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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1899

CURRENT COMMENT

An esteemed correspondent writes that we were "wrong as regards 'ignorer.' In the sense used by L'Echo de Manitoba it is good old French. (See Guérin: "feindre de ne pas savoir"). Do not let us taboo old French words and meanings." This meaning must indeed be very old and rare, since we have searched both the huge dictionaries of Littré and Larousse in vain for it. Besides, were it defensible in the abstract as a piece of recondite erudition, it is altogether too archaic to be used in a newspaper without an introductory or explanatory phrase. Finally, the editor of L'Echo virtually confesses judgment. He says in his last issue (Oct. 26) that he lays no claim to be an academician. But then he goes on to make another still more amusing blunder: "However, we take the liberty of pointing out to these delicate critics the unfortunate beam which, according to Lafontaine, has lodged in the eye of certain people who are worried about the mote they see in their neighbor's eye." We very much doubt that Lafontaine ever spoke of the beam and the mote, at least we have no recollection of his doing so; but, even if he did, it is just as absurd to quote him as the author of this famous saying of our Lord in his sermon on the Mount (Matt vii, 3) as it would be to attribute a Shakespearian saying to a nineteenth century writer.

One day last week among our exchanges we noticed a copy of "The Catholic Citizen" of Milwaukee, which came to us considerably less than seven days after the last number received. As the events commented on therein did not seem particularly fresh, we glanced at the date and read "Sept. 17." This was evidently almost six weeks late. However, as a curious item met our eye we were about to snip it with the editorial double-edged glaive, when another heading of most venerable antiquity compelled us to look at the year of publication. It was 1898! Thus the postal authorities had taken more than thirteen months to carry this newspaper from Milwaukee to St. Boniface. Is this the result of the new broom sweeping clean

in the Winnipeg post-office, through which all our exchanges must pass? At any rate it is a comfort to know that the officials are strictly honest and will restore a year-old newspaper to its rightful owner.

Since writing what precedes we have received a copy of the Northwestern Chronicle (St. Paul and Minneapolis) dated Sept. 16, and—strangest of all—a number of the Catholic Witness, of Detroit, dated January 21, 1898! The latter reaches us like a voice from the tomb, as that Detroit paper went the way of all flesh about a year ago. Next!

The General Intention of the Apostleship of Prayer is "Religious Training at Home." We are asked to pray that parents may give more time and care to the religious education of their children. Father Devine, in the Canadian Messenger, very truly observes that "the careless home-training many Catholics received a generation ago is in great measure responsible for much religious indifference among Catholics to-day." The zeitgeist is a superficial, shallow spirit which tends to destroy the Christian sense of responsibility in parents. Too many fathers and mothers never seem to rise out of childish levity and thoughtlessness and love of comfort up to the level of conscientious manhood. Hence the necessity of conversion on the part of negligent parents. This is what the League of the Sacred Heart will especially pray for. "Virtuous parents," Father Devine tells us, "will be able to teach not merely by example, which is saying much, but also by that conviction which is communicative, and which belongs exclusively to those who practise what they preach."

The Rome correspondent of the Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times writes about a new book on the healthfulness of the Eternal City by Dr. Eyre, an Englishman who has long been practising there. The sum total of his work is expressed in the opinion "not only that Rome is the healthiest of the large Italian cities, but also that it is one of the most healthy cities in the world." According to the most recent statistics the death-rate is only 16.6 per thousand. The lowness of this mortality may best be appreciated by comparing it with that of London, which is 20.2 per thousand, and yet London is one of the healthiest cities in the United Kingdom. Or again we may compare the Roman death-rate with that of Manitoba, which, according to the latest edition of the Statistical Year-book of Canada, is 19.36 per thousand, and of course the death-rate of a whole country is always less than that of its large cities. This revelation of Dr. Eyre's has had startling effects. Only a few weeks ago the Medical Times advised the physicians of Great Britain to send patients to Rome rather than to the French Riviera.

How comes it, then, that the prevalent opinion of travellers has hitherto been unfavorable to the healthiness of Rome? The correspondent mentioned above attributes this false notion to

wilful calumny against the city of the Popes. But this explanation cannot stand in face of the fact that multitudes of devout Catholics, while dearly loving Rome, dreaded its climate. A better explanation is one suggested by Dr. Eyre himself when he states that the idea of the unhealthiness of Rome has grown up within the last 40 or 50 years. Now it is precisely during this last half century that the stream of travel toward the Eternal City has been largest. Most of the travellers, being English, French and American, were very tenacious of their own hereditary habits of eating, drinking and venturing out at all hours of the day and night without observing any of those sanitary precautions against mid-day heat and midnight damp which are traditional in Rome, and which account for the extraordinary health and longevity of its native citizens. The consequence was that many of these transient dwellers and visitors contracted malarial fever and other diseases due to their own imprudence, and then they thoughtlessly gave the city a bad name among their friends and acquaintances. But of late years, with the growth of a population anxious to enhance the merits of their chosen home, with the growth also of sanitary science, the natural resources of the excellent Roman climate have come to be more thoroughly understood. And so it happens that on the eve of the great jubilee year, 1900, when it is expected that upwards of a million Catholics will make their devout pilgrimage to the city of the Popes, there is no longer room for any misgivings as to the climate of Rome, and, provided the pilgrims live in Rome as the old and experienced Romans live, they will find it one of the best health resorts in the world.

