

## THE CHURCH ABROAD.

## THE IRISH IN AUSTRALIA.

Rev. Michael Phelan in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.

To play no role of self-constituted censor, or assume the office of fault-finder for the mere pleasure the occupation gives, betrays gross arrogance and contemptible vanity. To the writer it presents few attractions; but if in this and subsequent papers he is forced to say things occasionally that may not altogether be palatable, it is with the assurance that he does so for three cogent reasons:—(a) they are statements of facts universally acknowledged here; (b) their remedy is a crying want; (c) the discovering of them to those in whose hands the cure may lie is the discharge of a friendly office, perhaps an obligation, and not the carping of hypercritical cynicism.

With all due respect, and indeed regret, necessity forces me to say that the religious training of the Irish immigrant is not at all equal to his new surroundings, and far short of what is necessary in a Catholic to hold his own amid the wars and clashings of religious opinions around him, and the numerous seductions to apostasy on every side. In this country it may be stated, as a rule, that parents religiously ignorant, except in rare cases, bring up indifferent, if not infidel, families. So, though force of habit and tradition may preserve the first, the second and succeeding generations will suffer sadly for the neglected instruction of the pioneers. This is especially true of scattered districts, where a priest can visit but seldom, and a Catholic school is unknown. On the thorough instruction of an immigrant not only does his own perseverance depend, but also into the account are to be taken the after generations, who must in a great measure look to his zeal and intelligence for their knowledge and constancy. To the ignorance and neglect of one Catholic father the ruin of a multitude may be traced.

A well-instructed Catholic can scarcely be a negligent one, when he sees around him the dangers with which his children are beset. There are in every part of this country families, infidel or Protestant, having on their faces the bright intelligent birth-mark of their Celtic origin, and most Catholic names. Trace the history of any one of them, and invariably the lapse has one of two origins—a mixed marriage, or a poorly-instructed parent, who also became a negligent one. These are the two principal—it might be said the only—sources of leakage. Not alone is he set up for the saving or the ruin of his own blood, but a centre of light to those around him. The Catholic may be challenged who has lived a number of years here, without having opportunities, not only of defending his religion, its principles and practices, but of helping and enlightening struggling, prejudiced, or earnestly-inquiring minds. To break the crusts of error and prejudice, and lead souls, some way at least, into God's light, is within the power of the humblest. Catholic truth, too, meets Protestant minds here under singularly favourable circumstances. They are not hardened or blasted by continental sacrilege or apostasy lying between them and God's grace like a thick wall. The ties of family tradition, public opinion, or racial hates, do not chain them to the old moorings as at home, or repel them from honest investigation of the Church's claims. The old oaken pew, with its sweet and tender memories reaching back to childhood, the vault containing the centuries of ancestral dust, the circling chain of Protestant families dovetailed and intermarried, the local Protestant traditions, all these have passed away. Long distance from the scene of strife,

a constant blending and intercourse, melts anti-Irish prejudices, and with a little knowledge begets warm appreciation of our countrymen's genial natures. Thus it happens that Englishmen, who at home would as soon cut off their right arm as to think of joining an Irish Catholic congregation, and listen to their duties explained in Munster brogue, and face the mookery or the scowls of their friends here, marry Irish wives, and become good zealous Catholics. To himself you add the ever-multiplying generations destined to bear his name, the non-Catholic elements with which Providence surrounds him, and which, if it is not possible to transmute, it is certainly within his power to alter and to better, the number of souls whose salvation depends on the properly instructed mind of a single immigrant, is almost reduced to a definite mathematical problem.

