



The Progress of Heathenism.

Catholic Times.

In a recent issue of "The Rock" the editor, who, apart from his fierce anti-Catholic prejudices, seems to us to be both straightforward and candid, publishes a leading article on "Our Home Heathen." In the course of it the writer, after deploring that the proportion of the people who attend a place of worship even once on a Sunday is small and decreasing, uses these remarkable words: "In this England of ours, at the end of this century, so marked by advance in all directions, there are millions upon millions as utterly unsaved as the wildest savage roaming the forests of Africa." We agree with the editor of "The Rock" in the opinion that a spirit of the most absolute religious indifference is growing amongst the inhabitants of this country. For the most part the Protestants pay no regard to religious functions, many of them, whilst neglecting services and sermons, betraying the keenest interest in the results of foot-ball matches and horse races. Probably, too, a very large number of them are really, as "The Rock" declares, heathen, never having been baptised. No doubt there are in England some millions of earnest Christians. The Ritualistic churches are in various places well filled; there is a considerable percentage of zealous Evangelicals; and the Catholics are steadily advancing. Yet, on the whole the outlook for Christianity, judged by the attitude of the population generally, is far from encouraging. The absence of dogmatic and definite teaching, first in the Established Church, then in the Dissenting sects, and above all in the Board schools, is gradually leading to the abandonment of Christianity by the nation.

The same cause is producing a like effect in France. We have within the past few days been startled by reading an article published in the Paris "Verite" with regard to the spiritual condition of the parish of Notre Dame de la Croix, Menilmontant. The district under the charge of the parish priest contains a population of sixty thousand souls, consisting mostly of workers and their families. From investigations which have been made it has been found that of the sixty thousand scarce two thousand discharge the essential religious duties of a Christian and that a fourth of the children have not been baptised. That is to say, a fourth of the children are growing up as heathens. The revelation is one which gives rise to depressing thoughts, for, unhappily, the state of affairs disclosed is not confined to Menilmontant. The statistics of many other parishes in Paris, are, the editor of "La Verite" has ascertained, equally indicative of practical paganism. So that we are forced to conclude that the Holy Sacrament of Baptism is never administered to a fourth of the children of Paris. Figures which have been published at Lyons tell the same tale, or present a still worse record for that city, and there is only too much reason to fear that no better account can be given of centres of population such as Marseilles, Bordeaux, and Toulouse. "The sad truth is," observes "La Verite," "that France is being dechristianised, and at the present rate the process will scarcely take a great many years." It appears that never at any former period during the existence of Christianity in France have the statistics with regard to baptisms been so alarming. Even during the years immediately following the great Revolution the children were taken to the churches to be baptised, though their fathers might have been bitterly hostile to religion. And all who are familiar with French life know that till a comparatively recent period even in the most irreligious districts the women and children were attentive to their religious duties, whatever might have been the sentiments of the fathers and the sons who had reached the age of maturity. The last census of the population, in which were given statistics as to the religious practices of the different denominations, showed only a very small minority of non-Catholics. But in fifteen years the outcome of the anti-Catholic policy of the different Ministries and the working of the laicisation Acts has been disastrous. The new generations, having

been trained in schools wherein they received no knowledge of God, are bringing up their children as pagans.

