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*Northwest Review.*

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1898.

**CURRENT COMMENT.**

Some four or five years ago, when the *Civilla Cattolica* published several unanswerable articles against the Faribault plan, the Liberal Catholic papers in the United States could find no epithets sufficiently depreciative of the standing and authority of that Italian magazine. They said it was in no way connected with the Vatican. The opinions it expressed were merely the personal views of a few narrow-minded Jesuits. But now a change has come over these loud-voiced organs, simply because the latest issue of the *Civilla* advocates the establishment of an Italian republic as the solution of the difficulties arising between Church and State in Italy. Our Liberal friends now proclaim that the *Civilla Cattolica* is a fortnightly publication edited in Rome by a picked corps of distinguished Jesuit priests under the direction of Father Brandi, formerly Prefect of Studies in Woodstock College, Maryland. "Its utterances," they now cheerfully declare, "are generally regarded in the Church as quasi-authoritative, its contents being submitted to the scrutiny and approval of the Vatican before publication." This declaration should be borne in mind when next the *Civilla* scarifies the Liberals.

There are two ways of directing attention to a good lecture or sermon. One is to heap upon it laudatory adjectives and then add a feeble, incomplete summary of it. Another is to print either the entire production or the best parts of it so connected as to give a fair idea of what the lecturer or preacher said without the help of fulsome praise. This way is the more satisfactory to intelligent readers; that other way is the easier for the journalist and pleases superficial readers who like their opinions ready-made. It is rather a disappointment to see the *Freeman's Journal* adopt this second, fragmentary method of presentation in the case of Mr. F. Marion Crawford's lecture on Leo XIII. Instead of merely quoting, as it does, the Protestant view of the lecture as given by the *Brooklyn Eagle*, why did not our brilliant New York contemporary put before its readers, avid of anything that concerns so great a writer as Mr. Crawford, a full report of that lecture? We are no doubt grateful for what the *Freeman* has done in presenting so fine a portrait of the author of "A Rose of yesterday," in assuring us that he is really eloquent, has an uninterrupted flow of choice and vivid language and emphasizes his magnificent word-pictures with natural gestures, and in quoting a few passages from the lecture; but, on the whole, the report is, like the school settlement, "defective, unsuitable, not adapted to the purpose," and therefore very disappointing. Time and again have we printed in these columns Canadian speeches, lectures and sermons not easily paralleled anywhere; and, though, being sparingly praised in the headlines, they have escaped the notice of journalists of the shallow sort, they have proved the very reverse of disappointing to our critical readers.

The *Casket* strikes out two well-known names from the list of Catholic authors. It appears that Alfred Austin

"disclaims the honor" of being a Catholic "and says that he is an agnostic sort of an agnostic." As he was brought up a Catholic, this loss of faith may account for the inferiority of much of his verse, while reminiscences of the past explain the Catholic tone of some of his poems. Dr. Conan Doyle "is not a Catholic," says the *Casket*, "and never was one. He is not the son of Richard Doyle, the famous cartoonist of *Punch*, but his nephew. It is safe to say that he does not profess to be even a Christian."

Dr. Nansen, after delivering the same lecture sixty-nine times, and netting thereby some thirty thousand dollars, has broken off his engagement to finish the round hundred and left for Norway last Saturday. After the first few appearances with \$3000 or \$4000 houses, the Doctor receiving 55 per cent of the gross receipts, the attendance began to fall off and finally he broke his contract and returned to New York on the 22nd ult., delivering one lecture in Jersey City on Monday of last week and appearing for the last time on an American platform last Friday in Carnegie Hall, New York. As his agreement with his managers provided that if he failed to perform his part of the contract he should pay \$20,000 liquidated damages, they are now suing him for that sum. The trouble with Dr. Nansen seems to be, as the *Montreal Star* pointed out, that he is a better hand at doing brave deeds than at making interesting speeches. As a lecturer is a failure.

How true it is that "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley." As we considered the matter a very important one, we had taken the trouble to dictate to one of our assistants the exact wording of the notice that appeared last week about the reading of Archbishop Begin's letter in the churches of Winnipeg and St. Boniface. The words we dictated are there all right; but imagine our dismay when we found that the Church of the Immaculate Conception, of which the editor of this paper is Pastor, was omitted! Though the fault was our own, we deem it our duty to apologize for it and to state emphatically that Archbishop Begin's letter on the Encyclical was read on Sunday Jan. 23rd at the Church of the Immaculate Conception by Rev. Father Cherrier "according to the wishes and instructions of the Archbishop of St. Boniface."

