

Current Topics

Irish History

We have been asked why we are not inviting essays as a practical proof that Irish History is being taught in the schools. Our last competition was in some senses a success; in others a failure. As far as the number are concerned it was a success; it was a failure if we consider the marked similarity of papers that came in from many districts, some of them proving beyond possibility of doubt that not only were the pupils helped by the teacher but that the teacher must have prepared an outline—more or less full—and got the whole class to work on it. To say the least of it, that was not honest, and we were frankly disappointed. Now, we shall have a competition again before very long, and there must be none of that sort of work. What we want is evidence that the *children* know Irish History: we take it for granted that the teachers do; and *they* will please stand out next time. We venture to make a final remark here: we invite any priest who takes an interest in this important matter to offer a prize (which ought to be a book-prize) and to adjudicate on the papers sent in for the prize he offers.

Religious Instruction

It is important to know our Irish History, but it is even more important to know our religion. Remember that it is one of our ends on earth to know God. Now, how can we know God unless we study what writers deeply versed in theology tell us about God? We certainly will not get the knowledge that leads to Life Everlasting from reading the New Zealand dailies nor from talking to the man-in-the-street. We are here to work out our salvation in fear and trembling—to *work* it out, mind, not to loaf about it. Therefore it is incumbent on all of us to address ourselves seriously to the study of religious doctrine. It is desirable that senior pupils in our schools should have a knowledge deeper than that of the catechism, and it is in order to provide teachers and parents with the outlines of a course for higher pupils that we are publishing week after week a page of religious instruction. What we want to know is whether teachers are making use of it or not. There is only one way to find out, and that is by holding an examination, as we did before and will do again in the case of the Irish History. Therefore we urge the Catholic teachers to read and explain for the pupils the weekly page they will find in the *Tablet*; and at a later date we will propose questions to be answered by pupils in the higher standards of primary schools and in secondary schools. As in connection with Irish History, so here, too, we shall be pleased if any of the priests will volunteer to give prizes and to adjudicate. It has been remarked to us that the lessons published up to the present are rather difficult. We know they are not easy but as they deal with the very foundations they are very important and well deserving of hard study. It is precisely the groundwork that needs attention in a pagan land like this, and any extra time and care given to the subject by teachers will be well repaid by results. Indeed we venture to say that there are not a few teachers who might study with profit to themselves the lessons already printed in the *Tablet*. In conclusion, remember that two competitions are approaching now: the Irish History competition and the Religious Instruction competition. The former will be open to all, and the latter only to more advanced pupils.

Home

Cardinal Manning says: "Homeless men are reckless: there would be but little patriotism in a country where no man cares to stand *pro aris et focis*." Home life is a great fosterer of manly chastity, of forbearance, of unselfishness; men who have no homes are, not

rarely, apt to be sensual, unrestrained, and selfish. Home-life moulds the children of a nation more than any school they will attend. Of course there are some children born with certain predispositions that home can neither make nor mar entirely, but in average cases the home stamps the child with a character that is almost ineffaceable. Go into a school and get to know the children well and you will be able to tell infallibly what sort of homes they came from. Watch their conduct in the street and in the cars and trains and you will see what child had good, thoughtful, gentle parents, and what one had the other sort. If the child is in one sense father to the man, in another the man is father to the child, and as the elders are the children will be. Hence it is of incalculable importance that a nation should have right home-life in which right children are trained: and hence again it is more than rubies to the nation that has in its homes mothers who know what their duty is and do it. No, there is no place like home. The happiest homes are usually the homes of the poor—or rather of God's poor: for there is a difference between poor and poor. There are the poor who in their lowliness are closer than any on earth to the Home of Nazareth: and there are the poor whose poverty is but an additional incentive to vice and crime. We speak of the former. Among the peasants of Irish counties you will find families of a dozen or even more, living on wages that a laborer could easily earn here in a day. The children will be healthy and happy, the father patient and God-fearing, the mother cheerful and pure. The walls may be bare, if they are not covered here and there with cartoons from a weekly paper, representing perhaps a Mass among the mountains, an eviction scene in the eighties, a wailing throng watching the sails of a "coffin-ship" fading away on the horizon. There will be a cheap colored picture of Mary the Mother of God, and a cheap crucifix and a little delf holy-water font in the sleeping rooms. There will be no carpet, no easy chair, no article of furniture worth a pound note in the whole house. But the grace of God will be there, and under the smokestained rafters will grow up boys and girls who will do apostolic work some day in bringing in their exiled hearts to far lands like ours the saving faith of Brigid and Patrick. Ah, these are the homes that count in a nation's history. In such homes were bred the men who rose and broke the bayonet-bristling ranks of those who insulted the women of Ireland: in such homes grew up in purity the girls who carried across the seas the traditional purity of the Gael: in such homes grew up the children whose lives, wherever they went, were illumined by the Faith which is the only source of safety in a material world to-day. God's poor never seek to find arguments to justify murder of the innocents. *Le Ménage à trois* has no charm for them. Somehow they always find enough for all the healthy, hungry young mouths: somehow they always find time to be happy, time to play and time to pray. They do not forget when Friday comes; they are not too lazy to get up and walk—in hail, rain, or snow—three miles to Mass on Sunday. They know that they have souls as well as bodies and they are not prepared to sell their chances of seeing God for anything in the world. They see what is right and they go straight towards it, guided by the Ten Commandments at every step they take, until their weary bones rest in a grave that for them is only the place of their resurrection. The old homes of Ireland have given the world Faith and hope and love and courage, and the more like those homes we make ours here the better we shall build this new nation and the happier we will be now and forever.

Modern Politics

Chesterton is right in making up his mind to classify politicians as the higher criminals. A burglar is comparatively harmless, and you can get the police to attend to him if you catch him; but a politician—if secure in the Cabinet, the modern sanctuary to which high-class criminals flee for protection,—is police-proof and he can "Dope" and "Marconi" to his heart's content and no man dare take the law of him. Indeed

FOR UP-TO-DATE FOOTWEAR GO TO

LOFTS

'Phone 3227.

BOOT IMPORTERS.

172 PRINCES STREET, DUNEDIN.