

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF ST. PAUL:

St. Paul, Minn., Dec. 24, 1897.—For this, the mid-Sunday of the Christmas holidays, the day when we all stop for a few moments thought during the season of love and rejoicing, I cannot give a better letter than the description of an interview which I recently had here with the Rev. John Ireland, the famous Catholic archbishop of St. Paul. Archbishop Ireland is one of the most loved of the public men of the United States. His face has a smile as sweet as that of Santa Claus, and there is an honest independence of character about him which charms all who meet him. He is the personification of liberal catholicism. He has preached temperance from the pulpit, the lecture platform and the press and has again and again announced himself as against any union of church and state. More than any other ecclesiastic he has made himself known as a patriotic American. He believes in the reign of the people and is enthusiastic as to our possibilities as a nation. He stands very close to the pope, Leo XIII., and the pope's great interest in American matters is largely due to the influence of Father Ireland.

The archbishop was born in Ireland, but he bought the right of his American citizenship by fighting for the Union during the late war. In 1861 he was a young priest in Minnesota, having just finished his education in the theological seminaries of Europe. After the battle of Bull Run he offered his services as chaplain and was attached to the 5th Minnesota Regiment. The most of the members of this regiment were Catholics, and young Father Ireland was the most popular man of the corps. He preached to the boys before and after the battle, and I have heard it said that the men would drop their cards and leave their games at any time to hear one of his sermons. He was not, however, contented with preaching. At times he went into battle and fought with the men. This was the case at Corinth. The late John Arkins, editor of the Rocky Mountain News, who was in the fight, once told the story: "It was in the midst of that battle. The famous Texas Brigade had made their desperate charge. The confederates had succeeded in penetrating the Union lines. They had captured some of the batteries and were pouring into the streets of Corinth. The gap in the lines was widening. More soldiers were rushing through. It looked as though the confederates would soon attack Rosecrans' army in the rear, when the 5th Minnesota Regiment was ordered to the rescue to close the gap. They attempted to do so. They threw themselves like a whirlwind upon the enemy. With shot and bayonet they rushed upon the advancing mass, pressing it back inch by inch until at last they retook the batteries which had been lost and almost succeeded in re-establishing the line at the point where it had been broken. Just at this time, when the enemy were still crowding and fighting for the gap, the cry went out from Union soldiers for more ammunition. Many of our boys had used up their forty rounds and were replenishing their cartridge boxes from those of their dead comrades. It was then that, walking amid the shot and shell, came a smooth-shaven, tall, angular young man in the dress of chaplain. Upon his shoulder he carried a heavy box, and as he walked along just back of the soldiers he yelled out from time to time:

"Here are cartridges for you, boys. Here are more cartridges for you!"

"And so he went along the line, the soldiers reaching back and grabbing the cartridges by the handfuls and then turning again with new ammunition upon the struggling enemy. And so through all that fight this smooth-shaven chaplain moved back and forth carrying ammunition to the men to whom he had preached only a few nights before. He kept it up until at last when the evening shades began to fall the battle closed with a victory for the Union forces. Then it was discovered that the brave chaplain was missing. Father Ireland, for it was he who carried the cartridges to the men, could nowhere be found. The greatest concern prevailed and almost all thought that his bravery had cost him his life. There was an anxious search among the wounded, when in an improvised hospital on the outer edge of Corinth the young priest was found unhurt, but still at work speaking words of comfort and cheer to the wounded and dying."