The lesson to be drawn from what is happening in France should be taken to heart by the Christians of every country. French Catholics are beginning to prove that they are alive to it, and recognise that their political enemies have too long been allowed to pursue a nefarious policy without any well-organised opposition. The attempts made to damage the Church and rob the people of their faith were strongly denounced, but little more was done to render their efforts nugatory. They captured the working classes by brilliant promises, never, of course, to be fulfilled. The whole machinery of local government got into their hands and they utilized it to win popularity amongst the masses. Nearly every prefect became an agent for the promotion of their electoral strength. By such methods they were enabled to gain success after success at the poll and to make their hold of political power secure. With the command of a vast majority of the votes of the electors, they were in a position to carry out their anti-Catholic designs without meeting with any effective resistance. Priests and nuns were expelled from their homes, from public institutions, and from the schools. The electors who sowed the wind by placing men of this type in power are now reaping the whirlwind. The principles of Christianity and the faithful who professed them were held up to scorn, ridicule, and hatred; and as a consequence scandals in political life have become alarmingly frequent. So much so that in France men are now complaining that never during the worst of the monarchical regimes was there such palpable evidence of corruption. A favourable opportunity is offered to the Catholics, and it is to be hoped they will avail themselves of it to the fullest extent. Following the directions of the Sovereign Pontiff, they should make it their aim to purify the Government of the Republic, and this can only be done by thoroughly organizing their forces in the various constituencies. Side by side with a campaign amongst the electorate special measures should be taken for parochial evangelization such as are adopted at Menilmontant. It will thus be possible to roll back the tide of infidelity and indifference. We too in this country have to fight against the progress of the same evil, and it were well if all Christians bore in mind that it can be successfully combated only by imparting definite religious teaching in the schools as well as in the churches.

Donations for Masses.

Western Watchman.

The Supreme Court of Kansas has just delivered a decision on the validity of bequests for Masses which shows how rapidly the American mind is veering around to a broader and more Catholic view of the rights of conscience. This decision coincides exactly with many others that have been handed down by the supreme courts of other states in the past few years.

The arguments heretofore relied on to defeat bequests of this character have been borrowed from the dimmest annals of English jurisprudence, when it was an axiom of church and state law that everything favorable to Catholics or the Catholic Church must in the very nature of things be wrong; that if unassailable on any other ground, it could at all events be shown to be "contra bonos mores." In those days it was not difficult to prove that the Mass was a superstitious ceremony; and now our cheap lawyers find their briefs already made up by English decisions; they plead that dead people are ghosts and cannot be the beneficiaries of a trust, and the service enjoined is superstitious. The American people have a juster conception of religion than the Elizabethan lawyers and judges; and the more fully realize that a man's religion is his own and can concern nobody else, save where it conflicts with public morals or the rights of others.

It is proper here to say something about stipends for Masses. It takes money to get Masses said. This shocks Protestants and not a few Catholics who are already shaky on their theological pins. Why have people Masses said? It is because they want to offer them to God.

Why do they want to offer them to God? Because the Mass is a sacrifice, and God is pleased with sacrifice. Not only is it a sacrifice, but it is the one great sacrifice of the New Law, the clean oblation that has taken the place of all the sacrifices of the Old Law. Men who have displeased God by sin strive to make reparation by good works; and the best of all good works is the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross, which the Church does again and again in the Mass in commemoration of Him. The Mass is God's work, and God's greatest work.

Ordinary people cannot celebrate Mass. It takes priests to do it. To have a Mass offered up you must get a priest to do it. That is their exclusive office. To that were they ordained. You must have an altar too. You must have also sacred vestments. Finally you must have ordinarily a church, and lights and bread and wine, and acolyte and sexton. If you are to have a Mass offered up for you, it will be necessary for you to put all these agencies in motion. You must contribute money. That is your part.

Yes, money. Money buys wine. Money pays for flour, Money builds churches. Money buys bells, Money builds and adorns altars. Money places meat on the priest's table and pays for his sacred vestments. Money hires sextons.

No place in all the broad earth does the jingle of Money sound sweeter or more becomingly than on the marbles of the sanctuary. God says: "the gold is mine; the silver is mine." He gives it to the laity. They make it by industry and trade. The priests are inhibited from entering the money getting avocations. They are to offer sacrifices and serve at the altar, and St. Paul says: "those who serve at the altar shall live by the altar." Money is not the condition, but it is the contingent of the sacrifice.

