

"If I Could See Him Again."

If I could see him again,
If I could hear him say,
Merry and kind as he used to do,

THE REV. JOHN THAYER.

INTERESTING SKETCH OF BOSTON'S FIRST NATIVE-BORN PRIEST.

Boston Pilot.

Readers of the Pilot will enjoy these excerpts from an excellent sketch of Father Thayer by the Rev. Arthur T. Connolly, of St. Joseph's Church, Roxbury, Mass., read by him last year before the United States Catholic Historical Society, and now published in pamphlet form.

To the historical student who is conversant with the intolerant laws enacted by the early New England Colonists against the Jesuits, or, as the law reads, any "ecclesiastical person ordained by ye authority of ye Pope," it will be interesting to hear that one of the first Catholic priests who exercised the duties of his divine ministry in the Puritan city of Boston was a descendant of these same Puritans and a Bostonian by birth, the Rev. John Thayer.

This worthy pioneer of Boston's native born priests was born about the year 1700. His parents, Cornelius and Lydia Thayer, were in easy circumstances, and strict members of the Presbyterian or Congregational Church. As the hostility of the Presbyterians to the Catholic Church was most bitter, we can naturally conclude that he was reared with all that intense hostility to Catholics so common to his parents' sect.

At the conclusion of his college course, made at Yale, he was made a minister of the Puritan sect, and such was the high esteem in which his family was held that he was appointed chaplain to Governor Hancock.

When he had filled this position about two years he felt a secret inclination to travel a resolution, as he himself tells us, of passing into Europe to learn the languages which were most in use and to acquire a knowledge of the constitution of States, of the manners, customs, laws, and governments of the principal nations, in order to acquire, by this political knowledge, a greater consequence in his own country, and thus become more useful to it.

He embarked for Europe and arrived in France toward the close of the year 1751. Here he remained ten months, totally taken up in studying the languages, reading the best authors and instructing himself in the principles of the government.

While thus engaged he was suddenly taken sick, and so opposed was he to all sects, and especially to the Catholic faith, that he gave strict commands that no priest should be allowed to visit him.

After his recovery he spent three months in England, occupied as he had been in France in observing the manners and customs of the country. Leaving England he returned to France with the intention of proceeding to Rome.

As yet no change had taken place in his feelings, for he was still strongly prejudiced both against the nation and the religion which from his youth had been represented to him in the most odious colors.

On his way from Versailles to Rome the vessel on which he sailed was wind bound for several days at a little port called Port Ercore. Here he formed the acquaintance of the Marquis D'Elmore, an Italian nobleman, who treated him with the greatest hospitality.

"His house, his table, his library," says Mr. Thayer, "were at my service, and he treated me with the kindness and affection of a father. Such goodness, such cordiality to a stranger, to an avowed Protestant, at once touched and surprised me. This religion, said I, is not, then, so unsocial, and does not hate us as we have been told, inspire sentiments of aversion and intolerance to those of a different persuasion."

On his arrival at Rome he was still a Protestant; but as he was at last in the very city of the Pope, he resolved to instruct himself thoroughly in the principles of the Catholic faith.

It was not through a suspicion that his own religion was false, nor with any intention of embracing another that he was impelled to pursue this study; but for the same reason that he would, have been impelled to study the tenets of Mohammedanism had he been in Constantinople.

With regard to priests, and especially the Jesuits, he was deeply imbued with the opinion entertained by most Protestants, namely, that they are men of deep cunning, political craft, and subtle reasoning.

In one of his rambles around Rome he fell in with two ecclesiastics whose courteous manners, simplicity, and conversational powers charmed him. Great, indeed, was his astonishment when they addressed themselves to him. Soon, at his own suggestion, the Catholic religion became the topic of conversation.

Shortly after he was introduced by the ecclesiastics to another member of their society, who kindly volunteered to give him all the information that he sought.

How far he was from the thought of changing his belief he was easily seen from the following words that he addressed to the latter ecclesiastic on the occasion of his first meeting: "Sir," said he, "I may possibly have conceived some false notions of your religion, as they are reported of its enemies; if this be the case, I wish to be undeceived, for I would not entertain a prejudice against any person, not even against the devil. Yet do not think of converting me, for certainly you will not succeed."

The examinations that he made of the dogmas of the Catholic Church were most searching and serious, and, considering on the one hand that unerring sameness through the long ages of the Church of Rome, and on the other, the constant instability of all sects, especially the Protestant, he was forced to admit that Protestantism was not the religion of Jesus Christ.

