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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL.

FROM time to time we have published extracts which go to show that the non-Catholic mind in America at least, is slowly opening at length to the need of having religion permanently wedded to school life. In a recent speech Cardinal

Moran pointed out how some of the foremost flag-bearers of the godless schools have now become champions of the cause which demands the blending of religion and science in the class-room and the study-hall. His Eminence dwelt on three chief points: (1) Some time ago circulars were sent to some 400 noted experts on the Public School system of the United States, asking them whether they adhered to the present programme of excluding religion from the school, or whether they wished to go back on the old lines. The vast majority replied that, from what they had seen of the results of the Public School system, it was necessary to return to the old method of blending religion with secular instruction. (2) Again: Statistics published a few months ago in the United States showed that at least 10,000,000 persons had renounced Christianity and drifted into that hollowest of superstitions—spiritism. (3) In England, this class of schools flourished chiefly through the action of the Nonconformists. What was the result? Since 1832, the Nonconformist body in England, instead of the natural growth in proportion to the population, had lost 615,000 members. Such a leakage as this must mean the annihilation of Congregationalism. The melancholy feature of this decay is this: that a vast number—perhaps a great majority—of those who drop out of communion with the Congregational body, go to swell the growing ranks of infidelity and irreligion. The Catholic Church can never fail in faith; but communities, and even countries, may, and have done so. The Catholic school is, humanly speaking, one of the chief anchors of hope and safety for the Church of the future in New Zealand.

SPAIN'S DECAY AGAIN. SPAIN'S decay has been made in the United States, as in New Zealand, the theme of some loud, volcanic pulpit nonsense. Callow declaimers of neglected education put forth the dogma that

Spain is decadent because she is Catholic. We have dealt with this before. After quoting non-Catholic opinion to the contrary, the *Ave Maria* gives this neat parting rapier-thrust:—

'Material prosperity or adversity depends on other causes than religion, and in no case can it be interpreted as the visible sign of God's pleasure or displeasure. The only promise of temporal prosperity recorded in the Bible was made, not by Christ, but by Satan on the pinnacle of the temple. Pointing to the kingdoms of the earth, he said: "All these will I give thee if, falling down, thou wilt adore me." If the bigots can get any consolation out of this, they are welcome to it.'

A CONTRAST. AMBITION is cruel. Bigotry, compared with it, is merciful. An article that appears elsewhere in our columns gives some idea of the concentrated

gall of the bigotry that reigns in the north-east corner of Ulster, with the happy contrast that is presented by the rest of Ireland. Our readers are aware of the strong, rank aroma of bigotry that prevails in Manitoba. We learn from the *Ave Maria* that the Catholics of Canada, like those of Ireland, furnish a striking contrast, and a lesson, to the zealots of the North-West:—'In vivid contrast to the disinclination of Manitoba Protestants to give their full rights in educational matters to the Catholic minority, stands out the generous action of the Quebec Catholics in their treatment of the same question as it affects the Protestant majority of their province. The Quebec Government recently passed an order in council granting to non-Catholic educational bodies increased facilities for the betterment of their schools and for a more efficient

training of the teachers thereof. It seems passing strange that the freely accorded justice and fairplay received by Quebec Protestants does not make their Manitoba co-religionists thoroughly ashamed; but we rejoice that our Quebec friends display no desire of retaliating.'

MANY of your Protestant friends imagine that MAJOR EXCOMMUNICATION is part of the ancient armoury of the Church of Rome only, and that it is as unknown amongst the Reformed

creeds as the arquebuse and blunderbuss is on the modern field of battle. Two recent events in England will go far to show that this ancient and apostolic weapon is not obsolete in the Establishment. The curate in charge of St. Ethelburga's, London, recently 'advertised' his intention of excommunicating (refusing communion) to Mr. John Kensit. The sentence was, however, averted by Mr. Kensit tending his sorrow for the inconsistent act which had created the situation—partaking of a part of the communion and leaving the rest. The *Saturday Review* of May 21, and *Reynold's Newspaper* of May 22, record the infliction of the still more dreadful major (or greater) excommunication on a clergyman who had been found guilty of two serious crimes. The sentence was passed with great solemnity by the Bishop of Lichfield in his cathedral. It excludes the offender from the sacraments, and, says *Reynold's Newspaper*, 'from the company of all Christians.' How the latter part of the sentence is to be carried out, we are not informed, as for a very long period sentences of excommunication have not been carried out in any country, Catholic or Protestant, by the civil government.

The Presbyterian *Confession of Faith* (chap. xxx., 2, 3, 4) empowers the officers of the Church 'to shut that Kingdom [of Heaven] against the impenitent, both by word and censures'; 'to proceed by admonition, suspension from the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime and demerit of the person.' The usage is an apostolic one, and is laid down by implication or in set terms by St. Paul—even to the avoidance of the excommunicated person—in *II. Thus.*, iii., 6, 14, 15; *I. Cor.*, v., 4, 5, 13; *Tit.*, iii., 10. Sentences of excommunication were frequently resorted to during the Middle Ages. 'They were,' says Lingard, 'the principal weapons with which the clergy sought to protect themselves and their property from the cruelty and rapacity of the banditti in the service of the barons. They were feared by the most powerful and unprincipled, because at the same time that they excluded the culprit from the offices of religion, they also cut him off from the intercourse of society. Men were compelled to avoid the company of the excommunicated, unless they were willing to participate in the punishment.'

To adapt Tennyson's well-known line, Angloism GOING TO THE OTHER EXTREME. 'spins for ever down the ringing grooves of change.' Most recent in the many Romeward changes of ritual in the Establishment is that of mixing water with the wine in the administration of the Eucharist. The Archbishop of Canterbury, on behalf of his episcopal colleagues, has, in the cases of reformed dipsomaniacs, permitted 'the dilution of the wine with water before it is brought into the church to whatever extent may be necessary.' The last six words indicate that the Bishops believe they have the power to change the matter of the sacrament as instituted by Christ. They are, moreover, abundant evidence of the fact that, as the *Times*' Rome correspondent says, 'they do not hold the doctrine of the Eucharist in the Roman sense.' The practice has curiously varied in the Established Church. The first prayer-book of Edward VI provided for the mixing of water with wine in the administration of the Lord's Supper. The revised prayer-book of the same reign omitted it; yet, according to Skinner's *Illustration* (pp. 108 sqq.) it was retained in the Scottish Office. In his *Comparison Between the*

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