

add, of the oath which bound the latter to regard as inviolably secret every message entrusted to him for transmission. There are apparently in our public service some who reason as Ralpho did in 'Hudibras':—

'Oaths are but words, and words but wind,
Too feeble implements to bind,
And hold with deeds proportion, so,
As shadows to a substance do.'

Politics are, in the main, an evil game. But—for New Zealand at least—a brand-new degradation has been added to it since that evil night last week, when treachery on the part of a State employee was (as one of our contemporaries has put it) 'exploited for political purposes.' Every sender of a telegram is hit by such a gross breach of trust on the part of a public official. And we hope—both for the sake of the general public and of the good name of the great body of the telegraphists who are faithful to their salt—that the Ralphos of the Service will be placed where a discount is put upon perjury.

A Reading Guild

Gilbert White is a writer whose charm is evergreen. He found the study of bird-ways and insect-life in the fields and groves and hedge-rows of Selborne a romance of surpassing interest. It was, said he, 'an innocent and healthful employment of the mind, distracting one from too continual study of himself, and leading him to dwell rather upon the indigestions of the elements than his own.' But White's enjoyment of his robin red-breasts and his moths and stag-beetles was not a selfish one. He shared his treasures of observation with the world at large, and his 'Natural History of Selborne'—though written as far back as the fateful year 1789—is still a thing of beauty and a joy for ever to multitudes of eager readers.

The gentle curate of Selborne wrought and wrote from the fulness of a heart that overflowed with intelligent delight at God's wonderful ways with the lesser forms of His creation. His life and work are reminders, to those that taste the benefits of life, of the joy of sharing them unselfishly with others. 'There is still,' says Knowlson, 'room in that choir invisible "whose music is the gladness of the world".' One of the thousand easy and obvious ways in which many of our co-religionists can share their blessings with others is by forwarding their used Catholic newspapers and Catholic magazines to hospitals, homes for the aged, and other public institutions. For several years past the Catholic Reading Guild has been doing excellent work along these lines in Great Britain. Its object is 'the general dissemination of Catholic literature, especially by distributing our newspapers or magazines, when read, for the benefit of others.' We learn from a circular sent to us by his Lordship the Bishop of Christchurch that 'at present 350 Catholic periodicals are being sent regularly, each week or month, to 190 Public Libraries in Great Britain and 60 Military Stations throughout the Empire.' The International Catholic Truth Society (Brooklyn, U.S.A.) is carrying on a good work on similar lines, and catering, in addition, for the neglected poor in various remote parts of the Union. There is a wide scope for such a Guild in New Zealand. And we have every hope that it will materialise in the early future and enter upon what, we trust, will be a long career of usefulness and sweet charity.

Spread of Catholic Schools

For all his smoke and flame, Sir Henry Parkes was a rather small-bore politician. As a prophet, he did not receive—or deserve—much honor either in his own or in any other country. Once upon a time, at a public meeting in New South Wales, he held aloft his draft Bill on Public Instruction and declared to a gathering that was well sprinkled with his tawny-hued following: 'I hold in my hand what will be death to the calling of the priesthood of the Church of Rome.' Every man is

supposed to have a germ of madness in some cell of his brain. The amiable, beef-witted Mr. Dick, in 'David Copperfield,' was mad on the subject of King Charles' head. The late Sir 'Enery's insanity was 'Popery.' It was, with him, the 'idee fixe' which Charcot associates with mental aberration. It lay hold of him o' nights and shook him. By day—especially in the fine fury of his electioneering outpourings to his saffron friends—he cursed it all round the compass. And he devised the present Education Act of New South Wales for the purpose of driving the hated creed beyond the southern limits of the Tropic of Capricorn.

The new system took effect in the Mother Colony in 1879. But as a weapon against the Church of Rome, it has missed fire. Some days ago, in the course of a speech at Forest Lodge, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Sydney quoted figures which show how far Sir Henry Parkes's hopes and efforts have failed of realisation. 'I have,' said he, 'marked down a few statistics to show that, so far as the Catholic Church is concerned, she has done her part, and has kept true to the conditions to guide her children in the paths of virtue, and to preserve to them the blessings of the Catholic faith. I find that the Minister for Education, in his report on the 31st December, 1880, just 25 years ago, reported that in the Church of England the children attending the Government denominational schools were 8972, and in the public schools 45,437, making in all 54,000 odd. At the same time the Catholic children in the Government denominational schools were 11,482, and in the public schools 16,345, making a total of 27,000 odd. Well, on the 31st December, in the year just closed (1904), we find by the same official report that the Church of England children had fallen away very much in the denominational schools—there were only 4116 children, but in the State schools 109,658, making in all 113,000 odd. On the other hand the Catholic children in denominational schools were 41,112, and in the State schools 20,233. This was in New South Wales alone. Well, that speaks highly for the progress of our schools in those 25 years. The Catholic children in the denominational schools have increased from 11,000 to 41,000. Whilst in the Anglican denominational schools the number has dwindled from 8900 to 4000. That shows that great progress has been made.'

Sir 'Enery is bone-dust now; and the Church whose 'death' he schemed in New South Wales is flourishing like the green bay-tree above his half-forgotten grave. A similar fate has fallen upon the kindred political movement in Victoria, which (according to Attorney-General Stephens) was to 'purge the Colony of clericalism' and lead the young generation by sure but gradual steps to 'worship in common at the shrine of one neutral-tinted deity, sanctioned by the State Department.' Tw'elve months ago there were 32,626 children attending the Catholic schools in Victoria. And not one person in fifteen that you casually meet in that State to-day could, perhaps, immediately recall the name of Attorney-General Stephens. And his 'neutral-tinted deity, sanctioned by the State Department,' has thus far failed to materialise—although the Bible-in-schools people recently made a supreme effort to give him a local habitation and a name.

A Greater Failure

When Voltaire's remains were discovered in the vaults of the Pantheon (Paris) some years ago, a crowd of morbid sentimentalists crushed and jostled each other to get a glimpse of the dried bones. And the chronicler of the event declared that the skeleton face still sneered. Now there was more horse-power, and more malignant activity, in one lobe of Voltaire's brain, than in all the grey matter within the headpieces of a corporal's squad of men like Parkes and Stephens. The great French traitor, rouse, and traducer of the saintly Maid of Orleans, waged a fierce war against the Church for half a century, till death cut short his wicked