

The Catholic Record.

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Catholic Record.

London, Sat., Dec. 30th, 1890.

TO OUR FRIENDS.

We have mailed to all our subscribers who are in arrears a statement of their accounts. We need scarcely say that it requires a large cash expenditure each week to produce a newspaper. Our subscribers are surely aware of this already, and they must, on reflection, arrive at the conclusion that it is unfair to overlook the duty of squaring their indebtedness at least once a year. Many subscribers postpone payment until the agent calls, and pay promptly and cheerfully when he makes his appearance. For this we sincerely thank them. It would, however, be much better for us were they to make remittances to the office, thus giving us the use of the money in the meantime as well as saving the time of the agent. It costs but two cents for a money order and five cents for registration. Either of these methods should be employed. The money order system is, however, the best as well as the cheapest. With the money or money order all that is necessary to send is the name and post office address. Receipts are sent immediately, and if not received in due time a card should be sent to the office giving date when remittance was made. A very common custom is to fancy that the publisher will not miss the subscription of any one individual. We would not indeed miss one nor a couple of dozen subscriptions, but the fact is that thousands are on the principle alluded to. We hope all our kind friends will begin the New Year with accounts balanced for their Catholic paper.

THE FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

The great festival of Christmas, which the Church is to celebrate next Thursday, is justly considered to be one of the two greatest festivals of the year, both on account of the importance of the event in itself which is thereby commemorated (and because of the benefit conferred on mankind by the mystery which was accomplished on that day).

The importance of the mystery of the birth of Jesus was recognized in heaven itself, for a Redeemer had been promised to mankind when our first parents were yet in the garden of Paradise, that is to say, before God punished them for the disobedience of which they had been guilty, by driving them from that happy abode, condemning them for the future to earn their living by the labor of their hands. During the four thousand years which elapsed between the fall of our first parents and the birth of Christ the world was by the will of God in a condition of providential preparation for this great mystery of the coming of Jesus Christ. The old law which God gave to the Jews was itself a part of this providential preparation, all its sacrifices and religious ceremonies being but a figure of what was to happen during the period of Redemption which was inaugurated by the incarnation of Christ the Son of God; and when the time arrived for His coming into the world His birth was announced by angels to the shepherds of Judea as most joyful news. We are told in Holy Scripture that the "brightness of God shone round about them" so that they were filled with great fear, whereupon the angel said to them: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."

This news was a source of gladness to these pious shepherds, because the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, through whom man was to be redeemed, had been long expected as the precursor of a new era of peace to man. It was on this account that a multitude of the heavenly army praised God for the accomplishment of so desirable an event, chanting the hymn of joy:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

An era of peace was indeed then inaugurated, for there could be no true peace until the sad effects of the sins of mankind were repaired by the work of Redemption, which could be accomplished only through the incarnation of the Son

of God. The birth of Christ was therefore the signal that the work of Redemption was about to begin, which was to restore the human race to that high destiny for which it was created, but which through sin had been forfeited. No atonement which man could offer for the sins of four thousand years could suffice to satisfy the divine justice which demanded that an adequate sacrifice should be offered to the adorable Father God in satisfaction for the many enormities of which the world had been guilty during forty centuries; and it was only the infinite wisdom and mercy of God which could find a remedy for evils so great and so numerous.

The coming of Christ into the world was the only means whereby that atonement could be made, and it was for this purpose that Christ was born. It was for this reason that He is announced as the Saviour whose coming was an occasion of great joy to all the people, inasmuch as it is "for us and for our salvation that He came down from heaven," as we are told in the words of the Nicene Creed.

As our future Redeemer, a Saviour was expected and announced by the Prophets who preceded our Blessed Lord. To Him were applied those words of Isaiah: "Rejoice and give praise together, O ye deserts of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem." (Isaiah 62.) The fulfilment of this prophecy is announced by the Apostles of Christ in many forms, among which we may particularly note the words of St. Paul to Titus (ii, 14): "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people acceptable, pursuing good works."

