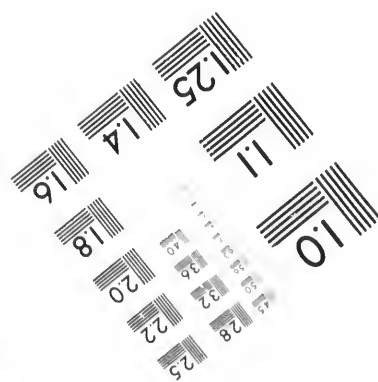
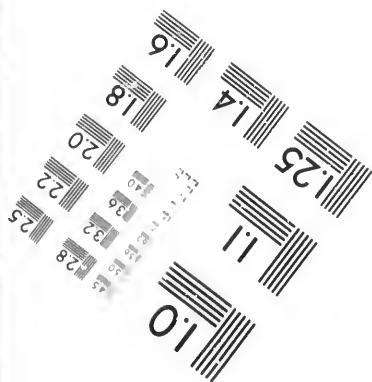
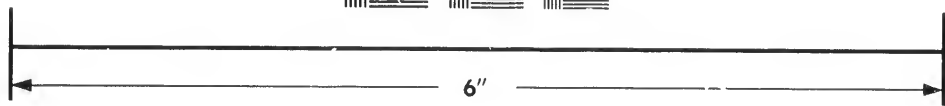
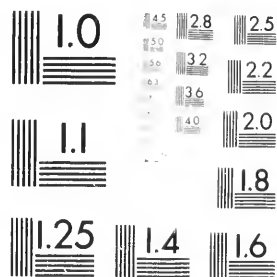


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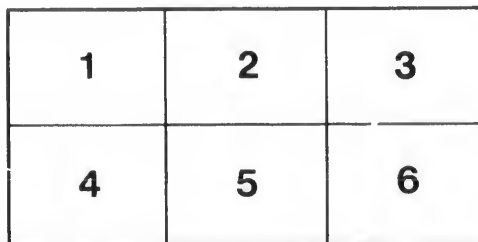
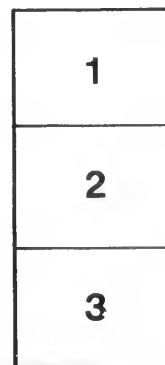
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" HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS, "
A
SERMON PREACHED
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OF
SHERBROOKE.

17th of March 1878.

by Rev. F. P. Nignan.

SHERBROOKE.

