

Northern storms. The noble German race were almost alone among barbarians in having but one wife, and in being faithful to her. No youth, no beauty, no wealth could make up in their eyes for the loss of virtue in woman. Fashion was powerless there, says Tacitus ('Germania,' 18, 19, 20), to make vice merely ridiculous. These Germans supplied later on the raw material of Christendom.

(To be concluded.)

DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

The Right Rev. Dr. Grimes, Bishop of Christchurch, has issued the following Lenten Pastoral:—

Dearly Beloved Brethren and Children
in Jesus Christ,—

The opening chapter of the Bible gives us, in brief but graphic terms, the first and sublimest page in the history of mankind. It tells us that when the Almighty had created the heavens and the earth and the fulness thereof, He said:—'Let Us make man to Our own image and likeness' (Gen. i., 26). Then taking a portion of the slime of the earth, He breathed into it the breath of His own divine life; and lo! that man uprose in all the greatness and glory of manhood. Having made man to His own image and likeness, 'the Lord God subjected' all things under His feet, and set him over the work of His hands' (Ps. viii., 7-8). Alone, throughout the whole range of creation, gifted with intelligence, man seeks by the very bent of his nature to utilise all things subjected to his empire. Thanks to his deep research, he, at times, works wonders amid the marvels of creation.

Every age is indebted to him for some new discovery. Happy he if he use these discoveries for his own and the intellectual, social, moral, and religious improvement of his fellow-being! Happy he if he refer the honor and the glory thereof to Him who is 'the God of all knowledge' (Kings i., 2-8).

Of all the arts the secrets whereof man's genius has unravelled, there is hardly one whose sway is more powerful than that of printing. By its speech reaches beyond the limits of time and space. Thanks to the perfection of the art, and the wondrous rapidity of communication, the press establishes amongst all nations and peoples, a daily, almost instantaneous exchange of ideas, light and knowledge. A discourse delivered in London or Paris, Rome or New York, re-echoes in a few hours throughout every part of these great cities. Before the end of the week it will have travelled the length and breadth of Europe, aye, of the whole civilised globe, kindling in millions of breasts feelings of sympathy or revulsion.

Not only does the press reproduce and spread abroad speech, it even supplies it. It gives wings to the thoughts of mighty minds, placing them in communication with men of all nations and beliefs. Well has it been said of the press that 'it is mightier than the sword or the word.'

But how sad to think that the power of the press is so often put to base purposes! How sad to know that it too often becomes the ready instrument of the spirit of lying, disorder, and iniquity! Is it not deplorable to see society flooded with licentious and obscene productions consecrated to the idolizing of the grossest passions and doctrines the most degrading? Who can behold, unmoved, the crowd of shameless writers who seem to have no other mission in life than to sully, whilst attacking all that is pure and noble and holy? Sworn foes of every idea of order, duty, and justice, they prostitute their talent or their pen to the service—nay, to the very justifying of the unclean vice, which they would fain make attractive, by the expounding of guilty theories, or the depicting of morals more guilty and more dangerous still. Writers of little or no talent often make capital out of the evil passions and corrupt inclinations of fallen nature to draw readers by the bait of immorality.

A few days ago a well known citizen of Christchurch brought under our notice some of the novels eagerly devoured by thousands in our Dominion. A noble-minded layman, he assured us that it was with a sense of loathing and disgust that he ventured to bring them before us. He did so solely in the interests of morality. He says, speaking of one of these novels—'It is one of a series in which the sacredness of marriage is held in contempt and opprobrium.' In it the sin of adultery is held to be a necessity, and indulging of the passion to be a fulfilment of the demands of nature. . . the whole tendency of the volume is a degradation of God's highest creature to the level of the brute. Of another, written, too, by a woman, there is not a clean thought or expression in the whole of its pages. Of another, by the same author, 'it is one of the filthiest productions of the age.'

From a cursory perusal of its polluted pages, we ourselves must pronounce it a horrid, blasphemous parody on the sinless life of our Blessed Redeemer.

Speaking of another novel of a similar kind, the above-mentioned gentleman says: 'The author displays a prurient mind wallowing in filth and uncleanness.' One of these 'lewd' productions has on its inside cover these significant words from the pen of a voluminous writer: 'It is a world-wide novel—a novel to set people thinking—a bold, brilliant, "defiant" presentation of the relations of the

sexes which I do not remember ever having seen treated with the same freedom and audacity.'

