

Current Topics

France and the Vatican

M. Herriot, the French Premier, must have lost his head entirely when, during the debate in the Chamber of Deputies on the proposal to withdraw the French Embassy from the Vatican, he supported the proposal on the ground that during the war the then reigning Pontiff had failed to "demand justice above the clamor of battle," and of having "displayed a curious type of neutrality, even in the face of atrocities." In a word, he condemned the Vatican because it did not permit itself to become a tool of the Allied Governments by condemning Germany on the strength of the cock and bull stories that rose from the fertile imagination of enterprising journalists and posturing politicians. The Pope, however, had a great deal more wisdom than M. Herriot, to say which is not to pay him a very high compliment. The policy of the Pope during the war needs no defence. It has been sufficiently vindicated by those who knew the facts, and all the venom that M. Herriot can pour upon the Pope will not have the slightest effect, save to convince sensible people that the French Premier becomes more childish as he grows older. The proposal was carried, the Chamber approving by 314 votes to 250. Out of it, however, a paradoxical situation arises. The Franco-Vatican Concordat of 1801, which was renounced by France in 1905, still exists between Alsace-Lorraine and the Holy See. The French Chamber decided to withdraw the Ambassador from the Vatican, but it made provision in the Estimates for the continuation of the Alsace-Lorraine Mission. We fancy that M. Herriot was not sorry to find so easily a middle course. In any case, it was France, not the Holy See, that proposed to re-open the Vatican Embassy, and the withdrawal will not affect the Vatican. France herself will be the loser, but that will not disturb M. Herriot so long as the bridges are pleased.

Modesty in Dress

The Church speaks in no uncertain voice with regard to modesty in dress. Secular papers say that few actions of the Papacy in recent years have attracted such general attention in all parts of the world as the definite stand taken by Pope Pius XI on this matter. In Italy, it is reported, the members of the National Union of Italian Catholic Girls have commenced an active campaign against immodest fashions. Their programme comprises two parts: first, to demonstrate the folly, stupidity, and barbarism of immodest fashions; and second, to suggest the most efficacious means of obtaining practical results. "Attractive and modest," we are told, is the rule which the clubs are asked to follow. The Archbishop of Clermont, in France, is said to have issued orders that all persons appearing in insufficient costume shall be invited to leave the church, and priests are directed to refuse Holy Communion to those presenting themselves unbecomingly garbed. In the United States also the crusade has been taken up. The President of the Catholic Big Sisters of

Brooklyn told an interviewer that clothes may be very alluring without being vicious. "Don't try to dress the way they do in revues," she advises. "It can't be done in one case out of a thousand." The pastor of a French church brings a little satire to his assistance in order to bring his parishioners to a sense of their duty in this regard. He published the following notice in his parish bulletin:—"M. le Cure knows as well as anyone the difficulties of the high cost of living and the increased cost of cloth. He has the deepest sympathy for the sorrow of the young girls who are unable to procure for their wedding more than half a dress, which leaves their chests and arms bare. He has therefore purchased a very fine scarf of white wool, which will be kept in the sacristy, and which he will make a point of offering to all young brides who are too thinly clad and who would risk catching cold in our church. This fatherly solicitude, he trusts, will be appreciated by all interested parties."

A Beautiful Death!

Some months ago we referred to the dictum of Bernard Shaw that "Protestantism in Ireland is not a religion: it is a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons, who will go to hell when they die, and leave heaven in the exclusive possession of ladies and gentlemen." G.B.S.'s opinion is well illustrated by a story which is now going the rounds of the Home papers: A dying Belfast boy, having asked for his "wee sash" and his "wee drum," turned his face to the wall and said, "To hell with the Pope," and the good Lord took him to Himself. "Ay," said the sorrowing mother, "it was a beautiful death." We do not vouch for the truth of the story, but it and Bernard Shaw appear to be in complete agreement.

Acrostics and Religion

England and the United States have gone crazy over crossword puzzles. It was inevitable that sooner or later they would be called to assist Protestant pastors to overcome the living problem of the empty pews. Just as one clergyman recently took to climbing round the walls of his church in company with a baboon, just as others have introduced love story picture films to keep their congregations awake and to add a dash of romance to their services, so also has the Baptist pastor of Knoxville Church introduced acrostics to help fill his temple with devout worshippers. The puzzle concealed the words of the preacher's text, and we are told that all the crossword enthusiasts attended to try their fortune at solving the riddle. The minister said he believed the use of the crossword puzzle as an aid to Bible study would be of immense value to religion. To which we might add, "We don't think." We might go further and say that a knowledge of Bible texts does not necessarily mean an increase in spiritual

fervor. Did not the devil quote Scripture to tempt the Son of God? And what will happen when the crossword craze goes out of fashion? The new-found religion will evaporate with it; and worried pastors will then be looking for song and dance artists to brighten the weary hour in their churches. The Catholic Church can congratulate herself on the fact that the empty pew problem does not trouble her; but she is based upon something more stable than crossword puzzles and tumbling monkeys; and that just makes the difference.

The Sutherland Case

Much interest was manifested in the recent litigation on birth-control when Dr. Sutherland figured as the champion of Catholic principles and Catholic teaching. That Dr. Sutherland succeeded before the highest judicial tribunal in England speaks volumes for the soundness of Catholic doctrine in regard to the family. The case was well treated by Father Sargent, O.P., when speaking to a Greenwich congregation a few weeks ago. The preacher said that seldom has there been witnessed a more striking testimony of the Church's wisdom than the solemn pronouncement made by the highest judicial court in a non-Catholic land, where the so-called reformed religion has so lamentably led to a weakening of the principles of morality, as seen every day in our divorce courts. Nor can we fail to appreciate that this victory over the powers of moral ruin has been won only amidst the greatest difficulties and against the combined forces of anti-Catholic influences. The present-day world is spiritually bankrupt of religious values, so that the marriage ideals which once were our surest shield in family life have now become weakened to almost virtual extinction. It is left to the Catholic Church to fight single-handed the battle for those moral principles which are the mainstay of our civilisation. And yet Catholics are accused—as a certain contentious cleric of a northern city recently had the temerity to accuse them—of being "grandly" isolated and indifferent in matters of national concern and community welfare. But may we not now ask why it is that our brethren outside the fold have so isolated themselves from this great moral issue while Catholics have fought to uphold, at a supreme cost, the sanctity and integrity not merely of the Christian home but of everything that has counted so far in the greatness of any civilised nation? The answer we shall find, convincing and condemnatory, in the attitude of "other Churches" towards the question of birth-control as reported in the proceedings of "Copec." There we see and read and understand how, amidst such chaotic reasoning, the Catholic Church alone is seen to be "isolated." But her isolation is that of her Divine Founder's choosing. It is the result of her Divine-given prerogative of being infallible in everything concerning both faith and morals.

A Grave Indictment

The champions of the godless system of secular education will not have much reason to feel proud of their handiwork when they read that the Kings County Grand Jury, in

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