequences of the wrong done.

Make the confessor respect in him and you put an end to confession. The strength of the confessional consists in no small measure in the absolute conviction shared by all who frequent it that there will be no disclosure and that their secret, however appalling, is sacred—so sacred as to be buried in midocean.

The obligation to secrecy of the Catholic confessor has been well set forth in the present controversy by the Rev. Sidney Smythe. He says: "Priests of the Catholic Church cannot, with clear conscience, break the seal of the confessional whether in the witness box or elsewhere, and whether they be asked to tell what they learnt in the confessional itself, or what they have learnt previously or subsequently but with a view to it or as a consequence of it. In short, it is the confessor's duty to keep himself altogether on the safe side, and divulge nothing which could by any chance enable a clever questioner to infer what had been said in the confessional. This is his duty, and it is our consolation to know that it would be indeed difficult to discover instances where a Catholic priest had failed in his duty. Of the cases cited in the various law reports in two only—the two already referred to, namely, the Dubourg case and R. v. Day—was a Catholic priest put to the test, and in both they respectfully and without any blustering refused to speak and submitted to an imprisonment for contempt. In both, it is pleasant to acknowledge, a pretext for releasing them was quickly discovered, and it may be that they foresaw that it would be so.

"Still if the penalty had been that of life long imprisonment or death, they would have been bound in conscience to face it, and we may confidently trust, would have done so. Such cases are on record, and though I forget where to find it there was one during the last century of a Polish priest whose house-keeper was found murdered. The murderer, to draw off the scent from himself, had gone at once to the priest, and in a bad confession told him of his crime; on his departure, leaving behind him traces which would direct suspicion against the priest. The latter was accordingly convicted and sent into exile in Siberia, whence he only returned many years later, the murderer on his deathbed having publicly acknowledged his own guilt.

"The Catholic priesthood will have the respect, if not the sympathy, of most Englishmen for its fidelity to this conception of duty. But are there not, it will be asked, exceptional cases in which he must feel that he really ought to betray the secrets of the penitent culprit? Ought he not when by so doing he could save an innocent person from an unjust conviction and punishment? No, not even then. The secret of the confessional according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, is enjoined by a divine law from which neither judge, nor king, nor Pope has power to dispense; and hence for a confessor to disclose himself from its observance, even to save the innocent, would be to do evil that good might come. Or if it were known that such exceptions could be made, would the guilty be likely to confess their crime? And so no advantage would accrue to the innocent from the priest's liberty to aid them in this manner. On the other hand, the present absolute inviolability of the seal does tend to avert substantial justice from the innocent. The culprit, whose only inducement to confess to his priest is that he may obtain the divine pardon for a sin of which he has repented, may have arranged things purposely so as to cast suspicion on the innocent. In that case the confessor's duty is to tell him that he has no chance of divine pardon unless he will voluntarily undo this injustice to another."

There have been martyrs to the seal of the confessional. But the days have happily gone by when priests in civilized communities are required to speak of things confided in the secrecy of the confessional. The social value of this tribunal is greater than most men are able to realize. There is no more potent factor making for the moral uplifting of the race than this sacred tribunal. Every blow aimed at it is a blow aimed at society itself.

On the devil tries our faith, it is that he may crush it or diminish it; but when God tries our faith, it is to establish or increase it. — Marcus Jalastford.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

CULTIVATE YOUR SOUL STIMULANTS.

There are just nine rings in the ladder reaching from earth to heaven—love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control—and by some mysterious law of the infinite, each one is the outcome of its opposite vice; Love is a grace only because you possess the power to hate men, yet choose the better part, mercy and forgiveness. Joy is a grace only because you have the privilege of grumbling and bitterness of mind, yet prefer to retain your child heart through all life's bitter experience. Peace is a grace that comes after the storm is over and the day's work is done, leaving your heart still in the conviction that God alone is great and true. Thus does the great silent work of eternity go on growing good out of evil, making dark days an effective background for bright living, and causing the death valley of misfortune and disappointment and sin to at length blossom as the rose.

