

The Stricken Island of Martinique.

Rev. William A. Maher, Indianapolis, Ind., writing to the "Catholic Columbian," says:—

It is difficult for us to realize the awful calamity that befell the city of St. Pierre, the virtual capital of Martinique, on that fair and fatal May morning when St. Pelee belched forth the blazing matter that destroyed more than 30,000 human beings and left the doomed city a heap of ruins. The mind is overwhelmed with the greatness of the catastrophe. If we are afflicted by the sudden death of one of our neighbors, what must we think of 30,000 persons with a few moments notice swept out of existence!

The people that morning were going about their daily avocations—some must have been assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass—many were beginning another day either of happiness or sorrow—the little children were in their schools—the more grown up ones in the academies and colleges—the good priests of the Catholic college were no doubt already in class. The hard-working Christian Brothers and French nuns, occupied with the poorer class of youth, were at their places—the virtuous and the wicked were looking forward to their daily pursuits when, oh horror! A frightful noise like thunder is heard, the city shakes, and Mt. Pelee rains fire, and in a few minutes all, all were gone!

In my opinion the people no more expected that that dreadful volcano would irretrievably ruin them and their city in that way than we now to-day in Indianapolis expect to be launched into eternity by an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. Oh! it is terrible to think of those few moments of dread which must have paralyzed these people before the burning ashes, rocks and lava killed them!

The public prints of this country have given much space to the description of this city and island, both before and after the disaster. Good pictures of the principal streets and some of the public buildings of that beautiful city in which 30,000 persons met their sad end, have been published and justice has been done the tropical beauty of the island.

It is not my intention to speak in this article of those things. But there is a matter which the papers have not touched, and that is the religious side of the city and island. I shall briefly therefore state a few facts connected with the religion and education of Martinique.

The diocese of St. Pierre is a suffragan diocese of the archdiocese of Bordeaux, in France, having a bishop and about fifty-five priests. It is canonically instituted like the dioceses in France, with canons and chapter. The canons wear the dress special to such dignitaries. I do not know how many priests there were in the city or the number of churches in the environs, but I would say at a rough calculation that there must have been thirty between the parochial and college clergy. There were several country parishes, all supplied with French priests. Fort de France is the largest parish now left in the island. I do not think there was a non-Catholic Church in Martinique; I never heard of any there. There were a great number of good Catholics in the different parishes—moral men and women. Of course, as in all tropical countries, there is a certain looseness of morals in a certain class, but I maintain that the good, practical Catholics in St. Pierre were moral people. There were Christian men and women there who could compare with the Christian elite of any country.

It is wonderful how some people see immorality wherever they go. As for me, it must have been on vacation when I was in Martinique, for I never saw any sign of it more than can be seen in any of our American cities. The good people of Martinique that gave sons to the altar and daughters to the cloister were the first to deplore the immorality brought on by the infidel schools. The public school teachers of both sexes are in France as a class hostile to religion—nay, some even profess atheism. These men and women have aided the government in expelling God from the schools, and in my opinion, if immorality increased in the West India French possessions, its cause is to be found in the schools taught by the practical infidel men and women appointed by an infidel government.

Side by side with the anti-religious schools were the Catholic private schools maintained as our parochial schools are in this country, by the generosity of the good Catholic religious sentiments of a very few. Now this fact speaks well for

great number of the population. The governments schools to the pupils—only the pupils of these schools can expect government positions. Yet there was in St. Pierre a flourishing Catholic college splendidly equipped, academies for girls, parochial schools for boys conducted by the French Christian Brothers, for girls by the communities of the French Sisters, and all maintained and supported by money coming voluntarily from the Catholics. There must certainly have been good Catholics in St. Pierre when they thus sacrificed their temporalities to have their children reared as Christians.

At Fort de France on a Wednesday in Holy Week I saw the priests' house crowded at night with men going to confession. The men had the custom there of going to confession at night in the parochial residence. I would venture to say that very few in danger of death refused to be reconciled with the God that they had neglected during an indifferent or wicked life.

There is one thing which even the so-called atheistical French officials have never been able to impugn, and that is the honor and integrity, the edifying lives of the clergy of Martinique. They were and are certainly the salt of the earth.

