

against it. (d) In the speech quoted above, Dr. Grace expressed this generous personal opinion: Catholics would continue to pay double contributions for education—one for the maintenance of their own system, the other for that of the non-religious State system which they cannot in conscience accept; they would go on extending their own system, at their own expense, until Catholic children would be practically removed from the dangers of both secularism and of proselytism in the schools; Catholics might then (according to Dr. Grace) help Protestants to Protestantise the public schools, and contribute, as before, to the cost of Protestantising them. And for what purpose? Lest Protestant children might lose faith in Christ, owing to the failure of their parents and clergy to make the sacrifices for religious education that Catholics have been cheerfully making for more than a generation. In other words, having secured the faith of their own children (which is their first and paramount duty), Catholics, although perhaps 'impoverished' by these sacrifices, would, according to Dr. Grace, contribute, financially and otherwise, to saving the faith of Protestant children neglected by their own Churches.

All this showed a magnanimous spirit indeed. But it only moved Dr. Grace's masked accuser to dance an unseemly can-can upon the grave of that noble-hearted man; it only moved 'R.W.' to mutilate and misquote a public document in order to make that fine type of Christian gentleman and scholar appear to be a rabid hater of Christ and of the Christian revelation. If 'R.W.' manipulated a will or deed as he manipulated this parliamentary document and the book of the Rev. Mr. Ross—both of which were open before him—he would be judicially afforded an unpleasant opportunity of expiating his offence. It is to the last degree painful to me to say these things. But this shocking and persistent and clearly deliberate form of misrepresentation is not to be treated with kid gloves or lisping accents or swords of boiled leather. And—may God forgive him!—after these cruel and bitter calumnies, 'R.W.' finds it in his heart to preach the Gospel of truth and Christian chivalry and brotherly love!—Yours, etc.,

EDITOR NEW ZEALAND TABLET.

## PASTORAL LETTER

### DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

(Concluded from last week.)

In the days of our youth we had a companion whom we loved as a brother or the dearest of friends. Though our senior by two or three years, we were friendly rivals at school, and almost inseparable in recreation or vacation. He was a superior youth, endowed with the richest gifts of heart and of mind. One day a woful day for him, he received from a wicked schoolfellow one of those firebrands of hell, a poem which, despite its too fatal renown, is a work worthy of the demon of impurity itself. For the first time we saw that he was long silent and sad; for the first time he refused to show the book we both had reason to suspect.

The sad change wrought in him is most vividly brought before us this moment. We can see his bright blue eye sparkling with unwonted passion; his ruddy lips quivering with dangerous emotion, as he sat poring over and clinging to the seductive pages eagerly drinking in the deadly poison soon to flow through his every vein, and penetrate the inmost recesses of his soul. Ah! unhappy youth, what have you lost and gained by that first fatal reading? The seeds of abomination have already sprung up in your breast. Your excited passions will soon hurry you on to every excess till they hurl you into the lowest depths of guilt! In vain was he warned. In vain was he urged to shun the precipice yawning beneath his feet. He was deaf to the voice of friend, deaf to the voice of his directors, deaf to the voice of conscience, deaf to the voice of his God. Soon he lost all power over himself. His once bright intellect grew disordered, his rich imagination was quickly perverted, the whole faculties of his soul were eaten up by lewd reading, and at times he seemed to be on the very brink of madness. What we all dreaded soon came to pass. The once model youth became, in his turn, a minister of Satan, and found pleasure in corrupting and spreading the empire of vice everywhere around. He had learnt from his favorite authors that duty and conscience were but idle words and fancies, that youth is the time for pleasure and enjoyment, that whatever the Church said about vice and virtue was good only for priests and pious women. Unable to bear the restraint of a college life, he feigned illness, and returned to his parents' home; in fact, he was about to be dismissed. The awful change in his favorite son soon broke his saintly father's heart, and bore him to an untimely grave. His too fond, weak-

minded mother gave him every facility to gratify his morbid passion for immoral literature, she never refused him any single wish.