It is certain that the Christian Church celebrated this festival from the earliest times, though it cannot be said that there was complete uniformity in regard to the very day on which it was celebrated. Pope Julius the First, whose pontificate was in the first half of the fourth century, made close inquiry into the records of Judea, which had been brought to Rome by Titus after the destruction of Jerusalem, and in a letter which he addressed to the Bishops of Jerusalem, in answer to enquiries made on the subject, he states that the proper day for the celebration of the nativity of Christ is the 25th of December, and this is the date on which it has been celebrated in the Western Church, though the practice in the Eastern Church was then to celebrate it along with the Epiphany on the 6th of January. After the time of Pope Julius, however, the Eastern Church accommodated its practice to that of the west, and St. John Chrysostom in one of his sermons delivered in Antioch on the 25th of December speaks of that date as being the day universally observed as our Saviour's birthday. The Eastern Church, the Schismatics, as well as the Catholics, celebrate the festival on the 25th of December, though owing to the difference in the calendar, between the old and new styles, the 25th of December in the old style used in the east does not occur until our feast of the Epiphany, January 6th, which is on this account often called "Old Christmas day." It will be borne in mind that owing to a few minutes difference between the actual time of the earth's revolution around the sun, and the length of the year as observed under the calendar used down to the sixteenth century, there was at that time a variation of ten days between the date of the actual vernal equinox and the date on which it occurred when the old or Julian calendar was instituted in the year 45 B. C. The vernal equinox in 1582 occurred on the 11th instead of the 21st of March, and in that year Pope Gregory XIII. ordained that the 6th of October should be called the 15th of October. Since that time the discrepancy has reached twelve days, so that the oriental now observe Christmas day while we are celebrating the Epiphany.

The season of Advent was instituted by the Church for the purpose of preparing for the great solemnity of Christmas, and as the best preparation which can be made, in order to fulfill the purpose for which the feast is to be observed, is to be in the state of grace, the Church strongly recommends all Catholics during this holy season to make their peace with God, and to receive worthily the two Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, for it is of the last-named sacrament that our Blessed Lord says: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you." (St. John, vi.) At this time, therefore, all good Catholics should prepare themselves carefully for the fulfilment of this sacred duty.

HERR WINTHORST, the leader of the Centre or Catholic party in the German Reichstag, earnestly supports the Government. His relations with Chancellor Von Caprivi are most cordial, and it is confidently stated that the Chancellor is in accord with Herr Windthorst on the question of repealing the laws under which the religious orders were expelled from Germany. The Bundesrath is less favorably inclined towards the Catholic Church than is the Reichstag, but there is good reason to believe that Gen. Von Caprivi will use his influence in inducing them to repeal all obnoxious penal laws which were passed under Bismarck.

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

A valued friend of ours, a merchant in a flourishing Canadian town, in the course of his business, became possessed of a large number of pigs' heads, which being a useful article for purposes of domestic economy, he desired to sell at a low price. As his customers came in he informed them in the course of trade that he had pigs' heads which he would sell cheap, but to his discomfiture he could find no buyers. A happy thought hereupon struck him. He would give the pigs' heads a pleasant name, and would again try his luck. He began to tell his customers that he could sell jowls cheap, and as soon as they saw what the jowls were, his stock of pigs' heads was rapidly disposed of.

The Methodists have the idea of holding a general meeting of representative Methodists from all parts of the world. It is well known that Methodist Conferences are rather tame affairs in the matter of religious results, rather devoting themselves to the discussion of such questions as, how many cigars or pinches of snuff a brother may lawfully make use of in a day, than to any practical religious questions. With a happy thought somewhat like that of our merchant friend they have decided to call their coming conference by an attractive name. It shall not be an ordinary conference. That would be somewhat flat; so it has been dubbed "an Ecumenical Council," and by this name the intended gathering of Methodist Fathers of the Church is seriously spoken of by its promoters.

Arrangements are now being made for holding this conference, and in order to select a place for the meeting, and to settle other matters of detail, a preliminary meeting was held recently at Philadelphia, at which representatives were present from all the American Methodist churches, including those of Canada. It was decided that the conference should take place at Washington, in October 1891, and the number of delegates who are to be present was fixed at five hundred, of whom three hundred will represent the Western or American section, and two hundred the Eastern or European section. Canada will have twenty-four delegates.

There is something extremely ludicrous in the application of the term Ecumenical to this coming conference. An Ecumenical Council is a council of the authorized teachers of the whole Church of God on earth, and as such it has supreme authority to define matters of faith, and to settle the discipline of the Church. It has always been held that the decrees of such a council in matters of faith are obligatory on the whole Church, and that they must be accepted as the voice of God. The Church is described in Holy Scripture as the pillar and the ground of truth, and as Ecumenical Councils with the Head of the Church presiding in person or by his delegate represent the authority of the Church, their decrees of faith have always been held as infallible.

