

ON FAITH AND SECULAR PHILOSOPHY.—THE DYING INFIDEL.

SOME time ago I came across an eloquent panegyric on the celebrated James Watt, by Francis Jeffrey, the late eminent editor of the far-famed 'Edinburgh Review.' After describing Watt's labors as the improver, or rather inventor, of the steam engine, and delineating the various intellectual gifts and vast stores of varied knowledge which that wonderful genius possessed, the writer comes to describe the last scene of all. It struck me as something remarkable that in describing this scene, he makes not the slightest allusion to the faith in which Watt died. The description might aptly apply to the closing scene of the life of some Pagan philosopher, such as Socrates or Plato. If he died in the Christian faith—as I presume he did—surely some allusion to his disposition and hopes as a man at that awful moment might have been looked for from his biographer. But no—nothing of the kind. We are merely told that a few weeks before his death he became aware of his approaching end, "and with his usual tranquillity and benevolence of nature" seemed only anxious to point out to the friends around him the many sources of consolation which were afforded by the circumstances under which it was about to take place, "and thus, full of years and honors, in all tranquillity and calmness, he yielded up his soul without a pang or struggle." The reader of this graceful panegyric is left to conjecture whether this wonderful man died in the faith and hope of a Christian or not, and the impression thus left on our mind is of a sad and painful kind. Here is a man who has filled the wide world with the fame of his name, and whose labors have contributed to revolutionise the whole system of manufacturing industry and of travelling by sea and land; yet he passes into eternity without giving one sign that he believes in Christ or a future life. Truly, mathematics and secular philosophy and learning will not conduct us to Heaven, and console the parting spirit ere it quit this world.

We are told in holy writ that publicans, the most disreputable of men—and harlots, the objects of universal pity and horror—will be seen to enter Heaven when the respectable and decorous Pharisees will be excluded from that place of bliss. Would it be irreverent to say that many of the worst characters in our time will see salvation, while many a gifted genius like James Watt will not be numbered hereafter among the friends of God on the great accounting day? The death of the celebrated Scotch infidel Hume is described, and by a kirk minister, too, Dr. Robertson, if I remember right, in a manner much resembling that in which Jeffrey here records the end of Watt. The scoffing infidel might erroneously infer from all this that the consolations of the Christian religion are after all but of little moment at the awful hour, when what Macaulay called "the mystery of the grave" is about to be revealed to the dying man.

Sir Humphrey Davy was perhaps little, if at all inferior, in genius and accomplishments to Watt. His biographer and brother, Dr. John Davy, has described his death-bed. The scene was dreary. No word, no sign, there of the faith in which the great chemist and philosopher and scholar died.

L.A.C.

TRIUMPH OF THE FACTORY OVER THE SCHOOL.—CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' SCHOOLS.

WITH reference to your remarks on "Factory Regulations" in a late issue, the following extract from a report of Mr. Marshall, one of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, may be quoted:—

"During the past year more than one very painful example of the inevitable triumph of factories over schools, whenever they come into competition, has fallen under my observation. At Cheadle, in Staffordshire, where there are very beautiful schools erected by the munificent liberality of the late Earl of Shrewsbury, and where, two years ago, there was a very large attendance of children, attracted by teaching of an unusually high order, I found at my last visit that the numbers had dwindled away to less than one-half. The explanation will be anticipated. In the interval a 'factory' had been established, and the energetic proprietor had gained an easy victory over the devoted but defenceless teachers. Wages had made short work of education."

All the inspectors of Government schools at home dwell in their reports on the apathy or indifference of parents of the poorer classes to the education of their children. No remedy, in their opinion, exists for this evil except compulsory attendance. Are we not much in the same case here? Such a frame of mind seems utterly incompatible with religious and moral progress, but must tend to irreligion and vice. In England the greed of parents allows the children to remain but a short time at school, and this evil is already increasing. The school inspectors tell us that in England Government schools are not making the rising generation more steady in their conduct, more truthful, more thoughtful, more obedient to parents and superiors, more contented with their station of life. It is much to be feared that even Catholic children are not making much, if any, progress in these virtues. They must necessarily be tainted with the common vices of the great body of the people, with the spirit of the age, in fact—a spirit of insubordination, self-will, and self-indulgence. In that point of view, the boundless wealth and commercial prosperity of England are proving the greatest possible impediments to the progress of her people in that heroic virtue which alone can render any nation truly great and respectable. The influence of the Catholic Church alone can successfully meet such an evil. When she has fair play she will remedy it. Since she has the bulk of her children in her own schools, under her own authority and training, she will surely make something good out of them in time. If many, too many, Catholic children have a godless home, they have at least a day school in which they will learn to know and practice their religion. Without saying anything to detract from the merits of the many efficient and zealous Catholic lay teachers, there seems to me little doubt about the superiority of religious teaching orders. A community or organized association of teachers are more likely to be powerful than single laymen, more especially when we

