

Correspondence.

Romish Interpretation of Providence.

Translated for the Christian Messenger from Le Semeur by a pupil of the Female French Protestant Institute of Montreal.

Doubtless no one will deny that the interpretation of the dispensations of Providence is one of the most difficult things for man, not to say that it is one of those which are beyond his reach and above his power. Nevertheless, in spite of this acknowledgment, each one believes himself tolerably versed in this science, each one is more or less inclined to explain the ways of God towards his fellow men, and that, observe it well, according to his personal feelings, that is to say, his antipathies or his predilections. We hear every day, this person has been punished, this accident has happened to him, he has met with this loss, because he is guilty of such or such sins. And thus, we make ourselves interpreters of the dispensations of Providence, we explain them, and when we have pronounced our judgment we believe ourselves wise, not to say masters in this high philosophy.

We will admit willingly that God punishes the guilty in this world, and that his justice is manifested towards transgressors. However it hardly belongs to us to give our opinion upon it, as if we had been admitted to sit in His councils.

We were forcibly struck the other day by this fact, while reading in the Franco-Canadien, an extract from a French journal, which attributes the recent eruption of Vesuvius to what it calls the profanation of the Church of Torre-del-Greco. This paper says that Dec. 8th, 1860, while they kept the festival of the Madonna in the great church of this place, according to custom, a number of partisans of the new order of things, entered the Church with a flourish of trumpets and playing the Garibaldi hymn; going to the altar consecrated to the Conception, they wished to adorn the image of Mary with the tricolor scarf; afterwards they obliged the Priest and his assistants to wear the national cockade, while performing the duties of their office.

It says that the Priest exclaimed: "My God! what misfortunes are going to fall upon this poor country on account of these profanations!"

"The next year," continues this paper, "the 8th of Dec. between twelve and one o'clock, the very same day and hour, this mountain of fire suddenly trembled, it was rent asunder at its base near the gates of Torre-del-Greco, and opened five yawning mouths which vomited forth destruction and death upon the terrified inhabitants. Earthquakes reduced Torre-del-Greco to a heap of ruins and the lava laid waste the country.

"To day, there is no longer in the neighboring country a tree under which a traveller can sit down; there is no longer, at Torre-del-Greco, a solitary house in which secure shelter can be found!

"Yesterday in travelling the city, a poor deformed old woman, copper-colored, with haggard eyes, inspired looks and the voice of a Pythoness cried out to all passers by; 'Where are you going, unfortunate ones? are you going to see the fruit of our sins? Alas! they are very great, if they were not, do you believe we should be in this condition? The mercy of God is great, but his righteousness is great also, for he is just, and our sins were greater than his righteousness and mercy! We have wearied his mercy; but his righteousness will never be weary, God is just, the archangel will pass over us with his flaming sword; let the righteousness of God have its course.'

"Our guide told us that this old woman was a prophetess and that she was gifted with second sight, and what she said was right and true."

This is the way that the article of the French paper republished by the Franco-Canadien, explains the last eruption of Vesuvius! We have been, we acknowledge, quite astonished. It may do for the old woman of whom it speaks, to enlighten us on that point, it is her business, it is her rôle of Pythoness, and we know what importance to attach to it, but we are astonished in the highest degree that public prints should be the echo of these absurdities. The press has a more exalted mission than that of propagating popular superstitions.

As we do not wish to limit ourselves in expressing our astonishment, we will ask the Franco-Canadien to tell us what crimes have caused the preceding eruptions of Vesuvius, also what sins have drawn down upon the Vatican, the disastrous tempest that all the papers reported a little while ago. Besides, it would be interesting to know if it would not have been wiser for the Madonna to punish the Garibaldians, rather than the innocent inhabitants of Torre-del-Greco.

"For according to all justice we should wish That the most culpable should perish."

This was the opinion of Lafontaine and we certainly hope that the Virgin Mary of the Roman Catholics is not inferior to this celebrated fabulist in regard to moral ideas.

If the knowledge of our contemporary can not penetrate these mysterious depths, we counsel him to consult the old sorceress of whom he speaks, and who is doubtless conversant with all this. And if he can not have a satisfactory reply, he will obtain some old grand-mother's tales like those of which he has made himself the propagator.

For the Christian Messenger.

Errors to be corrected.

I love to fear uneducated people pray. I don't mind their bad English when their theology is sound, but I wish all our ministers, especially our young ministers, who have been, or who are going to the College and Academy, to avoid all gross improprieties in words as well as in deeds.

From some such I have heard the expressions "In that world without end," and "John the Revelator." The former phrase when used at the close of a prayer is improper. The latter is always so. World without end, is correct. It means simply for ever and ever. In Latin ad secula seculorum. In Greek eis tas aionas ton aionon—"to ages of ages," i. e. "forever and ever." See Ephes. iii. 21. "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN." So in the church prayer-book. "As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end! Amen!" Now if this is the expression you intend to use, don't say in that world without end, nor, in a world without end. Such an expression is flat and insipid when compared with the genuine term—WORLD WITHOUT END.