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To His Excellency,

THE MOST REVEREND

DOCTOR GEORGE CONROY,

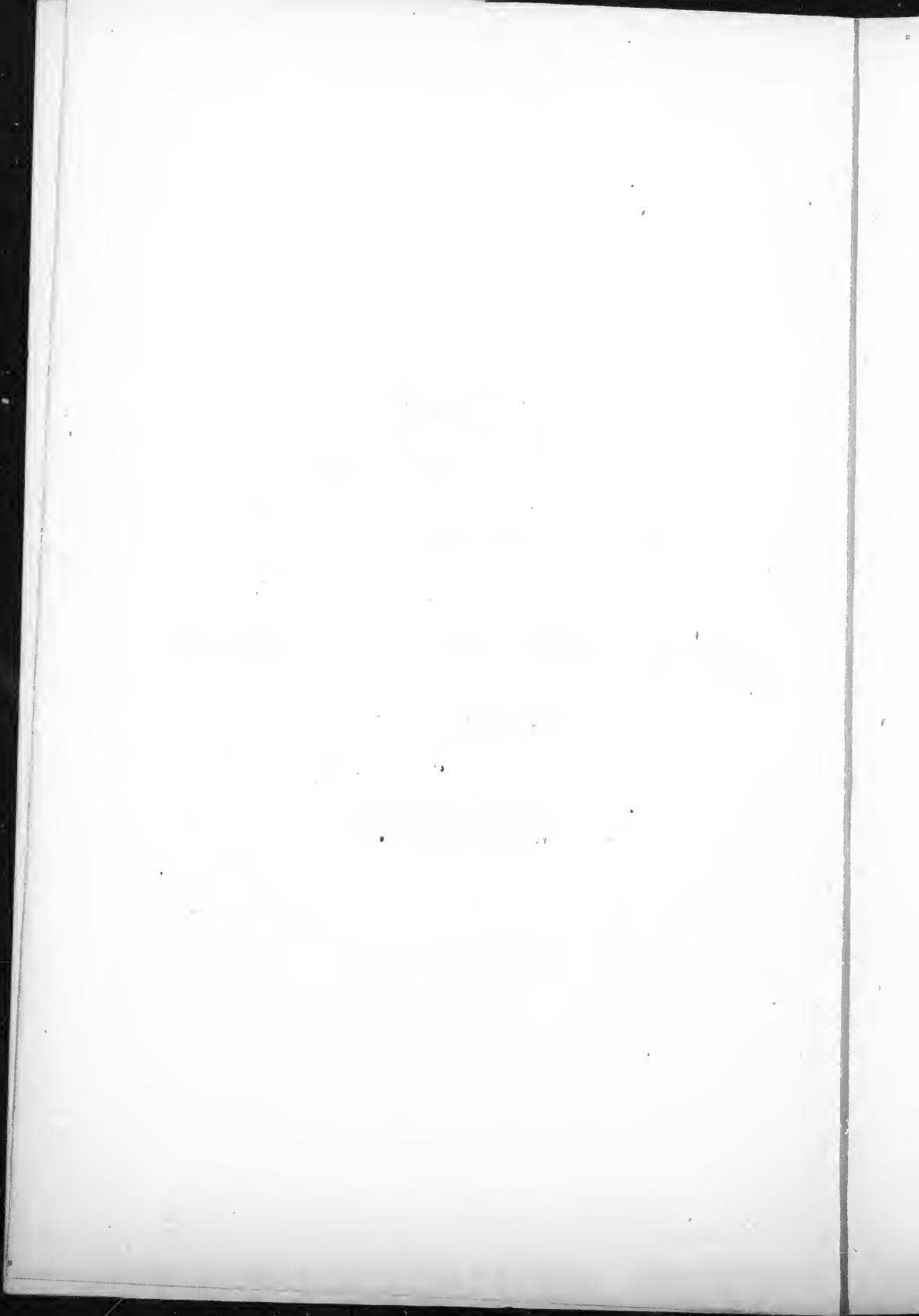
BISHOP OF ARDAGH AND CLAMACNOISE,

FIRST APOSTOLIC DELEGATE TO CANADA,

THIS DISCOURSE ON

THE APOSTLE OF IRELAND

is humbly inscribed.



ST. PATRICKS DAY.

*Habebitis autem hunc diem in monumentum
et celebrabitis eum festum Domino in perpetuas
generationes.*

“ And this day shall be a memorial to you, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance. ” (Exodus, XII, 14.)

MY LORD. (*)

MY BRETHREN.

It has always been a sacred duty to mankind to keep alive the memory of great benefits. All nations, even the most rude, have been strict observers of feasts in honor of their forefathers who have acquired renown. Who ignores the celebrations held by the Greeks and Romans in memory of the founders of their most important cities and nations. This is a law which nature itself has engraver in our hearts. And does not God sanction it in Holy Writ? In the text of my sermon, I have the divine ordinance given to the chosen people to keep for ever in “ their generations with an everlasting observance ” the memorial of the extraordinary benefit accorded to them while in Egypt. The descendants of Jacob are ground to the dust by the oppression of Pharaoh, but the Lord has not forsaken them; he will yet deliver them from the horrid yoke under which they groan. He makes use of a

(*) Mgr. Ant. Racine, Bishop of Sherbrooke.

mysterious rite : let each family take a lamb and eat it according to certain rites, then let them sprinkle the door posts with its blood, and the avenging Angel in his passage will spare the houses over whose door he shall find blood sprinkled. In thanksgiving for such an extraordinary preservation, the Jews have been faithful down to the latest days in keeping holy this day.

The practice of the Jews was agreeable to the Lord, but great as was their gratitude to him alone for his supreme and sovereign kindness, they never could forget the man whom God had chosen as his ambassador and interpreter towards them.

The memory of their Lawgiver was always vivid with the Jews, and the Book of Ecclesiasticus, chapter XLV, is filled with his praise. “ Moses was beloved of God and
“ men whose memory is in benediction.

“ He made him like the saints in glory, and magnified
“ him in the fear of his enemies.

“ He glorified him in the sight of kings, and gave him
“ commandments in the sight of his people and shewed
“ him his glory.

