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THOMAS COFFEY.

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READING CIRCLES.

We are very glad to notice that Reading Circles are becoming more numerous in Canada, because, after the grace of God, nothing is more powerful in fashioning and ennobling the character than wholesome reading. Quickening and stimulating the intellect, it helps us to form a just estimate of our responsibility; it fixes more deeply in our minds the principles that should regulate our life and bestow upon us in the imparting of the garnered wisdom of ages a sure and efficacious antidote to the literary poisons of our day and a happiness and serene joy.

But our reading must be done methodically. Too often we are in the habit of skimming lightly over pages into which a man or woman has put his or her life blood. The Reading Circles aim to make their members read intelligently, and consequently with profit. That their success has been rapid and permanent is evidenced by their ubiquitousness and by the really excellent work of their members.

The grand characters of the past live again within the Reading Circle. Their influence and its secret are studied and their words, which fell heedless but a few years ago upon our ears, ring with an earnestness and harmony of which we never dreamed, and we come to understand why "men hearken to them and always hear."

Cardinal Newman has described in a few sentences that will live forever in English literature the effect of the classic authors upon the mind:

"Passages which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply—which he gets by heart and thinks very fine and imitates as he thinks successfully in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him when long years have passed and he has had experience of life; and they pierce him as if he had never before known them with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. Then he comes to understand how it is that lines—the birth of some chance moraine or evening at an Ionian festival or among the Sistine hills—have lasted generation after generation for thousands of years with a power over the mind and a charm which the current literature of the day, with all its obvious advantages, is utterly unable to rival."

To make some great thought, pulsating with the life of untold possibilities, is education truer and better than if we had but a superficial knowledge of all theologies. This assertion sounds strangely in these days of cram and false culture. We read everything and we know nothing. We attend lectures and we take our criticism from the newspapers. Every new book heralded by the critics is read with avidity. Who can measure the loss of time and the injury done to the living soul? God's image is defaced and defiled by the crude thoughts of the writer, and his name is legion, to whom mental culture and intellectual development are words without meaning.

Not that we should shrink from the perusal of every new book, but we should use much care and judgment in selecting such as will nourish our intellectual life and move us nearer to a truer and juster appreciation of what is good and true. This, of course, demands a nice sense of discrimination, but a well-balanced mind will avoid a poor book just as a pure heart will start back, startled, at the approach of pollution.

An old-fashioned author has well said that he always read an old book when he heard of a new one; and we should, if we took his advice to heart, suffer no appreciable loss. To be able to appreciate the art of a writer, his choice of words, his simplicity of diction, his suggestiveness, his purpose, is to have power and knowledge. This, however, demands study, not slipshod reading.

And our Reading Circles, aware of the influence of books, have conceived the purpose of grouping together young men and women who have set their faces against the false and pernicious ideas of this generation and who are going to draw from the works

of the masters the strength and enthusiasm that will keep them faithful to high ideals—to a contempt of the mean and sordid, to a love of their Catholicity that "strikes its roots into the historic past of man's noblest achievements and looks to the future with the serene confidence with which it looks to God."

THE CENTENARY OF MAYNOOTH.

The College of Maynooth, near Dublin, has just celebrated the centenary of its institution, and the event was in every respect one of the most interesting and imposing which have ever been witnessed in Ireland, whether from a religious or a social point of view.

The centenary was attended by Cardinal Vaughan, and many prelates of the English, American and Australian hierarchies, equally with that of Ireland. The rectors of the Irish College in Rome, and of the Propaganda, were also present, together with representatives from Salamanca, Louvain, and other Continental Universities.

When Maynooth College was established the penal laws against Catholics were somewhat relaxed in their operation, though not repealed until 1829, the year of Catholic Emancipation; and the Government tolerated its existence, not from any great desire that an opportunity should be given for the education of aspirants to the priesthood, but chiefly because it was discovered by that time that it was impossible to prevent priests from risking liberty and even life in order to administer to the spiritual wants of the people, and it was deemed better policy to allow them to be educated in the country, rather than that they should be compelled to seek in foreign countries the education necessary to enable them to fulfill their duties.