I can fully understand how, in a country where the moral surroundings, the social life, and the literary instincts, are all impregnated with the divine aroma of catholicity, where anti-Catholic hostility, in all its truculent insolence, or still more dangerous bland seductiveness; where the constant defensive struggle, nerving to action and sharpening caution; and where, alas! the sad spectacle of apostasy are happily unknown, how easy it is, under such circumstances, to account for a pastor's blinking vigilance. He is led to forget the fact that a certain portion of his flock is destined, sooner or later, to go forth and be the foundations and apostles, to form off-shoots of the Irish Church, that in expansive width and towering strength are destined to eclipse the parent stem; to fill the noble mission evidently destined by heaven for our race—the world's apostolate, amidst the decay of Catholic, and the materializing of Protestant faith, that they are to be thrown in surroundings far different from those of their Irish homes. The sense of great and confident security for the majority of his flock in the present, is too apt to lull his anxiety about the few in the future.

The pastor's all-important duty of cultivating and enlarging the religious knowledge of his people, is relegated to the school-master and the Sunday school-teacher; his weekly discourses chiefly consist in moral disquisitions and exhortations, very excellent in their way; the sensibilities of his hearers, their fervour and their piety, may be intensified and inflamed, but their intellectual faculties are seldom enriched or enlightened. Young men and women coming here were generally instructed in their Catechism till they were confirmed, and very little trouble it has given them since they arrived at the mature age of ten, the more developed faculties remained unfulfilled. There was no necessity. At one stroke Catholic surroundings, that almost defy a fall, are suddenly cut off, and with a fragmentary recollection of their confirmation knowledge they land here. The scene, indeed, is changed. A sharp as well as a large demand is suddenly made, not only on their steadfast adherence to principle, but also their capability of protecting and defending the faith that is in them. From the hot-house of Catholic fervour they are suddenly transplanted and bid strike root amidst the chilling ice blasts of sceptical, often ribald, infidelity.

Piety, purely emotional, glowing and effervescent, has a poor chance of lasting in such an atmosphere. The cold sneer of the sceptic, or the plausible objection of the sophist, soon quenches its fire and cools its ebullitions. The devotion that rests not on the solid bed-rock of knowledge is a feeble gift, ill suited to the questioning spirit of our age and the practical nature of the Australian.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## A Touching Religious Vocation.

We take the following account from a letter by Mgr. Kleiner, Bishop of Mangalore, published in the last number of the *Annals*:

If this story was not of itself too long, I would prove by facts the fecundity of our apostleship. Here is, amongst others, a conversion which shows how very attentive God is in watching over the souls that are faithful to His grace. On the 28th of last July two young religious, natives of St. Anne, set out for Mysore, after having made their annual retreat. Having arrived at the railroad station, they took possession of a private compartment. Soon a young lady, resplendent with jewels, took a seat in the coach. The train started. After some moments of silence, the stranger thus addressed the two Sisters:

"Why this odd dress and this veil that covers your head?"

"We are Christian virgins, consecrated to God."

"Oh! this is beautiful," suddenly cried the young lady. "to remain a virgin to please God! I also desire to be a virgin; my heart has long since told me so, and for this reason I have refused many good proposals."

"Then come with us."

"No; I shall never go with you; I am a Protestant. My religion is better than yours. You are like idolators; you adore statues." Then pointing to the crucifix which Sisters wear on their breast; "There is an abomination; I would never consent to carry that."

The Sisters thinking they had to deal with a Protestant, like other unfair reasons, did not reply. But shortly afterwards the young lady reiterated her charges, and the Sisters, seeing simplicity and honesty manifested in her questions, told her that Protestants lied when they accused Catholics of adoring images. They plained to her the truth of their religion. The young lady seemed moved, but not convinced. Having reached Mysore the Sisters asked: "Are you acquainted with anyone in the city?"

"No," said she; "I come from Madras, I have never seen Mysore. I have a letter for the Protestant minister, who is to give me a position as school teacher or as catechist for women. But I do not know him; I do not know where he resides."

Then, at the invitation of the Sisters, our Protestant lady consented to go to the convent with them. The next morning she went in search of the minister. He was absent, but his wife welcomed her, and said her husband would return about five o'clock that evening, and had breakfast served. She did not feel at ease, a voice within bade her return to the convent. She arose, excused herself, thanked the lady, said she had friends in the city, and that she would return at five o'clock.

