

THE EDUCATION QUESTION

The following is the full text of a letter which was sent to the *Thames Star*, but, owing to want of space, only a portion of it was published:—

Sir,—When I furnished you with a few excerpts from Dr. Cleary's illuminating exposition of the educational demands of Catholics in reply to the *Post's* hostile criticism, I had not the slightest intention of raising a discussion on the merits or demerits of the question. However, since a correspondent has seen fit to open up the controversy, I appeal again to you in the name of truth and justice for space in your valuable paper to reply to the ill-founded charges which 'A Catholic, but not a Romanist' has caused to be promulgated. As regards his dream, there is really nothing to say by way of reply. I simply counsel him to overcome the painful weakness by giving more careful attention to diet and by contracting habits of industry. In the words of Shakespeare—

'Dreams are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;
Which is as thin of substance as the air,
And more inconsistent than the wind.'

It is quite evident that your correspondent lingered too long in the garden with the insecticides (which uncanny things were the dramatic personæ of the dream of 'nightmare' referred to above) under exposure to the hot noon-day sun which has warped his intellect, as he is conspicuously incompetent to handle the Catholic education question. Getting down to bedrock I will deal with the wild assertion that Roman Catholic education was responsible (I am pleased he uses the past tense) for more than Dr. Cleary or I would be proud to publish, which contention is 'supported' by an array of discredited denominational returns of crime culled from the Year Book for 1905 (which source of information was prudently concealed). I am grateful indeed to my Anglican friend for dragging in such 'overwhelming evidence' of 'Romish corruption,' as it affords me the opportunity of refuting its value. 'I have left out the Church of England,' quoth he, 'because there are thousands (of criminals) who set themselves down as belonging to the Church who are really nothing.' Feeling certain that 'thousands' was pretty wide of the mark, I had recourse to the same Year Book and found that the actual criminal returns for that denomination were only 1147. So your correspondent has unintentionally libelled his Anglican brethren, or some of them, and he owes me a little debt of thanks for the correction. Considering the numerical strength of the Anglican Church, the figures are not high, and I readily admit the probability of their inaccuracy. But on what authority or evidence, by what process of reasoning does he arrive at the conclusion, with a cocksureness as if he had compiled the statistics himself, that the denominational returns of crime are correct in every instance except one? Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others have as much cause to complain of the worthlessness of these returns for purposes of comparison. It is now generally admitted that no reliance can be placed on the official declarations as to religion by prisoners. The same prisoner at one time declares himself a Protestant, at another time a Jew or Roman Catholic, or of no religion. The best and most complete refutation of the figures supplied by your correspondent is to be found in the fact that the very compilers of the Year Book have themselves become so entirely convinced of their inaccuracy and unreliability that they have ceased to compile them, and your correspondent will search in vain, in the Year Book for 1910, for the old tables relating to denominational returns of crime. In Australia these tables have been so frequently used as a weapon of calumny against Catholics that Cardinal Moran has taken some steps to have the returns clarified somewhat. From the reports supplied by gaol chaplains he found that, on an average, one-third of those who register themselves as Catholics, are Protestants of one or other denomination, and have never had any connection with the Catholic Church; that three-fourths of the Catholic convicts either had no education at all, or had frequented the public schools. As a result, not more than 2 per cent. of the Catholic convicts are found to have received religious instruction in their school days. So that when you deduct from the incongruous total the Protestant convicts who have falsely registered themselves as Catholics, and the Catholic convicts who attended State schools, you will be able to contrast the merits of the two systems, and decide whether or no the fruits of the religious school are not incomparably superior to, and infinitely more cherishable, than those of the irreligious school.