Confidence in your ability to become master of your environment, whatever that may be. The world shows us three classes of people—those who "can't," those who "won't" and those who "will." The first fail in everything they undertake, the second oppose everything and the last accomplish everything. The first two classes are men of passive intellect, the negative quantities of the earth, mere drifters, nonentities, ciphers, who take life as they find it, and instead of making some impression on their age are enslaved by it and lose their individuality in their environment. They are cowed by the very appearance of the Baca vale and fall prostrate before its dangers, like the Hebrew host encamped before Kadesh-Barnea, and as a result God turns the faces of such men back into the wilderness of life to wander aimlessly till all are dead but the tried and true. The other man has a creative intellect, asserts his will, insists upon realizing his ideal, endeavors to fashion the stubborn things of nature according to the use of the soul."

Before he gets through with life his section of the Baca valley could say of him what Augustus said of Rome—"I found it brick; I left it marble."—G. W. Dame in Intermountain Catholic.

IS IT HONEST?

From the Paulist Calendar, New York.

This question has often been asked, and the answer must nearly always be in the negative: Is it honest for a young man to monopolize the time of a young girl for one or two years without any definite matrimonial object in view. No, decidedly it is not honest; but, on the contrary, it is very dishonest and will eventually bring its own reward on the offender.

So many young men think they are perfectly justified in their butterfly acts—jumping from one flower to another at will—that their sense of duty, their conscience, seems to have left them. It is true that every young man who intends to wed has the right to a certain amount of time during which he may judge whether the girl whom he visits will be for him a worthy partner in life. But the average young man can settle that question in less time than it takes his employer to increase his salary, if he is honest, noble and manly and, above all, if he is in earnest. But the truth is that so many are not in earnest. They keep company, so to speak, just as long as it suits them, and then discover some other girl in order to waste her time and spoil her chances of a better man. If you are keeping company, so to speak again, find out just how your young man treated his last girl: it's a good test, and may be of service to you in sizing up his character.

A TRIBUTE TO A NOBLE PAIR.

Irish speakers are notably eloquent, and St. Patrick's day is an occasion to inspire them to the highest flights of genuine oratory; but we are inclined to doubt whether the recent celebration brought forth any more thoroughly eloquent utterance than this page from the book of a Frenchman. The late Cardinal Perraud spent two years in Ireland, studying at first-hand the conditions of the country; and then, returning to France, wrote his splendid work, L'Irlande Contemporaine. We quote from its conclusion: "I remember one day in the Basilica of St. Peter what a great emotion took possession of me when I read on the humble door of the confessional these simple words, Gens Hibernica; and on another, Gens Polona. Thus, I said, conquerors have been able to blot out from the map of the world the very name of Poland, the glorious Catholic nation of Central Europe. Politicians and worldly sages take but little interest in the misfortunes of Ireland, because she suffered in the cause of Catholicity. But the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church has neither admitted this suppression nor shared in this indifference. Near the Tombs of the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, in the centre of Catholicity, she guards these great names, immortal souvenirs, watchwords of holy and invincible hopes."

"Ireland and Poland, noble sisters who have suffered so much, and who suffer still for our holy faith, hold firm in your hands the standards of St. Patrick and St. Casimir! You have to your account no dishonest triumphs, no guilty successes. During the long career of persecution and trial through which Providence has led you, it is for noble causes that you have done battle, for justice that you have struggled to the last drop of your blood. In the eyes of those who measure all things by success, you were wrong to fight, since you have been conquered, your

enemies are right, for they have succeeded. But for those who look to the morality of history, far different is their judgment. To them your defeat is only apparent, as is the victory of your persecutors; for, besides the fact that God, the Master of the future, can, when and how He pleases, give you back what the violence of politicians has wrested from you, you have kept, in spite of your enemies, the treasure of which they wished above all things to depossit you. You have kept it, and it has increased and fructified in your hands. Like the Church, your mother, you have grown great under persecution, and whilst the triumphant nations are going to sleep in indifference, and are growing sluggish and material in the abundance of their gain, you, the illustrious victims of the past and the present, hold up to the eyes of the world the inextinguishable torch of faith and hope and love. Have courage! Your trials will not last forever. The works of iniquity crumble and perish. I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedar of Libanus; and I passed by, and, lo, he was not." (Ps. xxxvi.)

Noble words. There are indications that the prophecy which they contain is nearing fulfillment; though at the time when the great Cardinal spoke, the burdens under which the Polish nation has groaned for so long a time were still unrelieved.—Ave Maria.