Foremost among the educational establishments of St. Pierre was the Catholic College directed by the priests of the Society of the Holy Ghost. Its title was "Seminare College du St. Esprit." Many a French priest that had distinguished himself in France as a theologian, a philosopher, a litterateur, or a scientist taught in that institution for the past sixty years. The seminary section gave many priests to the island; and the Rt. Rev. Dr. de Courmont, Bishop of German East Africa, a native of the island, spent his youth in the college. The Very Rev. Peter Huvets, late president of Blackrock College, Dublin, Ireland, a man respected by rich and poor in that country, and whose memory is venerated by many a past student of Blackrock College, was also a native of Martinique and a student in the Catholic College there. The Seminaire College du St. Esprit also gave many prominent professional and business men to the island; and year after year the Godless French examiners commissioned by the government to confer the university degrees on the graduating classes were constrained to acknowledge the excellent training given by those learned and zealous French priests.

The government Lycees, through supported by state money, and favored in every way by the government, were shown to be inferior to that college whose professors were handicapped by red tape regulations and every mean act that Satan could suggest to men that openly denied the existence of God. Alas! Mt. Pelee has blotted that grand home of learning with perhaps twenty saintly priests out of existence. "All, all are gone the old familiar faces." I feel sad at heart as I write these lines at the thought that probably several among them were friends of other days when "life was young."

The French Christian Brothers had excellent parochial schools in the city. As a rule, they had charge of the children of the poor. Most of these latter were colored boys. Yet, the Brothers spared no expenses in the training of teachers for these schools. Every teacher passed the examinations and received his certificate from the education board after having spent years in the training school. And what for? To sacrifice his life to the Christian education of the negroes of Martinique. The respectable colored people always venerated "les bons freres," as they called them.

The girls in the Martinique schools are entrusted to the Sisters. These good religious, like the Brothers, teach the poorer classes. Yet, there were academies in St. Pierre that could compete with any Catholic academy for girls in this country. Some of the Sisters were the daughters of the most aristocratic French and Martinique families, that had given all they possessed in this world to the cause of the Master who said: "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Besides the houses of education the Sisters had charge of the old and the sick, doing the same work that is done by the Catholic Sisters in this and all other countries. And to think that Mt. Pelee in a few minutes ruined all, all! It staggers the imagination to dwell upon that astounding calamity.

In this country we are inclined to underrate and undervalue what is done elsewhere. Did we not hear of the appalling ignorance prevalent in Cuba and Porto Rico? Do we not have it dimmed into our ears that the Philippine friars kept the people in dense ignorance? I am proud to state that there are at this moment Cubans and Porto Ricans in this city—refined, cultured, educated, that have received that refinement, culture and education in the Catholic schools of Cuba and Porto Rico; and when at the Buffalo Exposition I made it a point to investigate the state of the Filipinos that were there, I found that there was not one among them that did not know how to read and write—in Spanish, of course—and a most respectable looking man who was there with his family and who had a daughter a Filipino school teacher, stated to me that he was and ever would be a Catholic Romano Apostolico. Now they were all natives of the Philippines and had all received their education from the friars and nuns. The day will come when the Catholics of the United States will rise up in their might to repel the foul calumny originated by sectarians against the Church in those far-away islands.

The Catholic Church was doing the Master's work in Martinique, too. Infidelity—professed atheism, hostility of the public school teachers—enmity of the Masonic lodges—the inferiority of the race that had to be dealt with—obstacles of every kind that hell and the malice of men could invent, did not prevent her from calling the many so that the elect might be chosen. The clergy of Martinique is a model clergy. The French education is the acme of refinement when Catholic. No science is left out, and yet sometimes we are asked to believe that Martinique and the French are not up to date because not "Anglo-Saxon!"

St. Pierre is a thing of the past. The grand old Seminaire College du St. Esprit that witnessed the labors of many a noble French ecclesiastic exists no more. The Brothers and their schools, the heroic French ladies that befriended the poor in the schools and hospitals are now with their Master; the good Catholic people that were generous to priest and Church and school and the poor, have departed forever, and from every Christian heart the world over has come forth the cry: "Eternal rest grant, O Lord, to the victims of the dreadful Mt. Pelee!"

Corpus Christi in Scotland.

