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## CURRENT COMMENT

While sending us the compliments of the New Year three weeks ago, one of the legal luminaries of Ontario added without explanation, the following apothegm: "Ubi Deus est, ibi aranea murus; ubi non est, ibi murus aranea." The literal translation was easily made: "Where God is, there a spider's web is a wall; where He is not, a wall is a spider's web." But the difficulty was to find the first author of the pithy saying. On this point our most learned friends failed to enlighten us. But on Saturday last, after reading the life of St. Felix of Nola, whose saintly death is commemorated in the Breviary on that day, January 14, we came across the following passage in Alban Butler's Lives of the Saints. It was during the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Decius in 250. Government officials were scouring Nola, a small town near Naples, in search of Felix, the zealous Christian priest. Meeting him in the market place, they mistook him for some one else, spoke to him and inquired the whereabouts of Felix. "The persecutors," writes Alban Butler, "going a little further, perceived their mistake and returned; but the saint, in the meantime, had stepped a little out of the way and crept through a hole in a ruinous wall, which was instantly closed by a spider's web. His enemies, never imagining anything could have lately passed where they saw so close a spider's web, returned in the evening without their prey." This incident Mgr. Paul Guerin's Petits Bollandistes (Vies des Saints) adds the following remark: "In order to teach us, says Saint Paulinus" (Bishop of Nola in 409, who wrote the life of St. Felix), "that, when God is with us, spider's webs serve as strong walls, and when He fails us, the thickest walls are no better defence than spider's webs." This shows that the author of that wholesome truth so tersely expressed in none other than St. Paulinus of Nola, the celebrated convert and Christian poet of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The following paragraph from "The Casket," which is particularly well up in Scottish history, ought to serve as an antidote to those pseudo-historical novels so popular just now which paint the Covenanters as the "salt of the earth." Therein, too, our learned contemporary points out the essential difference between Catholic repression of heresy in pure self-defence and Protestant aggressive propagandism by the sword, a distinction too often overlooked, in a false spirit of affected magnanimity, by some Catholic apologists.

When Sir Walter Scott wrote "Old Mortality," he was reproached with having idealized Claverhouse. He acknowledged that he did so, but said that he wished to preserve a proper proportion without painting the Covenanters in colours as dark as they deserved. The Covenanters are better understood now than they were then, even by those who still regard them as the noblest of Scotland's heroes. The Presbyterian Witness confesses that "The Covenanters—we must regretfully say—the Presbyterians—had no adequate idea of religious liberty. For it was still an age of hot persecution. Their aim was to compel the whole nation—the Three Kingdoms—England, Scotland and Ireland—to embrace and profess Presbyterianism." The Lutherans of Germany, the Huguenots of France were equally intolerant. They claimed religious liberty for themselves and denied it to every one else. The stern repressive measures of Catholic States were

not persecution, but simply measures of self-defence, carried out in the only way possible at the time.

Here is another instructive quotation from our Antigonish contemporary. "The Jesuits stand for the most conservative traditions in the Church. Yet none are bolder in taking up new methods, or in adapting old methods to new conditions. Their work in Scotland affords instances of this. For months past, Father Power (of Irish origin) has been speaking from an open-air platform on the Lothian Road, Edinburgh, and he is eagerly listened to, always by hundreds, sometimes by thousands. Father Widdowson (an Englishman) uses a schoolhouse in Lauriston to give a series of instructions to Catholics and non-Catholics, and to answer all questions put to him. He is making many converts. A couple of weeks ago Father Walferstan (an Englishman) lectured before the Y. M. C. A. in Glasgow, on "The Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland," and he was well received.

Special attention is directed to Inspector Clancy's letter on our editorial page. His report on the Catholic parochial schools inspected by him—not officially, of course, since he is an officer of the public, not of the parochial, schools, but with the same thoroughness as if he were acting officially, and, as he says himself, with a strong bias against Catholic schools—is most gratifying to the Catholic teachers of New York, and incidentally also to their able imitators here, who have often had occasion to chronicle a similar superiority of results whenever a comparison has been possible.

Just now the "Literary Digest" is making a great effort to increase its circulation by offering the complete works of Edgar Allan Poe (in ten volumes), the regular price of which is said to be \$7.50, together with a year's subscription, which alone costs three dollars, all for three dollars. Apart from the slur thus cast on the great American poet, critic and romancer, his entire works being thrown in for nothing—which shows how little sale there must be for them otherwise—it is well for Catholics to think twice before subscribing to the Literary Digest. In order to help on this reduplicated cogitation we reproduce the following slanderous statements against Catholics. They were copied, without condemnation, from the "Independent" into a number of the Literary Digest last summer.

"The Catholic question in the United States is one of extreme interest. Within a few years it will be the Catholic peril."

