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CURRENT COMMENT

While wishing a merry Christmas to all our readers in the old Catholic meaning of that adjective, viz., a spiritually joyful Christmas, we would call attention to the fact that spiritual joy is generally preceded by fear. In the second chapter of St. Luke's gospel we are told that the shepherds, when "an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them," "feared with a great fear," so that the Angel had to say to them, "Fear not." Again, at the end of the last chapter of the same gospel St. Luke who, being a physician, readily notes these psychological phenomena, tells us that, when Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples on the day of resurrection, "they, being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit," but later on that very evening they "wandered for joy." Awe is the forerunner of God's visit, the price poor human nature has to pay for that joy which is inseparable from the presence of God. Hence it is that Catholics prepare for Christmas by fasting and abstinence, visible tokens of the fear of God.

These thoughts are suggested by a very practical sermon by Father D. S. Phelan, LL. D., editor of the Western Watchman of St. Louis. This sermon, entitled "Fear, the Heavenly Guardian of Divine Love," was preached on the 27th of last month. Here are some extracts from it.

"Take out of the hearts of men the fear of God, and there is no controlling them; they will rush headlong into every animal and lustful gratification. The Royal psalmist prays, 'Oh God, pierce my flesh with thy fear.' After Luther had succeeded in establishing his reformation in Germany, he discovered that the people were rushing headlong into all manner of vice. Germany became a mere wallow, in which all the swine of fleshly desire sought ease and gratification. And the civil authorities of the city of Nuremberg petitioned him to restore the confessional, as a check upon the unbridled passions of the people. Take away the fear of God and we open the flood-gates of immorality.

"Fear is rational. The man who does not fear God is a fool. The man who is not afraid of death is a fool. 'Fear is the beginning of wisdom.' The man who is without it is mad. The man who breaks the commandments of God is a fool! The Scripture says: 'Remember your last end; and you will never sin.' If there is one feeling that we expect in all Catholics it is this feeling of reverence for God; that filial fear, or the chaste fear to the child or to the wife. And this fear must hold guard over that love, that is the first commandment of the law. Now Catholics, as a rule, have this fear. Catholics have reverence. On the other hand, a non-Catholic writer, speaking of the evils of contemporary education, summed them up in one word; he said: 'It does not teach the children reverence.'

The children of our public schools have no reverence for strangers passing by; have no reverence for age or sex. They have no reverence for father or mother; have no reverence to any. And this will become apparent to all one who stands outside the public school when it is being dismissed. Let him stand a moment and see how the children act. They may talk very well; they may be children of good families; but he will be startled by the absence of all reverence on the part of those children. Standing outside of a Catholic school, especially a convent school, he will be impressed most of all, and first of all, by the reverence the children have for grown people, for aged people. They have it for their fathers and mothers; most of all for priests. This general sense of reverence is, I say, the safeguard of love. Without fear we are without love, and without love men are simply brute beasts."

Of course, these strictures are intended to apply to the public schools in the United States. We have seen public schools in this country where there was a certain amount of reverence, and consequently, of deference and politeness. But most of them have much to learn, in this respect, from our Catholic schools.

We lately came across a sad instance of Rousseau's influence among would-be progressive teachers. A lady, who had been trained for the teaching profession in an up-to-date normal school south of the line, determined, when she married, to bring up her children according to the method recommended by Jean Jacques in his "Emile." Children are to be hindered from learning when young. Their earliest years are to be given up to bodily exercise; the mind will, later on, develop of itself. Full of this idea, she made abounding health the great object of her training. In this she succeeded; her children are splendid animals, but little else. When they got to be ten or twelve years old without a single idea except to eat, drink and have lots of fun, she realized her mistake. She now bitterly deplores those wasted years of their childhood. The fact is that the years between six and twelve are the most precious for a child's mental development. To be sure, the brain should not be overworked, but every reasonable opportunity should be seized to train the mind, the eye, and the ear. Rapid and intelligent reading. Many men in after life have labored strenuously, but in vain, to make up for the deficiencies of their early boyhood in the matter of reading aloud. When once the uncultivated memory becomes sluggish, as it begins to be about the age of twelve, it is impossible to acquire that swiftness and ease in foreseeing a couple of lines ahead and in grasping at a glance the meaning of a sentence which is essential to good reading at sight.

Some parents derive an illusory consolation from the fact that their boys or girls read a great deal. They may not be brilliant at school, but they are always reading at home. This might be a real advantage if what they read was useful. But most of the time they use reading as a mental soporific. As Lord Roseberry recently pointed out in an address at the People's Hall, Midlothian, "many excellent people spend all their days in reading and are of no use to themselves or anybody else." In their case reading is a disease which saps all their mental vigor. Children should be directed in the choice of books and frequently called upon to summarize what they have read and talk it over.

