

## THE DECLINE OF PROTESTANTISM

### A FORGIBLE AND Eloquent LECTURE BY RIGHT REVEREND J. LANCASTER SPALDING, BISHOP OF PEORIA.

The Protestant Decline remarkable everywhere, but most of all in America.

(Concluded from our last.)

More remarkable far, and more worthy of attention, in the history of Methodism in the United States, a sect which a hundred years ago was hardly known, but whose rapid progress has placed it at the head of the Protestant Churches of this country.

#### METHODISM

originated in a sentiment; enunciated in its early stages no new doctrine, developed no distinctive theory of belief. All that Wesley asked of those who wished to be admitted to his society was "a desire to flee the wrath to come and be saved from sin." The awakening of his own religious sentiment had been occasioned by reading the works of Thomas a Kempis and Taylor, and the opportunity for the revival which he started was found in the abandonment and spiritual death of the masses of the people in England, where to the religious frenzy and fanaticism of the Great Rebellion had succeeded an almost incredible apathy and unbelief upon which the clergy of the established Church looked with solid indifference. But in the heart of Wesley the sight of this misery stirred up the fire of an unquenchable zeal. A change in his view was brought about by a acquaintance with the Herrnhutters. To them he was indebted for the doctrine of justification by faith, manifested in sudden and convulsive conversion. "God gives us," he said, "in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translates us out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear, into holiness and happiness." It was on the 29th of May, 1739, in Aldersgate street London, at a quarter before nine o'clock, that this assurance of divine election was given to John Wesley, not without violent internal commotions and upheavings of his whole being. More than any other, this doctrine of conversion has determined the history of Methodism, as it is this teaching of Wesley which his followers have above all seized, and which they have ever been eager to hold forth as the essential part of his legacy to them. As this is the one thing necessary, the whole aim of preachings is to develop the outward miraculous signs of the divine election, and it therefore became sensational, startling, soul-harrowing. The result was often marvellous. To the wild and frantic appeals of the preacher, the people at times responded with shrieking and roaring, and gasping, as though they were half strangled. Some grew red or black in the face, and fell down as in a fit or dead. Whole congregations were seized with uncontrollable jerking and contortions. In the exaltation of spiritual ecstasy they shouted, jumped, clapped their hands, saw visions. Heard the songs of angels. Nothing was extravagant, all things were possible. Those who were seized with these attacks believed them to proceed from the divine influence. They were certain; and their appearance and enthusiasm created like states of feeling in others, and the faith spread.

God had visited his people. There was a new outpouring of the Spirit. The regenerate were made perfect,—all impulse to sin, even involuntary, perished within them. If there was contagion in this exaltation, there was also danger. Mortal man believes himself an angel at his peril. When he takes wings it is probable he will trail them in the mire.

Antinomian views readily insinuated themselves into the minds of the regenerate and presanctified. Their election was such; for them there was no law. Fletcher, a disciple of Wesley and friendly to the cause of Methodism, says in his "Checks to Antinomianism;" "Antinomian principles have spread like wild fire among our societies. Many persons speaking in the most glorious manner of Christ, and of their interest in His complete salvation have been found living in the grossest immoralities. How few of our societies, where cheating, extorting or some other evil hath not broke out, and given such shakes to the Ark of the Gospel, that, had not the Lord interposed, it must have been overset." He cites the words of Hill, a Methodist, who taught "that even adultery and murder do not hurt the pleasant children, but rather work for their good; God sees no sin in believers, whatever sin they may commit."

In Scotland and Ireland Methodism made but little headway; in England its success was greater, and in the United States a field was opened in which it has won its most brilliant victories.

Its history in this country began with the little congregation of English emigrants who met in 1766 in Philip Embury's carpenter shop on Barrack St. New York. Ten years later Wesley counted seven thousand followers in the United States, and in 1784 the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally declared to exist by the sixty preachers who had met in conference at Baltimore.

