

Theatres and Their Programmes

(By An Occasional Correspondent.)

Now that the Lenten season is over, and the theatrical season is, as the saying is, in full blast, it might be well to give a moment's thought to the theatre generally and its influences, as judged from a Catholic viewpoint strictly. That non-Catholics may see beauty and art in theatrical representations of various kinds is a matter of interest only to themselves. To the Catholic mind the generality of theatrical entertainments does not make for good; not because Catholics are less liberal in their appreciation of art or music, or literature, but rather because, under the strict teachings of the Church, the laws of morality and the temptation to break them are looked at more seriously perhaps by Catholics than by others. It is not for a moment intended to assert that all plays are bad in their tendency. It is only the general latter day productions that are specially referred to here.

A passing word may, however, be said in regard to what are known as the classics and other high class performances, for to deal with the theatre in a just mood, the higher elements should be taken into consideration as well as the lower. One must run the gamut down from its sublimity of some grand opera to the filth of the cheap vaudeville. Even in opera we see the grandest music degraded to a libretto the argument of which is worse than indecent. Listen to the music of Mozart's "Don Giovanni" if you will; but will you go home and tell your daughters the story on which it is based?

The class of entertainment the theatrical managers are forced to offer the public nowadays may be classified under the heads—legitimate, society, comedy, melodrama, comic opera or musical sketch, vaudeville and burlesque. There is comparatively little danger to Catholic susceptibility in the first named; but it doubtless will also be noticed that it is very seldom offered to the public. The so-called society drama, or as it is later named, problem play, is the most insinuating, dangerous and debasing in the whole catalogue. In recent years developments in the divorce courts and elsewhere have shown us all what a rotten fabric in the make-up of the world this "society" is.

Comedy, requiring less thought and being in a lighter vein, is not dangerous generally, although in many there is a substratum of thinly cloaked obscenity. There are some few comedies, however, which can possibly do no harm and which leave a good impression behind after the play is over. Such a one is "A Pair of Spectacles." Unfortunately these are rare as diamonds and just as valuable.

The great danger of melodrama is the temptation to youth. On the young mind a seat in the gallery of a cheap theatre is liable to leave a more vivid impression than reading half a dozen yellow backed novels of the old slench type. In later years the impossibility of the situations will be seen; but in the meantime, there may be mischief done in attempting to imitate "Billy Birdseye, the Boy Burglar," and getting locked up for stealing.

In the musical comedy way the tendency lately is to cleanliness as well as sprightliness. Few questionable lines are permitted to pass. The objection is to the costuming, which in nearly all cases is immodest to say the least of it.

Lastly—burlesque. Under no circumstances should a Catholic attend burlesque performances. The poor creatures hopelessly are to be pitied and prayed for. The lines they have to say or sing are frequently unfit for Catholic ears; their costumes are as indecent as possible without the wearer being subject to arrest. A glance at the gaudy bill boards will give an idea as to the quality of the entertainment offered.

Taking it altogether it looks as if the good Catholic would not miss much by staying away from the theatre altogether. There are some things he can see without danger, few that will profit him anything, and many that are positively injurious in their tendency.

PERSONAL.

Mr. William Hingston arrived in London, Eng., on Thursday.

Mr. Justice Curran's Report on Police Charges.

