

Current Topics

Thief Logic

At a very early stage in the present French persecution we expressed the opinion that thief-logic would not for long fail to see and apply the lesson of the wholesale plunder of the religious Orders by the uniformed 'crib-crackers' of the Third Republic. The sensational series of thefts of art-treasures from the churches followed, in due course, and was justified by some of the 'magsmen' just in the way that we had predicted. A minor, though scarcely less instructive, instance is furnished by the Paris correspondent of the *Glasgow Observer*. 'Quite recently,' he writes, 'a man was charged with stealing a fowl from a convent, and the following conversation took place between the presiding judge and the prisoner:—

"Did you not know it was wrong to take what belonged to another?"

"But, my Lord, it belonged to a convent."

"That does not lessen the crime."

"Then," said the prisoner, "what about Clemenceau, Briand, and Fallieres, who have stolen millions from the convents?"

The public laughed, but the judge did not relish the home thrust.

The 'Faith-Cure'

Through the action of one of the Anglican bishops of this Dominion, a form of 'faith-cure' has received ecclesiastical benediction in this Dominion. The matter has even gone so far that one reverend practitioner has been deputed, or deputed himself, to apply the 'faith-cure' to as many ills of the flesh as may be submitted to the operation of his supposed gift of healing. It seems to be a sort of Eddyism or Christian science which, if not more scientific, is probably less un-Christian than the pseudo-religious system which lifted Mrs. Eddy into millionaire-dom. To the new cult in the Dominion we may perhaps without injustice apply the following words which the *Ave Maria* quotes from the eminent American physician and nerve-specialist, Dr. S. Weir-Mitchell, who said at a recent meeting of the Neurological Association: 'Although Eddyism, in one form or another, is as old as civilisation, I am amazed that the undisciplined minds of the Americans, usually so sceptical, should be taken in in such increasingly large numbers by an elderly woman with a smile. It is not against psychotherapy [mind-healing] that I charge you, but against the proneness to overstate its claims as an available remedy. No organic disease was ever cured by it, and its legitimate uses are circumscribed. The rational employment of it in some cases is without doubt of incalculable benefit, but its wanton misuse is inexcusable. There are at least seven cults which have grown up about its tested worth, which are alike only in that they despise each other. They thrive partly because of ignorance, partly because of the pride of untrained reason pampered by the conceit that by subscribing to certain dogmas and paying fees they can themselves become "healers." Persons who refuse credence to stories of the Lourdes cures will swallow these latter marvels complacently.'

'This reference to Lourdes,' says the *Ave Maria*—'where, by the way, organic diseases are cured—seems to differentiate Dr. Mitchell from the Zola brand of latter-day sceptics.'

The Battle of the Schools

When the last mails left England, the battle of the schools was being fought out there with a vigor that (especially on the Catholic side) evidenced the public sense of the importance of the issues involved. One of these is the so-called 'unsectarian' and 'undenominational' form of religious instruction which commends itself to the Nonconformist conscience. This figment of an exuberant fancy was, by the way, described in the following terms by the late Lord Salisbury in the *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1896: 'Numbers of persons have invented what I may call a patent, compressible religion, which can be forced into all consciences with a little squeezing; and they wish to insist that this should be the only religion taught throughout the schools of the nation.' Catholics are naturally unwilling to be compelled to pay taxes for the propaganda of this or of any other faith, whether definite or fuzzy, unless on terms of perfect equality. Under the new Bill 'a Protestant or Nonconformist child,' says the *Catholic Times*, 'may draw 120s from the public purse every year for its education; a Catholic child may draw only 55s at the most! Yet the Catholic parent must pay for his own school buildings, out of his own pocket; and pay rates too for the school buildings of Nonconformists. We will not

submit to such injustice. If we pay, we will receive. If we pay as much as others, we will receive as much as others.' We will have no starved schools, starved teachers, starved scholars. One ratepayer is as good as another. So is one ratepayer's child as good as another's. Why should a ratepayer's child in a provided school get 120s, and another ratepayer's child in a Catholic school get only 55s? There is but one answer—because the latter child is a Catholic! The opponents of the Catholic claims justified the passive resistance of the Nonconformists. In doing so, they have justified it for Catholics. And, according to our Liverpool contemporary, Catholics in England will, if driven to this resort, better the example of the Nonconformists.

