

# The Catholic Register

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY AT  
119 WELLINGTON ST. WEST,  
TORONTO

SUBSCRIPTIONS:  
In City, including delivery..... \$1.50  
To all outside Canadian points..... 1.00  
United States and Foreign..... 1.50

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TORONTO, AUG. 27TH, 1908.

## NEARING THE ABYSS.

The people of France, or at least their most prominent statesmen and the press, are once more turning their wandering eyes to the contemplation of a state of affairs in that unfortunate country, which strikes terror into the hearts of all patriotic citizens; and rightly so, for a true patriot cannot but feel and look agape when he finds before him authentic official statistics which tell him that while all the nations around about are prosperous, and increasing in population and wealth, notwithstanding a constant tide of emigration which flows out from them to assist in building up other nations and countries, particularly in the New World, his own country, the one dearest to his heart, is being depopulated; and this process is going on while there is absolutely no emigration worth counting.

France is naturally a rich country. Its climate and soil give magnificent crops of every description, and the people, far from being extravagant, are so thrifty that every one, even of the peasantry, saves something out of his earnings.

In 1870 the war with Germany, which ended so disastrously to the country, decimating the population of its sturdiest young men, and leaving to be paid five million francs or a million dollars, within three years, as a war indemnity. Enterprise was, as a matter of course, suspended, while the war lasted, the fields were uncultivated or devastated, and even the ending of the war itself did not bring the end of the troubles to which the country was doomed, for there were internal dissensions which brought on the dreadful civil war of the Commune of Paris, which was the signal for uprisings against the new Government of the country in other localities which were its centres of commercial activity.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the natural advantages of the country and the patriotism of the people enabled them to get rid of the incubus of the foreign military occupation much sooner than was expected, the war indemnity being paid off in an incredibly short time, so that the people were enabled once more to devote themselves to the arts of peace, and the restoration of prosperity.

But, alas! as one of our poets says:  
"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;  
Princes and Lords may flourish, or may fade—  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made—  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed can never be supplied."

And France is now in this deplorable situation. Forty years ago France was almost recognized as the dictating power of Europe, but today,

"There is none so poor to do her reverence."

And wherein lies the cause for such a change? In 1866, when the population of France was 38,000,000, that of Great Britain was 30,000,000. Twenty years later, that is in 1886, France still had 38,000,000, while Great Britain had attained 36,000,000. In 1894 the population of Great Britain not only equalled, but passed, that of France, and in 1906, Great Britain reached the 42,000,000 mark, while France had only 39,000,000. Germany has also run far ahead in population, so that France is now regarded as decisively only a second-rate power in the European concert. But 1907 has been the fatal year! Down to this date, at least France was gaining somewhat by an actual increase. It was only in comparison with her neighbors that she was growing weaker. Between 1866 and 1886 came the terrible Franco-Prussian war, and with it two noble provinces were wrested from her and added to Germany. It was easy to account for her remaining stationary at so disastrous a period. Notwithstanding the facts of the case, the French Chauvinists hoped still that at some future moment the lost ground would be recovered, and even Alsace and Lorraine regained, but in 1907 came a more terrible blow than ever to French pride. In this year it was discovered by official statistics that while the number of births was 773,969, the deaths were 793,889, that is to say the excess of

deaths was 19,920. No wonder the nation took alarm at such a state of affairs, and asked the cause.

A governmental special commission was appointed recently to enquire into the matter, of which Senator Piot was chairman, and the remedy was proposed by him and unanimously adopted to the effect that an indirect premium be given to the parents of large families by reducing their taxes and imposing a heavier tax upon those who are childless, whether married persons or single.

We cannot imagine that such a law would seriously affect the situation, and it seems to us that it is only desperation that has suggested such a remedy.

The press of other nations, as for example of England, regard the facts as indicating that the French race is doomed to disappear, its actual decline having begun.