Very naturally, the British Government felt that it did not tend to strengthen the tie between Ireland and England, that Ireland should be entirely prohibited from educating her own clergy, as the fact that persecution was the obstacle to this could not but increase the animosity of the people towards the nation from which such persecution came.

The penal code under which Catholics suffered for three hundred years was as cruel as it was possible for human ingenuity to devise. It was never exceeded in Russia, and scarcely the persecutions of Christians more barbarous under the Pagan Emperors of Rome than in the three kingdoms which boasted that they revelled in the advantages of civil and religious liberty, and in the light of an open Bible!

Under this code it was prohibited for Catholics to teach school at all, and if any disobeyed the cruel enactment, they were successively fined, banished, and for a third conviction put to death.

Of course, under the operation of such laws, a theological college was an impossibility, and priests had to be educated for their work in Douai, Rheims, Louvain or other institutions on the continent.

It might well be expected that the priests thus educated would entertain no loving heart for the nation which had compelled them to prepare themselves surreptitiously for their great work; and their people, too, would naturally be angered, as the facts were more and more brought to their attention. For this reason, as well as because the spirit of toleration was beginning to extend its influence, the existence of Maynooth college was at first tolerated, and the institution itself was many years afterwards subsidized by Government as a slight offset to the wholesale robbery by which the Catholic Church in Ireland had been deprived of all her property and revenues and the further spoliation which was still inflicted on a Catholic people by the collection of tithes for the support of an alien Church, and taxes for an alien educational system, teaching a religion which the people abominated and repudiated.

Fifty years ago the Maynooth Government grant was, to the extreme Protestants, like a red flag flouted in the face of an angry bull, and the question of discontinuing it was frequently agitated by a certain clique in the House of Commons; but no attention was paid by any Government to these complaints. It was continued even as a matter of policy. Some complaints of it were made, however, from a very opposite quarter. Some well-meaning Irishmen imagined that the Maynooth grant acted as a bribe to the priesthood, or at least to those priests who were educated in the institution, making them unpatriotic

toward Ireland; and so they demanded that it should be cancelled.

Every dolt of justice, however slight, on the part of rulers toward the ruled contributes to some extent toward lightening the bitterness felt by the oppressed, and in this sense there may have been some such general influence even in the small pittance which Maynooth received towards the softening of asperities, and creating a hope of redress for injuries; and in this respect the Maynooth grant may have operated too; but that it operated as a bribe cannot be asserted by any one who knows how patriotic to Ireland were the clergy educated within its walls. As the eloquent Bishop Clancy of Elphin said in his sermon delivered at the Centenary Mass:

"There is no exaggeration in stating that the soul of every political movement of the century (for Ireland's relief) have been the priests educated at Maynooth."

They were foremost in aiding to bring about Catholic Emancipation, the Disendowment and subsequent Disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland, and they were the mainstay of the Repeal and Home Rule agitations. They have also maintained Catholic rights to Catholic education, and have contributed toward securing them.

No one stood forth more courageously than the "Lion of the fold of Judah" known as John of Tuam, in infusing courage and hopefulness into the heart of the people in their struggles for justice, yet he was for years a member of the college staff. The Maynooth grant was in fact but an infinitesimal part of the debt due to Ireland on account of past confiscations; but it was willingly surrendered in 1870 in order to secure the greater boon of relief to the people from the incubus of a Church establishment forced on them against their will. Since 1870 the grant has not been received, but this fact has in no way affected the priesthood educated in the institution.

Historic Maynooth has been, and will undoubtedly continue to be, the garden from which will proceed the seeds of religion, knowledge and piety which the Irish people have borne over a large extent of the world and planted in many a soil.

An affectionate response was sent to the faculty of the College by Pope Leo XIII. on the occasion of the Centenary, in reply to their address of loyalty and veneration towards the Holy See and the Supreme Pontiff personally.