The tendency of our people here to have outdoor processions when the festival of Corpus Christi occurs, says a special correspondent of the "London Universe," becomes more marked every year, and, as a result, the people taking part in the processions become more numerous when the festival day comes round; the banners and vestments used are more gorgeous, and the devotion displayed becomes more intense. This year was no exception. True the number of processions were not augmented; but this was owing to St. Mary's, Glasgow, having none this year. Its place, however, was worthily filled by St. Michael's, Parkhead. The procession at Dalbeth on Thursday was the grandest yet seen. Mass was said in the Reformatory Chapel by Father McCormack. The chaplain, Father Brotherton, of St. Mary's, gave a short sermon on Corpus Christi. This was a holiday, said the Rev. Father, and everybody was bound to hear Mass and abstain from work. Yet in Glasgow everything was going on as usual. The shops were open, as were the mills, and every one seemed at work. Why? Because Glasgow along with the rest of the country had turned its back on God and become heretic. The people had denied the faith. To-day they were singing

Jes's, my Lord, my God, my all, How can I love Thee as I ought?

because they did not deny, as the people of Scotland had done, that our Lord and God was in the Blessed Sacrament. It was hard to believe, hard to understand; but they believed it though they did not understand. That very week a learned man had said that he did not know how any one could believe that under the appearance of bread they had the body and divinity of Christ. He said it was beyond his power to believe it. The reason why he said that was because he was too proud to believe what he did not understand. His hearers did not understand it, neither did he, but they knew it was a fact, and they believed it because it was told them on good authority. Several things were mysteries in this world, and the great stumbling-block to those not Catholics was the mystery of the Eucharist. They could not believe because they could not see.

They believed, and to show that faith they were going to have that procession to honor God—not for any other reason. They were going to carry the Body and Blood of the Son of God around in order to show their belief. That was their motive. In conclusion, the rev. gentleman said that when Corpus Christi came round again many of them might not be there, but he asked them to keep the processions they had participated in in their memories, and always respect the Blessed Sacrament and attend Mass when they were able.

The procession then formed in the grounds. First came the cross-bearer attended by two acolytes, then the boys four deep to the number of some two hundred, and interspersed were banners representing St. Joseph and Child, Blessed Virgin Mary, with inscription, "Mother of God, remember me," St. Patrick, Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross, Sacred Heart, and others. Then came the acolytes, and a little party of girls and boys, the former in white, and the latter in Highland costumes, each carrying a basket of flowers, wherewith to strew the path of the Blessed Sacrament. Lastly came the canopy borne aloft by Messrs. Lindsay, Gallagher, Cunningham, and MacKenzie, and underneath it, carrying the Sacred Host, was Father Brotherton, attended by Fathers McCormack and Haeger. The singing was led by Mr. Brotherton, Deputy Governor of West Thorn, father of the officiating priest, whilst the instrumental music was looked after by Mr. Reilly, bandmaster of the institution. The procession then wended its way into the graveyard to the strains of the "Tantum Ergo" played by the band. Here the large crowd which was waiting to receive it knelt down, and when the canopy passed, rose up and joined in the procession. The singing of the boys was marked by vigor, and the chorus of one of their hymns:

Mary, dear Mother, I sing a hymn to thee;
Thou art the Queen of Heaven, and thou our Queen shall be,
And thou shalt guide us into eternity.

was given with such a blending of pathos, devotion, and unquestioning faith, that they would be "blase" indeed who would fail to be affected by it.

As the procession passed along the cemetery walks every one knelt down and adored as the tinkling of the bell told of the approach of the Sacred Host. At the North-Eastern gate of the cemetery, on a mound overlooking the silent rows of graves but within their own enclosure, stood a group of white-robed nuns—the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, some twenty in number. They stood motionless as statues till their Lord and Master came in sight, and then they prostrated themselves till the procession passed. Coming to what once was the gate of the cemetery, the processionists formed themselves into twos, and knelt down on each side of the path, whilst the canopy-bearers and the priests came down the centre and passed into the Mortuary Chapel, where the first altar was erected, and where Benediction was given, the people remaining outside, and singing the "O Salutaris," Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and the "Tantum Ergo." At the conclusion of Benediction the procession again made its way through the graveyard (this time with numbers considerably augmented), and proceeded within the grounds of the West Thorn Reformatory, where, under a cluster of trees which spread their branches over both altar and worshippers alike, a temporary altar had been erected. Here the Benediction service was once again celebrated, and then, the procession forming once more, the Sacred Host, amidst hymns of joy, made its triumphal procession to the private chapel of the institution, where once again Benediction took place, after which the crowds dispersed. One cannot wonder after seeing one of these processions why they are becoming more popular amongst us every year, for they certainly waken up the latent faith within us, and, no matter how good we may be, make us better Catholics than before. Processions of a similar nature took place on Thursday, in Fort Augustus, Bothwell, Garngad Hill, and on the Sunday, in Broxburn (Edinburgh), Gourcock, and St. Michael's Parkhead. The usual outdoor procession in St. Mary's Glasgow, did not take place this year owing to street improvements having taken place in Abercromby St., the principal street through which the procession used to pass, but inside processions took place in it, as in nearly all the Glasgow churches on Sunday, that in St. Mungo's being prominent on account of the large numbers participating in it and the splendid sermon by Father Bonaventure, C.P.

