

tions, but in lives of the saints; for as an early Christian martyr pointed out, 'Christianity is not a work of persuasiveness but of greatness.'"

Australian C.T.S.: *The Story of a Conversion; For the Holy Souls*, by Miriam Agatha; *The Real Presence*, by Eustace Boylan, S.J. 2d each.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

READER.—There are certainly over 18,000,000 Catholics in the United States. Taking inevitable omissions into account, one might say a round twenty millions. But if we reckon all those under the American flag we might put the figure as high as thirty millions. There are over twenty thousand priests. Nearly two million children attend parish schools.

INQUIRER.—There were two Hawthornes. Nathaniel, the more famous, wrote *The Scarlet Letter*. Julian was not nearly as great a writer as his namesake, who was and is an American classic.

CELT.—They observe no less than three different times in Ireland during summer. They keep the new "summer time" in towns and cities. Then there is "old time" which is an hour later. And in some places, refusing to keep Greenwich time, whether old or new, they abide by the sun, and call it God's time. It is a puzzle when one wants to catch a train.

QUESTION.—Yes, you are bound to hear Mass either in a public or semi-public oratory, unless you enjoy a privilege of hearing it in a private oratory. At least that is the Canon Law on the point. But your friend was probably right in saying that one could hear Mass anywhere in Ireland. Some maintain that the privilege remains since the Penal Days.

EXHIBITION VISITOR.—If you ask with a view to a personal visit of course the answer is Come when you please. But if you ask for a general direction we beg to say that the most suitable time for visitors who want to talk about the weather to see the Editor in his office is after five o'clock when the office has been locked and he has escaped home. All are welcome then.

R. J. L.—Your poem is full of promise, but it is too long for us. The metre limps here and there. "Thou seems so near" would not pass the critical eyes of our readers who are particular about the majesty of English grammar. It is very hard to write a good poem of two or three stanzas. It is geometrically progressively harder to write one of six or nine. Do not blame us for being strict. If we were not the Spring Poets would spring on us and rend us just now when the flowers are springing and the birds singing.

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The Secularisation of Amusement

With respect to the question of Amusements, says the Very Rev. J. P. Cooney, the modern age has lost all sense of proportion and of the fitness of things. It has come to regard pleasure as an end, and, in consequence of this wrong notion of the matter, has become pleasure-mad. It no longer subordinates the pursuit of pleasure to the higher aims of life, but, on the contrary, makes it the supreme concern of human striving. Pleasure bulges too large in the thoughts of the modern generation. It is imperatively necessary that we return to saner views with regard to this subject, for, otherwise, the mad rush for pleasure will leave us physically exhausted and morally ruined.

What is Amusement?

By "Amusement" we understand those lighter forms of activity to which we turn when we are relieved from the stress and strain which the serious tasks of life impose upon us. In amusement we can follow out lines of choice and special preference, which we are not permitted to pursue in our daily work—that is usually imposed upon us without any particular regard for our tastes and wishes. Amusement in this wide sense relieves and agreeably interrupts the dull routine of existence. The more the work in which a person is engaged assumes the character of drudgery, and the less it is interesting and spiritual, the more does play become necessary in order to prevent a dulling of the finer sensibilities. Unfortunately, the modern division of labor and over-specialisation of function have taken the joy out of work and reduced it to a purely mechanical task that makes no appeal to the higher faculties of man.

Religion and Play.

Religion, far from casting a pall of gloom over life, has on the contrary been a joyous element in human existence, and lifted it to the serene heights of gladness and ecstasy. Before the time of the modern secularisation of life, which came as a result of the Protestant Reformation, the Church not only catered for the spiritual needs of people, but it also made generous provision for popular amusement and recreation. The whole of life gravitated towards the Church as its dominating centre of attraction. The popular festivals that gave the people an opportunity to relax from their daily work, and to strengthen themselves for new tasks, were of a religious character. Recreation was taken in the shadow of the Church. There was nothing profane; everything was sanctified. Knowing full well that the people needed entertainment, the Church made sure that the entertainment would be inoffensive, wholesome, and clean. Then came the Protestant Reformation that tore Christian Europe asunder, and with it came the great divorce. Life was taken away from the religious influence of the Church and reconstructed on entirely secular lines. Among other things, recreation was separat-

ed from the Church, and as Francis Thompson says, "The separation has been ill for recreation; and it has not been well for religion." Both suffered, as is usually the case when an unnatural severance of things that ought to be united is brought about.

The Church and Amusement.

Recreation speedily degenerated, and fell into the hands of unscrupulous men, who exploited it for the sake of profit, without any regard for higher considerations. Forms of amusement were introduced that, by their very appeal to the baser instincts of nature, ruined innocence and spread corruption. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that more souls are ruined by improper and tainted amusements than by any other agency. Hence the Church has often been compelled to take an attitude of disapproval towards many of the amusements indulged in by the people, and through this attitude often appears to the young and inexperienced as an enemy of joy. The Catholic Church has always taken a sane stand in the matter of amusement. It does not condemn pleasure or play or amusements. It knows that human nature cannot be re-made, and that periods of recreation are a psychological necessity. Its doctrine concerning pleasure is in full harmony with the nature of man. It condemns the excess in pleasure as it denounces excess in everything else, and it reproves those forms of recreation that either are sinful in themselves or are calculated to lead to sin.

The Best Amusements.

When we ask which amusements are best suited to fill up the free time of our young people, we can answer in a general way: Those forms of recreation are most beneficial which require some co-operation on our part, and which call into play the faculties that are not sufficiently exercised during our work, whilst they allow the faculties overstimulated by our vocational occupations to rest. It follows from this that hardly anything will be more beneficial to our young people usually confined during the working hours in office buildings than exercise of a kind that will take them into the great outdoors where they can breathe pure air, let their eyes feast on the beauties of nature, and permit their limbs that freedom of action which favors healthy growth and promotes harmonious development. Least desirable are the purely passive forms of recreation which contribute very little towards mental or physical development, and serve only to while away the time.—*Catholic Times* (London).

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