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CURRENT COMMENT

One month of 1905 gone already! How about those New Year resolutions? If a truthful answer to this question would jar you, read what Father A. B. O'Neill, C.S.C., writes in the New Freeman of St. John, N.B.

"While it is of course, most desirable that the man who swears off on Jan. 1st, should keep good his resolutions, not merely for a week or a fortnight, but throughout the full cycle of 1905, still it is an excellent thing to take a good resolution, even if it be kept only for a brief period. It is distinctly better to resolve and fail, than never to resolve at all; and the man who turns aside from the broad road of drunkenness, licentiousness, profanity, dishonesty or similar vicious highways, if only for a week or two at New Year's, has very surely gained something.

"While we may lament the instability of purpose that occasions his all too speedy return to the old routine, we must recognize the fact that at least he has made an effort which will certainly facilitate his future permanent reformation, that there is within him the still living consciousness that his life needs reforming—a truth less generally recognized by inconsistent Christians than is commonly believed to be the case. Viewed from the standpoint of Catholic theology, any course of action that diminishes the number of one's mortal or venial sins, is to be commended; and no genuine Christian philosopher will decry the practice of turning over a new leaf at New Year's, even though that leaf may too soon be as soiled as those that preceded it."

Thomas W. Lawson's brilliant articles on "Frenzied Finance" have been a real bonanza to Everybody's Magazine, sending its circulation up to dizzy heights; but the question is, will these revelations of dishonesty in high places make towards reform? Will they not rather encourage treachery and double dealing by betraying its universality? Most people are influenced by the thought, "They all do it." The only lasting incentive to reform is the awakening of conscience by a vivid portrayal of the internal agonies of a soul whose life is one series of lies, agonies which are a reflex of the coming judgment of the Inexorable Judge of all men. No doubt Mr. Lawson does occasionally give us glimpses of abject fear, ungovernable fury, piteous despair in the wrongdoers, but the general impression he conveys is a fascinating whirl of ever-recurring excitement, the very feeling that binds the gambler to his fatal passion.

The present crisis in the affairs of the Vatican having necessitated retrenchment, Pope Pius X. has so managed affairs that the expenses of the Holy See will be reduced yearly to the extent of a million of francs in normal times. The yearly savings will be much greater on extraordinary occasions, such as jubilees, when the contributions of Peter's Pence are wont to increase enormously.

It is refreshing to meet with a fairminded Protestant missionary like the Rev. John A. Stanton, who, while telling of his baptizing recently thirty-five Igorrotes in the Philippines, praises the Friars. "I take no credit to myself," he writes in the Lamp, "for the work of Christianizing them. The seed was sown long ago by Spanish priests."

When the United States bought over the Philippine Islands the popular cry among American Protestants was that now, at length, that

benighted archipelago would be moralized. Every subsequent year has proved that the invaders had much to learn from the natives in the realm of ethics. Quite lately Bishop Spalding, of Peoria, received a letter from Irving Winslow, the secretary of the New England Anti-Imperialist League, in which he says:

It seems to me that it is our duty in every way to aid and hasten that preparation (for Philippine independence) and, from my point of view, to bring about a condition of things in which the Aglipayan schism can no longer receive aid and comfort from the irreligious example of the American military and civil officers, speculators and exploiters.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the disregard of religious duty, which has spread so rapidly in the Philippine Islands, is directly due to this example. Our soldiers began by violating churches and looting the holy vessels and sacred vestments, and the general tone of the invaders has been contemptuous to every form of religion. Such protection as has been given to property rights very inadequately compensates for the moral harm that has been done.

If the disaffection in Russia should continue to spread, and especially if, as it is feared, war should break out between England and Russia, Poland will strive to resume her place among the independent nations of Europe. Multitudes of Poles look forward to the fulfilment of a prophecy made a hundred years ago and not understood at the time, to the effect that Poland would come to life again when Russia had been defeated by a nation then unknown in Europe, and England would complete the task which the unknown nation, now easily recognizable as Japan, had already begun. In the October number of the Review of Reviews Mr. Stead related an interview he had with Mr. Lutoslavski, the author of "The Polish Republic," who was reported as saying: "The resurrection of Poland draws near. When Russia and Germany are defeated by the great alliance of England, America, France and Japan, then my country will rise from the tomb and take its place among the great States of the World." When Mr. Stead, with those false views of past history which go far to explain his lack of perspective in current events, objected that Russia has been the bulwark of Europe against the Asiatic Yellow Peril, Mr. Lutoslavski exclaimed: "The Yellow Peril! Russia is the Yellow Peril. It was and is the Poles who are the vanguard of Western civilization against the Asiatic. It was the Poles who swept the Turks back from the walls of Vienna. It was the Poles, who, for a thousand years, manned the ramparts of Europe against the Tartarised Muscovite. The Russians did not stem the tide of Asiatic invasion. They were engulfed by it—transformed, Tartarised. Their Tsar is but the Tartar Khan. Their system of Government is Oriental." This Polish view of the Russian character has been crystallized in the French adage: "Grattez le Russe, vous trouverez le Tartare" (Scratch off the outward polish of the Russian and you will find the Tartar). Language, which is so faithful an index to character, gives to Poland an acknowledged superiority over all the other Slavic nations, Russia not excepted. In flexibility, richness, power and harmony the Polish is hardly excelled by any other language in the world; its grammatical structure is fully developed and firmly established, its orthography precise and perfect. Hence it comes that even here in America a Polish audience is known to be extremely hard to please. Congregations clamor for priests who speak their language correctly, without any admixture of foreign idiom or accent.