“ He sanctified him in his faith and his meekness. ”

But if the Bible is thus filled with the praises of one who gave his people the Law of fear, what shall we say on the present circumstance of the herald of the Law of grace and mercy towards our nation ? May we not praise and bless him ! May we not rather raise our hands and hearts towards the celestial abode, where, in the presence of the Lamb that was slain for our Redemption, he continues, till the present time, the office which he begun 1500 years ago, namely : of praying and interceding for us.

Glorious St. Patrick, hear our prayers! From the moment the bright sun began to gild the shores of far off India, until he seem to melt in the waves which bathe the feet of the Rocky Mountains, a tribute of prayers and blessings and thanksgivings will ascend towards your heart. Young children, who begin to lisp your dear venerable name, old men, tottering to the grave, will have a petition to offer you. In poor little huts and in majestic Cathedrals, hymns and canticles shall be sung in your honor! Obtain for us, your devoted children of the Irish Catholic Church, final perseverance in that holy faith which you taught our forefathers!

The best means of obtaining that happy result, is the pious examination of the life and teachings of our Apostle.

It is very difficult to give the precise date of the birth of St. Patrick, and his native country. The Roman Breviary adopts the opinion that he was born in Gaul, in Lower Brittany or Armorica. His father, who afterwards became a priest, was Calphurnius, and his mother, Conchessa, was a niece of St. Martin of Tours. His birth was probably in 387, and his death occurred on the 17th day of March 465, at Downpatrick, where, surrounded by his beloved flock, he breathed his pure soul to his Creator. The historians of the time tell us that when the news of the death of their Apostle had spread over the country, it was received every where with intense sorrow. Prelates and Clergy flocked from all quarters to be present at the funeral obsequies, which were celebrated with unusual magnificence and splendor. Masses were offered up on the altars continually, and not only the day, but even entire nights were spent by the assembled priests in psalmody. The funeral service lasted twelve days, and

so great was the profusion of lights and torches, “ that
“ darkness was dispelled and night seemed to be changed
“ into day. ”

Well might the Church of Ireland bewail its loss. With Eliseus, seeing Prophet Elias departing upwards, she might exclaim: “ My father, my father, the chariot of
“ Israel and the conductor thereof. ” But her grief found solace in the thought of the reward Patrick did immediately receive from the Prince of Pastors. When the choir of Holy Angels brought the soul of the Apostle to the feet of its Creator, Jesus Christ, while giving him the rank and crown of an Apostle, addressed him in those consoling words: “ Well done, good and faithful servant, because
“ thou hast been faithful over the flock entrusted to thy
“ care, I will place thee over many things, enter thou into
“ the joy of thy Lord. ”

How did Patrick obtain this happy reward, it now remains for us to examine.

Far off in the Western Seas lies an Isle of quiet and loveliness: “ Innisfail: ” The Island of Destiny. Wrapped in a shroud of vapours which rise from the bosom of the waves, the ocean is, as it were, jealous of the beauty of its emerald gem and guards it on all sides. But still darker and more shrouded by the errors of Paganism are the minds and intelligences of the hapless inhabitants of the Island. The gulfs and abysses of briny waves which surround Erin are not so deep and dreadful as the horrid abysses of superstition which the Devil has placed between their immortal souls and their Creator!

St. Jerome, a contemporary historian, relates “ that the
“ inhabitants of those islands are still immersed in the er-
“ rors of barbarity and paganism. On this most beautiful

“ spot, on this little Garden of Paradise, monsters, under
“ human shape, live and reign supreme. The soil is in-
“ fested with snakes and horrid serpents; those are the
“ gods of the Irish: they are so barbarous that they even
“ feast upon the flesh of their enemies caught in battle!”

Who shall come to their relief? Who shall announce to those benighted souls the new Law? That bright Sun of Justice, who, three centuries before, had illumined Judea and the countries of the East, shall he never shed his rays on the far West?

Yes! Sitting upon the Pontifical Chair, in the See of St. Peter, to whom Christ has given care of the whole flock, Providence has placed a good and holy man. The name of Pope Celestine III, with the name of Pope Pius IX, must for ever be held by the sons of Erin in most pious recollection. To Celestine, after God, we owe christian civilization. He had previously sent Palladius to teach the doctrine of Christ to the inhabitants of the British Islands; but it seems that Palladius was not the man destined to have the glory of the Apostleship.

It was Patrick, and Patrick alone, who received from God the qualities of heart and soul which might enable him to perform the good work and cultivate that part of the Lord's vineyard.