THE POPE AND THE COMET.

In the current number of the Month, of England, the editor, Father Gerard, S. J., has an amusing article entitled "Of a Bull and a Comet." And it is hardly necessary to add that, unlike our contemporary, the Smart Set, it furnishes us with instruction as well as amusement. "That a Pope," says Father Gerard, "did once solemnly ban and anathematise a comet, bidding it begone from the sky, is an old story, most in favor with certain writers who love to descant on the ignorance and ineptitude of our pre-scientific ancestors, as contrasted with our own enlightened age, when no one speaks of what he does not know, or makes statements which he is not ready to support by conclusive evidence." It is certainly an old story, and as such it comes to us with all the weight and authority of a venerable tradition. And the critic has little difficulty in citing a host of highly respectable writers, among them being eminent men of science, who have told us with satisfaction, and taken it as a typical case of Polish superstition and credulity. But when he comes to ask for the conclusive evidence, it is conspicuous only by its absence. And the reader is left with the painful impression that these respectable writers have given currency to the tale without taking proper care to inquire into its truth. It would seem that, after all, this tale of a Comet and a bull must be classed in the same doubtful category as the celebrated "story of a Cook and a Bull."

After exposing the curious mistakes that have been made in this matter, Father Gerard very naturally has a word to say on the strangely unscientific methods of those who repeated and used the story as evidence without first inquiring into its accuracy. "On the whole, therefore, it can hardly be said that in regard to the famous legend of the Bull and the Comet the wanted of the general public is a scientific training, as securing accuracy and caution in adopting conclusions, is very conspicuous. It would rather appear that when dealing with certain subjects, men of science may be no safer guides than any others."

There can be little question that this conclusion is well warranted by the evidence. At the same time it is obvious that it casts a slur on modern scientific methods of historical research. For the point is that in this instance the professors of science have not put their own principles into practice. In dealing with certain subjects they have been, perhaps unconsciously, swayed by religious or inherited prejudices and prepossessions, and in consequence they have failed to conduct the inquiry on those strictly scientific principles which might have preserved them from those unfortunate blunders.

It may not be amiss to add that errors of this kind may often be due to other causes than the influence of religious or party prejudice. And for our part we are disposed to believe that, in some respects, an expert in any branch of science is often peculiarly liable to err when he is dealing with matters outside his own special province. Non omnia possumus omnes. And though it may be true that there is a general tendency towards habits of accuracy common to all sciences, it must be borne in mind that the concentration of attention on any one point is apt to lead to some neglect of others which may possibly be of equal importance. If some scientific rules might suggest a careful examination of every fact adduced in argument it must not be forgotten that a conspicuous feature in recent science is an increased tendency to specialization and division of labor. In these days it is scarcely permissible to aspire to the broad scientific culture of Leibnitz. One must first be content with proficiency in one some field, and outside its limits much must needs be taken on trust from those who are specialists and experts in other branches of science.

Another admirable piece of destructive criticism is supplied by Father Thurston's paper in the "Fiscom and Jettison" on "The Assumption as a Festival of Demeter and Dionysus." But whereas Father Gerard has demolished a venerable legend, his colleague, on the other hand, may be said to have done the same service for a myth in the making. There is, however, a curious similarity in the mistakes made by the eminent scholars concerned in both cases, and the acceptance of the old story is matched by the uncritical haste with which the others have adopted a new-fangled theory. In some respects, indeed, the scholars refuted by Father Thurston are more to blame than the scientists

THE SOVEREIGN BANK OF CANADA

HEAD OFFICE - TORONTO
RANDOLPH MACDONALD, President.
A. A. ALLAN, Vice-Pres. D. M. STEWART, Gen. Mgr.
Capital subscribed \$ 4,000,000
Capital fully paid 3,998,000
Reserve funds 1,255,000
Assets over 25,000,000
General Banking Savings Department
Interest credited quarterly
London Branch—Opposite City Hall, F. E. KARN, Manager.
London East Branch—635 Dundas St., W. J. HILL, Manager.
Aylmer, Belmont, London, Berlin, Iderton

ABSOLUTE SECURITY TO DEPOSITORS
BALANCES ON SAVINGS ACCOUNTS WHEN KEPT WITH US DRAW INTEREST AT FOUR PER CENT PER ANNUM, COMPOUNDED QUARTERLY, AND ARE AT ALL TIMES SUBJECT TO CHEQUE.
MONEY TO LOAN SAFETY DEPOSIT VAULTS TO RENT
ACCOUNTS OF EXECUTORS AND TRUSTEES ARE SPECIALLY INVITED
THE UNION TRUST CO. LIMITED
TEMPLE BLDG
174-176 BAY ST. TORONTO.