#### CAUSES OF ITS RAPID GROWTH.

The growth of the new sect has been rapid. Its churches have multiplied at the rate of two a day, and are at present estimated at 25,000, with a corresponding number of preachers. The property of the organization is valued at \$80,000,000, and the number of communicants in 1872 was 2,047,876. Methodism here, as in England, first found acceptance among the poor and ignorant. Its worship was performed in barns, in back streets, in open fields, and in the primeval forest. Its preachers, many of whom were laymen, were in general as rude and unlettered as the crowds to whom they spoke. In the audience and in the speaker there was the fittest preparation for the wild and startling oratory by which the vulgar mind is uplifted and tossed like a ship in a stormy sea. How susceptible to such influences the masses of the people in this country were, had been shown in the first Great American Revival of 1740, in which the English Methodist Whitefield took so prominent a part. Though a clergyman of the Church of England, always looked upon with suspicious jealousy, especially in New England, his preaching was listened to with unbounded enthusiasm by the descendants of the cold and unemotional Puritans.

Whenever he went to Boston the churches were too small to hold the people who followed him, at one time as many as twenty thousand, to the Common, and stood for hours in a drizzly rain, most of them weeping. He passed from Georgia to New Hampshire, preaching always to large crowds, and with visible effect. His hearers were gathered from all the contending sects of Protestantism, which was the best evidence of the religious restlessness and dissatisfaction then existing. In violation of their fundamental principle, all the sects had dogmatized, and with a fanaticism as intense as it was narrow, had built up doctrinal walls of separation, which they sought to defend with desperate courage. As a result, their prevailing spirit was sour, contentious and unlovely. From the arid and bitter fields of controversy, the people rushed like thirsting flocks to fresh water, to this new preaching, which spoke to the heart and the imagination; there is exhaustless force in appeals to the soul's inborn consciousness of God's justice and mercy; and the craving for immortal life will always bring hearers to him who doubts not his power to point the way to heaven.

In their sinner moods, men do not question the eternal verities. They feel that it is unquenchable

pitiful to quibble about God, the soul, sin, death, and judgment, and whenever these divine truths cease to impress the mass of mankind as the most solemn and awful realities of which it is possible for us to think, human reason will have sunk to the level of brutish instinct. The power of the early Methodist preaching lay chiefly in its appeal to the sentiments which are a part of our religious nature. Take away the extravagance, the shouting and hysterical convulsions believed to be the workings of God's spirit, and the sermons were but repetitions of truths which have been announced in the Church from the beginning. The necessity of salvation, the merits of the passion and death of our Lord, the need of repentance, the evil of sin, the efficacy of prayer, the sweet joy of a holy life, God's justice and mercy, are not subjects which Methodism or any other form of Protestantism has introduced into the Christian pulpit. The success of Wesleyanism was no doubt due in part to the strong relief in which it placed truths that had been lost sight of in the midst of theological wranglings.