The General Intention recommended to the prayers of the associates for February is "The Welfare of Seamen." The Apostleship of Prayer will, therefore, fix its attention during this month on all those who "go down to the sea" or rivers and lakes "in ships" or boats of any kind. This class of men, from whom Our Lord chose his apostles, must be most dear to His Sacred Heart. Though generally preserving their belief in the next world, sailors are too often careless of the commandments. But they are ready and eager to accept spiritual helps whenever they are offered them, as is proved by the success of the Catholic Sailors' Club in Montreal and similar clubs in London (England) and New York. In this great Northwest the practical application of this intention would be prayer for all the brave fellows who will in a few months be shooting rapids and making portages from the Klondike to Hudson Bay.

Of all human testimony the weakest is that of one single man who is interested in exaggerating his exploits. And yet the same world that disbelieves extraordinary facts occurring in the Middle Ages and attested by a cloud of witnesses who had no possible interest in lying, believes implicitly the unsupported affirmation of one single explorer, whose testimony, as in the case of Nansen marking down his "farthest north" in the presence of Johansen who could not take or control an observation, is open to the obvious objection that it is inspired by insatiable ambition and pride and that he declares himself to "have not any Upper Powers" (VOL. II, P. 46) who might keep him within the bounds of fact. And of course there is absolutely no means of verifying if he ever did reach 83°13.6 North.

**APHORISMS.**

School boards that define the length and breadth of scribblers generally produce nothing but scribblers.

The religious rebel borrows the language of heroic obedience, the freethinker talks as if he were plagiarizing the Holy Ghost.

The sharpest of mankind ought not

to forget that the dullest of womankind can fool him if she tries.

The virtue of the new woman who goes about lecturing on "Purity" and distributing Chiniquy's lecherous lies will bear watching.

A State that monopolizes all education kills all initiative and cramps the public mind.

People admire talent, and talk about their admiration. But they value common sense without talking about it and often without knowing it.—Mrs. Gaskell.

Man is the only animal that blushes; or that needs to.—Mark Twain.

Never repeat a quotation without knowing its context. Many a fair dame would shudder if she knew the insect whose gambols suggested to Burns "O wad some power the giftie gie us To see ourselves as others see us!"

Many good people are so engrossed in their work that, when they catch a glimpse of their good resolutions at the night examination of conscience, they merely wave them a weak recognition and a promise to keep an eye on them.

The man who relates the story of his life is generally at a disadvantage, since he cannot without some confusion of sound his own trumpet.—Athenaeum.

Tact and good-breeding, the best of all natural gifts, far better than bodily health, are the closest imitation of supernatural virtue. When united to holiness, as in the case of St. Francis de Sales, the combination is marvellously perfect.

**An Authentic Prophecy Fulfilled.**

On the twentieth day of this month Our Holy Father, Leo XIII., will have completed the twentieth year of his great pontificate. A few years ago the newspapers began to refer to a well-known prophecy by a holy monk in Rome to the effect that His Holiness would fill the chair of Peter for twenty years. Last summer, on the arrival here of Monsignor Merry del Val, who is one of four or five prelates in constant attendance upon the Pope, we determined to ascertain what truth there was in the report of this prophecy. Accordingly, the first time the Apostolic Delegate dined at the Archbishop's residence in St. Boniface, we asked His Excellency if the report was true. His reply, listened to with lively interest by His Grace of St. Boniface and some twenty priests, was substantially this.

On the day of the Holy Father's election, February 20th, 1878 a Cardinal hastened to the Franciscan monastery of Ara Coeli in Rome to announce to the good Fathers and Brothers the news of Cardinal Pecci's election to the Sovereign Pontificate. The Franciscan friars received His Eminence in the sacristy of their church, and when they were told that the new Pope was sixty-eight years old, they seemed to deplore his advanced age, saying that there would soon have to be another conclave as the difficulties then surrounding the Church would surely hasten the end of an already aged Pontiff. Just then a young Friar entered the sacristy, and on being informed of the general fear that the new Pope could not live long, he said: "Do not fear; he will be Pope for twenty years." Little attention was paid to this unexpected prophecy till the lengthening years of the present Pontificate revived the memory of those words. But Leo XIII., to whom they were reported at the time, seems to have always borne them in mind.

