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MERRY CHRISTMAS

Merry, merry Christmas,
Haste around the earth;
Merry, merry Christmas,
'Tis the Saviour's birth.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Be to one and all!
Merry, merry Christmas,
Enter hut and hall.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Be to rich and poor!
Merry, merry Christmas,
Stop at every door.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Fill each heart with joy!
Merry, merry Christmas,
To each girl and boy.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Better gifts than gold;
Merry, merry Christmas,
To the young and old.

Merry, merry Christmas,
May the coming year
Bring as merry a Christmas
And as bright a cheer.

FATHER RYAN.

A CHRISTMAS GREETING.

In this month's issue of the Canadian, the official organ of the C.M.B.A., in Canada, the Grand President, Hon. M. F. HACKETT, addresses the following touching and inspiring Christmas greeting to the members:

"The near approach of the greatest and grandest of all the Christian festivals, with its divine message of peace to man, and its sacred associations of charity, love, and heavenly love, naturally suggests the joyous and familiar greetings which flow spontaneously to all lips during the holiday season. It would therefore ill become me if I did not gladly seize this most suitable of all occasions and this best of all channels to conform to a time-honored custom, and, while reiterating my thanks for the honor done me by my brethren of the C.M.B.A. in electing me their Grand President, to heartily wish them, far and wide throughout the Dominion, 'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.' The coming anniversary of the Nativity is the just upon which it has been given me to preside over the destinies of our great association, and the thoughts which crowd my mind at such a time, naturally come so thick and fast that I find it difficult to express them all, even if I had the audacity to so far trespass on your valuable time. However, let me briefly say that the familiar Christmas greeting, which in too many cases sounds so hollow and conventional, conveys a deeper and holier meaning when exchanged between the members of the brotherhood of the C.M.B.A. We should and can never forget that 'the good tidings of great joy,' which were flashed from heaven over the bleak hills of Judea nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and which heralded the coming of the Christ-Child and His wondrous mission of human redemption, with its glorious message of 'peace on earth to men of good will,' were the precursors of that spirit of brotherly and neighborly love of God-like charity which have revolutionized this world of ours, and which it is the great object of our order after the example of its Divine Model, to inculcate and extend. We may, perhaps in our day never hope to witness the universal brotherhood of man, but we can at least do our feeble mortal share by our example and teachings, by the cultivation of fraternity, and above all, by the exercise of love and charity towards our neighbors as towards ourselves, to help on the great doctrine of moral and material regeneration involved in the mystery of the Incarnation. And with the blessing of God and of His holy church, which He came on earth as a feeble and lowly infant to found, we shall continue to do this, confident in the success of our heavenly mission and seeking by all the means in our power to extend to our fellow-Catholics the benefits of our organization. Unlike the Messiah, we may not be able to altogether heal the broken-hearted, or to comfort the mourning widow, as He comforted the Widow of Nain, but we can at least help to pour balm upon their sorrow, to bring glad tidings of great joy to their bruised and bleeding spirits, and to rejoice the hearts of the fatherless and helpless.

And, above all, let us try to remember that the golden feast of Christmas is the little children's festival, par excellence,—that the great Master of all good came upon this sorrowful and sin-laden earth in the form of a poor little Humble Child to manifest His divine love for the little ones; and that it is our duty, therefore, at such seasons, to set to our own youthful offspring this example of that thoughtful affection, that brotherly love, and that charity towards our neighbors which will inspire them to take up and continue the good work of the C. M. B. A. when we are gone. At such a happy, joyous time as the Christmas season, with all its loving and pleasant memories, with all its traditions of good cheer and hospitality, no brother, of the C.M.B.A. especially, should be suffered to wander, nor his little ones to imagine that the dark cloud which towers over their homes, possesses no silver lining for them. Let the gladness which irradiated and still irradiates the whole world at the coming of our Saviour, find them out also, and by cheerful existence. Let them have a recollection of their childhood's days. Happy children make virtuous, devoted parent-loving youths, and good members of our Order in the future. So do not forget that the coming Christmas must be a merry one for the children. But still of greater importance even than they are the poor—God's poor—whether they belong to the brotherhood of the C.M.B.A. or the greater brotherhood of mankind in general. We have these ever with us, and there is always scope, especially at this blessed season, for that God-like virtue which, we are told, covereth a multitude of sins. While the rich and comfortable are feasting, the poor should not be forgotten. Moreover, charity knows neither creed nor clime. Its snowy wings are spread over all in need and all are welcome to their shelter. Thus God's work is done and the bruised heart is comforted. And most certainly the sweet recompense of doing good to others exceeds all the pleasure that can be derived from selfish enjoyment. Let each member of the C. M. B. A. resolve, therefore, that this will really be a glad Christmas for all—the young and old—the rich and the poor! Let the Christmas greeting be not a mere expression from the lips. Let it be accompanied by some tangible evidence that it has a real and holy meaning, in keeping with the principles of our great order. And let us pray that when another Christmas comes it will find our order even still happier, stronger and more numerous and prosperous than we are this year, with the blessing of the Divine Child, the anniversary of whose lowly but glorious birth we shall celebrate on the 25th of December. At least such is the sincere prayer, with the Christmas greetings of