The Roman Church, which in the United States numbered 44,500 communicants in 1700, to-day numbers 12,000,000 or more. The total population of the country is twenty times more numerous than at that epoch; the Catholic population three hundred times more numerous. To this we must now add 6,500,000 of Catholics in the Philippines and 1,000,000 in Porto Rico. The territory of the republic maintains 1 cardinal, 17 archbishops, 81 bishops, administering 82 dioceses and 5 apostolic curateships, almost 11,000 churches, more than 5,000 chapels, with 12,000 officiating priests. There are 81 Catholic seminaries, 163 colleges for boys, 629 colleges for girls, 3,400 parochial schools, 250 orphanages and nearly 1,000 other various institutions. Finally, the United States alone sends more Peter's pence to Rome than all the Catholic countries together."

After thus indirectly comparing the growth of the Church with the famous "yellow peril," the writer goes on to make the following vicious attack:

"The public press, for example, carefully tempers its news and its views in deference to its Catholic patronage. In most of the largest towns the Catholic youth are not only united in special societies and clubs, but even in military organizations. The Church even derives profit from the American weakness for marrying foreign titles by introducing young Catholic aristocrats into the society of millionaires, and she is often rewarded not only by gaining control of great dowries, but even by gaining fair converts, who embrace the ancient faith for the pleasure of being married by a bishop or cardinal amidst the theatrical and medieval pomp of Rome. The Catholics, it is true, are a minority; but they are a minority that is homogeneous, organized and disciplined. They form a solid block in the midst of a heap of crumbling Protestant fragments. They are, it is true, the lowest element of the nation; but under universal suffrage the vote of a brute is worth that of a Newton. When there shall be an army of fifteen or twenty millions of Catholics, firmly united by a tyrannical faith, trained under the regime of the confessional, blindly committed to the will of their priests and directed by the brains of a few high Jesuits, we shall see how much of a showing there will be for American liberty."

The Literary Digest, which prints, without protest, this farago of stupid insults to almost one-fifth of the population of the United States and to the larger half of the civilized world, prides itself on its impartiality. But at its best, it is the impartiality of the oyster that receives into its gaping mouth all the sewage of the world. There, every week, are paraded all the errors of humanity, without one solid foundation of truth to refute them by. It is a labyrinth without Ariadne's thread. The Catholic father who allows his children to read this weekly digest, made up of impartial doses of truth and falsehood, need not be surprised if these children gradually come to think that one religion in as good as another or lose the priceless gift of faith altogether.

It was an advertising circular of "Men and Women" that first called our attention to the passages just quoted from the Literary Digest, and we thank our Cincinnati contemporary for this good turn. But it is not a trifle too flamboyant when it styles itself "the National Catholic Champion?" We admit that it is big enough to be a champion fighter; in fact, its great unmanageable size is a real drawback to the pleasure of reading it, for it cannot be held in the hand, nor can it be spread out on a small table. But a Catholic champion in the journalistic field needs something more than size and beauty. He must suggest great thoughts to the rank and file of willing, but unthinking defenders. Now great thoughts are sure to be picked up and repeated by eager followers, and we seldom or never see "Men and Women" quoted by the Catholic press. There is more thought and consequently more defensive power in one month of the Catholic Fortnightly Review, the N.Y. Freeman's Journal, the Casket, La Verite, the Sacred Heart Review, the Catholic Columbia, and other modest journals, than in a whole year of Men and Women.

The Free Press maintains its exclusive right to publish Foster's forecasts by printing, just a month after date, the following letter:

Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, '05. I have given no authority to any paper in Western Canada to publish my weather forecasts except the Winnipeg Free Press, and no other paper west of Ontario has any right to copy my bulletins.

(Signed) W. T. Foster.

This does not apply to us. We don't copy Mr. Foster. We cut him up, by holding the mirror of facts up to his Delphic oracles. His latest one, dated Jan. 14, contains only two definite announcements, the rest being an inextricable tangle of warm and cool waves, partly contradicting his forecast of the preceding week. The two definite announcements are that, after January 25, "will come a severe cold wave that will effect the whole continent, and the best ice of the winter for the ice harvest will be formed by the close of the month"; and "look out for blizzards and all kinds of severe weather from the 22 to Feb. 4." That is precisely what everybody expects about that time.

Rev. Dr. Bryce is publishing in the Saturday Free Press weekly instalments of an "Illustrated History of Winnipeg." For those who are not particular about facts, this breezy narrative will appear quite readable. Not so, however, to those who know the history of this country. Mr. C. N. Bell, who, thanks to his accurate and painstaking researches, is considered the best living authority on the origin of the Red River Settlement, writes to the Free Press a long letter, challenging several of Dr. Bryce's conclusions. As all the challenges relate to the doctor's first chapter alone, we may infer that the harvest of inaccuracies and misleading statements in store for any patient worker through the forthcoming volume will be immense.