#### FEED BY RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE.

The religious ignorance of the poorer classes was also favorable to its progress. Here, as everywhere, they were neglected by the dominant Protestant sects, that their Christianity had become a mere tradition—a half political and half religious bias. They were not sceptical, for they did not think enough on religious subjects to doubt; but only a trumpet's sound could rouse them from the deep apathy and indifference into which they had sunk. Nevertheless, they were not irreligious. Scattered over the plains, dwelling in the midst of illimitable forests, surrounded by danger, exposed to hardship, they lived separated from human society, in daily and necessary communion with nature. Though strong of heart, a sense of their helplessness and dependence was forced on them. In the midst of the blind and pitiless work ages of irresistible and all-crushing natural forces, man is like a feeble child without human companionship. He feels that God alone can redeem him from the iron grip of senseless destiny. In the presence of a foe that is superhuman, he appeals to a power who is supernatural. He is credulous, superstitious even; and rude like the nature which surrounds him, is slow to find anything extravagant or absurd. To populations of this kind, the early Methodist preachers appealed with startling effect and a zeal, made confident by success. They traversed mountains and valleys, swam rivers and waded through miasmatic swamps, to carry the light of Wesley's Gospel to those who were sitting in the shadow of death. They taught no creed, and despised learning, which they easily might do, for hardly one of them had received a college education. God had called them, and had sent them to preach, as He had called St. Paul. They had the testimony of His spirit in their hearts, dream dreams, saw visions, and heard God's voice. Their preaching was wild and incoherent. Suddenly the spirit moved them; they shouted and yelled, rubbed their hands, and jumped about in a manner which, to the dispassionate spectator, could not but seem most ludicrous, but which exercised over their hearers a magnetic influence, so that they too were seized by the spirit and shouted and were lifted up to glory. In this lay the power of Methodism, as this in the eyes of the believers was the all-sufficient proof of its truth. Arguments were superfluous; they had the testimony of God's approval in their hearts, and if any doubted they had but to look to see the miraculous workings of the divine Spirit. That some were hypocrites, the most ardent defenders of Wesley's doctrine will admit; that many were sincere no impartial inquirer can doubt. In honest fanaticism there is a fearful power. It creates those exalted moods in which the passions of the soul become contagious and are caught by multitudes and nations. Sound and fury are empty and impotent unless they proceed from the deeply feeling heart within. The early Methodists believed that they were inspired and they inspired others. In this mood it is easy to understand that their religious exaltation was heightened by the contempt in which the other Protestant sects held them.

"In routing out a nest of consecrated cobblers," said the Rev. Sidney Smith, writing in 1809; and "in bringing to light such a perilous heap of trash as we were obliged to work through, in our articles upon the Methodists and Missionaries, we are generally conceived to have rendered a useful service to the cause of rational religion;" and he protests his firm resolve to do all in his power to save "sober Christianity" from being eaten up "by the nasty and numerous vermin of Methodism." In his eyes the Methodists were "canting hypocrites and raving enthusiasts—despised by the learned and despised by the vulgar." "Give us back our wolves again—restore our Danish invaders—curse us with any evil but the evil of a canting, deluded and Methodistical populace. Wherever Methodism extends its baneful influence, the character of the English people is constantly changed by it. Boldness and rough honesty are broken down into meanness, prevarication and fraud." Language like this only inflamed the zeal and intensified the characteristic peculiarities of the Wesleyans. The sneer of the worldling, the scorn of the well-to-do and comfortable, the contempt of the polite and learned, served but to give them a stronger conviction that there was the spirit of Him who was born in a manger, who wrought in the shop of a mechanic, whose friends were the poor, and who sent to preach the Gospel rude and ignorant fishermen. The Methodist doctrine of sudden conversion and sanctification had necessarily a tendency to make those who accepted it a peculiar people, and the ridicule which was founded upon their preaching and worship widened the chasm between them and world. In their opinion the wheat is separated from the cockle, the roody from the ungodly, in this world, even now. How powerful this impression was may be seen at a glance by whoever will take the trouble to run through the pages of any Methodist newspaper or magazine published in the early part of this country. They were the pleasant children, the friends of the Redeemer, a godly race, with the seal and sign of election upon their souls. A special and miraculous Providence attended them. Thunderstorms, sudden deaths and all manner of divine visitations and judgments waited upon their preachers to confirm their teachings or to strike terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. Their self-consciousness and sectarian zeal increased with the sense of isolation. They grew intensely classish; were guided by religious feeling in their commercial dealings and political sympathies and used all manner of worldly influence to promote the interests of the sects. In accounting for the success of Methodism in the United States it is important not to lose sight of the sensationalism which is inherent in American character. Our love of novelty, desire of change, eager search after new experiences, readiness to put faith in quackery and patent medicines, belief in spirit-rapping, render American society a most proper soil for the sprouting and growth of religious sects; and we can imagine none more to this phase of popular character than Methodism, which lays but little stress upon dogma and obedience, and holds inward impulse to be the voice of God and the safest line of conduct. Pure subjectivism in religion is evil, but when states of soul are believed to be the results of immediate and special divine influences, the victims of such delusion fall a prey to the wildest and most extravagant fanaticism. The miraculous becomes for them God's ordinary Providence; the laws of nature are suspended and they live in a wonderful world, to the vulgar mind, is full of enchantment.

