

# The True Witness

TESTIS IN COELO FIDELIS  
AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1908  
PRICE FIVE CENTS

## Bishop Furlong.

### Jubilee of His Temperance Movement.

(Interesting Sketch By Very Rev. Canon Whitty, P.P., Newtownbarry.)

I have been asked to write for "The Echo" a brief sketch of Dr. Furlong, and an appreciation of his work as a bishop, on this the occasion of the golden jubilee of the great temperance movement which he set on foot at the beginning of his episcopal career. Though conscious of being little qualified for the task, I have undertaken to do so, both as a tribute to his memory, and as some recognition of certain kindnesses which the illustrious prelate thought well of conferring upon me in the early years of my priesthood. However, I cannot help but meanly express a wish that someone more competent than I, and having a larger knowledge and experience of the good bishop would be prompted to write of him and do a fuller and far more adequate justice to his memory. My first experience of Dr. Furlong was when, as a lad of nine years, on the day of my confirmation I stood trembling before him, and while timidly gazing at his benign and encouraging features, I heard him putting to me the question of the catechism: "Where is God?" The answer to which, by the way, I rattled out with an excitement of nervous jubilation almost equal to my absolute ignorance of the meaning of every word I was uttering. That question put to me then by the saintly bishop I have never forgotten; the sound of it has echoed in my memory ever since, and quite possibly it gave my life in its opening years a bias which otherwise it never would have had. Anyhow, I little dreamt on that day when the saintly bishop imposed hands on me in confirmation that he would thirteen years later impose them again on a greater and more momentous occasion. I knew little of Dr. Furlong's history or of the excellencies of his character until I had become a priest, but then from my personal experience of him, and from what I learned from others, I soon came to have for him that genuine and profound esteem which so one who had any acquaintance with him could withhold from him.

Dr. Furlong was from the Barony of Forth, a district that has given many excellent clergy to the Church, being born there in the year 1802. The first school he went to as a child was that of Mayglass, a little later he attended a school at Ballyhane, in the parish of Lady's Island where he learned the rudiments of Latin, being at the time, if I mistake not, a resident of Kiltane district. Next he went to St. Peter's College, Wexford, and after finishing his classical studies there he passed on to Maynooth, joining the logic class in the year 1819. During the Theological portion of his course, I may remark, he had the advantage of studying under the great John M'Haile, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, and honored by his co-temporaries with the title of "Lion of the forest of Judah." At the termination of his four years' Theology he became a student of the Dunboyne, receiving his ordination at this time; that is, in the year 1826. Towards the close of his Dunboyne studies he was appointed junior dean in the college, and two years later he was given the chair of Humanity, holding it for about five years, when he was promoted to that of Rhetoric. In the year 1845 he was chosen as professor of Theology, and this sacred science he continued to teach with signal ability until 1856, when he was summoned to the office of the clergy of Ferns, confirmed by the will of the Holy See, to come and undertake the pastoral charge of his native diocese. This was at the close of the year, and he was consecrated bishop a few months later; that is, in March, 1857. For the space of twenty years he ruled over his flock with admirable wisdom and success, closing the days of his earthly pilgrimage on the 12th of November, 1875. His remains rest in the Cathedral of Ennisceary.

It is needless to say that when Dr. Furlong came to take charge of his diocese he was a man of varied and extensive learning. The singular powers of mind with which Providence endowed him, he had every opportunity of improving and perfecting for having finished the long course of studies, that constituted his own education proper, he then had the advantage of spending no less than thirty years in a great educational establishment, where he continued as diligently as before his life of study, where his chief occupation was teaching advanced students in various branches of learning, and where meantime he brought into continual contact with highly cultivated and well-informed minds similar to his own. It was often stated, and all his co-temporaries agreed with the statement, that Dr. Furlong was one of the most cultivated and erudite men in the Irish Church. I once heard an eminent ecclesiastic, who was intimately acquainted with him, the Very Rev. Dr. Kavanagh, President of Carlow College, make this remark about him: "Bishop Furlong is a walking Encyclopaedia; there is nothing he does not know, and no subject on which he cannot give you information." One might easily have thought that the bishop would at least in the first years of his episcopate be at a great disadvantage to which, by the way, he never had a close observer and student of the methods and works of zeal carried on both by bishops and priests outside on the mission.

