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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

CARDINAL
MANNING
APPEALS TO
ENGLISH
VOTERS.

THE battle for Christian education which Catholics have been so long fighting in this colony is also being maintained with vigor in England. It is true that in England the fight is not so unequal and that Catholic schools obtain some degree of aid from the State, but this is not sufficient to prevent their maintenance for falling heavily upon the Catholic population, and many sacrifices there also are required to support them. The tendency, moreover, of the Government is to completely secularise the educational system, and to fall in with the movement towards godlessness that in a greater or less degree characterises the age. Cardinal Manning, then, leads the Catholics of the country in their fight, and it is especially interesting to us to find that his Eminence asserts his right to take upon him the part of a politician and appeals to the newly enfranchised voters exhorting them to require from the candidates they promise to support a pledge in favour of Christianity. The Cardinal speaking at a recent meeting claimed the right to take part in politics, because although he had become a member of the priesthood he had not been deprived of the privileges of a layman, and there was another reason why he should especially speak on the question of education even politically considered, since it was a moral and religious question:—"There was no strong line to be drawn between morals and politics," he said, "because politics were nothing but the morals of society at large. When the State entered into the matter of education, the clergy had a right to enter into practical politics, and so he wished to point out that the country was now waiting for the opinions and the will of two millions of people who until now had not been able to speak. What those two millions would say he could not at all prophesy, but he should be very much mistaken if two millions of Englishmen did not say that they wished the schools of England to be Christian schools, because the Board schools all over England which were set up without Christianity, had been forced by the public conscience, the public sense, and the public feeling of the people at large to introduce the reading of the Bible and the explanation of the meaning of the Bible. He therefore felt very confident that when these two millions spoke they would speak in the same sense, and therefore he wished to draw the conclusion that every man who loved Christianity and his country was bound, when anybody came before him to ask his interest and his vote, to assure himself that any person he voted for would protect Christian education and freedom of conscience, so that the schools of England should be Christian and religious, thenceforth and for ever. He hoped they would all put this question, and that when the unknown land of the new House of Commons was seen there would also be seen a considerable atmosphere of Christianity over it."—His Eminence then went on to point out that England had been established in her greatness by means of Christianity to which she owed unity, freedom, and self-government.—"Down to the year 1870 the English people were a self-educated as well as a self-governed people. All the education which existed was the education provided by the voluntary schools founded by the voluntary efforts of the people at large. That voluntary system was aided, indeed, by the State, for it was the genius of our whole constitution that the State should aid individuals to do what they could not do without State aid, but that the State should not aid what individuals could do by themselves. The combined efforts of voluntary exertions and contributions and the assistance of the State produced the condition of education in England down to 1870." But must we admit that down to the year 1870 England had been an ignorant, an inglorious, and an unfortunate country? Or is it not manifest that her name had been won abroad, and the zenith of her prosperity attained to at home, while the nation was still self-educated? The Cardinal next proceeded to show the unfair manner in which those people who had done everything in aid of education were treated, they having contributed millions of money, and covered the country with schools only to find that the Board schools, not required for their children, received the whole education rate.—We see then, that, everywhere as well as in this Colony of our own, the

education battle is being fought, and we may derive additional courage and perseverance by knowing that we only form part of one great army fighting in the cause of truth all over the world. Cardinal Manning's hope, however, can hardly be ours, for there seems but little likelihood that the electors of New Zealand will change their minds, and demand of Parliamentary candidates a pledge in support of Christianity. Catholic electors, nevertheless, so often advised in our columns to vote for no man who will not give such a pledge will perceive that we have advised them only as a Prince of the Church, and a leader whose influence is widely acknowledged beyond the limits of the Church, advises his English fellow countrymen.

AMONG the characteristics of the age also is that of RESPECTABLE AND ENLIGHTENED DRUNKARDS a consumption of alcohol, that threatens to work the ruin of society, and to undermine the constitutions of the whole human race, and, more especially in countries regarded as taking a principal part in civilisation. We are used to hear of the drunkenness of Ireland, and it has been the comfortable custom of some good people to explain all the misfortunes of that country by the drinking habits supposed to exist among the people. But it was a revelation to us, when the *Times* published certain letters from its Swiss correspondent disclosing the taste for strong liquor shown by one of the model peoples of Europe, and the extent to which they were accustomed to indulge that taste. A condition of things, in fact was revealed such as had never existed in Ireland, and the question arose as to how the Irish people owing to their drunkenness had become very miserable, whereas the Swiss being much more drunken were known as models of prosperity, and everything that was commendable. The only satisfactory answer to be given, as we have perhaps already pointed out, was that the heads of the Swiss were much better made, and as to the degree in which that should prove satisfactory it would depend a good deal on the person receiving it. But it seems that it is not only the Swiss, who are more drunken than the Irish and the *Times* again gives us some particulars that concern some other most respectable nations of the European continent:—"Englishmen," it says, "have been accustomed to hear themselves denounced by preachers of temperance among their own countrymen as singularly abandoned to indulgence in alcohol. Consul-General Oppenheimer, of Frankfort, in a report published within the last few days, and addressed to the Foreign Office, assigns to Germans a far worse pre-eminence. Great Britain is the land of beer as France is of wine. Valiantly as North Germany imbibes beer England easily distances it in its consumption of that beverage. In spirits the balance is much more than reversed. North Germans drink nearly five times the British spirit average. Spirits were sold in 1880 at ninety-three thousand houses in Prussia. Germans of the better classes seldom drink spirits. In general, the habit is confined to the working population, and to men. Thus, although the statistics do not seem to be very systematically made up, the figures at their lowest indicate the drinking by North German workmen of six glasses of *schnaps* daily a head. Only Sweden, Russia, and Denmark show a more damaging proportion. Holland and Belgium, which are notorious for the same taste, do not reach an equal level. It has grown, and is growing; and Northern Europe must increase its thirst, or it will be overtaken by the Kingdom of Prussia. Consul-General Oppenheimer confesses his obligation for his estimates to Dr. Baer, the head physician at the Plotzensee Prison. Statistics of spirit-drinking are interchangeable with statistics of crime and madness. In Germany forty-one per cent. of the prisoners were in gaol for acts committed under the influence of intoxication. Not quite half the forty-one per cent. were habitual drunkards. An eighth of all the annual suicides in Prussia are committed under the impulse of alcohol. In the Prussian States two thousand and sixteen persons are yearly treated for *delirium tremens*. Yearly there are five hundred and ninety-seven cases of dipsomania. In Prussia thirteen millions sterling are spent annually on spirits. Spirit-drinkers in North Germany waste a huge amount of the national wealth. They murder, they assault, they run mad, they crowd hospitals, prisons, and asylums. The habit ruins themselves body and soul. It devises a fatal inheritance of disease, rickettiness, and mischievous thirstiness to succeeding generations. The working classes are the replenishers of the population. For future moral