

our right to say that to attack any politician and try to oust him from Parliament, not because of his political views or of his incapacity, but solely and merely on the ground of his religion, is in the last degree unmanly and contemptible. Speaking entirely from the non-party point of view, and with reference only to his work as a Minister, it will be admitted by friend and foe that in the various departments which he has controlled, Sir Joseph Ward has proved himself the ablest and most progressive administrator that New Zealand politics has known for many a year. His present temporary eclipse is not the first he has known. After his previous brief retirement from political life, the country was glad to get him back again. History, in this respect, is quite likely to repeat itself.

The Two Forces

Seventy years ago Newman wrote some words that have proved prophetic, regarding the probable development of the religious and irreligious forces of the time. Discussing the question of the future of religion, he thought that Evangelical Religion (so-called) might hold its ground for a time, but only for a time. He 'observed upon its organisation; but on the other hand it had no intellectual basis; no internal idea, no principle of unity, no theology.' 'Its adherents,' he said, 'are already separating from each other; they will melt away like a snow-drift. It has no straightforward view on any one point, on which it professes to teach, and to hide its poverty, it has dressed itself out in a maze of words. We have no dread of it at all; we only fear what it may lead to. It does not stand on intrenched ground, or make any pretence to a position; it does but occupy the space between contending powers, Catholic Truth and Rationalism. Then, indeed, will be the stern encounter, when two real and living principles, simple, entire, and consistent, one in the Church, the other out of it, at length rush upon each other, contending not for names and words, or half-views, but for elementary notions and distinctive moral characters.'

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Few men have a more accurate knowledge of the signs of the times in Europe than Mr. Hilaire Belloc; and according to this thoughtful and capable judge, the day of 'the stern encounter' predicted by Newman is now upon us. In a notable address delivered in London, on November 15, to over fifteen hundred members of the Guild of the Blessed Sacrament, he declared that the business of the Church in this world was a fighting business, and that the Church to-day was essentially a Church militant. And then he proceeded to indicate the one and only serious enemy with which the Church has now to contend. 'Modern Europe,' he said, 'was no longer a society of divided Christians. It had become a society in which two things only stood opposed. The Catholic Church on one side, and upon the other that nameless thing which desired the destruction upon earth of the name of Jesus Christ. They had not Protestantism to fight to-day. It was not this or that particular opponent of the Catholic Church, but the general spirit, he would not say of hostility so much as of negation, the general spirit that took it for granted that a new earth was going to be built, a new society that would satisfy men without religion. Against that spirit, now universal in Europe, there stood but one opponent—the Catholic Church. The issue between the Catholic Church and her nameless but universal enemy was now joined; the battle had begun. In the near future that battle of which he spoke would become as clear and apparent to the most ignorant and circumscribed as it was now apparent to those who knew their Europe and its large issues. Catholics had not only that principal task of defending the revelation of God, but also of preserving civilisation. They were the garrison, and were holding a place about to be besieged. Whatever their trade or profession, it was now the worse for them, in a temporal sense, that they professed Catholicism. Perhaps in the future that profession might bring physical pain and death. Pray God it might! For physical pain

and death were the realities which were the test of military quality.'

Is Death Painful

The question as to whether or not death is accompanied at the last by acute physical pain has often been discussed. It is undeniable that in a proportion of cases there is the dreaded death agony; but it seems equally certain that in a majority of instances death brings its own chloroform, and that when disease has done its work, death is frequently no more painful than falling asleep. Such at least is the view of no less an authority than Sir William Osler, the distinguished Oxford Professor of Medicine. Commenting in the *Spectator* on Maeterlinck's recent book on *Death*, he says: 'A student for many years of the art and of the act of dying, I read with eagerness Maeterlinck's recent essay, only, I must confess, to be disappointed. A brilliant example of the type of literature characterised by Hamlet in his famous reply to Polonius, there is an unpleasant flavour, a cadaverous mustiness about the essay which even the words cannot cover; and in spite of the plea for burning burials, one smells everywhere "the mould above the rose." To those of your readers who feel after the reading, as I did, the chill of the charnel-house, let me urge an hour in the warm sunshine of the Phædo. But I write for another purpose—to protest against the pictures which are given of the act of dying, "The Tortures of the Last Illness," "The Uselessly Prolonged Torments," "The Unbearable Memories of the Chamber of Pain," "The Pangs of Death," "The Awful Struggle," "The Sharpest Peak of Human Pain," and "Horror." The truth is, an immense majority of all die as they are born—oblivious. A few, very few, suffer severely in the body, fewer still in the mind.'

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Sir William Osler gives expression to the same view in his interesting volume of *Counsels and Ideals*. After pointing out the value of 'that sweet and gracious feeling of an ever-present immortality,' and lamenting that 'that golden cord of Catholic doctrine, the Communion of the Saints, so comforting to the faithful in all ages, is worn to a thread in our working-day world,' he discusses, from the purely physical standpoint, the question of how man dies, and come to the conclusion that in a majority of cases he dies unconscious. 'I have careful records,' he says, 'of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concern us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain and distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no sign one way or the other; like their birth, their death was "a sleep and a forgetting." It is not so much the pain of death that is to be dreaded as the fact, and the awful issues that depend upon it. It is only the Christian that can really welcome death, and say, with Keble,

'No smile is like the smile of death,
When, all good musings past,
Rise wafted with the parting breath
The sweetest thought, the last.'

A new Irish organisation in London, called 'The Union of the Four Provinces of Ireland,' which was lately established, held its inaugural dinner recently. Its aim is to link London Irishmen in a bond of union, irrespective of creed or politics, and eventually to establish an Irish Chamber of Commerce in London. Catholics and Protestants, Unionists and Nationalists, are members of this Council.

Rev. Thomas F. Price and Rev. James Anthony Walsh, the organisers of the contemplated American Foreign Missionary Seminary, having received a letter of encouragement from the Pope, will open temporary quarters at Hawthorne, New York, and proceed at once to form what will be known as the Catholic Foreign Missionary Society of America. They will make known soon afterwards the full character of their work and will appeal for students.