

The Catholic Register

PUBLISHED BY THE CATHOLIC REGISTER PUBLISHING CO. 154 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

Telephone, Main 489

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1902

IRISH PROBLEM PRESSING

The new organization of Irish landlords formed for the avowed object of breaking the United Irish League...

was a reasonable and temperate man in comparison. The intense zeal of M. Combes is not to be wondered at...

It may be that a military crisis lies outside the range of vision at the present moment...

AN EVIL CRUSADE.

The writer of the letter to the daily papers of Toronto, which we reprint in another column, deserves the thanks of every resident of Ontario...

The only wonder is in the behavior of the press, and this is the point "A Torontonians" puts his finger upon...

SERIOUS OUTLOOK FOR FRANCE

According to the despatches of the past week an ugly problem is developing in France. M. Combes, the new Premier, has been as good as his threat to strain the Associations Law...

EDITORIAL NOTES

Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier entertained a large and distinguished company to dinner at the Hotel Cecil...

A Melbourne dispatch dated June 8 says "Women franchise is at last an actual fact, as the Governor-General has assented to the Franchise Act...

Mr. John Redmond M.P. sent the following telegram to the late Mr. William Johnston's son "Allow me as one who, though so strongly opposed to your father, yet greatly respected his transparent honesty and kindly nature...

Abbe Combes, the French Premier, has addressed a circular letter to the prefects, requesting them to inform all establishments managed by religious confraternities which had not received authorization...

In a sympathetic tribute to the late head of the Orange organization, Mr. William Johnston, M.P., The Freeman's Journal, the great Nationalist organ, says "He (Mr. Johnston) saw the son who inherited his property become a Nationalist, and his daughter become a Catholic..."

It is one of the failings of Catholics that they are affected with creeping paralysis in matters which concern publicly. Let some charge be made by our enemies, and every one lays the burden of exploding it on the shoulders of somebody else...

Canadians will have reason to thank Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the plain speaking in which he indulges at meetings of an ultra-Imperialistic sort in London. At a dinner at the Trocadero, the Lord Mayor of London had proposed the toast of "The Dominion of Canada..."

HIBERNIANS TO BE INCORPORATED.

Denver, Col., July 21.—It has been decided by the National Board of Directors of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, chosen at the last session of the biennial convention, to incorporate each State division of the order...

Monastery of Trappist Monks Destroyed by Fire

Oka, July 21.—The wonderful Trappist Monastery of Oka, which it took years to build and where ninety-seven priests and monks from all over the world were carrying out vows of perpetual labor, perpetual prayer and perpetual silence...

A fire started, no one knows how, fed by a strong easterly wind, which, as it swirled in between the surrounding mountains, was discovered at 6 o'clock yesterday afternoon and though the priests and monks, and laymen employed about the building, headed by Father Columbin the prior, worked with all their might to save the buildings...

Wonderful to relate there was no loss of life and all the ninety-seven monks and priests got out safely although two monks, Brother Seraphin, who was blind, and another brother, whose name is not known, and who was in the hospital suffering from consumption, are expected to die. They were rescued from the top story at the risk of the rescuers' lives.

A choice had to be made between the magnificent library and the beautiful church with its main altar and its two score of side altars and it was decided to first try and save the church. Father Aurelien took charge of this work and they succeeded in saving all the holy vestments and the Eucharist and other holy vessels and a great many of the big illuminated prayer books...

The great aim of the monastic life was the complete annihilation of self, and in order to aid the monks of the monastery to attain this end mottoes such as these were painted on the walls and even in the stables and the cowsheds...

The Sulpicians from Oka offered all possible help. The abbott, Dom Marie Antoine, was in Montreal at the time of the fire.

Nestled among the great range of Laurentian Hills, three and a half miles back of the quaint village of Oka, which is situated on the banks of the Ottawa River, was the monastery of Notre Dame du Lac des Deux Montagnes...

The stone monastery, which was erected a few years ago, near the old wooden one, was a fine structure and formed a hollow enclosing a large courtyard. The western wing was called the hospice, and was set apart for the use of guests.