“ When I was sixteen years of age, he says in the Book
“ of his Confessions, I had not yet turned my heart in earn-
“ est to the love of prayer and devotion.” He was, at that time, captured by King Nial in one of his marauding expeditions in Gaul, and sold by him as a slave to Milcho, who sent him to tend his flocks in the hills of Antrim. If, in his early youth, the young man had been remiss in the practice of his religious duties, the hardships and

cruelties he had to endure in his new state of life were the means that God, in his mercy, made use of to constrain him to turn his thoughts heavenward. And now may we not fully admire the power and wisdom of God when he wants to bring about his celestial plans for the conversion of souls! How often may we not cry out with St. Paul: “ O depth of the riches of the wisdom and of “ the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways. (Rom. XI, 33.)

How extraordinary the grace of God’s vocation and how different in each circumstance! Sometimes the Apostle or Prophet is called suddenly and illuminated for his mission by a sudden light from above, as Saul on his way to Damascus; at other times, God takes more time,—he allows his chosen one to object and hide himself for sometime, as Jonas on his way to Nineveh, or Moses in the Desert of Horeb. Like the Lawgiver of the Hebrews, Patrick is led by the spirit of God while tending his flocks into the hills and fastnesses of the land which he must hereafter overrun as a spiritual conqueror.

The Lord appears out of a burning bush to Moses and commands him to go and carry his Laws and Will to the Kings of Egypt. In the same manner, the Angels of God, nay more, the Son of Man, Our Saviour himself, reveals to the humble slave of Milcho his future designs on him. As a proof, he restores him miraculously to his native land and to the tender embraces of his mother. Once more he is cast amongst the inhabitants of Innisfail, but only for sixty days; and after his second captivity, he turns his mind in earnest to the work set out for him from all eternity.

Undoubtedly Patrick fully realized the importance of

the Mission he was about to undertake, and his soul quailed at the responsibility ; nature's claims were heard : the cruel character of the people he wanted to convert, the tender mother and venerated father whom he had to forsake, the long life of future hardships, must have for a moment made him falter ; but—

“ His word, who, on the Galilean Sea,
“ Reft John from Zebedee, and changed his love,
“ Alone could have sustained him in that hour
“ 'Twas he who said : (*)—

“ He who loveth father and mother more than me is not
“ worthy of me, (St. Math. X, 37.) and bidding adieu to
this fleeting world, he devoted himself generously to
tread in the footsteps of his heavenly Master.

A vision, which he relates in the Book of his Confessions, helped to confirm him in his decision : “ I saw
“ in a nocturnal vision, a man coming as if from Ireland,
“ whose name was Victoricius, with innumerable letters
“ in his hand, one of which he gave me ; on reading the
“ beginning of it, I found it contained these words : *The*
“ *voice of the Irish*. And while reading, I thought I
“ heard the voice of persons from near the wood of Foc-
“ lut, which is near the western sea. And they cried out
“ as if in one voice : *We entreat thee, holy youth, to come*
“ *amongst us !* And I was greatly affected, and could
“ read no longer, then I awoke. ”

When he was thirty years of age, he went to place himself under the direction of St. Germain of Auxerre, who sent him to study at the flourishing monastery of

(*) Cardinal Wiseman.

Lerins, near the Mediterranean Sea; and after spending nine years in that sanctuary of piety and learning, he went to Rome to venerate the tomb of the Apostle St. Peter, and to receive from the Apostolic See the legitimate Mission towards the nations and “ people that sat in “ darkness, to them that sat in the shadow of death.” (St. Math. IV, 16.)

Patrick understood, as all other Missionaries, that outside of the communion of Peter there can be no success in converting nations to God. Peter has the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and nothing can be loosed or unbound, unless through his direction.

Enriched with the Pontifical instructions, and fortified with the blessings and good wishes of his spiritual Father, Patrick returns through France towards his future field of labor. It was in France, in the diocese of Exereux in Normandy, that he received Episcopal Consecration; and ever since, the ties, which have bound those two countries, have remained unshaken, With what gratitude do we all turn to-day to glorious catholic France and offer her the tribute of our praise. France has always been a friend and a protector of Ireland. It was a Frenchman—St. Patrick—who converted us, and it was on French soil that the Irish Catholics have always found a most hospitable reception. Three hundred years ago, when persecution racked Ireland and made a waste of its schools and monasteries, our priests found colleges and seminaries and universities on noble France's soil. May our prayers for the preservation of that hospitable and generous nation be heard to-day!