The investigation into the police charges which took place before Hon. Mr. Justice Curran during the early part of this month, has now been brought to a close. It is very much to be regretted that when the charges were placed before the Chief Justice, twelve in number, six of these were so formulated as to force His Lordship to throw them out for lack of precision. These six were directed against certain aldermen, but the names were omitted, as the Hon. Sir Melbourne Tait said "although it was not stated that those names were not within the reach of the Council, and that it was not in any way impossible for them to furnish them to the court. Therefore, the investigation of charges against the aldermen had to be dropped. This was the part which concerned the public in the highest degree. The investigation as it stood was directed against the Chief of Police and a certain number of police captains. The report of the Hon. Mr. Justice Curran censured Chief Legault and Captain Mallette. This was to have been expected. Chief Legault admitted that he had allowed saloon-keepers to keep their places open after midnight, because they had private wires in their establishments whereby their customers were duly informed of the progress of the prize-fight in the United States between two pugilists, Jeffries and Fitzsimmons. One of the excuses given by the Chief was that this practice had been tolerated in former years not only by the city police, but by the Inland Revenue officers of this province. It was proved that such had been the case, and nothing more deplorable can be conceived. Our law regarding the licensing of places for the sale of intoxicating liquors by retail are not by any means severe, but if properly enforced would enable the police to have full control, and prevent the ravages that are being made amongst old and young in this city, by the abuse of intoxicants. The Chief has to bear the blame with regard to the charge above referred to, but it was brought out in the investigation that as regards other places that were allowed to keep open on Sundays, and after midnight on week days, the Chief did not prosecute the proprietors, because aldermanic influences were brought to bear upon them. But how is it to be expected that the Chief of Police will effectually perform his duty, if these in authority above him are the first to induce him to extend clemency where none should be given. The fact is, that in many instances as His Lordship brought out in his report, the laws of the province as well as the regulations of the police have been a dead letter. The circumstances narrating the seizure of liquor in brothels must have been startling to the public. The liquor was seized, but according to law, they should be immediately handed over to the collector of the Inland Revenue of the province to await the judgment of the court as to their disposal. In not a single instance for years and years has the law been complied with. The Chief of Police and Captain Mallette seem to have been in ignorance of the very existence of such a legislation. In the report, the Chief and Captain Mallette were censured for not having handed over the liquor in at least a half dozen seizures. It is pleasing to notice that the charges brought against Quarter-Master Keogh and a number of the captains regarding exchanging of police clothing, etc., utterly failed.

The press of the city is unanimous in approving the report of His Lordship Mr. Justice Curran. The Montreal "Gazette" closes an editorial in which it states that "the findings of the report will undoubtedly meet with general approbation from those who followed the evidence closely." In the following terms:

The findings of Mr. Justice Curran may be taken as indicative that the Chief has been content to accept things as he found them. The most serious finding is that of suppressing proceedings against certain offenders. It is a comparatively small matter that the alleged offenders were allowed to escape; the evil is found in the fact that officers engaged in the prosecution of their duty had their efforts set at naught by the man to whom they were entitled to look for the most earnest support. This is something which cannot be allowed to exist in a police force without working great damage. It is what the City Council is bound to see does not occur in the future. It does not necessarily mean that the Chief shall lose his position;

it only means that it shall be given to him to understand that he is chief of police, and that his duty lies to a greater extent in upholding his men in the performance of their duty than in catering to the desires of aldermen.

The Federation of Catholic Societies.

In another page of this issue, we refer to the recent action of Archbishop Farley of New York in connection with the American Federation of Catholic societies.

Although New York has been the last State to enter the federation, its founder, Bishop McFaul of Trenton, is closely allied with the New York archdiocese. In outlining the history of the American federation, Bishop McFaul made the following statement last week:

"Since the Columbian exposition the Catholic societies of the United States have been moving toward a national federation. At the Chicago convention there were four states already organized and ten more in process. The movement is increasing every year so fast that it is expected most of the societies will be represented at the convention in Atlantic City in July and that it is not too much to predict that all the leading societies will send delegates to the convention, which will probably be held at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.

"To account for this rapid progress, it must be observed that federation has met with no serious opposition. Its promoters have never attempted to constrain any society to take part in the movement, and from the first they have insisted that every organization thus federated should maintain its freedom of action. By deed, rather than by assertion, they have lived down the charge that they were seeking to form a political union. In their public actions they have avoided everything that could savor of politics, notably in their Cincinnati and Chicago conventions, held at a time when Catholics considered they had just provoked for adopting political measures.

"When the entire Catholic body was aroused last summer by what seemed at the time to be detrimental to the interests of the church in the Philippines, the dignified and loyal attitude of the Federation's delegates in Chicago did much to inspire confidence in the administration, and to inform the American public of the true state of affairs in the islands. In this way the movement has been benefited rather than hurt by the accusation that it is political and against the administration.

