

and fidelity of the Irish priests in Ireland than I do. I know their worth and their learning, but I know, too, that they can gather, by reading or otherwise, only very scant and imperfect knowledge of the religious situation, and the dreadful assaults that are made upon the faith of the simple Irish people in distant lands like New Zealand. One must be here and see for himself to understand the trials, temptations, heartburnings, and struggles, that are daily endured by thousands of Catholics to keep from being extinguished amidst the mists and clouds of heterodoxy and infidelity that torch of holy faith which they brought burning brightly from Ireland.

As in America and Australia, so also in New Zealand the mass of our Catholic people are "exiles of Erin." The vast majority of them are the sons and daughters of the small farmer and the labourer. They left their homes without wealth and with only the rudiments of knowledge. They are merged in the different nationalities scattered through this vast country, where Catholics are in a miserable minority. We are here not a nation but isolated individuals. In country parts the young men are labourers and shepherds. In the towns the girls are the slaves of English, Scotch, and colonial mistresses. The greater number of these young men and women have come from the country districts of Ireland. Educated in national schools, many of them received only that minimum of religious instruction sufficient for admission to the sacraments. Beyond this they have little knowledge of the groundwork of their faith. In Ireland the priests as a rule preach every Sunday, but their discourses, beautiful no doubt as they are, nevertheless, are, I venture to say, more extortory and paraphrastic, than didactic and catechetical. This is glorious for the old land, while the people remain at home, but it does not do for here. Landing on these shores, our young men and women have a simple, lively faith, but a faith founded on a weak substratum of knowledge. It is practical but not theoretical. The belief is there, but the why and the wherefore are not. Here, working amongst Protestants, stifled with vice and inhaling an atmosphere tainted with unbelief, they are asked a reason for this article of their faith, and for that, and most of them are unable to give any, or at best, but a feeble reply. Nay, very often they have only a vague, sometimes, an incorrect knowledge of what they precisely do believe; but this faith they were prepared, when entering the emigrant ships, to resign only with their lives. The grace of God was still abiding in their young hearts when they left their homes of innocence with a father's blessing and a mother's tearful entreaties. They had little suspicion of the character of the enemies or the nature of the dangers that awaited them. They came armed with the sword of faith but had not on the breastplate of knowledge, and soon the poisoned arrows of unbelief find entrance to their innocent hearts. The grace of God, it is true, cherished and increased in the beginning by frequent recourse to the sacraments, shields them for a time, but when the intellect at first embarrassed, then disoriented, is led astray, the demon of perversity, indifference and finally unbelief, takes possession of the heart. They are confronted on these shores by two classes of people—one who feel no sympathy with their national feeling and instincts—the other, the avowed enemies of all Christianity. The staunch Presbyterian, the gloomy Wesleyan, and the loyal, honest Church of England Protestant meet them with objections against "popish superstition;" the professed Atheist and the disciples of the free-thought lecturer challenge them with proofs against every dogma of Christian belief. To face such an array of enemies there is need of great moral courage, much prudence, and deep-rooted convictions.

Moral courage the Irish race at home and abroad may fairly boast of; prudence we have not in very great measure, and religious convictions with a large proportion of our unfortunate emigrants are more the result, I think, of what I will call *training* than of religious education. They have imbibed their beliefs with their mother's milk. Born in the bosom of a Catholic land, associated in early life with Catholic companions, taught in Catholic schools, they had little to tax their faith or call into requisition that necessity for a knowledge of the groundwork of their beliefs so necessary in a foreign land. When such emigrants, young men and young women, in their daily toil, and toil they must, come in contact with those whose morals are corrupt, whose hearts are poisoned with a hatred of Catholicity, and whose minds are stored with a specious reasoning against it, the religious antagonism is very unequal indeed. On the one side you have an unsophisticated, innocent, guileless heart, and an untutored intellect; on the other an astute selfish unbeliever, or what in the case is sometimes worse, a vain, tenacious Bible-reader armed with weapons against Catholic doctrine, forged by the perverse ingenuity of minds more logical and deeply read even than the assailant's own. Human nature is human nature, and in a conflict like this the consequences as known to missionary priests are much to be dreaded. Our people are thus questioned and embarrassed oftentimes for an answer. If they decline to give any, they will be told they believe without, or against reason, that their faith is a pile of superstitions founded on ignorance and sustained by the influence of priestcraft. Should they be imperfectly instructed in the groundwork of their faith while attempting to give a rational account of their beliefs and practices, the probability is, they will expose themselves to ridicule and their Church to greater contempt. Not unfrequently, indeed, does it happen that, in circumstances like these, a mind hitherto artless, full of simplicity and trust, will be led to think more seriously, and through thinking to doubt or question the wisdom of believing what till lately it had not thought of examining, and which when put before it, dressed in a false costume by an unbelieving caviller, seems to it, in the light of its rustic logic and scant instruction, absolutely inexplicable or altogether untrue. Here lies the danger, to many an Irish emigrant having no scientific knowledge of the groundwork of his holy faith when leaving the old land. Here is the rock upon which many a soul is shipwrecked and lost. I would respectfully suggest to the priests in Ireland to forewarn the people against these dangers and to equip them to meet their opponents by regular serial courses of catechetical instructions. While they live at home breathing an atmosphere of purity and innocence, surrounded by their priests, having every opportunity of approaching the sacraments as often as they wish, a homely exhorta-