Sir West Ridgeway, who had been a vigorous upholder of coercion during his term of office as Under-Secretary for Ireland, was afterwards sent to the Isle of Man, which has a complete system of self-government, and there he became a Catholic. In his speech at the annual dinner of the London Manx Society on November 25, he said: "When Mr. Gladstone came into power he very naturally designated that the high office which I held should be filled by a person who was more in sympathy with his policy than I could be, and accordingly I was sent against my will to the Isle of Man. I think there was some humor in the situation, and it has occurred to me that Mr. Gladstone, like Rasmith's hammer, whom nothing was too big or too small for, thought it probably very appropriate that this heathen should be sent to the island of Home Rule in order to be converted to the true faith; and certainly I did learn this. I learned how safely the widest powers of self-government could be entrusted to a community at your very doors provided—and this is a very important proviso—that is loyalty to the Crown and Empire was beyond dispute."

Mgr. Touchet, Bishop of Orleans, speaking on the Concordat at the closing session of the Lille conference

of the Catholics of Northern France, roused the enthusiasm of his audience by the eloquent protestation which closed his brilliant discourse. "We are Catholics," he cried, "and we are citizens. We are resolved to have our rights as both. If our enemies do us an injustice, we will give them neither rest or peace till they have withdrawn it. If they refuse us liberty, we will seize it. Catholic Ireland had an O'Connell; Catholic Germany had a Windthorst. Catholic France will produce a hero who will march under his banner, and lead us against the foe. The people will follow him; the priests will be at their side; and I swear it by the Cross I bear and the unction I have received, the Bishops will not be absent from the fray. The French Church will stand together, shoulder to shoulder, in the coming fight." Let us hope that these noble words may soon materialize into deeds.

The Brothers of Mary, at their provincial house, St. Mary's Institute, Dayton, Ohio, a college journal, called "The Exponent," the prose and poetry of which entitle it to a high place among similar publications, and they have this advantage over most other college journals that their numerous illustrations are produced in that degree—conferring college itself. The beautiful half tones are the work of one of the Brothers. The Jubilee Number, intended to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception is particularly fine. On the cover is a picture of the monument erected in the college grounds in memory of this Jubilee Year. The general form of the monument was suggested by the one erected in 1867 by Pius IX. in front of the Propaganda in Rome, an illustration of which appears in this number. The statue, surmounting a graceful, fluted column, is copied from the figure of Our Lady on the Miraculous Medal, and this selection was made by reason of the impetus which this medal gave to the devotion to Mary Immaculate. The statue, which is of heroic size, conforms pretty closely to the description sister Catherine Labouré gave of the vision afterwards depicted on the medal: "She was of medium height, and her countenance inexpressibly beautiful. She was clothed in a robe of light like the dawn. Her head was covered with a white veil that fell on either side down to her feet. Her face was partially covered, and her feet rested on a globe, only half of which was visible. Her hands were raised almost as high as her waist in a graceful attitude, whilst luminous rays issuing from them fell in streams of dazzling light upon the earth. Then I distinctly heard these words, 'These rays are the symbols of the graces I obtain for those who ask for them.'"

Other excellent articles in the Jubilee Exponent are: Mary in Painting and in Song; St. Bernard and the Immaculate Conception, a succinct and accurate historical sketch of the great Saint's curious position on this question; The Secular Dispute concerning the Immaculate Conception, which though brief and therefore slightly inadequate, brings out well the initiatory influence of Duns Scotus; Our Lady of Japan, by Francis Yasaburo Sugita '07, apparently a Japanese youth, who gives a number of interesting, out-of-the-way facts about the Church in Japan. The Miraculous Medal, a historical sketch of the origin and development of that devotion; "Christmas as seen in Dickens," "and Irving" is added in the title, but it is hard to find him in this jolly article. All the illustrations are admirable, the best being Rillo's Immaculate Conception, St. Bernard's Vision of Our Lady, The Star of Bethlehem, and The First Christmas Night. Truly, the Brothers of Mary are to be congratulated on this beautiful tribute to their great Patroness.