It is worth noting that the actual decline in population is coincident with the date when the government announced its intention to drive the priests from their homes, and to confiscate the churches. This intention was only partially carried out, but sufficient spoliation was perpetrated to show that it was the wish of the government to abolish the religion of Christ from the land. War to the hilt against Christianity was declared, and immediately the depopulation began.

This coincidence is not accidental.

"Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not put asunder man and wife whom God hath joined together." These are the laws of God which the French Government has violated in its war upon religion, and it is reaping the consequences in the crop of child-murders, abortions, concubines, and divorces, caused directly by the encouragement it has given to irreligion. This is no imaginary picture for it has been shown that the areas which have sent infidels to the Chamber of Deputies are the localities where the depopulation is going on, as for example in the valleys of the Loire and the Garonne, while the La Vendee and Brittany, where the Catholic Church still holds sway, the population is on the increase almost at a normal rate.

Let the Government go on in its insanity and the evil will correct itself in the course of time. By mere natural increase, the Catholic population by remaining faithful, will once more become the majority of the nation, and religion will again assert itself throughout the country. But even this will leave the country for a long time in its inferior position among the nations.

## THEY PRESERVED THE FAITH.

At the recent dinner given by the Catholic Union to Lord Lovat during his visit to Toronto, His Lordship in the course of his address referred to the tenacity with which the Catholic Highlanders in Canada had remained loyal through every vicissitude to the Faith brought by them from the land of their ancestors. I met those, said Lord Lovat, in and about Quebec of Highland descent whose native tongue and manners had been lost, who spoke only French, whose customs had changed and whose very name had been modified—who had little, in short, to associate them with the past, save and except their religion, their Catholicity. This they had carried with them through every modification of fortune and time—their Faith was the one thing that proved imperishable. The experience of Lord Lovat is one more testimony to that already piled up to overflowing of the strength and vitality of the Catholicity of the Scottish Celt. The bringing forward of this additional proof awakens a process of comparison. Why is it that in Scotland and Ireland the Celt has retained the Faith untarnished, while in France for example, many thousands have lapsed and in numberless others the once fruiting seed is almost withered? It is to history that we must turn for the solution, and this points to persecution as the lever about which through the centuries the forces have worked for the preservation of that which to the believing mind is the "one thing necessary." Ireland as a nation stands before the world as an example of fidelity and loyalty to the cause of Christianity. Fines, imprisonment, tortures, death itself have failed to weaken the bond that ties Irish men and women to the faith of St. Patrick. So in Scotland the religion implanted there by the great St. Columbkille, has been for the Scottish, Highland Celt the one thing retained through every vicissitude of fortune. Kings, governments, customs and language have changed, but the light of the Faith has been kept as bright in the fastnesses of the Scottish hills as in the roadside cabin of the Irish themselves and wherever they have migrated, the Catholic Highlanders have carried with them the religion of their forefathers, and one of their first tasks has ever been to plant the Cross and erect the chapel wherein the one great Sacrifice might be offered. The faithful priests, too, have accompanied and often preceded their people. Thus we see the McDonalds, the Frasers, the Chisholms, amongst the pioneer names of the hierarchy and priesthood of Canada as witness those of Nova Scotia, Glengarry and other parts.

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Yes, the testimony of Lord Lovat, as to the loyalty to Faith of the Highlanders in Canada, is strong, but it is not surprising, for it is but a continuance of that fidelity which Mary Stuart suffered imprisonment and death, and countless others have since followed her example.

## THE CHURCH THE PRESERVER OF NATIONHOOD.

"This in brief is the primary motive and reason for the federation of Catholic societies, namely, to safeguard the best interests of the nation by endeavoring to bring into the actual and throbbing life of the people those vivifying principles of Christian civilization, upon which Christian society is built; and secondly, by denouncing earlily whatever endangers the public moral welfare and agitating prudently to bring about a healthy public sentiment."

