

CONSECRATING A JOSS.

(From the *Detroit Free Press*.)

THE occupant of the vehicle pushed open the hack door, thrust forth a gorgeously enveloped foot and leg, and in a moment stood on the side-walk in all the glory of a long scarlet robe, green breeches, a gondola-shaped hat and a pigtail of unusual length. He was tall, for a Chinaman, and rather slim, the long robe seeming to add a foot or two to his stature. Two similarly arrayed Celestials sprang from the doorway of the building to meet him, and said something that sounded to Anglo ears like "Soon ahoy," almost in unison. This salutation was responded to by "Bale o' bay!" and the three marched up the steps to the building, the last speaker leading the way.

"It's some joss business," said the policeman, who was called on to explain what these manoeuvres meant.

But the explanation was not a very full one, and the reporter's curiosity getting the better of him, he climbed up the outer steps and followed the scarlet-robed Mongolians up two or three flights of dirty stairs through the smoke and stench which permeated the whole interior. The trio paused before a gorgeously decorated doorway leading into the room devoted to the worship of Chinese deities—a large room, in which were several Chinamen, some standing and others sitting on low benches. As the three newcomers opened the door some musicians seated in a corner of the room sent forth a burst of melody almost as sweet as that usually heard in a boiler factory. The noise continued until the scarlet-robed Celestials had made the circuit of the room and paused before a huge joss, where they stood solemnly for a moment and then prostrated themselves before it, all the other Chinamen falling on their knees with their heads bent to the floor. Then the music struck up again, and the heathen arose to their feet and began chattering among themselves as on ordinary occasions. The reporter seized this pause in the ceremonies to enquire what was being done, and it was explained by one Chinaman, who spoke English quite plainly, that the idol had only been set up in the room that morning, and that it was now being consecrated by the priests. The reporter then stood back at a respectful distance and witnessed the enactment of a strange scene, similar to that which Wores has recently been placing on canvas—"The Consecration of a Joss."

A Chinese boy with a red pig-tail now brought a long-legged cock to the tall priest, the one who seemed to be master of ceremonies. The fowl was taken by the priest, swung round in the air three times by the leg before the paper and tinsel god and handed back to the boy. A small china vessel containing salt was then brought to the priest, who, standing between his scarlet-robed attendants, sprinkled a handful of the contents over the image, and then placed the dish on the pedestal between its feet. Rows of punk stick and wax candles, arranged about the idol, were next lighted by the two assistants, and the boy brought a small earthen basin of water, in which the priest dipped his fingers and then flirited them in the direction of the joss. The bowing process was then repeated, the unearthly music resounding through the room so loudly that the reporter was obliged to place his hands over his ears to keep out the din.

Then came the most interesting portion of the ceremony. The boy with the red pig-tail brought a small dot of vermilion and a brush. One of these was handed to the right-hand assistant and the other to the left. Both were then presented to the priest, who took them, mumbling some words, which could hardly be heard on account of the clanging and squeaking of the musical instruments. The priest dipped the brushes in the paint and held both aloft. This was a signal for more kneeling by those around, and redoubled energy on the part of the musicians. He then applied the brush to the staring black eyes. This perfected the divinity of the joss. Before this he had been only pasteboard and paper; now he was omnipotent. His eyes could read the future and he was capable of giving good fortune to his worshippers, and bad luck to those who disregarded him and believed not in his powers. The music ceased, the ceremonies came to a close, and the heathen passed out of the joss house, down the stairs, and into the street.

In the person of the Rev. Dr. Glancy, of Motherwell, the Catholics of Scotland possess a champion who has rendered their faith many good services by his letters to the newspapers of this country. Both Catholics and Protestants admire his ability. Among the clever things he has done was the winning of £50 from a local Protestant "missionary," who, relying on the veracity of "Brother Widows," challenged Dr. Glancy to prove that that "convert" never was a Catholic priest. At present the Catholic champion is engaged demolishing a Rev. "Dr." Brown, who came as a boon and a blessing to the Scotch Established church. "Dr." Brown was trotted out to the edification of people in general as a "converted priest," a late vice-rector of a Catholic college and a Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Glancy contradicted the assertion that the "convert" had ever been a vice-rector of a Catholic college or a doctor of divinity, and added that the name of the neophyte was not "Brown" but "Niemsal," and that the man's real name had been altered for certain reasons not mentioned. All this he offered to prove by authoritative documents; but the challenge has not yet been accepted. Instead, letters of a goody-goody-assertive nature have been written. In a letter in today's *Glasgow Herald* Dr. Glancy again challenges Dr. Cunningham, Brown's patron to come to the scratch. Concluding his letter to-day, Dr. Glancy writes to the editor of the *Herald*: "When I tell your readers that at the very time he was writing his last letter to the *Herald* Dr. Cunningham had before him an authentic copy of one of Brown's own letters, in which his *protege* characterises his apostasy from the Church as a fall which fills him with remorse, and for which no one but himself is to blame, they will readily understand that I have ample grounds for my conviction that Dr. Cunningham is in reality conniving with Brown in an attempt to deceive the public."—*Nation*, August 30.