This peculiar mental state which Methodism creates fits it above all other sects for religious revivalism. The decay and indifference that are constantly weakening the life of Protestantism are attended by periodical spasmodic reactions, called revivals, awakenings, outpourings of the Spirit, and to these chiefly the sects owe what fitful and feverish activity they are able to maintain. In agitations of this kind Methodism first made its power felt; and this agency has been employed with great success by the disciples of Wesley. It was already a great gain for them that the principle of revivalism was accepted by the other sects; for was not this acceptance an implied admission of the Methodist doctrine of conversion?

*Edinburgh Review, 1809, art. Methodism.*

This peculiar mental state which Methodism creates fits it above all other sects for religious revivalism. The decay and indifference that are constantly weakening the life of Protestantism are attended by periodical spasmodic reactions, called revivals, awakenings, outpourings of the Spirit, and to these chiefly the sects owe what fitful and feverish activity they are able to maintain. In agitations of this kind Methodism first made its power felt; and this agency has been employed with great success by the disciples of Wesley. It was already a great gain for them that the principle of revivalism was accepted by the other sects; for was not this acceptance an implied admission of the Methodist doctrine of conversion?

In the great awakening of 1740 Methodist phenomena broke forth in all the various Protestant Churches. The movement may be said to have originated in the preaching of the Calvinistic Edwards; and while it lasted dogmatic differences seemed to be forgotten. The preachers of the different denominations very generally agreed in considering it a miraculous visitation; which in their sermons and writings they designated as "the great work of God," "the glorious work of God's grace," "the day of God's power," "the great outpouring of the Spirit," "the dread majesty of God filling heaven and earth."

Protests there undoubtedly were against this interpretation of the phenomena, as, for instance, in the Presbyterian church, in which this awakening produced the schism of the *Old Lights* and the *New Lights*, the former opposing, the latter approving the novel spiritualistic manifestations. The general current, however, of thought and feeling in all the sects flowed with the movement, carrying what is known as Evangelical Christianity into the unquiet and vexed sea of revivalism.

This was a critical epoch in the history of American Protestantism. The orthodox became revivalists; the Liberals committed themselves more openly to the rationalistic interpretation of the Scriptures. Among the Evangelicals a seeming homogeneity of sentiment, if not of belief, came into existence, founded upon the theory that religion is an emotional experience, not a dogmatic teaching. The positive basis of the Christian religion was thus undermined by both parties. The Liberals, upon intellectual grounds, strove more and more to eliminate the truths of revelation, and the sentimentalism of the orthodox logically drove them to take up a like position. Both placed the subjective above the objective. What, however, I am now insisting on is the acceptance of the principle of revivalism by the evangelical sects of the United States, for to this fact more than to anything else the Methodist ascendancy in this country is attributable. Other influences too have their effect, as, for instance, the conduct of the Methodists during the pro and anti-slavery agitations which found their settlements through the civil war. In the North, the followers of Wesley were the bitterest opponents of slavery, and in the South, its warmest advocates. So intense was the feeling that it led to a schism which, instead of weakening, strengthened the cause of Methodism by winning to it the sympathy of the fanatical political factions of the North as well as the South. Among the negroes, also, it met with great favor. The wild and startling appeals of the preachers impressed their rude imaginations, and in the excitement of revivals and camp meetings they found opportunities for indulging in those passionate sensations, half religious and half animal, which are so congenial to their nature. As the chief requisite in a preacher was the ability to shout, there was little difficulty in obtaining a negro ministry, to the efficacy of whose labors rudeness and ignorance were not obstacles. Much, too, must be attributed to the fact that Methodism was a new fanaticism, full of the enthusiasm and freshness that belong to a young life and faith. But after all has been said its success is noteworthy only when compared with the failure of other sects. In 1875, there were two million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand Methodists in the United States, divided into some eleven or twelve different bodies. The communicants of all the Protestant churches amounted to something over seven millions. About one-third, therefore, are Methodists. This preponderance is beyond doubt an injury to the cause of Protestantism and one of the elements most active in helping on its dissolution. It has turned public thought from doctrinal to sensational religion, and has ignored the reasonableness of faith. When the churches acknowledge their dogmas and creeds to be doubtful or unimportant, this confession of impotence necessarily produces indifference in their adherents. Belief must be in something definite and it must be all-important. Methodism, by reducing religion to an experience, a sensation, must end in indifference and scepticism. Error of feeling is not at our command, nor, when possessed, is it easily retained. The early zeal of the Wesleyans has already cooled. They no longer shoot, fall into ecstasy, see visions as in the good old days that are gone. It is not sufficient now that a preacher should hear the call of heaven; he must be educated. The simplicity of dress and peculiar manners which the Methodists once affected, and which greatly helped to spread their opinions, are forgotten, the religion of cobblers, blacksmiths and backwoods farmers is clothed in broadcloth. Methodism is respectable, and henceforth harmless.