The above is from the sermon of Archbishop O'Connell of Boston, to the confederated Catholic Societies of America during their late Convention. The words quoted are an epitome of the objects for which federation is sanctioned and assisted by the Church, and furthermore, are a fine expression of that which is best for the fostering and development of all that which makes for perfection in nationhood.

The newspapers have been talking recently about the somewhat abstract condition or thing called "nationhood," and its highest meaning. Definitions many and varied have been published, but to our mind the words of Archbishop O'Connell are luminous, nothing more is necessary. Nationhood developed under true Christian civilization is what the world is wanting and upon which no improvement could be proposed. The Archbishop's text, too, defines the work of the Church in this regard. It is to "safeguard the best interests of the nation by endeavoring to bring out into the actual and throbbing life of the people the vivifying principles of Christian civilization upon which Christian society is built," and doing this the Church proves herself to be the nation's first benefactor.

That the address of the Metropolitan of Boston was no platitude, is well known to those acquainted with the broad lines upon which the care of the Church is directed. Beginning with the family in the home, which it seeks to train and fit, it reaches out to the community and recognizes that for peace and progress there must be a harmony of Christian ethics amongst all parts, otherwise disruption follows and the ideal of a perfect nationhood will prove impossible of fulfillment. To vivify society, then, by the inculcation of sound Christian principles is the first step towards an ideal nationhood.

The second essential, according to the Archbishop of Boston, is a fearless denunciation of whatever tends to endanger the morality of the people. The last, as is apparent, is distinct from the first, because while sowing correct principles, wrong might easily survive if it be not uprooted by denunciation from those whose duty it is to watch and warn. Prudent agitation with a view to the growth of a healthy public sentiment is the last clause of the advice given, advice which forms a recipe for the formation of a nationhood which in its character and results would be that for which all seem clamoring but from which few seem able to lay their hands.

## COMMUNICATION

To the Catholic Register:

My two preceding letters were written on the hearing desk of an Atlantic liner, my present communication is being penned in the midst of one of the fairest scenes of earth—on the banks of Killarney's lakes and in sight of its mountains. But Killarney must not be the subject of this contribution. I wound up my last letter by a description of my ocean voyage, and the law of continuity demands that I describe the last scenes of the journey as well as the incidents of the journey to the place in which I now write.

The latter part of Saturday, July 25th, was obscured by rain and mist; hence only a momentary glimpse of the coast of Scotland was afforded and the bold and rugged coast of Antrim was entirely hidden from the view. The weather grew more favorable towards evening, and an opportunity was given us to get a glimpse of the south-western shore of the Isle of Man. Bold and springing almost like a wall from the water in places, and then broken by a curving bay around the shores of which a charmingly situated town could be dimly discerned, gradually rising on the south into a stretch of well cultivated fields, the portion of the Isle of Man unfolded to the eyes of the passengers of the "Ottawa" was indeed a happy combination of the rugged and the beautiful.

Our first herald of the English coast was the alternate flash and disappearing of the revolving lantern of a light house. After a while another light of the same character some dis-

tance north of the former marked the estuary of the Mersey. The hour was now growing late, and the heavy mist rendered it impossible in the waning light to catch a glimpse of land. Hence the last portion of our sea voyage was a kind of torch-light procession. Our whole course up the Mersey to Liverpool was between rows of lighted buoys which marked the course steamships should take. The necessity of this step was quite apparent. In many places the channel marked by the buoys was hardly wide enough to permit two ocean liners to pass one another; in other places it took a sharp curve. Only for the excellence of the system of marking the channel by lights, it would be impossible to come to Liverpool except by day-light. And the enterprising city fathers of that famous centre of commerce deserve the highest credit for their determination to make their city as accessible to the shipping of the world by night as well as by day.

