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THE CATHOLIC STUDENT.

CERTAIN QUALITIES WHICH SHOULD DISTINGUISH HIM.

Modesty and Honesty—Scholarly Lectures by Father Tennant at Pawtucket.

From the American Catholic News.

The Rev. J. C. Tennant delivered recently before the Young Men's Association of St. Mary's Church, Pawtucket, R. I., a lecture in which he told his hearers in what spirit their studies should be pursued.

It appears to me, said he, that there are two qualities which should distinguish all real students, and certainly and very specially all Catholic students; they are modesty and honesty. Modesty is indispensable to real progress. Self-sufficiency is a full cup which lets additions run over. One of the disadvantages to which students are nowadays exposed is the great existing temptations to be superficial; a modest estimate of the extent of our knowledge is the great remedy for this evil.

The elements of knowledge on so many subjects are brought now within the reach of every one;—there are so many books and magazines and newspaper articles which will enable a quick youth with a ready tongue to talk glibly about the topics of the hour, the latest discoveries of science, or the newest historical theory, that it is not difficult—before persons more ignorant than ourselves—to make parade of a learning to which we have not the shadow of a claim. But this sort of thing is not merely a wretched vanity—it is the very temper of mind most adverse, I will venture to say, to all real study—most sure to lead us to take up with every crude theory and passing fancy of the day—most certain to turn what ought to be the wholesome food of the mind into a destructive poison.

You, then, who wish to be real students, be first modest. Be ashamed of a moral fault—for such surely it is—to pretend to know more of any subject than you really do; be distrustful of yourselves, chary of displaying what you know—loving learning for its own sake, or for the good it may enable you to do; never using it to gratify your own vanity or to win applause for yourselves.

And, secondly, be honest in your study. Reject no proved facts, but keep ever before your minds the immeasurable distance between fact and theory. Hold hard to facts. Nothing justifies you tampering with them. You may test them as much as you will; you may often doubt—it may be your duty to doubt—what their real meaning is. They may sometimes seem to contradict each other, whether they are facts of the outer world, or of history; or facts of faith and reason. In all such cases be patient. The explanation may come quickly, or it may be delayed. It matters not. Be sure, any way, that there can be real contradiction—that God in His own good time will reconcile all seeming contradictions, and solve all perplexing enigmas. It is that impatient spirit which is so characteristic of the times in which we live, which makes difficulties of this kind so distasteful to most men that, instead of waiting for the knot to be untied, they cut it at whatever cost, and rejoice to have freed themselves from its pressure, even if it be at the price of honesty and truth.

But there are one or two branches of study in which the quality of honesty is especially required, and on which I am glad to have an opportunity of saying a few words to you. Our popular literature is a great field of study for Catholics. Almost the whole of it has a certain vein of sceptical thought running through it. At any rate its general tone seems but little to correspond with Christian ethics. For, example, it is generally assumed—one would say almost as a first principle—that worldly grandeur and material successes are the great and paramount ends of life, as being the sole matters about which we can have any reasonable certitude, and, further, that riches and prosperity and the practical achievements of science constitute, in some measure, an evidence that countries which can permanently show them are specially favored by Heaven in the matter of their religious convictions.

Of course, it is impossible to think that notions of this kind, if honestly and straightforwardly presented as formal propositions, would impose upon any person of the most ordinary discrimination and intelligence. It is more cleverly done by a process of insinuation and subtle suggestion. Newspaper articles, magazine essays, travellers' books and popular lectures, have a habit of defaming those countries which are regarded as Catholic, by representing that they are behind the age in everything that constitutes progress and modern civilization; similar statements are made concerning sections of a country and local communities, if they have any sort of a Catholic reputation; and when at length a due degree of contempt may be supposed to have been raised with regards to our religion, it is very commonly argued that a system which arrests progress, blights civilization and degrades nations, cannot reasonably be looked upon as the work of God.