Seventeen years ago, ten men, tired of the pomps and vanities of the world, were given one thousand acres of land on these wild and densely wooded hills for the purpose of forming a monastery, and by cultivating the land, to pay for the humble buildings, they purposed erecting and passing their lives in, and for the little they ate. As the years stole by their number gradually increased...

scores of powerful horses, over three hundred head of cattle and hundreds of pigs and sheep, besides valuable barns, gardens, young orchards, a blacksmith shop, and a saw mill, all of which were tended by the monks, who began work long before the sun rose.

It was a man was allowed to take the life vow at the monastery at Oka he had first to spend two years in the institute preparing for the numerous novices. If he found, during this time, that his health gave out or that he had not the courage to take the life-vows, he was allowed freely to depart.

All the monks worked in the fields from early morning to sunset, driving horses, milking cows, turning over the earth, cutting hay and making butter, cheese and cider, which was sent to Montreal and sold in large quantities.

The great aim of the monastic life was the complete annihilation of self, and in order to aid the monks of the monastery to attain this end mottoes such as these were painted on the walls and even in the stables and the cowsheds...

The monastery of Oka, although burned to the ground, is more than ever a shrine for semi-religious pilgrimages.

Carts and wagons of all descriptions fill the road from the village of Oka to the "Valley of Silence." What the priests are going to do is as yet unknown. The writer of an article in The Montreal Star had a talk with Father Columbin, the prior, about it.

He was directing the men, who were, some in the act of picking valuable things out of the debris, and others making preparations to tear down some of the parts of the walls which were still standing, and which looked dangerous.

"It was a great calamity," he said, "and the thought that is uppermost in our minds is how severely the Abbot will feel it."

"What will you do?" he was asked. "Do what can we do? Where are we going to get the money to do anything? We will have to remain for the present in the agricultural school, and though it is not by any means fitted up to serve as a cloister, we will have to do the best we can."

"You have no intention of leaving here?" "No, we have not, but the way which we are situated we are certainly unable to build again."

"Still if people would furnish you with the necessary money, you would not hesitate to erect another building?" "Let them give us two hundred thousand dollars and we will start again at once."

The conversation was interrupted constantly by the rumbling and crackling sound of the crumbling walls. At the end there was a warning shout from some of the agricultural students to be careful, and then there came a heavy detonation, and the ruins threw up a cloud of dust, and vomited bricks and stones high up in the air, parts of one of the

chimneys which they had been trying to blow up with dynamite.

All afternoon as soon as the rumble began to cool off, the work of entirely demolishing and bringing to the ground the walls of the portions thereof which remained was gone on with squads of students and monks dragging them down with thick long ropes, a work in which many of the former boarders participated, and which Professor de Maurie, of McGill particularly distinguished himself.

"I came here for a quiet time," he said, "and you can see how well I succeeded in getting it."

They, as well as the monks and priests, lost all of their clothing except what they had on.

Although desolation inhabits it, the valley of silence is still beautiful. Upon the hills along the road still stands the little chapel from which a magnificent view is obtained over the Lake of Two Mountains. It was only spared because the wind happened to blow the other way. The agricultural school, to which the monks and priests return for the present, has sheltered them before. In fact, it was the first monastery, in which it moved in 1881, shortly after Father Bellefontaine had come from La Trappe, near Dyon, France, and had obtained from the seminary of St. Sulpice the thousand acres they now occupy, and which the Oka Indians and Chief Kennatsove claim are part of their inheritance.

In the same year the foundation stone of the new monastery was laid in the valley, a few hundred yards north of the hill where the agricultural school is situated. In 1889 the actual work on the edifice, which two days ago became a prey to the flames, was commenced, and in 1891 the late Archbishop Fabre, with great ceremony solemnly declared the monastery open. Next year it was finished.

In September, 1897, the church was solemnly consecrated by Archbishop Bruchesi, and this was again the occasion of much ceremony, in which all the heads of the Catholic Church in Canada, which could come, were present.

One of the strangest things of this great calamity to an onlooker, is the philosophical manner in which the fire is looked upon.

