

Current Topics

Our Danger

Mr. Chesterton, in a recent number of the *New Witness*, refers to the ease with which sane persons may be branded as lunatics in England. That is not where our shoe pinches: the danger in New Zealand is the ease with which stupid persons may be made Cabinet Ministers. Still, when the standard is as low as it is here one must make the best of a bad job. What can be done in a country where people are not afraid to admit that they have read an *Otago Daily Times* editorial about Ireland!

Sane Women

We read in an American paper a short time ago that the women of Holland have organised a Catholic league to deal with the evil of immodesty in female dress. The league not only binds its members not to wear objectionable costumes but it visits shops and "says things" to dealers who will not help by refusing to expose in their windows garments that do not come up to the standard of decency. Some day or other we may hope for a similar movement here, if the hard times brought upon us by Mr. Massey and his over-salaried men will not make plain dress a matter of necessity rather than of choice even before the remnant of a national conscience awakes. Indeed one is at times forced to think that only urgent need can ever produce the desired effect. Our Placemen have robbed the country of Christian principles and reduced the people to a pagan level. They have brought young New Zealanders to believe in their blood relationship with the ape; and who can blame the cousins of the ape if they ape the ape in more ways than in nakedness?

The Propagation of Catholic Principles

We realise that the world is out of joint: we also realise that its sad condition is the result of a murderous war made possible by the dominance in most countries of the passions of avarice and hatred—fanned to flame by a prostitute press, such as we have only too many examples of in New Zealand. As lack of Christian principles is responsible for the war, there can be no real reconstruction until we begin to build anew on Christian foundations; and this we can never do until the masses are taught Christianity. It is hopeless to expect that politicians who hold office only for the sake of profit, or that a venal press that has forgotten the meaning of the word truth will do anything to educate or uplift the people. Some other way must be found or else we must only reconcile ourselves to dreeding our weird with what patience we can command. One way is to make the most of what means are already available: to support and encourage the Catholic Truth Society; to help our schools and to defend their interests; to support the Catholic newspapers and to get others to support them—these are things we all can do, and all of them count towards the result desired. In America Catholics have summer schools in which lectures on Catholic topics are given by priests and laymen; in England the Catholic Evidence Guild goes into the highways and byways to teach the truth to the people; in Australia a similar movement was begun some years ago. Our enemies spare no expense to provide lecturers to tour the country and tell lies about us. Why should we not also have frequent public lecturers in which the lies might be refuted and the truth set before a deceived and blinded people? It would be well worth while appointing a national Catholic lecturer who would go systematically through New Zealand in order to tell the dupes of the parsons what the Catholic Church really is.

Faith and Freedom

The Church is entrusted with the task of preserving pure the deposit of revealed truth from generation to generation. Therefore she must speak out in

defence of the truth as often as men, under no matter what guise, attack her and attempt to distort or annihilate truth. "The Church," says the Vatican Council, "having received with her apostolic office to teach, the obligation of preserving the legacy of the faith, has also the God-given right to condemn what is falsely called science, lest any one be cheated by philosophy and vain deceit." In loyalty to her Master the Church is bound to cry out from time to time, warning the scholars and thinkers of the age that their path is leading away from truth and towards error. They will denounce the Church for this; they will call her reactionary and out-of-date, but as she is not a little Protestant conventicle she cannot fawn on new-fangled theories and forget her divine mission; she must cry out *Erratis*—"You have erred—even though you denounce me and crucify me, it is my duty to tell you that you have erred." In truth, the Church does not interfere with science: as the Vatican Council says, it is what is falsely called science that calls for correction from her. When a forger, like Haeckel, wanders out of his province and gives false accounts of the origin of man, the Church speaks out—and in time is proved by further enquiries to be right; when one picked out of the gutter by the Church, turns to bite the hand that fed and clad him, and to do so elects to spread among the poor ignorant people false theories of life and conduct, the Church will warn the faithful that the ravings of a MacCabe are not science. One may ask, Why does she not leave science to correct itself, why bother about it at all? Rarely does the Church interfere. As a rule she is called upon to act because scientists go outside their own sphere and deceive people by pretending that science is opposed to truths of vast importance for the order of Christian life. In such cases the Church has absolutely no choice: she is the guardian of truth and she must speak. But is not this restraint and hindrance? It is, but it is the restraint of truth, which every science must submit to. It is the restraint of the lighthouse which warns the mariner that he must not cross a reef: the restraint of the Ten Commandments that preserve life and property and decency; the restraint of the law which keeps motorists from killing people in the streets: the restraint of a guard-rail that keeps people away from a precipice. It is a restraint that is no restraint on the seeker after truth, and only the man who seeks licence rather than truth finds it a restraint. Certainly the man who does not bother about faith at all has a greater apparent freedom than the man who does: for faith is the foundation of the moral law, and the man who knows no moral law does not suffer from the limitations of a decent man. In every civilised State there is restraint for the sake of the greater freedom of all: and the more cultured and educated the State the greater the restraint. A man who knows the laws of good breeding, is more restrained at meals than one who does not know the use of a knife and fork; the boy who is brought up well will feel bound to close a door which he finds closed; the boy brought up badly will never close a door after him. Thus, good manners, good morals, love for truth involve restraint, and no lover of truth and order complains of it. In matter of fact it is only in few cases the Church interferes, and as a rule it is when scientists leave "their last" and intrude on the province of philosophy. Then the Church's action is only the interference of the lighthouse or the warning buoy: it actually makes the way clearer for those who take the warning. For there can be no contradiction between faith and reason, and the apparent conflict is due either to the doctrine being misunderstood and not interpreted in the sense of the Church, or to erroneous opinions that are mistaken for conclusions of reason. (Vatican Council.)

False Progress

Progress is the catch-cry and the watchword of politicians. It is a word consecrated by journalists. It is also a stone in the sling of the atheist and the Protestant bigot who go forth to slay the Church of Christ. Onward and upward through the ages the best and noblest men have striven in the wake of the