That this enterprise has been richly rewarded was evident as the "Ottawa" proceeded up the Mersey. On one side and the other a procession of smaller craft destined for every quarter of the British Isles steamed past us with a swiftness which bespoke perfect knowledge of their course. And as the docks of Liverpool were approached, several great ocean liners, revealed by their lights, lay at anchor. These multitudinous and many-colored lights, moving or at rest, gleaming along the river and reflected in its dark waters, gave a more impressive idea of Liverpool's commercial greatness than daylight itself would furnish. Beyond the river banks the lights of New Brighton, a famous bathing and amusement resort—the Hanlon's Point, Balmly Beach and Rosedale of Toronto combined—of Birkenhead, a great ship-building centre, and of other populous suburbs of Liverpool, formed great luminous clouds on each side of the river, out of which shone like stars the powerful arc-lamps of prominent buildings and thoroughfares. When finally the lights of the centre of all this illumination, Liverpool, displayed its greatness by their thickness and far-reaching gleam, the picture was worth a visit from across the Atlantic. The Anglo-Saxon party, who were sorely disappointed at their failure to land at Moville, were reconciled by the grandeur of the entry into Liverpool by night; indeed some of them, including your correspondent, were glad of the turn affairs took.

A grander sight, however, than that supplied by the enterprise of man, awaited those who rose early on Sunday morning. There was not much virtue in early rising on that occasion, for our steamer did not reach her destination until 11 p.m. on Saturday, July 25th, and as the Anglo-Saxon party had to hear Mass at 5.30 a.m. and be present at breakfast at 6.30 a.m., it was a matter of necessity to be stirring before the morning had far advanced. Those who were on deck a half hour or more before the required time were richly rewarded by a glorious sunrise. Right behind Liverpool the sun rose in royal splendor, above him a canopy of shining cloud, whilst the whole city stood revealed in front of this background, with not a stir of life and with scarcely a smoke wreath from her many chimneys. It was hard to realize that all the passion and misery and sin of which we were to see evidences a few hours later were wrapped up in that peacefully sleeping city steeped in that gorgeous sunrise.

About 8.30 on Sunday morning, the Ottawa set foot on the soil of the Old World. The "Customs" examination occupied an hour or so, the officers doing their work quickly, carefully, and politely. This ordeal was passed quite easily for the representative of Cook's Tourist Agency who was there to meet them and take them under his charge. It was after 10 a.m. when all was ready for a bus drive to the North Western Railway Hotel, adjoining the railway station of the same name, from which we were to take our way to Holyhead. After sending away some postcards, snatching a brief rest till what Torontonians would call dinner time, but in the parlance of this country, lunch-time, and partaking of a meal which deserved the name of dinner, our party broke into groups to see Liverpool.

The first feature which made itself apparent was that Liverpool keeps Sunday. There were no open stores (that the liquor stores or saloons were open at least in the evening was proved to us by ocular demonstration); no street peddling or commercialism of any kind was visible. A Sabbath stillness reigned. To some of our American friends this seemed too Puritanical, but the impression produced thereby on others was decidedly favorable. To see a great centre of commerce, the second or third in importance of the world's shipping stations, reverencing the Lord's Day, does credit to the Englishman's regard for religion, and in a material age is something for which one should be profoundly grateful. The two-story cars were very much in evidence, but they glided along quietly as though entering into the spirit of the day.

These street cars, or tramcars as they are styled here, afforded another worthy trait of British character. Their windows were surrounded by a guard reaching almost to the rails, so that it would be an impossibility for the tiniest toddler to be run over. Then they were run slowly, and in sufficient number not to be crowded, whilst all bore the mark of civic ownership. The citizens of Liverpool evidently deem themselves able to run tramcars as a civic enterprise. In doing so they give a cheap and excellent service, and show a paramount

regard for the sacredness of human life, and in these respects set an example to most of the cities of the New World.

Another feature of Liverpool with which the visitor is favorably impressed is the cleanliness of its streets. Great business thoroughfares and lanes and alleys alike are thoroughly swept.

