

Current Topics

Thanks!

'We desire,' says the St. Louis Catholic Progress, 'to congratulate the "New Zealand Tablet" on its recently improved typographical appearance. It is unquestionably one of the strongest Catholic exchanges which come to this office.'

Praise from so high a source is praise indeed. Our thanks to our bright contemporary by the far-off Mississippi!

Modern Paridels

Pope in his 'Dunciad' pours forth his pity upon the easy-going, inactive Paridel, who wore away the days of his useless life

'Stretched on the rack of a too easy chair,'
and suffering

'The pains and penalties of idleness.'

An indignant lay writer in our esteemed contemporary, the 'Outlook' seems to regard the non-Catholic clergy in this Colony as modern Paridels. But he pours neither benison nor pity upon their nodding heads. 'They bemoan,' says he, 'the fact that the Churches have not bestirred themselves' (in the matter of imparting religious instruction in the schools); 'and, lest the Churches should awake and ask the ministers to do the work for which they specially exist, they lull them to sleep the sounder. Our Torres Vedras! I think the event in English history which it most resembles is Byng's affair at Minorca. . . Do the ministers of the Church in New Zealand think that they are fulfilling Christ's last command with reference to the children at their own doors? Why do they not take up this work—a work really far more important than Sunday schools and sermons? If other things must go in order that the young be taught, let them go. All other things are small compared with this. I read that Paul taught daily in the school of one Tyrannus, and the results of that teaching affect the world to the present day.'

Marsh-weeds grow best in stagnant pools. And disorders grow fast and rank where zeal for the little ones has become stagnant and sluggardised. We Catholics realise better than others the tremendous perils and the high possibilities of child-life. We know—and act upon the knowledge—that work among Christ's little ones is even more important than Sunday schools and sermons. We try as best we may to imitate the example given by St. Paul in the school of Tyrannus. And we leave the rest to God, hoping that with His blessing 'the results of that teaching' will 'affect the world both to-day and to-morrow and in all the days to come. We toil on, hopeful that our long and loyal and patriotic labors for the highest interests of the State will receive due recognition at its hands when the presentiad of secularist public instruction, our inheritance from the French Revolution, has run its evil course. But whatever time and circumstance may send; our duty to Christ's little ones will be carried on with unflagging zeal.

It may not be our lot to wield
The sickle in the ripened field;
Nor ours to hear, in summer eves,
The reaper's song among the sheaves.
Yet where our duty's task is wrought
In unison with God's great thought,
The near and future blend in one,
And whatsoever is willed, is done.

It is but a small claim—to have toiled in faith and hope for the cause of God. If even one of the larger Christian Churches in New Zealand rose from its ignominious easy chair and did the one-half of what their poorer Catholic fellow-colonists have done for the cause of religious education, the school question in New Zealand would be solved within three years.

The A.C.T.S.

The Australian Catholic Truth Society is the most practical outcome of the great Catholic Congress that assembled in Melbourne towards the close of 1904. The need for such an organisation had long been pressing, and soon it was out, full-panoplied, like the knight of the olden chivalry, to do battle for God and truth and right against the forces of ignorance, prejudice, irreligion, and immorality. Its sword and lance are the voice and pen—the lecture and the pamphlet. Within the two infant years of its existence 'the Society,' says its recently published report, 'has prepared and published over forty pamphlets, on subjects of very varied interest. So far, the list of our publications is but sample of what we desire our Society to aim at; but the time has come for the issue of a number of tracts explanatory of the truths we believe, for which there is a great demand. The total number of pamphlets published by the Society up to date is 247,000. The number circulated is 172,840.' Of the Society's excellent and recently issued 'Australian Prayer-Book', no fewer than 13,236 copies have been distributed. The organisation is doing excellent work. It is now trying 'in every possible way to reach out to the farthest limits' of the far-scattered States and Colonies of the Australian group. It comes as a shock to us to learn from the report that there are in New Zealand only forty-eight subscribers to this noble and self-sacrificing work. We trust there will be from this Colony a numerous and generous response to the appeal for five thousand more supporters 'who will cheerfully subscribe five shillings a year, and not expect it all back again'. (Subscriptions will be received by the Rev. J. Norris, Catholic Presbytery, Dryburgh St., North Melbourne). In the interests of Catholic truth, many of the Society's pamphlets are sold below cost price, others at an infinitesimal profit. We hope that there are many among our readers on both sides of the Tasman Sea who will hasten to have a share in this great and good work—mindful of the prophet's promise, that they who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.

Juvenile Smoking

Calverley once sang the manifold stories told by exaggerated opponents to the discredit of Madame Nicotine—alias 'the Fragrant Weed'—

How they who use fuseses
All grow by slow degrees
Brainless as chimpanzees,
Meagre as lizards;
Go mad, and beat their wives,
Plunge (after shocking lives)
Razors and carving-knives
Into their gizzards—

besides other enormities too numerous and too sanguinary to mention. A serious political counterpart to this consciously droll exaggeration of the social evils of tobacco is furnished by the solemn dictum of Charles Fourier: 'The nation that smokes perishes'. Neither smokers nor non-smokers accept such sweeping generalisations. But the most progressive States, basing their verdict upon lay experience and medical testimony, place a serious discount on juvenile smoking—and especially on the sucking of those deadly cigarettes that, on the other side of the Pacific, have received the apt appellation of 'coffin nails'. Tasmania is now dropping into line in the matter of penalising juvenile smoking, on the lines adopted—but thus far not conspicuously enforced—in New Zealand. The fair flower of early promise is often withered by the poison-bearing, reverie-producing weed. Yet, despite statutes in that case made and provided, how many boys and hobbled-boys do we see day by day laboring to acquire the nicotine habit at an age and in a form when it is most destructive—toiling after it (as the stammering Charles Lamb, a prodigious smoker, said of himself) 'as some men toil after virtue'. One of George Augustus Sala's old schoolmasters treated the juvenile smoking habit

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