And don't nickname the author of the Revelation with a slang word, which conveys neither sense nor meaning. Say John the beloved disciple: even call him Saint John, if you like, for he was a saint, as all christian men and women are. Call him John the divine and no one can reasonably object. But for pity's sake don't call him the Revelator; for there is no such word.—A revelator would signify one who reveals, and pray what would that mean? I know what a Reveler is, and I know what a Revealer is. But I know nothing about revealing. You might with equal propriety call him the Apocalypticator, from the Greek word Apocalypse, often applied to the book of Revelation, and meaning the same thing.

GENTLE HINT.

For the Christian Messenger.

Tobacco.

DEAR BROTHER,

I enclose for publication a letter I have just received from the President of the "Juvenile Reform Society," at Hillsburgh. (Indian name, Elsetcook.) I take this method of thanking my good brother for writing, and for his kind invitation, of which I shall take the earliest opportunity to avail myself. Meanwhile there are several other places that would be vastly improved by the banishment of profane language, rum and tobacco.

Yours truly,
S. T. RAND.

March 8.

Extracts of letter:

"Your remarks on the anti-tobacco reform in this place had a wonderful effect. The Juvenile Moral Reform Society had a meeting shortly after and we got 50 added to our lists. The first day of January we gave them a nice picnic and had first rate order, marched through the village with badge and banner unfurled to the breeze. Some as we passed fell into the procession and smashed their black pipes against the board-fence as a token of total abstinence.

"We returned to the Tabernacle, had some first rate speeches and dismissed about four o'clock to have another picnic the first day of April.—We have now about 85. The change is apparent to all acquainted with this community. I am told that in the district where swearing and profane language were worst, there has not been an oath heard since. With quite small exceptions they have all kept their pledge from swearing drinking spirits and using tobacco. I hope your Micmac mission will bring you along this way before long, and you must be sure and give us a call. There is no mistake if you will lecture on Tobacco Reform you will have a crowded house, and you can take a collection for the Micmac Mission. We will try and not forget as we did before.

Yours very truly,
ISRAEL RICE."

No man rejects a minister of God who faithfully performs his office, till he has rejected God. The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without adversity.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Private Ethics."

—Letter of "A. C."

I believe, with yourself, Mr. Editor, that "no one has been hurt" by the tremendous northern fire of A. C. But I am willing to let him retire, with the passing reply you have made. I ask your patience, while I descend to a closer analysis of the argument. I profess to be at least equal to A. C. in the goodness of my cause, but were "the battle to the strong," I might participate in his sanguine expectation for the success of the North.

I am glad the Northerner has been permitted to speak for himself. That he has, however, spoken against himself, I shall endeavour to show, but will not join the South. Secession then is no new theme. The South claim a constitutional right of secession, for each individual state. The North deny this right, maintaining that Secession can only be effected by means of a national Convention. Now the North have not accepted the plan of the South for "peaceful and harmonious not to say constitutional" separation, nor have they attempted to give practical effect to their own theory. They had abundant opportunity to do so, when they saw the South determined to make their exodus.

But it appears to me that the North have shown clearly, that a National Convention, having for a basis secession, was to take place only after every drop of their "Puritan blood" had been shed. How they can talk of a National Convention and peaceful separation, when at the same time they are making such sacrifice of blood and treasure, using all the barbarous and hellish instrumentalities which God and nature have put in their hands, in order to retain them, I cannot understand? Must all this be done, merely to decide the abstract question, from which door the South should make its exit? The Southerners well know that secession, as a Constitutional right, was the only door that was not bolted and barred against them; out of this they bolted.

It thus appears that the North have denied the South, contradicted themselves, and professed blood.

We now advance to consider the grounds of the claims of the South, or rather of the denials of the North, and the wrongs resulting therefrom. The South maintain, according to A. C.'s authority, that the United States Government is a compact, and therefore any state has a constitutional right to secede at pleasure. The North reply, admitting that the Constitution is a compact, your case is not a good one, "for it is a principle of private ethics, that obligations solemnly assumed, must be abided by, until we are released from them by the power to which we have made the surrender." Whether this proves decisive against the South or not, it evidently does not justify the North in their course. To do that it must be made out that the parties of a compact should always use violence against the disaffected to retain them.