Yours fraternally,
M. F. HACKETT,
Grand President.

A PROTEST.

The Roman Catholics of the Parish of St. Pierre Jolys, France themselves on Record.

On Sunday, Dec. 6, the citizens of St. Pierre Jolys held a meeting in the public hall. Mr. Albert Prefontaine, reeve of the municipality of De Salaberry, was voted to the chair, and Mr. Bernard Racicot acted as secretary. The following resolution was proposed by Alfred Lassalle, and seconded by Charles Mignault:

Whereas, before the year 1890 the Catholics of the Province of Manitoba had their Catholic schools, their Catholic trustees, their Catholic teachers, their Catholic text books, their Catholic board of education and their Catholic superintendent in a word, enjoyed the autonomy of their schools;

Whereas, this autonomy of their schools is guaranteed by the fundamental laws of the country as interpreted by the highest tribunal of the empire;

Whereas, since the Public School Act passed in 1890 by the legislature of Manitoba we have been deprived of these rights and since that time we have not ceased claiming them;

Whereas, the compromise of Laurier-Greenway, despoiling the constitution and the decision of the Privy Council, does not restore to the Catholics of this province the autonomy of their schools, and the said compromise places virtually the Catholic minority of this province under the tutelage of a Protestant majority;

Whereas, the text books of history and of morals used in the public schools, where we would be compelled to send our children, are good but to avert them from the Catholic religion in which we want to educate them;

Resolved as follows: We, Catholic citizens of the Parish of St. Pierre Jolys, Manitoba, reject with indignation and in a most absolute manner the so-called Laurier-Greenway settlement. We declare that we will accept no settlement by which the autonomy of our schools would not be assured. We pray all the Catholics of the Dominion to join with us in our efforts to have our cause succeed. We appeal also to the friends of justice, Unanimously carried.

Proposed by Joseph Labonté, seconded by Ferdinand Marcotte, that a copy of the present resolution be sent to the Hon. Mr. Laurier, premier of Canada, to the Hon. Mr. Tarte, representative in the cabinet of the French Canadian population, to His Grace the Archbishop of St. Boniface, our religious leader, to the Hon. Sir Adolphe Caron, leader of the Opposition in the Province of Quebec, to the Hon. Mr. Greenway, premier of Manitoba, to the following papers: Le Manitoba, the Northwest Review, the Nor-Western, La Merveille, La Presse, Le Courrier-du-Canada and Le Courrier-de-St. Hyacinthe. Carried.

Signed:
ALBERT PREFONTAINE,
Reeve of the Municipality of the De-Salaberry, Chairman.
BERNARD RACICOT,
Secretary.

Mr. A. Lassalle, merchant, in moving the above resolution said that the so-called school settlement cannot be too highly or strongly repudiated by the Catholics of this province.

Mr. C. Mignault in a few well-chosen words said that the Catholics of St. Pierre Jolys were not the last ones to protest against the action of the local government in 1890, and now they wish to put on record their solemn protest against what is called the settlement of the school question in this province.

C. H. Royal and J. Bernier were the two principal speakers of the meeting and they acquitted themselves of their task in a very creditable manner.

Mr. A. Prefontaine in a few well-chosen words thanked those who had addressed the meeting and the proceedings were brought to a close.

FROM ROME.

Authentic Account of the Vatican's Opinion of the So-called Settlement.