Though convinced of this fact, he was not yet certain that the Catholic was the true religion. He still harbored a deeply rooted prejudice against all miraculous events since the time of the apostles. This prejudice, however, was soon to be removed, for at the very time that he was present in Rome, the venerable, now sainted, Benedict Labre, died in the odor of sanctity.

Like most of God's saints he was poor and despised during life, and God deigned to glorify him after his death.

Many miracles were wrought through his intercession, and all Rome spoke his praises and proclaimed his glory and sanctity. What Mr. Thayer had thus far refused to believe on hearsay, he was now forced by ocular demonstration to admit.

Among the multitudes that flocked from all sides to the tomb of the sainted Benedict was a poor woman suffering from some incurable disease. Mr. Thayer saw her piteous condition, and witnessed her miraculous restoration to health by the mere touch of the saint's holy relics.

"My God, I believe!" were the words that she insensibly uttered. Whether he would or not, faith at last prevailed, and, on the 25th of May, 1783, he publicly abjured Protestantism in the presence of a large assembly of former friends whom he had specially invited to the solemn ceremony.

As he had been the first native born priest who exercised his holy ministry in New England, so also he was the first native of America who exercised his priestly duties in Kentucky. Here he remained for about four years, and during two of the four labored most zealously on these widespread missions. It was while thus engaged that he often meditated on the advantages of a truly Christian education for the young, and finally conceived the design of establishing in his native city an institution similar to many that he had seen in France and Italy—a convent school for young Catholic females.

In the year 1803, having obtained the approbation of Bishop Carroll, he went to Europe with a view of raising, by eleemosynary contributions, the necessary funds for such an establishment.

After spending some time on the continent, he subsequently went to Ireland and exercised his holy ministry in the city of Limerick for several years.

He was unable to learn the exact date of his death, which occurred in the last named city, but I am sure it must have been some time previous to 1818. In his last will he left Dr. Matignon, his successor at Boston, between eight and ten thousand dollars, with instructions to carry out his design.

(The death of Dr. Matignon left this task to Bishop O'Connell, who brought a colony of Ursuline Nuns from Limerick to Boston in 1820. They were finally established at Mt. St. Benedict, Charlestown Neck.)

For the subsequent history of this worthy foundation of Father Thayer we must refer the reader to the history of "Mount Benedict, Charlestown," Aug. 11th, 1834. In concluding this sketch of Rev. John Thayer, we can appropriately apply to him the beautiful words inscribed upon the tomb of his successor, the Rev. Dr. Matignon, by the good and loving congregation of the Church of the Holy Cross: "Far from the sepulchre of his fathers repose the ashes of the good and great Father Thayer; but his grave is not among strangers, for it is and will be watered by the tears of an affectionate flock, and his memory is cherished by all who value a manly, honest heart, honor a noble, sacrificing life and love the true apostolic priest of God."

He returned to France and entered that world-renowned school of learning and piety, the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Paris.

After due preparation he was ordained to the priesthood, and soon after was sent from Havre de Grace. He reached Boston on the 4th of January, 1750. Boston at this period contained only 18,000 souls, and of this number about 100 were Catholics.

There stood on School street, between Washington and Tremont streets, on the site now occupied by the Five Cent Savings Bank, a small brick chapel, built in 1710 by some French Huguenots, who had taken refuge in Boston at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This society, after the death of its minister, Mr. Mercier, had gradually dwindled away to nothing.

In this small brick house, where these Huguenot refugees had worshipped, and, as tradition says, the British in 1775 stabled their horses, the little Catholic congregation assembled.

Although, as I have stated, the Catholics had been called together and ministered to by the Rev. Fathers La Potherie and Rousselet; still, strictly speaking, Rev. John Thayer was the first regularly appointed missionary rector of the Catholic Church in Boston.

In order that he might be free and without danger of molestation in the exercise of his ministry, he secured from the Perkins family, the owners of the building, money was soon raised by subscription, and everything procured that was necessary for the adornment of the church and respectability of Divine worship.

The Sunday following his arrival he offered up the Holy Sacrifice, and preached the Word to a large assembly, which was composed of persons of different persuasions.

Thus, says a Protestant, commenting on Father Thayer's first Mass, was Mass publicly said in a town where, only ten years before, the Pope had been denounced through the streets on the 5th of November, in commemoration of the famous gunpowder plot, and, after serving as a spectacle of ridicule and scorn, were burnt together, leaving it doubtful in those days which of the two were most hateful.

According to an account given by Father Thayer himself, he was received by all classes with the greatest kindness; still, I do not think it on Christian to say that in some instances this show of kindness was more apparent than real.

