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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

IN relation to the disgraceful exhibition that has now been going on in the Colony for some weeks and which at present occupies the evangelical bull-ring or cock-pit at Wellington, it is hardly necessary for us to remind our readers that they see only the regularly recurring diversion of the Evangelical world. We allude to the tirades against the Catholic people made by the woman who calls herself O'Gorman or Auffray, and whose *nom de theatre*, on boxing-ring title, is the "Escaped Nun." Concerning the woman herself we do not consider it necessary to say much. The very nature of her occupation is sufficient to explain her character to all Catholics, and it is for Catholics that we write. Certain American papers, moreover, and notable among them the *New York Sun*, a secular newspaper, have given an account of her career which was reproduced in our columns a month or two ago, and this must have confirmed all that Catholics had previously concluded, if any confirmation were necessary to them. We are not, again, without some feeling of compassion for a poor creature earning her living in such a way. We think it very possible—and, more, almost probable, that she still retains some remnants of the Faith—and, believing with the belief of devils, finds herself in some degree in the position of those miserable beings who in the ancient world were represented as driven by the furies. Can our readers conceive the frame of mind of a human being looking forward with certain eyes to eternal torment and determined at least to bring a full score before the Judgment Seat where the terrible sentence will be passed. To carry such a mind must in itself be punishment beyond all imagination, and, however great the wickedness of the situation, it is not without the reach of pity. We would leave this woman, then, to her God Who will require an account of every word she speaks. Nor are we troubled about this matter on the part of the Catholic community. To suffer persecution is a note of the Catholic Church, and, in one shape or another, such suffering must pursue her members. The penal days are over, and, for the time at least, they cannot return. But the hatred still exists in which the penal days themselves originated, and it must have some form and method of expression. Is it not a full and bitter persecution that foul and ribald accusations should be publicly brought amid the applause of a mob against respectable and inoffensive people? Our holy religion, however, is worth the penalty we pay for adherence to it, and it would be so were that penalty fifty times, nay, fifty thousand times as great. Our fathers in by-gone days bore the imputation of all this infamy, and in addition they were fined or imprisoned or banished, or put to torture or death, and how shall we complain? Our God requires such sacrifices of us, and had warned us that He would require them. What, therefore, is there for us to show but patience and submission? And it is not now, moreover, as it was in earlier days; we do not now find the higher class of Protestants arrayed on the side of the vile defamer. The matter has gone down into the lower ranks, and is the particular privilege of coarse and vulgar people. Respectable men and prominent members of the Anglican Church, indeed, in years passed by were deceived by some foul apostates who came to them with their tale of lies and filth. They took up such men as Achilli or Ciocci—but they burned their fingers badly and their experience, as well as the advancement in refinement, and the return to more Catholic practices, of the Church of England made them wiser and of better minds. They will, indeed, still support apostates from the Church, but these people must now keep themselves within bounds, and there is no opening for prurience or abomination on their part. Loyson, for example, declaims no tale of infamy against Catholicism, nor does Savarese or Campello. But as to the effects of these brutal exhibitions on Catholicism we honestly believe—and we speak from some personal knowledge and experience, that they are wholesome,—and we believe, and we have particular reasons for our belief, that even towards the Protestant world itself they are beneficial. They excite the curiosity of minds that had never thought of the Church, and lead to inquiry that must tend towards conversion.—They

may even ultimately benefit the people whom they prejudice the most, when some chance or accident reveals to them the probability that they were misled, and a further acquaintance sought with Catholics, their habits and their religion, results in completely disabusing them.—Nothing materially or lastingly injurious to the Catholic cause, in fact, has ever followed from such exhibitions—and that is acknowledged by some of the chief opponents of the Church themselves.—Take, for example, this passage from the late Canon Kingsley.—“For the time we sink for calling Popery ill names is past: to abstain is certainly a sore restraint for English spirits. . . . But Romanism has been exposed, and refuted triumphantly, every month for centuries, and yet the Romish nations are not converted; and too many English families of late have found, by sad experience, that such arguments as are in vogue are powerless to dissuade the young from rushing headlong into the very superstitions which they have been taught from infancy to deride. The truth is, Protestantism may well cry ‘Save me from my friends!’ We have attacked Rome too often on shallow grounds, and finding our arguments weak have found it necessary to overstate them. We have got angry and caught up the first weapon which came to hand, and have only cut our own fingers. We have very nearly burnt the Church of England over our heads, in our hurry to make a bonfire of the Pope. We have been too proud to make ourselves acquainted with the very tenets which we exposed, and have made a merit of reading no Popish books but such as we were sure would give us a handle for attack, and not even then without the precaution of getting into a safe passion beforehand. We have dealt in exaggerations, in special pleadings, in vile and reckless imputations of motive, in suppressions of all palliating facts. We have outraged the common feelings of humanity by remaining blind to the virtues of noble and holy men, because they were Papists, as if a good deed was not good in Italy, as well as in England. We have talked as if God had doomed to hopeless vileness in this world, and reprobation in the next, millions of Christian people, simply because they were born of Romish, and not of Protestant fathers. And we have our reward; we have fared like the old woman who would not tell the children what a well was, for fear they should fall into one. We see educated and pious Englishmen joining the Romish communion simply from ignorance of Rome, and have no talisman wherewith to disenchant them. Our medicines produce no effect on them, and all we can do is, like quacks to increase the dose. Of course if ten boxes of Morrison's pills have killed a man, it only proves that he ought to have taken twelve of them. We are jesting, but as an Ulster Orangeman would say, “It is in good Protestant earnest.”—(Miscellanies, Vol. I. p.p. 235-6) Canon Kingsley, as we all know, and as, indeed, he himself in this same review tells us, was a Protestant among Protestants—but he had recognised the falsehood and folly of such infamous onslaughts on the Catholic Church.—We venture to differ from him as to his confidence that legitimate controversy would be more effectual in hindering conversions, but it would at least be manly, and fair, and decent.—Kingsley's warning may possibly also have contributed to unveiling the more brutal method for Englishmen of the higher class, and aided in the revolt of the more cultured mind against it.—The lower Protestantism, however, runs itself in so coarse and ugly a groove that nothing need surprise us as to the associations in which we find it.—When we are told, as we are for instance, by a report in our contemporary, the *Evening Press*, that a band of Evangelical ministers were the patrons of this unhappy woman at Wellington, we perceive that they were quite in their proper place.—Even the Evangelicalism of the Church of England has been recognised by members of that Church as inconsistent with the character of the gentleman, and what are we to expect of those bodies in which evangelicalism reaches its extreme? What especially of the ministers who necessarily display an exaggeration of the general tone of their flocks? We have, however, no desire to be unjust, and, no matter what we may be obliged for truth's sake to withhold from our ministers, we are willing to concede to them all that is their due. We do not, then, see, according to our contemporary's report, that there was a disgusting affectation of kindly feeling, and their usual revolting hypocrisy, among them on the occasion to which we allude. They did not on this occasion make any pretence to serve their “dear brethren of the Romish Church,” as they are wont to call us, or, while spitting filth in our faces, affect to caress us. On the contrary, so far as we can judge, they were quite