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The Witness

Vol. L, No. 29 MONTREAL, SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1901. PRICE FIVE CENTS

GOOD READING FOR PARISH GRUMBLERS.

Under the caption "Hooley and Finnassy on the Fall Collection," a correspondent contributes to the "Catholic Standard and Times" the following interesting dialogue between two Catholics on parish matters—

They were standing on the sidewalk opposite the church discussing the report of the Fall Collection in the "Monthly Calendar."

Hooley to Finnassy, "is a grand one, and I trust we'll hear nothing more about money from the altar for the next six months. I notice some very large amounts have been contributed, and so many names are in the report that I believe every person in the parish has given his share. Really it seems to me the collection is big enough to carry on the business of the church for at least a year."

"Hooley," says Finnassy, "whether you are in fun or in earnest, you are talking through your hat, and you make me tired. I also have been looking over the contributions and adding up the amounts, and I find you are entirely mistaken. It is true there are some in the parish who have given very generously, but there are others who have given very poorly, while there are very many who have contributed nothing at all. There are dozens of young men and women in the congregation who are making good money at their work and who are ready to spend it for dress or blow it in at a party or at the theatre, but they have not donated a cent to the Fall Collection. Indeed the number that has given fifty or twenty-five or ten or even five dollars is very limited, but the two and one dollar contributions and the 'absentees' of the parish would make a very long list. And, coming down to common sense, what is an annual contribution of one dollar from a man or woman who rents no pew or seat and who, perhaps, gives no other offering to the church than a miserable penny on Sunday? Does this amount from a well-dressed person or from any Catholic in comfortable circumstances comply with the command of the Church to support religion? To my mind such insignificant offerings savour of contempt and are more like excuses than contributions."

"There are some Catholics," says Hooley, "who seem to value their church accommodations no higher. Fellows who drop into Mass when it is half over and who form an unsightly fringe against the front wall and who are away like a shot at the end of St. John's Gospel shouldn't be asked to pay much for the little they receive. As they are easily pleased and give little trouble, they perhaps consider a small contribution sufficient."

"If they think so," says Finnassy, "they are entirely mistaken, because the church has to be kept up where they attend it or not. And you also are completely at sea. If you imagine it an easy matter to satisfy a Catholic congregation, the Catholic people in general, and this class in particular, are not as easily pleased as you imagine, and as a rule the less they contribute to the church the more they expect and demand from it. Actually some of them expect to receive all the comforts of the Church and all the advantages of religion for nothing, and will be the first to grumble if they don't get them. Like the 'converts' in Rome and in Cuba who are playing hide and seek with their Protestant evangelizers, they seem to demand that the Church should be built for them and that they should be paid for attending the services. The priest must be always at their beck and call. For their accommodations he must sit for hours in the confessional box; he must attend the family by day or night whenever any of them gets sick; for their use the Church building must be kept neat and clean, well ventilated in summer and warm in winter; the Masses must be celebrated at convenient hours, and the music, if not up to the mark, will be severely criticized; a school house must be built regardless of expense, competent teachers must be engaged and all modern appliances must be provided for the education of their children—and they expect all this can be done by their paltry penny on Sunday and their dollar or two at the annual collection! Ool darn it, man, did you ever keep house or did you ever calculate how much it costs to run a large establishment like a Church?"

"Keep your averaring to yourself," says Hooley. "Though I'm only a bachelor and a boarder, I can guess what it costs to keep house, but I can't see how it can be very expensive to run a Church after everything is built up."

"Hooley," says Finnassy, "if you believe what you say, you are a very poor calculator. You either shut your eyes to the facts in the case or you have never considered the matter. It won't hurt you, however, if I refresh your memory with some items of the expense that must be borne by the average city parish at the present time. It costs nearly a thousand dollars for coal, it costs from two to four hundred dollars for light, three or four priests and their households have to be maintained at least in decency, a sexton and janitor have to be employed, together

with some women to do occasional washing and sweeping; from sixteen to twenty-four teachers must be secured for the school, house accommodations have to be provided for these teachers, together with books for the children who are unable to buy them; from two to three hundred dollars are contributed to the maintenance of the chancellor's office and the Bishop of the diocese, from one to two hundred dollars are given to maintain school superintendents and chaplains to our public institutions; from three to nine hundred dollars are contributed to support the Proctory and the orphans, from five hundred dollars to two thousand are paid to secure an organist, singers and music; taxes, water rent, interest and insurance foot up a large bill; new furniture, with the wear and tear and repairs to the Church property, are important expenses—and with all this before your eyes you have the cheek to assert that it can't be expensive to run a Church, and that a fall collection of a few thousand dollars will maintain it for a year! Hooley, I had a dream the other night and saw all the employees of the Church coming in procession to the pastor for their salaries. Determination was printed on their faces. But the unfortunate rector seemed anxious to avoid them, for they extended down the street from the steps of the rectory like the long line at a funeral."