tion, a pathetic effusion, which may touch the heart while it leaves the intellect barren, will pilot them smoothly over a peaceful life to a happy death. But when they have left far behind the calm skies of holy Ireland, and have "to rough" against the billows of unbelief that are fast flooding this country; when they have to meet the sneer of the bitter sectarian with his inherited prejudices; when they have to work with corrupted and captious men in stations and sheep-runs twenty and thirty miles away from the nearest church or priest; when they can hear Mass only once in two or three months, and can approach the sacraments not so often; when unfortunately they find their temporal interests clash too frequently with their spiritual, then those discourses of other days which moved the heart and generated short-lived sympathies, vanish into oblivion or are remembered only as hollow-sounding and unsubstantial vanities. No longer will an implicit uninformed faith be found sufficient amid the practical indifference which now surrounds them. Absence from Sunday's Mass, neglect of approaching the sacraments of confession or communion, want of due reverence for the priestly authority, all which in other days would suffice the countenance with shame, or merit the disapprobation of others, will here be a temptation to gain popular applause or a coin to purchase the patronage of those whose will it is their temporal welfare to serve. But the evil does not stop here; it is not linked merely with the individual himself. His firm adherence to the faith or his practical renunciation of it becomes an inheritance which is sure to descend to his offspring. If virtues flow from parent to child, much more do vicious inclinations. We have in this country two classes of Catholic parents, the agriculturists and farm-labourers, and those who reside in the towns. In nearly all the districts the country families live far apart, being outnumbered by those of other denominations to a great proportion. The priests are few and far between. They reside only in the principal towns. Struggling against immense odds, they find it impossible from the revenues of their parishes to maintain more than one, at the most two, Catholic schools in every mission.

(To be concluded in our next.)

CHRISTCHURCH.

June 20, 1887.

THERE is a scarcity of Catholic news in Christchurch. The one absorbing topic is the Magdalen Asylum, but that is a budget in itself. The first portion of the building at Mount Magdalen is now rapidly approaching completion, and people are looking forward to its opening at no very distant date. The work is a great one. It was nobly conceived, and has been nobly prosecuted, and its present advanced condition speaks volumes for the zeal of the managing trustee, Father Ginaty; without his marvellous energy and indomitable perseverance the place would not have had an existence for years to come. In season and out of season, he has, for months past, been pleading the cause of the Magdalen Asylum. From the pulpit, in the offices of merchants, in the highways and byways, and he has at intervals, during the past six weeks, been scouring the Province in quest of funds to appease the insatiable demands of contractors, and always with most encouraging results. On Sunday week, at the end of Mass, he spoke in glowing terms of his reception in all parts of the country, by men in every station of life, and he provoked a smile from his hearers as he told how he obtained a subscription from a certain ploughman, who was on his way home after a hard day's work, and who, though dubious as to the wisdom of contributing so substantial a sum as a pound in these hard times, was, nevertheless, sensible of the necessity of doing his share of so good a work. When a man is once convinced that it is his duty to take part in an undertaking like the Magdalen Asylum and when it is Father Ginaty who urges its claim, there is obviously nothing for it but to hand in his subscription. So the ploughman contributed his mite and plodded his way home, while Father Ginaty went on his way rejoicing. Father Ginaty accepts nothing less than a pound, because his wish is that only those who can afford to aid him should do so, and he thinks that those who cannot give a pound must have more imperative calls upon their purses. It must be most gratifying to him to find that wherever he goes, the sympathies of all classes and creeds are with him in his work, and the hearty co-operation he meets with must be an immense encouragement to him to continue his exertions. The work is a great one; God speed it!

The Canterbury Catholic Literary Society, which is now flourishing under its energetic president, Mr. Lonargan, has taken a new departure by entering into a union with the other literary societies of the city. The idea of a union of literary societies in Christchurch originated with Mr. Smeaton, of the Young Men's Christian Association, who it appears was chiefly instrumental in forming a most successful union of a like nature in Adelaide. The object of the union is to create a friendly feeling between the various societies by the interchange of favours in the shape of lectures or papers, and by the formation of a Parliamentary Club, consisting of representatives from each society in the proportion of one representative to every ten members. It is also proposed to have periodical competitions in impromptu speaking, essay writing, and elocution. Altogether the scheme is viewed most favourably, and if carried on with the same spirit with which it has been started it ought to achieve great success. The Council of the Catholic Literary Society was no doubt moved to join the union for the purpose of arousing the members to greater activity in their work. The Society has struggled on valiantly in the face of grave difficulties and is now in a very prosperous condition, but still the Council is of opinion that a great many members might well exert considerably more energy than they do, and it believes that a friendly rivalry with other literary institutions is calculated to bring this about.

It was stated at the annual meeting of the Scottish Reformation Society in Edinburgh, that the Catholic population in Scotland numbered 312,000, and that it is steadily on the increase, merely through the emigration of Irish persons.