Dr. Furlong's manner of ruling his flock was gentle, though there did arise occasions when his method of acting was characterized as severe. In his relations with all classes of both clergy and laity he was cordial and good-natured; and notwithstanding a certain grave solemnity and dignity of appearance and manner, he was easy of access to everyone, even to the simple and poor. With children he was particularly descending and kind. I think I remember something being told of him as to taking a little child into his covered car the very day before he was struck down with his last illness. And I could myself tell a story of him, when one day as a mischievous truant I was pursuing a stray dog (that had come a-pilfering after beef bones) in a forbidden part of the college grounds, the good bishop, who unexpectedly came upon the scene, mercifully turned his eyes in another direction, lest detecting my identity he might have to report me to the President. With all his gentleness and condescension, he could be a man of iron will and changeless purpose whenever he deemed the occasion demanded it. The determined attitude he assumed with regard to Sunday drinking, fast dancing, and the Ennisceary Model School were instances of this. "Gentle as a mother, strong as a diamond," were words applied to him on some public occasion; I think it was by the Very Rev. Dr. Kavanagh mentioned above. And I once heard a certain ecclesiastic pass the same, or a similar encomium upon him, though using words of not quite so refined and elegant a character: "A child could lead him, but the devil could not drive him." The bishop's zeal in inaugurating and promoting the building of churches, schools, presbyteries, and every sort of useful institution was active and energetic in the highest degree. Indeed the years of his episcopate might not inaptly be termed the building period in the diocese of Ferns. I dare say if a list were compiled giving in detail all that was done in this way at his instigation and under his guidance, it would be found to be a very interesting and edifying (except to the Pharisees) item of ecclesiastical history, and would prove Dr. Furlong to be a prelate of very signal enlightenment and zeal. Among the large number of works which he set on foot for the good of his people there were two, which, I believe he always regarded as peculiarly his own, and upon the good results of which he set special store. These were the House of Missions at Ennisceary and the Convent of Perpetual Adoration at Wexford. His paramount and characteristic devotion was devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and these two institutions he established in honor of and to promote devotion towards that divine mystery. The House of Missions he intended for the purpose of giving Missions and Retreats within his diocese; for he had great faith in Missions and Retreats, as means of reforming and perfecting his flock. And this seems to me an instance of that instinct in him that enabled him, though not having practical experience of missionary life, nevertheless accurately to gauge what would be best for the good of the faithful, for Missions and Retreats are, as all men of experience attest, amongst the most powerful machinery that can be adopted for this end, particularly when these holy functions are carried on by enlightened and zealous priests who are specialists at the work. From the beginning of his episcopate he induced his clergy to call in the aid of missionaries, especially those

of the Redemptorist Order, for he seemed to have a special preference for the Redemptorists, and the more he saw of good done by the missions these Fathers gave the more desirous he became to institute himself a body of missionaries, who would be entirely his own, and who would be ever at hand to attend to the interests of his flock. Hence his founding the institute at Ennisceary.

Outside his diocese Bishop Furlong became renowned chiefly as a great and successful advocate of temperance. In the very first year of his episcopate he inaugurated the salutary movement for the closing of public houses on Sundays and holidays, and in this he was eminently successful, thanks to his own earnestness and tact, and thanks also to the faith and docility which he found in his flock, and which he many times afterwards very highly commended both in his pastoral and public utterances. Many publicans—and I know some of them very well—have never sold drink on the Sabbath or holiday since that time, fifty years ago. The reform brought about by this Sunday closing of the bishop was very great, the Lord's Day being subsequently observed in as religious and edifying a manner as it had previously been desecrated by excessive drinking and other disorders. The effects of Dr. Furlong's legislation in this matter are, I think, far more extended than is generally imagined, for there is no doubt that the success attending it did in no small measure contribute to the passing of the State legislation which came on afterwards, enforcing Sunday closing in public establishments throughout the country; and I think it is equally indisputable that the bishop's success was a powerful stimulus and encouragement to those other temperance movements that since sprang up in the diocese and effected such happy and widespread results. How far he had to do with the removing of the fairs from the holiday and transferring them to the week days I confess I do not know, though I should like to try much, but the transformation effected on the holidays was even more striking than that on the Sundays, for the disorders formerly were much worse on the former days than on the latter owing to the fact of the public fairs being held on them. The greatness of this happy change for the better used to come home to me very strongly on those occasions when I took part annually in the grand religious procession at Lady's Island on the 15th August, for it was on the 15th that the fair was held in that district. The scene is here changed entirely, and blessed be the memory of the good prelate to whom the change is in such large measure due.

