

The Catholic Record

Price of Subscription—\$1.00 per annum.
United States & Europe—\$1.50 per annum.

Publisher and Proprietor, Thomas Coffey, L.L.B.
Editor—Rev. J. F. Foley, B.A.
Associate Editor—Rev. D. A. Casey, B.A.

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Obituary and marriage notices cannot be inserted except in the usual condensed form. Each insertion 50 cents.

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In St. John, N. B., single copies may be purchased from Mrs. M. A. McGuire, 349 Main Street.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Thomas Coffey, Ottawa, June 13th, 1905.

My Dear Sir:—Since coming to Canada I have been a reader of your paper, and have been struck by its high standard of intelligence and ability, and, above all, that it is imbued with a strong Catholic spirit. It is a pleasure to me to see a paper of this kind in this country.

Following these lines it has done a great deal of good for the welfare of religion and country, and I do more and more, as its wholesome influence becomes more and more apparent. I therefore, heartily recommend it to Catholic families. With my best wishes for your work, and best wishes for its continued success.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,
DOROTHEA, Archdiocese of Ephesus,
Apostolic Delegate

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA,
Ottawa, Canada, March 7th, 1900.

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On such shifting sands does news-
paper "science" build.

With regard to the age there is the same lack of all certainty.

"Most of the scientists agree that the skull represents the man of 500,000 years ago, although some contend that the skull dates back only 150,000 years ago.

A little matter of 350,000 years should not disturb one's faith in a "scientific fact."

The following day (Aug. 11th) was devoted to discussion of this famous "scientific fact."

"Dr. Arthur Keith, curator of the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, where the discussion was held, declared that the skull as modelled was an impossible skull, in fact, it was the dream of a diseased imagination. He said that if Dr. Arthur Smith Woodward, keeper of the geological department of the British Museum at Kensington, who constructed the skull, was right in giving the jaws of a chimpanzee to a skull that was human, then all the rest of the world was wrong."

So those who have been studying "accurately and in detail" the famous "reconstructed" skull of the English ape-man of half a million years ago have been studying not a scientific fact, but "the dream of a diseased imagination."

"The discovery" was made in December 1911; for a year excavation went on without adding anything to what had been already found.

With the "reconstruction" of the skull from the fragments found the world was informed that man lived in England a million years ago. Some of the dogmatic pronouncements are now interesting reading.

W. P. Pycraft was quoted. Who he may be matters not at all. Such men are quoted, and no pronouncement of the Pope ever receives such respectful, reverential hearing amongst Catholics, as the unknown "scientist's" dictum, especially if it contravenes received religious belief. Mr. Pycraft nine months ago said:

"The evidence for the interpretation placed upon them is incontrovertible. In the first place, the lower jaw is unmistakably ape-like, while presenting other features indubitably human."

"Incontrovertible" and "indubitably," are terms characteristic of scientific dogmatizing.

Now we know that "the interpretation placed upon them" is an "impossible skull," "the dream of a diseased imagination."

THE PITDOWN SKULL IN SASKATOON

Some time ago a correspondent in Saskatoon sent us a copy of the Phoenix containing an address to the Baptist Young Peoples' Union of the First Baptist Church of that city.

Mr. Hull, in this address, attacked directly the foundations of Christian belief. He quotes Dr. Lightfoot, a divine of three hundred years ago, to the effect that he had proved satisfactorily to himself that "heaven and earth, centre and circumference, were created altogether at the same instant"—and that "this work took place and man was created on October 23rd 4004 B. C. at 9 o'clock in the morning."

He characterizes Dr. Lightfoot as "one of the most eminent scholars of his day"; and Dr. Lightfoot's startlingly precise conclusion as the result of a profound study of the Scriptures.

"Think of that triumph of theological erudition and then think of that discovery in the gravel pit in Sussex, that silently eloquent testimony to the existence of man on the earth a million years before the date at which Dr. Lightfoot placed the creation of the universe and of man."

Mr. Hull is evidently not without dramatic instincts and ability.

Why single out the childish calculation of this forgotten divine. If he wished to find ridiculous conclusions from "a profound study of the Scriptures," he could find them without number here and now. They affect neither Christianity nor the Bible.

The Bible nowhere states the date of creation. The ordinarily accepted time is based on human calculation of Biblical chronology, which may or may not be complete. The fact of creation is all-important; the time of it is of so little moment that the Bible nowhere records it.

But fantastic as Dr. Lightfoot's precision is, what about "the silently eloquent testimony of the existence of man on the earth a million years" ago? This is the Pitdown skull which we have just considered in the preceding article, and which the free-thinking lecturer accepted with unsuspecting faith and child-like confidence. A mere reference to "the

Sussex gravel-pit" was, apparently, "proof" stronger than Holy Writ for the Baptist Young People's Union.

Mr. Hull then passes on:

"But, you will say, if the Bible story of creation is disproved by modern science, and if the fall is merely a variant of a universal myth, what becomes of the whole scheme of Christianity. If there were no Adam and Eve, no temptation, and no fall, then there was no need for an atonement, no need of a vicarious sacrifice, no need of a Messiah and a Savior of the human race. I think I have stated this question fairly, perhaps bluntly."

Bluntly stated surely; and this is Mr. Hull's thesis in a Baptist church!

We shall consider just one other point in this remarkable lecture, remarkable because of the circumstances of its delivery; in itself but a rebash of stale "scientific" objections to Christian truth.

"What then are we to say of the story of Jesus the Christ? Simply that like the Bible stories of creation, the fall, the deluge, the tower of Babel, Samson and Jonah and others, it is a story common to nearly all religious systems, the origin of which is lost in the mists of antiquity."