In company of a few priests, St. Patrick sets sail from the coasts of Britany. Winds, be favorable and fill his

sails! Waft in your most rapid flight that precious bark which comes to you, not laden with gold or precious stones from the far East, but the inestimable price of your redemption! Behold, a conqueror comes to subdue and captivate the Gem of the Sea, but not with treason or bloodshed,—like the future tyrants who shall cross the waves with rage and the sword,—the new visitors, whom you spie in this little bark, are the Messengers of the Lord! Their sword is the word of the Gospel; their helmet is faith in the Lord: their riches,—the mysteries of a crucified Redeemer!

Patrick first landed on the banks of the Dee; but the inhabitants were so adverse to his coming, that he set sail towards the north and approached the scene of his first sojourn in Ireland.

With the wisdom of an experienced general, Patrick directs his steps towards the capital of the land, to attack error in its centre, at its very heart. He goes, with his companions, to Tara where the chiefs of the nation are assembled with the Druids to perform certain mysterious ceremonies in honor of their false gods. Although it is forbidden by law to light a fire, Patrick lights a fire in honor of the true God, and attracts thereby the attention of the assembly. Being brought into the presence of the kings and warriors, and having received leave to expound his belief, he begins to explain the mysteries of the one supreme God, in three divine persons, who created the world and governs all things: But this doctrine is incomprehensible to those rude idolaters, who are accustomed to recognize and worship as God all the inanimate and abject things that surround them. Stooping down towards the ground, Patrick finds a triumphant proof of what he preaches in that delicate little trifold leaf which

covers the hills and valleys of Erin. The victory is won, through the grace and mercy of God ; the people fall in worship before the one true God in three persons, they confess their belief and ask of Patrick further instruction. The life and death of the Redeemer, his Passion and Cross, the seven Sacraments—which are instituted for the sanctification of our souls,—in a word, all the pure doctrine of Christ, as given by Christ himself to his disciples and ever maintained intact by his holy Spouse—the Catholic Church, “ the ground and pillar of faith, ”—is given, by the holy Bishop, to the children of Ireland, and was received then and there with a docility which has never been witnessed in any other land.

Time will not allow me to dwell at any length on the particulars of the life of St. Patrick in Ireland. It lasted over thirty years, and, in the course of that time, he had the happiness of converting the different tribes from their errors and darkness, and led them to the pure light of christian doctrine.

All the historians of his life declare that he visited every portion of the Island, from North to South, preaching “ Christ and Him crucified. ” He erected a number of churches equal to the number of days in the year ; he ordained thousands of Priests and several Bishops ; established monasteries for cloistered nuns and holy religious ; so that Ireland, at his death and many centuries after, became the rival of Thebaid,—because the hymns and praises of the Lord were continually sung by holy religious of both orders. By the dispensation of God, it became the Island of Saints and the sanctuary of Letters. From its hospitable and blessed shores, whole colonies of Apostles went out to the forests of Germany, Switzer-

land and down to the plains of Northern Italy, to civilize in their turn the inhabitants of those countries. Even, in more modern times, Ireland has been the land of missionaries, not only by its priests and bishops, but especially by the life and purity of its people. Therefore, we are right and justified in celebrating "this day as a memorial and triumphant day to the Lord in our generations, with an everlasting observance."

The life and examples of St. Patrick have always been meditated by his children; but above all, they have studied and practised his doctrines!

What are those doctrines?

The object of St. Patrick's mission on Irish soil was not to preach doctrines which come from the fancies of men, or novelties brought down from heaven by Angels. No; he labored hard, "in season and out of season," to implant the pure faith of Jesus Christ on Irish soil. To attain that happy result, he did not follow the plan of recent Gospellers who throw the Bible broadcast over the land, leaving each one to find in it a belief according to his taste. He taught them the sublime institution of the Church, as established by Christ on the solid foundation of the Apostles,—having, for corner stone, Peter who is the rock against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Following the example of St. Paul, he compares the Church to the human body, in which, although there are different parts, there is but one being. "For, as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are but one body, so also is Christ, But now God hath set the members, every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. Now you are the body of Christ and members of member."