PAGE ACME White Fences
Any height to 8 ft. Any length you say. From 16 cents a foot. Gates to match, from \$2.25. Last longer, Easy to put up. Get booklet.
PAGE WIRE FENCE CO., Limited
Walkerville • Toronto • Montreal
St. John • Winnipeg • Regina

The Church Decorators TORONTO
SPECIALISTS
Distance No Obstacle.
Designs and prices free.
Inquiries invited.
OUR DESIGNS have just been accepted for the elaborate decorations of "The Church of Our Lady," Guelph.—the largest contract of the kind ever awarded in Canada.
Recently completed works: St. Mary's, St. Francis and St. Joseph's Churches, Toronto, and St. Patrick's, Galt.
THE CHURCH DECORATORS
86 Wellington St., West TORONTO, Ont.

By recollecting what Jesus Christ, our Saviour, suffered for us we will experience but little difficulty in bearing the inconveniences imposed by the penitential season.

Postponed.
The Trenton Bazaar which was to open on April 1st has been postponed till April 25th. The object of this enterprise is to pay off a debt, which has been for many years on the Sparrow's nest, and also to make very necessary repairs. The congregation is smaller than it was some years ago, hence, the pastor, Rev. M. J. Spratt, deemed it advisable to adopt this means of securing the amount required. We sincerely hope the undertaking will prove a success, as it is a matter that should appeal forcibly to all who know the value of the proper instruction of youth.

Catholic Order of Foresters
The largest and one of the best Catholic Fraternal Organizations on the American Continent.
In existence twenty-four years. Membership 153,000.
Insurance cost averages \$12 per year. Maintenance cost 31 cents per member. Ontario has a membership of 8,400. 32 new courts have been organized during the past year in Ontario. Sick benefits paid and free consultation for medical advice given in most courts. \$12,000,000 have been paid to widows and orphans of deceased members since the Order's inception. Ontario has received its share. Accumulated Benefit Fund, Reserve, in nine years, \$1,291,000.00.
Without distinction, any one, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years, and who is a practical Catholic may join the Order. Information furnished by applying to the undersigned.
VINCENT WEBB, Dr. B. G. CONNOLLY,
Prov. Sec. Prov. Chief Ranger,
P. O. Box 434, Ottawa. Renfrew, Ont.

WANTED GROCERY MANAGER.
MUST BE HONEST, RELIABLE AND temperate. Capable to buy for, build up and manage the Department. Applicant please send recent photo, state age and salary expected. Thos. P. Malone, Departmental store, Strathcona, Alta. 1185 Z.

THE London Mutual Fire INSURANCE CO. OF CANADA.
ESTABLISHED 1859
Assets including re-insurance \$847,419 88
Reserve \$314,000 25
Surplus 438,818 62
Security for Policy holders 622,908 39
Incorporated and Licensed by the Dominion Government. Operates from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Conservative, reliable and progressive.
HEAD OFFICE, 82 and 84 King Street, TORONTO
HON. JOHN DEYDEN, D. WEISMILLER,
President, Sec. & Manag. Director

1854 The HOME BANK of Canada 1906
Head Office, Toronto.
DIRECTORS
EUGENE O'KEEFE, President
THOMAS FLYNN, Vice-Pres.
EDWARD G. GOODERHAM
M. J. HANEY, C. E.
Lt.-Col. J. L. DAVIDSON
W. PARKYN MURRAY
Lt.-Col. JAMES MASON
JAMES MASON, Gen. Mgr.

Just Out The Catholic Confessional and the Sacrament of Penance.
By Rev. Albert McKeon, S. T. L.
15 cents post-paid

C. M. B. A.—Branch No. 4, London.
Meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month, at 8 o'clock, at their hall, in Allston Block, Richmond Street. H. J. McFARLANE, President; P. F. Boyle, Secretary.