A FEATURE OF SECRET SOCIETIES.

(From the *Catholic Review*.)

As it has often been urged that the hostility of the Catholic Church to secret societies is either entirely unreasonable or founded upon some doctrinal tenet not intelligible to the average Protestant we propose to show that the oppositon is so obviously just as to compel the approval of the most ordinary honest-minded person, inasmuch as it is a consequence from an ethical principle as broad and simple as morality itself, and one which men constantly apply in the everyday affairs of life.

The principle is this, that no person is justified in binding himself to the observance of a secret the purport or burden of which he does not know beforehand. It is quite possible that the secret knowledge furnished in this manner may be of such a sort that it ought to be communicated to others either under pain or sin or under the penalty of the law. For instance, should a person find that the secret thus confided to him involved the life and honour of others, would he not be compelled, even in defiance of his pledge, to acquaint those concerned with the facts as known by him? If he found that such knowledge meant a conspiracy to massacre the inhabitants of a city or to poison its wells, would he not be guilty of participation in the awful crime if he withheld his knowledge from the proper authorities? Who would say that an oath was binding under such circumstances? This is no arraignment of the value of an oath which of course is so sacred that life itself should be the forfeit of its observance, but the repudiation of a mistaken pledge which lacks one of the essential conditions of a legitimate oath. It might be said that an alleged inviolable secrecy does not alter the relations in this case, since the person thus bound is as one not knowing, for knowledge which cannot be communicated does not differ from ignorance. This is a mistake, for if such a pledge were binding the person so bound could not make use of his knowledge even should he obtain it through another channel, for his promise was absolute never to disclose certain facts then and there communicated to him. Surely nobody will maintain a proposition so absurd, and yet it is a possible consequence of the fundamental principle of secret societies. Now, if an oath be taken to keep secret a knowledge of certain facts which it is one's duty to divulge, and if, consequently, such an oath is not binding, does it not follow that such an oath ought not to have been taken, that the taking of it is in direct conflict with public morals and public welfare? It matters not what may be the tenor of the knowledge confided to us under the pledge of secrecy; so long as it is possible that one might be in duty bound to disclose it, so long is it immoral for us to pledge ourselves in advance to keep it secret. If the knowledge were communicated to us first, and that there being no valid reason to refuse, we should pledge ourselves to keep it secret, there is no doubt that such a pledge is binding; but a pledge to secrecy can never legitimately precede the knowledge to be kept secret. The principle, like all general principles, is universal and can admit of no exception. The fact that the knowledge which we thus obtain is innocent or even beneficial does not alter the case, for such a character of the knowledge occurs *per accidens* and does not flow from the secrecy to which we commit ourselves. Were the beneficial character of the knowledge confided to us the necessary consequence of secrecy, then indeed that circumstance would alter the case, for then it would be a consequence, *per se*, of secrecy. But it is evident that it can never occur.

So long as the pledge to secrecy does not, *per se*, carry with it the guarantee that what is to be confided to us is of an innocent or beneficial character, so long is there a risk in accepting it, or, in other words, the pledge is rash. Nor can any general assurance that what we are about to be pledged to keep secret is of a useful character influence the question, for it is possible that we might deem it otherwise, or that the so-called good is only apparent. Therefore, strict morality sets its face against the taking or administering of an oath to observe secrecy with regard to what is as yet unknown to us. Now, this is precisely what takes place in secret societies. The candidate for admission pledges himself to keep a secret, the nature of which he does not know, and so is guilty of taking a rash oath. But a rash oath is no oath at all, and is consequently not binding. He may be assured that benevolence and charity are the aims of the society, but, as before remarked, that is a mere accident and has no effect upon the pledge. Besides, if such be the general objects of a secret body, what is the use of secrecy? Evidently none. A previous general knowledge of the aims of a society narrows the secrecy just so far; but so far as the secrecy goes, so far is a previous pledge to it invalid. Therefore, secret societies are subversive of good morals, since they are in conflict with the conditions of a legitimate oath or pledge.

There is nothing surprising in the statement made by our London correspondent in the able letter which we publish to-day that the English School Board system of education is rapidly falling into discredit. Not a week passes but we read in the papers the news of some death or other calamity which may be easily traced to the excessive mental labour imposed upon the poorly-fed children of the poorer classes. To omit the religious aspect of the question, it must follow that to instruct the poor much against their will in a multitude of subjects which will never enable them to earn their daily bread, but which may have a directly opposite tendency, is not to spread abroad the blessings of education. How much better would it not be to provide practical instruction, to teach the working classes how to succeed in their own special walk of life, and to prepare them, to use the words of our own correspondent, for the home, the factory and the farm. Such is the kind of instruction which is imparted by the most experienced among the educators of the poor, the Christian Brothers, whose exhibition at the Healtheries has attracted such universal interest. We call attention to this subject all the more readily, because the evil of bestowing what is called a liberal education upon such as cannot possibly benefit by it, is not unlikely to prove ere long as great a misfortune to the poorer classes of India as to those of Great Britain.—*Bombay Catholic Examiner*.