Thus in the Church there must be different functions and different degrees. In the army of the Lord of hosts, all cannot command,—some must obey—some must teach,—some must be taught. St. Patrick established the divine hierarchy of inferior priests, bishops and different religious orders, all subject to the Bishop of Rome. The respect of Irishmen for their religious superiors,—for their priests, has caused the admiration of the whole world. For them, the Priest is “ the salt of the earth. “ But if the salt loose its savor, wherewith shall it be “ salted ; it is good for nothing but to be cast out and “ trodden by men. ” How can a people preserve its traditions of glory and religion, if the priests thereof fall from their exalted position—if they cast away their crown of chastity and holy unction, to take up the debased life of this world and the flesh ? How can the priest preach Jesus-Christ “ and him crucified, and poor and naked if he load himself with the goods of this world ? St. Patrick came to Ireland poor, “ possessing neither “ gold nor silver, nor money in his purse. He had no “ scrip for his journey, nor two coats, nor shoes nor staff.” “ Freely he had received, freely he gave. ” When the Irish princes brought him money, he gave it back to them or to the poor, whose constant friend he was : thus leaving an example which has been followed down to the present time.

The priest is the best friend of Ireland,—he has proved it amply ! He is identified with his people ; he shares in his joys ; he partakes of his sorrows ; he has been the teacher of the children and the comforter of the poor as well as the companion and guide of the nobles and princes of the Land. The Priest is “ the ambassador of Christ, ” and well has he performed his message ! In the

Irish language, he bears a name which has no corresponding word in English, and means "sacred man, a giver of good things." Therefore, our countrymen have always surrounded him with utmost respect. They knew that him whom the priest blest, was blessed a hundred-fold, and they knew that his curse was a sentence which had a dreadful consequence. "Whosoever, says the Son of Man, heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. (St. Luke, X, 16.) And he that despiseth me, hath one that judgeth him." (St. John, XII, 48,)

Never did the Irish nation despise nor cast away the representative of Christ. On the contrary, when persecution raged fiercest, then did the people cling fastest to their priest; and well they might love and respect them, because he was that faithful servant who gaveth em the pure—unalloyed doctrine of salvation. It is a noted fact that the soil of Ireland and heretics are not congenial...

To fulfil his duty of an Apostle, St. Patrick presented to his people, and held up to their gaze, the image of all that is most pure and exalted in regenerated woman. In the Mother of Jesus-Christ,—in the holy Virgin of virgins,—the Irish have found impersonated and summed up all the virtues which can adorn a human heart. In the love and respect of Jesus for his Mother, they found the example of that unbounded love and confidence which they have always had for Mary. In her sweet name they have always placed their trust. They have honored that name and honored their families by imparting it as the dearest inheritance to their daughters. Long may that devotion last!

Jesus-Christ is the celestial vineyard of which his Father is the husbandman. He is that true vine whose root and stem are the support of the Church. To bear fruit for eternity, all must abide in Him: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth, as a branch and wither, and they shall cast him into fire," (St. John, XV, 56.) Those to whom St. Patrick brought the knowledge of supernatural wisdom must have felt anxious above all to know what duties should be performed in order to belong to that celestial vinetree, whose fruit is immortal.

But St. Patrick taught his dear children that all vitality—all life must come down from heaven and be distributed to the uttermost parts of the earth through the instrumentality of the Bishops or overseers whom the Holy-Ghost has appointed to govern that Church which Christ has purchased with his blood." (Acts, XX, 28.) Christians must for ever remain in close communion of thoughts and practice of good works with the visible head of the Church. They must be firmly attached to the Vicar of Christ,—to him for whom Our Saviour "prayed that his faith fail not: and who, being once converted, must confirm his brethren." But that Apostle has established his See in Imperial Rome, in the city of Cæsar, and there it hath taken root for ever. On this Chair, there shall always be a successor. Peter will forever give utterance of divine truths to the universal flock of which he is the supreme Guide, by the mouth of his successors. Outside of Peter's bark, all must perish in the flood. None can enter into heaven without his leave, as he holds the keys of that celestial abode. To be sure of salvation; all christians must be in communion with

Rome.. But did St. Patrick teach his flock obedience, in spiritual things, to the Pope ?

Allow me to relate a personal recollection.