This remarkable reasoning is not new; on the contrary it is very old and pretty well abandoned. Because there are traces of a universal tradition regarding creation, the fall, the deluge, etc., therefore the Bible record of these facts must be untrue! Why the fact that there is such a universal tradition is the strongest possible human corroboration of the truth of Bible history. If these things happened as recorded in Scripture would one not expect to find just this universal tradition even amongst tribes and peoples who never heard of the Bible? How account for the "variant of a universal myth" otherwise?

Mr. Hull is no doubt quite honest intellectually, and has come to his conclusions in all sincerity. He is an honest pagan. But that he should be invited to give such a lecture in a "Christian" church is a sign of the times. The B. Y. P. U. may be good Protestants, but they give evidence of a peculiar sort of Christianity.

OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS

When Kipling gave to Canada the poetic title of The Lady of the Snows, Canadians were disposed to resent the appellation as a calumny on our climate. The tide of emigration had not yet turned Canada-wards, and we were somewhat sensitive in the matter, thinking such title might confirm the false impression that appeared to prevail abroad with regard to the Canadian climate.

To a Canadian journalist voicing this feeling, in an interview with Kipling, the author disclaimed any such intention, and said, Ask a Roman Catholic friend about it; and queried further, Have you read D'Arcy McGee's use of the term? Which goes to show that Kipling got the title for his famous poem (which by the way is the most poetic thing about it) from "Our Lady of the Snows."

It is interesting to note that the Church celebrates during this month the feast of Our Lady of the Snows, The Breviary Lessons tell us the story:

During the reign of Pope Liberius, John, a Roman patrician, and his wife, likewise of noble birth, having no children to inherit their property, made a vow to dedicate their wealth to the Virgin Mother of God; and brought her earnestly to make known to them to what pious work she would be most pleased to have their money devoted. The answer to their prayers was thus miraculously given: The naves of August, when Rome was at the hottest period of the year, a part of the Esquiline hill was covered with snow. During the night the Virgin Mother revealed in a dream separately to John and his wife, that she desired that a Church in her honor should be built where the snow covered the hill. The Church was in time duly constructed, and to distinguish it from others dedicated to Mary, it was finally called St. Mary Major, or the Church of Our Lady of the Snows.

D'Arcy McGee's use of the title "Our Lady of the Snow" is based on the legend of an old French snowman who lost his way in a snowstorm and believed himself at the point of death. After fervent prayer Our Lady appeared to him and conducted him safely to a forge on the side of the mountain, on the site of which he afterward built a church in honor of Our Lady of the Snows.

The stanza which opens and closes McGee's poem that enshrines the story is as follows:

If, Pilgrim, chance thy steps should lead

Where, emblem of our holy creed,
Canadian crosses glow

There you may hear what here you read,
And seek in witness of the deed,
Our Lady of the Snow!

It is a happy coincidence that the modern poet should address Canada, whose early history is so exclusively Catholic, by a poetic title drawn from Catholic sources.

PREDESTINATION

The Rev. J. J. Ross of this city preached a sermon recently in which he adhered very strictly to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. In an age when almost every preacher feels called upon to say something new or sensational, it strikes the average man as somewhat startling in itself to find a preacher adhering to the old Protestant standards of faith. "Justification is purely an act of grace that God bestows on men for Jesus Christ's sake." Thus far Catholics will agree. But Catholics hold the common sense doctrine that God does not justify a man against his will. And further, that he may of his own free will fall from the state of grace. Not so Mr. Ross, who says, (Predestination) is an irreversible act once done, done forever."

Luther held that no sin, no matter how gross, could forfeit justification, or as Catholics usually call it, the state of grace. "Sin bravely, but believe more firmly" was his famous dictum.

It is most interesting to note that the average Protestant of to-day has gone to the other extreme. He holds that it matters not what one believes so long as he lives right. Catholics alone keep the golden mean, holding fast to the truth that justification is by the grace of God through the merits of Christ; but holding likewise, what all human experience attests, that he may lose the grace of God by the abuse of his own free will.

ADORATION OF THE VIRGIN

The Rev. W. P. Garrett told the brethren on the anniversary of the relief of Derry some of the reasons why they were opposed to Catholics. One of these reasons is, according to the learned preacher, that the Roman Church claims that the "adoration of the Virgin Mary" is necessary for the salvation of the soul.

Some of these old calumnies die hard; but they are dying. It is not often, nowadays, that we hear of the "adoration" of the Virgin Mary. Every Catholic child learns in the Catechism that the first commandment commands us "to adore one God and to adore but Him alone."

Therefore to say that Catholics "adore" the Virgin Mary is a calumny pure and simple. It may be that the Rev. Mr. Garrett believes otherwise. But if he be so grossly ignorant of Catholic doctrine and practice, can such ignorance be excused? Surely when a Christian minister assumes the task of teaching his brethren what Catholics believe, he should prepare himself for the task assumed. Otherwise he pays but a poor compliment to the intelligence of his hearers. Only those as ignorant as himself will be influenced by his misrepresentations.

Protestants in general have become a bit ashamed of the attitude of their forefathers towards the Virgin Mother of Our Redeemer, and have quietly abandoned it. Indeed, many of them now stand side by side with Catholics in honoring her whom God so much honored. "Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

THE A. O. H.

In the development of Catholic spirit and zeal for the interests of the Church the Ancient Order of Hibernians is no inconsequential factor. In Canada its membership is increasing and its fidelity to its best traditions is an argument that is listened to by many of our people. It has a compactness and unity. It believes more in deeds than in words. Its ever prompt obedience to orders and loyalty to Church and reverence for the priesthood, which