



## CURRENT COMMENT

Of our three daily contemporaries only one, the Tribune, took any notice of the blessing of the new Ruthenian Catholic church on Sunday, Jan. 15, and yet the morning papers, which had ignored this most significant event in which fifteen hundred people took part, devoted each half a column or more to the blessing of the Red River on Jan. 19 by that ecclesiastical mountebank, Bishop Serafim, of the Greek Orthodox church, whose following on that occasion is put down by both papers, with suspicious accuracy of agreement, at nearly or about two hundred, which doubtless really means fifty at most. The fact that Serafim has been officially repudiated and declared, by the Russian government, never to have been consecrated a bishop, and that the gang of disreputable illiterates whom he attempted to ordain here have publicly rebelled against him and denounced him, has no weight with our contemporaries. They boom him just because he is not a Catholic, while they ignore one of the most striking manifestations of Catholic unity ever witnessed in the west.

So has it ever been with the caterers to Protestant public opinion. Whoever secedes from the centre of unity by heresy or schism is sure to be praised even for those very things that are blamed in Catholics. The devotion of Russian or Greek Orthodox to icons is admirable, but the pious use of these same icons (pictures) by Catholics is superstition or idolatry. Cassocks and flowing robes may seem effeminate in a Catholic priest or bishop; they are full of majesty when worn by a schismatic clergyman. Catholic blessings of water are ridiculed; but any Orthodox charlatan may bless the waters of a whole river and exhort his followers to dip up and preserve this liquid just where it is most polluted by sewage, and all this is highly commended; "every devout believer of the orthodox creed," we are told (Free Press, Jan. 20,) "filled some receptacle with the holy water to take home and preserve till the same season next year. Should illness visit the home or some member of the household die, the house or body would be sprinkled with the carefully guarded water." It would indeed be strange if disease did not visit the homes in which Red River water, taken at the foot of Selkirk avenue, where typhoid and other germs must be plentiful, is "carefully guarded" in loosely corked bottles for a whole year.

The third volume of the biography of Louis Veillot by his brother Eugene, comprising the years from 1855 to 1869, besides being one of the most interesting books ever written, deals with the period when Veillot's power as a writer was greatest. Experts in French literature will understand what this implies when they are reminded that Jules Lemaitre, one of the greatest living critics and one who does not profess belief in Catholic doctrine, could write twelve years ago: "I do not hesitate to count him among the half dozen very great prose writers of this century (the nineteenth)." And Veillot's reputation grows every day. Quite lately the Abbe Delfour asserted that he was undoubtedly the greatest master of French style in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately Veillot is too persistently Catholic in all that he writes to be chosen as a model in non-Catholic schools and colleges, which are thus, as in the case of Newman and others, debarred from all that is loftiest and cleverest in literature. This third volume fairly sparkles with gems of thought. It is a pity that French book-makers do not take kindly to the alphabetical index, for Veillot is, of all men, pre-eminently the one whose works would need that indispensable adjunct to any book worth reading. True, the undertaking, if applied, as it ought

to be, to all his works together, would be a gigantic one, since they already fill fifty volumes and fifty more could be filled with selections from his editorials during forty years of unparalleled journalism; but the labor would be valued and paid for by the increasing number of his admirers who always want to know what he thought on a thousand and one live questions. In the very latest number of the "Etudes" (Jan. 5) Father Longhaye, admittedly the best of Catholic critics, whose work on the Literature of the 17th Century has been crowned by the Academy, says that, "from 1850 onwards, L. Veillot is the first of French prose writers and Sainte Beuve the second." No other writer in French or any other language, past or present, has ever handled so many vital questions with such sincerity and, on the whole, so much truth, with such vigor of style such pungency of wit, such crushing satire, such captivating and wholesome realism, so much deep tenderness and lofty poetic vision, and always and everywhere with such faultless precision of language and such utter devotion to Catholic ideals that Cousin once said of him: "Whatever may be alleged against Veillot, he always has on his side the Pope and the grammar."

Take for instance these two passages on Renan, the truth of which forty subsequent years have amply confirmed. Louis Veillot, in 1862, described him as "a man skilled in getting others to sound in his honor the cymbals and trumpets of renown. But noise is only noise; no balloon, however tightly it may be inflated, ever assumes the consistency of marble. There is affected pathos and overniceness in M. Renan, there is stucco in his style as in his erudition. If his doctrines were not horrible, people would hiss his pretty style, as foreign to the gravity of science as his science itself is foreign to the majesty of truth."

Eight years before that, in 1854, Louis Veillot—we translate from the biography—made M. Renan the subject of a character sketch in the "Univers" which was much talked of. It was a propos of certain articles of this young "would-be-philosopher" on saints and sanctity. Louis Veillot explained to him that, having hastily passed from the Seminary to freethought, the state of his mind was incompatible with a proper treatment of such a question.