All sorts of articles used for ornamentation of a church were strewn around, and the road in front of what was the main building, and the ditch beyond were lined with the smaller altars. Here the relic seekers found their harvest, although a close eye was kept upon them yesterday. Yet there was many a quaintly fashioned wooden spoon, and many a quaintly carved wooden fork, and many other things that could be easily concealed, that found a way in the pockets of even the respectable looking sightseers. Some picked up almost anything they could find on the grounds, or in the ashes, and took their lives in their hands at the base of tottering walls to get a relic. Hard to believe though it may seem, one man actually picked up a white china spittoon, carefully did it up in a piece of paper, and took it with him in his carriage. This was nothing, however, to what went on during the actual fire. The visitors from the surrounding villages, at that time, were actual freebooters, and looted right and left. Nothing was sacred to them, and some of the most rapacious ones came to grief.

The priests and some of the students had managed to save the pharmacy, and they had put the bottles containing the drugs, some liquid, and some in powder form, in baskets along the roadway, just beyond the grasp of the fire. When they did not see anything else to take, the looter seized upon the bottles containing the liquid drugs, and thinking perhaps that it was some new kind of Trappist Liqueur, several of them took good big swallows. Not very long after two or three of them lay writhing and groaning in the road, tied up in knots, and although it was impossible to find out exactly what they had taken, the priests managed to find time from their task of battling with the flames to administer something to them that eased their pains, after which they disappeared.

The quickness with which the building succumbed to the flames was perhaps the one thing that surprised the former inmates. One of them said "It was only Thursday, about noon, that I took around a young American, who had come on purpose to visit the monastery, and I called his attention to the absence of curtains and other inflammable stuff. Not five

hours afterwards the whole place was in flames. Brother Florent led the way to the back and into the cemetery. Pieces of the statues of saints, the main body of the high altar, the flowers and vases and other attributes that adorned the minor altars were all scattered about.

The cemetery, always a cold dreary looking place to the man who lives in the warm, living, throbbing world, with its half-open grave yawning to receive the next brother who dies, looked more dreary and desolate than ever. The crosses that were not actually burned down were blistered and scorched, but there were only few, and the others were demolished. The little vegetation there was was scorched to death, and the top crust of the latest grave was actually baked. It was only two days before that they had filled it. There had been St. Solemn High Mass, twenty-four hours after the brother unknown, and we wept for, had dropped out of the world in which he had only been part of a great machine.

Then there had been the processions to the grave, the brothers all carrying lighted candles following and preceding the stretcher upon which the dead man lay attired in nothing but his habit.

When the grave was reached the corpse was lowered upon the bottom layer of earth, with nothing but a brown habit between its embrace and the body of the dead. Then the father in charge of the infirmary stepped into the grave, and had the dead man's face in the brown cowl, and then the earth was heaped upon the body, and the new grave dug for the next to die after that for the living work and forgetfulness, and prayers through which to forget.

There were two safes. One of these was opened, and the papers it contained were found intact. The other at a late hour last evening was still hovering like Mahomet's coffin between heaven and earth, it having been built in the wall of the second or third story, above an arch which up to that time had resisted the flames, the ropes of the demolishing squads and even the dynamite.

A visit to the agricultural school, which has accommodation for two hundred students but nothing in the way of cloisters, showed large lofty airy apartments, turned into temporary curiosity shops, the contents of which were all objects one is accustomed to see in connection with Catholic churches.

The only heap of goods which did not recall the chapel, was that which had been saved from the shoeshop, and consisted of huge rolls of leather, and heaps of finished and partly finished boots, all of the heavy hob-nailed kind.

Amidst all the confusion, of people running hither and thither, and bringing in constantly new articles from the ruins, including a partially demolished group of Saluts, and other altar pieces, the priests, whose hour it was to spend their time in contemplation of the Scriptures, and prayers, went on with their devotion as if they were in their old cloisters, and in the very midst of it all, looked just the same as they did a few months ago in the monastery.

As night began to fall, there was no change in the scene about the ruined place. Visitors still kept coming, monks and students still kept working, and the moon only served to make it all more weird, more wonderful and more apparently unreal.

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