

every Christian home ought to be a sanctuary, a beautiful imitation of the home-life of the Holy Family at Nazareth—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And that such may be your case, 'may the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.' Amen.

Given at Wellington on this 2nd day of February, in the year of Our Lord, 1909.

✱ FRANCIS,
Archbishop of Wellington.

DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

(Continued from last week.)

Listen to the warning addressed to his readers by the editor of a highly respectable American newspaper: 'The weekly story papers that circulate by the hundred thousand in this country should be suppressed by law. Immoral fiction is their chief attraction for the perverted appetite of young America; but in the Answers to Correspondents Department, to be found in nearly every one of them, lie evil advice and suggestions which are drunk in like water by the youth of our day. This is not all. The press teems with vile advertisements. Patronised by the young and foolish, a medium is offered those who would fatten on the ruin of their species to advertise for the vilest purposes. One of these papers is the . . . Magazine, a well-known . . . weekly paper. It has all the appearance of a respectable ladies' literary and musical journal, and everything in it looks attractive and unobjectionable—except its advertisements on the inside pages, which are a perfect nest of unclean birds. These advertisements are, with devilish cunning, calculated to disseminate licentiousness and vice in every family to which a number of the . . . Magazine finds admission.'

The representative of the Society for the Suppression of Vice has now in his hands letters from hundreds, perhaps thousands, of the unhappy boys and girls who have answered these unutterably foul advertisements from all parts of the United States and Canada. The publication of these letters, if he chose to publish them, would ruin their writers for life. The parent who admits any of these satanic sheets into his house is a murderer.

Dearly beloved Brethren and Children in Jesus Christ, let us be firmly convinced that it is a paramount duty incumbent on all who have the least control of others, not only to warn but to keep them from the contagion of bad books and immoral literature of every kind, which are not only a contagion for families, but a very scourge for society. Let us now consider some of the reasons alleged, or, rather, pretexts assigned, as an excuse for immoral and dangerous reading:—

1st—Is it to while away a few hours in recreation and amusement? No one will blame you for enjoying a moderate amount of recreation and amusement provided it be lawful.

2. Another reads such literature to nourish, strengthen, and improve his mind. How is the mind strengthened and improved? Like the powers of the body, by good, substantial, solid, fitting food. Studious reading is the food of our mind. Whatever nourishment it receives enters into its inmost recesses and brings forth, in due season, thoughts and desires—fruits akin to the nourishment taken—good and profitable if pure and profitable be given; wicked and destructive if poisonous and destructive be received.

Why has the Almighty endowed us with the glorious gift of intelligence? Our catechism gives the answer, 'To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, so as to be eternally happy with Him in the next.' Here is the true food and nourishment of our understanding—the study of truth, of God and the things of God. This it is which raises our mind above the gross material things of earth, whilst etherealizing this noble faculty and spiritualizing our whole being. But when trifles are allowed to engross its attention its powers are gradually enfeebled, and blind reason too often justifies what gross inclinations so urgently enforce. What is the chief aim of the bulk of modern novelists, and the host of lewd writers of our day? To amuse their readers, to gratify unruly passions, though it be at the cost of justice, of honor, and truth. To this base end the regions of fiction or falsehood are freely explored, nothing is too extravagant to be rejected. The laws of order and method are as easily sacrificed as those of truth or probability. At best an idealism is portrayed which it was never intended for ordinary mortals to attain. How then can such reading nourish and strengthen the mind? Even granting that after feeding for hours or days on fictitious incidents, the mind could firmly grasp every delineation of character, even the most varied situation, every word or thought, what greater knowledge would it possess, since amusement is the writer's only aim? For this does the infatuated reader so eagerly pore over the most polluted pages. For this are holy serious volumes flung aside with disgust. For this are sinful ones clung to for hours and hours unobserved. For this does the panting reader so eagerly