Even a very imperfect notice like this ought not to be concluded without some reference to Dr. Furlong's pastoral letters. They were many, and they treated of subjects of great public interest, which he never failed to handle in a most effective and masterful manner. The style of the pastorals was somewhat ponderous and Johnstonian, yet the language was accurate and elegant, the tone was lofty, and a most intense spirit of piety breathed through every line of them. I do not think that anyone could read them without being convinced that they emanated from a man possessing a truly Apostolic spirit.

Dr. Furlong has gone from us now more than three decades of years, but his spirit still remains; it is at this hour inspiring those zealous men, who with a fervour like his own are carrying on in the diocese a campaign against that vice which he contended with so strenuously and successfully—men belonging to those two missionary institutes which were so much appreciated by him, and from which, were he alive, he would no doubt be most disposed to summon laborers to work in the temperance cause.

W. F. CANON WHITTY.



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May 16.—Nineteen  
ded 1011 colored and  
al 1061; 11c bid; 555  
May 16.—Boarded at  
1029 boxes butter and  
se. Cheese sold for 11  
at 22 1-2c. 76 pack-  
22 5-8c, balance re-  
Farnham is again bul-  
et.  
May 16.—At the  
ese board to-day 392  
were sold at 22c to  
95 boxes of cheese were  
On the corresponding  
r 755 boxes of butter  
nd 200 boxes of cheese  
May 16.—At the butter  
to-day, 205 pack-  
were boarded. 120  
at 22 1-2c. 76 pack-  
22 5-8c, balance re-  
Farnham is again bul-  
et.  
May 18.—465  
boarded, all sold at 11

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ple, but he confessed himself beaten, and became himself the champion of Irish Home Rule. Earl Spencer, Viceroy of Ireland under the Gladstone administration, did all that man could do to intimidate the Irish people, and he also confessed himself beaten, and declared coercion could never conquer them, and he advocated Home Rule. Lord Cairnvarnon and Lord Dudley, both Tory Viceroys, are converts to Home Rule. Lord Aberdeen, the present Viceroy, is in favor of Home Rule. Gladstone's Home Rule bill was defeated by thirty Whig rats. Redmond's motion the other day declaring that in the opinion of the House of Commons Home Rule alone could settle the Irish question was carried by a vote of 313 to 157. Does that look as if Home Rule is dead? All Ireland needs is an active campaign in Great Britain to prove to the people of England, Scotland and Wales that Home Rule for Ireland means the advancement of democratic principles. The English labor vote is organized now better than ever before, and it is friendly to the Irish cause. Why, then, should we lose courage? Home Rule is very much alive, and Home Rule is on the crest of the wave of democratic progress that will carry it on to victory.

The foolish word "impossible!"  
At once, for aye, disdain;  
No power can bar a people's will,  
A people's right to gain.  
Be bold, united, firmly set,  
Nor flinch in word or tone—  
We'll be a nation yet.  
Redeemed—Ere—Alone.  
—John F. Finerty, in the Chicago Citizen.

## The Confessional as Viewed Through Other Eyes.

(S. V. D. in Boston Transcript.)  
An institution so essentially Catholic as the tribunal of penance has not, of course, met with universal favor on the part of those whose very religious life originated in protests against things Catholic. Yet in this case at least it would be untrue and unjust to charge all Protestants or all non-Catholics with uncompromising hostility or with failure to acknowledge the great utility and convenience of the practice of confession. True, a little upstart now and then is moved with righteous indignation at the thought of the unholiness of the practice, froths at the mouth in public and betrays a bent of mind toward the unclean. But there is evidence a-plenty that his views are not shared by the sane and healthy-minded portion of his flock. But if there were a million such, the testimony of the great Leibnitz alone would more than suffice to rule them out of court.