(In proof thereof Father Connolly quotes an article from the American Mag. of September, 1788, in which the character of Father Thayer is wickedly calumniated. The American Mag. of July, 1790, represents, however, a class of Americans better deserving of the name. It rejects at the advent of Father Thayer and at the determination of the authorities of Boston to act as benevolent advocates of religious liberty and the equal rights of man.)

Prompted by a religious zeal for the conversion of his countrymen, he published in the beginning of the year 1791 the following advertisement in one of the public papers:

"Mr. Thayer, Catholic priest of Boston, fully persuaded that he has found the inestimable treasure of the Gospel, is greatly desirous of imparting it to his dear countrymen. For this purpose, he offers to preach in the evening of week days in any of the neighboring towns, if any persons desire to hear the exposition of the Catholic faith, of which the majority of Americans have so mistaken an idea, and will furnish any place for the accommodation of hearers. Mr. Thayer will be ever ready to attend them.

"He will also undertake to answer the objections any gentleman would wish to make, either publicly or privately, to the doctrine he preaches."

Shortly after the appearance of the above, a Rev. George Leslie, pastor of a church in Washington, New Hampshire, looking upon the advertisement as a challenge, declared that he would take up the gauntlet and prosecute the controversy as long as he could hold a pen. He did so, but soon either his pen became too heavy or Father Thayer's arguments too conclusive, and his courage failing him he became silent. During this year Father Thayer delivered a series of controversial lectures, and invited all who loved the truth and sincerely desired its salvation to be present. His little chapel on the occasion of these lectures was crowded by many who came either through curiosity or a desire of hearing the exposition of Catholic doctrine.

After the arrival of the Rev. Dr. Matignon in Boston Father Thayer felt that he could give greater scope to his zeal by taking a wider range and extending his visits to other parts of New England.

Wrentham, Salem, Newburyport, Plymouth, Hanover, Braintree, Situate, and nearly every town of importance in Massachusetts was visited by him.

He made missionary journeys also to Dover and Portsmouth in New Hampshire, to Newport in Rhode Island, and to Norfolk and Portsmouth in Virginia. Thus he travelled from town to town from State to State, announcing the Gospel and restoring to God souls from heresy until the year 1799.

Feeling probably that "no prophet is received in his own country," he left Boston, and after spending some time in Canada, offered his services to Bishop Carroll, in whatever mission he might see proper to place him. Bishop Carroll, accordingly, sent him to labor on the missions in Kentucky.

As he had been the first native born priest who exercised his holy ministry in New England, so also he was the first native of America who exercised his priestly duties in Kentucky. Here he remained for about four years, and during two of the four labored most zealously on these widespread missions. It was while thus engaged that he often meditated on the advantages of a truly Christian education for the young, and finally conceived the design of establishing in his native city an institution similar to many that he had seen in France and Italy—a convent school for young Catholic females.

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published, was 4,477,807 in 1888. The Irish police have received orders not to shadow the English members of Parliament who travel in Ireland.

The distinguished English visitors whose enthusiastic reception in Dublin we recorded last week are now visiting the various sections of Ireland where evictions have taken place in which law and order are preserved in Ireland. The Castle authorities have given special orders to the police not to "shadow" them, and to answer their questions civilly. The notice also states that it is not necessary to take notes of their speeches. It would seem, therefore, that they are not to be subjected to the vile usage which was meted out to Mr. Wifford Grant and Mr. Conyngham, Secretary Balfour not having gained in popularity in England by his treatment of these distinguished gentlemen. One party with Mr. Stansfield is making a tour of inspection through Ulster, and Mr. Stanfield addressed a very large meeting in Belfast, in which he spoke very feelingly against the wrongs under which the country is suffering. A large number of Protestants was present, many of whom were Home Rulers, and some Unionists. Another party is visiting Waterford, where they were honored with a torchlight procession and a most enthusiastic welcome. A third party is visiting Drogheda. They will be able to tell the English people from personal observation on their return home of the misery entailed on the people by bad laws. They can tell what they have seen, and their story will not be gossamer. The visitors are not likely to trouble the policemen in order to obtain information, though the latter have been instructed to give them civil answers. They will be more likely to rely on the information they receive from seeing and hearing for themselves, and it is evident that Mr. Balfour has no expectation that what they see and hear will increase the confidence of England in the Salisbury Government.