A Prize-fighter's Grievance

Psychologically the prize-fighter is, after all, rather an interesting study—at a distance. In point of appearance, he is certainly, as a rule, 'no oil painting,' and he is not generally associated in the popular mind with Christian Endeavor movements or Sunday school 'rallies.' It would seem, however, that he is nevertheless very often a fiercely-keen religionist, and harbors quite a quantity of unsuspected piety within his panting bulk. Two or three years ago all the papers were filled with the story of how one of the very brightest stars in the fistic firmament—we forget his name—had 'got religion,' as they call it in America, and, renouncing the ring, devoted the rest of his life to dealing out tracts instead of 'straight lefts.' Early last year a paragraph went the rounds to the effect that one Abe Attell, a Jew, said to be the cleverest feather-weight in America, and one whom his best friends would never have suspected of any leanings toward religious controversy, had become a Catholic. Whether Attell was led by some deep-theological argument, or whether respect for Holy Church had been inspired by some doughty representative whom he had met in the course of his many battles, deponent sayeth not. Tommy Burns, the ex-champion and present idol of Australians, goes regularly to Mass, and even after the disastrous—and we may add degrading—clash on Boxing Day was in his place at the Cathedral next morning, as if nothing had happened. Then, as if to furnish further evidence that even prize-fighters are not past praying for, there comes on the scene Johnson, the colored giant from Galveston, who expresses himself as having felt more than hurt at the way in which his Church has neglected him.

Johnson is very emphatic on the matter. It appears that this particular, dark-skinned mass claims to be a faithful Methodist; and after explaining to a *Sydney Morning Herald* interviewer that when worried by public criticism he turns for consolation to his favorite books—Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*—the black person proceeded to pour forth his plaint: 'You may be surprised that I should turn to literary work when annoyed, instead of seeking sympathy from the Church to which I belong. Of course, you know I am a Methodist. When I arrived here in Sydney first of all I expected to be well looked after by my fellow-religionists in Sydney. Well, do you believe it, not one of the Methodists even called on me! At first I resented this very much, and I fretted a lot, so that my manager had fears lest I should go back in my training.'

And worse remains behind. Not only did the dark gentleman's 'fellow-religionists' neglect to call on him, but they added injury to insult by not rolling up to support him in the fight. 'Outside the conduct of the local Methodists,' he said, 'in not inviting me to church, there is not a single one, so far as I can learn, who signified his intention of witnessing the fight. In America, whenever I had a "scrap," I could always count on solid support from my denomination.' This naive announcement throws quite a new light on the negro's notion of the mission of Methodism in the States. 'Because I am a black,' continued the Ethiopian, speaking of his church-people in Australia, 'you spurned me'; and in his interview with the *Herald* representative he returned their contempt with interest. 'Depend upon it,' he concluded, after a strong denunciation, 'I shall report to the American people how I was treated here . . . by the Methodist body to which I belong.' In effect he applied to his Church the sentiments, if not the words, of his favorite Shakespeare:

'Hast thou not spoke like thunder on my side?
Been sworn my soldier? bidding me depend
Upon thy stars, thy fortune, and thy strength?
And dost thou now fall over to my foes?
Thou wear a lion's hide! Doff it for shame,
And hang a calfskin on those recreant limbs.'

The Dunedin & Suburban Coal Co.

☎ TELEPHONE 401

are still at 29 CASTLE STREET, and will supply you with any kind of Coal or Firewood you want at LOWEST TARIFF RATES. Smithy Coals supplied.