

## Current Topics

### For the New Year

In Bailey's *Festus* there are some lines which may be appropriately quoted at this early dawn of the new year:

'We live in deeds, not years: in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.'

The sequel of this thought is found in the famous hymn of Bernard, the twelfth-century French Benedictine monk of Cluny:

Brief life is here our portion,  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.  
O happy retribution,—  
Short toil, eternal rest!  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest!

If!

It would be both churlish and unfair to question the goodness of motive of those among our separated brethren who are casting about for schemes to bring into the school-lives of our State-trained children the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, and the love of Him which is its end. Unfortunately, the shy bud of pious wishes has not, thus far, grown into blossom or put forth fruit. Where so vast a field for good work exists, it is doubly unfortunate that our fellow-citizens of other faiths should fall into an inoperative habit of mind, and allow a chasm to separate their wishes and their powers, in a matter in which Catholics have given such an inspiring lead. 'Shingle Short' reproves as follows this habit of divorcing aspiration from activity, where a great good is waiting to be accomplished:—

'While, as for work an' such—Look here!  
I guess the one success you do  
Is *thinking* you're a-goin' to.  
Oh, all's right then: looks good and sound,  
An' plump, and regular all round—  
Puff-ballish! Prove it, an' it's broke,  
For all that good fat shape was—Smoke!

'If Protestant Churches,' says Dr. Lorimer (a New York Baptist preacher), 'were as interested in the education of their children as the Catholic Church is, there would be no religious problem in our country.' We (*N.Z. Tablet*) have been for years urging that if even one large Protestant denomination in New Zealand did, for the Christian education of their children, the half of what Catholics have been doing for a generation, the 'school difficulty' in this Dominion would soon solve itself. If! But what a mighty if! We have been humming this old melody in season and out of season. But it is a good old song, and deserves the 'encores' that it gets. The strains of 'Die Wacht am Rhein' ('The Watch on the Rhine') steel the heart of the German recruit and make his pulse beat high with love of the Fatherland. If we could only induce the leaders of our separated brethren to take up the note of our little unmetrical ditty, it might, perchance, move them at last to throw aside the torpor that holds them in its spell, to realise more fully their responsibilities to the rising generation, and to enter upon 'the strenuous life' for the Christian education of the little ones whom the Saviour has committed to their care.

### Marrying

Because of rather trying experiences of wedlock, Socrates—and John Wesley—would never advise young men to marry. *Punch's* historic 'advice to those about to marry' was an emphatic 'Don't!' Max O'Rell contends that all men should marry—and no woman. An old Italian proverb discounts marriage with a beauty. So do sundry Dutch and German 'wisdoms,' while an ancient Rabbinical writing pronounces 'happy the man that hath a beautiful wife,' for 'his days shall be increased.' And a Russian advice to the young man about to marry is to take his life-partner by all means—and beat her with a hammer! The author of a now rare book, *Husbands and Wives*, written a century ago, discounts, from personal experience, the savage method of ruling the 'better half' of his household. 'You may,' said he ruefully, 'beat the devil into your wife, but you can never bang him out again'—a 'wisdom' which we commend to all whom it may concern. But marriage is the common lot. And its failures should not deter those whose course through

life should be run in double harness. So many men find marriage a failure because (say they) they have married the wrong women. We very often find that their wives have married the wrong men. Philip D. Armour, the millionaire organiser of the Chicago stockyards, gave some shrewd advice, in this connection, to young men, which we may appropriately quote at this season of marrying and giving in marriage. 'The young man,' says Armour, 'who wants to marry happily, should pick out a good mother and marry one of her daughters—any one will do.' For Catholic young men we further stipulate that mother and daughter shall be practical children of the Old Faith.

### Bolivia

According to Disraeli's Young Duke, there is no greater sin than to be *trop prononcé*, or greatly exaggerated in praise or blame. During the course of the past year we dealt with sundry flagrant cases of the latter form of this 'greater sin'—namely, wild and exaggerated onslaughts upon Catholic persons and Catholic institutions. One of these was a high-pressure stream of vitriolic speech with which, in an Otago contemporary, a missionary, on a collecting tour in New Zealand, lashed the Catholic Church in far-off Bolivia. Our readers may recall how the accuser's readiness to fling dishonoring accusations was only surpassed by his significant unwillingness to make them good, and by the rather desperate character of his effort to keep from Otago readers the evidence (if any) on which a specific item in his story was alleged to have been based. One of the less bitter items of this 'missionary tale' from a far-off land was to this effect: that 'Popery' had never so much as raised its little finger for the education of the native race in Bolivia, and that the very 'first school for Indians' in all the history of that country was opened by the Government in July, 1907. We pointed out at the time that the *Statesman's Year Book* for 1906, 1905, and so on back to 1898 (how far further we could not say) clearly distinguishes the various elements in the population of Bolivia—whites and negroes (who are comparatively few), and Indians and *cholos* (half-breeds) who form the vast bulk of the population. We also added that the same publication (basing itself on Bolivian official and semi-official literature) states expressly that, for a long time past, there have been Catholic missionary and other schools 'for the rural Indian population.' The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (ed. 1906, vol. xxvi., p. 290) also mentions a number of Catholic missionary and other 'schools for rural Indians'; and so, likewise do a number of other publications that we were able to consult, for dates as far back as 1896. We have now before us a large volume written not later than 1905 and published by A. C. McClurg and Co., of Chicago, in 1906. It is written by Charles M. Pepper, while on a diplomatic mission through the Western South American republics, and is entitled *Panama to Patagonia*. On pages 304 and 305 we find the following statement in connection with the author's visit to the Aymará Indian town of Sicasica: 'I wandered into a girls' school, where the little maids were seated on vicuña skins, and, rocking forward and backward, were conning their lessons aloud while the woman teacher accompanied their sing-song, standing. . . . The primer was in Aymará [by far the most extensively spoken language in Bolivia], and seemed to correspond to Noah Webster's spelling-book.' The author (who is by no means well-disposed towards the Catholic faith) finds the Bolivian school system 'a creditable one' (p. 345). 'The Bolivian Government,' says he (pp. 339-40), 'has handled the Indian problem very well—much better than it has been handled in the United States.'

Here we find an Indian school, with Indian text-books, in full operation in Bolivia at least two years before the date assigned by the missionary for the opening of absolutely 'the first school for Indians' in all the history of that difficult country. We have not referred to the splendid work of civilisation and education which the Jesuits, the Franciscans, and the Salesians have done or are doing among the Indian peoples in every country of Central and South America—including the Mojos and the Chiquitos of the Bolivia of two centuries ago and more, and the red tribes-people of that country in the present day. On these two latter subjects we hope to have more to say in detail at a later date. Bolivia has been styled, on account of its peculiar physical configuration, the Mexico of South America. From the point of view of the outside inquirer, it may be almost termed the Tibet of South America, on account of the slowness and difficulty of securing replies to correspondence. But even that difficulty will, in our case, be overcome in due course.

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