The following very interesting letter is taken from the last issue of the best-informed and most influential Catholic paper printed in England, or perhaps in any part of the world. The communication appears over the signature of its special correspondent at Rome, who is recognized as a reliable authority on matters of the kind, and readers may take it for granted that any information he gives regarding the views of the Pope on any question of public interest is not based upon mere rumor, but upon actual knowledge of the facts. His statement, therefore, as to the opinion of the heads of the Catholic church concerning the proposed settlement of the school question and the drastic action the Vatican may take if Mr. Laurier persists in his present policy may be considered as absolutely authentic. The letter reads as follows:

"Monsignor Begin, Coadjutor-Archbishop of Quebec, Monsignor Gravel, Bishop of Nicolet, and Monsignor Labreque, Bishop of Chicoutimi, have just left Rome, where they have fully explained to the Holy See the rights of the Catholics in the Manitoba schools question and pointed out the misleading character of Mr. Laurier's diplomatic action. They received from the Holy Father and from Cardinals Ledochowski and Rampolla assurances of inflexible firmness. 'You can count upon it with certainty,' said his Holiness to them, 'that we shall uphold to the end the decision of her Majesty's Privy Council.' The Vatican has in its hands proofs that Mr. Laurier is pursuing that 'mysterious policy' of which Montaigne speaks, and to which weak natures readily lend themselves. On the one hand, he has sent to Rome two secret ambassadors, the Abbe Proulx and the Chevalier Drolet, for the purpose of gaining over the Pope to the views of his Government and requesting the establishment of an official representation on the part of the Holy See at Ottawa. On the other hand, his 'Friar Joseph,' his familiar, Mr. David, has just issued, under his inspiration, a pamphlet against the clergy of Canada. If

one were to believe this pamphlet the Canadian clergy are a fanatical body, disobedient to the instructions of Rome, anti-National, and accustomed to trench on political ground. By Mr. Laurier and his friends the are regarded as 'the enemy.' The bishops have submitted the pamphlet to the judgment of Rome, and the matter will come under the consideration of the Congregation of the Index. Mr. Laurier evidently wants war, and he will have it. The Canadian episcopate have on their side right, justice, reason, moderation and intelligence. The emissaries of Mr. Laurier were received coldly by the Prefect of Propaganda. They set forth their case as follows: The school question of Manitoba, arranged between the province and the Federal government, is the maximum of concessions; to go beyond it would be to ask for the impossible. Now this system stipulates for the spoliation of 1890 and for neutrality on the school question by tolerating religious instruction during half-an-hour on condition that it be given by a clergyman of the same denomination as the children, and by permitting a parish of twenty-five Catholic children to establish a school on condition that the master is duly qualified. But it is well known that organized parishes containing twenty-five Catholic children form an insignificant number when the many scattered hamlets which compose the agricultural colonies of Manitoba are taken into account. Moreover in the Northwest the authorities have never granted diplomas to masters and Sisters who had passed satisfactory examinations. How could it be done in Manitoba where the party in power desires to exclude religious influence? Accordingly Cardinal Ledochowski has replied with that precision and lucidity which always characterizes his language, that the Propaganda was guided by the judgment of the Privy Council as by an immutable rule, and that that verdict demanded the restoration of the status quo ante. As the Prefect of Propaganda has had conferences on the subject with Leo XIII. and Cardinal Rampolla, his attitude may be taken as that of the Holy See. Still Mr. Laurier's representatives have not lost hope. They paint in sombre colors the state of Canada, the uncertainties of politics, and the changes of popular feeling. They have even gone so far as to get published in the 'Voce della Verità' a manifesto drawn up by certain revolutionaries calling for the annexation of Canada to the United States. The procedure has evoked some smiles. Finesse and artifices do not suffice to convert men of long experience at the Vatican, who have so often probed complicated affairs. Leo XIII. has declared to Mgr. Begin and his episcopal colleagues that the Holy See will not diverge from the course traced out by the Pastoral of the Bishops at the time of the elections and the decision of the supreme tribunal of the British Empire. As to the delegation for which Mr. Laurier has asked, the Pope deems it useless, and this is also the opinion of the Bishops, who, it may be stated, are ready to accept a permanent delegate of the Holy See at Ottawa, devoted to Canadian affairs, but not an extension of the United States delegation to Canada. If Mr. Laurier persists in his policy, especially if he carries on a warfare against the episcopate, the Vatican may publicly condemn the Manitoba Schools Bill, as it will not allow any party to create misunderstandings on a great question which affects the interests of a whole people and the rights of conscience."

