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New Zealand Herald

B. A. L.

NINETEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XIX.—No. 14.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 1891.

PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

HERE are a few more of those wonderful figures, MORE OF THOSE WHICH, as lately given by Bishop Moran, astonished WONDERFUL some of our kind secularist friends, who in their COMMENTS, however, did not remark that the chief FIGURES. wonder connected with the matter was its complete truth. We quote from an editorial headed "Catholic and Technical Education," and published in the *Dublin Review* for October:—"Of sixty-seven apprentice mechanics," says the writer, "who passed in 1888 for the School of Brest, at the five French naval ports, sixteen were the pupils of the Brothers (of the Christian Schools), and not only were the three highest places gained by their schools at Capetan, Brest, and Quimper, but with the exception of the fourth, taken by a student of the High School at Mirepoix, all the high numbers up to fourteen were carried off by their schools." May we not echo the Bishop's query? Does this prove that denominational education has been a failure? If the opposing voice were an honest and manly one, its answer would be, It proves the direct contrary. Wonderful figures, indeed, borne out by facts quite as wonderful, and both figures and facts, as we have said, wonderful because of their complete truth.

CATHOLIC TRAINING.

THERE is, however, a good deal more than the paragraph given above which is worth quoting in this article in the *Dublin Review* to which we allude, and, as under more aspects than one education is a subject of particular prominence at the present season, we shall make no apology for setting the passages in question before our readers. Indeed, it is very necessary, under the circumstances of the times, that Catholics should be fully informed on this subject of education so that they may not only themselves be settled and firm in their convictions, but that they may be in a position to answer, each for himself, the arguments advanced with such groundless assurance and such obstinate reiteration against the Catholic standing-point. The writer then traces from early times the connection between Catholic institutions and technical education. To the monks of Combe, he attributes the place of the first master-builders of mediæval Europe. "From architecture, developed by religion," he says, "sprang all the other arts as its handmaids and auxiliaries." As an illustration of the part fulfilled by the great abbey, he quotes a passage from a work entitled *L'Eglise et la Jeunesse Ouvrière*, lately published by the Abbé Secretain. "That of St. Gall, dating from 810, may serve as an example. We find there workshops for shoemakers, harness-makers, armourers, shield-makers, turners, carriers, goldsmiths, locksmiths, fullers; beside these the schools with their dormitories, and further off, nearer to the stables and outhouses, quarters for the grooms and shepherds, the swineherds, coopers, neat-herds, etc. Nothing could come up to the solicitude of the Cistercians for the labouring classes, and it is in the abbey of this order that the most perfect organisation of manual labour is found. In a word, almost all the generations of workmen at this epoch were moulded by the religious of Cîteaux. The trade corporations came forth from the monastic professional schools." The spirit of the Cistercians, as the writer shows, was revived in the founder of the schools of the Christian Brothers, the Blessed de la Salle, who, he tells us, divined in technical education the want of the coming age. "The fundamental axiom that 'the unity of science governs the multiplicity of its applications,' was enunciated by him as the basis of the teaching in his central school of arts and manufactures. This maxim, then new, but now of universal acceptance, means that metallurgy, carving or moulding wood, stone, or iron, and the artistic handicrafts generally, have a ground-work of elementary knowledge common to all." To give practical effect to this principle schools were opened, that at Saint-Yon especially in the last century proving most successful. The chief technical school of the Brothers is now that of the Rue Vaugirard, in Paris. "Its 1200 pupils have open to them fifteen different trades, and may become book-binders, lens-

grinders, compositors, printers, workers in bronze, metal engravers, makers of wooden and brass musical instruments joiners, saddlers, trunk-makers, wood-carvers, wood-engravers, mathematical instrument-makers, map-engravers, or mechanics. The admirable training bestowed on them enables them to earn good wages immediately on leaving the institution, seldom less than from four to five francs a day, even when the general standard is low, and often as much as from six to seven. The artistic handicrafts are still more highly paid, and we read of engravers receiving fifteen francs a day within two months of the completion of their course, and of wood-engravers whose wages rise as high as twenty-eight francs. The work produced by the school has a high reputation, and a carved mantle-piece exhibited in London was valued at 4000 francs, while a book-case from the Rue Vaugirard was the admiration of visitors to the Parisian Palace of Industry in 1889."—Of the success of the Brothers' pupils as tested by competition we have given an example above. "These results," says the writer, "are achieved not only by the unwearied personal zeal and devotion of the members of the Order, but by traditional methods of teaching, handed down by its founders and scrupulously adhered to. They have many establishments in the United Kingdom, and the one at Artane, near Dublin, is not less admirable than that of Rue Vaugirard, though intended for a lower class of pupils." The writer gives the monks of La Trappe as another order who have attained particular distinction in industrial training:—"In Algeria, on the edge of the Sahara, they have introduced flower-farming and the manufacture of perfumes. In the neighbourhood of Rome they have undertaken the reclamation of the Campagna, and by the introduction of the Australian eucalyptus have rendered portions of its fever-stricken tract habitable and productive. Among the Natal Kaffirs they have established a great industrial colony at Mariannhill, where, on their arrival in 1882, there was neither house nor homestead, and their waggon was their only shelter. This establishment and its dependencies have now 70,000 acres under cultivation in Natal and Griqualand, while sixteen miles of road, ten stone bridges, and a magnificent system of waterworks, comprising five tanks and 7000 feet of pipes are among the other trophies of their industry. Their various undertakings . . . include a great bakery, supplying 600 people on the spot besides the bread sold, a printing-office, in which papers are published in four languages, a photographic studio, forges, mills, and workshops for carpentry and waggon-making. Paper manufactured from native grasses, and bee culture, for which Italian queens have been introduced to improve the African variety, are among their other specialties." The writer gives one or two other examples of missionary enterprise of a somewhat similar kind. We have, however, quoted enough for the present to prove once more that success, not failure, attends upon Catholic education in all its branches. But no doubt we should in vain challenge the reproduction of these particulars by those journalists and other secular pundits who have presumed to denounce Catholic education as a failure.

AN ERRATIC AGE. THE *Spectator* of November 1st gives us an insight into the spirit of the age that we confess is somewhat startling. "Allen's *Indian Mail*," says the *Spectator*, "a little paper which during two generations has endeavoured to record all matters of interest to Englishmen connected in any way with Asia, published on Tuesday, 28th October, the following extraordinary paragraph: 'A native gentleman at Hyderabad has received a letter from Mrs. Cates, the local secretary of the Liverpool Moslem Society, in which the lady states that there are now in that city no less than twenty-five gentlemen and five ladies who have embraced Islam. Mrs. Cates asks for support to carry on the work of converting the English nation to Mahomedanism; and the leading moulvies in the city, in response to her appeal, have opened a subscription list for that object. The President of the Society is Mr. W. M. Quilliam, B.A., a solicitor of Liverpool, who has published a pamphlet entitled 'The Faith of Islam.'"—The *Spectator* assumes that the statement quoted by him will not be easily credited. He, however, expresses his belief that it is true, and declares that he himself has no difficulty in accepting it. He says, in fact, that a quarter of a century ago he foretold