BRUTAL MOBS.

Among the Tory press of England it has always been the habit to represent the conduct of Irishmen as disorderly at political gatherings, and especially during election campaigns. It is unfortunately true that from time to time there have been disorders in some localities, especially in Belfast and Londonderry, where the Orangemen are accustomed to disport themselves at wrecking the houses and seeking the lives of their Catholic neighbors, but it is very unjust to throw the blame of these escapades on the Catholic people of Ireland, or to infer that they are unfit to govern themselves, as these papers are wont to do. If such inferences are to be drawn from these occurrences they should be confined to those on whom the guilt rests.

The recent elections have been very peaceable in Ireland, so much so that the press telegrams report that there is a striking contrast between them and the brutality exhibited by mobs in many English constituencies.

Some particulars of these have been given in the cablegrams: thus, at Mile End, after the declaration of the poll, a man rushed forward at Lord and Lady Mountmore as they were entering their carriage, and struck the lady in the face with his fist, knocking her down, exclaiming: "She's the one that did it." So great was the force of the blow that Lady Mountmore was unconscious for a considerable time.

In East Norfolk there was also a horribly disgraceful riot. H. Rider Haggard, the novelist and the defeated Conservative candidate, was roughly received in many places, being pelted with stones and mud. At Latham his party was attacked by a mob of eight hundred persons, and Miss Hartcup, a member of the company, was cut on the head by a missile, so that she could not be moved from the hotel in which they took refuge.

At Walsham Mr. Haggard received an ovation and made a speech in which he said that in all his travels he had not seen such dastardly conduct.

As Mr. Haggard has travelled a good deal among the wild tribes of darkest Africa, especially among the Zulus, the comparison is not very complimentary to the people of enlightened England.

We do not draw any inference from these election riots to the effect that the people of England are unfit for self-government, for it is well known that in every crowd composed of a large number of people there are some who have brutal instincts and are ready for any disorderly conduct. But neither should an inference of this kind be drawn in respect to the occasional rioting which sometimes occurs in Ireland, especially in times of great excitement. Ireland has always compared very well with England in this respect, and the worst outrages have always been among the Orangemen, who constitute the alien garrison of the nation.

GOES THE WRONG ON.

Governor Hastings of Pennsylvania has signed the absurd religious garb Bill passed by the Legislature of the State. It is an Apatist measure, and its design was to prevent Catholic religious orders from being employed to teach the Public schools. There were only a couple of localities in which nuns were so employed, and from those they withdrew of their own accord, as they could not teach religion in them undisturbed.

The Parochial schools and other works which these good ladies have in charge are quite sufficient to occupy them, and they leave the Public schools without regret to lay Catholic lady teachers, who will ably fill their places. Thus the Catholics will not suffer from the law, though it was especially aimed at them.

The Lancaster *New Era*, one among the most influential Protestant newspapers of the State, thus gives utterance to the views of all liberal Protestants on the action of the Governor and Legislature in this matter:

"The religious garb bill has become law through Governor Hastings' approval. The Governor has given the people of Pennsylvania a good many surprises, but none greater than this one. It was believed that the injustice of the bill, so notorious to every unprejudiced man, would sway the Governor to do the courageous, manly thing. It turns out to have been a false hope, and the only loophole the chief magistrate has to escape through for doing what he, no doubt, believed was a most questionable act, was that the Legislature wanted it, and he, therefore, thought they should have it. Did they not also ask for every other measure he has vetoed? Why did it not occur to him to make this same excuse for his vetoes in those cases? It was a weak surrender to the demands of bigotry, and as such will be regarded by the best people of the Commonwealth with sorrow and pity—for the deed itself and pity for the doer."

But there is an amusing side to the matter. Catholics only laugh at the bill, as it does not hurt them; but in the Quaker State there are hundreds of thousands of disciples of William Penn, and of Aumish, Dunkards, and Seventh Day Baptists, Protestant sects of whose religion it is that their members should wear a distinctive garb, and the law was made so stringent by these wise legislators that suddenly the young men and women of these sects find themselves in the dilemma that they can no longer earn their living as Public school teachers unless they practically deny their religion by donning the profane secular costume!

