

Current Topics

Dangerous Tendencies

Father Walter Drum, S.J., has the courage to disapprove publicly of the exegetical methods of certain of his brother-Jesuits whom he considers as rather untrustworthy guides for the average student. He complains that converts, like Father Benson and Father Tyrrell, have had undue influence on the trend of thought among Catholics whose lack of education and of leisure for study of the great classics in Biblical interpretation may have rendered them incapable of perceiving the drift of the influences in question. Father Drum thinks that Father Martindale, who is also a convert, requires careful reading too. This outspoken Jesuit says of the English scholar:

"His attractive style lures the unknowing into ways that are devious from tradition. He is not to be unreservedly trusted in Biblical exegesis. . . . An attractive style is no guarantee of either a knowledge of theology or a pondering of textual Biblical evidence. A woeful ignorance of theology may be noted in the writings of the disloyal Father Tyrrell and the loyal Monsignor Benson. Of Father Martindale's errors in theology, we may later on write. At present we have to do with his slapdash methods in textual criticism and interpretation of the Bible."

"There are other serious charges," says the *Fortnightly*, "made against the English Jesuit by his American brother, e.g., on account of his textual criticism of St. John and his disregard of such a great scholar as Father Cornely, S.J. Father Martindale is a brilliant scholar who has been attempting so many varied lines of activity that it is not at all surprising that his writings are calling forth such severe criticism from the ranks of his fellow-Jesuits."

Hints to Correspondents

There are many correspondents who send in copy that is the joy of a sub-editor, but there are others who seem to imagine that we have nothing to do except correct their grammar and spelling, add punctuation to their MSS., and write up articles on hints dropped by them, more or less (often less) illegibly. For the advantage of us all, meditation for a few moments of intense thought on the following extract is highly commended:

"TO CONTRIBUTORS.

"The *Denver Catholic Register* gives the following excellent advice to its correspondents. It is applicable to people who contribute to every Catholic paper in the United States:

'Send in news articles without comment.

'In notices regarding parties, a mere recital that the social was held at such and such a place, and that so many were present, is enough. Every reader knows how the guests spent the evening, etc.

'Kindly omit personal notes, except when there is general news value attached to them. Send us Catholic news only. Our aim is to have a paper with a vast amount of information, presented as briefly as possible.

'Before sending your letter, read it over. Cut out every unnecessary word.

'In reports of society meetings, send nothing except what will interest everybody. If some one is given a vote of thanks or another motion is passed that cannot possibly be of interest to all readers, omit it. Be brief. We must insist upon this, and will have to cut down the items ourselves if you do not do it. If an address is made that contains nothing but generalities, mention the name of the speaker, but omit the address. If you don't, we will.

'Do not abbreviate words in your letters. We have to rewrite much of the correspondence and we do not have time to do it.

'Use one side only of the sheet on which you write your news.'"

Christianity and Womanhood

Human nature, left to itself and deprived of the elevating and illuminating action of divine grace, is not an admirable thing. Among savage races and even among pagans who have attained a fairly high degree of civilisation, woman is usually regarded as inferior to man; the law of the jungle is enforced in all its ruthlessness; animal strength and power count for more than the refinements and higher qualities of the physically weaker sex. And, as the influence of Christianity wanes in a community and men drift backwards towards pagan ideals, inevitably the degradation of womanhood accompanies the decay of religion. If the women of the world could only realise all they owe to Christianity they would be much more solicitous than they often are concerning the safeguarding of religion in their homes, and they would understand that if they would retain their honor, their dignity, their prestige they must preserve the principles of Christianity which are their bulwarks against such forces as paganism lets loose in the breasts of men. Christianity taught mankind that man and woman are equal in dignity; that woman is not the slave of man, and that, like him, she has an immortal soul which Christ died to redeem and save; it taught the world that true worth consists not in riches or strength of body but in the brotherhood of man with Christ who by becoming incarnate elevated our nature and raised it from the dust; and it taught that this elevation placed man and woman on the same high plane in the sight of God. The early Fathers of the Church insisted in and out of season on this great truth. Their eloquent words convey principles that ought to be kept in mind to-day even as vividly as when they were first enunciated among semi-pagan communities; for in our time, outside a few countries like Ireland and Italy, men have fallen back and are no better than they were in the early centuries when Christianity was fighting its way upward through the gloom and darkness of error. Gregory of Nissa tells women that they must not lose courage and say they are but weak creatures. Their weakness, he tells them, is bodily, but they are brave and strong in spirit. They must cherish their virtues of the spirit and regard their gentleness and their lack of rugged strength as graces that men do not possess. If they are inferior in mere force they are superior in their tender goodness and in their womanly pity. How, he asks, can the nature of man be compared to a woman's? How can he rival her heroic mortifications, her constant zeal in prayer, her pious tears, her prompt charity? St. Basil recalls the tireless activities of the early Christian women and compares their heroism and fortitude to the virtues of Judith. Chrysostom dwells on the holiness of the women of Apostolic times and affirms that in sanctity and in all that concerns the spiritual life they were superior to men: they do not, he says, go to battle, carrying their shields, but they undertake the more arduous warfare against the devil and the powers of darkness, and their fortitude of spirit, conquering their bodily weakness, leads them to victories more glorious than those of warriors. Gregory Nazianzen reminds husbands that their wives are their equals in humanity, subject to the same laws of grace, and of life and death, and warns them that men are bound to be as faithful as they would have their wives. In pagan ages as at present, laws made by men put women in an inferior position; and then as now, such laws were sanctioned by a corrupt society which forgave male offenders and received them with open arms while hounding down and shunning as if they were outcasts the victims of men's sins. I do not approve of such laws, says St. Gregory. They were made by men against women. Why should there be different laws for beings endowed with the same nature and with the same dignity? Why should man pretend to enforce upon women a standard which he will not live up to himself? Adam sinned as well as Eve, and it was not for Adam alone that Christ died on the Cross. For the salvation of both man and woman Christ became man and died on Calvary; for the sake of both He was born of the Virgin Mary. For woman and for man He instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony and made it a symbol of His own union