

THE FAITH IN AMERICA

An Interesting Lecture on its Origin
Delivered by Rev. E. I. Devitt, S.J.

What the Country Owes the Church.

VI.

Father Menard, after many hardships, founded the first mission of Chippeways on Lake Superior, in 1660. The church founded by Fr. Allouez, at La Pointe, in 1666, claims to be the oldest in Wisconsin. Indians of many tribes flocked to these great trading stations; they heard the heralds of the faith and invited them to their far-distant homes. They were motley gatherings, representing many nations and tongues, but, with the exception of the priest and some adventurous fur-trapper, no white man was present, for France had not yet established its fort and settlement in the region. Fr. James Marquette in 1669, was at Sault Ste. Marie. The missions to the Illinois and Dakotas were in prospect, and new laborers were needed. They came, and the light of the Gospel shone around the shores of Lakes Superior, Huron and Michigan. A most interesting relic of this early period is the monstrance presented by Nicholas Perrot, to the church of Green Bay. Its base shows the inscription with the date, 1636. In May, 1673, Fr. Marquette set out, with Joliet and five companions, upon a voyage, which has become historic. A month was required to pass with the canoes from Sault Ste. Marie, by way of the Wisconsin River, and he glided down the Mississippi, until the problem was solved, that the mighty "Father of Waters" emptied into the Mexican Gulf. He was the first white man to look upon the wild grandeur of the river; now bordered by prosperous commonwealths, and one of those states has honored his memory by choosing him as its representative in that Memorial Hall at Washington, where each state is entitled to place the statues of those two of her historic sons whom she judges to be most worthy of honor. He was not born in Wisconsin, but she claims him as her own, and a special act of Congress was passed that this statue should be admitted with all the rights of citizenship. The humble missionary is not unworthy of a place amongst the great ones of the land, for which he did so much, for which his life was spent.

Fr. Marquette, as opportunity offered, planted the seed of Catholicity among the natives along the Mississippi; but he was destined to cultivate the promising fields and gather in the harvest. Returning from his great voyage, the Kaskaskias claimed his services, and he promised to come and live with them. In fulfillment of the promise, he set out next year for the long desired mission of the Illinois, but sickness compelled him to spend the winter of 1674 near the Chicago River. He reached Kaskaskia in the spring, built a chapel, said his first mass in it, and began the Mission of the Immaculate Conception; he was very devout to Our Lady, under this title, and he had bestowed this same beloved appellation of "The Immaculate Conception" upon the river with which his own name is inseparably connected. But he felt that the disease was mortal, and wishing to die assisted by his brethren, he tried to reach Michilimackinac. Death came, as he was on the way. Thinking God that he died a member of the Society, a missionary destitute of all things, with the sweet names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, he expired. The canoe-men buried him by the shore of the lonely lake and his body now reposes at Mackinac.

French settlers began to come, and French garrisons were planted at commanding points. Capuchins, Recollects, Seminary priests shared the labors of the original missionaries. Hennepin, a companion of La Salle, first gave a written description of Niagara, and ascended the Mississippi to the Falls of St. Anthony. Louisiana was colonized. The faith was preached to all the tribes along the river and by the lakes; the church shared in the foundation of every French post from New Orleans to Niagara. Fr. Charlevoix, the historian, visited and described them. Catholicity is identified with the origin of Mobile, New Orleans, Natchez, St. Louis, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, St. Joseph's Detroit, Vincennes, Mackinac, and

St. Ignace, and the faith was the result of the struggle for ascendancy, the bulwark of Fr. Duquesne, at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela: There was Catholic life, with its profession and practice, from Western Pennsylvania to the Gulf. The solidity of that profession and the vitality of those practices may be judged by this, that an Ursuline Convent was founded at New Orleans, in 1727, and under every change of flag it has continued its work of charity and education. The structure, which is now the residence of the Archbishop, is the oldest building in the Crescent City, and the most ancient conventual building in the United States.

