

'CATHOLIC INTERESTS.—THE PROTESTANT PRESS.

THERE has been considerable discussion in the Press of late as to the comparative amount of crime and immorality among Roman Catholics educated in religious schools, and others who have been educated in non-religious schools. The *Otago Times* and *Auckland Evening Star* have established to their own satisfaction that Father Hennebery and Dr. Moran were wrong—were under a delusion, in fact—in what they said about the American system of infanticide. The *Otago Times* has also made out to his satisfaction that among Catholics, Irish Catholics in particular, there is a far greater amount of crime than among Protestants or other non-Catholic classes. Granting, for argument's sake, that Bishop Moran and Father Hennebery over-stated the truth, or had been misled as to the real number of American infanticides, there can be no doubt that there is far more truth in their statements than the friends of "modern secular civilization" could wish. When some years ago I read what Hepworth Dixon wrote on the subject, I confess I was amazed and incredulous. I considered he was hardly justified in going so far. I have not his book at hand now, but if I recollect aright he said the Irish Newcomers in some parts of New England were supplanting the native Americans, because the New England married ladies—so many of them—could not be bothered with children, and managed so as not to have them. I myself was told by a Scotch gentleman who had resided 22 years in America, near New York, that there was a class of well-known female practitioners called "abortionists" in the States. We have seen only a few weeks ago an English lady, highly educated, the wife of an Anglican clergyman, and the mother of a family, criminally convicted in London, and sentenced to a severe punishment for circulating a book written by an American physician on a subject closely connected with that to which Father Hennebery and Dr. Moran referred. The book was pronounced by an English jury to contain matter subversive of public morality. One strange feature in this trial struck me forcibly. The lady, who personally conducted her own defence in Court with remarkable skill, said that anything in her pamphlet was decency itself when compared with some portions of those books which Government put into the hands of the youth of both sexes attending the Kensington School, and she was ready to make good her words by calling these pupils as witnesses into Court. Another and still more melancholy thing was that the lady was apparently, as the Judge admitted, circulating this immoral book with no evil design, but from a mistaken sense of duty. She professed that from motives of humanity she wished to arrest the progress of population among the humbler ranks. By such means alone she supposed she could effectually prevent those frightful scenes of misery, physical and moral, which she had so often been forced to witness among the poor. There is "progress" in modern civilization for you gentlemen of the Protestant Press. For denouncing and setting his face against "civilization" of this and a similar kind the late Venerable Head of the Roman Catholic Church was sneered at and loaded with abuse by the so-called Liberal Press of England. Every day we see the Protestant Press, like the lady above referred to, publishing matter of a decidedly immoral or irreligious tendency with apparently no evil motive, but only for money, and to gratify a depraved popular taste. This lady and these gentlemen, editors and other Protestant writers, obviously require the services of a prudent spiritual director such as men can find only in the Catholic Church—one who has "authority" to define what duty is, and to restrain the aberrations of conscience, even in the well disposed.

The *Otago Times* was very properly reminded that there are other circumstances besides men's religious creed which influence their moral character, and that powerfully. When men, like the Irish Catholics, have been for generation after generation, for centuries, subjected to unjust, cruel, and merciless treatment by their rulers, can we wonder if their moral character degenerate in many instances in spite of their religion. When a people have been once demoralised by a long and systematic course of ill usage, which has reduced them to penury and despair, it cannot be expected that they will soon recover their lost virtues, even after their ill usage has to some extent ceased. The *Otago Times*, considering the party and principles represented by him, should be the last to reproach any portion of Irish Catholics with their frailties. A sense of shame, if not of justice, should have restrained him. The wonder to me is not that so many Irish Catholics should at times figure on the black list, but that the Great Mass of them should exhibit so many sterling virtues as they do in every part of the globe where they settle. I have observed with pleasure that the number of Catholics on the criminal calendar in this province has of late been gradually diminishing. I hope ere long that not one Catholic will be seen on that black catalogue. The influence of the Hibernian Society has possibly something to do with this gratifying diminution of Catholic crime in this part of the colony. That professes to be not merely a Benefit Society in the common acceptance of the term, but in some sense a religious corporation too. They go on the right principle that every thing really good and great must be done out of a religious motive. The credit and influence of the Catholic Church in these colonies are, after the clergy, in a great measure in the hands of the Hibernian Society. Let them therefore look to their ways. They may rest assured the eyes of the Protestant and Catholic body too are upon them. A large, widely-extended Catholic Association like that can never stand among the mediocrities or neutrals.

There were two virtues, which, in the darkest hour of Protestant ascendancy, the Catholics never lost: fidelity to the Catholic Church, and female honour. I could bring Protestant testimony to show that as regards the last virtue the Catholic women of Ireland are unequalled by the women in any other part of the British dominions—perhaps of the world. It is to be hoped they will ever retain this proud distinction. But it was their religion, the much maligned "confessional" especially, which enabled them so effectually to guard their honour. Even candid and well-informed Protestants admit this.

