

Men I Have Seen And Heard.

By a
Veteran
Scribbler.

Last week I went pretty far back in my life to find the subject of my brief and imperfect sketch; this week I will again go to the seventies to seek matter for another article of the same class. In the long list of men—bishops, priests, ministers, statesmen, lawyers and ordinary politicians—whom I have had occasion to hear speak in public, it is no easy matter to select the most interesting and most instructive. I will, therefore, follow the decades, commencing as I have done, with the seventies, and take them in batches as I descend to the close of the last century. For this issue I purpose dotting down a few lines about a preacher whose name may not be very familiar to the readers of the "True Witness," but whose presence and whose eloquence must still be fresh in the memories of many of our French-Canadian fellow-citizens.

REV. PERE MOTHON, O.P.—Whosoever has had the privilege of hearing Pere Mothon, the great Dominican preacher, cannot easily forget the man. I use the word "man" advisedly; for he was a "man" in every sense, and in the highest acceptations of that term. I have been told by a gentleman who had heard both Pere Mothon and Pere Montsabo, that the latter was the greater orator of the two. Such is quite possible. I never heard Montsabo, and from the reading of his published sermons and lectures, while one can form an idea of his literary and theological merits, it is difficult to estimate at its proper value the effect of his spoken language. In what qualities he excelled Pere Mothon I do not know; but he needs have produced any more wonderful impressions than those which Pere Mothon imprinted upon the minds and hearts of his hearers.

It was in 1878 that I heard this grand disciple of Saint Dominic. He was then connected, in a temporary manner, with the Dominican convent of St. Hyacinthe. He came to a lecture at Laval University, and during his stay he preached two sermons in the old Basilica. He may have preached others, but I only heard the two in question. The first sermon was on "Human Affections," the second, a sermon of about fifteen minutes, on St. Joseph. The lecture was a patriotic one, if I remember rightly. Any way, the text of the lecture was published at the time, in pamphlet form, as well as in several French-Canadian papers. When a person speaks of a member of the Dominican Order he naturally has to deal with either a born or a trained orator. As men vary in the talents they enjoy and the gifts they possess, so amongst the Dominicans there are various grades of preachers—but they are all exceptionally able and eloquent. It is an Order of preachers; its special mission is to fulfill to the letter the command "to go forth and teach all nations." Its members are not eligible unless they give evidence of certain aptitudes for public speaking. Hence it is that they all speak well, fluently, effectively. But in a vast community of men, universally trained in that particular branch, there are necessarily some who surpass in a remarkable degree their fellow-members, and there are always a few who tower sublimely above all the others. Of this last category I feel confident that Pere Mothon was one.

The characteristics of his preaching, as far as I could judge, were simplicity, fervor and illustration: the most uneducated as well as the most highly-instructed could follow him with ease, and receive impressions calculated to last; the earnestness of the man was evident in his manner, his voice, his gesture, his subdued fire of devotion and religious earnestness; and his happy method of illustrating every idea by familiar comparisons rendered his treatment of a subject most entertaining, while it made it almost impossible for his hearers to forget what he had said. His voice was very soft, musical and subdued; his gesture was elegant, at times lively, but never exaggerated, nor demonstrative; while his fine stature and animated, as well as handsome features, combined with that peculiar attractiveness of the Dominican robe, lent great power to his expression. On the whole, his style had more of the calmness of conversational form than the fervidness of oratory. But he was entire master of himself, and he made himself master of his audience.

I could not better convey an idea of his effective style than by citing from memory a few of his illustrations. He would make a statement, a clear-cut assertion, which might demand both reflection and study on the part of his hearers, in order that they might fully grasp its purport; but this he would immediately follow with a familiar illustration, a comparison drawn from the ordinary affairs of life, or a story of deep interest; and at once a new light would shine, the idea, coldly expressed in dogmatic words, would stand out in strong relief, perfectly

understood by even the child in the audience. To my mind the secret of Pere Mothon's success as an orator rested upon this remarkable, this almost miraculous power of illustration. In order that the reader may fully understand what I mean, I will do like the great preacher, that is I will give a few examples illustrative of his style. It must, however, be remembered that I am merely quoting from memory, and that what I now transcribe in English was spoken in French. While I can find words to convey the meaning, yet I cannot make the English language express the beauties and charms of the French.