All these sects are now in arms against the members of the Legislature who have thus struck a most serious blow at their religious liberties; and the legislators are trying to excuse themselves for the folly by saying that was not what they intended. The question now is: Will they go straightway to Canossa?

The incident reminds us of the old story: Three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl. If the bowl had been stronger, the story had been longer.

Very different from the folly and bigotry of Governor Hastings was the noble contempt shown for Apatism by Mayor Strong of New York city, who recently appointed Mr. Ford, a Catholic, and the brother of the proprietor of the *Irish World* and *Freeman's Journal*, to be Water Commissioner, of the city.

Mayor Strong, by thus setting the A. P. A. at defiance, has shown what he thinks of the A. P. A. boast which was so prominently made by them that he was their nominee for the mayoralty and that they elected him. We commend these facts to the attention of the Hamilton *Spectator* which (unwittingly perhaps?) gave prominence to

the A. P. A. boasts, not merely as to New York, but also in regard to the result of the last election throughout the United States.

THE PAN-AMERICAN CONGRESS.

The Pan-American Congress on Religion and Education assembled in Toronto on the 18th ult., in accordance with previous announcement, and continued in session till Tuesday, the 23rd.

The meeting was expected to bring a large number of visitors to the city, and in view of this many merchants subscribed liberally towards defraying its expenses. In this respect the reality fell below expectation, as the number of delegates in attendance numbered only about four hundred, and but few visitors were attracted to the city by the Congress.

At the opening meeting there was a fair audience of citizens, about seven hundred persons having assembled in the pavilion, to listen to the speeches, the principal object of the first meeting being to extend Toronto's welcome to the delegates. Mayor Kennedy, W. B. McMurrich, Q. C. and Rev. Dr. Sims tendered the welcome, the mayor reading an address, and the other two gentlemen making appropriate speeches.

A curious feature of Dr. Sims' speech was his dwelling upon his conviction that the congress demonstrated that common unity of religions is made possible because "right thinking conduces to right living, and deeds are of more importance than creeds."

We have no desire to belittle the importance of good deeds, of which the Apostle says that as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without good works is dead; but as there is a tendency nowadays to make little of the importance of faith in the dogmas of Christianity, we cannot give an unqualified approval to the expression of such a sentiment, when there is good reason to believe that its purpose is to encourage the belief that Christian faith is of no important at all.

The Holy Scripture tells us that "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and "He that believeth not shall be condemned." We do not disguise or ignore the fact that charity, which consists in love for God for his own sake, and love of our neighbor for God's sake, is pronounced to be the most enduring and highest of the virtues, but we cannot easily separate the flaunting of the superiority of deeds over creeds on such an occasion, from the suggestion nowadays, so frequently made, that all creeds are equal, and that no creed is as good as any; and we cannot but express our dissent from such a suggestion if it was meant by the reverend doctor, and somewhat similar to this appears to have been the meaning of the President of the Congress, the Rev. Dr. Samuel G. Smith, who very unnecessarily congratulated the convention because it was unauthorized by any ecclesiastical authority: it was, in fact, he stated, "a protest against ecclesiastical butting he-goats."

The Rev. Father Ryan of Toronto conveyed to the delegates the cordial welcome of his Grace the Archbishop of Toronto, and assured Dr. Smith that "here he would find no he-goats to butt against."

There is much common ground between those of different creeds, Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Gentile, if we cultivate the spirit of universal charity and good-will which Christianity inculcates, but we must not be thereby led into a denial of the truths of Redemption and other Christian dogmas, while in search of a basis for Christian, or social, unity.

In the course of the Congress, the Rev. Morgan Wood, of Detroit, made an uncalculated-for attack upon the Catholic Church which made it necessary for Rev. Father F. B. Ryan to rebut his charges, for the most part indirectly, but sometimes by direct reference, and by saying after several of his climaxes "this is not quoting something said by Mr. Wood." He caused much amusement by acknowledging that he did not understand what Mr. Wood meant by "Centripetal and Concentric Christianity." He asked that some one should explain, but the phrase remained without future light being thrown upon it.

