

Current Topics

The Lash

Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. In London in the seventies the garotter laughed at gaol locks and locksmiths all and went on serenely garotting until his pranks came to be punished as a matter of course with the cat-o'-nine-tails. Then the garotters learned that the risks of their profession were not worth the red meat they won by it. And garotting came to a speedy end. The 'Auckland Star' of February 19 stands stoutly for the infliction of the same persuasive penalty upon a class of sexual criminals that are apparently becoming a greater menace than ever to unprotected women and children in New Zealand. 'Imprisonment', says our Northern contemporary, 'appears to us likely to effect little as a deterrent, however useful it may be for the protection of society for the time. But we believe that much may be done by a judicious application of the lash. We are, of course, familiar with the old cry that flogging merely brutalizes. But the good people who cling to this doctrine appear to forget that physical punishment is generally accepted as indispensable to the formation of the average child's character. Further, it may be pointed out that a creature, so far degraded as to prey upon defenceless women and children, can hardly be in serious danger of suffering morally from a flogging; while to such selfish and cowardly natures physical pain is often a most effective argument.

In the lash the law has at least one remedy, which has been tried with success in such cases before, and may be trusted to exercise a distinct influence upon the imagination of the human animal in the future, if once he understands that it is the inevitable sequel of such infamous and degrading crimes.'

The New 'Theology'

From the Catholic stand-point the 'New Theology' movement, which is receiving so much attention in the secular papers, is significant in two ways: First, as an illustration of the extent to which the Protestant principle of private judgment, when driven on to its logical consequences, undermines and destroys all definite dogmatic belief; and second, as showing the amazing extent to which the Protestant laity have been, and are being deceived as to the views actually held by their pastors.

With regard to the first—the disintegrating effect of the principle of private judgment—it is a very old story. Since the time when Luther first raised the standard of rebellion against the authority of God's Church and promulgated the doctrine that every man should be his own Pope dogma after dogma has been abandoned by the non-Catholic world, belief in the supernatural has almost entirely disappeared, and now the very Bible itself—once supposed to be the great bulwark of Protestantism—is being violently assailed. As Mr. W. H. Mallock aptly expresses it in one of his latest works: 'Slowly, and yet inevitably the centuries have wrought their changes. That old foundation, the Bible, has ceased, in itself, to be a foundation any longer. It moves, it shifts, it totters. It will support no structure, unless something outside itself shall be found which will support it.' That 'something' we Catholics have in the Holy Catholic Church: that 'something' Protestants must find if they are to get any logical resting-place.

Of the fact that the Protestant laity have been very largely kept in ignorance of the views really held by their pastors regarding the authenticity and veracity of the Scriptures there is unmistakable evi-

dence. The public avowal of 'new theology' views by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple, London, has been blazoned in the papers as 'a theological thunderbolt' not because these views have not long been held by a large proportion of Protestant clergymen, but because they have been held, so to speak, sub rosa. On this point Mr. Campbell himself has been very outspoken. 'Even in the ranks of the Christian ministry,' he said in a recent sermon, 'there are not a few who have been found willing to degrade their sacred office for the sake of temporary popularity or material gain. . . . There are some of them who dissemble, or worse, with the truth that God has committed to their charge. They have the fear of men before their eyes; they would rather please the unthinking mob, or those who provide them with their daily bread, rather swim with the stream than speak as the prophet of truth. . . . Therefore, with all solemnity and deliberation I say these men are liars, like their predecessors in days of old. Liars, not so much by what they say as by what they do not say. Liars, by trying to ignore or misrepresent or distort the truth, preaching as though they do, not believe it when they do. Liars, because they will not look facts in the face; liars using the name of God.' This is strong language, but Mr. Campbell has a specially close acquaintance with the Protestant clergy of England, and may be taken to know whereof he affirms. On reading the report of this sermon—a country minister wrote to Mr. Campbell to say that he had a small church whose deacons had intimated to him that he would either have to leave off preaching the new theology or leave the place. The minister confessed that with a wife and four children dependent upon him he had yielded to pressure and had been hedging ever since. Evidently there are many such cases, and we do not envy either the clergy or the laity so situated.

With the particular brand of 'New Theology' enunciated by Mr. Campbell and his League we have no sort of concern. In many cases the so-called higher critics are taking precisely the position formerly taken by professed infidels, and our feeling towards such men is pretty much that implied by the American humorist when he said that he 'wouldn't give fifty cents to hear Ingersoll on "The Mistakes of Moses," but he would give fifty dollars to hear Moses on "The Mistakes of Ingersoll." So far as the problems connected with the inspiration and authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures are concerned, Catholics can await their solution without fear and without anxiety. Our faith in God's Word depends, not on the conclusions of critics, higher or otherwise, but on the infallible authority of the Church—the pillar and the ground of truth.' And, as his Eminence Cardinal Logue has eloquently expressed it: 'We rest firm in the belief and confidence that when so many fanciful conjectures shall have proved groundless, as in the past; when so many gratuitous suppositions shall have vanished; when so many theories ingeniously built up to support a foregone conclusion, that the Bible, in whole or in part, is without supernatural sanction or Divine authority, shall fall to pieces from their intrinsic unsoundness; when the names of the higher critics shall be a bare memory and their books shall moulder in some forgotten corner of the library, the Word of God shall still live and do His work in the souls of men.'

Public Worship Statistics

The latest instalment of census figures published in the Government 'Gazette' consists of a table showing the number of churches, chapels, and other buildings used for purposes of public worship by the different denominations in April, 1906, when the census was