Last summer, in the month of June, I had the happiness of being present in that magnificent church which the piety of the Irish has erected to St. Patrick in the city of Montreal. With many of my race who pressed round the pulpit, I was anxious to hear the first words of greeting of the saintly Bishop of Ardagh to his fellow countrymen in Canada, and to know the object of his mission amongst us. " I come, he said, on behalf of the Sovereign Pontiff, the supreme Pastor of souls, to visit this distant part of his fold, and fill you with his blessings. And I know that the Irish Catholics of all the Canadian Dominion shall welcome me, because I stand before them as the representative of that Roman See which St. Patrick taught the Irish, from the earliest times, to venerate. In the Book of Armagh, we read the dictum of that holy Apostle who taught his converts to be as faithful to Rome as to christianity itself: *Sicut Christiani, ita et Romani sitis*. In all difficulties concerning faith, the Irish must have recourse to Armagh, and then, beyond the Seas, to that fountain Head from which the light of the Gospel hath come to them." Have the children of St. Patrick clung faithfully to their spiritual Chief in Rome,—have they kept the commandment of their Patriarch? The history of the nation, for fifteen hundred years, is there to answer. The Irish name is but another name for Roman-Catholic. Whether in joy or in woe,—whether a strong nation, or trodden underfoot and in the chains of the oppressor,—whether at home or abroad, the

genuine Irish have always and everywhere been avowedly Romans in belief! The Pope is their teacher, and they glory in their submission to his commands. And allow me to congratulate you, good Catholics of Sherbrooke, who have made a public and filial demonstration of that love, this year, by setting aside all public demonstration of joy out of respect for the memory of the late Pope, Pius IX.

Pius IX was always a friend of the Irish. He founded a College for them in Rome. At the beginning of his reign, he manifested a desire of having the roman *Campagna* settled by the faithful Irish who were compelled to abandon their dear land and cross the Atlantic to distant countries. Unfortunately this grand idea of the farseeing Pontiff and King was not relished by his subjects, and he was deprived of the best support of his temporal power. But the help of the Irish hearts and Irish arms was not completely wanting, for, on Castlefidardo's plains, the Irish Brigade fought valiantly to check the torrent of invading barbarians from the North. The gratitude of Pius was worthy of his great heart. He selected a Bishop of Ireland and made him Cardinal. For the first time a son of Erin was clothed with the Roman Purple,—for the first time an Irishman took rank with the Princes of the Church. By that election, Pius IX expressed his conviction that an Irishman was worthy to be his successor, and consequently the Head of the Church, the Vicar and Representative of Christ on earth. O incomparable glory! O never to be forgotten distinction conferred upon the whole race! Who would not cherish the memory of so beneficent a Pontiff? But the love of the lamented Pope for the Irish race was exhibited also by the creation of the first Cardinal in America—as

here again I find a son of Erin exalted to that sublime dignity. Pius IX had a most favorable opinion of the intelligence and excellence of the Irish when he selected, as his Representative and Ambassador to this Dominion, a Bishop of Ireland, to whom he gave commission to go and visit in his name his children of this distant country.

Long may the memory of the glorious Pope be cherished in the hearts of his grateful Irish children! Their prayers in behalf of his soul shall cease only on that day when his picture shall be placed on the altar, side by side with those of Pope Celestine and St. Patrick!

“ This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein. ”

Obedient to the invitation of the Prophet and King, let us raise up our hearts and hands to Heaven—to God the author and giver of all celestial joys; “ For, if it be good to hide the secret of a king, it is honorable to reveal and confess the works of God. ” (Tobias, XII, 7.) Let us therefore publish and exalt the great things done to us by the mercy of God—for having drawn us from the shadow of death to the most pure light of the Gospel. “ To the only God, Our Saviour, through Jesus-Christ, our Lord, be glory and magnificence, empire and power before all ages, and now and for all ages of ages. Amen. ” (St. Jude, I, 25.) But after God, glory and honor and thanksgiving to St. Patrick “ who hath magnified the name of God ” amongst our forefathers, “ who hath not spared his life, by reason of distress and tribulation of our people, but hath prevented our ruin in the presence of our God. ” (Judith, XIII, 25.)

Honor to Patrick who, after the example of Jesus-

Christ, was ready to lay down his life for his flock, “ and
“ give himself for us, to make us a people acceptable, a
“ pursuer of good works.” (Titus, II, 14.)

May his blessings descend upon us to-day from that
celestial abode, where, amidst “ the cloud of witnesses ”
who enjoy the pure vision of God, he still takes an in-
terest in us! May that blessing descend upon each and
every one of you who are here present in the church
to-day,—upon your families,—upon your undertakings!
May it comfort you through life and guard you in your
passage from time to eternity.

Amen.

