

From information on p. 173 of the 'Year Book' for 1907 we learn that from 1896 to 1905 (inclusive) the number of private schools in New Zealand (including Catholic schools) rose from 283 to 291, and the attendance thereat from 13,947 to 16,639. This gives an increase of eight schools during that period and of 2692 pupils. But during that time Catholic schools increased by 31, and their attendance by 2148. In other words, 23 non-Catholic private schools have been closed, while 31 Catholic ones have been opened. Here is, in tabular form, a story of the progress of Catholic schools during ten years:—

Year	Catholic Schools	Pupils at Catholic Schools
1896	115	9590
1897	120	9642
1898	124	10175
1899	133	10526
1900	132	10687
1901	129	10448
1902	139	10802
1903	139	10812
1904	149	11873
1905	146	11738

The figures given above do not include the many Catholic schools for Maori children, but only those attended by Europeans. And thus, despite many adverse circumstances, the cause of religious education among Catholics goes marching grandly on.

The 'New Theology'

The old errors tricked out under the label of 'New Theology' no longer share with the latest murder or shipwreck or conflagration the questionable honor of lengthy columns in the daily press of Australia and New Zealand. Yet even still short spasms or tremors of the fuzzy old-new pantheism occasionally shake the weekly brimstone columns of sundry of our secular papers. Last Saturday, for instance, brief reference was made in one of our Northern contemporaries to a convert Catholic writer—of shallow philosophy and brilliant prose—who has been captured, not indeed by the 'New Theology', but by Will-o'-the-Wisp ideas that, if followed up, may land him at last in that morass. 'His conceptions of religious truth', says our contemporary, 'are gradually taking shape'. It would, we think, be difficult to give less felicitous expression to the drift of the Catholic author in question. For, instead of taking, his ideas of religious truth are losing, shape—unless we are prepared to compare his new position with the 'execrable shape' in Milton's 'Paradise Lost'—

'If shape it might be called that shape had none'.

For the 'New Theology' is a vague, fuzzy, shapeless Something of pantheistic character. It is not so much a religious system as a bankrupt philosophy.

Omar Khayyam grieved that the idols which he vaguely worshipped

'Have done my credit in this world much wrong—
Have drowned my glory in a shallow cup,
And sold my reputation for a song'.

But those that are deep in philosophy will not drown their glory in the shallow cup of the New Pantheism. The passing glorification of the vague, the fuzzy, and the foggy recalls Arthur Helps's fable of the mist. It is told in his 'Friends in Council':—

'There was a gathering together of creatures hurtful and terrible to man, to name their king. Blight, mildew, darkness, mighty waves, fierce winds, Will-o'-the-Wisps, and shadows of grim objects, told fearfully their doings and preferred their claims, none prevailing. But when evening came on, a thin mist, curled up, derisively, amidst the assemblage and said:—"I gather round a man going to his own home over paths made by his daily foot-steps: and he becomes at once helpless and tame as a child. The lights meant to assist him, then betray. You find him wandering, or need the aid of other terrors to subdue him. I am, alone, confusion to him." And all the assemblage bowed before the mist, and made it king, and set it on the brow of many a mountain, where, when it is not doing evil, it may be often seen to this day.'

The reader can readily find, in the old 'New Theology' and in Modernist errors, the fog or mist that misleads the footsteps of many a man on his way to his heavenly Home, and leaves him wandering helplessly and in confusion through the dark valley of a darkened life. During the Galway trials many years ago, in which the notorious Judge Keogh played so ignoble a part, two old Claddagh fishwives sat side by side near the entrance to the court. The day's proceedings had terminated, and the judge, lawyers, and officials were leaving. 'Who's that?' asked one fishwife of the other, in the mellow Gaelic tongue. 'That,' replied the other, 'is Keogh' (the name in Irish means 'fog'). 'May an eternal fog encompass him!' flamed out the first old dame. The quick-witted and resentful author of the terrible punning curse probably realised its fierce significance. At any rate, to be, spiritually, in a fog is to be in the sad plight of those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Big Thief and Little Thief

Big thieving is sometimes glossed over as 'high finance' or 'high policy'; 'tis the petty thief that gets the handcuffs and the prison-cell. 'Great news!' said, one friend on 'Change' to another; 'just heard that Murwell has got off clear with £5000 of the Corporation money'. 'Well, well! Clever fellow! And what a joke, too! You know I have a grudge against that Corporation over that rating case I lost'. 'Do you remember that presentation umbrella of yours? Well, he's got off with that, too'. 'The mean scoundrel!' This sort of judgment is neither new nor very unusual. But

'The Ten Commandments will not budge,
And stealing will continue stealing,'

no matter with what drapery of fair phrases it may be tricked out; no matter by whom it may be perpetrated, whether by Bill Sikes the burglar, or by the bigger corporation of official thieves that in France have been pilfering the wardrobes of the Sisters of Charity, 'pinching' monastic pots and pans, and 'converting' churches, seminaries, clergy residences, convents, etc., on a vast scale to secular uses.

To adapt a well-worn line of Swift, the big thief

'Has smaller thieves that on him prey,
And these have smaller still to bite 'em,
And so proceed ad infinitum'.

In France, the big thieves—that is the Government—have a horde of smaller thieves (liquidators, lawyers, magistrates, and art dealers) to bite into the profits of the Great Pillage. Says the 'Catholic Times' of October 18:—

'There has been quite a brisk trade carried on among buyers and sellers of objects of ecclesiastical art. To supply the trade, methods were adopted that seem to be very far from honest, and so the French police have had occasion to inquire into the doings of a M. Antoine Thomas, who confesses to being the author of a number of sacrilegious thefts, or at least thefts which would have been called sacrilegious had not the State already stolen from the Church the very things which M. Thomas stole from the State. Our contemporary the "Academy," so spicy of late in its editorial comments, puts the case thus: "Altogether M. Antoine Thomas seems to furnish a very bright example of the results of the anti-Christian movement carried on by the French Government. The State, acting in obedience to 'the will of the people', steals the property of the Church, and now the engaging M. Thomas steals it from the State, and we shall witness the spectacle of a gang of thieves trying a thief for stealing a stolen object." The situation is Gilbertian, but we fear that M. Thomas has made a mistake in imagining that he could do in his individual, what the State had done in its collective, capacity. A man who steals from the State is a thief; a State which "conveys" from the Church is a benefactor of mankind. So goes our modern political casuistry.'

M. Antoine Thomas's exploits as a cracksman were accorded the honor of a cable-message to the daily

DEED eye! A box of "Cook o' the North" Tea makes jist a splendid Xmas present. The flavor's delicious.

WHAT about a Box of "Hondai Lanka" Tea for a Christmas present to Grandma? She would be delighted.