"Anglo-Saxon's" protest against some of our remarks on the Transvaal war calls for an explanation. Without venturing to affirm that this is an unjust war, we cannot distinctly see that it is either just or expedient. In this view we are supported by distinguished men whose loyalty has never been questioned. We need only mention Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Morley, Sir Edward Clarke, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. Leonard Courtney and Mr. W. T. Stead. As to the technical defence that the Boers began the fight, we think this will not hold water. Mr. Chamberlain has manoeuvred with his usual astuteness to put the South African Republic in the wrong before the world and make it appear the aggressor. In this he has been ably seconded by that millionaire highwayman, Cecil Rhodes. Yet, as long as seven weeks ago, from his doorstep at Highbury, in reply to a Unionist demonstration, Mr. Chamberlain spoke threatening words about the sands running out and used provocative language, which, in the mouth of a responsible minister, is generally regarded as the immediate precursor of premeditated war. When the demands of England were refused by the Transvaal government, Mr. Chamberlain announced that a new plan would be formulated for a complete settlement of the trouble. Paul Kruger waited a consider-

able time for this plan and repeatedly informed the British government that he was waiting. No plan came, but troops from various parts of the British Empire did come and were promptly marched to the Transvaal frontier. The game was plain enough. Mr. Chamberlain calculated that the Boers would either have to wait until England was ready to strike first, and England could then say to the world, as "Anglo-Saxon" does: "See, the Boers are the aggressors, they have invaded our territory." Under the circumstances no European nation would have waited so long as the Boers did. They framed an ultimatum, which Mr. Chamberlain would no doubt have framed less awkwardly, but which amounted to saying: "Give us a pledge, within 48 hours, that you will withdraw your troops from our frontier and stop pouring soldiers into South Africa, or, if you refuse, we shall consider your refusal a declaration of war." An ultimatum thus extorted seems not only justifiable but even necessary if the Boers were not prepared to yield up their independence without a struggle. The claim that the Boers have made an unprovoked attack may be a diplomatic technicality; but it is contrary to the previous history of the case.

As to the contention that the internal government of the Transvaal justified a war, we think this cannot be proved. However great may be the blessings of the electoral franchise, their absence does not justify the horrors of war, especially when the disfranchised Uitlanders managed to get rich in spite of their disabilities. Even the ostracism of Catholics—to us a much more serious matter than the denial of voting power—does not at all justify Catholics in fighting Oom Paul. No, the only plausible motive is gold-hunger, and this is a robber's plea.

We have said, moreover, that we do not think this war expedient or wise. A measure may be unjust and yet politic. We fail to see that this extreme measure has even the excuse of probable advantage to bolster it up. Cape Colony behind our fighting line is far from loyal. The best the Prime Minister of that newly self-governing colony could promise was to try to keep the Cape neutral. Our troops are beset with possible traitors on every side. The black tribes may indeed abhor the Boers, but they dread the English still more, because the latter have subjugated more of them than ever the Boers did; and nothing is so dangerous as a panic-stricken, half-civilized tribe of blacks with a chance to kill their hereditary foe. God grant the British Empire may not rue the day when Mr. Chamberlain entrapped it into this Transvaal war, with its endless possible complications.

B. Herder, of St. Louis, Mo., announces "What is Liberalism?" as a translation of Don Félix Sarda y Salvany's famous book, the real title of which is "Liberalism is a sin." Is there not liberalism in the very fact of thus changing the title of a book,

in order not to shock American susceptibilities?

The movement of subscriptions for the future new cathedral of St. Boniface is advancing, as mechanics would say, with accelerated velocity. The other day in far off St. Albert, a thousand miles from here, \$1,400 were collected for that purpose and several of the individual donations were as high as two hundred dollars.

On the 8th of May, 1896, speaking for the Government and trying to efface the impression made in South Africa and throughout the civilized non-British world by the Jameson raid, Mr. Chamberlain said: "To go to war with President Kruger to enforce upon him reforms in the internal affairs of his state, in which Secretaries of State, standing in their places have repudiated all right of interfering—that would be a course of action which would be immoral." Thus did "Pushful Joe" condemn this Transvaal war which he has now provoked.

War despatches have never been considered as models of veracity, but the cablegrams from South Africa have a peculiarly unveracious flavor that has hardly ever been surpassed. Just after two glorious victories which completely wiped out the shame of Majuba Hill we were astonished to find the Boers advancing upon Ladysmith in spite of those two crushing defeats. This was certainly a strange result of victory, the retreat of the victors. But more was to come. A whole squadron of British husars are lost for a couple of days and then turn up within the Boer lines as prisoners with apparently but few casualties. Worst of all, our troops have to fly so precipitately that they leave their wounded in the enemy's hands, and a British general actually died a prisoner of war. Victories of this kind have one advantage: they preach humility and modesty.

The English "Catholic Times" tells us that the Transvaal was formerly part of the Natal vicariate, but on the 15th of last March it was declared a separate prefecture. The mission, which is conducted by the Oblate Fathers, embraces the territory of the South African Republic. The first priest to visit the Transvaal was Father Houdewanger. On his arrival at Potchefstroom in 1868, thirty-one years ago, he was warned by the government officials not to celebrate Mass under peril of expulsion. His remonstrances were answered by the execution of the threat: a field cornet was instructed to see him out of the country. This regulation was repealed in the following year through the efforts of the Catholic residents and owing to the visit of the Governor of Quilimane, a Catholic, who wished to be present at Mass. Since then there has been considerable progress. There are churches with resident priests at Pretoria, Johannesburg, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, Barberton, Vleischfontein and Lydenburg. The Marist Brothers have a college with five or six hundred pupils at Johannesburg, and there are in the same town three convent schools under the direc-