In the unique history of doctrinal development presented by the theo-

logical discussions of four or five centuries on the Immaculate Conception two of the most salient facts are: (1) the way in which the great Franciscan, Duns Scotus turned the scales in favor of the truth, and (2) the preponderating influence of the Society of Jesus on the final definition. When in 1307 Duns Scotus defended the Immaculate Conception before the theological faculty of Paris the contrary opinion was by far the more common one among theologians, but after his brilliant and decisive defence the true opinion prevailed more and more. With regard to the second fact, Father Goldie relates, in his life of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, that this holy lay brother once said in recreation, apropos of a thesis against the Immaculate Conception which had created a riot in the town (Palma, Majorca): "One of the principal reasons for which God raised up the Society of Jesus in order to defend this truth." So great was his earnestness in uttering these words that one of the Fathers said to him: "Brother Rodriguez, how do you know that God has entrusted to the Society of Jesus the mission of defending the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin?" "I am certain of it," he replied, and, lifting his arms and eyes to heaven, he added: "It is from there, from above that I have learnt it, and if Father Rector allowed me, I would go and proclaim it in the streets of Palma." Questioned again on this subject shortly before his death, he said he had had no vision nor exterior revelation about it, but that in speaking he had yielded to an impulse which he knew to be divine and that he was still quite certain that what he then affirmed was true. The well known humility of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, together with the many supernatural lights that illumine his life, lend great weight to these solemn words, though, of course, belief in them is a mere matter of human testimony. But subsequent events confirm their truth in an extraordinary way. The holy lay brother died in 1617, when the chain of great Jesuit theologians was not yet complete. Since the rise of the Society of Jesus in 1534 most of the greatest theologians of the Church have belonged to that Order, and all of them took up the defence of the Immaculate Conception. For those who know anything of ecclesiastical history, it will be enough to mention such names as Canisius, Bellarmine, Suarez ("in whom," says Bossuet, "one hears all the schoolmen"), Vasquez, Petavius, Perore and Passaglia. The effect of the teaching of such men was that, more than two hundred years before the definition, not one dissentient voice was ever raised in public, though certain theologians were still allowed to controvert the doctrine in harmless academic discussions.

That the distress in the west of Ireland is terrible the following extract from Liverpool "Catholic Times" Irish correspondence, of the 2nd inst., proves:

"Once again the cry of famine comes from Connaught. This time it is not the so-called agitators who have proclaimed it loudest, but the special representatives of English newspapers, who went down to the West and saw for themselves. That it is widespread is generally admitted by these gentlemen, but according to the special correspondent of the Daily Mail 'the heart of the famine' is in that portion of Connemara enclosed roughly between the ragged coast-line on the south and west and the railway from Galway to Clifden on the north-east. He says it is evident that extraordinary relief of some kind will have to be provided. The representative of the Pall Mall Gazette writes in a similar strain. The correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, while fully admitting the desperate condition of affairs in the West, condemns the opening of relief works as a remedy, and advocates the 'stopping or lightening or diminishing' in some way of what he describes as

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"by means of indirect taxation, which is paralysing the people and reducing the peasantry to absolute starvation." The writer's solution is to give the control of Irish taxation to Irishmen who will turn it to reproductive uses and thereby give useful employment. No doubt he is quite right as to a true and lasting remedy, but how are the famishing peasants to be fed until this simple act of justice is conceded? The time for granting it does not appear to be drawing one day nearer. Emigration seems still to be the safety-valve from famine. The blood and sinew of the country are leaving, the wealth producers are flying to foreign lands. It would seem as if Home Rule is to be killed not by kindness but by extermination.

We borrow from the same English authority a transatlantic view of the Caldwell episode:

Under the heading of "Reactionary Rome" the Daily Chronicle publishes a telegram from Rome which states that the Catholic University, Washington, is financially embarrassed owing principally to the bankruptcy of its official banker and the secession from the Catholic Church of Miss Caldwell, a benefactress and a member of a millionaire family, in consequence of "the hostile attitude of the Vatican to progressive thought." We were not aware that millionaires (Mr Carnegie, perhaps excepted) or millionaire's children were authorities on progressive thought.

We know not why the press has attached special importance to the fact that Miss Caldwell, now the Marquise de Monstier, has left the Catholic Church and embraced Protestantism which she formerly abandoned. True, she has money, and has endeavored to make good use of it, but so far as gifts of intellect are concerned, we are not aware that the lady's judgment on the claims of the Church is entitled to more weight than that of the most ordinary member of her sex. Whom the press disdains to notice. Money, of course is a mighty power; but, after all, when it obtrudes itself unjustifiably into a domain where it has not even as good a title as poverty, the moment has come for a protest. The Associated Press has circulated a report in which the Marquise is represented as boasting of her efforts to lift the Church from the lowly position it occupied in America by a gift of £60,000 and saying that for years she has been trying to rid herself of the influence of the Catholic Church, and that now after living in Europe "her eyes have been opened to what the Church really is and to its anything but sanctity," and her Protestant blood has reasserted itself. It may, we think, be doubted, considering the spirit the Marquise displays, whether she ever received the grace to understand what the Catholic Church is. As to sanctity her investigations have been far from thorough. Whether in Europe or in America, the practising Catholics are par excellence the people amongst whom purity of morals is to be found.

One of our Catholic contemporaries is too severe on the Ontario version of Luke, II. 14 "On earth peace, good will toward men." This is not a false translation, but a fairly correct translation of a probably incorrect manuscript. The whole difficulty turns upon the absence or presence of a sigma (s) in St. Luke's original Greek text. If there was a sigma, 'eudokia.' The weight of the best is the only correct one. If there was no sigma, then the Authorized Version of King James is right. Now two of the best manuscripts still extant, a great many other old manuscripts, all the Latin Fathers and some of the most learned early Greek Fathers at a time when there still existed New Testament manuscripts two or three centuries older than the oldest manuscript we now have (which dates from the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth)—contain the Catholic reading, "On earth peace to