

The broad-arrow brand of religion is about the most degraded of all substitutes for Christianity. Its doctrines are a profanation. Its preachers are of the class described by Carlyle as vociferous, brazen-faced, brass-tongued—and not polished brass at that. And the minted sovereign is its ark of the covenant.

Clean-Speech Crusades

Lord Chesterfield was a pagan, though a polished one. He lived in a roystering, hard-drinking, oath-volleying age. Yet—speaking merely as one who cultivated the graces—he roundly denounced swearing as the habit of "subalterns, or people of low education." "That practice," he added in a letter to his son, "besides that it has no one temptation to plead, is as silly and illiberal as it is wicked." Landor makes Philip of Macedon "the most religious prince of his age"—chiefly because "he swore more frequently and more awfully than any officer in his army." The habit is about the only sign of religion that some people display in our time—the only profession of religious faith that they make during long years of their adult life. And the fearful prevalence of the practice of swearing is one of the very distressful facts of the domestic and social life of our day and country. We sorely need some organisation like that of the fast-spreading Holy Name Society, which a few Sundays ago made such impressive outdoor demonstrations in several cities of the United States in favor of clean speech. In three cities of the Newark diocese over twenty-five thousand Catholic men marched in solemn parade through the streets as a protest against all forms of blasphemous and unclean speech. These evil habits, when well entrenched, become so strong that it takes a strenuous struggle to drive them from their vantage ground. Cowper phrased this truth under a striking figure of speech:—

'Habits are soon assumed; but when we strive
To strip them off, 'tis being flayed alive.'

The very prevalence of the habit also dulls the public sense of its enormity, and thereby increases the difficulty of coping with it. Does not history tell how duelling and the three-bottle habit were at one time so rooted in English society that for a period they seemed to many to be of the nature of things?

But the duel is gone out of English life, and the three-bottle man would not nowadays be allowed to practice the three-bottle habit at the table of any respectable host. And one day, we hope, swearing will be counted among the barbarous habits that an advancing Christian civilisation has moulted. In many countries, Holy Name Societies have been flinging themselves against that rock-wall of inherited evil habit, profanity. Such crusades in favor of clean tongues have effected much good when properly pushed home. Perhaps the most noted association of this kind was that which was formed in the first half of the fifteenth century by the famous Franciscan preacher, St. Bernardine of Siena. He raised aloft a banner bearing the Holy Name inscribed above a figure of the Crucified, preached a crusade against the abhorrent blasphemy that was so prevalent in his day, and succeeded everywhere in winning men to abandon those jarring expletives of passion and irreligion that are now so common in these new countries. The Maid of Orleans imposed upon her soldiers the most stringent orders against the use of profane and blasphemous speech. She even succeeded in reducing to the bounds of strict decorum the language of the celebrated La Hire. He was a very Boanerges among the sturdy swearers of his time. He even—like the hero of a French comedy of our day, 'Les Jurons de Cadillac'—considered thunderous blasphemy an indispensable qualification for a leader of men—just as in the 'Way Back regions of these virgin lands it is regarded by

some as a necessity for the driver of the slow-paced ox-team. Under the gentle and holy influence of the Maid, La Hire so far snuffed his tongue as to swear by nothing else than his marshal's baton. St. Louis of France, the Lollards, the Puritans, the Quakers all waged war against swearing. In the year 1700 there was founded in England what was known as the Society for the Reformation of manners. One of the principal objects of its institution was the abolition of the flippant and vituperative blasphemy so common in that loose and unbelieving period. Julian Sharman tells us that its membership roll comprised, in addition to the King Consort, a number of persons who were distinguished alike for the laxity of their own morals and a tender solicitude for the welfare of other people's. They proceeded criminally against blasphemers, etc. But these reformers of 'the other fellow' were not the sort of people to work a radical improvement in the habits of a nation. After much noise and bluster, the Society for the Reformation of Manners—which had forgotten to begin by reforming its own—fell to pieces. It was merely a simmering glue-pot in a soap factory—unable either to moderate or seriously disguise the circumambient stench. At its passing, it left the profanity of the time as coarse and widespread as it found it. The Holy Name Society aims to attain vastly higher ideals by widely different and more efficient means. It may yet, with God's blessing, do for the world what the sainted Bernardine did for Central Italy. Floreat!—may it grow and spread! There are such myriad tongues that stand in need of cleansing and disinfectants!

INVERCARGILL.

The fierce gale of wind and downpour of rain which came on shortly before eight o'clock on Friday evening (says the 'Southland Times') must have adversely affected the attendance at the concert given by pupils and friends of the Convent school. There was, however, a very fair attendance, and those who did put in appearance were delighted with the dainty entertainment presented. Some people enjoy nothing better than children's performances, and when there is the happy circumstance added that everything is well done, the enjoyment is very widely distributed. The children of the Convent school and their teachers did everything well, and therefore pleased everyone who listened to their songs and saw their pretty dances. The items on the programme showed some nice variety. Choruses by the girls, recitations, pianoforte duos, nursery-land revels, and club swinging were all rendered in capital style, while a few tableaux were admirably staged in all the glamour of the limelight. The piece de resistance was the operetta 'Bubbles,' a very pretty and taking composition. The curtain rises on a little maiden seated blowing soap-bubbles, after the idea of the celebrated picture by Millais. She falls asleep and is visited by a dainty band from Fairyland who in rhythmic measures pass before her, their fairy footsteps entering into her dreams. Suddenly the maiden awakes, the fairy-bubbles vanish, the Queen alone remains. Wondering, the little maiden asks what were the lovely forms she had seen and the music she had heard while sleeping. The Queen explains that she reigns over the fairy-bubbles. She recalls her little subjects, they surround the maiden, and tell her that once a little cripple child who was sad and lonely had been comforted by blowing soap-bubbles and watching with joy their beautiful colors as they rose into the air. 'God sent us,' said the fairy-bubbles, 'to comfort and cheer that lonely child; how he laughed and clapped his hands with glee as he saw our gay colors dancing before him! So you see even our seemingly useless lives are full of purpose—even bubbles need not be empty.' The children entered into the spirit of the play, and gave their parts with a remarkable appreciation of their meaning. The audience was quite demonstrative in its approval, and apparently everyone was thoroughly pleased. The entertainment was repeated on Saturday evening.

The publication of an advertisement in a Catholic paper shows that the advertiser not only desires the patronage of Catholics, but pays them the compliment of seeking it through the medium of their own religious journal. So says an esteemed and wide-awake American contemporary. A word to the wise is sufficient...

YOUNG LADIES!—Don't drink teas full of tannin. Preserve your complexions and drink pure "Hondai-Lanka" only.

DON'T be behind the times! "Hondai-Lanka" is now the fashionable tea, because it pleases the fastidious.