Of course, our relationship with him was broken. But on the eve of our departure from home to consecrate ourselves to God, we called to bid him farewell. We spoke of the many happy days we had spent together, of the joys of our First Communion. He burst into tears; grace was working within him. Alas! his mother entered the room and reminded him of a party of pleasure he had promised to take part in that evening. Poor, worldly-minded woman, she was afraid to lose her son, who heretofore had longed to give himself to God in the ecclesiastical state.

Next day, a Sunday, we were summoned to his bedside. The night before he had been the gayest of the gay, the idol of a fashionable group of worldlings whom he had charmed by the melodious notes of an exceptionally fine voice, and now he was dying of a malignant disease brought on by the over-exertions of the previous night. It was one of the most touching scenes one could witness. Only a few hours before we had seen him admiring his fine manly frame in a mirror close by, promising himself years of happiness and of health—he was not twenty. We had seen his fond mother admiring and encouraging him in his prospects of a brilliant future—and now his throat had swollen to the level of his face, and was actually covering his chest and rendering him speechless. Near him lay the fatal book, the first cause of his ruin. We eagerly seized it, and flung it into the flames. He saw the action, and gave a convulsive sob, a look, a vacant stare—was it in gratitude or reproach—God alone knew. His afflicted mother stood by wringing her hands in despair. She could not shed a tear, her grief was pent up. It was breaking her heart. The sight was too much for us, and we withdrew. The next day the poor youth was dead. The doctors had wished to perform an operation. The mother refused, lest the beauty of her darling boy should be marred by the unsightly scars it would leave. The priest arrived whilst the doctors were in consultation, and he was asked to return. When he came back it was to view a lifeless corpse, the soul of which had just fled to the judgment seat of God, summoned, too, without the Sacraments of the Church! Oh! what a death! Whilst the priest was pronouncing the last Absolution at the grave, a carriage drove up to the spot, a lady rushed out with dishevelled hair, and swinging her arms madly about called for her boy, her noble darling boy! 'It is I,' she wildly cried; 'it is I who have killed him!' She was carried from the grave a raving maniac!

O God! Tears and sighs alone can express the Church's grief at such sad examples of the ravages inflicted upon her children by the corrupt literature of the present day, of the hellish works so eagerly devoured by each age and sex! Well may we cry out with the Prophet, 'Who will give a fountain of tears to mine eyes, I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people.'—Jer. ix., 1.

Dearly beloved in Christ, if you have ever imbibed a passion for bad or dangerous reading, give it up if you value your peace and happiness of mind, and the welfare of your immortal soul. Shun 'the works of darkness' as you would the approach of a murderer or wild beast. Fear those who might slay the body, but, above all, fear those that may plunge the soul into the everlasting abyss. Not only shun bad books yourselves, but warn all, over whom you may have the least authority or influence, to shun the same. Imitate the example of the faithful of Corinth, of whom it is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that when St. Paul had preached to them on the subject of bad books 'they brought together those they possessed and burnt them before all.'

Was it not with a prophetic view of our own day that the Prophet of old cried out, 'I see a volume flying . . . this is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth.'—Zach. v., 2-3.

Dearly Beloved Brethren and Children of Jesus Christ, cast your eyes around the world, or merely around the country wherein you live. See to what a sad state society has reached at the present day. What has brought about the alarming change. What is it that fills so many hearts and homes with grief and shame, by the cowardly suicides, the cold-blooded murders, the corruption in high places, the reckless speculations, the base bankruptcies, so destructive to society at large? What has begotten those two great evils which, like cankering worms, are gnawing at the very vitals of family and society, the dissolution of the marriage tie, and the cruel, unnatural tampering with life in its very bud? Why is there so widespread unbelief nowadays? What has robbed so many noble souls of all hope of Heaven? What has driven them to seek their whole and sole happiness here below? Whence springs that unquenchable thirst for low pastimes and pleasures? Go to the anti-Christian immoral press, the lewd literature scattered broadcast over the land. There you will trace the source, the fountain-head of the streams of evil threatening to sap the very foundation of all order, social or civil. We know how hard it is to give up this scandalous inven-

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