Father Ryan's subject was the "Organization of Charity in the Catholic Church." He dealt with it ably, and pointed out that there are on this American continent, at the present moment, 12,000 Catholic women who devote their lives toward the relieving of every form of human suffering—the deaf and dumb, the blind, the lame, the insane, the poor. "Go and see them," he said. "This is more than

organized energy and philanthropy. The Catholic Church is the grandest charity organization in the history of the world, past or present. These women are the nuns or Sisters, who do not talk about what they do. They have left the world and ask no reward. He also spoke of the 90,000 brothers of St. Vincent de Paul—laymen, not priests—but princes, noblemen, clerks, merchants, men of all classes, who are engaged in various occupations, yet apply themselves to caring for the poor, making no noise about it. "This," he said, "is the fruit of the old theology which the speaker from Detroit dynamited so vigorously this morning."

Father Ryan was earnestly and vigorously applauded by the audience, the great majority of whom were Protestants, and if nothing else were done by the Congress than to give him the opportunity to reply to Rev. Mr. Wood, the Pan-American Congress was not held in vain.

On the last day of meeting the Rev. Dr. Conaty, of Rochester, read an able paper on Catholic Education, and what the Church has done for education, completely vindicating her from the attacks of those who accuse her of keeping the people in ignorance.

A BREEZY MEETING.

The Montreal presbytery had recently a stormy meeting at which the young ministers in charge of Presbyterian missions in the suburban districts of the city were charged by the Rev. Dr. Robt. Campbell with "trying to entice members of existing congregations to join their churches," that is to say, with attempting to steal the congregations of the city churches.

Dr. Campbell stigmatized this conduct as indecent and improper. These young ministers are in charge of the missions at Petit Cote and Maisonneuve, and they were in the habit of going about from house to house soliciting members of other Presbyterian churches to sever their connections with their old churches in order to join the mission churches. Members of his own congregation had been so solicited, and he desired that the presbytery should put a stop to such proceedings.

He explained that city pastors have great difficulty in maintaining their congregations, surrounded as they are by Catholics on one side, and by Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists on other sides. The Maisonneuve missionary especially, he added, apparently devotes his whole strength toward obtaining recruits for his church from existing congregations.

The facts revealed by Dr. Campbell explain any success which these mission churches may have attained. They are established for the purpose, especially, of propagating Presbyterianism among the Catholic French-Canadians, but in this respect they have failed of success, and are compelled to devote their energies to stealing away the congregations of other Presbyterian Churches in order to maintain themselves.

At the same meeting the Rev. Professor Scrimger, who a few years ago took so much pains to misrepresent the Jesuits as designing plotters, was accused by one of his brother ministers with plotting to get control of the records of old St. Gabriel church. He was told by the Rev. Mr. Crombie that the report of a committee of which Mr. Scrimger was chairman, was "ingenious" with this object in view. We presume that the ingenuity displayed was just what Rev. Mr. Scrimger would describe as "Jesuitism." It appears that his accusations against Jesuits have come home to roost.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

WHEN the present session of Parliament is over some of our statesmen from whom much was expected will have a glorious future behind them.

INGERSOLLISM is directly responsible for another suicide recently committed in New York: another, we say, but how many are there in all walks of life of whom we do not hear, who have embraced the same unhappy gospel of despair and irresponsibility to any higher power, act upon Bob Ingersoll's principle that it is better to leave the world by one's own hand than to endure trouble. Such persons do not reflect that

"Fear, guilt, despair and moonstruck frenzy
rush
in voluntary death. The wise, the brave,
When the fierce storms of fortune round them
roar,
Combat the billows with redoubled force."

That Col. Ingersoll's published letter maintaining the morality of suicide is responsible in the present instance is made clear by the following letter ad-