

OUR NEXT ISSUE AUGUST 30th.

In consequence of taking our Annual Holiday, our next issue will be the 30th August.

THE PRAYER FOR RAIN CONTROVERSY.

THIS is what is commonly known in the old land as the "silly season" for newspapers. The dearth of news, the suspension of political discussions in Parliament and on the platform, the cares of harvesting, the absence of the responsible editor in many cases, and the general lassitude of the public during the heated term, cause the press to fall off in power and interest. Hence we find at this season absurd paragraphs of mere "stuffing," and editorials that betray the "prentice hand." We fear our contemporary, *The Mail*, in condemning prayer for rain has succumbed to the epidemic of dullness and folly that affects the press in the dog-days. In this matter it is a compliment to any newspaper to say that the symptoms of this trouble are manifest. The "silly season" lasts all the year round with some. So far from our regarding the *Mail*, as it was most injudiciously called by a speaker a few days ago, as a "weak and paltry" newspaper because of its utterances on the prayer for rain question, every literary man in Canada knows that the *Mail* is head and shoulders above every Canadian newspaper as an intellectual force. We have no argument to offer on behalf of the Church's prayer for rain, just as we have none for the existence of God. Christian and Deist alike regard the confession "I believe in God the Father Almighty" as the expression of a fixed, indisputable fact. None the less established does the believer in revelation believe that prayer to the Almighty is heard and answered. This is for us beyond the sphere of argumentation, it is a cardinal article of faith, verified by experience and consciousness, which are just as solid facts as any physical ones.

It is rank nonsense to speak of prayer being intended to alter the will of God, or to change His laws. What the will of God is and what His laws are, we only know by revelation and by the observance of phenomena. Now revelation declares that prayer for rain has been answered, and there are testimonies beyond question to the phenomena of rain following prayer in such a marked manner as to give rational ground for connecting them in orderly sequence. If prayer must not be made for rain because this is to ask a change in the order of law, then all prayer is folly, because all spheres wherein human interests move are under the operation of God's laws; and all human effort is profane for work of all kinds interferes with natural laws.

There has been much said by, and in the *Mail*, about the Bishop of Manchester objecting to offer prayer for rain when he was Bishop of Melbourne. The allusion is not just to Dr. Moorhouse. The case as we understood it was this: the people were grossly negligent in storing water, then having neglected this duty

they asked the Bishop to pray for rain to save them from their own folly. He in his frank, outspoken, common sense way told them that it was not prayer for rain that would bring help, but obedience to the natural laws of prudence. Take the case of Toronto for instance; suppose the people of that city were afflicted by cholera arising from their mad and filthy practice of making Toronto Bay a sewerage pit, owing to their meanness, ignorance, and preference of dirt and smells and all forms of nastiness to cleanliness and pure air, would it be proper to ask God to save such a people from the chastisement brought on by breaking His laws? No! obedience in a rebel is even better than prayer, indeed prayer is mere idle breath that is not inspired by humble acceptance of the Will of the Supreme.

Men talk too much of the laws of nature in this connection—the laws that bring or keep back rain are not known. Even with a whole continent under view by telegraph, the Meteorological department can only foretell weather a few hours ahead, and then its mistakes are one in four, showing that they are not working with accurate knowledge of atmospheric laws. It is believed in England that heavy firing of cannon or rifles will often bring down rain, whether this is so or not, the firing and the rain are so commonly noticed together that it has given rise to a popular belief. Here is a case of man interfering with natural law, and according to the somewhat shallow theories of some, is performing a miracle.

In asking for rain we are not asking for the breach of any law, for we cannot know what that law has in store for us, rain or drought. We are, however, asking for one supreme law to be fulfilled for our blessing, the law that controls even God Himself, which is the love He has for all His children. So whether He who is the Almighty and Omniscient Father will send us gracious rains as we ask or withhold them as His Will decides, we shall have the blessing, if our prayer is prayer at all, of being brought thereby into harmony with the Divine nature by our finite will being made one with the Will of the Creator and Governor, who, for us, doeth all things well.

THE ONE CHURCH.

WE need make no apology for calling the attention of our readers to one or two of the principles concerning our faith in the Church of Jesus Christ—the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which we confess in our Creeds. There is a marvellous nebulousity, born of ignorance, which leads people into all kinds of strange ideas, and still stranger language, about the Catholic Church. For instance, we find people talking about the Church of our baptism, as if anyone could be baptized into the Church of England or the Church of Rome. Indeed, the very names Church of England and Church of Rome, though used for convenience sake, are in themselves a contradiction of terms. Strictly speaking, of course, there is no such body in existence as the Church of England. What we mean by

that term is that part of the Catholic Church which is contained in the Provinces of Canterbury and York. Hence the utter absurdity of talking about the Church of England in Africa. When we speak of the Church of Rome we intend that part of the Church Catholic which owns the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, though, as a matter of fact, there is no such body in the world as the Church of Rome. Still, seeing that these terms have established themselves in our language, we may use them—nay, we must use them in order to avoid circumlocution—but we must recall to ourselves that there is only one Church, of which these are component parts, and not a number of independent bodies floating in space, so to speak. The expressions Anglo-Catholic or Roman Catholic Church are also self-contradictory, as though we were to talk of the Church as being local-universal. As a matter of convenience we are compelled to use them from time to time, but we must not lose sight of the principle of the Church's existence—that she is one. Again, we constantly see in the religious press of this country, and hear people talking about, the branches of the Church. We hear a great deal about the three-branch theory, as it is called. There never was a more unfortunate expression in the whole history of religious controversy. The Church can no more be divided into branches than—to speak with all reverence—the three Persons of the Godhead can be divided. There may be quarrels amongst Catholics, and one part of the Church may refuse to hold intercommunion with another part; but the two no more become two branches of the Church than husband and wife become two families when they have a matrimonial tiff. Of course, it is possible for a national convocation of the Church to fall into such heresy that it unchurches itself, just as individuals may cease to be living members of the Body of Christ. But this is a point which we are not considering at the present moment. What we wish to impress upon our readers now is that Christ founded one Church, and that this Church can never be divided, otherwise it ceases to exist. To this Church all belong who have been baptized, unless they have separated themselves from its communion. We came across the other day what was intended for a dilemma, upon one of the two horns of which it was intended to impale English Churchmen. Some such question as this was asked: Suppose a foreign Catholic were to come to England on the supposition that the Church of England is that part of the Catholic Church which alone has jurisdiction in this country, would you tell him to worship in his parish church, served by an Evangelical, rather than in the Roman Catholic Church in the same place? Certainly we would. And if it be replied that he would hear Protestant doctrine preached, see the Blessed Sacrament maimed of its rites, and possibly be refused sacramental confession, we should be deeply grieved. But at the same time we should affirm that the unworthiness of the minister affects not the validity of the sacraments, and that our foreign friend could