Cardinal Gibbons' new book, 'The Ambassador of Christ,' is about to be issued from the press. It is intended for priests and ecclesiastical students. Speaking of the Bible as a book of study for priests, the Cardinal says, among other beautiful things:

"The book that I recommend to the minister of Christ, first and last and above all others, is, of course, the Word of God. The Bible is the only book of study that is absolutely indispensable to a priest, and hence it is appropriately called by St. Ambrose 'Libre Sacerdotale.' He might be familiar with the whole range of ancient and modern literature, and yet his sermons would be lamentably cold and defective if he happened to be ill-instructed in the Sacred Volume. On the other hand, if he is well versed in the Holy Scriptures, though a comparative stranger to human science, he will preach with edification and profit. The clergyman that draws his inspiration from the Sacred Text is easily recognized by the sweet unction that flows from his lips."

As a matter of fact, no class of men read the Bible more prayerfully and

incessantly than the Catholic clergy. They are obliged to devote at least one hour each day to reading the Sacred Scriptures and homilies on them by the saints and fathers of the church.

Though the Cardinal's latest book is addressed to the clergy, a perusal of it will prove valuable to lay readers as well. They will learn from it the sanctity and august character of the priesthood.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal, n. l.

WHO IS THE INTERPRETER?

"Our excellent contemporary, The Freeman's Journal, says that if we deny the necessity of competent authority in the interpretation of Scripture, we therefore admit the sufficiency of incompetent authority. Even more; we admit the sufficiency of no authority at all. So far as is important, the Scripture will interpret itself to any candid reader. Beyond that, it is not really serious, religiously, if people make mistakes on matters of form, ceremony or ecclesiastical order. Any one not a fool can understand the Sermon on the Mount. It needs no authority to interpret it. If people fail to interpret aright the utterance, 'On this rock will I build my Church,' it is a matter of no vital account, and Christ will interpret his own words by his own action. It is just as with election, another hard matter, which is God's business more than ours."—The Independent.

Here our contemporary first refuses to admit the sufficiency of any authority whatever to interpret the Scripture, and then in the same breath claims that, 'so far as is important, the Scripture will interpret itself to any candid reader.' This claim commits it to the admission that there is a sufficient authority. Thus the Independent denies in one proposition what it affirms in the next. It may explain that it referred to authority external to the Scripture and the individual reader, but it should have said that, and not denied all authority whatsoever.

The theory above set forth by the Independent first takes the Bible as a record of historical events, laws and thoughts that passed through men's minds in ages passed, and then it makes this same record the sufficient interpretation of those events, laws and thoughts. This is contrary to the practice of mankind in all ages. The common sense that directs the race has never recognized the law itself as its own interpreter, and as a consequence men have always, wherever law of any kind prevails, established courts or other authority to interpret and apply the law to individual cases that require its application. This is absolutely necessary for the preservation of society and order. Our constitution would not be worth the paper it is printed on were it not that there is a court to interpret it and to whose interpretation all must submit.

Just why this common sense, and at the same time most rational practice in the case of civil laws should be discarded when there is a question of divine law, the Independent does not stop to consider or explain. Certainly, if private interpretation of civil laws would produce a state of utter lawlessness and disorder, it would have the same effect when applied to the laws of the spiritual or religious order. The very existence of law, in whatever sphere—except pandemonium—supposes an authoritative interpreter.

The theory of the Independent that laws are their own interpreters and executors must, common sense dictates, be rejected as dangerous to society and subversive of all order. But there are other difficulties in the way of this theory, when applied to the divine law. It is not, and never was, the method appointed by the divine lawgiver. He who revealed His will to man has never left His word without a commissioned guardian and interpreter. In the old laws it was Moses, and other inspired prophets, and the Sanhedrin. When the Son of God came among men He was the guardian and interpreter, and before He returned from whence He came He established an organism and commissioned it to teach mankind. That organism is His Church, of which He said: 'He that will not hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican.' There are still other difficulties. The Independent says:

"So far as is important the Scripture interprets itself to any candid reader."

"So far as is important!" Who is to determine what is important, and what is not? Does the Bible itself interpret this point and distinguish what of its contents is important or essential, and what is not? If certainly does not. Then it is not a sufficient or satisfactory interpreter.

(Continued on page 2.)