The Church has taken ample precaution to safeguard the Mass from the suspicion of sordid motive. In most countries of Europe the money contingent of a Mass ranges from fifty to twenty cents. This is all the priest gets as his personal support, and it must cover all incidental expenses as well. In this country the "honorarium"—for that is the name the Church gives this stipend—is one dollar, and sixty times a year the parish priest must offer up the Mass for all the people of his congregation without any honorarium. The ministry of the Catholic Church is the grandest in the world, and the most poorly paid. The proper salary of a priest is what he receives for his daily Mass, and few can keep even that. Their arms are uplifted for the people, as were those of Moses on the mountain; but they must be supported, as his were, or they will fall.

Is It A Miracle?

Remarkable Cure of a Sister in Cleveland—The Doctor's Testimony.

Cleveland Intiver.

Very frequently of late has the press of this country been called upon to publish reports of seemingly miraculous cures. In the total of five or six that have been noticed during the past six months there is none which presents more convincing evidence of supernatural intervention than that of a religious in one of Cleveland's charitable institutions. Last October the subject of the miraculous intervention was injured in a collision between a vehicle in which she was riding and a Woodland avenue motor. Her right arm was badly sprained and the ligaments torn and she suffered intense and constant pain in the member for nearly two months. In spite of the careful attention of several physicians, including some of the most eminent members of the medical profession in the city, she received no relief. A few days before Christmas the attending physician announced that it would be several months before the Sister could hope to regain the use of the arm.

She had recourse to prayer. A novena in honor of a saintly missionary who died a few years ago, a martyr to zeal in the wilds of Africa, was begun on December 15, in the hope that through his intercession the injured member might be restored. On December 21 the pain was so excruciating that the patient asked permission of her superior to have her arm opened and a portion of the bone

removed in the belief that the operation would give relief. The request was not granted and the Sister was sent to the chapel to pray. While engaged in pouring out her heart in earnest petitions to the Almighty the Sister experienced a sudden cessation of pain, the first in months, and the same day she regained perfect use of the member. The swelling and inflammation disappeared and in a few hours there was not a vestige of the injury left. Nor has there been the slightest indication of a return of the trouble since.

Dr. William Clark, one of the attending physicians in the case makes the following statement:

"I have been requested to make a statement concerning the sudden case of Sister—, whom I attended from October 30 to December 22, 1897, for a very bad sprain of her wrist, by being injured by a motor car of the Woodland avenue line. The sprain was a very bad one, the ligaments of the wrist being badly torn; there was much swelling and great pain from the time of the accident up to the time she suddenly got well.

"Some weeks after the accident we had a consultation with Dr. C. B. Parker, and he united with me in the opinion that it would be at least from two to three months before she would be able to use her hand.

"Some days after that she came to my office, being able to use her hand just as well as before the accident; the swelling had disappeared and the pain also; the hand looked certainly as well as the other.

"She made the statement that the cure was the result of a novena made to some person whom she supposed was a saint in Heaven, judging from his holy life and the circumstances of his death.

"I am not a believer in modern miracles to any extent, and I would ascribe this cure to some natural law or combination of circumstances, did I know of any. But I do not. I can give no reason why this wrist should get well so suddenly or so much short of the time I expected, and I will state that it is contrary to the laws of medicine that it should happen so.

"Whether this is the result of a direct intervention of God I leave others to say."

NINETY-EIGHT.

Dublin Nation.

The Ninety-Eight Centenary movement grows apace in Dublin. Not long ago a splendid meeting was held at 90 James' street. Its object was the formation of an Usber's Quay branch of the organisation. In Dublin all political differences have been sunk, at any rate amongst the people. Nationalists of all sections have decided that this is an occasion for the display of genuine national sentiment. In doing so they have shown their good sense, and their good taste, also. By raising the movement above party they have given evidence of a sound conception of genuine patriotism. Irishmen who love their country and desire to see it respected will rejoice to see their countrymen thus rising, when occasion offers, above sectional differences. There can no longer be the least doubt that the whole country will join in a unanimous demonstration to honour the memory of the soldiers of civil and religious liberty who died a hundred years ago. The overwhelming majority of Nationalists in Ireland to-day have no sympathy with extra-constitutional measures. But no Irishman with a grain of manhood in his composition can hesitate to honour his countrymen who died for their ideal. In that ideal there was nothing ignoble. Let the worst be said of it, and by no harder word than visionary can it be described. At any rate, they loved their country. They fought for her to the best of their ability. They were beaten, but they died fighting. We can all be proud of their pluck, and honour them for it, and show the next generation of Irishmen that though their fathers were constitutionalists, they nevertheless revered the courage of the men who had preferred the logic of the sword.