To the anti-dogmatic theory of religion, I attribute the almost universal acquiescence of the Protestants of this country in the common school system of education. Since religion is an experience, they argue, it cannot be learned; since it is independent of dogmas, it cannot be taught. The school and the church, education and religion have nothing in common. This is the most fatal blunder that American Protestants could have made. In the atmosphere of the common schools their faith must surely die, is already dying.

#### PROSPECTS OF PROTESTANTISM IN AMERICA.

It would be tedious to pass in review the innumerable sects which, in this country, are struggling to maintain a feeble existence; and we make no apology for declining the task since its performance would be as useless as uninteresting. Rather, from a higher plane, let us take a general survey of the actual state of Protestant sectarianism. In a population of over forty millions, after a hundred years of perfect freedom, some hundred sects or more hold, with what power of grasp they may, seven millions of members. If we reckon the Catholics at seven millions, there remain some thirty millions who are neither Protestant nor Catholic, but simply indifferent to all forms of religion. No words, it would seem, could add to the significance of this fact, which of itself proves the hopeless failure of Protestantism in the United States. And yet this is but a partial view of the religious condition of the country. Church membership itself has lost meaning. People join the church as they seek admission to a club; for social or aesthetic reasons. They like the preacher, or the singers, or the worshippers. Congregations hire their ministers not for their orthodox faith, but for their power to interest or entertain them. The preacher's social gifts have a financial value. "What ability there is, in the ministry is found almost exclusively in the large cities. The same law that drives the fastest speakers to the metropolitan pulpits. There the highest prices are paid. The churches grow more and more aristocratic and exclusive; while God's poor are left to God's care. No great mind, devoid of Evangelicalism to-day. In fact, what feeble advocacy is given to Protestantism is given to it not as a doctrine or a religion, but as a tendency.

