

# Current Topics

## The Bishop Wishes

—that every Catholic school in the diocese of Dunedin shall enter for the *New Zealand Tablet* Irish History Competitions. The date is hereby fixed for Tuesday, December 15. If that date be for any sufficient reason inconvenient, the examination may be held on the next suitable day. The papers are not to be opened until immediately before the beginning of the examination. It is usual to invite the local priest to attend as supervisor or to delegate somebody to represent him. The period is from the death of Hugh O'Neill to the Union.

## Irish History

We regard these annual examinations as of great importance, and although this year circumstances make it difficult for us to conduct them, we feel that we should be lacking in our duty if we let them go by default. The story of Ireland is, for most of us, the story of our Faith. The period appointed for 1925 deals largely with the heroic men and women who kept the sacred lamp burning in Ireland, in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword. Children reading of their sufferings will come to understand what that Faith must mean which was worth so much to our ancestors. They gave up everything they had in this world, often even life itself, rather than be false to the Faith of St. Patrick. Their schools were burned down; their churches sacked; their priests and teachers hunted like wolves; and the most diabolical code of laws ever invented by the perverted ingenuity of man was framed to compel them to apostatise. But they conquered the Gates of Hell; and they kept the Faith. Reading even at this distance of time and place of what they did and how they endured, we will surely be moved to imitate them in their love for our holy religion, and we will come to understand why it was that Archbishop Ireland exclaimed: "I hold no man my equal who does not possess as I do the Catholic Faith."

## The Danger of Apathy

Do not say that all this is past history and that it does not much concern us. Few things concern us more intimately; and it is for its present lessons that we urge the study of that glorious past. Teachers may be tempted to believe that the subject is not important enough to devote valuable time to it. It is important, just as the Faith is important; and no teacher in a Catholic school would pretend that time given to anything connected with the Faith is wasted. It may involve no small sacrifice; but what is our sacrifice to the torments endured for long years by those who handed the Faith down to us, pure and undefiled? Again, there is at the present time, in many countries, a tendency to lose interest in Ireland. In America it is very noticeable; and we believe it is the same here and in Australia. But do not confound Irish politics with Irish History. The pros and cons of the present situation over there are but a passing shadow, and perhaps there is justification for not taking deep interest in them.

But, beneath all the political changes, as an immovable background for the scenes that take place from day to day, is the magnificent and inspiring record of how the people of Ireland kept the Faith. In that we must not lose interest. No Catholic worthy of the name, descended from Irish ancestors, can afford to forget the sufferings of the past. And it is common experience that the men and women of to-day are good or bad Catholics in just the same ratio as they are proud of what their forefathers did in those ages of their grand refusal to become turncoats. Hence, we keep the competitions going, year by year; and we urge teachers to co-operate with us in this important undertaking.

## The Rites of the Pedestrian

Before indignant readers rush to assure us that we are spelling the word wrong, we beg to inform them that they do not know what they are thinking or talking about. Pedestrians have no *rights* nowadays. In fact they are in imminent danger of being exterminated as a nuisance to motor drivers, male, female, infantile or paralytic. Hence, to speak of their rites or obsequies is much more becoming than to waste time discussing what is but a tradition. Having been once run down by a car without a light, we are (almost by a miracle) in a position to speak. And we say we fully endorse the recent editorial protest of the *Dunedin Evening Star* against the insolence of motor persons. In Paris things are done without any attempt at pretence. Furious chauffeurs chase you almost up a tree; and speedsters on motor bicycles all but pursue you upstairs and into bed. You know they are out for blood and you are on your defence, but here it is still a fiction that the pedestrian has a square deal, and that he may proceed to cross a street provided that there is no car within at least ten miles of him. To come back to the problem of rites: it ought to be enacted that whenever a driver runs down a pedestrian the nearest five chauffeurs should be hanged, drawn, and quartered. One of these days, if something is not done by public authority, the public will be compelled to exert private authority with machine guns.

## Mr. McDonald Draws the Line

In a recent meeting held at Liverpool, Ramsay McDonald came to close quarters with the Bolshevik or Communist elements of the British Labor Party. While professing his adherence to Socialism, he made it clear that he did not stand for anarchy and violence and he warned the extreme sections of Labor that the British Labor Party was not the place for them. In taking this stand he had the vast majority of the workers behind him; and it is probable that nothing he has done previously has been so helpful to his Party. New Zealand as well as England has its Communists and Bolsheviks, whose writings and words are sufficient proof to the man-in-the-street that they are not to be trusted. At election times the enemies of Labor are only too ready to seize on the wild ravings of would-be Lenins and to bring before the thoughtful public the blasphemies of persons for whose ignorance the

godless State Schools are primarily responsible. Men of this type are the worst enemies of Labor, and to repudiate them as Mr. McDonald did is simple wisdom and common sense. The terrors of Russia are too near us in point of time to be forgotten, and it in this and many other countries there is a small section of violent people who want to introduce Russian conditions, a sharp line of division ought to be drawn between them and the ordinary workers who are the most conservative and law-abiding of men. What injury is done to the Party by the tactics and gestures of its extreme fringe may be gauged from the fact that it is common knowledge that no inconsiderable number of workers vote against their own candidates.

## The Irish Bishops on Dancing

The Irish Hierarchy, at their recent meeting in Maynooth, have warned their flocks of the dangers to body and soul with which modern dances and the evils associated with them are fraught:—

"Dancing halls, more especially—in the general uncontrol of late years—have deplorably aggravated the ruin of virtue due to ordinary human weakness. They have brought many a good and innocent girl into sin, shame, and scandal, and set the unwary feet on the road that leads to perdition."

They point out that when frivolous people and careless parents are found in combination, the agents of the devil will do the rest when there are uncontrolled dances. These may lower or destroy the moral tone of a whole community, and action must be taken while the character of the people is still sound. They have no condemnation for legitimate amusement, but, as pastors of the people, they are bound to speak against the dangerous occasions of sin, such as certain dances undoubtedly have become. They also refer to the modern habit of bringing drink to dances, and to the desecration of the Lord's Day which often follows. They exhort all concerned to see that dancing is held under proper supervision, given up at an early hour, and preference ought to be given to the old Irish dances which have so much more to commend them than the imported abominations. "It is no small commendation of Irish dances that they cannot be carried on for long hours. That, however, is not their chief merit, and, while it is no part of our business to condemn any decent dance, Irish dances are not to be put out of the place that is their due in any educational establishment under our care. They may not be the fashion in London or Paris. They should be the fashion in Ireland. Irish dances do not make degenerates."

What the Bishops of Ireland have to say about these dangers applies still more forcibly in New Zealand. Some years ago an experienced Catholic layman, whom duty brought to a ball in one of our cities in this Dominion, told us that the dances he saw were such that he could not understand how a decent mother would permit a daughter to be present.

## The Ulster Boundary

The cables are full of the news of trouble over the Ulster Boundary. Mr. MacNeill has resigned. President Cosgrave has protested that undue influence has been brought to bear on the Commission. There

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