Current Topics

Our Young People

Youth comes but once in a lifetime, as Longfellow saith. And the complexion of the later lifetime is largely determined by that of youth. Hence the necessity to mould and train and shape it and color its thoughts aright. 'Young men and women', says Dr. Dunlop in last week's 'Outlook', 'deeply appreciate interest shown in them individually'. Over and above the work of clubs, guilds, etc., he adds, the clergyman 'should try to cultivate friendly intimacy with the young men of his congregation and district. Nothing quite takes the place of personal contact. To convince them of your genuine friendliness is to get a splendid hold on them for spiritual purposes. When a young fellow has got so far as to say that "you are a white man", it is a sign that you have won his confidence. Nothing pays so well as intercourse with the young men; directly and indirectly you can influence them most powerfully in this way.'

A Doubtful Tale

A recent cable-message from Rome runs as follows:

'A priest and sacristan near Reggiode (Calabria) drank from a chalice wine which had been poisoned. Both succumbed.'

Here is another 'doubtful tale from a far-off land'. This is the second time within the past few years that a cable message about priest, sacristan, and poisoned chalice, identical in sense and practically identical in wording, has been sent to this outer rim of the earth from distant Calabria (Italy). As usual, the names of the 'priest and sacristan' are not given. Besides, there happens to be no place in Calabria known as Reggiode—Reggio is, perhaps, intended; and, as every Catholic ought to know, sacristans, even in Calabria, do not drink wine out of chalices. We might add that newspaper 'tall tales' of the 'big gooseberry' order are 'in season' in Italy in the merry month of May. In the present case, the story lacks the quality of plausibility deemed essential by the artistic fibster of old:—

'Lest men believe your tale untrue,
Keep probability in view'.

Cardinal Logue: Another View

Cardinal Newman says of a rather numerous class of travellers that 'they find themselves now in Europe, now in Asia; they are in the marts of commerce, or amid the islands of the South; they gaze on Pompey's Pillar or on the Andes; and nothing which meets them carries them forward or backward to any idea beyond itself. Nothing has a drift or relation; nothing has a history or a promise'. To this class belonged the American dame who remembered Brussels only as 'the place where we had those perfectly lovely sausages'. One meets so often with this class of returned globe-trotter. Their pell-mell rush through distant lands leaves only a blurred impression upon the mind, and their lessons of 'sight-seeing' are crystallised in odd and undigested scraps of guide-book talk and in 'disjointed photographs of 'places where we have been'. The rush, and the hurry, and the prejudice, and the unreflective spirit, and the lack of the faculty of observation, prevent their either noting, so to speak, the text of travel or putting a mental commentary to it. So they bring their bucket (to wit, their mind) to the great springing well, and they come back with it as empty as it was before.

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It is a pleasure to revert from these 'returned empties' to such a keen and observant writer as the 'New Zealand Journalist' who is confiding to the 'Otago Daily Times' his experiences of travel in the Green Isle. At present we are concerned with only one observation of his, which has a special interest at the present moment. 'Looking', says he in the third of his articles, 'at the desperate condition of the country and its people, one is constrained to ask himself whether it is at all so very singular that even a man like Cardinal Logue, in moments of pardonable despair and exasperation, feels himself impelled to say foolish and unmeaning things, just because they accord with his reasonable anger and represent the measure of his indignation against a system of government which has converted his country into a ruin. Does it suggest itself to no one that the spirit which the contemplation of those wrongs has evoked would, under better and more favorable national conditions, have easily and gracefully attuned itself to speech of another kind, in which gratitude and loyalty to England and glory and pride in the Empire would have been the burden? It should suggest such thoughts. But perhaps it doesn't, not to many, at least, among the world-wide British audience at whom the Irish Cardinal, in no complaisant mood, flung his defiance and his anathema.'

The writer assumes (perhaps for the sake of argument) that Cardinal Logue used the words attributed to him by the American interviewer. It is, nevertheless, a very big assumption.

Zola

Official French atheism has just been dancing and singing around its latest golden calf—Emile Zola. The remains of the defunct pornographer—of the apostle of the stye and of literary filth unspeakable—now lie beneath Tissot's beautiful dome, in the crypt of the desecrated church of St. Genevieve, Paris. Beside it lies the mouldering dust of Rousseau and Voltaire—par nobile fratrum, the former of whom sent his illegitimate offspring to the Foundling Asylum, and the latter of whom was sentenced for a grievous crime against morality. Such be the gods of the new French Israel. The crypt of one desecrated church, the bells of another, have been dishonored by association with the dead purveyor who has given the name of Zolaesque to all that is most coarse and foetid in literature. The London 'Evening Telegraph' tells as follows the story of the bells:—

'We have grown accustomed to the campaign against religion in France and its various manifestations. We have seen the Chamber of Deputies remove the motto "Dieu protege la France" (God protect France!) 'from the rim of the twenty-franc pieces. Law courts have been stripped of their religious emblems. The Archbishop's palace in Paris has been turned into the Ministry of Labor, presided over by a gentleman with a profound contempt for the Church. What were once seminaries are now cavalry barracks. All this is deplorable, and it is not far-fetched to imagine that the spring cleaning which has been found necessary in certain of the places of amusement in Paris would have been avoided if the nation had remained true to its old reverence for the Church. It has remained for Suresnes to commit the final culminating act of desecration, when the parish church was demolished, and the bells were melted down and transmogrified into a bust of Zola, of all people. When the bust was unveiled the speakers "alluded with satisfaction" to the use that had been made of the ancient religious symbols. And so the process goes on. We shall shortly have a reproduction of the Joan of Arc fetes with the religious element, which played so vital a part in her wonderful career, carefully excluded. Our recent friendship with the country increases the pang with which such things are witnessed.'

We lay two little withered blooms upon the dead pornographer's grave; they may serve as Twain's small bottle of eau-de-cologne did in the glue factory—not to cure the stench, but in a very small way to moderate it. In his young and unspoiled days Zola wrote at least one novel that might have been read as a textbook in a convent boarding-school. That was before he slithered down the slippery slope of Avernus. May