God grant, dearly beloved, that you will never defile your hands, your eyes, or your mind with the reading of such abominable writings! Still, the danger exists even for you. There is hardly a town or a village in New Zealand which does not boast its circulating library. What are the books chiefly to be found on the shelves of these libraries? Novels, and many of a questionable character.

During the year 1908, the total number of books issued by the Dunedin Athenæum was 81,824, and of that number 73,080 were works of fiction. We have it on the best authority, that fully 95 per cent. of the books issued by one of the leading, perhaps the leading, public library of this Dominion are novels. No wonder one of the characters in a book written by one of our leading English statesmen could say: 'Nine-tenths of our existing books are nonsense, and the clever books are the refutation of that nonsense.'

It were impossible to exaggerate the terrible evils wrought by the immoral literature of the day. The evil penetrates everywhere, carrying with it the seeds of disorder and unbelief.

At the approach of this Holy season of Lent, we deem it our duty to warn you against the dangers of this growing evil.

For this we propose, with the blessing of God, to enumerate the various works you must studiously avoid, and then review and examine the reasons alleged in favor of novel and all dangerous reading. Think not that we would wish to shackle you in the pursuit of true wisdom, the enriching of the mind, or even in the choice of reading for the sake of lawful recreation or amusement. Far from this, we would urge you to acquire a true taste for sound literature, to increase your desire of knowledge, your fondness for even entertaining, providing it be good and useful reading. We would tell you that a good book is the image and the echo of a beautiful soul, a living being with whom we may commune alone and unmolested, a faithful companion, and the truest of friends. But, we would add, that if this desire of knowledge, coeval with man, if this taste for reading be depraved, if bad literature alone be welcomed, whilst the sight and very title of whatever is good provoke disgust, if to satisfy this craving for knowledge, only unclean, filthy, or sensational trash be sought, then reading is no longer a useful, pleasing pastime, it becomes a willing, slow it may be, but a deadly poison. Such a book is no longer a safe guide, a faithful friend or companion, no longer the image and echo of a pure soul. It is a traitorous hand leading to the venomous viper's sting. It is the image, the echo, and the forerunner of hell.

First, of all—What are the writings carefully to be avoided? Beside those filthy productions, the mere title of which brings a blush to a Christian's cheek, those licentious pamphlets which stain the very hands of those that touch them, works, which every one with the least remnant of self-respect spurns with the disdain they deserve, and the indignation they inspire, one should turn away from:

1. Most of the current literature, whether it be what is known as yellow backs teeming over with licentiousness, the gilt-leaved sensational novels; the bulky reviews, or the flippant monthlies, weeklies, or dailies which carp at the holiest and most lawful authorities on earth.

2. Newspapers and pamphlets whose anti-Christian and sickly pages either feed the cold polished pride of the intellect, inculcate a wretchedly empty sentimentality, and openly or secretly unfold the most wicked irreligious principles.

3. Books which stupidly pretend to foretell the future and explain signs or dreams, or any such-like superstitious fooleries.

4. Those false or far-fetched interpretations of the Inspired Writings and of our holiest dogmas. We must remember that it is of faith that 'no Scripture is of private interpretation.'

5. Pages which to-day belch forth some horrid calumnies against persons consecrated to the service of the Most High, scandalous deeds sprung only from the wicked brain of the writer, to-morrow some historical lies a thousand times refuted, yet a thousand times repeated with the same boldness and bitterness.

6. Those illustrations which have become to us what the amphitheatre was to the Romans of old, slaughter-houses for men, and dens of infamy for women, whilst Christians were flung to the lions to pander to the passions of the bloodthirsty Romans. Pages wherein the engraver's satanic skill is used, at one time, to caricature the rites and ceremonies of our holy religion; at another, to display the grossest forms of vice or the most painful and loathsome scenes of wretchedness and crime.

7. Poems or fables which, under the name of histories, are penned to enkindle the most inflammable passions in our nature.

8. Books which, under pretence of encouraging virtue, deify vice, foment and strengthen that passion which is the chief spring of every other.

9. Most of the cheap trash called novels, which, to catch the young and thoughtless, are filled with scenes of love and blood and thunder, amidst which the greatest monsters are held up as heroes of humanity.

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