Thus the great ecclesiastical historian Socrates, speaking of the Council of Nice, says that the Fathers present "could not by any means err from the truth because they were enlightened by God; and by the grace of the Holy Ghost. St. Gregory the Great says of the five Ecumenical Councils which had been held up to his time, that he "receives and venerates them as the four books of the holy gospel." St. Ambrose said that "not death nor the sword could separate him from the Council of Nice," and Leo I., called also Leo the Great, declared repeatedly that the faith of Nice and Chalcedon is a first principle from which neither he nor any one else is permitted to swerve; and the Council of Chalcedon itself declared the Creed of Nice to be unalterable. St. Augustine and St. Vincent of Lerins declare that future Councils must build their decisions of faith upon what has already been decided by previous Councils. It is because the authority of the body of the pastors of the Church is to be received with unquestioning faith that the holy Apostle St. John says: "We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John, iv, 6.)

The early Fathers who wrote so strongly defining the authority of General Councils to be indisputable merely propounded what the universal doctrine of the Church was in their day, and a truly Ecumenical Council has to-day the same authority as it had when the Councils of Nice, Chalcedon, etc., were held, and for the same reason.

But will the proposed Methodist Ecumenical Council have any such authority? Can it decide between the Calvinistic and Arminian doctrines, which are just now so hotly debated among the Protestant denominations, each doctrine having its supporters among Methodists as among the others? Every one is aware that it will possess no such authority, and that it will carefully avoid any such decision. What then is its purpose? Can it insist that the Methodists of the Southern States shall regard the colored Methodists as fellow-men, having, before God, equal rights with their white brethren?

It can do nothing of the kind. It will be a convention absolutely without authority, and should it attempt to assert that it possesses authority its claims

would be listened to with laughter. Those who will assemble are perfectly aware of this, as the Anglican Bishops who met at the Pan-Anglican Council, and the Presbyterian Councils who assembled at the Pan-Presbyterian Councils were sensible that they also were destitute of authority. They did not attempt to exercise authority, and neither will the General Council of Methodism, though Christ certainly gave authority to the Church which he established, and declared those to be as shepherds and pastors who would reject his decrees.

These facts prove indubitably that neither the Methodist, nor the Presbyterian, nor the Anglican Church, is the one which Christ instituted, if such a proof be needed. The future Methodist Ecumenical Council will not dare to say with the Apostle St. John: "He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." It is only the Catholic Church which can speak with Apostolic authority, and which can say as did the Apostles in promulgating their decrees: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things." (Acts xv.) And in similar terms does the Church issue her decrees to this day.

We presume there will be much self-gratulation indulged in at the coming convention, and many declarations of good-will indulged in, and it may be productive of some friendly feeling between the members, but as an authoritative body, legislating for the Church, or deciding questions of morals, it will be a farce. It is much more likely to fulminate a decree against the use of cider and snuff than to explain the Christian doctrine, or to establish uniformity of discipline, as regards, for example, the extent of the authority of those ministers to whom some of the Methodist Churches have thought proper to apply the name "Bishops." But at all events it is evident that the promoters of the coming Council will succeed in attracting public attention to their proceedings, if, like the jowl dealer, they can persuade that something peculiarly valuable is offered to them because it is given under an attractive name.

RELIGIOUS ITALIANS.

A despatch to the New York Times from St. Louis was extensively published in the papers last week respecting a celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception by the Italians in St. Louis. The celebration was interesting as an evidence of the fervent faith of those who took part in it, but it was by no means an extraordinary occurrence, as a careful reading of the despatch will show. Yet by highly coloring it the penny hammer who furnished the item to the papers makes it appear to be something in the style of the Voodoo orgies of the Protestant negroes of Georgia and Alabama, or perhaps, rather the more lucrative and polished abominations of the astute spiritualistic demon worshippers which have been so popular with New York and Toronto audiences from time to time.

Here is the manner in which the news-monger introduces his description: "New York, Dec. 9.—A St. Louis despatch to the Times says:—A weird procession such as was certainly never seen before in this city and probably not in any other city in the United States took place between 2 and 6:30 yesterday morning, the occasion being the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception by the Italians."

And in what did the weirdness of the ceremony consist? We will let the despatcher describe it himself:

"Half a hundred torch-bearers were in front. Then followed a bugler, who at intervals sent his clarion notes resounding along the well lighted deserted thoroughfares. Behind him came a dozen stalwart Sicilians bearing on their shoulders a wooden platform. On this rested an image of the Virgin Mary, decorated and adorned with gold and silver wreaths of fruit and flowers. On all four sides candles burned, the reflection of which sent dazzling glares of light from the diamonds which bedecked the figure. The image was of plaster of Paris, and was moulded in this city. * * *

Just as the day was dawning the carriers deposited their burden in a niche in a corner of a room at 85 Essex alley, where the image will remain for the next eight days. The room has been gorgeously decorated with bright colored tissue paper, flowers and fruits, one corner being arranged to form an altar. Here every evening of the present week the faithful will gather to repeat their prayers to the Virgin."