Taking the short sermon on St. Joseph I have a very striking example of his method. His text consisted of two words: "Justus est"—he was a just man. After pointing out all the perfections and characteristics needed to constitute the "just man," the preacher ran hurriedly over the recorded events in the life of St. Joseph, and indicated how every quality of the "just man" was to be found in that glorious, but unostentatious life. As if summing up all he had before said—and he said very much in his fifteen minutes—the preacher quietly and calmly proceeded thus:—"Take a ray of light, decompose it in a prism, and you have the seven colors of the rainbow; combine those seven colors and you have a ray of light. Such the life of St. Joseph. He was 'the just man'—a ray coming from the sun of Eternal Justice. Decompose that ray in the prism of your mind and you will discover the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost: reunite the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in one ray, and you have that beam of light that faith calls 'the just man.'"

Since the evening on which I heard that instruction I never hear the name of St. Joseph mentioned that I do not think of a ray of light in a prism; and I never hear or read about a ray of light, or a prism, or a rainbow, or the seven gifts that I do not at once think of St. Joseph. If, then, that simple comparison has stereotyped on my mind the idea of the preacher, what must not have been the beneficial effects of his sermons upon all who have ever heard him? The man preached for his audience—about two thousand—in the Quebec Basilica that night; but his sermon was intended to survive that hour and that day, it was intended to live on in years when that sympathetic voice would be forever silent.

Still more striking is one of the illustrations in his sermon upon "Human Affections." He spoke, that evening, of the ordinary affection that exists in the world and that is not in any form derived from God nor directed towards Him. It was a very suitable subject for the wealthy and ease-loving members of the congregation. After pointing out that nothing purely human can last, and that the perpetuation of a sentiment must spring from a higher source, or else it must soon go to the way of all that is mortal, Pere Mothon gave this example by way of illustration:—"A traveller in the woods of the North makes a fire in the snow, cooks his rude meal, and then proceeds on his way. That night another traveller comes along; he sees the place where the other had taken dinner, and he gathers an armful of fagots, lights a fire, warms himself and goes to sleep in his blanket. During the night the fire dies down; in the morning he awakens, lights a strong blaze, absorbs all the heat possible, and the fire burns; then it dies out, another traveller coming along finds only ashes where he had found flames had so recently been. Towards evening the snow falls. Then a third traveller appears, but he cannot find even a trace of the fire or a mark of his predecessor's footsteps. "Such is an image of the Human Affection that has not its source in God. During life the flame burns warmly. A separation, and, like a misunderstanding, a harsh word, a misapprehension, and, like the fire of the traveller, the affection dies away. Then a kindly deed, a generous act, a pleasant expression, a meeting after long absence, and, like the fagots gathered by the man in the woods, the fire of affection is rekindled. Then comes the grand hour of perpetual separation. It is a death-bed scene. Those vows of eternal remembrance and undying love are spoken. The blaze of affection is fused into a white heat by the breath of circumstances. The hour comes; the separation takes place; one goes on to Eternity, the other continues his route towards the inevitable end—the grave. For a time that affection lasts, but gradually, like the traveller's fire it dwindles away. In a week, a month, a couple of months another goes by that hearth and finds only the ashes of the once fiercely burning love. Then the snows of oblivion fall, and the next traveller misses the very ashes of the old affection; he does not even find the foot-prints of the one who has died."

Who is he that cannot fully grasp that idea? What could be more clear and more effective than such an illustration? It had been my intention to reproduce a few more of these examples of Pere Mothon's way of impressing upon his hearers the sen-

timents, the thoughts, the arguments that he possessed, conveyed, or arranged; but I fear I would need more space to do so than certain circumstances can allow. What I have here given must suffice for the present to establish Pere Mothon's right to a place in the foremost rank of Dominican orators. It was a delight to look upon him; it was a privilege to have heard him; it was a delight to look upon a thousand percent more good than they actually believe. Their words go far and resound where they never dream of them surviving. To have seen and heard such a man is calculated to increase one's Faith, to awaken fresh Hope in his breast, and to impart a reflection of the Divine to the soul. Charity, or Love within his soul. Their mission is great and glorious if they adhere to it in every sense, and their reward will surely be proportionately to the benefits they confer upon the human race.

"FLEETING MEMORIES."

By OUR CURBSTONE OBSERVER.

I almost every day we find poets, authors, thinkers, lamenting the changes that progress and improvement operate in the world. Horace, the most frequently quoted of Latin poets, tells how "the times changed, and we change with them." Racine, the great French dramatic poet of the seventeenth century, places an almost similar expression on the lips of the faithful Israelite Abner, in his immortal "Athalie," when the bold and brave character exclaims: "Que les temps sont changes!" In Gerald Griffin's "Old Times," we find the Irish muse joining in this universal lament. In the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," Scott meditates thus: "Old times are changed, old manners gone, in every grade of society we are familiarized with the saying 'the good old times.' It is, therefore, evident that there must have been a something in the men and manners of former days that we miss greatly in our more advanced age."

