

THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN'S IMPRESSIONS

At Liverpool the other day Father Bernard Vaughan, S.J., the distinguished pulpit orator, traveller, and writer, gave a special interview to a *Catholic Times* representative, and freely discussed his recent Canadian-American tour.

'Had you a pleasant return voyage, Father Vaughan?' asked the *Catholic Times* man.

'Yes,' replied Father Vaughan. 'I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it, but most especially the whole of Sunday, October 9.'

'Did you conduct any service aboard?'

'Yes. I held three services by special request. At 9 o'clock I said Mass in the steerage before a congregation that packed every nook and cranny. What delighted them beyond measure was the fine playing of the orchestra, whose services I had enlisted for my *Missa Cantata*. I preached to them on the subject, "The soul's voyage across the sea of life." At 11 o'clock I preached in the first saloon, taking for my theme "Trust in Our Lord in life's sea of trouble." In the evening I gave another service in the second saloon, when I dealt with the subject of the priceless freight that was borne over the sea of life in the soul's frail craft—the human body. It was a crowded but a consoling day,' concluded Father Vaughan.

Edison and the Soul.

'Did you not deliver a lecture upon Edison's denial of the immortality of the soul?' pursued the interviewer.

'Yes, that is true. I found that some of my friends on board had been disquieted in their souls by the fact that Edison, the improver of the telegraph and the inventor of the phonograph, had stated the day before we left America that man was only "an aggregate of cells" and his brain only "a storehouse for keeping and giving records," and that Edison himself saw no use in a hereafter. I agreed with the mechanician in what he said about the body and the brain, but I wanted to know who was the "operator" in the storehouse and who it was that prepared and sent out the records referred to. Mr. Edison had very wisely told them that he knew nothing at all about electricity itself. Perhaps the human soul, being of finer and more subtle substance than the electricity about which the genius knew nothing, might have eluded Mr. Edison's search for it under his microscope. As a matter of fact, any man who tested the faculties and energies that were the characteristics of man was forced to the conclusion that at the root of his being, at the back of all these barriers, there was the presiding spirit called the "human soul." If Mr. Edison saw no use in the life hereafter, I, on the contrary,' said Father Vaughan, with a characteristic gesture, 'see no use at all in the life here if there is no hereafter.'

'What struck you most in Canada, Father Vaughan?' went on the reporter.

'The most wonderful organisation in Canada, the one spiritual organisation that is full of vitalising force—the Catholic Church. I was struck by the splendid manifestations of her unity, universality, and perpetuity I found everywhere in evidence. The extraordinary "at home" feeling that took possession of one in all the Catholic centres was a fine testimony to the matchless unity of the Catholic Church. Everywhere in the Dominion and in the United States of America one discovered not merely the same Sacrifice and the same Sacraments, but the same energising, spiritualising devotions and pieties; the same stirring guilds, the same uplifting confraternities, so that within the walls of the Catholic church it was difficult to realise that one was thousands of miles from home, and not in a neighboring parish, working under more favorable circumstances than one's own.'

Canadian Impressions.

Asked what he thought of Canada itself, Father Vaughan replied:

'The natural resources of the Dominion of Canada seem to be inexhaustible. The surface only of this vast continent has been scratched, and yet its yield of grain and fruit, of coal and other minerals, baffles the description of figures. I passed through what I might call the Granary of the British Empire. It was a series of surprises; the picture presented was like a continual cinematograph, changing the day through. Towns and cities seem to spring up like enchanted castles under the magic wand of the pioneer, who is soon followed by enterprising parties who crowd such towns as Fort William and Fort Arthur, with splendid futures before them.'

'Do you believe that Canada has a great future before her?' interpolated our representative.

The future of Canada depends on the habits of sobriety and thrift, of honesty and industry, of its city fathers and its citizens. Of course there are rocks ahead,' continued Father Vaughan, 'and there is a need of the arresting note of the alarm bell. There is a danger of the people becoming so absorbed in the pursuit of material things as to have no eyes at all for things spiritual. Money-making with its quick turnover—in a word, avarice—like every other passion, like lust, and drink, and pride, is a very exacting tyrant, who leaves no time or energy over for the pursuit of things lying beyond this shifting scene.'

