

Current Topics

Mr. Chesterton on 'Little Bethel'

Mr. G. K. Chesterton has evidently small respect for extreme evangelicalism either as a creed or as a religion; and his new book on the *Victorian Age in Literature* has some biting and more than ordinarily contemptuous references to the narrower type of Non-conformity. Here is a sample:—'Thus, for instance, he [Dickens] hated that Little Bethel to which Kit's mother went; he hated it simply as Kit hated it. Newman could have told him it was hateful, because it had no root in religious history; it was not even a sapling sprung of the seed of some great human and heathen tree; it was a monstrous mushroom that grows in the moonshine and dies in the dawn. Dickens knew no more of religious history than Kit; he simply smelt the fungus, and it stank.' That is certainly strong; and the passage has naturally elicited some vehement and vigorous 'replies.'

Anglican Attitude in N.S. Wales

Official Bible League speakers and publications are continually assuring us that the League system in New South Wales gives absolute and universal satisfaction, that not a voice is lifted against it, and that no one—saving the Catholic body—ever expresses the slightest wish or makes the slightest move for anything better. This is one of the many statements promulgated by the League which are certainly not so. Time and again representative Anglicans have complained of the inadequacy of the system; and have urged on their people the necessity for having schools of their own. Here is a recent instance in point. We give it as we find it in a letter addressed to the *Sydney Church Standard* of April 4, a paper which is now one of the most influential Anglican journals in Australia. It will be noted that the communication represents not only the writer's own view but also that of an Anglican paper, the *Southern Churchman*.

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The *Church Standard* correspondent writes: 'Sir,—The editor of the *Southern Churchman* speaks of the need of Lenten discipline in days of almost unparalleled laziness, selfishness, and indifference, and that our only hope is with our children, and he wisely pleads for more *Church schools*. What, indeed, can be grander than having Churchmen placed at the head of these schools? And that, of course, implies men and women leading (example is better than precept) the children on Prayer Book lines, leading them to love the Church of their forefathers and to obey her teaching: teachers who ought to be full of enthusiasm for the Church, looking only upon the school as it were one of the branches of activity. This is, indeed, the only reason for such schools—loyalty to Christ and His Church. Then, to my mind, the multiplying of Church schools is impossible till the Church has a teaching Order of devoted men and women, who, out of pure love for the Church's children, are willing to devote their lives in this direction, and who are supported by the Church's leaders, and who are ever found in sympathy with the parochial clergy, working hand in hand. *This is the only solution*. For a Church school working unsympathetically towards the parish is almost inconceivable: and surely Rome is not the only organisation which possesses devoted and self-sacrificing men and women who are willing to devote their lives in this direction.—Faithfully yours,

'CHAS. E. BURGESS.'

The Catholic Attitude

As to the attitude of the Catholics in New South Wales towards the system, it could not be better expressed than in the words of his Grace Archbishop Kelly in an address delivered on April 23 at the opening of a bazaar in the Bible Hall—words which dispose once for all of the suggestion that because Catholics are not every other week protesting against the system they must be regarded as approving or at least as

acquiescing in it. 'I am speaking to Australians in general,' said his Grace, 'and I say that it (the N.S. Wales system) is most objectionable to Catholics, that it is in itself unstatesmanlike, and that from a religious point of view it is nothing better than a delusion, a mockery, and a snare. Allow me to draw attention to the position we Catholics are placed in: If we are silent our silence is taken as praise; if, on the other hand, we keep on complaining about the public schools system, we are told that people are tired of our complaints, that the public is satisfied with the State schools system, and that we are an unreasonable, intractable, recalcitrant minority.'

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'What has been our policy, therefore? Now and again on given occasions we have emphatically protested against the system of having Bible or Scripture lessons given by a teacher who may or may not have any religion as altogether unsuitable for Catholics. We have gone into the history of this system also, and we have shown that it is not at all to the credit of Australia to have taken it up: At the Education Conference, convened in 1904, I think, by the then Minister of Education, Mr. Perry, the late Cardinal spoke to this effect. So did others, including myself. At the last Catholic Congress, held in Sydney, I devoted considerable time to showing that these Scripture lessons given in the public schools had been garbled, and did not present the Gospel truth fairly to the children of New South Wales, even on most important points. . . . We have not been altogether silent, but our legislation that our Catholic children, when they are compelled to attend public schools, should not be present at these lessons continues. Catholic parents would fail in their duty if they did not see that their children were absent from these lessons. Therefore, it is false for anyone to say that the Catholics of New South Wales are content with the present system of Bible lessons and religious instruction imparted in the name of secular instruction.'

A C.T.S. Publication

Some time ago we felt it our duty to comment unfavorably on a pamphlet issued by the English Catholic Truth Society and purporting to give the story of the life and work of Nano Nagle, foundress of the Presentation Order of Nuns. The publications of the C.T.S. have a high reputation—and deservedly so—for fairness, accuracy, and ripe scholarship; and for ourselves we have the most enthusiastic admiration for the magnificent work which the Society has done and is doing for the defence and propagation of the faith. But the Nano Nagle pamphlet is neither fair nor accurate. Its unfairness lies in the exaggerated and highly colored description which it gives of the moral condition of the Irish people of Nano Nagle's day, a description which is based largely on some emphatic and heated utterances of her biographer, Dr. Hutch. Had the pamphlet writer made it clear that the lurid picture she paints was only partial and local in its scope it might have been allowed to pass; but put forward, as it virtually is, as a general description of the condition of the Irish people it is not sustained by the facts and testimony of sober history. According to the C.T.S. pamphlet the Irish of the penal days were without a knowledge of God, steeped in heathen darkness, and 'sunk in immorality'; according to the Rev. E. A. D'Alton's monumental history the people, while undoubtedly crushed and degraded in many ways, 'looked to God alone for deliverance,' and 'clung to the faith they loved,' and 'their standard of domestic morals was the highest in the world.' On such questions the historian, with his judicial mind, due sense of proportion, and truer perspective, is surely a safer guide than the almost necessarily partial and partisan biographer. The English C.T.S. can have no possible inducement or desire to overstate the facts; and if D'Alton's review of the period is even approximately correct it would seem clear that in all fairness some modification of the pamphlet is called for. The popular and highly esteemed secretary of the C.T.S., Mr. James Britten, K.S.G., has written to us to say that his committee have gone into the matter, and have decided to take our representations into consideration when a fresh

Better Teeth

At HOWEY WALKER'S,

Less Pain.

QUEEN STREET, AUCKLAND,

Less Expense.