

THE CATHOLIC SCIENCE CONGRESS.

Discourses of Bishop Keane, Mgr. d'Hulst and Father Zahm.

In the course of his address at the Science Congress at Brussels Mgr. d'Hulst dealt vigorously with the difficulties that present themselves in the study of science. He said: "The difficulty is double; on one side (harybdis, the rock of heterodox ternerities; it is the most formidable, I was going to say the only formidable one in itself, for to shake his faith and that of others under pretext of demonstrating what is solid, is it not the worst disgrace to a Christian? Yes, but in wishing to avoid it at any price we risk running upon Scylla, the rock of puerilities or ignorance which shelter themselves under the fair name of orthodoxy. If it is dangerous for one who wants to keep his soul in safety to be a minimiser, it is hardly less for one who pretends to do



BISHOP KEANE.

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honor to our belief to be a maximiser. You are afraid the use of scientific methods will carry you too far, afraid to break bounds, you prefer to lag behind, to close your eyes and ears, to only hear the words you have been accustomed to hear. It is your right, but then your place is no more in the ranks of men of science and, respecting your prudence, I have only one wish, one desire in your regard.

My wish is that this apparent prudence may not, unknown to you and despite you become the worst of ternerities, that of confounding the faith with human opinions which a common error made general in the past among believers, but which had no roots in revelation, and which the irresistible movement of the human mind dooms to disappear. Such is my wish, and this is my prayer. I ask the maximisers if, despite all, they find their tactique successful not to pretend to impose it. This tactique as an eminent apologist said, consists in needlessly spending too much time in the defence of some paltry positions whose possession is of no importance whatever to the safety of the army, which will have to be evacuated one day and whose abandonment, if it was done spontaneously, would certainly spare us the apparent discredit of successive capitulation. Well, I respect those who formulate, or at least practice, that kind of strategy, but I beg of them not to require every one to admire it and conform to it. I beg them above all, not to make this requirement a law of orthodoxy; so that in wishing to avoid it one should become suspect in the matter of faith. In complaining of the excess of the maximisers, do I wish to recommend minimism? Nothing is farther from my thoughts. Faith has its determinate object; nothing must be taken from or added to it."

Father Zahm's discourse was an earnest and eloquent plea for a more advanced study of science in our ecclesiastical seminaries. The hall was filled with the elite of European scholars and the Reverend lecturer had a rare

opportunity of discussing a subject in which he manifestly has an intense interest. Not a little curiosity had been manifested as to how the speaker would treat such a subject, but curiosity soon changed into admiration and approbation.

As Father Zahm's discourse contains twenty-seven pages of printed matter, this is but the merest skeleton of his argument. "The age of heresies and heresiarhs," he said, "is past." Protestantism is now but another name for scepticism and rationalism. The conflict in which the Church is now engaged is no longer one which is conducted against her by the followers of Luther, Calvin, Knox and Wesley, but rather one which is declared against her in the name of science. The issue is no longer between Catholicity and Protestantism but between Catholicity and Agnosticism. The great majority of those outside of the Church to day are sceptics or Agnostics. Agnosticism as now understood, is a modern growth, and is fostered in its attitude which a certain school of scientists have assumed during the past few decades towards dogma and the Church. In order successfully to grapple with the foe against which it is now pitted—the shrewdest and most intelligent foe she has ever encountered—it is necessary that the Church should avail herself of all the most perfect appliances of modern warfare. As it were folly for an army provided only with javelins and broadswords to contend against one equipped with Krupp guns and dynamite, so would it be like leading a forlorn hope for our young ecclesiastics to enter the field against Agnosticism unless they are beforehand fully instructed as to its methods of attack and defence, and are fully acquainted with the use of the arms which their enemies have so well learned how to handle. In a word if our clergy are to have any chance of success in their struggle with the forces of contemporary error, they must have a thorough training in the various branches of science from which Agnostics, Materialists and Atheists draw their stock arguments against the Church and revealed truth.

"The objections now urged against the faith are not the same as they were a hundred years ago: they are entirely different from those which were formulated by the apostates of the sixteenth century. Before an objection can be satisfactorily answered, its full significance must be properly appreciated. Most of the objections now urged against the teaching of the Church are offered in the name of geology, archeology, biology and cognate sciences. To reply to these objections adequately and in a way to silence our opponents we must meet the enemy on his own ground, and wrest from him the arms in which he reposes such confidence. We must dislodge him from his chosen coign of vantage and victory is ours."

This is but an imperfect statement of Father Zahm's thesis, but it will suffice to give an idea of the nature of his argument. He was frequently applauded during the course of his argument, and at its conclusion he was greeted with rounds of applause, while from those around him he was most warmly complimented on his *tres remarquable et tres important discours*.

"Father Zahm has rendered a great service to science and to the Church," remarked a scholarly prelate who sat near, "and his discourse is bound to be productive of good results in the near future."

