

old Motherland, and—like her, and unlike Canada—burdening our children's brains and clogging our commerce with a system of weights and measures and rules that are as cumbersome and out-of-date as the ideographs of the heathen Chinese. Here in New Zealand we have long been straining to produce infant phenomena—overburdening the brains of our youth with doses of undigested knowledge that is utterly lost or thrown to the winds in the practical battle of after life. Yet the new school syllabus proposed to add still further to the burdens of teacher and pupil. In the crush and hurry of stuffing the children's heads with homoeopathic doses of fifty 'ologies, the great object of education—the formation of character—is wholly neglected in our public schools. Within the narrow limits of their system, our State school teachers are, no doubt, good instructors. But they are not educators. And this arises, not from their fault, but from the radical defect of a system which, in practice, assumes that the child has no more soul within him than the colt of a wild ass.

Catholics alone in these colonies realise the tremendous perils and possibilities of youth, and the dread responsibilities of the work of education. We give the development of character its due place in our system. State inspection in New Zealand and public competitions in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, and other States of the Commonwealth, show at the same time that, in the matter of secular instruction, we are ever ready to pit ourselves against all comers. At recent public examinations, for instance, for twenty positions in the Commonwealth service, fourteen successful candidates—among them the highest on the list—came from the Catholic schools. It took a generation of agitation and a long and costly war to reform the British army. Expert opinion and public dissatisfaction may at last send that darling idol—'Our Great National System'—to the melting pot. But no reform can be complete but one that will recognise in a practical way the valuable work which the Catholic schools are doing for the State.

## Notes

### A Risky Business

Horse-dealing is a risky business. Horse-backing is riskier. 'Kind o' risky business buyin' hosses,' said old Eben Holden to his nephew in Irving Bacheller's droll volume; 'got t' judge the owner as well as the hoss. If there's anything the matter with his conscience it'll come out in the hoss somewhere—every time. Never knew a mean man t' own a good hoss. Remember, boy, 's a lame soul that drives a limpin' hoss.' According to the Duke of Portland, 'backing one's fancy' on a racecourse is as ticklish and uncertain a business as 'buyin' hosses', for there seems to be a deal of lame souls and case-hardened consciences to deal with. And the Duke ought to know, for is he not the man who owns Cathine, Australia's most famous racehorse? He states that with the best of horses and the best of information, it is impossible to win by betting on the turf. 'This opinion,' says the Melbourne 'Advocate,' ought to convince backers who foolishly think that they can "spot winners" that the practice is all one-sided, and the bookmaker has the best of it. Very often not only have bookmakers horses running in their interests, but also the controllers of horses, the jockeys, are often in their pay. The Duke of Portland knows the tricks of the betting ring, and consequently advises persons against betting.

### A Frothing Bigot

The January number of the 'Review of Reviews' is blemished by a repetition of some of the paltry tales which the Rev. Alexander Robertson contributed to the

'Pall Mall Gazette' under the pretence of being an 'anecdotal narrative' of the life of the new Pope. The Rev. Alexander is a Protestant minister resident in Venice. The people of Venice have conspicuously failed to assimilate the sort of substitute which he offers them for Christianity. This may or may not account for the evil temper in which the Rev. Alexander Robertson speaks of the Italian clergy and people. At any rate, the Rev. Alexander is a bigot of the most fanatical type. He writes with a pen steeped in gall and assafoetida. Some months ago we published a book, entitled 'The Roman Catholic Church in Italy.' It was a fine war-whoop—a frothing exhibition of shrieking non-Popery hysteria. The widely circulated and well-known non-Catholic London weekly, the 'Spectator,' said of it: 'This book may be best described as an invective against the Roman Catholic Church in Italy. The author, is a Protestant minister resident in Venice, and as he has many friends among the Italians, he might have written an informing book had he not been so blinded by his hatred of the Church of Rome as to be unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood.'

One of the abominable falsehoods told by the Rev. Alexander Robertson in that evil book is this: that, in the time of Pius IX. Catholic priests in the Papal States made a practice of murdering sick people for their money in the very act of administering to them the Sacraments of the Church! The 'Spectator,' referring to the malevolent falsehood, said that it was 'amazing' 'that a minister of religion and an educated man should repeat without a word of dissent such a monstrous allegation. There is,' it adds, 'much of the same kind in Dr. Robertson's volume, which we cannot recommend.' And this is the man whose venomous tongue clacks petty small-talk and perverted 'anecdotes' in the hope of showing unamiable blemishes in the lovable character of Pius X. The great-hearted Pontiff may have his little defects. But we prefer not to take the catalogue of them from Dr. Robertson, who, like Foude, 'leaves us hopelessly struggling to distinguish between his history and his hysteria.'

### Cardinal Merry del Val

More sympathetic and more true is the 'Review's' character sketch of the Pope's new Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val. 'The son of a distinguished diplomatist, he has spent the last twenty years in the greatest school of diplomacy in the world. Other Sovereigns can back up their diplomacy by force, but the Pope has no second weapon. It is doubtful whether any modern diplomatist has ever started better equipped for his task. His wonderful gift of languages places him in a position of superiority over all his predecessors. Spanish is his mother tongue, English he speaks as an Englishman, French like a Frenchman, and he has also a fluent command of German. Italian he speaks without accent, and he has become so much to be regarded as one of themselves that there was no feeling of opposition from the Italians to his appointment to a post they had always regarded as belonging to an Italian. He is the first Cardinal Secretary of State who has been able to deal with Catholics of the Anglo-Saxon race in their own language, and this has been, perhaps, a large factor in his appointment. He is an indefatigable worker and a man of strong character. He has a temper well kept in control which betrays itself sometimes by the appearance of an indignant flush on his face and by a flash from his dark eyes.'

The finest trait in the new Cardinal Secretary's character is, perhaps, set forth in that part of the sketch which represents him, after an arduous day's work in the Vatican, snatching a hasty and ascetic meal, and then casting off his brilliant robes and donning the plain black soutane and 'hastening along the streets across the Tiber to the Trastevere, where the great work which he has organised amongst the poorest