'Do you recommend people to go to Canada?' was the next query. Father Vaughan disposed of it as follows:—

'I would strongly recommend that man to go to Canada who is prepared to take the first "job" that presents itself; to take his coat off, to put his back into the work, and if there is a wheel in front to put his shoulder to it. If he does this he is bound to get ahead, and to come out "on top"; but if he is going to Canada with the idea of teaching them how to do it and not doing it himself, he had better stay at home, because he will never recover the money paid for his steerage passage. The successful men I met started below the bottom rung of the social ladder. They are now on the wall-top and can survey their own fine achievements. "It is dogged as does it," added the famous preacher. "In many places they don't want English, because very often instead of coming to work the Englishman comes to patronise and loiter. In the West—in British Columbia—there are vistas opening in every direction for the man who intends to "play the game" and to "play up." Canada will be our Empire's daughter of destiny, supplying us with grain, minerals, and fruit.'

The Church in America.

'Passing from Canada to the United States, what is the position of the Catholic Church there?'

'The Catholic Church in the United States of America is teeming with splendid life and untriring energy,' continued Father Vaughan. 'She is not only the light of the New World, but the salt of the new earth. In most of the great cities she is not only holding her own, but she is more than half the population. Let those who talk about Catholicity as "a discredited system" and "a played-out superstition" go to the States, and they will find that she is the one spiritual uplifting force in that vast continent. Without her the ship of State would be without ballast and the State-coach without its brake. Like her Divine Master before her, she and she alone stands up and with authoritative voice drives divorce from her door-step, buys cradles for her nurseries, and builds schools in which Christ is Head Master. She is the one and only authority that dares to utter the whole of Christ's Gospel message, and yet subtracts no jot or tittle from His moral code. She is simply splendid; defying the very gates of hell in their foolish attempt to prevail against her.'

'What about Modernism?' continued our reporter.

'Is it making any way in the United States?'

'For Modernism,' replied Father Vaughan, 'which aims at reforming Christianity and Christ Himself, the Catholic Church has no use anywhere, but least of all in the United States. It would seem to be a disease in the divine organism not unlike appendicitis in the human organism. It serves no purpose at all except to test your patience and the skilful handling of the surgeon's knife. Our Holy Father by his masterly Encyclical on "Modernism" has performed such a fine surgical operation upon it that there seems to be no spiritual appendix left. Certainly I could not find any traces of its symptoms in the United States. The Church out there is far too active, energetic, and healthy to fear any such malignant growth as Modernism in her system. Her danger would seem to be not Modernism, which will never be found where priests have more than they can do, but rather leakage from dearth of clergy, or leakage from mixed marriages, or worldliness, which is the euphemistic name for "dollar-worship."

Discussing the future of the Catholic Church in the United States, Father Vaughan said:

'If the Catholic Church is true to her mission, she will have the United States in the hollow of her hand. It must inevitably be so. Unless non-Catholics change their ideals and tactics, in other words, I say deliberately, unless the non-Catholic peoples there check divorce, renounce racial suicide, and cultivate a more Divine Christian education, they will become so heavily handicapped in the race for population that in the long run it will be a "walk-over" for the Catholic Church over the non-Catholic communities in the United States. I say this not without regret, because it is not in a race such as this that the Catholic Church is anxious to enter and to win. She would much prefer to contend on even terms with her separated brethren. She would make any sacrifice to convert the self-centred materialism she finds around her, for that self-sacrificing spirit is the only true test of membership and of brotherly love in the Christianity of Christ.'

Controversy Without Rancor.

'With reference to your Liverpool sermon of Sunday last, in which you pleaded for the suppression of differences between citizens, would you deprecate controversy?' queried our reporter.

'By no means do I mean that we must cease to test the value of Socialism, secularism, Agnosticism, or Protestantism, etc. It is the duty of educated men to look into these things thoroughly, and show whether they are of value or of no value as the case may be. But all this should be done without rancor, without animosity, and without personalities entering into the discussion. No man that ever I met is psychologically qualified to judge his brother man. Pass your judgment, I say, upon these various "isms," but about their advocates or supporters severely suspend your judgment. Leave them in the hands of Him whose dying word echoes down the ages: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."'

'A guid New Year! An' may ye hae plenty o' Hondai Lanka Tea tae slocken yer thirst.'

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