As yet I cannot call myself one of an older generation, yet I remember very well, how, in my father's days, a man's name and memory were long kept green, even when life had been closed for years. When a neighbor died, every person in the vicinity attended the funeral; his good qualities were talked about in whispered conversations; his last words were related to the children; his witty remarks, or his charitable deeds constituted subject matter for many an hour around the fire-place in winter. Men enjoyed pointing out the achievements, be it agriculturally, industrially, socially, or otherwise; that their departed neighbor had accomplished. His portrait hung high on the wall of the cabin, and his grand children gazed with pride on their ancestor's features. In almost every imaginable way he was recalled to the memories of men. How the times have changed!

"To-day a man dies: a couple of dozen old-timers gather to lament his demise; but scarcely has the tomb closed over him than his form is forgotten, his delightful manners and peculiarities no longer arrest the attention; the rush of life sweeps onward, men are hurrying in all directions to grasp the dollar, and there is no time to think of the dead. No matter how exalted the station in life that a person occupies, the moment the Death Angel comes to snatch him away, the tide of human neglect rolls over his grave, and the public does not pause for a second. Of all the bodies that are mindful of the departed the Catholic Church seems to be the only one that never relaxes in that sacred devotion—from the "Month's Mind" to the long continued Requiem Masses that are daily said."

If a person would like to realize how little he is, how insignificant his life must be in the presence of the social arrangements that are the governing power of the day. Everything seems to be at fever heat in the world of the present. It is truly an electric age; and in proportion to the rapid development of man's domain is the haste with which the olden customs, there was a warmth in the sentiments of men, a sincerity in their words, a significance in their actions. Now sentiment is absorbed by greed—the greed of wealth, expressions of deep concern regarding the departed are replaced by the monosyllables of dollars and cents, and the external acts of charity and affection make way for deeds of speculation and sordid ambition. I have been led in to this long sermon—a style that is not usually mine—by a few reflections of a very serious nature that the funeral of a fellow-citizen suggested.

Much as I prefer the olden ways, I am no exception to the general rule of men to-day. I had read, in the evening paper, of the death of a certain man; I knew him well, and I recalled many a kind word of his while I regretted to feel that he was forever gone from the scene of his life's activity. I attended the funeral, and I found that all those who assisted were busy talking about the weather, the crops, the political situation, the South African contingents, and every other kind of subject, except

the one before them. I was also soon absorbed in such like conversation, and my mind was busy with a study of the last stock returns. Had this event taken place, twenty-five years ago I am positive that the sole topic of conversation would have been the life and deeds of the one whose coffin was being carried to the cemetery.

I am fully aware that were I to write until my finger-tips would be worn off, or lament until I could give no more expression to my feelings, I would no more be able to bring men back to the olden forms and customs than I am to check the tide on the Atlantic when it is making Time, lives, manners and everything is on the move. It is a grand forward rush, or sweep, that Providence guides for the benefit and ultimate triumph and glory of man. "Advance" is the watchword of the ages, and none can change either the order of the fidelity of all creation in obeying it.

"God bade the sun with steps sublime
Advance,
He whispered in the listening ear of time
Advance."

And sun, moon, stars, earth, and all creatures coming from His Hand must "advance" perpetually towards their end.

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES.

On Wednesday last, 19th June, the fifty-third annual commencement of the University of Ottawa took place. The last scholastic year has been one of great general success for that admirable institution. It closed, likewise, with an event that shall mark an epoch in the history of its development, as well as in that of Catholic education in Ontario—we refer to the dedication of the new science hall, a magnificent and extensive structure which has been added to the already vast proportions of the university. When we reflect upon the strides made by this great Catholic educational establishment, from the time that it was an humble school, scarce deserving the title of college, down to this moment, when it rears its majestic head proudly and contentedly amongst the universities of the continent, we cannot but admire the zeal and courage, as well as the ability and success of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Some of the leading Catholics, in Church and State, both of Canada and the United States have received their early training within its walls; it has enjoyed the enviable reputation of having possessed some of the best professors in America; and for long years its rector—Very Rev. Dr. Tabaret—will forever occupy a foremost place amongst the educationalists of this Dominion. And worthy successors have followed in his footsteps, until the present rector, the young and talented Dr. Constantineau, took in hand the educational helm. His address, on this occasion, is a clear and able exposition of the circumstances surrounding the development of the institution to-day. It affords us no small degree of pleasure to publish some portions of that address. Very Rev. Dr. Constantineau said:—

It behooves me, as rector of the university, to make a few remarks on the occasion of the closing exercises of this scholastic year. It is a pleasing duty for me to do so on account of the very flattering report that I have to present to our friends and well-wishers with regard to the present prosperous condition of our institution.