"The framers of the constitution of the American Federation of Catholic societies acted wisely in declaring (Article X):

"Nonpartisan politics shall not be discussed in any of the meetings of the convention of the federation or subordinate body of the federation, nor shall this body or any subordinate body thereof endorse any candidate for public office."

"From the start this enactment precluded the possibility of utilizing the organization as an instrument to advance party measures, or to control votes or political patronage for any party or personal advantage, and has lifted the whole movement to the high plane befitting a body with such exalted religious, social, and civil aims."

Father John Wynne, S.J., editor of the "Sacred Heart," who has worked actively to bring New York into the federation, supplements Bishop McFaul's expression by this statement:

"The object of the American Federation of Catholic societies is to enable the Catholic laymen throughout the United States and its dependencies to co-operate together in religious, social, and civil enterprises, and to endeavor, along with other bodies of citizens not Catholic, to promote morality and patriotism."

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Montreal, March 31st, 1903.

etation are some peculiarly American—two in particular, labor, implying the proper organization of labor unions, the prevention and settlement of strikes; and legislation affecting marriage and divorce. Other social interests, such as Sunday observance, temperance, purification of the stage, and repression of gambling, important though they be in themselves, are in comparison with the two just mentioned really insignificant.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1903.

An Infallible Teacher.

(By An Occasional Correspondent.)

Last week we had the Rev. Dr. Hackett, who was willing to accept clear as the sun, upon of the Church changing ings, or adding new dog already accepted dogma no need, now, to repeat ments. We wish to com his statement that the infallible teacher is c Scripture, to history and We claim, and without fear of contradiction, th teaching is in perfect ac all three—Scripture, hist son.

For the present we wi with the first of the thr for another article the the third. As it is cust those who enter upon c subjects to start out wi we will accept those tha gentleman has himself t that is to say:

In St. Matthew, xvi., 1 said, "Thou art Peter a rock I will build My Chur Luke xlii., 31-32, He sai Simon . . . when thou verted, strengthen thy and in St. John xxi., 15 gave the triple comman My sheep."

Then in addition we wil that Christ, speaking to I "Teach all nations * * ever I have commanded y I am with you until the tion of the world." He p send them the "Holy Gho lighten and guide them a successors. He established called a Church—and left necessary powers for the of its mission.

It is beyond all ques Christ, being God, could things by halves; He co leave an institution ine equipped to perform the w He had prescribed for it; not leave a representative who would be devoid of ce his actions. If there is a that body is living, it mu soul. The soul is God, i Himself, is the Holy Spirit enlighten and to sanctify t But the soul of man is not more is the soul of the Ch members and parts of the all visible. And the first ation is the Head. It u more than one limb, more arm, more than one eye to the horizon around and be but it can have only one F only one tongue in that H Head of that body is Pete successor; the tongue of th when speaking as a teacher ters pertaining to faith and is the tongue of Peter or o cessor.

Christ did not tell Peter disciples to go forth and down doctrines, to read for tions of the earth that wh been written. He ordered preach, and by preaching wh He had commanded, to tea world. And He promised to them for all time—that is t be with them when preachi they all should take their t from the Head, or from the representative of the Invisi Consequently, when speak Christ's own name, and fr throne of Peter, it would b late blasphemy to suppose t visible Head could err. It i possible for him to be mis could in turn mislead othe; say that Christ left a Chu earth that could, under any stance, mislead men, wou ply to deny the Divinity of C

When dealing with this subj the standpoint of reason and tory we will have occasion t these statements to their conclusion; but, for the pres will suffice to point out that did confide to Peter the care flock, and did command him. His faithful—that is to fee sheep. It cannot be supposed moment that Peter was not libe, in all matters that pe the doctrine which Christ com him. Nor do we think that a cere Christian has a doubt i regard. But the argument i Peter's successors are not nly possessed of the same q and privileges as was the pr the Apostles. It suffices to for a moment, to reflect in o perative the absurdity of this fiction.

If it were intended that the date given to Peter should come out of effect with his