"Anyhow," says Hooley, "though it may cost a good sum, to keep things going, the priest gets the money easily. But I don't like to see him standing at the door on Sunday with the collectors not going up and down the aisles at Mass with the plate in his hand. It lowers his dignity, to my mind, and I can't get used to it."

"I don't like the practice myself," says Finnassy, "and I am confident the priest abhors it. Time and again I have heard from his own lips that the most humiliating part of his parish work is to stand at the church door on Sunday or take up the monthly collection from pew to pew. But how can he help it? If the people refuse to give to the lay collectors, what remains but that he ask them himself? It is a question of the existence of the church and schools. If the present incumbent and his assistants are unable to procure the necessary funds, the progress of religion must cease or the parish must resign into more competent hands. But it is the nigardly Catholics like yourself who have put this unpleasant burden on your priests, for I firmly believe that no educated man, even for the sake of charity, feels any delight in holding out his hand like a beggar."

"Do you know what it is Hooley?" continues Finnassy; "if I had a son I would never encourage him to become a priest. I heard an old Catholic gentleman remark some years ago, when speaking of the priesthood, 'that it was a very hard trade to learn,' and the more I reflect on his words the more I believe it. I am aware that a good priest can do a power of good and that he will also reflect honor on his family, but I also believe that his long training in a life of self-sacrifice, and that his years in the priesthood are filled with worry and humiliation. Man dear, I witnessed more mortification on his part on his recent visitation of the parish as I accompanied him from door to door than I ever imagined was possible! The good man was zealously engaged in his legitimate work and was entitled to general help and encouragement, but the manner in which some of the people received him was most disrespectful, while the reasons they gave for neglecting their religious duties were often most ridiculous and insulting."

"Finnassy," says Hooley, "what you say is a libel on the Catholic people, and I won't allow you to say it again. A Catholic may be guilty of many sins and may even entirely neglect the practice of his religion, but he never loses his respect for the priest; on the contrary, he will fight against those who insult him."

"Go easy!" says Finnassy to Hooley; "there are degrees in this word respect. You don't have to knock a man down in order to insult him. To be sure the great body of the Catholic people were exceedingly respectful and were delighted to welcome the priest to their homes, but there were some whose behavior and answers were most rude and against whom I am confident he often had to restrain his disgust and indignation. For instance, one man was absent who was absent from Mass for a long time, giving as a reason that he objected to the pastor's method of collecting money, and besides he found the pews of the Church locked against him on several occasions when he came to the last Mass. Another had some cross words with the priest about his children, who attended school, and because the priest upheld the side of the teachers, he vowed he never attend Mass while that man was pastor. Another had remained away from confession for years because he had seen a priest behave badly at a hotel, and he also had read in the paper that a priest had given much dissatisfaction at the summer resort where he was stopping. Another would not attend his religious duties because

zeal for the welfare of his people, as well as the example of our Lord's people could make any man happy or resigned in the active work of the priesthood. Truly it is a hard trade to learn." But you have read me a good lecture, Finnassy, and have given me much information about the expenses of a parish. I must, however, resent your insinuation that I am a penny Catholic or an absentee, as you call it. I don't wish to throw out my chest and boast of my generosity, but I do say that I give to the Church according to my means and never allow my name to be absent from my parish collections. In regard to the contest among the young pastors, I'll let you know when I'm going to the suburbs. Good-day."

NOTES FROM ROME.

FEAST OF ST. SYLVESTER.—On the last day of the year 1900, the Feast of San Silvestro was solemnly celebrated at the church dedicated to the saint, and by the desire of the Holy Father, served by English priests for the convenience of English-speaking Catholics in Rome. At this Feast a great number of the English pilgrims were present, their first visit being to their own special church. At 9 o'clock, a solemn Pontifical Mass was celebrated by the Grace Mgr. Kelly, Bishop of Geraldstown, Australia; in the afternoon His Eminence Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli, Titular of the Church, assisted at the "Te Deum" and gave Benediction. This church is one of the most antique in Rome, part of it having been erected under St. Dionisius, Pope in the 3rd century, 261; part of it also in the time of St. Sylvester. According to Biondi, the church was erected on the ruins of the baths of Diocletian. The remains of nineteen Popes repose here, having been brought from the catacombs.