Our year's work has been, indeed, most satisfactory from every point of view. Students and professors have contributed towards this successful result. We have had, this year, the happy experience that devoted and zealous professors with honorable and studious pupils constitute a perfect college-home. Our sincerest wish, then, is that the young men confided to our care during the year may, by their upright and manly conduct, deserve the same credit at the hands of the good and self-sacrificing parents to whom they will soon return.

It is a great satisfaction for us to note that every student, yes, I may even say, without exception, has made a profitable use of the opportunities so abundantly offered him in this university for the development of his moral, intellectual and physical faculties.

We believe and maintain that the moral training is the most important, hence it should come first. At least, how many Catholic parents there are who overlook this most necessary factor in education, which were it wanting this essential feature, could claim to be nothing more than "instruction."

We also know, by experience, that a young man who is good and virtuous possesses a foundation upon which he may build a solid intellectual edifice. The heart and mind of man were too closely allied by the Creator to imagine that it is possible to neglect one without injury to the other.

As far as physical development is concerned, the heavy financial burden that we have placed upon ourselves in order to encourage honest and manly sport is a sufficient proof of our desire to never lose sight of the old adage "Mens sana in corpore sano."

It is, therefore, for me a cause of just pride, on this last day of the year, to extend my sincerest thanks to our entire staff of professors, whose devotedness, zeal and self-sac-

rifices have made it possible for our students to attain such a high standard of merit. Thanks, also, to the students for their cordial appreciation of, and sincere correspondence with the efforts made in their behalf by their learned and distinguished professors.

Catholic parents, whether from this Province of Ontario, or from any other province of the Dominion, from any other country, should be convinced of our sincere determination to ever occupy the foremost place in the field of education. No sacrifice, however great, can deter us from providing the young men of our day with the most improved methods and the latest and most practical facilities that should be a special feature of a leading university.

This fact is made quite evident to-day by the blessing and solemn inauguration of our new science hall. This grand and very expensive structure is certainly unsurpassed in this country from every point of view. It will stand as a monument to the self-sacrificing spirit that animates all the members of our Faculty who are devoting their every energy, their very life, to the great work of the education of youth. Its special purpose is to occupy the demand that is now so general for a first-class scientific education. We know that this is an age of specialists in every field of human knowledge. This tendency, when applied by political economists to the manufacturing world is called the "Division of Labor."

Thanks to the large and well-equipped laboratories and scientific lecture rooms contained in our new science hall we shall soon be able to afford our students an opportunity of embracing every branch of scientific knowledge in which they may wish to become proficient. We sincerely expect to have here, in the near future, a school of science that will be on an equal footing with the best schools of the country. The encouragement and assistance of our Faculty will be required to successfully carry through this project, but I am sure that we may confidently count upon their earnest and hearty support in this undertaking which will redound to the honor of education in Ontario and also, in great part, to the honor of the capital city of the Dominion.

Let me here express, in a very special manner, the sincerest thanks of the Faculty towards two noble benefactors who have understood that an institution such as ours should not be allowed to stand alone, unaided, unassisted by government or individual. For the first time in the history of the university we have received a donation, pure and simple, one that imposes upon us no obligation of a perpetual nature. The generous sum of five thousand dollars each was donated by Mr. M. P. Davis, of this city, and Mr. M. J. Haney, of Toronto, to aid us in the erection of our science hall, the cost of which will be a burden upon us for many years to come unless other kind friends follow the example of our generous benefactors.

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Moreover, it is a source of satisfaction for us to notice that we have recalled the want that is now felt in other institutions for a high-grade commercial department. A visit to our well-appointed business class rooms would readily convince one that nothing is left undone to impart to our students a thorough and practical knowledge of book-keeping, banking, commercial law and all business requirements that will be most valuable to them, whatever state of life they may embrace.

In conclusion, I wish to extend a hearty God-speed to the graduates in the different departments of the university. By their departure we are losing good and earnest students, but we are also increasing the number of our true and lasting friends, who will always, by their practical interest in our work, prove that they are faithful and grateful children of "Alma Mater."

To His Grace, the Apostolic Chancellor, to His Grace, the Archbishop of Kingston, to the distinguished representative of our Very Rev. Father Superior-General, Rev. Father Patin, to the numerous clergy, both regular and secular to our large and sympathetic audience, I wish to say, in the name of the Faculty "thanks for the kind encouragement of your attendance here to-day."