All who are moderately familiar with our current literature will know that these statements are substantially accordant with the fact. Is it not familiar experience that persons, when contending that Protestantism is true and the Catholic religion false, think they strengthen their position by contrasting Spain and Portugal with England, South America and Mexico with the United States, the Protestant with the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, and Ulster with the more Catholic parts of Ireland?

Of course honest Catholics know very well—nothing being more easy of demonstration—that the facts are very seldom as they are said to be; and that, whatever may be the evils or shortcomings, actually to be found in particular countries, called Catholic, they are not to be ascribed to the religion (very often but nominally professed); but, as it would not be difficult to show, to political causes in some instances, and to direct anti-Catholic agency in others. Nevertheless, this cannot be expected to be apparent to everyone. In fact, I know that some of our young Catholics who have gone through Brown University and have followed a dishonest anti-Catholic course of study there, have imbibed this subtle form of calumny. And in more than one instance it has been seriously prejudicial to the bold Catholic faith here on them, operating in its habitual utterances like the drop of water hollowing a stone—NON VI, SED SÆPE CADENDO.

How can the evil consequences of this and other dangers of our current literature be best abated?

By cultivating the society of Catholics; by Catholics obtaining the habit of reading, with an honest, healthful taste for such publications as combat modern forms of error and unbelief, and by a charitableness on the part of the more experienced to aid those among the less so who may be troubled by intellectual difficulties that have arisen in the course of their reading.

History is another great field of study for Catholics. In this country, and indeed abroad also, the principal historical works of modern times have, generally speaking, been written in an un-Catholic, very often in an anti-Catholic spirit. A great part at least of the historical literature of the eighteenth century is instinct with this animus against everything Catholic, and it was sufficient for an historical personage to have been a bishop, monk, or pope, to make it almost a matter of course that his motive should be assumed to have been always the most unworthy, and his conduct judged in the harshest spirit.

It is happily a fact that at the beginning of the present century a fairer spirit sprang up, and a juster mode of dealing with historical facts prevailed, and it is pleasant to be able to point out that eminent among those who inaugurated this better and juster school we may place the names of the great Protestant writers, Guizot and Roscoe. But I very much fear that of late years we have been returning again to something of the less impartial and fair-minded spirit which animated, as I have said, a great portion of the writings of the eighteenth century. Old calumnies are raked up; old misrepresentations refurbished—whether it be in the furious onslaughts of Germany, or in the ribaldry of infidel Frenchmen; or, on the other hand, in those distorted pictures which mar the

beauty and detract from the historic value of Froude's and Bancroft's artistic pages.

If this be so, how is it to be met by Catholics?

By an earnest devotion to the study of history, and to a study of it in the very opposite spirit to that of which I have been complaining—in a spirit of honest fairness, and with a simple desire to be impartial. We must rejoice to think that this is already being done in these days, and that works are coming forth from time to time which tend to correct misrepresentations, and to put the facts of history, as they relate to Catholics, in their real light. But if you address yourselves as students of history, to this work, if you wish to make an impression upon those around you who are not Catholics, if you mean faithfully to fulfil the duty which lies upon you in this respect, the first quality which you must cultivate in your historical studies is an accurate and honest spirit.

Doubtless when all is done, when misrepresentations and misunderstandings have been cleared away, the pages of real history will still contain many a record which Catholics will blush to read; records of weakness and wickedness in those who ought to have been the light of the world, or who were in their day the champions of the Catholic cause. But what is this but to say that the Church on earth is made up of men full of human passions; of men with all their imperfections upon them; of men often exposed to temptations strong just in proportion to the greatness of the positions which they fill? The cause which they defend, the Church to which they belong, are not touched or tainted by their shortcomings. The virtues of the saints are the harvest of the Church—the vices of her servants are of their own sowing.