Having established to his satisfaction that religious education is a potent factor in begetting criminals, your correspondent asks why he should be expected to pay for our religious system. The query would be pertinent if Catholics contemplated such a proposal. But we are not calling upon the State to tax Protestants for the support of our religious dogmas. We are asking the State simply to refund to us OUR (not YOUR) quota of the contribution to the general education fund. Under the present system the State provides education of one kind—and takes Catholic money for the purpose—which kind Catholics

never have accepted, and never can conscientiously accept. Does it appear in the least way just to your correspondent that Catholics should be compelled to support State schools for non-Catholic children in addition to making stupendous sacrifices for the erection and maintenance of their own schools? It is no wonder that the *Dominion* was moved to exclaim: 'So far as the Catholic schools are concerned, their separation from the State is surely not an argument for the penalising of those who support them.' 'Ought not these Romanists to try the Methodist or some other system?' Will your correspondent tell us what is the Methodist system. I am sorry that he has not yet learnt all his manners. Does he not know that 'Romanist,' according to a writer in remote 1812, 'was no longer applied to Catholics by any gentleman or scholar. If he is not a scholar, he should at least act the gentleman even if the role be found somewhat arduous at first. I would like to add more to this letter, but, recognising that there are limits, I refrain. I thank my anti-Romanist friend for the good-natured suggestion of his to send Catholic investigators to Spain and Portugal for some reason or other. Personally speaking, I would much prefer a trip to Rotorua, where the presence of active geysers and boiling pools would serve during my retreat to keep me in constant remembrance of the futile vaporing and ebullitions of my friend, who in the interim could utilise his time in studying standard works on the Catholic education question. I shall be glad to oblige him in that direction.—I am, etc.,

April 5.

A CATHOLIC.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC DEFENCE UNION

OFFICIAL LETTER OF THE HIERARCHY OF IRELAND

By REV. P. J. DOWLING, C.M.

Although a week later than my promise, I have now much pleasure in submitting to your readers what I may term as the first stage in the development of this project which has aroused practically world-wide interest.

There is less attention given to federation by the English-speaking section of the Church than by their brethren on the Continent. In all the Continental countries there is a considerable effort made at combination amongst the Catholics, and the object of these unions is to defend Catholic interests against the Socialist, to support the Catholic press, to help the Catholic workman, etc. There is a great lack of enthusiasm amongst us in all these respects. Naturally, therefore, before we could ask those federations to fall into the ranks of an international union the first step should be to form national unions amongst ourselves in order to possess a unit for the bigger amalgamation by and by. Nothing could or should be attempted in this direction without the approval of the Bishops. Accordingly, as soon as possible after the Leeds Congress, I placed before the Bishops of Ireland and England an outline of a scheme for the International Union.

Through the kindness of Most Rev. Dr. Browne, the Irish Bishops did me the honor of allowing me to make a personal explanation in the presence of their meeting in October, and whilst giving a very cordial hearing to the outline of my plans, they asked me to hand to each Bishop a written copy of the scheme and promised me to have it officially considered at the meeting of their Standing Council in January.

The following is a copy of the paper placed in the Bishops' hands:—

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC DEFENCE UNION.

Scheme Proposed by Rev. P. J. Dowling, C.M.

1. The object of this Union is to join together a number of bodies already existing, and other Catholics that may wish to join, in one common league to assist the Catholics in defending themselves against the organised attack of Freemasonry in various countries. The Union is strictly for defence.

2. The means adopted will be (a) to watch the press and utilise it in exposing the plots and calumnies that are employed in the warfare against the Church, (b) to provide an international trusteeship, registered as a commercial company, which in case of need will undertake the guardianship of threatened Church property, (c) to make common cause and concerted action with regard to the commerce of a country that engaged in a warfare against the Church, and to use every means to ban all products of that country everywhere the Union exists so long as that hostility continues, (d) to supply funds to fight the cause of priests and religion when attacked before local tribunals, (e) to use any other means the Council may adopt as legitimate defence against the attacks of the enemies of the Church.

3. The purposes of the Union will need a number of paid agents or organisers. It is proposed that every member will pay one shilling per year to the funds. If twenty million Catholics join the Union it will mean that a war chest of one million a year will be at the disposal of the Union.