"The Irish Catholic Matron," a London Protestant journalist,

tells us, "retained her native dignity amid a penury which prostrated all the landmarks of virtue; and the Irish Catholic maiden resisted the lures of vice when she had hardly sufficient clothing to conceal her charms from the gaze of the tempter." It was this very class of women, the poorest of the poor, who were under the more immediate influences of those Catholic priests whom the Protestant Press—and to their shame be it said—so many of the Protestant clergy have so often represented as prostituting their great power to evil purposes among the females of their communion. There is an Anglican Ecclesiastical dignity in Auckland at this moment who has calumniated the Catholic clergy in this way:—I may as well give his name, Dr. Mansell, of Parnell. Of course he did it from a sense of duty. There are, I know on good authority, Catholic young women in this colony—too many—who have lost their honour, and been seduced into an openly vicious course of life. But I think I may make bold to affirm that it has been in consequence of their Protestant surroundings that they have fallen, and that the destroyers of their virtue were not of the Catholic faith, or if they were that they belonged to the self-excommunicated class of Catholics who defy the authority of the Catholic priesthood—a class of the laity unhappily now-a-days but too numerous. A portion of the Protestant Press and clergy, and some ministers of State too, may think they are doing society a benefit by insidiously undermining the power of the priest. They make a great mistake. They are thereby helping to undermine public morals, to undermine Christianity itself, and its authority over both Catholics and Protestants.

There is too much vice and crime among Catholics as well as Protestants. Much of both is never entered in any public record, nor comes before any human tribunal, and will never be publicly known till the great day arrive when everthing secret shall be openly revealed. Criminal statistics I therefore think must afford but a fallacious test of the comparative goodness or badness of different nations or different sections of the same nation. If Imperial Cæsar had ordered criminal statistics to be compiled in Judea, it is quite possible that not a single Pharisee would have appeared in that document. Yet we know on high authority that those men as a class were the most hateful to God, and that many of them, in spite of their outward piety and decorous manners were less likely to enter the kingdom of heaven than even those unhappy Jewish women who scandalised their religion and their sex as they walked the streets of Jerusalem; and one of whom as we all know has furnished an example of humility and penitence, and fervent piety, which will be known and held up for the imitation of sinners wherever the gospel of Christ is preached until He come again to judge us all.

I consider it an unseemly and injudicious thing to institute invasions comparisons as to the morals of different classes of baptised Christians. They are all the followers of the same master, profess to be guided by His law; and we all believe much in common. It was the downfall of the papacy, or the violent and insane efforts of man to destroy it, which corrupted and debauched the morals of all Christendom. I could bring the testimony of the leading "Reformers," as they are called, to prove this. They admitted and deplored the fact that those who embraced the Reformed Faith forthwith became immoral characters. They had changed their creed, but their morals had suffered by the change. The leading reformers seem to have discovered the fatal mistake they had made when it was too late. One of their number very naturally said that in destroying papal power they had struck at the very root of the true "Principle of Christian Obedience," and had introduced a demoralising licence of belief in its room. The thing called Reformation gave a shock to men's moral and religious instincts, from which Christendom has not yet recovered, and will not soon recover. It demoralised the ruling classes in England, the reformed clergy, the Press, and the mass of the people. The Protestant Press and clergy are ever holding forth about liberty. They say little about obedience. Need we wonder at the present licentiousness of creed and morals.

JOHN WOOD,
Surgeon, late H.M.S.

THE MARRIAGE QUESTION.

(To the Editor of the *Morning Herald*.)
SIR,—I notice the following paragraph in your issue of this morning: "In St. Joseph's Church yesterday, Bishop Moran delivered a discourse on the marriage question. He explained that marriages by the Registrars, though sinful, and carrying with them the penalty of excommunication in the case of Catholics, yet were valid, and no power on earth could dissolve them." I beg to say this is an incorrect report of my teaching in St. Joseph's Church on Sunday last. I did not say what the above extract from your paper states I said; but the following is precisely what I did say:—Marriages celebrated before Registrars in this colony, though sinful, and bringing with them the penalty of excommunication in the case of Catholics—provided always there exist no diriment or annulling impediment arising from the natural, divine, or ecclesiastical law—are valid. And this statement I made after explaining that the law of clandestinity of the Council of Trent, requiring parties to get married before the parish priest and two witnesses, in order to the validity of marriage, has not been published in this country, and is not, consequently, binding here. Throughout my discourse on Sunday, I insisted on the distinction between unlawfulness and validity, and took great pains to explain how a marriage might be valid and at the same time unlawful in the eyes of the Church, and sacrilegious.—I am, &c.,

✠ P. MORAN,
Bishop of Dunedin.

Dunedin, April 8th, 1878.

THE Oblate Fathers lately closed a Mission in Belfast, Ireland, which they carried on for a month in the six churches of the city. Seventeen Fathers were engaged. Forty thousand persons received the sacraments. Over twelve thousand adults were confirmed by Bishop Dorrian, and a large number of converts were received into the Church.