If you will devote yourselves to these studies, you will doubtless scrutinize very closely every story which tells against any one who has occupied a high place in Catholic history; and if you do so you will find many a rumor, and many a calumny, fade away like the morning mist. But you will admit what is proved to you upon good evidence—sorrowfully indeed and reverently—but honestly and in good faith.

And now a few words more and I have done. We often hear men speak as if they thought that cultivation of the intellectual powers alone would, of itself, make men virtuous. I do not think that any of you will suspect me of undervaluing intellectual cultivation, or of being blind to the importance of education in the times in which we live; but if I urge their necessity upon you, it is not that I believe that intellectual studies, however ardently pursued, will keep you from sin. The sins of cultivated men are, doubtless, different from those of the rough and the ignorant; temptations will not present themselves in the same forms to the two classes; but the knowledge of one class will give them no more power than the ignorance of the other to resist what are real temptations to either.

If I urge you, then to study, it is first because in these days of widespread mental cultivation, if you fail to keep yourselves up to the standard of knowledge around you, you will fall behind in the race of life, and be overthrown and trodden down by your eager competitors; and while you suffer yourselves the Catholic name will suffer through your neglect, and men will point to you as the living proofs of the current calumny that the Catholic Church is the enemy of human knowledge.

But I have another motive to put before you. Look round on the vast field of knowledge which God has laid, as it were, at your feet, and from which you can in these days reap the fruits with a facility unknown to former generations; look at it as it lies before you, illuminated by the light of the Catholic faith, which makes clear so many of its obscurities, and reads for you so many of its riddles—and then say whether you of all men are not called, each according to his opportunities, to make its harvest your own, that you may offer them all to Him from Whom they spring, and may be enabled to employ the intellectual powers, which He has given you, enriched by your industry and strengthened by your toil, for his service among men.

TO MY DEAR CHILDREN AND FRIENDS

The Half-Breeds of Manitoba and the Northwest.

ST. ALBERT, ALBERTA.

MY DEAR CHILDREN:—

I write you this to-day in order to make you acquainted with this plan of a common colony in favor of all the Half-Breeds of this country.

You have already heard, for some time past, of the scheme. So far, in every place, amongst the white people as well as the Half-Breeds, this scheme has met with general satisfaction.

You all know what interest and affection have always moved me in favor of your nation. It is again thorough fatherly love for you, that I undertake to help you once more, in a new way, at this critical period of your existence. I still remember with pleasure the happy days when, under the guidance, and the safekeeping of your missionaries, you were living contented under your tents or your roofs in the midst of an abundance acquired by hunting and tilling small parcels of land.

Everything is changed to-day. Misery and poverty, among many of you have replaced that easy life of old. Far from bettering your condition, the new civilization has done nothing but render it worse. As well as I do, you see the change of life has been fatal to you in every respect. Scattered in every direction to-day; having no longer steady abodes and lands to till; living a wandering life around the new cities and towns, a very large number of you are in a more miserable condition than the Indians who have their reservations and their missionaries. Under such circumstances, in the absence of the priest's control and vigilance, children in too many instances are brought up in complete ignorance and oblivion of their religious duties.

In the course of my travels in this part of the country how often has my heart bled with sorrow and regret, at the sight of our poor Half-Breeds' decline! I said to myself "with the consent of our Bishops I will make a supreme effort to save them whose fathers were our first children in Faith." In consequence, with the divine protection, I set to work. To-day, my scheme of redemption has advanced so far:

1° On my request, earnestly recommended by the Bishops of St. Boniface, St. Albert and Prince Albert, the Ottawa Government is willing to lend to us, for ever, that is to say, as long as the end for which the demand was made, is attained, a territory containing four townships, near Egg Lake, east of Lake LaSalle.

2° This land will be entirely under the direction of the Bishops and missionaries, who alone shall have the right to distribute and turn it to use, at their own will for the greatest good of the new colony.

