

So wrote an admirer. The recently published biography of Mr. Spurr contains some useful hints given to beginners by the gifted entertainer—hints which we commend in a very special way to organisers of Catholic entertainments who are tempted to permit the singing of certain rough or suggestive 'comic' songs, or the whoops and jerks and spasms of the epileptic baboon who poses as a 'stage Irishman.' Mr. Spurr applied the lash to the mis-called 'artists' who 'make what we call "big money" by singing songs and giving sketches that are simply poisonous and are a disgrace to our common nature.' He held that the public really 'doesn't ask for brainless buffoonery or double entendre.'

'I started out some seventeen years ago,' said he, addressing a group of budding 'artists,' 'to entertain the public, with one fixed conviction—that I would give the world of my best and eschew all evil methods, if I died in a ditch—and I have not yet died in a ditch! To such an essay to win the public favor by questionable means, I would say: "Think twice before you put an impure thought into a pure mind." Don't sniff pollution; lift your eyes and see all the pure, good humor of which this world is full, and try to reproduce it for the benefit of that world (and yourself incidentally, of course); give them a good laugh at a good thing; lift the pall of gloom and depression under which suffering mankind is so often found lying, if only for a few moments, and whether what you do be called "art" or not, and whether you receive £100 a week for your efforts or a humble five, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have honestly earned what you receive, and by pure and conscientious effort have added to the gaiety of the nation without sullyng its purity or insulting its intelligence.'

This extract deserves to be framed and hung up in every greenroom in the country.

## GREAT QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

### THE AUSTRALIAN PLENARY COUNCIL'S PASTORAL LETTER

(Concluded from Last Week.)

#### Catholic Truth Society

A great deal has been done in this direction by the Catholic Truth Societies already established in England, Ireland, America, and, last of all, in Australia; and to the strengthening and spread of this most useful and necessary work we would invite the attention of all whom we address, and bespeak their assistance for it. Australia's population is not dense enough to make the Catholic Truth Society's work succeed without encouragement and help from the leaders of the Catholic people; but we have no doubt that with such assistance it will be well established; and we earnestly invite the co-operation of all lovers of Catholic truth, especially the clergy and leading members of the laity, in a work which the needs of our times have made one of the first importance. Little, if any, sacrifice would be required to obtain ten thousand members of the Catholic Truth Society from the million Catholics of Australia, each paying an annual subscription of five shillings. If every parish provided one subscriber for every hundred of its people, the Society would have over ten thousand members, and an annual income of more than two thousand pounds to devote to its noble purpose.

#### Parochial Libraries

Another means of checking the influence of bad literature, and also of spreading the blessings to be derived from good reading, is the parish library. The establishment and maintenance of a library in every parish was most urgently recommended to all pastors by the Bishops in the Second Plenary Council, and we would again exhort all to awaken their zeal in effectively promoting this most useful work.

#### The Press

The help to religion that we may expect from the newspaper press is no small one in these days of ubiquitous journalism. So many things are provided to

the readers of the penny papers that few of them have time to read anything besides their newspaper. It is then a matter of much consequence that correct news concerning religious affairs should be found in the press. There can be no question that, in respect of its treatment of things Catholic, the action and tone of the secular press has undergone a vast improvement of late years. But it is also true that there yet remains much to be changed before we shall be satisfied that our religious doings receive the attention they are entitled to as affairs interesting to a large section of the public, and that we are dealt with in a perfectly impartial spirit.

In bringing about this desirable condition much can be done by the Catholic laity, especially those in a position to influence journalistic management. If laymen who are so circumstanced kept themselves well in touch with journalists, and showed an anxiety for the equitable presentation of Church matters, the Catholic cause would profit considerably. Towards that section of the press which is Catholic in purpose and in management, all Catholics owe

#### A Duty of Support and Encouragement.

The publication of a newspaper is an undertaking of no small responsibility and expense; and its success depends entirely on the help provided by its readers. It is to be feared that many of our people do not realise their responsibility in this matter. They do not take the interest they should take in the welfare of the Church; and so they are content with the small quantity of news about the Church they get in the secular papers. This is not as it should be. Those who can afford to subscribe to a Catholic paper should do so. Some indeed are so heedless in this matter, as to spend their money in the support of periodicals that are positively hostile to religion, and a danger to Christian morality; and they seem to think it no harm to bring into their homes, and under the eyes of their young children, pages that must plant in unsuspecting minds the seeds of indifference to the truth of Catholic faith and to the sanctity of Christian virtue. Such carelessness is criminal; and would readily be condemned as such, if it were question of the adulteration of the bodily food of their children. But, since it is a question of poisoning the mind instead of the body, they are so blind to the spiritual welfare as not to see the harm for which they are responsible.

#### Catholic Home Life

As a means of building up the Kingdom of God and of realising the highest aims of the Catholic Church, there is nothing of more value and efficacy than the influence of home life. So potent indeed is the influence of a badly-conducted home on children that, not all the zeal of pastors, nor all the efforts of teachers can withstand it, and both priests and teacher are often saddened to see their labors made fruitless by the evil effects of a child's home.

On the other hand, the good Christian home is the natural summary of virtue and knowledge; and in its influence is superior to any school whatever. The truth just stated contains a principle, that is at the very root of the Church's action in the domain of education, a principle which should be well understood and acted upon by every Catholic parent. The home is the child's first school, its mother is its first teacher; and first impressions last the longest.

Then, even after the days of infancy are over, the influence of home is more potent in a child's training than any other, because it is more pervading and more individual, and, being conducted rather by example than by precept, it is more telling. For the grown-up members of the family, too, the home means a great deal. How much of the sin and misery of the world is due to unfortunate domestic conditions, and how much virtue and happiness proceed from well-ordered homes, we can hardly realise. Now, in the ideal home, which at the same time owes its existence to Christianity and is one of its most exquisite products, while perfection arises from the excellence of all its parts, there is no question that the chief role is that of the mother. Here is woman's place of proper pride and useful power; this is the domain of her rights, and the field of her blessedness.

#### Marriage

The foundation and starting point of the Christian home is the Christian marriage—that union of hearts and lives which God instituted in Eden, and which the Redeemer of our fallen race restored to its original design, and raised to the dignity of one of His seven Sacraments. Where the doctrine of Christ on marriage, as interpreted and defended by His Church, is not held, not only is the ideal Christian family out of question, but the gravest dangers threaten the