To return to Mr. Lutoslavski's prophecy, when Mr. Stead asked him whether Poland would be a monarchy or a republic, he replied: "Republic, of course. She was always a republic, even when she crowned the man of her choice and called him King. Poland, as she will emerge from her sepulchre, will be a great State, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Riga, Konigsberg and Dantzic will be her sea-gates in the north; Odessa her seaport on the Euxine. She will be composed of three races: the Poles proper, twenty millions; the Ruthenians, twenty millions; and the Lithuanians, five millions. Besides these there are many Russians and Germans—minorities—so that the Polish Republic will start with a population of fifty millions. These will be the real bulwark of civilization against the Yellow Peril, the impregnable rampart garrisoned by an educated moral, incorruptible and religious race, against which all the waves of the Tartarized mongrelism, called Muscovy, will beat in vain." Should this forecast, so interesting at the present juncture, ever come true, Poland will have to remodel her former constitution, fortifying it with checks and counterchecks against those internal dissensions which once left her naked to her enemies.

Akin to the subject of the preceding paragraph are the reflections suggested by Mr. F. Cunliffe-Owen's article in the January "Munsey" on "The Strange Dilemma of the King of Saxony." The writer himself summarizes his article in these words: "Frederick Augustus III. is divorced from his wife by the Supreme Court of Dresden and refuses to recognize her as his queen, although the Church to which both he and she belong does not recognize divorce. Will he evade the difficulty by becoming a Lutheran?" Mr. Cunliffe-Owen reminds his readers how Marie Louise, then Crown Princess of Saxony, born a royal princess of Tuscany and of Hungary, and an archduchess of the Imperial house of Austria, eloped with Professor Giron, her boy's Belgian tutor, just before Christmas 1902. Though the scandal was of a most sensational character, the sympathy of the Saxon people returned to the unfortunate princess, when Saxon, Austrian and Swiss specialists concurred in attributing the mad act to dementia, resulting from the delicate condition of her health three months before the birth of her sixth child. When the mother recovered her reason after the birth of the little princess, Anne Monica, and realized the nature and inevitable consequences of the scandal in which she had become involved, the horror of the discovery was so intense that for several days she hovered between life and death. It was hoped that the former Crown Prince, now become King, would relent, for the impression prevailed that he was deeply attached to his wife. But, on the contrary, he declines to recognize her as his consort. He has issued a notification in the official Gazette at Dresden that there can be no question of any reconciliation between the former Crown Princess and himself, either now or at any future time. She is expressly prohibited from styling herself either Crown Princess or Queen of Saxony. Catholics, however, for whom there can be no divorce, continue to regard as the lawful Queen of Saxony the unhappy lady now officially known as Countess Montignoso and Princess of Tuscany. Mr. Cunliffe-Owen's conclusion is this: "The situation would, of course, be greatly changed if Frederick Augustus should abandon his faith and join the Lutheran Church, to which the great majority of his four million subjects belong. That he may take this step is indicated by the fact that the new King, breaking with the practice of his predecessors,