The English share in the planting was confined to limits far more circumscribed than the widespread areas of Spanish and French cultivation, which we have surveyed. But the origin of our faith in Maryland and Pennsylvania is, in many respects, more interesting to us, as it comes nigher to our hearts and homes, and is intertwined with our dearest traditions. Our history here presents an attractive picture, on which the patriot loves to dwell, for he recognizes in the Catholic colony of Maryland, the "Day-Star of American Freedom;" picturesque features and tragic incidents are not wanting but the chief claim to glory and renown is this, that the first page in the Catholic history of English America is lit up with the halo of civil and religious liberty.

George Calvert, first Baron of Baltimore, was a convert to the Catholic faith, and as proprietor, with the powers of a Lord Palatine, to him primarily belongs the credit for toleration, which was in the charter of his colony for Maryland. He had tried to form a settlement at Avalon in Newfoundland, and after its failure, he had visited Virginia. Standing high in royal favor he obtained extraordinary concessions for the newly projected foundation, and plans show him to have been prudent and broadminded; but, he died, whilst the preparations for settlement were still in progress, and it devolved upon his son, Cecilius, heir to his titles and spirit, to carry those plans into execution.

We know the result. It was an intolerent age, but, under his guidance, the founders of Maryland, "like true men, with heroic hearts, fought the first great battle of religious liberty, and their fame is now the inheritance, not only of Maryland, but of America." Secularism has joined hands with bigotry in the attempt to overturn the facts of history, and to belittle the broad statesmanship of the policy adopted by Lord Baltimore, but this one fact outweighs countless sophistries, that "the disfranchised friend of prelacy from Massachusetts, and the puritan from Virginia were welcomed to equal liberty of conscience and political rights in the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland," and "Religious liberty obtained a home, its only home in the wide world, at the humble village which bore the name of St. Mary's." (Baneroff).

The original colonists, those who came in the Ark and the Dove were English, and mainly Catholics. Three Jesuits accompanied them, to provide for the spiritual wants of the infant settlement. Fr. Andrew White, in his Narration, describes the incidents of the voyage, the landing, their dealing with the natives, the missionary labors and successes. They came to anchor near the island of St. Clement, in the Potomac river. The Narration says: "On the day of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virginia Mary, in the year 1634, we celebrated the first Mass on that island; never before had it been offered in that region. After the Holy Sacrifice, bearing on our shoulders a huge cross, which we had borne from a tree, we moved in procession to a spot selected, the governor, commissioners and other Catholics putting their hands first unto it, and erected it as a trophy to Christ our Saviour; then humbly kneeling, we recited with deep emotion, the Litany of the Holy Cross."

Land was acquired by purchase, and so fairly did they deal with the aborigines, that the settlers and natives dwelt together for the first year, inhabiting the same town, which was called St. Mary's, and no Indian war or violent shedding of native blood stained the early annals of the colony. It is a noble record, showing the triumph of justice and of right principles reduced to practice. The Indians were of a wild disposition, and they quickly responded to the peaceful overtures of Fr.

Calvert, who is celebrating Calvert.

Catholic life was active in the colony, and the neighboring tribes were either converted, or on the way to the faith, but dangers were impending from changes which had taken place in England. The contest had begun between King Charles and parliament, the animosities kindled against toleration, and the first duty of the position in those days was to provide money. In proportion as that faction became dominant, the persecution of Catholics increased. Leonard Calvert was driven from his government, and the pioneer missionaries were sent prisoners to England. Calvert, the evil genius of early colonial days, at the head of Cromwell's commissioners, was engaged, in 1652, "in the holy work of routing out papacy and prelacy in Maryland," and Ingle, the freebooting captain of a pirate ship called "The Restoration," went "boon-doing up and down the bay, and afterwards, in palliation of his piracy and outrage, 'avowed that he plundered only papists and malignants.'"

There followed a dark chapter in the history of Maryland, when Catholics were disfranchised and ostracized. But, the Jesuits returned, and, thrusting in their claws before the British, they assumed themselves to the preservation of Catholicity among the whites.