AT THE IRISH COLLEGE.—On January 1st Mgr. Kelly, rector of the Irish College, gave a dinner in honor of his guest, His Eminence Cardinal Logue. Among those present were His Eminences Cardinals Satolli and Propaganda College. All the other invited guests were Irish, even the rector of the English, Scots and American colleges being excluded. In the afternoon a reception was given to allow the Irish ladies an opportunity of offering their good wishes to His Eminence. All other nationalities were again excluded, except His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, who was present on both occasions. On the 3rd inst., the Marchesa Serlupi, nee Fitz-Gerald, rector of the English pilgrims, Their Eminences Cardinals Vaughan and Logue were present, the Duke of Norfolk, His Grace Mgr. Stonor, Archbishop of Trebizonde, the Roman prelates and members of the Roman aristocracy. On Sunday evening a musical entertainment was given by the students of the Irish College in honor of His Eminence Cardinal Logue. All the Irish residents and visitors enjoyed the pleasure of assisting at this entertainment. On Saturday, the 5th inst., at 3.30 p.m., His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan delivered a lecture on Leo XIII. in the Church of San Silvestro in Capite. The English pilgrims were all present, as well as the English-speaking residents of the Eternal City, all thoroughly appreciating the interesting address of His Eminence. On Sunday morning at eight o'clock His Grace Monsignor Stonor, titular Archbishop of Trebizonde, celebrated Mass in the Church of San Silvestro in Capite, with general Communion of the English pilgrims. In the afternoon the pilgrims were all present in St. Peter's, when the Holy Father assisted at the devotions in honor of the Redeemer.

THE SITUATION IN FRANCE.

[By an Occasional Correspondent.]

In the report, which was sent to the press, of the debate upon the law affecting religious associations in France—a discussion that marked the opening of Parliament, on the 16th inst.—we find, in one of our evening contemporaries, the following—

"M. Biviani, a Socialist, followed in an extremely able Radical speech, opposing the Prime Minister's acceptance of the concordat, and affirming that the law aims not only at the communities, but at the Catholic Church itself. Circumstances, he maintained, may justify the violation of liberty. The real danger, he declared, is in the propagation of the faith. The republic, he added, must substitute solidarity for charity, and assume the monopoly of teaching, since liberty was impossible."

We know absolutely nothing about this M. Biviani, beyond the fact that he is a deputy, a Socialist, an Italian in name, a Frenchman by accident, a revolutionist by instinct, and an illogical speaker, through blind prejudice, and one of the many dangerous nonentities that are likely to push France into some abyss of ruin in the near future. What strikes us as most peculiar is the fact that critics, journalists of experience, could style M. Biviani's rignarole an "able speech." Wherein does the ability lie? Any virago can pour out abuse, and do so in a more consistent manner than has this irrational deputy. It is not this importance that we attach to him or his remarks that causes us to refer to the subject; rather is it because we find here a very fine illus-

FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

The members of the Young Irishmen's Literary and Benefit Association have begun rehearsing the Irish drama "My Geraldine," which will be produced in Her Majesty's Theatre, St. Patrick's night, March 16th, 1901, under their auspices. It is an exceedingly pretty play, and one that is sure to find favor with their patrons, affording as it does opportunities for fine stage settings and strong climaxes. This drama in point of dramatic scope outrivals any of its predecessors produced by the Young Irishmen on St. Patrick's night, and is one that will hold the attention of an audience from start to finish; it is entirely free from caricature and abounds with bright, clean comedy. Five acts are required to tell its story, and the persons selected to portray the different characters have been chosen with a view of having each one in the right place. Those taking part are: Miss E. K. Peacock, Annie Rowan, Tina Kitts, Alice Jones, Gerie O'Brien and Mossera. M. J. Power, J. J. McLennan, M. A. Phelan, J. P. O'Connor, J. E. Slattery, J. P. Cunningham and Robt. H. Baird.

PERSONAL MENTION.

Rumor says that the genial and enthusiastic ex-president of the S.A.A., Mr. Joseph P. Clarke, will enter the ranks of the Benedicta early next month.