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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

OF the fairness with which it is usual for good "EVANGELICAL" Protestant Christians to deal with Catholic matters, HONESTY, we obtain another example from a newspaper published in Chester, and which we find quoted by one or other of the religious non-entities whose weekly duty it is, among ourselves, to circulate a farrago of goody-goody rubbish, relieved by the stale anti-Catholic clap-trap that is the natural language of Evangelicalism. The *Chester Chronicle*, which is the newspaper referred to, quotes a few passages from the letter of a correspondent signing himself "A Dublin Priest," who writes to the *Dublin Freeman* strongly condemning the customs that prevail at wakes, and calling upon the Government to second the efforts made by the Catholic clergy to put an end to them. "Each Lent," writes the correspondent, "the Church publishes her condemnation of wakes. Our Bishops are repeatedly calling on us to use every effort to suppress them, 'as insulting to the dead, and subversive of Christian morals.' These condemnations and our constant exertions are not effective generally." The *Chester Chronicle*, however, says not a word of this, but quotes some of the cases of disgusting conduct mentioned by the writer, and then lays the whole blame of the matter upon the Catholic Church. "Such," he says, "is the terrible degradation to which the Romish priesthood has brought one of the finest peasantry (peasantries?) in the world." The presumption is, nevertheless, that the priesthood which had brought the people to such a pitch of degradation would be content that they should remain in it, rather than condemn and make efforts to put an end to it. That the habit of waking the dead riotously, moreover, did not originate in Catholic Ireland, a pious editor might be expected to have sufficient knowledge even of the Scriptures to inform him. He might hardly be expected to have sufficient honesty to induce him not to hide the truth when it was laid undeniably before his eyes—for honesty is not among the attributes of pious editors as a rule. The *Freeman's* correspondent, then, in reference to the necessity that he finds for a law to second the efforts of the priests, speaks as follows:—"Until then we must only imitate our Lord, 'who (St. Matthew's Gospel, ix., 22 seq.), when He was come into the house of the Ruler (whose daughter lay dead) saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout, and said 'give place,' . . . and the multitude was put out.' Had He not raised the dead to life, on His departure the multitude would have returned, and so they do now." So much for the manner in which good Protestant Christians consider themselves authorised to deal with Catholic matters? But let us hope that they limit the gross license taken by them to this particular, and in all the other affairs of life are tolerably honest men. We must make allowance, besides, for the position in which they find themselves placed, for it is very necessary, in order that the Church may seem inferior and the various evangelical conventicles obtain some degree of credit, that falsehood should be strongly, plentifully, and unscrupulously made use of. Meantime, as a just means of contrasting the work done by Protestantism with that accomplished by the Church, let us compare the following figures—as contrasting Catholic and Protestant Ireland they are especially valuable. The returns of the Registrar-General for 1881, then, give us the percentage of illegitimate births in Ulster, the most Protestant province, and in Connaught, the most Catholic province. In Protestant Ulster it is 4.1, and in Catholic Connaught 0.8 per cent. We find, moreover, that in the Protestant county, Down, of 5,671 births registered, 328 were illegitimate, while in Catholic Mayo there were 29 illegitimate births out of 6,013 births registered. We see, therefore, that pious editors are very sorely put to it when they feel obliged to condemn the Catholic Church, as they very often do. If, under the circumstances, they take refuge in tricks and dishonesty, let us, at least, make all the excuse for them that their necessities demand. Good Protestantism very consistently, as well as constantly, acts upon that motto which it has itself invented for the benefit of the Jesuits—"The end justifies the means."

THE ARGUMENTS. In the *Month* for Dec. the Rev. James F. Splaine publishes an article on primary education in which we find much that is very pertinent to the subject which at present forms the chief interest of Catholics in this Colony. The writer begins by referring to the state of the religious question in England, and points out how religious freedom has been brought to mean freedom from religion. He goes on to show that all the provision made for education in the past was due to denominationalists, and declares that had secularists done as much an immense expenditure on Board Schools would have been avoided by the ratepayers. He then goes on to explain the injustice of the attempt to force on the whole community the system that is pleasing to secularists alone. "There is no greater fallacy," he writes, "than that which underlies this make-believe theory of being the same to all. Denominationalists see a distinction between the being educated and the being perhaps brimful of facts and processes. They are possessed of the idea that although a child were not only perfect in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but were also an adept in geography, domestic economy, and history and had also gained a smattering of the sciences, he would not for all that necessarily be educated. They believe that these attainments by themselves would in many, if not in most cases, be positively injurious, and that to be really beneficial they must rest on a substratum of morality. They believe also that to talk of building up a code of morality without religion is to talk nonsense; that a morality which is not founded on the first and greatest Commandment of loving God above all things, and all else for His sake, which is not, in other words, looped up to the supreme will of One who taketh thought for all men must be founded on selfishness; that under such a code man's motive for action must ever be in its ultimate analysis, love of his own body; and that his aim in life when traced through and past all his wordy and high-sounding professions, can be no higher than that which impels the beast of the field, namely the nutrition and well-being not of his soul, not of his mind, but of that in which these, according to the apostles of such morality, are mere phenomena, namely, his body. Finally—they believe that in such a code there would be nothing to hinder man from turning all his attainments in whatever direction he thought might most conduce to his own temporal pleasure or profit, however great an injustice he might thereby be guilty of towards the rest of the world." "We are not concerned at present," adds the writer, "in proving that Denominationalists are right in believing all this. We only state, as a fact, that they do. Is it would be, therefore, that they should be dissatisfied with the offer of the Secularist? The 'education' which he speaks of is to them a maimed and truncated abortion, and his attempt to thrust it upon them is an unwarrantable interference with freedom of conscience." The Secularist, however, answers that he has no intention of forcing his views on the Denominationalist, but that he cannot be expected much longer to contribute to the support of religions with which he has no sympathy. "This answer, by its coolness, seems to have deceived some even among ourselves," says the writer "Let us therefore consider attentively what it amounts to. We Denominationalists have laid out enormous sums in building our own schools, furnishing them, and supplying them with staffs of teachers. Then we have been taxed to do the same for our Secularist. Having thus been set upon his legs, the first announcement which he makes is that he will not subscribe any longer towards the support of our religions. Any longer! Why, he is not doing it now. It is difficult at first to guess what he alludes to, but his meaning is that he objects to our being allowed to compete with him for certain prizes called Grants, which are voted by Parliament out of the national income, and by Government thrown open at present to all certified schools." The writer, then, proceeds to examine into the secularist's objection, and to the passages in which he does so, as being of especial importance, we desire to call the particular attention of our readers. "But what are these prizes offered for?" asks the writer. "Is it for religion as he (the Secularist) insinuates? Is the grant that he gets given for religion? And is not the grant that we receive awarded on precisely the same conditions, and for precisely the same thing? Should we get a penny less if we were to cease from teaching our children a creed? The grant is given, as he knows perfectly well for success in teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Religion has nothing in the world to do with it. We Denominationalists have