Even at that early date Renan aimed at preciosity and open-mindedness. He strove to judge the Church from on high, without anger, without bias, as a disinterested teacher who bore her no illwill, although he had betrayed her. With almost a friendly tone, as if yielding to evidence, he reproached her with having lost the sense of holiness. To the saints of yore, who were men of mark had succeeded—he recorded the fact with regret—narrow-minded saints; unfortunately, there would never be any others, modern times not admitting of that higher sanctity which represented the "ideal and divine aspect of human nature."

Louis Veillot called attention to this proposition with ironical disdain; then, discussing it, he slashed it vigorously. Having broadly defined sanctity as "that invention of Divine mercy which lavishes upon men all the means of gaining heaven," he passed judgment on the writer and the "thinker" who declared it to be dead. Without denying that the ex-seminarian had some literary worth, he twitted him with attitudinizing as a gloomy exquisite, with his affectation, with his extreme research of elegance, "I point out this defect," he added, "in order to stop, if possible, the swelling tide of Gongorism which is invading the younger members of the university, and which threatens to make us regret the barely grammatical dryness of its emeriti. I have little hope, nevertheless, that M. Renan will succeed in correcting his taste, because the root of that wretched taste,

is in the wretched state of his mind." Renan profited somewhat by this advice. If he did not give up "his manner," he corrected it enough for Louis Veillot to acknowledge later on that he had "a pretty style." As to the state of his mind, he justified this forecast of his critic: "M. Renan does not make a formal declaration of unbelief; but that is what his whole article intimates, and I congratulate him on despising that sharp diplomacy with which men of his school often strive to appear Christian still, when they are so no longer. Should I be mistaken, he will protest." Renan did not protest.

The Winnipeg Street Railway are running a splendid new car, number 154, on the Broadway-St. John's route. It has a smoking and luggage compartment at one end. The seats, two on each side of a narrow aisle, are set across the car, which is geared for forty miles an hour. One evening, between six and seven, last week, there was the usual crush; all seats filled, and the aisle jammed with men and women standing up, even the vestibule crowded. By the way, this arrangement of cross seats, though more comfortable for long trips, as between Minneapolis and St. Paul, or Duluth and Superior, is very awkward in the city where frequent stoppages make the frequent exits from the seat nearest the windows a regular tussle through the overcrowded car, and lead to a continual struggle of conflicting anatomies. Two Englishmen, wedged in to the far corner of the vestibule were discussing the situation. "This sort of thing would not be tolerated at home," said one. "No, indeed," replied the other, "when people pay for a seat in English trams, they get it. The companies provide enough cars for all passengers. There are enough people here to fill two cars." Then a Frenchman, who had lived in Paris, but spoke excellent English, volunteered the information that a Parisian tram conductor would be fined fifty francs if he took one passenger more than the seats could accommodate. This led to a discussion as to why the people in this country and in the States submitted so tamely to the overcrowding of cars. The consensus of opinion among the three was that Canadians were not trained to stand up for their rights, and that, even if laws were passed securing the comfort of travellers, these laws would not be enforced, because the people were too careless and indifferent. It seems to us that there is another obvious answer to this question. We Canadians are accustomed to rough it. We had rather take things easily than grumble over them. Besides, when we are in a hurry, as we generally are, we prefer any amount of good-humored jostling to waiting, were it only two minutes, for another car, especially when the 15 below zero north wind cuts like a knife. In fact, we rather enjoy being overcrowded. It is such a warm contrast to the bleak, lonely prairie drives of the olden time.

Last Sunday's first news of the severity with which the St. Petersburg strikers were punished was very alarming. Nothing less than a second French Revolution was anticipated. Coming, as this news did, through English channels, it lost none of its fictitious bulk on the way, first, because of the long standing enmity between England and Russia, and secondly, because it is an axiom of the English speaking world that popular government is the only right form of government, an axiom, which, like many other first principles accepted by the unthinking hordes, would need more proof than has ever been deemed necessary by those same hordes. When, however, after a day or two, the main facts emerged from a sea of exaggerations, it was found that the several thousand people killed and wounded dwindled down to about seventy, and that the grievances of the strikers were rather vague, their only distinct demand being the permission to vote. The whole thing looks very much like an attempt at revolution disguised as an appeal to the "Little Father," and organized by a fanatic who took good care to run away and

hide at the psychological moment. Very likely, when we shall be in possession of all the facts, the whole thing will turn out to have been nothing more serious than the wise and necessary repression of a great socialist demonstration at Charleroi, in Belgium, some fifteen years ago, when the sacrifice of half a hundred lives saved the whole country from the horrors of anarchy. Had Louis XVI. been more of a man and less of a booby, all the benefits of the French Revolution might have come gradually without any of its unimaginable atrocities. On the day in 1790 when the rabble invaded the palace of Versailles, Napoleon, then a mere subaltern, exclaimed: "Oh! If I only had one cannon to stop that mob." And five years later, the very day after he had received command of the garrison of Paris, he swept the streets with grapeshot, terrorizing the Terrorists, bringing the Revolution to an end, and ensuring to France twenty years of internal peace and external glory.

## Clerical News.

Mgr. Ritchot is gradually sinking. Rev. Father Cherrier went to see him early this week and found him very quiet and resigned.