Last twentieth of February, several Cardinals were congratulating His Holiness on his having just begun the twentieth year of his reign. "Yes," said the Holy Father with a quiet smile, "I am beginning my twentieth year, but, according to the good Franciscan friar's prophecy, it will be my last." To this the Cardinals replied that the friar did not say the Pope would reign only twenty years; he prophesied twenty, but he fixed no limit, and they hoped his reign would be much longer. This point Leo XIII. did not attempt to decide.

Such was the recital of Monsignor Merry del Val, who is intimately acquainted with all the sayings and doings of the present Pope. Thus we have, almost at first hand and on the best possible authority, the proof of the authenticity of this most curious prediction. And certainly it looks very much as if our incomparable Pontiff had known, from the beginning of his reign, that he had plenty of time before him. His wonderful series of encyclicals bears all the marks of a carefully preconceived plan, arranged without haste and in perfect order, as if he were all the time

fully aware that his days would be lengthened so that his entire plan could be duly rounded off and filled in. Even if—which God forbid!—he is to have only twenty years, what a complete and perfect work has been his! But we pray and hope that the friar meant "at least twenty years" and that our great and glorious Pope may far outlive that promised period.

**Nansen's Limitations.**

Nansen's failure to fulfil his contract for a hundred lectures and his sudden departure for Norway provide us with an opportunity of expressing, as to his work and person, certain opinions which his present conduct strongly confirms. Ever since we read "Farthest North" last summer, we have held that Fridtjof Nansen is in some ways both childish and foolish. Of his childish tendency the oft-repeated unbosomings of his inmost soul to the public are a pretty good proof. Another is furnished by the *New York Sun*. "His agents have, in some instances, gone to newspaper offices and complained that Dr. Nansen thought that he did not receive as much 'space' in the news columns as he should receive; that the papers did not publish his lectures as fully as he felt himself justified in believing that they would. A reminder that papers publishing news, telegraph and local, could not be expected to print the same lecture twice"—for it was always the same identical lecture—"was without effect." It would have been easy, one would think, for Nansen to prepare three or four lectures, one, for instance, on the Fram's voyage, another on his sledge journey, another on the remarkable success of the entire undertaking with the unprecedented coincidence of the simultaneous return of himself and his vessel, a fourth on the scientific results of the expedition. But, to go on repeating one and the same lecture all the time and expect newspapers to reproduce it over and over again, is certainly childish. So is his sudden departure in disgust at the dwindling audiences, despite the contract binding him to give thirty-three more lectures. After his sixty-seventh repetition of the same lecture, he suddenly breaks away from his managers, gets another manager, Major J. B. Pond, for two farewell lectures, and then sails for Peppervik.

Of his folly we find many instances in the rhapsodies with which his book is filled on the infinity of the universe and the unknowable God. Addressing the aurora borealis, he says: "Oh, thou mysterious radiance, what art thou and whence comest thou? Yet why ask? Is it not enough to admire thy beauty and pause there? Can we at best get beyond the outward show of things?" A rational mind would reason thus: "The heavens show forth the glory of God." Not to see this is—as truly now as it was in the days of old—to be a fool. The fashionable increase in the number of such fools does not excuse their folly.

After a long screed about the full moon, Nansen concludes: "It is like entering a still, holy temple, where the spirit of nature hovers through the place on glittering silver beams, and the soul must fall down and adore—adore the infinity of the universe." We have italicized the rubbish. Even from the standpoint of ordinary common sense, it is rubbish to say that the full moon makes us adore infinity. Of all heavenly bodies the moon, being the nearest and the best known to us, is the exact opposite of infinity. But, from the vantage-ground of healthy philosophy, what arrant nonsense is this pantheistic admiration for a dead world, devoid of thought and feeling! How much more rational is it to say that all this beauty points mathematically to a First Cause infinitely more beautiful.

