

Williamstown, Pennsylvania, furnishes a melancholy example of the state of primitive savagery that is possible in a community in which intellectual enlightenment, Christian charity, and the spirit of toleration are about as conspicuously absent as they are in that region 'East of Suez'—where there ain't no Ten Commandments. There exists in that afflicted town a menagerie of organised intolerants—as alert for mischief as the Victorian tiger snake, which, at the rustle of a dry gum-leaf in December, the crack of a broken twig, the softest footfall, turns its evil yellow eyes, flattens its head, plies its forked black tongue, sounds its angry hiss through the parched summer grass, and—if fair opportunity offers—flings its mottled, yellow coils in head-long fury to strike its victim with its deadly fangs. Some weeks ago we told how those banded smooth-bores petitioned the School Board of Williamstown to the following effect: (1) that the Protestant Bible be read in the schools, and that all the children be compelled to attend the reading; (2) that all the Catholic teachers be dismissed. The petitions, says the Boston 'S.H. Review' of October 20, were presented by the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, the Patriotic Sons of America, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and, strange to say, Chester Post, Grand Army of the Republic. The School Board immediately acquiesced, the Protestant Bible was ordered read, and all the Catholic school teachers dismissed. The matter was carried to the courts, which refused to interfere.

The sequel is told as follows by our esteemed Boston contemporary: 'Under these circumstances, Catholic parents refused to permit their children to attend the public schools. For this they have been arrested and committed to gaol at Harrisburg because they would not pay the fines for refusing to let their children attend what are Protestant exercises in the public schools. Seeing no amicable or just settlement in sight, Father Dougherty, the pastor, has started a parish school under difficulties. Some of the children are in the parlor of his own house, others in the church, pending the fitting up of the church basement. And now the bigots threaten that they will force the health authorities to condemn the basement for school purposes.' The upshot of the affair will be watched with interest. The whole incident affords an illuminating example of the things that are possible even under a system of public instruction that plumes itself on being, in religious matters, severely neutral. Nearer home to us, the evidence given by non-Catholic witnesses before the Victorian Royal Commission of 1900 showed how Catholic and Jewish children may be forced into attendance at 'Reformed' religious instruction, in open, flagrant, and habitual violation of a 'conscience clause'. With us in New Zealand, the Bible-in-schools movement has been planted where the lilies blow. And we cannot say that we have for it either the 'words that weep' or the 'tears that speak'. Over its unmourned grave there may yet perhaps spring up among our separated friends the fair flower of an effort to solve the religious education difficulty in a manner that may be fair to all. But no settlement can be either permanent or possible in which Catholics are ignored, or not treated as principals.

Confession Among Non-Catholics

The schoolmaster keeps getting abroad. He has by no means been able to dispel all the ignorance that is about. But he has incidentally enabled some generations of the young idea to moulder sundry false impressions, regarding Catholic doctrine and discipline that were long bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of what is known as popular Protestantism. Among these is the practice of confession. Evangelical Protestants long assailed confession with tornadoes of fierce invective. That sort of thing is now

usually left to itinerant professional gaol-birds and slanderers who used to find—and still sometimes find—a lucrative business in making this ancient practice of saints and sages the subject of prurient romance of the Zola type. The first Reformers, however, recognised the divinely given instinct of the human heart to unbosom criminal secrets—an instinct which has manifested itself down the course of history, from Cain to Eugene Aram and Richard Pigott. Luther, for instance, after his break with Rome, adhered permanently to sacramental confession as 'the only remedy for afflicted souls'. Melancthon, in preparing the Augsburg (Lutheran) Confession of Faith, said (c. xi): 'Our Churches teach concerning confession, that the use of private absolution should be maintained in the Churches. Confession is not to be abolished in our Churches. According to Fuller's 'Church History' (book x, p. 9) Calvin recognised its utility. And in its Confession of Faith (xv, 6) the Scottish Presbyterian Church declares that 'he that scandaliseth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended'.

Confession of sins was retained by Henry VIII after his rupture with Rome. 'Auricular and secret confession to the priest' was provided for in the first Prayer Book of Edward VI. The practice is still retained (on paper) in the Book of Common Prayer, which directs the minister to 'move' the sick person 'to make a special confession of his sins' privately, 'if there be anything weighty on his conscience. The same thing is provided for in the Order of Holy Communion. Till the Oxford Movement, however, the practice of confession had been almost completely abandoned in the Church of England, despite the rubric of the Prayer Book and the exhortations of such men as George Herbert, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, Bishop Cosin, John Isham, and others. Bishop Short, in his 'History of the Church of England' (8th ed., section 309) refers as follows to the recommendations of the Book of Common Prayer in regard to the confession of particular sins:—

'So little are we accustomed to this most scriptural duty, that these recommendations are frequently unknown and generally neglected, while scarcely a vestige remains of ecclesiastical law for the restraint of vice; and though the punishment of many offences has been wisely transferred to the courts of common law, yet the laxity which prevails with regard to numerous breaches of the law of God may be well esteemed a deficiency in our national duty.'

Pusey's famous work in favor of confession, as well as the Oxford Movement, gave a great impetus to the practice. In our day an important and steadily increasing body in the Church of England are committed to it, and have issued quite a body of literature in support of what George Herbert termed 'this ancient and pious ordinance'.

At the recent Anglican Church Congress, in Melbourne, the Rev. Canon Wise (a delegate from South Australia) read a paper on the subject, which was reported in part as follows in the Victorian press:—

'They must realise the fact that certain supernatural powers were vested in the priesthood as a part of the ordination gift, and that they had the power of the keys given by Our Lord Himself to St. Peter, and the Holy Apostles, and to every priest since. "Whose sins ye do forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins ye do retain they are retained." How was this ministry of reconciliation being exercised in the cities and towns of Australia? Were sick folks being moved to make special confession of their sins? Were those who absented themselves from the Holy Communion advised to seek the ministry of absolution? Was one of the obstacles to the Catholic religion their own timidity and their own uncertainty? One of the most significant parts of the recent Ritual Commission was that where it was stated that the number of those seeking this special confes-

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