Rev. Father Lacasse, O. M. I., who is now stationed at St. Mary's Presbytery, begins on Friday a short retreat to the Sisters of Mercy at St. Norbert.

Very Rev. Father Allard, O. M. I., of Fort Francis, was here this week in the district confided to his care there has lately been built, at Big Fork, a neat little church dedicated under the title of St. Patrick, 34 feet by 18. It cost \$750, 550 of which are already paid.

Rev. Father Guillet, O. M. I., who had been invited to a special meeting of the Oblate local chapter this week, wrote from Duluth that he was unavoidably detained.

Rev. Nicholas Yunker will be ordained priest next Sunday by His Grace in the German Church. Rev. Mr. Speeman will, on the same occasion, receive minor orders.

The rumor, published last week, that Father Fleming, of the Parry Sound district, had been drowned while going to a sick call, is happily unfounded. He is quite well.

Rev. Father Loriau, F. M. I., was the Archbishop's guest on Thursday, the 26th.

His Grace, the Archbishop of St. Boniface, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Camirand, went to St. Alphonse last Sunday.

Rev. G. Belanger, pastor of Selkirk, has been laid up for a few days in St. Boniface Hospital. Rev. D. Plante, S. J., took his place at Selkirk last Sunday for the High Mass and sermon and the service at the asylum.

Rev. Fr. Thibaud, F. M. I., having been obliged to go to France for his health, Rev. Fr. Loriau becomes superior of the Missionaires de Chavagnes at St. Hubert and Cartier.

Rev. Fr. Noret, of St. Malo, has lately completed a record trip to France, going and returning in less than four weeks.

Rev. Fr. Thibaudeau, O. M. I., has lately been appointed parish priest of St. Charles, which place Rev. Father Marion, O. M. I., has left for the French Canadian church at Duluth.

Cardinal Satolli is very seriously ill. Pneumonia is feared.

Rev. Fr. Costiou, O. M. I., becomes assistant to Rev. Simeon Perreault,

O. M. I., at the Indian Boarding School of Crooked Lake.

During the absence of Rev. Arcade Martin, who is visiting his aged parents at St. Jacques le Mineur, Que., Rev. Fr. Lamy, of the Three Rivers diocese, is acting pastor of St. Joseph.

Rev. Fr. Libert, F. M. I., supplied for Rev. Fr. Noret during the latter's recent trip to France.

Rev. Fr. Hella, is assisting Rev. Fr. Bourret at St. Agathe.

## Persons and Facts

Madame Loubet, the President's aged mother, died at her home at Montelimar on Sunday last. She was of sturdy character, and on her ninetieth birthday wrote a public letter to her son, asking him to stop Combes' crusade against the religious Orders. President Loubet was much devoted to her, and when Combes came Sunday morning to place his resignation in his hands, he told him to come again; that there was an old woman dead down in the south of France whom he would bury before he undertook any more funerals.—Western Watchman.

Sherborne School, Dorsetshire, England, which was founded by Edward VI. in 1550, issues an interesting annual report and list of members of the Old Shirburnian Society. One of these "old boys" who resides in Winnipeg, has kindly allowed us to look into the last report issued in October, 1904. Therein we read that Sherborne will celebrate next June the twelve hundredth anniversary of the first coming of St. Aldhelm to that town in 705 A. D. There will be dramatic scenes, processions and living pictures illustrating the long history of the town. Of the sixteen projected scenes eight are thoroughly Catholic, one of them being the introduction of the Benedictine rule by Bishop Wulfy III.; but, of course, nothing will be said about the contrast between the Sherborne of the first eight hundred years, wholly Catholic, and the Sherborne of the last four hundred years, overwhelmingly Protestant. No such dangerous historical reminiscences would have been tolerated by the advisers of the thirteen year old king, who refounded the old Catholic church school of Sherborne.

To judge from a picture of the Grand Duchess Caroline of Saxe-Weimar, published in Wednesday's Free Press, her death from inflammation of the lungs is but the inevitable result of the efforts she seems to be making to shoulder her way out of a very low-necked dress.

Answer to S. H. M.—You are right in so far as 'fakir' for a humbug, is preferable to the spelling 'fakir,' which is common in the States, probably because Americans generally stick to the old pronunciation of 'fakir,' a Mohammedan ascetic. Smart (1835) used to pronounce this word with the accent on the first syllable; but all Englishmen who have lived in the east, the home of fakirs, now pronounce this word 'fah-keer,' with the accent on the last syllable.

An unfortunate mistake, exaggerating the severity of our climate, was made in the St. John's weekly weather report published in the Telegram of the 27th inst., and the Free Press of the 28th. The highest temperature for the week ending Jan. 26 is there set down as 19.8 below zero on Jan. 25, whereas the mercury rose above zero on that date (see Free Press News Bulletin, Jan. 26).

The death of Professor E. B. Kerrick on Thursday, the 26th inst., will be a great loss to the practical scientific interests of this country. He was a most distinguished analytical chemist.