

A CATHOLIC CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY.

(Continued from last week.)

None but a mastermind could control the details of the extended undertakings in which he was engaged; yet to him they seemed easy. Once his consummate skill had arranged his plans, everything went as smoothly as a piece of well-fitting machinery.

This was the commercial side of his character, with which we have no concern but as it related to the religious side. Excuses are made every day by business men that their time is so occupied with necessary worldly affairs that they have no moments for prayer. It is unfortunate for them that, unlike Thomas Nevins, they are not gifted with that extraordinary grace which followed him through life and remained with him through every phase of his career; because he never lost sight of the fact that it is the life we live more than any outward display of piety which counts in the sight of God. With him religion was solid, sincere, enduring; it was at the beginning and end of all his undertakings. He never began a work without praying and having prayers offered and Masses said.

Unlike those persons who serve God in the right way only until worldly fortune smiles upon them, Thomas Nevin made religion the strong, unyielding foundation on which his earthly successes were erected. The greater his prosperity, the more religious he became; the more he received from God, the more he gave Him in return. Better than this, there was nothing he detested so much as irreligion or the ridicule of sacred things. He has been seen to rise from table when some pretentious coxcomb sought to air his views to the disparagement of the Gospel. If at any time a guest at his own table happened to be the offender, the delinquent never appeared at that board again.

He had also a great contempt for that large and ever increasing class of Catholics calling themselves by the misapplied title of "liberal," whose faith is usually measured by expediency or human respect. "I have met," he has been heard to observe, "in various places people who were loud in their profession of Catholicity. I have watched them closely, and I have never known them to give anything to the Church except impudence and criticism. This is the only thing, so far as religion is concerned, of which they are lavishly generous. I always doubt the genuineness of their faith, and would not be surprised any day to hear that they had given up their religion altogether. In the case of several, I have remarked that their great wealth has not lasted beyond one generation."

How marked the contrast between this true picture and his own method of life, so perfect in faith and abandonment of himself and his concerns to the care of the God he delighted to serve! Once, conversing with the reverend writer of the biography from which this sketch is compiled ("Reminiscences of the Late Thomas Nevins, Esq., of Mountshannon, County Limerick." By the Rev. John McLaughlin), he said, with beautiful simplicity: "Father, I can never understand how it is that people who call themselves Catholics can live calmly and unconcernedly in deadly sin for weeks and months together. If I thought I was in mortal sin I could not retire to rest at night; for I feel it would be impossible for me to sleep."

He was pre-eminently a man of prayer. The piety he had learned at his Irish mother's knee remained with him to the end. His wife has borne testimony that during thirty-seven years of married life, no matter how urgent his business, she never knew him once to omit the duty of morning prayer. When travelling by train or steamer it was his custom to repeat the Rosary, not once but over and over; saying that he found it much more profitable than spending the time in idle gossip. Nor was he ever known to miss Mass on Sunday during his long and busy career. He would arrange his journeys so as to manage this; and even when

crippled with rheumatism could not be induced to stay away. And he was not satisfied with being personally present himself, but would bring facilities within the reach of those who seldom had an opportunity of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. Anything connected with the altar, the Church and its ceremonial commanded his unstinted generosity. Altar rails, sanctuary carpets, vestments, statues, tabernacle lamps, were gifts he gave freely and gladly wherever needed; and more than one church owed its timely completion to his beneficent hand.

Many ecclesiastical students, who would have been unable to carry out the wish of their hearts without his friendly aid, owe to his memory a great debt of gratitude. This kind of beneficence gave him an especial pleasure. "One of my greatest consolations," he observed, "is the thought that those priests whom my little offering helped in some way to arrive at their high calling will remember me when they enter the sanctuary and stand at God's altar to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. That remembrance I prize beyond all the silver and gold the world can bestow."

After the intense affection he cherished for his wife and children there were two loves that held a high place in his heart: love for America, the country of his adoption and his successes; and love for his native land. He regarded with admiration and gratitude this country of the free, where millions of his fellow-countrymen, driven from their own homes by tyranny and injustice, had found a livelihood and a home. At the same time he was firm in his belief that this forced exodus of the Irish people had worked for infinite good to the Republic: it stood for religious truth and practice against indifference and infidelity; for Irish priests and people were a Christian force that can not be overvalued within the open doors of that shelter of every wanderer from every clime.

But to his faithful heart and patriotic spirit "the Emerald Gem of the Western World," as he fondly loved to call his motherland, represented all that was most beautiful and tender upon earth. Says the sympathetic writer of the memoirs, who was in touch with every generous sentiment of his heart: "There were other countries larger, freer, richer; but to his mind there was no nation under the sun where that greatest of all blessings—the inestimable blessing of a happy death—was so easy of attainment for the average Christian as the old land within whose green bosom the holy relics of St. Patrick are enshrined. He had the feeling that the powerful prayers of the national Apostle still surrounded her like a spell, and swayed such a special Providence in her favor that, whatever else she might be deprived of, strong, practical faith should ever remain her most striking characteristic. 'All other things might be torn out of her bleeding hands, but faith can never be wrenched from her grasp.'"

He sometimes philosophized on the condition of privation in which it had pleased Providence to permit her to suffer so long. And here once more his reasoning was based on the truths of faith. It was a favorite theory of his that Ireland had sent more souls—in proportion—to heaven than any of those countries which possessed the fullest freedom and stood on the highest level among the great powers of the world. And he often expressed the doubt whether so many of her sons would have kept on the right path if her history had been an unbroken record of exceptional material prosperity. Many thoughtful minds have held the same opinion.

It was this great love and appreciation for his native land which had always caused him to cherish the intention of returning there to lay his bones in the soil he thought sacred. He had an idea that if wealthy Irish Americans should return, establish their residence in the Old Country, and use their wealth judiciously for the benefit of their countrymen, much good could be accomplished. But he could not persuade others to cherish these views, and this to him was a sore disappointment. His patriotic project entailed many sacrifices; for he

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had lived so many years in America that all, or nearly all, of his friends and associations lay here. But he carried out the project, and never repented the change.

His home at Mountshannon was an ideal home. In this house there was no punctiliousness and no standing on ceremony; yet everything was in good taste. He welcomed every visitor with outstretched hand. He rarely left his own domain for social purposes, finding his greatest pleasure in the bosom of his family. Next after God, his first concern was the welfare and happiness of his wife and children; and he had the inexpressible consolation of knowing that their affection was equal to his own. It is doubtful if any son ever occupied a higher place in his father's heart than his. How different his plan of action with regard to that son,—how unlike the response to those of the thousands of wealthy men who build great

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