It is valued as an auxiliary of scepticism and free thought. The preachers themselves take a hesitating and apologetic tone when speaking on religious subjects. They are no longer absorbed by the conviction that they are fighting the battle of God. The Protest of Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, which seemed to have almost a divine earnestness and efficacy, has died away into a feeble echo. Protestants would no longer protest did not the Catholic Church protest against them. The popular sermon is rationalistic, sentimental, fantastic, humanitarian, literary, anything rather than religious. Read the titles of these discourses in the newspaper advertisements. They are frivolous, odd, unworthy, whimsical, startling, as though they were the product of the genius which has invented the showman's handbill and theatrical poster. The revival, through which chiefly Protestantism strives to win adherents is growing day by day less effective; and its success seems to be greatest when in the hands of laymen. This is a significant fact, though it is by no means the only evidence of the declining influence of the Protestant clergy. As sectarianism rejects the sacerdotal character, its ministers are only laymen. The sacredness of the office is lost sight of, and the man is valued merely for his gifts. This raises the individual above the church, and it need not surprise us that Protestantism should lack the power to depose a preacher who is eloquent or censure a member who is rich. If the church excommunicates Mr. Beecher or Dr. Swing, Mr. Beecher and Dr. Swing will excommunicate the church. The world will applaud and their followers will worship them as heroes. The Protestant theory and practice of church communion has destroyed the Christian family, without whose sacred influence there is no hope of better things. Has the Christian family any existence among the Protestants of this country? The father is a Christian, or the mother is a Christian, but the family as such, like the State, is godless, knows no religion. This is the inevitable result of the Protestant discipline of communion with the church and the Methodist doctrine of conversion. "The father, who is a heathen, is not to blame; even his believing wife must feel this; for he has not been convicted of sin, has not been seized upon by the divine Spirit. It is not his fault that he is not a Christian. The children use similar arguments and the Christian family becomes impossible. Indifference follows, and all distinction between Christian and heathen, believer and unbeliever, is lost. What man believes, they tell us, is of minor importance; his faith cannot be wrong if his life is worthy. This bald transparent platitude finds acceptance like a current coin, and the souls of men fall into lethargic somnolence beneath the eye of the living God. In the meanwhile the moral tone of the whole country sinks. Impurity and dishonesty infect the social body. The rich are avicious, the poor are selfish, and both are sceptical and earthly minded. Men despair of finding a Divine being or a great cause. They eat and drink, and are not filled; their heart is hungry, the soul lacerated with matter.

#### THE SYSTEM FINDS NO PLACE FOR WOMAN'S WORK.

Another cause of the failure and decline of Protestantism is to be found in its failure to recognize the religious value and mission of woman. Her nature is more reverent, her love deeper and more constant, her power of self-devotion and self-immolation greater than man's. She cannot enter the priesthood. Public speech makes her coarse and common, and therefore degrades her. Yet is she most religious, and there is in her the faculty, if rightly developed, to make herself very eminent. The gift of God's merciful and ministering love to the poor, the orphan, the sick and suffering children of men, whom Jesus loved; and to thousands there is no higher evidence of the divinity than in religion than these works of Christian charity. What has Protestantism to say to the high-souled young woman who comes and asks to consecrate the love of a virgin heart to those who have none to console them? It tells her to get married and distribute tracts or become a Methodist class-leader. Hence the poor in hospitals and asylums find no meek-faced Sister to speak to them of the love and mercy of their Father in heaven; but only the heartless ministrations of a hired service. Little wonder is there that they should fall from away Christ and His religion. The Protestant horror of celibacy has had other consequences not less fatal than the rejection of woman. It has led to a married priesthood, which is necessarily both weak and expensive. When wealthy, it is aristocratic, and has neither the disposition nor the power to control the masses; and in poverty, it grows dispendent and cringes. It lacks the courage of its convictions without which no public teaching can be efficacious. Nor must it be forgotten that the charm and power of preaching, which is the vital act in Protestant worship, are constantly diminishing in presence of the growing influence of the press. People who go to church merely or chiefly to hear the sermon, will easily persuade themselves that they may just as well stay at home and read it next morning in the newspapers. The attempt to make the Protestant service attractive by having recourses to art must necessarily fail. The alliance of art with religion was fiercely denounced by the early reformers, and the beautiful and poetic symbolism of the Church was rudely and ignominiously rejected. The aesthetic tendencies now so pronounced in the sects are unmistakable evidences of decay. They are contrary to the true Protestant spirit, and hence are either empty shows or advances to Rome. Much has lately been written of the dangers which threaten Protestantism from the loss of the masses; and a partial return to the usages and discipline of the Catholic Church has been suggested as the most certain means of regaining the hearts of the people. The naive of such a proposition is almost incredible. When Protestantism will have found the secret of creating an unmarried priesthood, of founding sisterhoods of charity and mercy, of making its people go to confession, there may be ques on of returning to Catholic usages. Until then, stained glass windows and the music of the great composers will remain meaningless. The secret lies in Christ's real presence in the ever adorable Sacrament of the Altar. It is this that draws the great heart of the people, and without this, Protestant temples of worship, however magnificently constructed and ornamented, will remain cold and empty meeting houses; which is precisely what they were originally meant to be. In fact it seems to that by studying the architecture of Protestant churches, one might detect the hollow faith that built them. A temple without, a theatre within, a severe and imposing front, behind which is concealed a mere shell; as if the thing had been put up to strike the eye of the passer by, and not to lift the worshipper to heaven. It reminds one of those fashionable weak-minded people, who in the interior of their homes live meekly, but before the world appear in gorgeous apparel.