Then standing in the heart of the city, opposite the magnificent St. George's Hall, the visitor sees a block of public buildings of impressive massiveness and at the same time of fine proportions, worthy of Liverpool's commercial greatness. These, together with the world-renowned docks, reveal the solidity and enterprise which have given Liverpool and the nation of whose energy it is the expression, their commercial pre-eminence. Indeed solidity is everywhere apparent, in the business streets, as well as in the splendid suburban residences with which this city is surrounded. Your correspondent and a clerical companion took occasion to pay a visit to two of these suburbs—New Brighton and Seacombe—on Sunday afternoon. A splendid promenade of several miles in extent runs beside the Mersey River. Bordering, and stretching far back from, the promenade, are miles of streets of terraced mansions, as solid as they are elegant. They do not present the same variety and have not the same extent of lawn as our fashionable residences, but at the same time they are not freaks, as our pretentious dwellings often are.

The promenade was crowded with holiday seekers, young and old, all orderly, well dressed, and exceedingly unemotional. As your correspondent and his companion paced the promenade from end to end, they never heard a laugh, rarely saw a smile, and not once noticed a loud word. Even the children playing on the sands left bare by the retreating tide, were singularly quiet. The writer who declared that the Englishman takes even his pleasures sadly must have encountered such a scene. Your correspondent would substitute the word "seriously" for sadly, for he saw no sign of sadness in the groups which sauntered along the promenade, engaged in low and earnest conversation.

Whilst all this revealed fine traits of character, there was revealed another side of Liverpool life which will demand the best efforts of all that is best in British solidity and enterprise. The type of the population which hovered around the docks and poured out from the narrow streets and lanes, bore the stamp of a physical and moral degeneracy, which, unless arrested, bodes ill for the future of the country. This phase became more evident on Sunday night. The space in front of St. George's Hall was filled with an ever increasing crowd, some of whom joined in hymns to the accompaniment of a Salvation Army band, whilst others gathered round a lady advocate of woman suffrage, with a Socialist, and an anti-Socialist, orator haranguing on either side of her. On the outskirts of this crowd were the toughest specimens of male and female humanity to be found anywhere. To watch from the opposite side of the street this surging multitude, and see how it was addressed by speakers diametrically opposed to one another, there was no attempt at disorder—in the swept stream of humanity which swept past on the sidewalk—to see the brazen, shamelessness with which the handmaidens of vice proclaimed their calling—to mark the frequency with which men and women staggered along—to note the evidences of poverty, dissipation, huddling together of families in the vitiated atmosphere of a single room—to mark the sullen bitterness of many faces—was a wonderful study and gave an insight into the tremendous task with which Great Britain is confronted.

If she is to maintain her pre-eminence she must take vigorous steps to arrest the physical and moral degeneracy of which the slums of her great cities are the breeding ground. The congestion of the city must be relieved by a return to the land, by a breaking up and cultivating of those large demesnes which now minister to titlled pride and luxury. The drink evil must be grappled with. The startling contrasts between poverty and profusion which now afford the Socialist enemies of individual rights and liberty, their most effective weapons must be softened. The heir of wealth must be brought to realize its responsibilities. Thoughtful minds in England belonging to the ranks of labor and capital, of the aristocracy and democracy, alike are beginning to grasp this, to see that England's danger is from within. One very hopeful feature of the situation is the ingrained love of the Briton for fair play, his large tolerance of liberty of speech, and his respect for law and order. When men of diametrically opposite views can address within a few feet of one another, a crowd of men, without the least symptom of disturbance, there is hope for such a crowd.

The most gratifying feature of the whole evening's experience to your correspondent and his clerical companion was the evidence of activity on the part of Catholics. On one side of a large monument was a streamer bearing the inscription: "The Catholic Anti-Socialist Crusade." The Catholic Church in Liverpool clearly believes that it is her duty not to leave the monopoly of street oratory to Socialists and such like, and she has her chosen representatives to address the crowd which gathers every Sunday afternoon and even in front of the city's great central block.

My description of Liverpool, its greatness and its problems has led me further than I intended, and forces me to leave my first renewal of acquaintance with the Emerald Isle after many years, for my next communication.

L. MINEHAN.

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