

KINS—no friendly critic, by the way—writing on 'Kilmainham Memories' in the *Windsor Magazine*, says that 'crime,' as known in the sister kingdoms, is practically non-existent in Ireland. 'Our great guilds of crime—the bands of professional burglars and robbers; the financial conspirators; the adept forgers; the trained thieves; the habitual leviars of blackmail; the bogus noblemen, parsons, and ladies of family; the "long-firm" practitioners; the hotel and railway sharps; the "magsmen," "hooks," "bounces"—these are almost unrepresented in Ireland. In a word,' concludes Mr. HOPKINS, 'so far as habitual and professional crime is concerned, there is not as decent a country in Europe.' And the trade in white gloves, assizes after assizes all over Ireland, goes to show that this admission of an unfriendly critic is well grounded in fact.

(2) Again: the Palmerston cleric's quoted statement indiscriminately lumps misdemeanants as 'criminals.' And his thesis requires that he shall deal only with 'criminals' properly so-called. The overwhelmingly greater number of offences dealt with in our courts are in law petty offences or misdemeanors. The one item of over-indulgence in strong drinks represented for instance, no fewer than 8120 out of the 20,624 summary convictions in the Magistrates' Courts in New Zealand during the year 1901. (3) Our critic also assumes that all the criminals of the Colony are duly caught, convicted, and entered up in statistical returns. But nothing is farther from the truth. Statistics, in New Zealand as in Great Britain and elsewhere, do not represent even the actual amount of serious crime known to the police. The majority of burglaries and homicides, for instance, are not cleared up. It is difficult to sheet home great numbers of crimes, such as pre-natal murder and other forms of infanticide. Whole classes of frauds and swindles and breaches of trust never come before the courts, owing to the cost and trouble of instituting law proceedings. And for analogous reasons, coupled with the difficulty of detection, many grave crimes against morality never figure in our criminal courts. (4) Lastly, our northern critic assumes that a proper and correct record is kept of the religious beliefs of all the criminals in the country. This is undue assumption with a vengeance. (a) In the first place, as stated above, the roll of our criminals is far from complete. (b) In the second place all convicted criminals are not required to make a statement of their religious beliefs, but only those that are sent to prison. And (c) it is, we believe, the experience of every priest who has been engaged in prison work in these countries—as we were for a time in three separate places—that many non-Catholic criminals have the habit of giving themselves Irish 'aliases' and falsely designating themselves as Catholic. The case of the Williamstown murderer (who was a non-Catholic Sunday-school teacher) furnished a notable case in point, and the Melbourne *Advocate* and the Adelaide *Southern Cross* have exposed other flagrant instances of the kind from time to time. This is a matter which urgently calls for vigilant and emphatic action on the part of our reverend clergy.

Our prison statistics, therefore—which alone give the religious beliefs of offenders—furnish no evidence whatever for the assertion that that 'the Romanists of New Zealand have a far larger percentage of criminals than the Protestants, who give their children the Bible.' The presumption, in fact, favors a very opposite conclusion—namely, that the 'Romanists' do not furnish as large a percentage of criminals as the adherents, or nominal adherents, of other denominations. And this presumption is based by us on two facts: (a) the lesser relative number of criminals among the Irish people (who form by far the greater part of the New Zealand Catholic population) in their home-land (as shown above); and (b) their lesser relative number of criminals in Victoria, where they live in practically the same conditions as in this Colony. We have not the latest figures before us, but Mr. HAYTER, the Victorian Government statistician, in a work published some years ago, bears abundant witness to the fact that the Irish population of Victoria furnished a far lesser number of criminals—or persons guilty of offences of 'a serious nature'—than the English or the Welsh, and that their misbehavior consisted almost altogether of 'minor offences, hardly amounting to crimes.' The published returns of 'law and crime'

do not furnish the faintest shadow of evidence that a different state of things prevails among the Irish or Catholic population of New Zealand. If our Palmerston North assailant has any faith in gaol statistics as conclusive evidence of the number of 'criminals' to each denomination, he will find a nut to crack in the latest report of the Prison Commissioners for Scotland. It shows that our critic's native land has more than twice as many committals to prison as England, and nearly twice as many as Ireland, where Coercion Acts and an outrageously hostile and meddling garrison of armed police turn into 'crimes' large classes of actions that in other countries would not rise to the level of misdemeanors.

But our prison statistics furnish no reliable evidence even as to the number of misdemeanants or petty offenders for which the colony, or any given religious denomination in it, is responsible. (1) Over the published tables of 'law and crime' it is expressly stated that 'each offence is reckoned as a distinct person.' Thus, if JOHN O'DON is 'run in' seven times in one year for over-indulgence in drink, he counts in the statistics as seven separate misdemeanants. (2) Again: great numbers of misdemeanants and others convicted in our magistrates' courts do not figure in our prison reports because their means allow them to pay fines in cases where the poorer offender has to go into durance vile. Thus, in 1901, out of 20,624 summarily convicted, no fewer than 10,088 were merely fined, and 1,926 were ordered to prison as an alternative to paying a fine or finding security for good behavior. The systematic impoverishment of Irish Catholics by the operation of the penal code and the agrarian laws is responsible for the fact that they furnish an undue proportion to the poorer and poorest part of the population in these countries. And this circumstance would naturally account for a greater relative frequency of appearance, on their part, on the pages of our prison records. MULHALL, MACDONNELL, and statisticians generally acknowledge that petty larceny, drunkenness, and certain allied offences are the outcome of poverty. And the overstrung temperament and relative poverty of a great mass of our Catholic people greatly tend to bring their offenders prominently into the public eye. They drink, for instance, in the open, under the eye of the police, and, in their case, an arrest may be associated with three or four separate charges. People of more phlegmatic temperament or fuller purse get drunk, but their offence is unknown to the police records. Probably not two per cent. of the total cases of drunkenness in society figure before our courts. Our statistics of 'law and crime' contain no evidence that offences arising from poverty or low social status are proportionately more numerous among New Zealand Catholics than among persons of the same class that are adherents of other religious denominations. And we are convinced that in the graver offences that constitute 'criminals'—in murder, suicide; rape, indecent assault, burglary, swindling, infanticide, pre-natal murder, juvenile depravity, flagrant conjugal infidelity, and in other grave infractions of the moral laws of which God takes note where the policeman and the statistician fail—the Catholics of New Zealand would gladly take their chances as against those of all other sections of the community.

Notes

An Auckland Fanatic

Somewhere in one of his 'afferisms' the 'philosopher of the Sandwich Islands' compares quarrelsome bigoted people to a blind mule. They are, says he, 'anxious to kick, but can't tell where.' The representatives of this class in New Zealand make up in noise what they lack in numbers, brains, and respectability. They are ever anxious to kick at 'Rome,' although they cannot always tell just where to strike. And the proof of their fitness to criticise her doctrines and practices lies in the fact that the blind creatures have never seen the cover of a Catholic theological work and could not tell a syllogism from a haystack. The antics of one of the more violent of this order of fanatics created what might easily have been a serious disturbance in Auckland lately. He exposed in his window a number of coarse and outrageous attacks on the Catholic Church.

GEO. T WHITE

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