If you should tell all you know the recital might not require any great length of time, but if you attempt to tell all you do not know one lifetime would not suffice.

A MISAPPREHENDED PRECEPT.

The recognized hall-mark of the exemplary Catholic is his frequent reception of the sacraments. Unfailing regularity in attending Holy Mass on Sundays and festivals of obligation, with at least habitual presence at Vespers, Benediction, and other public religious services, may suffice to secure for one the reputation of a practical, as distinguished from the nominal, indifferent or lax Catholic; but the esteem entertained for the model Christian, for the man whose conduct is consistent with his beliefs, is never won save by those who, every few weeks, are seen approaching the tribunal of penance and the Holy Table. It matters not that less fervent neighbors may occasionally speak slightly of such a practice; that they flippantly disclaim any intention of "setting themselves up for saints," or that they sometimes essay a sarcastic fling at "devotees" and "old women"—at heart they pay the tribute of their homage to a habit whose excellence they recognize, although they lack the piety or the courage to adopt it.

Critics who affect to disapprove of frequent reception of the sacraments have not even the merit of consistency. Let the Angel of Death invade the circle of their acquaintances, and summon to the other world one who has been for years a monthly communicant, and the genuine sentiments of these critics are at once manifested in eulogies of the departed one's exceptional virtue, ardent piety, and true religious spirit. On such occasions they almost involuntarily belie their habitual mode of speech. Habitually, they are strong in quoting the third precept of the Church, "It is not the practice, but the intention of the practice, which is the important thing." "Is not the matter perfectly clear? If the Church wished us to confess our sins every month, or every two months, would she not have said so? And, with the air of having advanced an unanswerable argument, they complacently brush aside the extravagant custom of seeking the tribunal of penance oftener than at Easter, or possibly at Easter and Christmas.

Now, it need scarcely be said that the Church obliges us under pain of mortal sin to go to confession at least once a year, that she threatens with the deprivation of Christian burial those who transgress this commandment, is convincing evidence of the importance which she attaches to the practice; but the modifying phrase "at least," effectively disposes of the contention that she considers once a year sufficient for the leading of an exemplary Christian life. "If she desired us to confess more frequently would she not have said so?" But she has said so, is saying so now. The voice of the teaching Church, through the organs of curates, pastors, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes, is continually recommending to the faithful the salutary practice of frequent confession. The parish priest is the mouthpiece and representative of the Church, and where is the Catholic who has not repeatedly heard his pastor exhorting his flock to be more regular in frequenting the tribunal of penance?

Absolutely speaking, the Easter-tide confession and Communion is sufficient for those who throughout the year neither offend God grievously nor are in danger of so offending Him. Where are such extraordinary favors made to be found? In actual practice, those Catholics who are least exposed to occasions of sin, whose calling provides the most abundant safeguards against sin, are precisely those who have most frequent recourse to those life-giving fountains of sanctifying grace—penance and the Holy Eucharist. The farther a soul advances on the way to the Christian perfection that it is incumbent on all followers of Christ to seek, the more eager does that soul become to avail itself of the graces so lavishly granted to the worthy penitent.

If it be asked how often, or at what intervals, the ordinary Christian must go to confession in order that he may justly be said to receive the sacrament frequently, the answer must, of course, be approximate rather than definitely accurate. Having regard to the significance which attaches to the word throughout the Catholic world to-day, perhaps a month is as long a period as he may suffer to elapse between his confessions. This, of course, when his reception of the sacrament is purely devotional; for it is elementary that confession is imperative as often as the monthly or weekly, as one incurs the guilt of grievous sin.

The mistake most commonly made about this matter is the postponement of confession until we have actually fallen into mortal sin; and this would seem to result from an erroneous impression that the sole object and purpose of the sacrament is to cleanse us from the guilt of our transgressions. As a matter of fact, the sacrament in addition confers special graces which fortify the soul and strengthen it against relapse. It does not render us impeccable, but it helps us virtually to become so. It follows that the proper time for going to confession is just when we are ourselves growing weak in our struggle with temptations; when sinfulness occasions a desire for additional attractiveness when we feel our feet slipping on the inclined plane that leads to deliberate offense against God. In affairs of spiritual as of bodily health, prevention is better than cure.—The Ave Maria.

CHURCH

The Roman New York writes—To tell months of item of object of church to explain the Holy had not until widely known the thirty years the Ratisbods stand of must depend for a wider as the Cong Holy Father thoritatively All discuss ed forever by following v which the Ho to Abbot Del To Our Belo O.S.B. Ab XIII. Pope Beloved Son, tolle Blessing We have been ready praised performed by of those sacro tion says are ory the Great

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