

## IS IT FAIR?

THE 'Catholic Review' has a letter from London on the discussions there in reference to the American school question. The writer quotes a letter written to the 'Scotsman,' which is interesting. It is as follows:—

"LONDON, October 4, 1875.

"Sir,—Will you permit me to make two remarks upon your leading article of to-day on President Grant's recent speech? It is not accurate to say that the Roman Catholics of America are 'substantially Irish.' There are sixty-six Archbishops and Bishops—of these thirty-eight are neither Irishmen nor of Irish descent, but are either Americans of English descent, or French, or German. There are five mitred Abbots, and of these only one is an Irishman; and a very large proportion (considerably more than one-half) of the priests are Americans, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians and Poles. As for the laity, the Catholic populations of Louisiana, Texas, California, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, are less than one-half Irish; and taking the whole country through, it is probable that the Irish Catholics do not exceed one-half, or, at the most, five-eighths of the whole number. Nor is it accurate to say that if the Catholics got back for their own use only what they pay in the shape of school-tax, they would "get but little"—for their wealth in many quarters is very large, and I could of my own knowledge give you a list of individual Catholics, in San Francisco, New York, Baltimore, Washington, St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, and other cities, who are among the very largest taxpayers of the country.

"My other remark must take the shape of a question. Is it fair to compel one class to pay the State for the establishment and maintenance of machinery for doing work which they are anxious to do for themselves, at their own cost, and to the satisfaction of the agents of the State? While continuing to pay their school-tax, the American Catholics have everywhere established their own schools, equal, and often superior, to those of the State; and they ask now, as they have always asked, that they may be relieved from what they consider the injustice of being compelled to pay for the education of their Protestant neighbors' children. This is what they mean by "a division of the school-fund," and President Grant's sudden and extraordinary protest against their demand will not prevent its final success. "AN AMERICAN PAPIST."

## LIFE AMONG THE VIRGINIA NEGROES.

WE take the following interesting sketch from the Richmond correspondence of the 'N. Y. Tribune':—

Not long ago a police officer of this city, whose beat includes the famous Mayo's Bridge, saw a negro woman steal from the shadow of a neighboring building and glide quickly out on the bridge. Reaching a point where the current of the river beneath was swift and strong, she drew a bundle from under her shawl and threw it into the water. With the responsibilities of freedom to the colored race have come also its crimes. Infanticide is common among them, and few weeks elapse in which one or more abandoned infants are not picked up dead or alive by the Richmond police. Any clue to their parentage is rarely obtained, and the officer in this instance congratulated himself upon having detected not only the crime, but the culprit also. The woman was forthwith arrested, and, despite her protestations of innocence, was marched off to the nearest police station. The something which she had thrown into the river could not be recovered, but it was of course presumed to be the body of a murdered infant. The woman stated, in explanation and defence, that her daughter was subject to "fits," and that believing her "tricked" (*i. e.* bewitched) she had applied for relief to a doctor of her own color. He—a Voudou curer of great repute—had directed her to take some of the girl's hair, the parings of her nails, and some of her clothing, freshly soiled from wearing—make these things into a bundle, and throw them after sunset into the river as far from the shore as she could. This done, he assured her, the charm with which an enemy had bewitched her daughter would be removed and her recovery be certain. As might have been expected, the police justice gave very little credence to this story. Other witnesses were summoned, medical testimony was appealed to, and the girl herself brought into court. The investigation resulted in acquittal from all suspicion of infanticide, and full corroboration of the mother's story.

One often hears this mystery of Voudou spoken of as a spectre of the past, and is horrified when, as in this instance, it rises to confront him at the breakfast table through the medium of a paragraph copied from some Southern newspaper. There is no doubt that it still lives and flourishes, while not a few men and women in the Southern States support themselves by their practice as Voudou doctors. If an ignorant negro is smitten with a disease which he cannot comprehend he often imagines himself the victim of witchcraft, and having no faith in "white folks' physic" for such ailments must apply to one of these quacks. A physician residing near this city was invited by such a one to witness his mode of procedure with a dropsical patient for whom the physician in question had occasionally charitably prescribed. Curiosity led him to attend the seance—having previously informed the quack that since the case was in such hands he relinquished all connection with it. On the coverlet of the bed, in which the sick man lay, was spread a quantity of bones, feathers and other trash. The charlatan went through with a series of so-called conjurations, burned feathers, hair and tiny fragments of wood in a charcoal furnace, and mumbled gibberish past the physician's comprehension. He then proceeded to rip open the pillows and bolsters, and took from them some queer conglomerations of feathers. These he said had caused all the trouble. Sprinkling a whitish powder over them he burnt them in his furnace. A black, offensive smoke was produced, and he announced triumphantly that the evil influence was destroyed, and that the patient would surely get well. He died not many days later, believing in common with all his friends and relatives, that the conjurations of the "trick doctor" had failed to save him only because resorted to too late.