A very beautiful mode the participants took of testifying their devotion to the Mother of God, who was addressed with respect by the archangel who brought to her a message of good tidings to all mankind, a message from the adorable Trinity. The archangel does not hesitate to acknowledge the glorious privileges of Mary, "full of grace, and blessed among women;" and why should we or the Italians of St. Louis be in doubt about our duty in this regard? But though the adornments of the Italians were, no doubt, as handsome as they could afford to make them, there is nothing to justify the news-furnisher in styling the event

as a "weird procession" of unprejudiced character.

But where we have marked the hiatus in the newspaper correspondent's account of the matter, there is a sentence which we purposely leave out there, so as to give uninterrupted what is undoubtedly the truth of the description. We must insert here the part omitted above, as it is probably the "weird" part of the demonstration to which the writer refers. He says:

"The procession stopped several times in the Italian quarter, where the image of the Virgin was lowered and worshipped by crowds of Italians."

Every one will know at once that this part of the story is a misrepresentation. Those poor, perhaps, but religious Italians know their religion too well to offer to a plaster of Paris statue the honor which belongs only to God. They know better how God is to be worshipped than does the scoffing, and probably infidel writer who furnishes this bit of news. The little Catechism which all our Catholic children learn, and which, we venture to say, every one of those Italians knows by heart says that we are by no means to pray to the crucifix or to the images of the saints "for they have neither life nor sense nor power to hear or help us." It tells us also that we are not "to give to any creature the honor due to God alone," but that we should honor the saints of God as "God's special friends and faithful servants." Also "of God alone we beg grace and mercy, and of the Saints we only ask the assistance of their prayers." That this is lawful and useful is evident from the fact that we are recommended to ask the prayers of our fellow creatures on earth and to pray for them. If the prayers of the Saints of God on earth are beneficial to us, there can be no reason why those prayers should be less powerful to benefit us when they are offered for us by the Saints in heaven.

The St. Louis Italians, no doubt, asked the Blessed Virgin to intercede with her divine Son for her children on earth, but they did not ask the prayers of the plaster statue. Nevertheless, they showed respect to the image of Mary because it represents her, just as we might show marks of respect to the image of the Queen if it were exhibited on the Queen's birthday in a transparency at a procession in her honor. There is nothing more weird—that is to say, witelike or superstitious—in the procession of the Italians in honor of the Immaculate Conception than there is in any celebration of the Queen's birthday which we have ever witnessed.

It gives us pleasure to know that not all the Italians have lost faith in the power of religion, as have done the followers of Signor Crispi and his colleagues in the Italian Government; and the early hour at which these Italians began their devotions, before going to their work, shows the earnestness of their faith, for which we thank God fervently.

REV. MR. HAGAR.

Rev. Mr. Hagar, of Kingston, has earnestly placed Archbishop Cleary on his defence. His Grace, it will be remembered, in a recent speech, characterized Protestant clergymen as "poor little wretched ministers," "poisonous pastors," "hiring pastors," and "leaders of infidelity." Mr. Hagar quotes to the Archbishop passages of Scripture in which Christians are enjoined to love one another. He also refers his Grace to such texts as these:

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren."—James iv, 2.

"If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."—James i, 26.

"But whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."—Matthew v, 22.

Having made these extracts he asks the prelate if he thinks the terms "poor little wretched ministers," "poisonous pastors," "hiring pastors," and "leaders of infidelity," are justified by Scripture, to say nothing of courtesy. The expressions were certainly unfortunate. It is difficult to suppose that the Archbishop in his cooler moments would use them. But, of course, His Grace will explain.—Toronto Mail.

