

Current Topics

Bogus 'Catholic' Criminals

The manufacture of 'Catholic' criminals by the simple process of making lying statements to arresting officers is an industry which has often received attention in these columns. The business will probably flourish and require notice so long as crime statistics continue to be compiled on the present lax basis. In one of our recent articles on the education question we dealt somewhat fully with the whole question of the relation of Catholics to crime, and showed the utter uselessness of ordinary crime 'statistics' for purposes of information and comparison by reason of the enormous extent to which the returns are swollen by these fictitious 'Catholics.' In relation to this matter it is important that Catholic priests and papers should promptly put on record specific examples which come under their notice, for nothing so effectually clinches the Catholic contention as actual, definite, concrete cases in point. In this connection we note that our able and alert contemporary, the *Brisbane Age*, has just been switching on the electric light to a very glaring case in point. A local pawnbroker, when arrested for receiving stolen goods, had calmly given his religion as 'Roman Catholic,' though he was not then, and never had been, in any sense a Catholic.

The full facts are given in the latest issue (March 6) of our esteemed contemporary. We quote as follows: 'At the Criminal Sittings of the Supreme Court held in Brisbane last week, Adolphus James, pawnbroker, on a charge of receiving stolen goods, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. James, when arrested, gave his religion as 'Roman Catholic.' Now, as a matter of fact, James was not a Catholic, though he occasionally attended the evening devotions at St. Stephen's Cathedral, as many non-Catholics do. When James's premises were searched by the detectives, among other things brought to light were documents and a certificate of membership in a Masonic lodge. Yet when the next prison returns are compiled James will figure as a Catholic, simply because he chooses to "give" his religion as "Catholic." Some time back a case was brought under our notice where a young man was awarded twelve months' gaol for a serious offence. This young man gave his religion as "Roman Catholic," yet his parents, brothers, and sisters attend the Church of England; in fact, some of the children are receiving their education at the Church of England school. Another example, some couple of years ago, in Brisbane: a Swede was locked up on the charge of drunkenness. In the watchhouse he gave his religion as Catholic. To the watchhouse keeper this appeared ridiculous, so he insisted on the man stating his religion correctly. He then admitted he was not a Catholic.'

'These are just a few examples,' continues our contemporary, 'of the multitude of similar cases that occur every year, but which escape detection and public exposure wherein criminals as well as mere petty offenders falsely state that they are Catholics—or "Roman" Catholics, in order as one such falsifier admitted when challenged, "to save bringing discredit on his church." In this manner the police court and higher criminal courts statistical returns are unjustly crammed with fictitiously large numbers of "Catholic" offenders. It should also be known to non-Catholics that those offenders who really are Catholics cannot adopt this lying and unjust method of shirking whatever discredit they are to the Catholic body. For a Catholic to deny his religion, even under such circumstances, would not only be the sin of lying, but would also make him guilty of the grave sin of denying his Faith. It is a pity that the law does not provide any punishment for those who make these false statements of their religion.'

Burial and Sentiment

We are often told by would-be social reformers that there ought to be no such thing as sentiment in relation to place or manner of burial. But that such sentiment exists, and that it is very tenacious, is admirably illustrated by a story told by the late Dean Hole. A clergyman whose graveyard was sadly overcrowded, except on the north side of his church—which, being damp and drear, was not used for sepulture—went to a woman who was very old and ill, and having explained to her that the dislike to the shady side was a mere fancy and superstition, asked her as a favor, and for the example of others, to give directions that her interment should take place in the vacant portion of the ground. The old lady took a few moments for consideration, and then made answer: 'Well,

sir, as you say that one part's as good as another, and that it's of no consequence whatever where we're put, p'raps you'll gie us a lead.'

A Fight to a Finish

The French Government have entered on what is evidently meant to be a fight to a finish in the campaign they are carrying on with such relentless bitterness against the right of parents to protect the faith and morals of their children. We referred last week to the infamous Morizot case, in which a French parent, M. Girodet, succeeded, after an immense amount of trouble, delay, and expense, in obtaining from the Court of Appeal at Dijon nominal damages against a teacher—a moral degenerate—in the State school for talking atheism, anti-patriotism, and unprintable indecency to the hapless pupils confided to his care. Instead of being unceremoniously ejected from the profession which he had disgraced, this moral leper and assassin was promptly promoted and appointed to another teaching post to which a higher salary was attached!

And now the Government have gone one step further in their war on religion. Seeing that earnest parents were growing restive under the aggressive irreligiosity of the State teachers, and were beginning to organise themselves for the defence of their children, the Government determined to take drastic measures to immediately nip this movement in the bud. Accordingly, two bills were tabled in quick succession, and have now been finally adopted by the Committee on Education in the French Chamber of Deputies. The first bill punishes with imprisonment up to two years any parent who prevents his children from attending school, or receiving instruction in obligatory subjects, or using the authorised text-books (however anti-Christian they may be). It further prescribes the same penalties for any person who shall incite to disobedience of this law. Thus a journalist or priest who pointed out the danger to children's morals contained in any objectionable lesson in the authorised text-books would be held to be 'inciting' to a breach of the foregoing regulations, and would become immediately liable to fine and imprisonment. The second bill enacts that 'the civil responsibility of the State is substituted for that of the members of the public teaching body for the acts performed by them to the prejudice of the scholars during school hours.' That is, a parent will no longer be allowed to sue a teacher for irreligious or immoral teaching; he must take legal action against the Education authorities, represented in this instance by the *autoorat* and Grand Panjandrum of French provincial life, the Prefect of the Department. The meaning of all this is so clear that he who runs may read. M. Girodet, in his efforts to secure redress for the blackguard Morizot's misdoings, appealed to the Education officials again and again—and they, in every case, did nothing but attempt to whitewash the ruffianly offender. And when at last the Dijon Court of Appeal gave a final judgment against Morizot, the departmental authorities showed their sense of the fitness of things by at once transferring and promoting this human jackal. What the new bill means, therefore, is this: parents have now practically no redress against irreligious and immoral—or even blasphemous and indecent—teachers; their most sacred and inalienable rights as parents are being taken away, and their children are being gradually confiscated to the State. It is not to be supposed that religious-minded parents will remain like passive doormats under such tyranny, and when the inevitable reaction comes, and a Government friendly to religion is returned, it is consoling to think that the anti-clericals will be 'hoist with their own petard,' and that the powers they have so generously conferred on themselves may be used with very telling and deadly effect against them.

The 'N.Z. Times' Again

Quantum mutatus ab illo! What malignant microbe has invaded the office of the once able, scholarly, and reputable *New Zealand Times*? This paper, at one time in the forefront of New Zealand dailies, has of late been going steadily down hill, and is being dragged, by callow and slovenly editing, from the high and honored position it once occupied down to a level approaching that of a gutter journal. A few weeks ago the Rev. Father Hickson, S.M., had occasion to impeach it for publishing a coarse and bitter attack by a non-Christian on Christian faith and sentiment. His timely and temperate protest was approved and endorsed by some of the most powerful secular papers in the Dominion. Father Hickson's protest evoked from the Managing Editor a declaration of 'principles' which, if pushed to their logical conclusion in the columns of the *New Zealand Times*, would lead to energetic action under the libel and slander laws and

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