#### SECTARIANISM.

But the most immediate evil of Protestantism is Sectarianism. The Beechers, and possibly others hold that sects are beneficial. They may be to them though if we are to believe St. Paul, sectaries do not keep good company. Colonel Higginson has come very near the truth on this subject. "Each sect in religion," he says, "helps to protect us from some other sect." Our security is perfect. Whatever is affirmed here in the name of the Bible is denied on the opposite corner upon the same authority. Every eternal yes is neutralized by an everlasting nay; and the sum total is indifference, no religion and mere animalism. The defenders of

CONTINUED ON EIGHTH PAGE.

#### PERSONAL.

BECKX—Father Beckx, General of the Jesuits, is ill.

GRANT—The Pope received Gen. Grant on Saturday. The General was presented by Cardinal McCloskey.

COYLE—Mr. Coyle Advocate, was elected President of St. Patrick's Society, Montreal, on Monday night last.

HOWE—The first person blessed by Pope Leo, at his first public audience, was a Protestant—Mr. T. Howe of Boston. So says the *Boston Herald*.

LONERGAN—The Retreat which has just been concluded at St. Bridget's Parish, Montreal, was a great success.

KIRWAN—Mr. M. W. Kirwan, True Witness, lectured at Kingston last Thursday. There were rumours of disturbance, but none took place.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY—Orange rowdies attempted to disturb the National Anniversary at Lurgan. Some of the police were struck with stones.

DEVLIN—Mr. B. Devlin, M.P., has resigned the Presidency of St. Patrick's Society Montreal. He is in excellent health, and is now in Ottawa.

O'DONNELL—Mr. F. H. O'Donnell, M.P. the stirring Home Ruler has sent an article from the *Irish Patriot*, to the *Freeman* of Dublin. The article is strong in support of the Irish cause.

HAYES—The excitement about the illegality of the election of President Hayes is breaking out with vigour again in the U.S. The Maryland Legislature have passed resolutions in favour of Tilden.

DONEGAL—The *Army and Navy Gazette* understands that the Marquis of Donegal has informed the War Office that the London Irish volunteers are prepared to give their services wherever they may be required, in case of need.

O'DONOGHUE—Wm. B. O'Donoghue, Secretary of the Treasury under Riel, chief of the insurrection in Manitoba in 1871, and the most active participant in the rebellion, died in St. Joseph's Hospital, at St. Paul, Minnesota, on Tuesday week.

WILSON—We are happy to learn that Wm. Wilson, Esq., of St. Antoine Street was unanimously elected President of the St. Patrick's National Association, at a meeting held in their chambers McGill Street, on the 27th inst.—*Montreal Gazette*, March 30th.

IANLON—Ianlon's race with Plaisid is to take place on Toronto Bay, May 15th; with Eph. Morris, on the Hudson Course, June 28th, and with Wallace Ross on the Kennebecs River about the end of July. If Ianlon is successful in these contests he will meet Courtenay and Riley before the close of the season.

O'DONOVAN ROSSA—In the Toronto City Council on Monday night, the Mayor intimated that, according to the opinion of the city solicitors, the claims presented by several citizens for compensation for damages done to their properties by the mob on St. Patrick's Day could not be legally enforced.