Rev. Father LaRue, S. J., sang High Mass last Sunday at the Immaculate Conception.

Jelly-fish Catholics.

Every man, according to an old philosopher, has in his make-up something of the lower creation. Thus we find in some men all the qualities of the lion, while others evidence the characteristics of the tiger, and still others betray the traits which stamp the fox. How much truth there may be in this theory we do not know, but we do know that there are many Catholics who possess every qualification which is popularly ascribed to the jelly-fish.

What their place is in the scheme of salvation only the Lord knows; their position in the Catholic Church has always been a mystery to us. They appear to be too much afraid of man to confess their faith and too much afraid of the devil to desert it. They apparently belong to a body which calls itself the Church Militant, yet their whole life is an apology and their tongue has "excuse me" always dribbling from its tip. They claim fellowship in a society which has never been known to be afraid from the day that Peter and John confronted the Sanhedrim with the reply, "We must obey God rather than man," down to the days when Pius and Leo XIII met the victorious Italians with their immortal Non possumus; and yet, like their prototype, they are always in a tremble and their mental attitude to the world is "Please let us exist."

The jelly-fish Catholic is usually very refined and excessively sensitive. His abiding horror is to be counted among the Pope's Irish, and the burr of the brogue in the pulpit sends cold shivers down his spine. He still calls himself a Catholic, though his views of life are as expansive as the landscape at the bottom of a well. And he imagines that he is truly religious, though his feelings never are strong enough to take the carefully pressed crease out of his inexpressibles.

His religion is of the mild and soothing character. The Church of which he claims to be a member has never minced dogma and has set her face like flint against kings and people when principle was at stake. Not so with the jelly fish Catholic. He does not know enough to defend the tenets of his faith and his facile mind agrees with the latest speaker. When of the feminine gender, the jelly-fish Catholic circulates around to all the preachers and grows sentimental at any and every tiresome and labored string of platitudes.

The brotherhood of man is as blessed a word as Mesopotamia in the mouth of the jelly-fish, and one cannot understand why the Church is so opprobrious to these dear good men who look so sweet and speak so fair. One of the greatest trials of the feminine jelly-fish is to meet a Catholic who knows the Catholic religion and who is not afraid to stand up for it. The infallibility of the Pope grates upon her ears and the doctrine of eternal punishment leaves a bad taste in her mouth.

Times like the present try the rudimentary soul of the jelly-fish Catholic. Anything like plain speaking offends his cultured taste. It is so ungentlemanly to call a spade a spade. That the Church should dare come out of the catacombs almost brings on a fit of nervous prostration. That a Catholic should resent the calumnies cast upon his Church and on his people is to the jelly-fish an evidence of shocking bad taste, and he appeals with a "please-don't-wake-the-baby" air to those who are not minded to let insults pass by unresented.

We don't insinuate for a moment that these invertebrate Christians may not be good living people and Catholics after a sort, but "they are not of the seed of the Man by whom salvation was wrought in Israel." In religion, as in everything else, back-bone counts. The Catholic who knows his faith and who is not afraid to defend it will always be respected. Men love sincerity, and, although involuntarily, they will acknowledge the power of truth. The Church and her children have nothing to gain in the country by mincing dogmas or allowing calumny to go unrebuked.

"Truth," said the old poets, "is naked. She is not made more attractive by being her in mist. Right is right, no matter how contested, and right is never won by tamely submitting to wrong.—Monitor.