The young lady immediately returned to the convent. The same voice within her said: "Remain here, here alone will you be happy."

"If you will permit me," said she, "I also will become a Catholic and a religious. Now I understand all! I was obliged to leave Madras for Mysore in order to escape the attentions of a young gentleman who was determined to marry me. After my arrival at Bangalore I missed the train going to Mysore. You can conceive how lonely I felt, and this is how it happened that the next day I traveled with Sisters. I had never met Sisters before; I believed them to be Jews, and for curiosity I seated myself near them to hear what they were saying. It was thus that I met Christian virgins—I who have always desired to remain a virgin. For five years, in spite of all that our ministers said against devotion to the Virgin Mary, I secretly prayed to her each day. Now I have reached the summit of my

desires; for this may the good God be eternally blessed!"

Our convert renounced the Protestant religion, and she studied the catechism with such ardor that we were obliged to caution her against sitting up too late at nights. While she was preparing herself in this manner for baptism, which was to renovate her upon condition, she one day assisted at the Stations of the Cross with the orphans. When the tenth station was reached, where our Lord was stripped of his garments, our catechumen was deeply moved. Then, casting a glance on her jewels: "What," said she. "Our Lord consented to be stripped of his garments for love of me, and shall I dare to appear adorned with these vanities?" Instantly she doffed her jewels; then, the Stations being finished, she brought them to the Superior. When the much longed for day of her public renunciation and of her baptism arrived, the orphans urged her to wear all her ornaments at least on that day, as an emblem of joy. "No, no," said she with resolution; "I do not wish to do so. I shall never wear them more. I desire henceforth to please God alone and to become a Sister."

After her baptism and first communion she went to the convent in Bangalore, where she was admitted as a postulant with the Sisters of St. Anne. She accepted with happiness poverty in food and dress, the yoke of obedience and the renunciation of her own will.

I asked her one day if she still had a horror of crosses and statues.

"Oh! no," said she, lovingly taking the cross which she now carries suspended from her neck. "While I was a Protestant I did not understand these things: I love this cross; I venerate it, and I hope it will never forsake me."

During the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, we often remark that she tries to hide the tears that fall from her eyes. Mary Agatha is now her name, and not Ruth, the Protestant.

## Anecdote About Gounod.

Speaking of his beautiful division of sacred Dramas, the principal merit of the work, we recall the story of the famous composer's musical vocation. While attending college Gounod already had a taste for music; his parents worried him about it. They complained to the principal, M. Prisson, who removed their fears: "He, a musician? never! he will be a professor, he has the mark of a Latin and Greek scholar." Being himself a trifle in doubt, he immediately had the youth Charles summoned to his study. "Let me catch you again," said he, "trembling notes. . . . Moreover, this is not a profession. . . . And then, you are not gifted. See! here is pen and paper, compose me a new air for the words of Joseph: *a peine au sortir de l'enfance*." It was recreation hour. Before the bell rang for study Gounod returned with his leaf covered with notes. He rested himself at the piano, sang his work, and caused the principal to weep. M. Prisson arose kissed him and said: "Ah! they may say what they wish: compose music!" The child followed his advice; and sacred music is indebted to him for some of its most beautiful pages.

## Inactivity of the Stomach.

Persons having impoverished blood or suffering from enervation of the vital functions, or of inactivity of the stomach, or of pallor and debility, should use Almoxia wine which contains natural Salts of Iron. See analysis of Professor Heya. Gianelli & Co., 16 King street west, Toronto, sole agents for Canada. Sold by all druggists.

## A Simple Way to Help Poor Catholic Missions

Save all cancelled postage stamps of every kind and country and send them to Rev. P. M. Barral, Hammoncton, New Jersey. Give at once your address, and you will receive with the necessary explanation a nice Souvenir of Hammoncton Missions.