Bishop Keane was the next to take the rostrum. The preceding day he had spoken before one of the sections, as well as at the grand banquet the previous evening. He so captivated all who heard him that a general desire was expressed to hear him in the *Palais des Academies*, where he could have a much larger audience than was possible in the other places

in which he had spoken. He was asked to address the multitude on the "Parliament of Religions," which was last year held in Chicago, and in which all the members of the Congress were particularly interested. For nearly an hour the eloquent prelate held his audience spell bound. The perfect attention which was given to every word he uttered, and the rapturous applause—the repeated bravos—which accentuated his polished periods, were the highest tribute which could be given to any speaker. The Bishop's discourse, as were all those of the Congress, was in French, but the eloquent prelate seemed to be as much at home in the language of Bossuet and Montaigne as he is in his own vigorous and classical English. "I have never heard the Bishop speak better even in English," whispered one of his American friends, and the universal verdict was that the part taken by Catholics in the Parliament of Religions was a noble work.

Human Sacrifices in Russia.

It is probably known to few people that the practice of sacrificing human lives under certain conditions still exists in the Empire of Russia. The Government and the orthodox Church have attempted in vain to stop the inhuman practice, but up to the present time they have been unsuccessful. Revelations regarding the custom were made in recent issues of the *Gazette* of Yakootsk, Siberia. It prevails among a sect known as the Tshukshen, not far from that city. Old people, beyond the Biblical limit as to age, and sick ones, tired of life, offer themselves as the sacrifices. When a Tshuksho decides to "offer himself up," he sends word to all his relatives, friends and neighbors, who then visit him and try to persuade him to change his intentions.

But prayers, upbraidings, threats are useless in such a case, and the fanatic prepares for his end. The friends and relatives leave his house and return in ten to fifteen days, bringing the death candidate white clothing and several weapons, with which he is supposed to defend himself in the other world against evil spirits and shoot reindeer.

After completing his death toilet the candidate takes his place in a corner of his house or hut. About him gather his relatives who give him the choice of three instruments of death, a knife, a spear, and a rope. If he chooses the knife, two friends hold his arms while a third plunges the blade into his breast. Practically the same thing is done if he decide to die by the spear. When he prefers the rope, two of those present place it about his neck and strangle him to death. A cut is then made in the breast to let the blood flow out. All those present sprinkle their faces and hands with the blood, believing that it will preserve them from evil and bring them fortune.

The body, after this ceremony, is placed on a sled, which is drawn by a reindeer, to the "cremation hill," near the village. The neck of the animal is cut at once upon arrival at the place. The body is stripped of clothing, which is then cut in small pieces and placed on the altar with the dead man or woman. During the cremation the "mourners" utter prayers to the spirits, begging them to watch over those mortals still left on earth. This custom has been followed by the sect for centuries.

SKETCHES.—This is unhappily an age of skepticism, but there is one point upon which persons acquainted with the subject agree, namely, that DR. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL is a medicine which can be relied upon to cure a cough, remove pain, heal sores of various kinds, and benefit any inflamed portion of the body to which it is applied.

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Fighting for the Schools.

Canon Monahan in England has addressed an able letter to the *Loughborough Freeman* on the all-absorbing question of religious vs. secular education. He reviews the history of denominational education in England and very justly maintains that "in a country renowned among the nations for its Christian maxims it is a miserably weak contention that the teaching of a particular form of Christian belief is in itself a disqualification for the receipt of help to give, at the same time, a sound elementary and commercial education." Why secularists should be accounted for except, from the fact that Christendom is divided and that secularists are thereby emboldened to press their demand. "Why in this Christian country," asks Canon Monahan, "endow with public money religious system A, that limits its religious teaching to the scanty requirements of a certain section of professing Christians, and yet refuse to give the public money to religious system B, whose fuller and more definite religious teaching is drawn from the same source as system A, to wit, the authorized version of the Bible; or to religious system C, that gives its religious instruction in the fulness of doctrine insisted upon by the Catholic Church?" Both Protestant and Catholics gave a splendid proof of their earnestness and self-sacrifice in the cause of Christian education by studding, as they have done, the England of to-day with their 15,000 schools, which must have sunk, in sites and fabrics, above £100,000, to say nothing of the annual cost of maintenance. Anglicans unfortunately are losing heart and are sacrificing one by one their schools to the secularists and their Board-Schools. The non-Conformists long ago threw in their lot with the Secularists, trusting to their Sunday Schools as a break-water against the inroads of infidel and secularist teaching, but they must have soon ere this how terrible they miscalculated the enemy's power and influence. The Catholic body still remains determined and defiant, and must, we fear, continue single-handed to fight the battle in the schools of God and religion.

A Courtier's Blunder.

For some time after her marriage with Napoleon the Empress Marie-Louise was extremely ignorant of the French language. On one occasion, seeing her husband look vexed over a letter he had received from the Court of Austria, she inquired of him what was the matter. "Oh, nothing," replied Napoleon; "your father is an old *ganache*—that is all!" Marie-Louise did not know that this was French for "Fool," and took the first opportunity of asking a courtier what it meant, saying that the emperor had applied the expression to her father. "It means some one very learned and wise," stammered the unfortunate courtier. The empress was perfectly satisfied with this explanation, and pleased to learn a new word. A day or two after she received the Arch-chancellor Cambaceres in a crowded *salon*. Some question was being warmly discussed in the circle, and her opinion was asked. Wishing to be very gracious Marie-Louise turned to Cambaceres and said, "We will refer that point to the Archbishop, for we all know he is the greatest *ganache* in Paris."

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Mr. D. B. Sullivan, Q. C., is the Revising Barrister for Fernanagh this year.