trace the least connecting, if amusing link, impatiently yearning for the unravelling of the whole which even pleases when deferred. And when the end is reached, how soon is all that was so captivating forgotten, yet how soon again the vacant mind seeks fresh amusements in absurdities equally deserving scorn and contempt? Thus substituting lying for true historical facts, idle amusement for solid knowledge, that holy thirst for improvement planted by God Himself in the human breast, is destroyed, and a hurtful craving for evil cherished in its stead. No wonder the young and thoughtless, caught by the gaudy trappings of falsehood, disdain the solid, unadorned truth. No wonder minds once gifted with genius and taste can no longer brook the idea of close, laborious study. No wonder true taste becomes vitiated, true history insipid, solid attainments and real progress set aside and for ever despised. Like the disordered stomach which loathes nutritious food, the mind, once fed on such maudlin trash, can no longer support anything solid and substantial.

3. Another will say—'I read such works for the sake of the style, and to acquire fluency of speech.' What an excuse! To form one's style by wallowing in a very sink of vice and unbelief! To learn to speak and write by learning to think and act immorally! Perish the finest literature a thousand times over rather than it be acquired, even were it possible, at such a price! Can the style deaden or lessen the effects of the poisonous contents? Beautiful garments may cover a deformed or diseased body, but will they remove the disease or deformity? Is not the rich softness of texture more apt to communicate the contagion to those who would foolishly appropriate the rich but treacherous apparel? Venomous plants and reptiles may seem fair to the eye, but will their beauty destroy the poison lurking within?

Flimsy in the extreme is the pretext of style and fluency in writing and speech, since those who are the first to put it forward more often read works of the most worthless description. Besides, have we not masterpieces in our own and other languages? Have we not a 'well of English undefiled' without seeking models in the corrupted language of wretchedness and debauchery?

4. Others pretend that they read such literature to acquire a practical knowledge of the world. Satan promised our first parents a practical knowledge if they would but eat the forbidden fruit. They did indulge in eating thereof, but with the loss of Peace and Paradise, of innocence and happiness. They brought upon themselves and their hapless race sorrow and suffering and death. Show us one who has become a deeper thinker, a more eloquent speaker or writer, a greater expert in the affairs of family or society, the Church or the State, and we will show you thousands whom such reading has unfitted and ruined for life.

Some years ago a young lady was sent to school in one of the chief cities of the United States. Fervent and pious and industrious, she soon mastered several languages which she spoke with remarkable ease and correctness. She was always the first in her classes, and, in spite of beauty and wealth, she had but one wish—to give herself to God in the religious state. Her parents obstinately refused their consent. A few years later death deprived her of them both. Poor girl! With no one to guide or control her, with little practical knowledge of the world, she gave herself up to indiscriminate novel reading. Soon the realities of ordinary life became to her tame and distasteful. She would fain imitate what she read and become a real heroine. For this she thought the surest way was to adopt the profession of the stage. Returning one night from the theatre through the streets of New York she fell and seriously injured her spine. She was conveyed to a neighboring house where a charitable lady nursed her with motherly care. One day as she seemed to rally, the lady offered her a pious book which she rejected with scorn, and asked for a novel written by an author of bad repute. A priest came and exhorted her to make her peace with God and prepare for the dread passage from time to eternity. She put him off from day to day and died without receiving the last Sacraments! As the Angel of Death summoned her to the foot of God's throne, the novel was by her side—she actually died grasping it in her hand!

5. Another excuse which we ourselves have often heard is this—'Oh! I would not read the bad parts for the world! I always skip them over, and I read only the good parts.' Pray tell us how do you know that there are bad parts unless you read them? You will shun the bad parts only if you hate them, and if you hate them you will never dare read them unless obliged, and you can be obliged only as authors or others whose duty it is to read to refute them. There are works, written, too, in one of the dead languages, and our Catholic ecclesiastics dare not read them till they have spent twelve or more years in prayer and study, then only on the eve of their ordination as deacons, and because the study of those works is absolutely necessary to fit them for the ministry, when it behoves them to guide and direct the faithful in the sacred tribunal.

6. Some people say—'I know that such papers and reviews are not all that can be desired, but they are better posted in commercial affairs, and my business requires me to subscribe to them and to send them my

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