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A.O.H. LADIES' AUXILIARY, Division No. 5, organized Oct. 10th, 1901. Meeting are held on 1st Sunday of every month, at 4 p.m., and 3rd Thursday, at 8 p.m. Miss Annie Donovan, president; Mrs. Sarah Allen, vice-president; Miss Nora Kavanagh, recording secretary, 155 Inspector street; Miss Emma Doyle, financial secretary; Miss Charlotte Sparks, treasurer, Rev. Father McGrath, chaplain.

ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY.—Established March 6th, 1856, incorporated 1883, revised 1894. Meets in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander street, first Monday of the month. Committee meets last Wednesday. Officers: Rev. Director, Rev. M. Callaghan, P.P. President, Hon. Mr. Justice C. J. Doherty; 1st Vice, F. E. Devlin, M.D.; 2nd Vice, F. J. Curran, B.C.L.; Treasurer, Frank J. Green, Corresponding Secretary, John Kahala; Recording Secretary, T. P. Tansey.

ST. ANN'S YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY organized 1885.—Meets in its hall, 157 Ottawa street, on the first Sunday of each month, at 2.30 p.m. Spiritual Advisor, Rev. E. Strubbe, C.S.S.R.; President, M. Casey; Treasurer, Thomas O'Connell; Secretary, W. Whitty.

ST. ANTHONY'S COURT, C. O. F., meets on the second and fourth Friday of every month in their hall, corner Seigneurs and Notre Dame streets. A. T. O'Connell, C. R., T. W. Kane, secretary.

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ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE EDITOR.

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FIRST SUNDAY OF Holy Scapular Society, and investment in scapulars after Vespers in the General Communion Heat League at 8 o'clock.

SECOND SUNDAY.—Temperance Society, giving of temperance papers in Church. General Communion Name Society at 8 o'clock. Office of office of Holy at 7.30 p.m.

THIRD SUNDAY.—Society after Vespers, in Church, after which social attended to in large sac. FOURTH SUNDAY.—Mary, general Communion at 8 o'clock, meeting in Patrick's (girls') school.

Promoters of Sacred Heart meeting in large hall, 2.45 p.m., distribution, etc., in library, 92 Alexander St., on 4th Sunday, 3 to 6 p.m. evening service, and day, after evening service.

FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTION.—The Blessed Sacrament exposed all day in St. 1 every first Friday, solemnization and Act of Reparation p.m., followed by short.

LADIES OF CHARITY Tuesday at 2 p.m., again to make garments for. There are some sixty members of whom attend regularly to join in this noble and meritorious work.

ANNOUNCEMENT

AND SERMON AT ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH.

RICE-THROWING.—The Rev. Donnelly, the zealous pastor of St. Anthony's, read a large number of banns on Sunday morning. He took occasion of the banns to make some remarks which are applicable to parishioners besides his parish. The mention of coming marriages leads to the pagan habit—of throwing rice at a newly married couple at the doors of the church. It is a reprehensible practice, not at all in keeping with the sanctity of the God. The rice is sometimes thrown into the faces of the newly married couple, which is obviously a dan to do. Moreover, it is work of the sexton, who for this additional labor who make it necessary. get this habit. I do those who have indulged for the reasons I have given occur no more. I feel sure will be guided by this future.

HAND BILLS.—I mention the practice of hand bills at the door of Church, without permission only to Catholic society privilege, or the privilege newspapers is accorded. take these hand bills from them away when they read of throwing them walk in front of the Church.

FORTY HOURS.—In the Blessed Sacrament