A passage which embodies the fashionable claptrap and balderdash of pseudo-scientists, and which also distinctly acknowledges that the author is a child, is the following: "What demon is it that weaves the threads of our lives and ever sends us forth on paths we have not our selves laid out... Was it a mere feeling of duty that impelled me? Oh, no! I was simply a child yearning for a great adventure out in the unknown, who had dreamed of it so long that at last I believed it really awaited me; and it has, indeed, fallen to my lot, the great adventure of the ice, deep and pure as infinity, the silent, starlit polar night, nature itself in its profundity, the mystery of life, the ceaseless circling of the universe, the feast of death, without suffering without regret, eternal in itself." What the feast of death, without suffering, without regret, eternal in itself means we cannot for the life of us imagine. No wonder a man that can coolly write such nonsense cannot see that the existence of a personal God is one of the most immediate applications of the principle of causality. But we must complete the quotation: "Here in the great

night thou standest in all thy naked pettiness, face to face with nature; and thou sittest devoutly at the feet of eternity, intently listening; and thou knowest God the all-ruling, the centre of the universe. All the riddles of life seem to grow clear to thee, and thou laughest at thyself that couldst be consumed by brooding, it is all so little, so unutterably little... Whoso sees Jehovah dies." In spite of the august names God and Jehovah, this is nothing but Buddhist jargon. Standing "in the great night, face to face with nature," "sitting devoutly at the feet of eternity, intently listening," these are mental postures which no reasoning Western hemisphere mind can deem other than foolish, unless they are mere poetical exaggerations. Nature, without nature's God, is as nothing compared to the value of an immortal human soul. And, outside of God, there is no such thing as eternity; a long lapse of time there may be, but eternity is not made up of long lapses of time, however numerous they are supposed to be. If Nansen had meant that all the riddles of life grow clear in the presence of an All-Wise, personal, eternal God, we should applaud with both hands; but it is evident from many other passages of his "Farthest North" that his "God" is a mere abstraction to be spoken of in fine phrases that may delude the masses into thinking him a believer.

And yet, if any man ought to believe in a loving Providence, it is Fridtjof Nansen. Doubtless he helped himself and quit himself like the strong, clever, prudent, long-headed man he is; but God, without Whom all such human preparations are vain, helped him wonderfully. No other Arctic expedition was ever so fortunate or rather so favored with providential happenings. And even in the natural gifts of the leader and his men what Christian can fail to see the beneficent hand of the Author of all good?

The fact is Nansen is too proud to be grateful or reasonable. Other reviewers have chaffed him about his lofty patronizing tone toward the frozen North and his paternal way with his men. We have a theory of our own about something else. We strongly suspect that the chief, though carefully suppressed reason why Nansen broke away from the Fram and ventured northward with one companion was that he felt the Fram was too small for Sverdrup and himself. We gather from Capt. Otto Sverdrup's appendix that that same Otto is a masterful and very able man. His narrative is much more interesting and factful than Nansen's. The latter is intolerably diffuse. In one place where he tells us his journals are "exceedingly meagre," he yet finds means to spin out page after page of more or less silly reflections. Sverdrup, on the contrary, is concise and graphic. But there is one very important fact which, in the Captain's Appendix, as no doubt carefully revised by Nansen, does not receive the prominence it deserves, and has therefore generally escaped the notice of reviewers and readers. The Fram, under Capt. Sverdrup's hand, actually reached, at its most northerly drift, a latitude that is only a little more than nineteen statute miles south of Nansen's farthest north. Strange to say, this fact is nowhere mentioned in the text.

In that part of the book which was written by Nansen, an advance of one degree is loudly heralded and marked by festivities whenever a new parallel is reached; but here, in the appendix, otherwise so well proportioned, all such emphasis is suppressed. It is only by careful scrutiny of the tables indicating the position of the ship at different dates that we find, sandwiched in between lower latitudes, these tremendously significant figures "85°55.5." Now, as Nansen's farthest in his sledge journey was exactly 88°13.6, the difference between the two is only 18.1 geographical miles or a little over 19 ordinary miles. Does this not look as if Nansen, finding that Sverdrup had so nearly equalled his own achievement, has endeavored to gloss over the fact by burying it in a mass of tabular detail so that it might pass unnoticed, and yet so that he might say it was there in black and white if accused of suppressing it? For a man of his overweening pride it must have been no small humiliation to discover that all the hardships and dangers of his fifteen months' sledge journey had landed him only nineteen miles further north than the most northerly point reached by the Fram, which he had left because it remained too far south. We venture to think Dr. Nansen's recent breach of contract, throwing, as it does, an unenviable light on his character, tends to give color to our view.

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