Evictor O'phert has out Herded the Herds who oppress the Irish peasantry. He got together a troop of sixty policemen and a horde of emergency men, and cut away the turf which had been gathered for the winter use of his evicted tenants and to throw it into mudholes and to destroy the miserable green corn which was their reliance for food. All this he does though he is now acknowledged to be on the verge of bankruptcy brought on him by his avenger. As he would not and still refuses to accept any but exorbitant rents the tenants refused to pay anything, and a circular has been issued calling upon wealthy landlords to assist him in his struggle by sending him contributions. The circular says: "Mr. O'phert cannot without assistance continue the struggle. . . . Next November will complete a period of three years during which he has received no rent at all. He received one thousand pounds from Mr. Russell, but his law expenses nearly equal that sum already. It appears to me that all who are interested in the victory of law at Falcarragh should strive to support that man who is fighting their quarrel as much as his own." If he had accepted reasonable terms he would at once have been delivered from his difficulties. The two-faced Mr. Russell is the same M. P. of Tyrone who from time to time pretends to feel great sympathy for the oppressed tenantry.

Another policeman has resigned from the Irish constabulary, assigning as his reason the perjury and injustice prevalent among that body. His name is Martin Deely. Among the instances of these vices which caused his resignation, he related to the reporter of the Cork Herald the case of a young man named Larkin who was assaulted from behind and knocked down without any provocation, at Wm. O'Brien's meeting at Carleton Cross, and was then imprisoned for six months on the false charge of assaulting the District-Inspector. Deely is an athletic young man aged thirty years.

Lord Harrington has at last become convinced that defeat awaits the Government at the next general election, and he has indicated the course which the Tories intend to pursue to prevent the will of the people from being accomplished. Speaking at Limerick the other day he said the Home Rulers cannot claim anything like unanimity of the masses in favor of Home Rule, but only a majority in the most populous constituencies. He adds that if his party did themselves in a minority, it will be a strong and powerful minority whose opinions deserve respect, and an adverse vote will not end the contest. They will fight the measure stage by stage, and will raise every difficulty to its passage to compel its consideration and reconsideration."

The Government have, however, already furnished the means by which Lord Harrington's proposed tactics will be foiled. The closure will be as efficient in the hands of a Liberal Government as it will be in the hands of the Tories.

The progress of the Church in the New England States is well illustrated by the fact that in four successive days recently the Right Rev. Bishop Healy, of Portland, Maine, dedicated three new churches and laid the corner-stone of a fourth.

In Many Forms.

Dyspepsia assumes many phases, all disagreeable to the sufferer, yet it takes no form which from two to four bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters will not cure. B. B. cures dyspepsia, tones the weak stomach, aids digestion, sharpens the appetite and renovates the entire system.

Canoe Fall.

Mr. John E. Thompson, of Shelburne, P. O. writes: My two children, opposite great benefit from Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry for Diarrhoea and summer complaint. I gave it according to direction and they soon recovered. Be sure and get the genuine.

Tried! Tested! Proved!

A year ago last summer I was troubled with dysentery. I procured Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry and took according to directions, which completely cured me. ROBERT E. GREEN, Lyndhurst, Ont. This medicine cures all looseness of the bowels.

Expel the Worms by using the safe and reliable anthelmintic Freeman's Worm Powders.

THE POPULATION OF IRELAND, according to the Registrar General's returns just published, was 4,477,807 in 1888.

WHY YOU SHOULD USE Scott's Emulsion

It is Palatable as Milk. It is three times as efficacious as plain Cod Liver Oil. It is far superior to all other so-called Emulsions.

It is a perfect Emulsion, does not separate or change. It is wonderful as a flesh producer. It is the best remedy for Consumption, Scrofula, Bronchitis, Wasting Diseases, Chronic Coughs and Colds.

Sold by all Druggists, 25c. and \$1.00.

C. C. RICHARDS & Co.

GENTS.—I took a severe cold which settled in my throat and lungs and caused me to entirely lose my voice. For six weeks I suffered great pain. My wife advised me to try MINARD'S LINIMENT and the effect was magical, for, after only three doses and an outward application, my voice returned and I was able to speak in the Army that night, a privilege I had been unable to enjoy for six weeks.

Yarmouth, CHARLES PLUMMER.

CATARRH AND GOLDEN HEAD HOW CURED

NASAL BALM

A certain and speedy cure for Cold in the Head and Catarrh in all its stages.

Wholesale and retail, outside the combine. Always open.

R. DRISCOLL & CO. 44 Richmond-st., London, Ont.

WANTED Active men, young or middle aged, to sell Catholic Bibles and Goods in Australia. Fortunes may be made, are being made. Oceanic Publishing Co., Guelph, Ont.

AN ORGANIST

Experienced musician of twenty years' experience, educated in France and Germany, wishes a position in a large city. Can play French and English languages. Can be a member of the B. A. Organist. Catholic Record office, London, Ont.

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