

DEGENERATE SPAIN.

"THE degeneracy of Catholic Spain" is a favorite topic with the non-Catholic press. "Look at the fruit of Popery," they exclaim, "Behold how degraded, weak, and despised, has become a country which has been Catholic for 1,500 years or more!" It matters not to these critics that whenever a really sensible non-Catholic visits Spain, spends some time there, and keeps his eyes and ears open, he comes away with all his preconceived notions dissipated; with a very high opinion of the people; and, not infrequently, with an interior light which leads him into the bosom of the Church. We recall, as we write, the experience of two acquaintances of our own; one was an orthodox Episcopalian, the other an educated but very determined infidel. Each of them went to Spain, at intervals not very distant, and remained there several months, travelling from place to place and mixing freely with the people. They both returned with the opinion that the Spaniards were among the most truly happy and enviable people on the globe. "The women," they said, "are chaste; the domestic life of the Spaniard is a model of thrift, contentment and homely happiness; the men are brave, frank and incorruptibly honest; and they know what duty means." But such testimony as this, which is practically inexhaustible, goes for nothing in the estimation of our aforesaid critics: nor does the fact that whatever of evil there is in Spain, of a moral, social, or political character, may be traced directly to the anti-Catholic and revolutionary element introduced there by the secret societies, and that this evil is only to be seen in the large cities; nor does the other fact that both at the Vienna exposition and at our own Centennial Spain made a display which put several other countries to shame, and which could never have been furnished by a degraded, weak and indolent people.

But a fresh proof of the falsity of the hackneyed assertion concerning the degeneracy of Spain has just been supplied. For nine years the Spanish Government—monarchy, regency, republic, and monarchy again—has steadfastly held the insurgents in Cuba at bay, and has at last put an end to the conflict by awarding to the vanquished terms of pardon so liberal that they were constrained to accept them. We say nothing here as to the merits of the conflict; or as to the chances that Cuba free, or Cuba annexed to the United States, or Cuba the scene of an irreconcilable conflict between the natives and the Spanish inhabitants, would be any happier than Cuba as she will now continue to be, a colony of the Spanish crown. Our present point is that Spain, by the firm tenacity with which she maintained her authority against the revolt; by the willingness with which her people, under every form of Government, spent their blood and money to maintain this authority; and by the terms she has now awarded to the vanquished, has emphatically disproved the assertion that she is either weak or ignorant, or degraded. There is scarcely another country on the globe that would not have quailed before such a task. England would have thrown up the sponge before the first shots were fired; Australia and Canada to-day could shake off their allegiance to England by simply declaring their intentions. The governments of the world, it may be added, have a far higher opinion of the prowess and the pluck of Spain than that entertained by our non-Catholic critics. Not one of the powers ventures to treat her with contempt; if a demand that she considers unjust is made upon her, she knows how to resist it. To use the slang of the day, "she doesn't scare worth a cent." The only peril for Spain is from the machinations of the anti-Catholic element from outside, working through the secret societies. Her strength, her glory, and her happiness depend upon her remaining firmly Catholic.—*Catholic Review*.

A USEFUL WIFE.

THEY had been out to the graveyard to bury Mrs. Pidgeon, and were riding home in the carriage with the bereaved widower. While he sopped his eyes with his handkerchief he told about her:—

"In one respect I never saw her equal. She was a manager. I've known that woman that's lying out there in the tomb, to take an old pair of my trousers and cut them up for the boys. She'd make a splendid suit for both of them out of them old pants, and a cap for Johnny, and have some left over for a rag carpet, besides making handkerchiefs out of the pockets. Give her any old garment and it was as good as a gold mine. Why, she'd take an old sock and make a good overcoat out of it, I believe. She had a turn for that kind of economy. There's one of my shirts that I bought in 1874 still going about making itself useful as window curtains and plenty of other things. Only last June our gridiron gave out and she took it apart, and in two hours it was rigged on the side of the house as a splendid lightning rod, all except what she had made into a poker and ice-pick. Ingenious! Why, she kept the family in buttons and whistles out of the ham bones that she saved, and she made fifteen princely chicken-coops out of her old hoop-skirts, and a pig pen out of her used up corset bones. She never wasted a solitary thing. Let a cat die around the house and the first thing you know, Mary Jane'd have a new muff and a set of furs, and I'd begin to find mince pies on the dinner table. She'd stuff a feather bed with the feathers she got off one little bit of a rooster, and she'd even utilise the roaches in the kitchen so they'd run the churn—had a machine she made for that purpose. I've seen her cook potatoe parings so you'd think they were canvas-back duck, and she had a way of doctoring up shavings that the pig would eat them and grow fat on them. I believe she could build a four story hotel if you'd give her a single pine-board; or a steamboat out of a washboiler; and the very last thing she said to me was to bury her out in the garden, so she would be useful down below there, to help shove up the cabbages. I'll never see her like again."—*American paper*.