It has been explained over and over again that Archbishop Cleary never made use of such expressions. It was the Mail's own reporter that misreported and faultily misrepresented the Archbishop's words. The Archbishop has proved himself a master in the employment of sound Anglo-Saxon terms, and should not be suspected even of saying "poisonous pastors." What he did say was: that men of no faith wanted to lead the lambs of his flock into "poisonous pastures." He referred to no ministers except to those "poor little fellows" calling themselves Equal Righters, who stumped the country at the last election and had one man elected, the member for East Durham, who, last week, was unseated by judicial authority at Millbrook—Hon. Justices Maclean and Falconbridge declaring his election void. And, strange to say, Dalton McCarthy acted as lawyer for the petitioners who asked to have Mr. Campbell unseated. The "hiring pastors" and "leaders of infidelity" were the very few ministers who, shouted "down with religious education," and who accompanied or followed

the advocates of the godless system from town to town and from platform to platform all through the Province.

Archbishop Cleary is no bigot. All those who know him socially or otherwise in Kingston entertain the deepest respect for him as a very ripe scholar, a deeply learned theologian and a perfect gentleman. To the unscrupulous reporters of the Toronto press must be attributed all the harsh and un-English expressions for which Archbishop Cleary has been so unjustly pilloried; and, in spite of all explanations is still held up day after day in the columns of the Mail to the unjust criticisms of a too easily duped Protestant public.

THE SITUATION.

Our first pronouncement on the question of Mr. Parnell's guilt or innocence, of the independent stand he assumed, was all in his favor. We believed in his reserved power, in his capability of some day and very soon proving himself guileless, and satisfactorily demonstrating that the O'Shea scandal was a trumped up case of diabolical forgery, in which Capt. O'Shea and his servants were filling the roles of Le Caron and Pigott. We believe that British gold and Balfour's unscrupulous methods could be proved, as by many they are held to be accountable for the disgrace brought home to Parnell's door, and to Ireland wounded in her chieftain's honor. A new feature is now given to the situation. Mr. Parnell declines positively to make any explanation. He sees all Parliamentary Scotland shocked at the revelations of the divorce court, the city of Edinburgh withdrawing he honors of citizenship she had in admiration of his patriotism conferred upon him. He sees all the masses of the English people with their leaders, Morley, Harcourt and the grand old Man, who, for the last five years, has had Ireland in his day dreams, and for declared policy the reversal of England's conduct towards Ireland with full restitution to the Irish people for all the wrongs and confiscations of past legislation—Parnell sees all these grand results of his and his colleagues' work for the last ten years that away before him on a wave of calumny that one word from him could arrest. He sees those grand results—more extensive knowledge of and sympathy for the Irish people, a general uprising all over England and Scotland in favor of Ireland's claims to self-government, statesmen, peers and commoners all equally enlisted in the cause of Ireland's prosperity and regeneration. All these magnificent and hitherto unexpected results, the fruit of twelve years' hard struggle against coercion, are borne in on the rock of scandal and crushed out of sight. We ask how is it, in the nature of any man, as it must be in the nature of Mr. Parnell, to view such mighty ruins unmoved and undismayed?

Mr. Parnell may allege that those wonderful changes in British opinion and among English statesmen are the natural outcome of the independent policy he devised, and, being his own handiwork, he can let it perish, that he may bring about still greater changes, and in the long run show still more wonderful results. But Mr. Parnell was not alone in the formation of the Land League and of the obstructive policy that forced the House of Commons to the serious consideration of Ireland's claims to self-government. Michael Davitt is the father of the Land League. To him especially is Mr. Parnell indebted for the bold and independent policy of passive resistance that broke the power of landlordism. Mr. Parnell had able and self-sacrificing colleagues in John Dillon, Wm. O'Brien, Justin McCarthy, Thomas Sexton, Timothy Healy and others. All these he has been willing to sacrifice, that he, with a few others, may escape. And yet it must be admitted that, while under plea of illness he was enjoying himself at the seaside, John Dillon and Wm. O'Brien were in the thick of the fight, defying Balfour's janissaries or enduring the horrors of solitary confinement on penitential hard tack and the plank bed.

It is our humble opinion that some such considerations should have weighed with Mr. Parnell before he flung his banner of self-willed independence to the breeze. He certainly should have hesitated before he broke with Gladstone, and treated so grand and noble a figure in history with contumely and the reproach of garrulousness and deceit. He should have hesitated before he telegraphed his ultimatum to his old friend, Roman of them all, and pronounced the fatal words: "Too late." Naught, however, is "too late" or too difficult of attainment or solution for the intrepid O'Brien. He is now speeding his way over the ocean in the midst of winter's raging billows, to attempt, if possible, the allaying of the storm that has already burst upon unhappy Ireland. "The tone of your reply," he wired to Parnell, "leaves little ground for hope, but, having regard to the horrible consequences to the country of prolonged internecine struggle, I am still anxious