The church of St. Francis Xavier, at Newtown, in St. Mary's county, is of great antiquity. It has been frequently reported, that it claimed the position of the original settlement will remain preserved. St. John's church, with the nearly equal title of his title, early beloved Temperance Brevint, "to the greater honor and glory of Almighty God, the ever Immaculate Virgin Mary and all saints," granted to the Roman Catholic inhabitants, and their posterity, an acre and a half of ground for a chapel and cemetery, and here arose the first church of Newtown.

The manor house of William Brewster passed by purchase into the possession of the Jesuits, and until a recent date, it was the residence of the priests, who had charge of half the county. Retired positions were chosen by the clergy for church and residence, as the stringency of the penal laws compelled them to perform their ministrations in stealth, and privately. If the priest said Mass, it was in a chapel attached to his own residence, to which as a private gentleman he invited his neighbors. Chapels thus situated, as at Newtown, Whitmarsh, St. Thomas, and Bohemia, built on the land, and adjoining the dwelling of the missionary, were regarded by the law as his private property, which he allowed to be used for religious services. The bell was placed upon the house, and not upon the chapel. The custom grew from this of establishing private chapels under the same roof and connected with the dwelling of some Catholic family, as in the old manor of Charles Carroll at Annapolis. Thus amid perils and vexations they kept the faith.

To be continued.

British First Women Printers.

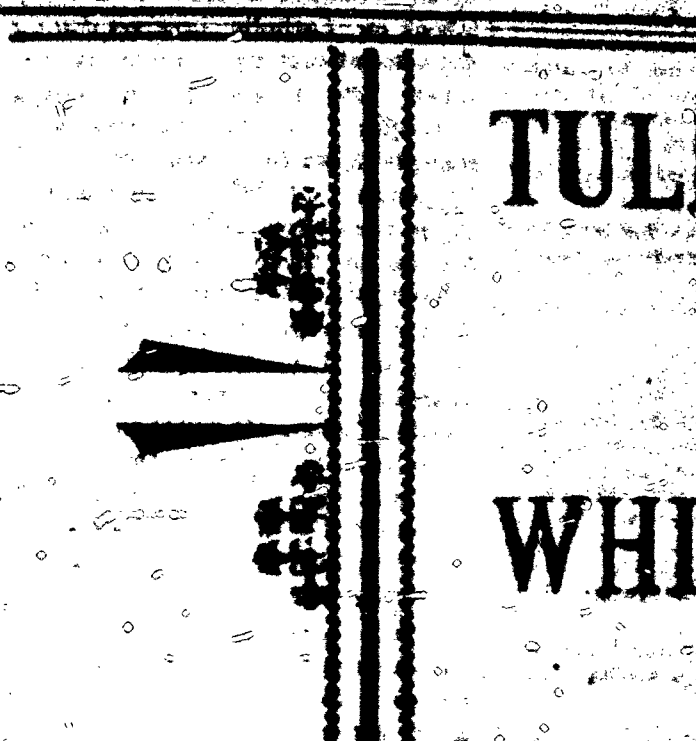
The British Printer says the general belief that women were for the first time employed in typographical work in 1831 by Rignout, a printer in Montparnasse, is declared to be erroneous, a printing press worked exclusively by women having been in regular use in Italy a century and a half before that date. The printing office was the convent of St. James at Mt. Sipont, and the women printers were Sisters of the Dominican order. The abbot of this convent had projected the art of copying and illuminating manuscripts since the thirteenth century. When the Gutenberg's invention made its appearance, the press spread rapidly in Italy, and every town soon possessed its printing office. Florence had one as early as 1478.

The Sisters appear to have devoted themselves to their typographical labors with ardor and success. For between 1478 and 1484 more than one hundred works, a large number for that period issued from the conventual press.

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Mechanics... Bullock... Manufacturers...

L. Dulligan... Fine Custom Suit...

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