

Current Topics

The Scare

Bacon represents some folk as so selfish that they would set a house on fire merely to roast their own eggs. The 'yellow' press has been again playing this dangerous game—fanning the flame of international distrust and hate, pushing a 'situation' towards a 'crisis,' with the off-chance of forcing a crisis into a war. In 1898, when the American 'yellow' press was rushing the United States into a war with Spain, Mr. Labouchere published in his paper (*London Truth*) the following Machiavellian proposal—which, although 'wrote sarcastic, is no more sarcasm merely than was Dean Swift's *Modest Proposal* for the butchering of healthy Irish infants for the 'cross-channel meat market': 'Each country should have a secret service corps, well instructed in all the methods of taking life by poison. So soon as a war is about to break out, each of the belligerents would endeavor to poison the sovereign, the ministers, the representatives, and especially the journalists, of the other country. After a very few deaths, I am convinced that peace would not be broken. This may seem at first sight a startling proposal; but between poisoning men and taking their lives by shells, bullets, and other such projectiles, there is in reality no difference; and my plan would result in a great saving of life. Instead of mowing down thousands, burning villages, and other such barbarities, a few leading men would be taken off. By the present system the few promote a war and the many suffer by it. This, indeed, is the reason why there are wars. I would bring the consequences of hostilities directly home to those who are responsible for them.'

Mr. Labouchere's little plan would not meet with the approval of the moralist. But he has a shrewd appreciation of the perils of a jingoistic 'yellow' press.

'Hot Cross Buns'

The old English Catholic custom of eating 'hot cross buns' on Good Friday comes year by year into more conspicuous evidence even in the southern Province, whose people (being chiefly Scottish) never took kindly to this usage by their ain firesides ayont the Tweed. The 'hot cross bun' (with its brown sugary surface marked with a cross) is still composed of materials that were originally specially selected with a view to compliance with the Catholic discipline of the 'black fast,' which is observed on Good Friday. In his *Book of Days* (vol. II., p. 418) Chambers tells how thousands of the poor in England are engaged in 'the business of disseminating these quasi-religious cakes' on each recurring Good Friday, only intermitting the duty during church hours. 'And if the eagerness with which young and old eat them could be held as expressive of an appropriate sentiment within their hearts, the English might be deemed a pious people.' In these countries we do not hear the familiar street-cry that resounds throughout England on Good Friday morning:

'One a penny, buns;
Two a penny, buns;
One a penny, two a penny;
Hot cross buns!'

Instead, the cross-marked window-card cries to the passer-by, in the reddest of red-ink: 'Hot X buns!'

Some State School 'History'

That useful and single-minded organisation, the Australian Catholic Truth Society (312 Lonsdale street, Melbourne), has made our co-religionists once more its debtors by its compact and telling exposure of the sort of 'history' that is taught in public schools beyond the Tasman Sea. The work is done, and (considering the limited space of a penny pamphlet) thoroughly done, by Mr. Wallace. A similar work is much needed in New Zealand, dealing with the sectarian and legendary rubbish—written or compiled for the most part by mere literary hodmen—that is palmed off as 'history' in some of our public schools. One of the worst samples of this sort of stuff that we have yet come across was lately (and perhaps still is) used as a text-book in a High School in the South Island. Catholic as well as non-Catholic boys were required to read the wretched and semi-illiterate production, which spun the discredited legend of Luther's 'discovery' of the Bible, made heroes and demi-gods of the Elizabethan pirate-privateers, and had but two colors in its palette—gleaming white for its Protestants, and the black of Erebus for its Papists. Yet this lately was (and perhaps still is) a text-book in a school system which is vaunted to be

'neutral' and 'unsectarian' and 'undenominational.' In the New Zealand Parliament, on August 31, 1877, Mr. Curtis (a Protestant representative) spoke strongly of the 'sectarian histories in the schools' of the time. 'The histories,' added he, 'which we use in our schools are sectarian histories, Protestant histories, histories from one point of view, having no mercy whatever for the Roman Catholic faith. Now, it is not fair to expect the Roman Catholics to send their children to schools where they would read sectarian histories altogether opposed to their teaching' (*Parliamentary Debates*, vol. XXV., p. 176). We have no longer in our schools the rough and offensive epithets and the crude and legendary barbarities of Collier. But our perusal of two or three of our public school 'histories' has amply convinced us that the schoolmaster has not yet, in this respect, been abroad to great purpose in New Zealand, and that the compilation of our so-called school 'histories' has been to an extent entrusted to men who do not seem to know that writers of such eminence as Brewer, Pocock, Blunt, Child, Creighton, Gasquet, Gairdner, and Maitland (to mention only a few original investigators of the first rank) ever lived. The result is, that, in some important respects, our public schools serve up, for history, historical romance—or hysteria.

Warning Wisdom

Don Quixote took lightly the blunt and friendly warnings which his esquire and friend, Sancho Panza, gave him about the windmills of Montiel. So the Knight of the Rueful Countenance set his lance in rest and went full tilt at the solid walls and the whirling sails, and got mauled almost to death for his folly. Full many a time did wise and foreseeing counsellors warn the authorities of the Church in France that they were leaving themselves without defence in the coming religious crisis by their failure to oppose to the anti-religious press of the country a strong and able and patriotic and aggressive Catholic press, and by their policy of resting content with the puny local efforts of pitiful, half-starved, nerveless, spineless, little diocesan *Semaines Religieuses* devoid of both power or pence or influence. The lesson of this blunder is, for the fortieth time, rubbed in by a second edition of a timely and spirited little work by Paul Barbier, *L'Eglise de France et les Catholiques Français*, which has just been published by Lethielleux, of Paris. Every one now realises that the lot of the Church in France might have been different if the clergy of all ranks in that country had, like their confrères beyond the Rhine, sunk, in the formation of a bold, virile, and able religious press, a good percentage of the millions expended on churches and colleges that have been now seized and plundered and sold by the aggressive atheist rulers of the Third Republic. They are now endeavoring, under sore difficulties, to do what might, ten to thirty years ago, have been done with comparative ease. History has a trick of repeating itself. And the history of the French persecution contains, in this as in other respects, warnings which we in these countries cannot afford either to forget or to ignore. It is pleasant to see the star of hope shining through the gloom of persecution. 'There are now,' says M. Barbier, 'fewer routine Catholics, fewer hypocrites, than in any former period. There are fewer egoists, fewer cowardly spirits, fewer half-believers, fewer formalists, for whom religion was only an attitude or a pose. All this is a sign, not of retrogression, but of progress. Let the French clergy and laity march forward hand in hand to coming battles; they will conquer.'

So may it be!

Education; An Anglican View

From an editorial article in the April number of an Anglican contemporary, the *New Brighton Monthly Magazine* (Canterbury), we take the following: 'In one of his letters Sir Robert Stout appeals to the well-worn argument that children trained in secular schools compare more than favorably with those brought up under what he describes as the sanction of ecclesiasticism. We do not say for one moment that our secular education can not turn out good citizens. But we are sure of this, that it is making them forget that "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The lessening of the growth of crime must, in many cases, be put down, not to the fear of wounding a loving Heavenly Father, but to the thought that the State, rightly, will not let the offence go unpunished. Only a few years ago we met, in the backblocks, a girl who had not even heard the name of Jesus. What was there to keep her from crime but the fear of being found out? . . . It may be that sins which bring their certain punishment at the hands of the authorities are on the decrease, but what of those hidden sins which no detective can find out, and which, even if they are found out, are not punishable before the earthly judge? . . . As things are,

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