3° All Half-Breeds are invited to take their share of the advantage proffered by this establishment. However, we do not wish that the Half-Breeds who have still lands and houses in their respective parishes should dispose of them in order to respond to the call. Let such as those continue to dwell near their churches and their missionaries. The establishment of our new colony is for those who have no longer any home and who do not know how to earn a living.

4° The Half-Breeds who will come and settle among us, while being usufructaries of the portion of land which will be allotted to every one of them, will never be able, nor will their offspring, to sell, alienate or mortgage that property. If any of them leave the colony it will be their own business, but they will carry off nothing but their furniture and cattle. This must be well understood before effecting this change of life.

5° It is well understood that nothing is promised either in provisions or pecuniary aid, clothing, etc., but we may say that our corporation will do all in their power to aid as effectually as their means will allow those who will be determined to work and live in good accord with the missionaries.

6° If we can succeed, we propose to go on the spot, next spring, with a few families who will follow us, in order to make the first breaking of land, to erect the first houses and to sow all the grain at our disposal. We shall be compelled to go very slow, at the beginning, owing to the small resources of the directors of the colony.

7° Besides the portion of land allotted to each family, there shall be commons for hay, grazing and wool cutting, the use of which shall be regulated by the missionaries.

8° In the most suitable places of said townships, the directors will set apart two sections for the site of a church, a school, a priest's residence, etc., etc. These shall be reserved as well, on other sections other pieces of ground where other chapels, schools etc., will have to be erected by and by.

9° It shall be forbidden for white people or Indians to settle in our colony, with the exception of those who will have received from the missionaries permission to do so. It shall not be allowed to any strangers to hunt, cut hay or wool on our reservation. For the enforcement of this prohibition we shall be protected by the Government.

10° Of course, all kinds of intoxicating liquor are strictly prohibited on our territory. Any Half-Breed who will bring some for traffic or to give his fellow-citizens some to drink, shall be expelled. Any white person who shall try to do likewise, shall be prosecuted according to the law.

11° As soon as possible, we shall establish industrial schools for boys and girls who shall be instructed in schooling and the various trades, chiefly in agriculture and cattle breeding.

We do not wish that a large number of families should come at once, for we shall not be ready to receive them. We want to begin with a few families of good will with whom we wish to obtain success and to sow others that we have every reason to hope for the future.

That is, my dear children, what I had to tell you on this scheme, which is of interest to you. If, once more, you listen to the priest who is your true friend, I promise you in advance that you will again live happy and that you shall not be exposed to be at the mercy of the white people. Be confident, come and work with us on our reservation. In a short time, you will have made an establishment which will afford you an easy living and you will have the consolation to be at home, near your church, your school and your pastors.

It will be one of the greatest consolations for me, in my old age, to have done you, before my death, this good office which I beg God to bless.

Your very devoted father in Our Lord,
A. LACOMBE,
O. M. I.

Infidels Reap Where Christians Sow.

Christian denominations quarrel about the kind of religious seed to be sown in the fertile fields of public education. The infidel obtrudes his services as umpire and decides that fairness requires that denominational seed should be excluded from a field equally belonging to all. Practically the exclusion of denominationalism is the exclusion of all religion, for a denomination is but a definite form of religion, and an indefinite thing can have no existence. So the umpire makes education infidel, thus cunningly reaping a harvest of infidelity which benighted Christians, too antagonistic and bigoted to be fair to one another, fail to see is not a neutral, but a most uncompromising anti-religious denomination. — Sts. Peter and Paul's Church Calendar (Detroit).

A Fundamental Objection to Secret Societies.

They require an oath or promise of absolute secrecy and obedience. Such an oath, taken before knowing the nature of the secret or command, and without reservation as to their morality, implies a disposition to comply whether they be good or evil. This disposition is intrinsically wicked; so is the oath that implies it, so are the societies that require this oath. Such an oath is not binding before God or upright men; nay, if the secret or command be evil, its fulfilment is a crime, its violation a conscientious duty. — Sts. Peter and Paul's Church Calendar (Detroit).