Mr. Bell thus exposes Dr. Bryce's carelessness and vanity.

Under the heading "Verandrye," Dr. Bryce says that that enterprising Frenchman, furnished with a birchbark map obtained from an Indian, pushed in from Lake Superior in 1731 and built a small fort called St. Charles three miles up the river from the present Fort Frances, where he (Dr. Bryce) found the remains some years ago. The facts are that it was Verandrye's nephew Jemeraye (as the English frequently spell it) who in 1731 built this fort which was called "St. Pierre," not "St. Charles." Verandrye's journals and a score of maps confirm this. Fort St. Charles was not built till 1732, and its location was on Buffalo Point on the west side of the Lake of the Woods, where, by an item published in your paper, I think last year, I learned that Archbishop Langevin and a party had visited the site and evidences of the structures. Concerning the remains of the old Fort St. Pierre, near Fort Frances, I will merely remark that Dr. Bryce no more discovered or "found" them than a new arrival in Winnipeg would now discover or "find" Main Street. Twenty-five or thirty years ago, Mr. Pither, for years in the Indian department, informed me, and many other persons, of their location, and it was a matter of general public knowledge.

In a letter printed in the following issue of the "Free Press," Dr. Bryce pleads guilty to carelessness in writing "St. Charles" instead of "St. Pierre," and says, "the whole matter is correctly stated in my 'History of the Hudson's Bay Company,' page 84." But he dismisses all Mr. Bell's other criticisms as "matters of opinion or wrong inference."

The patient critic next reviews the evidence for the location of Fort Rouge and concludes, against Dr. Bryce, that all records are in favor of its having been situated on the north bank of the Assiniboine. Mr. Bell then enlightens the bumpitious doctor as to "Fidler's Fort," over which "Dr. Bryce has for some years worried." It appears that the doctor has managed to crowd three mistakes into one short passage: (1) The fort, thought built

by Fidler, did not bear his name, but was called "the Company's Fort"; (2) it was begun, not in 1813, but in 1817; (3) it was not at the foot of Notre Dame Avenue near the Red River, but "on the high bank at the west side of Victoria Street at the foot of Lombard."

We append Mr. C. N. Bell's conclusion in his own words. For careful students of the history of this country we need hardly insist on the extreme gravity of Dr. Bryce's misrepresentation of the conflict between the half-breeds and Governor Semple.

In connection with the Seven Oaks skirmish in 1816, Dr. Bryce says: "The Bois-Brules bands crossed the prairie and made an attack on Governor Semple and his staff." As a fact a dozen fully printed descriptions of this affair are in existence, which agree that the half-breeds were avoiding Fort Douglas and crossed over from the present Silver Heights road to below St. John, and reached the main settlement trail at the crossing of the coulee where the Seven Oaks monument is now erected, and that Governor Semple and his party left Fort Douglas, at the foot of the present George Street, Winnipeg, and went out and intercepted them. The general consensus of opinion in the reports of the day was that a gun in the hands of one of the Governor's party was accidentally discharged and the attack of the half-breeds immediately followed.

These few comments of criticism are written in the hope that they will cause more care to be taken in the preparation of the succeeding chapters of the History of Winnipeg by Dr. Bryce, for it is a pity that lack of data or carelessness of preparation should result in misleading people interested in the history of our city.

This week we begin the publication of a masterly lecture by the great Benedictine scholar, Dom Gasquet on "France and the Vatican." It is a clear and truthful account of the relations between the Holy See and the French Government during the past 114 years. A lucid statement like this is very timely, when we have the "Telegram" of this city publishing such a misleading article as that which appeared last Tuesday under the heading, "Combes and the French Republic." Suggested by the resignation of Combes the day before, this article pats the unspeakable apostate on the back because "he has succeeded in maintaining a stable government for a period surpassing that of any of his predecessors." But not a word is breathed as to the vile methods by which he has clung to power, pandering to the Satanic hatred of religion fostered by French Masonry, slandering the Holy See, persecuting men and women whose only crime is devotion to a perfect life, terrorizing the soulless "blot" of his abject oath-bound supporters, spying on the private piety of the best soldiers of France, trampling under foot every manifestation of liberty that does not cloak itself with the lying mantle of that colossal misnomer, "free-thought." Frenchmen will smile when they read that "to no one is France more indebted for the restoration of her pristine prestige than to M. Loubet, whose firm hand has pursued unflinching the policy of centralized authority inaugurated by his immediate predecessor, and who has held the enemies of the Republic in check by an increasing vigilance fortified by a dauntless courage." Loubet, forsooth! Loubet, the old woman, who is a mere puppet in the hands of his Premier Ministre. Nor does the Telegram perceive that it retracts this absurdity a few lines further on, when it