Suppose a number of persons enter into compact relations to dig gold in Nova Scotia, or elsewhere. They acknowledge no earthly power superior to that of the compact. Mining operations are carried on successfully for a season.—But certain parties become unruly, cudgel any peaceful and industrious member of the compact, for presuming to express an opinion about the quality of the dust they were getting; also compel all the other members to perform the most servile work, for their especial benefit. One day the din of strife is heard in the camp. You approach and find the parties hostilely engaged against each other, with pick and shovel, and whatever instruments "God and nature have put into their hands." Some are lying low weltering in blood; others terribly maimed and mangled, yet the melee goes in. You wish to know the cause of all this, when our warrior-digger minus a leg, an eye and teeth hobbles forth and says, "Those wicked unruly fellows wished to leave us altogether, and carry on operations for themselves; on another part of our extensive claim; but we mean to teach them better, for we will kill them all and die ourselves, rather than that they shall violate their engagements," and to justify such a course, with philosophical gravity, he imperfectly articulates a chapter of "private ethics." "In private ethics the right to give implies the right to take" &c.—So by virtue of private ethics, the North have a public right to "shed every drop of Puritan blood," and of course of Secession blood, i. e. destroy every person in the Union, and of course every thing "for the sake of the Union;" and if all in the Union, I should suppose all out of the Union, "if the safety of the Union requires it" i. e. all the world for the Union.

But the Southern people are not allowed the

favour even of these "private ethics." Says the Northerner, "Our fathers formed not a league or confederation, but a government." League and confederation are here only different words for compact, and constitute the same term in the argument. The reason given that the U. S. Government is not a compact, appears to be "that they cannot build or own a ship, a fort, a mint," &c. But is this anything more than the surrender which is necessary to form the compact? Webster calls the U. S. Government a national compact. The position of the Northerner appears to be as follows:—"Our government is not a compact, but a government, and a government is a government, but a compact is a league or covenant, and if you do not comprehend this logic, I will shoot you, as a Mohawk would a muskrat. I regard civil government as theoretically a compact, and therefore whatever authority is not derived from this source is founded in usurpation.

Stress is laid upon the fact that in the Constitution "not one syllable of provision is made for the withdrawal of any of the parties to the arrangement;" and I would still magnify the emphasis. This may perhaps possibly prove the South guilty, but may not the Northerner find in this "not one syllable" a volume of condemnation to himself. There is not only not one syllable of provision made for withdrawal in the Constitution, but not one syllable about withdrawal at all. It not one syllable is said about withdrawal, surely no wholesale destruction of life and property is added, as a penalty for withdrawing. In all the surrender of fort and mint, and arsenal, &c., soul and body is not mentioned. Could any one be condemned for a crime about which nothing is said in the law-book; or punished when penalty is out of the question. The subject of an unwritten Constitution, may appeal to precedent, where he will commonly find but too much authority for a war similar to the one in question.

The sentence quoted from the Constitution: "That no state should pass a law conflicting with the laws of the United States, within its own borders, does not affect what has just been said about no provision for withdrawal." We must distinguish between violating the obligation of the compact, as long as we are parties, and withdrawing from the compact. The former is evidently what is intended here. Now it appears to me it would be as just to permit the parties to a compact, in which not "one syllable of provision is made for withdrawal," to withdraw at pleasure as to retain them forever; and much more merciful than to slay them, spoil their goods and beggar their posterity.

"They tore down, and trampled upon the National flag, the sacred banner." Stand up for the national honour! When the North submitted to be edgedged, in the very sanctuary of law, and to have their own free country made a hunting ground, where human beings were to be the game, and themselves the inhuman sportsmen, I do not see what honour the nation has left. Had the North taken up arms when Brooks brutally assailed Sumner, and was afterwards returned by his constituents, presented with a cane, on which was inscribed, "Hit him again," they would have stood in defence of a vital point of freedom—the artery of liberty of speech. Had they broken allegiance with the South, to save themselves from the reproach of the Fugitive Slave Bill, the civilized world would have applauded. But can they be otherwise regarded than as having sacrificed their liberty and honour to slavery, and now themselves? Is a great national name of so much importance as to be estimated by immortal souls? is it not rather "a doubtful good," and to be estimated in brass cents?

I would now like to try a home-thrust at A. C. Suppose our province, a kingdom, and any county declared its independence—would have a government of its own. Would A. C. take the fire and sword into such county; would he meet parent and brother and friend in the deadly strife? I would prefer taking the olive branch. Or, suppose that Liberal, and Conservatives lived in entirely separate parts of this province; and the party out of power made a strike for a party kingdom, would it be the duty of the Government to declare war? I presume the country might be in a better political state than now; and surely Liberal and Conservatives are not farther apart than North and South. Whether it be considered a weakness or not, I must confess, with regard to myself that sooner than imbue my hands in my brother's blood, than betray and beggar the defenceless and innocent, than fill prisons with sighing inmates, and hospitals with festering victims; than destroy barbers with stone fleets, and excite the worst of passions in the human breast, I would let Secession have its course, until I stood alone, unprotected