PRINCE BISMARCK has been the Sphinx *par excellence* throughout the Eastern complications, and all the parties in the Reichstag are agreed in wishing to know what the great man means, and what he is driving at.—*Overland Mail*.

A DANGEROUS DRINK.

THE use of absinthe is daily increasing in this country, and it is possible that those who drink the deleterious liquor are ignorant of its terrible properties. A few years ago, even in the large liquor saloons of our great cities, one would ask for absinthe in vain. At present in almost every saloon the name of the injurious drink is familiar and often mentioned.

Absinthe, even when pure, is a compound of extraordinary nature; and when adulterated, as it generally is, becomes a most virulent poison. The pure absinthe is prepared by pounding the leaves and flowering tops of various species of wormwood, along with angelica root, sweet-flag root, the leaves of dittany of Crete, star-anise fruit, and other aromatics, and macerating these in alcohol. After soaking for eight days the liquid is distilled, yielding an emerald-coloured liquor, to which an essential oil (anise) is added. But most of the absinthe used in America is made with other herbs and essential oils; while the adulterations are very deleterious. The green colour is usually produced by turmeric indigo and blue vitriol.

A French physician, M. Legrand, who has studied the physiological effects of absinthe drinking, found that in the case of excessive drinkers there is first the feeling peculiar to intoxication. The increasing dose necessary to produce this state quickly deranges the digestive organs, and destroys the appetite. An unappeasable thirst takes possession of the victim, with giddiness, tingling in the ears, and hallucinations of sight and hearing, followed by a constant mental depression and anxiety, loss of brain power, and eventually, idiocy. The symptoms in the case of the occasional drinker or tippler, begin with muscular quiverings and decrease of physical strength, the hair begins to drop off, the face assumes a melancholy aspect, and he becomes emaciated, wrinkled, and sallow. Lesion of the brain follows, horrible dreams and delusions haunt the victim, and gradually paralysis overtakes him and lands him in the grave.—*Boston Pilot*.

SOCIETY IN IRELAND.

No one can go into society as represented in the country houses in Ireland without being struck by the absence of veneer which he will find there. We do not mean those country houses inhabited by people who spend their season regularly in London, and who differ in no way from the magnates with their houses in Yorkshire or Sussex, but the *bona fide*, Irish country houses—whose owners look upon Dublin as their metropolis and great shopping town, and consider an occasional month in London as an event to be classed with the ramble in Switzerland or the tour of Italy. The visitor to one of these houses will find no sham—there is "no deception." His arrival will cause no flurry; he will not be kept waiting in the drawing-room while the lady of the house and the girls put finishing touches to their beauty. It is ten to one that before he has succeeded in evoking a sound from the bell—probably broken—one of the young ladies will herself open the door, and with a welcome beaming from her honest Irish grey eyes at once insist on his feeling himself at home. There will be no false pride, no attempt to hide defects, or to make up by brag for poverty. Rather will fun be extracted from the very deficiencies, and the stranger will at once see that there is no danger of putting his host or hostess to confusion by demanding what is not to be had. If there is but one man-servant, the host will not complain of the illness or temporary absence of a mythical footman; if the one man-servant is tipsy (a not uncommon occurrence in the land of John Jannison) the hostess will not be the least ashamed of being detected assisting the maid to lay the cloth and arrange the dinner table.—*Exchange*.

At the winter assizes in Ireland there was, from amongst a population of over 5,300,000, not one capital conviction. This, truly, is solid matter for rejoicing.

"I AM tempted," writes Major R. Stuart, from Port au Prince, "to notice a plant that grows here of such strong narcotic powers that, in the hands of a skilful practitioner, it will produce coma of any intensity or duration, or even death itself, when so intended. The knowledge of this plant is confined to a few families, who transmit the secret as an heir-loom from generation to generation, and the heritage is highly prized, confirming, it is thought, the power of miracle workers and priests. For the plant is in many ways used in aid of solemn imposture, superstition, and even crime. The power thus exercised is called 'wanga,' a word that inspires the African with awe and dread. The wanga priest can throw into a death-like coma, and knowing the moment of returning consciousness, he will make a show of recalling to life. If a burglary is to be committed, he can, by means of his art, cast a deep sleep on all in-doors; and one may understand how he can attain other forbidden ends in the same way. An experienced botanist could not fail to discover this plant, which, an anaesthetic, would no doubt prove a valuable acquisition to medical science."

WOODFIELD AND JOLLY,
GENERAL PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS,
OCTAGON, DUNEDIN.

W. and J. having recently imported a most extensive and varied printing plant, are now prepared to execute every description of Plain and Ornamental Printing in the newest and neatest styles, and with despatch

Printers of all kinds of Circulars, Cards, Receipt, Delivery, and Cheque Books, Ball and other Programmes, Chemists' Labels, Bill-heads, Handbills, Posters, Magazines, Pamphlets and Publications of any size or form.