Such was the Father Ireland of 1862. He was only twenty-four years old then. He is fifty-nine years old today, and the thirty-five years which have gone by since the battle of Corinth have been years full of work for him. Every one knows his ecclesiastical labors. Outside of this he had done great things for the country and his people. One of his schemes was to establish colonies in the unoccupied lands of Minnesota and Dakota in order to take care of the poor people of the tenement districts of the big eastern cities and to save the emigrants from the temptations and dangers which are found in such quarters. He founded a number of such settlements and several thriving little towns are due to his efforts. Another great thing which he attempted, but in which, through the panic, he failed, was the building of a magnificent cathedral here in St. Paul and in connection with this a well endowed school. He expected to do this out of own means. He was a man of good business ability, and his real estate investments three years ago were such that I am told had he sold out at that time he would have been worth something less than \$2,000,000. The hard times, however, made such a shrinkage in real estate that suburban property dropped from the value of several thousand dollars an acre to almost nothing, and the archbishop's wealth faded away under the shadow of the depressed money market. He had borrowed upon his holdings in real estate about one-tenth of their value, but this tenth was hardly enough at forced sale to bring the amount of the debt, and without there is a great revival in real estate the archbishop will not be able to regain the immense fortune he had.

The archbishop has a beautiful house about two miles from the center of the city. It was by telephone that we arranged for an appointment there, and later on I met him again in the pastor's house next to the cathedral in St. Paul. He was at first rather averse to an interview for publication, but as he grew interested in my questions his words came forth hot and fast, and I had trouble in holding them in all their meaning. At times the archbishop spoke slowly and meditatively, and again, as he warmed up to his subject, he arose and walked up and down the floor, giving me striking ideas at the rate of 200 words a minute. Throughout the talk I was struck by his evident earnestness and his high-spirited

points of view. One of my first questions was as to whether we should ever have a universal or a world religion. The archbishop replied:

"I think we have such a religion now. The world religion is the religion of Christ. It is based upon Christ yesterday, today and forever. Christ came down to the world as a divine Teacher, and proposed His religion as one that was to last to the end of the world. If I did not believe that Christ was divine I could, of course, discuss other religions. The Mosaic religion was divine, but its message was only to prepare the way for the religion of Christ. You might ask why it has not become more universal, why the world is not already altogether Christian. To that I say that what seems to us a long time may be only a moment in the mind of the Infinite God. The infinite cannot be judged by the finite, and in God's time I believe all the world will come unto Him."

"But, your excellency, do you not think the world is becoming more liberal in regard to religious matters?"

"Yes," was the reply; "but it is necessary to state what liberality or liberalism means. If it means that man is to give up or conceal what he really believes to be the truth I do hope the world is not becoming more liberal. The Almighty judges men according to their lights and consciences. If men are absolutely sincere in their beliefs and actions we must respect their sincerity even as I believe God respects it. I think in this sense the world is far more liberal now than in the past. We are now willing to say that men may honestly differ from us in such things and be right in others. This is liberalism in the true sense, and I think it is important that it should not exist to its fullest extent in our country. We Americans are made up of men of all beliefs, but we have so much in common with our family, social, state and business relations that it is vital to our happiness that we respect one another. If we had not liberalism of this kind we should soon have chaos. It is to our interest that we work together. We have to help, trust and respect one another. It is due to this that we have a happy and united country, even though we are divided upon the lines of religion."

"the world is growing more liberal, your excellency, I suppose you will also say it is growing better?"

"Ah!" replied the archbishop, "as to that I don't know. The world is improving in many ways, but in others it seems to me it is at a standstill, or worse. As far as material things go, we have made many steps in the advance. We accomplish more, we live better, and so far as man's own thought and works in a temporal and social way can persuade man to be good, the world is perhaps better and stronger. But when it comes to questions of moral and social purity, personal integrity, the repression of passion and the possession of higher aims, of life and citizenship, I do not know. I believe the chief support of all of them is religion, and by religion I mean the strong belief in an All-Powerful, Divine Ruler of the universe, and in rewards and punishments from that Ruler. When such religious faith declines, the danger is that morals will also decline. I fear that there is such a decline going on now, though I hope it is only momentary."

"Upon what especial lines do you notice the decline, your excellency?"

"Chiefly along the lines of materialism and agnosticism," said the archbishop. "And, of course, upon all lines which tend to take men away from a belief in the divinity of God and Christ. The further we get away from the conviction of a Divine Moral Ruler the further we get away from Christ."