

Current Topics

'Catholic Marriages'

As indicated in our last issue, the pamphlet entitled 'Catholic Marriages' was published last week at the office of this paper. It contains the Latin text of the Decree of August 2, 1907, with an English translation; a popular explanation of the Decree; the letters (both sides) of the recent controversy on the subject in the Christchurch 'Press,' with copious notes and comments, both of a historical and general character; and a lengthy exposition (running into 83 large and closely printed pages) of the Catholic teachings and practice in regard to impediments invalidating marriage. The first part of this exposition is devoted to the consideration of certain fallacies; the second, to a statement of the mission and authority of the Catholic Church; the third, to the relations of the Church to the marriage contract; and the fourth, to a historical statement of the invalidating legislation of the Jewish and the Christian Church. Detailed treatment has been given to every error and misconception that arose during the Christchurch controversy. A copious index affords the reader a means of ready reference, and the whole publication forms a book of over 150 pages demy 8vo. The price is one shilling per copy, with a considerable reduction for quantities for distribution. One private person has ordered 500 copies, and numerous orders have been received from the clergy for re-sale or distribution among their flocks.

Bad Mothers

A few days ago, an esteemed clerical friend of ours, who has had considerable experience as a prison visitor, spoke to us in substance as follows: 'The Church strives hard and successfully to train the child to walk in the way he should go; the Catholic school does splendid work in the same direction. But the best efforts of both are, in too many cases, undone by the evil influences of a bad home. I have met in prison many young men who got a good start, so far as Church and school could give it. In the immense majority of cases, they owed their downfall to bad mothers.'

Catholic College of Music

The Right Rev. Monsignor O'Haran's idea of a Catholic College of Music has the warm approval of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Sydney, and there is every prospect that it will materialise in the near future. Catholic educationists on this side of the water, and in the other States of the Commonwealth, will watch with interest the development of this striking and apparently very practical proposal of Monsignor O'Haran.

The Common Lot

The Seddon monument is being proceeded with, quietly and unostentatiously. Perhaps we are a bit ashamed to remind ourselves too bluntly of the shortness of our memory, and of the manner in which we hasten to forget to-day the giant of yester-morn. We believe that Richard John Seddon's time is coming, and that he will bulk very large in the perspective of fifty years hence. But the ant, that has an eye for a millet-seed, fails to grasp with its limited vision, the massive contour of yon hill. 'Th' nearest anny man comes to a conception iv his own death,' says 'Mr. Dooley,' 'is lyin' back in a comfortable coffin, with his ears cocked for th' flatherin' remarks iv th' mourners.' The remarks of the others may not be so 'flatherin.' 'When a man dies,' says Billings, 'the fust thing we talk about iz his welth, the next thing hiz failings, and the last thing his vartues.'

Sic transit! It is the common lot.

Atheism v. Christianity

'The battle between Atheism and Christianity across the Channel' (in France), says the London 'Saturday Review,' 'is not over. The Church is still in a perilous position; but the thing which has suffered most in the fight has been the conception of the omnipotent State. . . . For Pius

X., with no physical force or diplomatic influence behind him to take up the gauntlet that French Jacobinism had thrown down, seemed to the ordinary man the height of folly. It was an act of the highest heroism. Pius VI. when he flung the civil "constitution of the clergy" in the face of the National Assembly, Pius VII. when he defied Napoleon, did no braver thing. But the brave thing was also the right and the wise thing. It brought home to French Catholics, clergy and laity alike, that French Christianity was at stake. And French Catholicism made a noble response. For the first time in the history of France, the French Church stood solid for the Pope against the rulers of the State. In a moment it was apparent that French Chauvinism had been beaten.'

Cockneyisms in New Zealand

The sporadic tendency to cockneyisms of speech in New Zealand is still exercising educationists up North. Two weeks ago we made an editorial reference to the subject. And seven years ago, dealing with the same theme, we suggested that the fashion of dialect stories, and the crude vogue of coster songs and other such music-hall 'turns,' may possibly have some effect in producing the growing tendency towards the sort of speech that is heard within sound of Bow Bells. We have (as indicated in a recent note) come across cockneyisms in unexpected places—in districts remote, unfriended, solitary, slow, and in circumstances that it would be almost as difficult to explain as to solve the mystery of the live toad in the heart of the solid rock. Can it be that cockneyisms, like Dogberry's reading and writing, come by nature? Some fifteen years ago Professor Morris, of the Melbourne University, grappled with this puzzle—with only a qualified success. During the newspaper discussion that ensued in the Melbourne 'Argus,' a correspondent told all abay't hay'w (about how), at a dance, a handsome lidy asked one of her guests to tike the kike (take the cake) first and have the gripes (grapes) afterwards. Coming from beautiful lips, such language recalls the 'creepy' fairy-tale about the intolerably lovely maiden from whose mouth, when she opened it, there issued a procession of frogs and toads.

One authority issued some years ago the warning that, unless the educational authorities are watchful, whole districts of New Zealand will become infected with cockneyisms as they are with Californian thistles. 'An Irishman,' says the Wellington 'Times,' 'does not say "gripes" for "grapes," nor a Scot, nor an educated Englishman. The monstrosity is cockney, pure cockney, and, so far as New Zealand is concerned, will be found flourishing either where cockneys predominate, or where the teacher chances to have acquired the "langwidge." Even such ethereal beings as school inspectors have been heard to speak of the West Indiar Islands. But to say that this is colonial is a calumny. It is not any more colonial than the Edinburgh accent is Scotch, or the Yorkshire dialect is English. Gather Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Edinburgh children into one school, and let each read the same passage—or better still, listen to them in the playground, and tell me which speaks Scotch or English. The fact is that in no country do the majority speak in the language as it is written. There is no colonial accent. We are too scattered, too young, and too mixed to have acquired this national feature. We believe it to be a fact that our colonial children speak as good and pure English as you will find anywhere. The cockneyisms are local and accidental—importations; and should be trodden under foot of men.'

A Harmless Bogy.

A New Zealand contemporary has, so to speak, resurrected the 'buried alive' bogy. Figures are given purporting to represent the proportion of persons that are interred before they are 'fatally dead.' But the figures are fantastic guesses without any solid substratum of truth on which to rest. This sort of scare comes and goes like other epidemic fear. The first that we can recall occurred in the early eighties, when a foolish paper was read before the French Academy of Medicine, the writer expressing his conviction that one person in every five thousand is con-