Leibnitz, undoubtedly the greatest Protestant philosopher of modern times, speaks thus: "It cannot be denied that the whole institution of confession deters many from sin, especially those who are not yet thoroughly hardened, and it vouchsafes great consolation to the fallen, so that I believe a pious, earnest and prudent confessor to be a great instrument of God for the salvation of souls. His advice is useful for the regulation of the passions, for the warring against crime, for the avoidance of the occasions of sin, for the restoration of stolen goods, for the reparation of damage, for the elevation of the depressed mind, finally for the extirpation or mitigation of all the ills of the soul. And if on earth there be hardly anything more precious than to possess a true friend how much more important will such a one then be for us when he, by the inviolable sanctity of a divine sacrament, is bound to be ever faithful and to administer help."

Another distinguished Protestant layman, in a discourse on penance against the Catholic Church, writes as follows: "Who can deny that millions of Christians have derived from this institution (confession) the impulse to a change in life for the better consolation and peace of the soul; that millions, guided by the hand of a humane leader, have been brought back to the road of

salvation from which they have been removed by their frivolity and passion? What the most powerful public sermons could not bring about has frequently been effected by private admonitions." The celebrated Dean Liddon wrote from Christ Church, Oxford, to a friend in 1838: "I have myself used confession whenever I have needed it ever since 1847, and have never regretted it. I think it braces the soul as nothing else does. It helps us, if we will, to repent and make a great moral effort which is not made so easily when we are alone." And to this extraordinary testimony from a champion of religious thought outside the Catholic Church we might add that of another staunch Protestant, Naville, the renowned Egyptologist, who thus exclaims: "Who has not cast envious eyes on the tribunal of penance? Who has not longed in the bitterness of remorse, in the uncertainty of divine pardon, to hear from lips that could speak with the power of Christ, 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!'"

Now listen to Voltaire, that arch enemy of the Catholic Church, who did so much to overthrow all religion in France. Confession, says he, is an excellent thing, a restraint upon inveterate crime, a very good device to prevent the guilty from abandoning themselves to despair and relapsing into sin; to influence hearts ulcerated by hatred to forgive, robbers to make restitution. The enemies of the Romish Church who have opposed so beneficial an institution have taken from man the greatest restraint that can be put upon crime. Plato, the sage of ancient Greece, acknowledged and proclaimed the necessity for confession and taught it to his disciples. Confession, says he, is remarkable words: "If one has committed an injustice, he should betake himself where he may receive as soon as possible proper correction; he should hasten to the judge, as to a physician, lest the distemper of evil confined within his soul beget a secret corruption that will become incurable. I know of but one way to make philosophy useful which is to accuse one's self as soon as one has done wrong, not to keep it secret but to make a clean breast of it, so that it may be punished and atoned for. Let him be the first to give testimony against himself. As for Plutarch, the fathers themselves never offered a finer apology of the Catholic sacraments. Beware of concealing thy life even when it is evil; rather make it known, so as to recover thy health and correct thy faults. Ye who advise concealment, have a care to whom this advice is given. Is it to a vicious, ignorant or foolish man? It is as though you said to a sick person. Whatever is thine ailment, mind well not to mention it to thy physician, so that no one may know that thou art sick. As for those who deny their faults, who hide or disguise them, they simply succeed in plunging themselves deeper in the mire.

Such testimony, and much more that might be adduced, goes to prove, better than any reasoning could do, the natural beneficence of confession of sins as it is practiced with us in the sacrament of penance. These men of acknowledged superior wisdom had either no love for or no knowledge of the Catholic Church; they uttered from the depths of their sincerity the fruit of their unbiased judgment. Their words mean much and confirm strikingly what we know to be true, that God in His Church deals with humans humanly.