## DEATH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

JOHN's death was gentle and painless. All antiquity agrees upon this point. As to the circumstances surrounding it, the narratives given are far from possessing historical authenticity.

One day, they relate, knowing that his hour was come, John forewarned his disciples, assembled them in the church, broke bread, distributed it to the faithful, and addressed to them this adieu: "May my part be with you, and yours with me."

That done, he walked with some of his followers to the place of his sepulchre. It was upon the slope of a hill near the city, no doubt Mount Libate, where his beloved Timothy slept in peace. Thence he could for the last time bless Ephesus, stretched at his feet; all the Ionian coast, where rose the churches which he had begotten in the faith; and, beyond the sea, the colonies whither his sons had to bear the sacred fire of the Gospel.

Arrived there, St. John began gently to converse with the brethren, whom he was nevermore to behold. They attribute to him a final recommendation to keep themselves in the unity of the faith of Jesus Christ, and to flee impiety. But he insisted more strongly than ever upon the commandment of loving one another. Then, extending his arms and raising his eyes towards Heaven, the saintly old man became absorbed in prayer.

According to the same accounts, no human eye was witness of the death of St. John. Having dismissed the brethren, John entered the subterranean place of his sepulchre, and the disciples left him there to meditation and to repose. When, some time after, they penetrated therein, John had ceased to breathe, and his virginal soul had returned into the bosom of the Lord.

Some Catholic writers view, with reason, in that representation of the Apostle, but an image of the gentleness wherewith the old man slept in peace. In fact, the picture of a man who descends alive into the tomb is the best figure of his passage from this world into the next.

That blessed death took place, according to Eusebius, in the sixty-eighth year after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the hundredth year of the incarnation, under the reign of Trajan, Consul for the third time. It is from St. Irenæus that we learn that the Apostle lived until that time. According to St. Epiphanius, John must have then been ninety-four years old. The Chronicle of Alexandria, perhaps more exact, represents him as one hundred years of age. It places his death in the one hundred and fourth year of the Christian era, the seventh of Trajan, Neratius Marcellus and Licinius Sura being consuls, St. Evaristus being Sovereign Pontiff of the Church of God.—Bannard.

## STORY OF A CONVICT.

A FRENCH correspondent writes: "The old saying that truth is stranger than fiction has rarely received a more striking illustration than in a case which has just been brought before one of the French tribunals. Thirteen years ago a soldier named Jean Lastier was sentenced to five years' penal servitude and ten years' surveillance by the police for having insulted one of his superior officers and stolen a few shirts. He was sent to Africa to undergo his sentence, and his conduct was so exemplary that he was employed as book-keeper in the prison. At the expiration of his sentence he was ordered by the police to reside in a small town in the South, but as everybody knew he was a returned convict it was with the utmost difficulty that he could obtain any kind of employment. The commissaire of police, knowing how well he had behaved while in prison, interested himself on his behalf, and induced a tradesman of the town to employ him as messenger. He fulfilled his duties so zealously that the tradesman promoted him to the post of cashier, and in the course of time the returned convict married his daughter and entered into partnership. Three months after his marriage the war broke out, and Lastier, anxious to rehabilitate himself completely, volunteered his services, and joined a regiment of the line. He was taken prisoner at Gravelotte, but managing to escape he rejoined his corps in time to take part in the battles around Orleans. From thence he passed into the army of the East under Bourbaki, and received no less than eight wounds. At the end of the campaign he had become sub-lieutenant, and had received the military medal, which had been given him on the battlefield. He was almost a hero in his regiment, and when he returned to his father-in-law's house nearly all the town turned out to meet him. Soon afterwards his father-in-law died, and Lastier, with his wife and two children, determined to reside in Paris. His term of surveillance had not expired, but the local police had ceased to treat the sub-lieutenant as a returned convict, and placed no obstacle in his way. He had lived quietly in Paris for more than a year, when a few weeks ago he was accompanying a friend to the Orleans railway station. The latter had a dog with him, and this dog was attacked in the street by another. The respective proprietors while attempting to separate them came to high words, and at last to blows. Jean Lastier, who naturally took his friend's part, was, with the other two, arrested by the police, and was of course compelled to show his 'papers,' etc. His antecedents being known, the Paris police, finding that he had left the place assigned to him before the expiration of the ten years, had no choice but to proceed against him, and being brought before the correctional tribunal of the Seine, he has just been condemned to two months' imprisonment for breach of regulations. This is unfortunately the law, but it is not justice, and your readers will, I am sure, be glad to learn that an Englishman who happens to be acquainted with the facts of the case has brought the matter before Marshal MacMahon, and has reason to hope that the poor fellow will receive the full pardon to which he is so fully entitled."