has appointed a number of Lutherans to court offices hitherto held by Catholics. It may be remembered that his family were Lutherans until they adopted Catholicism in order to qualify themselves for the throne of Poland, long since lost. Only by reverting to the Protestant Church, it seems, can the new King of Saxony set at rest the doubts which prevail as to the precise status of his former wife." In this direct bid for perversion to a sect that introduced divorce into Christendom there is one historical inaccuracy. It cannot be truly said that the "family" of Frederick Augustus "adopted Catholicism in order to qualify themselves for the throne of Poland." No doubt the conversion of Frederick Augustus I. (Elector of Saxony) in 1697, coming as it did four weeks before his election, which was secured by electoral corruption on a large scale, to the throne of Poland, might have seemed a compromise between conscience and interest; but he was only one member of the family and its conversion had begun before him. The first member of the House of Saxony to return to the old faith was Christian Augustus, who became a Catholic in November, 1689, and was afterwards bishop and Cardinal. He it was who persuaded Frederick Augustus to abjure Protestantism. When the latter had been crowned King of Poland (as Augustus II.) he gave proof of the sincerity of his faith by choosing as his confessor the Jesuit Father Vota, the friend of John Sobieski, who was the immediate predecessor of King Augustus. After settling the most pressing affairs of his new kingdom he returned to his hereditary Electorate, and with more zeal than discretion contemplated the destruction of Protestantism by force. But Father Vota, who accompanied him, dissuaded him from using violent measures, and succeeded in convincing him that freedom of discussion would suffice to soften hearts and enlighten minds. Meanwhile the heir apparent to the Electorate (for Saxony did not become a Kingdom until 1806) was growing up a Lutheran under the care of his Lutheran mother and grandmother. His father, hoping to convert him, planned a trip through Italy. At Bologna the young prince met Father Salerno, whom he had already seen at Dresden, where this Jesuit had acted as theologian to the Nuncio, Annibale Albani, and, ere long, the youth eagerly studied the doctrines of the Church. He made his profession of Catholic faith in the hands of Father Salerno on the 27th of November, 1712, and seven years later was married in Vienna to one of the Austrian Archduchesses. As a matter of course all his children were brought up as Catholics. The Electors and Kings of Saxony have remained Catholic ever since in spite of all sorts of incentives to embrace Protestantism, which is the religion of 98 per cent. of their subjects, and of the majority of the neighbouring German principalities. This sketch, brief as it is, suffices to prove that the kingship of Poland had only an indirect influence on the conversion of the House of Saxony.

Either the Winnipeg Tribune must have been short of copy or it must be reverting to the bigotry of its early days when it demeaned itself by republishing last Saturday E. E. Sheppard, the Toronto "Saturday Night" owl's virulent hooting against Separate Schools. One or two specimens will be enough to show the weakness of that bitterly anti-Catholic writer's arguments. "When the Catholics have been or are in the majority, who ever hears of the rights of the minority? Quebec may not be quoted, for the public school there is the Roman Catholic school." This is no answer. The real answer is that Quebec does respect the claims of

the minority as fully as that minority desires, giving them in their separate schools a freedom and an independence utterly unknown in the Catholic separate schools of Ontario and the Northwest. Again "When Rome ruled, were there public schools?" Yes, there were. As early as 1597, hundreds of years before the Protestant public school system was established, St. Joseph Calasanctius founded the public schools of the City of Rome, which were really free schools, for which nobody was obliged to undergo compulsory taxation. And years before that there were public schools adjoining innumerable monasteries in the Middle Ages. And before the medieval period there were public schools in most of the large Catholic centres, as at Alexandria in Egypt.

The Provincial Government statistics, published less than a month ago give the population of Winnipeg as 67,265. Henderson's Directory published on Tuesday, Jan. 31, estimates the same population at 97,401. There is thus a difference of over 30,000, almost one third of the total, between the two estimates. The Government estimate is, confessedly, too low, a warning to that effect having been added to the list of populations. Henderson's estimate is far too high, and at any rate it is based on an arbitrary system, the result of which this year was so astounding as to force the publishers of the Directory to reduce their multiplier. Winnipeg's population is probably 80,000.

With regard to the live question of the taxation of church property the judicial opinion, which we begin to publish in this issue, ought to have great weight with those legal gentlemen who frame the laws of this country. The fact that this decision was rendered, not by one of His Majesty's judges, but by an American judge in an Ohio court, does not detract from the intrinsic value of the precedent, for our best lawyers here continually quote judicial decisions from the United States. We would call attention especially to the principles so clearly expressed in the following two sentences quoted in this decision:—"The fact that a school which is conducted as a charity is under the exclusive management and control of a particular religious denomination or sect will not deprive it of its exemption from taxation as a purely public charity if the general public is admitted, even though the members of the sect which conducts the school are preferred"

"An institution does not lose its charitable character and consequent exemption from taxation by reason of the fact that those recipients of its benefits who are able to pay are required to do so, where no profit is made by the institution, and the amounts so received are applied in furthering its charitable purposes, and its benefits are refused to none on account of inability to pay therefor."

Clerical News

Monsignor George Hobart Doane, who died on the 20th ult., was a prominent figure among the large cluster of Catholics in the southern half of New-York State and New Jersey. He was born in 1830, was the son of Rt. Rev. Washington Doane, Episcopal bishop of New Jersey, and the brother of Rt. Rev. William C. Doane, Episcopal bishop of Albany. Ordained deacon, he was assistant to Rev. Dr. Stewart, of Grace church, Newark, when he became a Catholic in 1855. Then he went to study at St. Sulpice, in Paris, and at the Collegio Pio in Rome, whence he returned to be ordained priest in St. Patrick's cathedral, Newark, on Sept. 13th, 1857. At the outbreak of the civil war Father Doane went to the front as chaplain and was under fire