ROBERTSON—The many friends of the Hon. J. J. Robertson will be glad to learn that this gentleman is fast progressing to recovery. The disease of which he was the subject was typhoid fever, contracted in Quebec, while in the discharge of his Parliamentary duties. He will soon be able to see his friends, and receive their congratulations.

REILLY—On Monday, Patrick and John Reilly, brothers, of Chippewa, started to return in a row boat from this side. When half over, it was noticed that they were in trouble, as if an oar was broken, but they were too far down to render any assistance. They went over the Huron-Shoo Falls, just outside of the Three Sister Islands.—*Niagara Telegraph*.

MATTHEWS—Charles Matthews, the veteran English comedian, is full of ability, in spite of his advanced age, 75. He can shiver and open an oyster at the same time, and can also repeat the Book of Job. His first wife was the celebrated Madame Vestris. Matthews has all his life suffered from pecuniary embarrassments, and his knowledge of debtors' prisons is varied and extensive.

CALCRAFT—William Calcraft, the English veteran ex-executioner, is a mild inoffensive old man, fond of flowers and a lover of rabbits. He has always evinced a great repugnance to hanging a man of intellect, and asserts that on such occasions he would have failed in the task had it not been for a powerful dose of alcohol. Calcraft, venerable in appearance, grows a handsome white beard.

O'CONNOR—The Rev. Dr. O'Connor delivered a short but telling sermon on Sunday, in St. Patrick's Church, in condemnation of the growing habit of swearing so prevalent in this city. The Rev. gentleman said it was horrible to hear little boys of from six to sixteen years, using the foulest oaths in vogue. It was a terrible evil, and unprofitable, unlike some crimes to the blasphemer. The practice of blaspheming, is too common we regret to say, by boys, on our public streets, and parents would do well to see to the early and better training of their children.—*Ottawa Herald*.

CARDINALS—A Rome special says a commission of Cardinals, appointed to consider the position of Catholics in reference to Parliamentary elections, have reported that it is the duty of Catholics to participate in elections, and accept seats in Parliament if elected, taking the usual oaths to King and Parliament, but pledging themselves not to offend against the laws of the Church. We must remember the advice of Archbishop Lynch about these "specials" from Rome, although the above one looks like truth.

LEITRIM—A tragedy is reported from Derry. "The Earl of Leitrim's clerk and driver were all shot dead yesterday morning while driving in the neighborhood of the Earls home, Vaughan, County Derry. No details. So reads the news later. The Earl of Leitrim's body was found in a ditch the left side of his head was battered in. It is thought he was also shot in the head, but the fatal shot was through his heart. His left arm was broken, and the right completely shattered. The driver and clerk were shot in the head. The ground where the murder was committed showed traces of a hard struggle. A fowling-piece and part of another gun were found near the spot. Three or four men were seen loitering in the neighborhood before the occurrence of the murder. Later—The Earl of Leitrim was shot opposite a cottage from which he had recently evicted a widow. 89 of his tenants were under notice to quit.

McGILL—Mr. James J. Guerin, a young Irish Catholic, passed a very creditable examination in medicine at the annual convocation of McGill University. Dr. Guerin intends to practice in Montreal. In the examination for 1st year law student, the second prize was taken by Mr. Edmund Guerin, brother of Guerin. Mr. Alexander Ohlshelm of Lochiel, received his diploma of M.D., O.M., and the prize for the best thesis was awarded to Mr. H. J. Kavanagh, another in the faculty of law, the highest prize was won by Mr. P. D. Mignault, a young gentleman of French Canadian and Irish extraction, while in Anatomy, Mr. Mignault, President of the Catholic Union, was successful in passing. Out of four medals given for law in four years, Catholics have won three of them. This is the first year that a prize has been given for the best Thesis in law, and as we announce above it has been won by Mr. Kavanagh.