consider that the members of such teaching orders follow the business of teaching as a religious vocation, and not from any worldly motive. The main design of Christian teachers is to make good Christians, rather than fine scholars crammed with secular knowledge. The great fault of our modern schoolmasters seems to be attempting to teach the scholars too much and too many things to fill their memory with facts, and to pay too little attention to train them to good, moral, religious, and intellectual habits, so as to fit them for self-education in after life. A boy trained to educate himself is more likely to do well than one filled to the brim with school lessons or facts only. There is great reason to fear that much of the good which the poorer class of Catholic children derive from ordinary day school training is counteracted by the bad influences under which they are brought in their godless homes, in the factories, and on the streets. Mere ordinary schoolmasters could hardly provide against such terrible evil influences as these in such an age as ours, hence the necessity of such teaching orders as the Brothers of the Christian Schools in all large centres of population, both for the sake of public morals and the special instincts of the church. Even Protestant public writers bear strong testimony to the great good the Christian Brothers do by their schools wherever established, and admit that the secular knowledge they impart is highly satisfactory. The Christian Brothers in Europe are far too few for the educational wants of the age. Would it not be possible to form a branch of the order in this colony out of all the dioceses, to aid existing schools, if not to establish schools of their own? In France they do both. The remarkable fact that a London Government school very recently was nearly deserted by the children, being sent to a Catholic school near it, might encourage the hope that in this colony schools on the principle of those of the Christian Brothers might prove formidable rivals to the Government schools, even for Protestants. The bulk of Protestant parents have a sort of horror of purely secular schools. However godless a parent may be himself, he does not relish the thought of his child being reared without religious feelings and influences in a godless or purely secular Government school, where no prayer is said by master or pupil from week's end to week's end. Protestant parents know that when their child is attending a Catholic school his religion will not be interfered with. Catholic parents have not always the same assurance when circumstances force them to send their children to a Protestant school, though in some cases they may.

AUCKLAND.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CIVILISATION.

A CORRESPONDENT of the London 'Catholic Register' forwards the following letter to the address of Mr. Spurgeon. The early hour he mentions as attending Mass in Belgium limits his observation to the poorest class of day laborers. From six to eight are the hours to see the largest number of day worshippers:—

THE GOSPEL IN ENGLAND AND BELGIUM.

Sir,—I should address you more reverently, but I understand you don't like it. Your Lancashire sermons, as reported in the papers, speak so strongly against "Popery," that I am compelled to give you briefly my ten days' experience in Belgium, a thoroughly "priest-ridden land."

I landed at Ostend at 3.30 on Saturday morning and at five o'clock was awake by the ringing of the church bells, got up and went to the church, where I found nearly 100 persons and morning prayer going on; this was at 5.20. On Sunday, at the same hour, the church was crammed; at 6.30 another congregation quite as full; again another congregation at 7.30; altogether the church was filled four times over before ten o'clock—all separate congregations. During the remainder of my stay I put up at a little village inn in the country and I occupied the daytime in seeing all I could in town and country. Every morning I was awake by the sound of the "church-going bell" (at five o'clock), and always went to see what was going on, and I always found some 30 or 40 at that early hour in the house of prayer, and the service going on, the organ being played by the village schoolmaster. This, I am told, is a sample of every-day life in Belgium. I could not but contrast the early and daily meeting in the House of God with English practice, where churches and chapels as a rule are only open one day a week—on Sunday—and then the doors not open before ten o'clock.

In Belgium the public houses are open on Sundays as on any other days. No Mainelaw. No Lancashire kicking. The bulk of the people quiet, civil, industrious and happy. I only saw one drunken person and he was a German. How am I to reconcile all this with the turbulence, the insolence, and rudeness of large masses of the people in England? Take the Black Country for instance (see 'Daily Telegraph' of this date). Again, look at the Lancashire manufacturing places! It is impossible to travel in a third class carriage without soon finding out that you are not in accord with the crowd, with their smoking, bad language, drinking and unpleasantness on all sides. This is not the case in Belgium; and yet, as I said before, Belgium is a land of priests, monasteries and convents.—Yours truly,

E. W.

P. S.—It is a common saying—"The proof of the pudding is in the eating." In Lancashire amongst the working classes we have—

Brutality,	} And Bibles	
Vulgarity,		
Cruelty and		
Drunkenness,		
		in abundance.

In Belgium amongst a similar class, it is—

Humility,	} And Priests and	
Civility,		
Charity and		
Sobriety,		
		Nuns everywhere.

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