

upon incontinence, and that (2) all creeds have not the same value as restraining agents against this form of human frailty. But it is quite a different thing to assume (as your correspondents did) that specific forms of religious belief should get the whole discredit of such rates of illegitimacy as prevail among their real or nominal or supposititious adherents. At least one of the writers in your columns went so far as to hold the Catholic Church accountable for the moral obliquity of vast numbers of people who never came under her jurisdiction, who reject her faith, and many of whom are among her bitterest opponents and persecutors. Of this, more anon.

'Illegitimacy,' says Leffingwell (p. 85) 'is a phase of social phenomena produced by the constant

#### Action of Several Causes.

Its variance in different localities depends upon the force and number of the factors there present.' The strength or weakness of religious influences is one of these, and a very important one. But there are, as we shall see at the proper time, other and powerful factors also at work. Over some of these the religious denominations have little or no control. The measure of a church's responsibility in this connection is the measure of its deficiencies (if any) in teaching, and of its failure to rise to the level of its duties and its opportunities. In specific cases the blame (if any) must be apportioned, not as writers in your columns have apportioned it, recklessly, but with care and judgment. And this can be done only by those who have 'studied the matter' long and seriously, and who are in possession of full knowledge of the facts. And this full knowledge, as I shall show, is not to be found ready catalogued in statistical publications. Neither is it contained in the sixth volume of 'Chambers's Encyclopedia.'

This letter has already run into too great length. But it is slow and 'dour work' to clear this field of controversy of the weeds and undergrowth that infest it. I request your courteous permission to conclude this subject in another issue.—I am, etc.,

Editor 'N Z. Tablet'

April 2.

#### CAUSES AFFECTING ILLEGITIMACY

The second letter, which runs as follows, appeared in the 'Evening Star' of last Thursday:—

Sir,—In your issue of Monday I dealt with the disputants in your columns who recently took the statistical returns of illegitimate births in various countries as 'tests of Protestantism versus Romanism' to determine which has the purer faith.

I now come to

#### The Causes

that affect the rate of illegitimacy. They are many, they differ in energy, they sometimes neutralise each other, and they vary greatly in different countries and even in different districts of the same country. They may be divided, for the purposes of this discussion, into two classes—(a) Those that tend—in themselves and apart from the action of neutralising agencies—to increase incontinence and the rate of illegitimacy, and (b) those that tend to reduce the rate of illegitimacy without diminishing the total immorality of a country. To the first-named class belong, generally speaking, all causes which tend to directly or indirectly undermine the influence of religion, and all causes which—without necessarily impairing religious faith—increase the temptations to unchastity. Here are the principal—

1. Causes contributed by religious organisations themselves or their clergy, such as loose living, lack of zeal, laxity or indeterminateness of doctrine, etc.

2. The spread of coarse materialism, or infidelity, or of debasing principles of moral conduct, war upon religious faith and practice, such as a long succession of anti-Catholic Governments have been carrying out in France (cf. Lecky, 'Democracy and Liberty,' vol. 1, p. 84).

3. Suggestive, unclean, or demoralising literature, all amusements and occupations that tend to blunt or impair the moral sense (cf. Lecky, 'European Morals,' 12th ed., vol. 1, p. 116).

4. Overcrowding, as in the slums of large cities. (Yet in Catholic Mayo, Ireland, poor one-roomed and two-roomed houses shelter three-fourths of the population of a county that contains the purest peasantry on earth.)

5. The presence of large bodies of military (cf. Lecky, 'European Morals,' 12th ed., vol. 1, p. 116). The wholesale conscription that prevails in the great military nations of Europe is aggravated, in the case of France and Italy, by Freethought Administrations removing the citizen soldiers as much as possible from religious influences (as to France, see Lecky, 'Democracy and Liberty,' vol. 1, p. 86).

6. 'Any restraint on early marriage, whether imposed by law or custom, or arising from severe industrial depression' (Leffingwell, 'Illegitimacy,' p. 86). We shall see that legal restraints exist in Austria, Bavaria, and Italy.

7. Leffingwell (pp. 50-59) and others give a position of some importance to the hypothesis of a special hereditary influence towards lubricity, which they suppose to exist in some races of mankind more than in others. A warm climate (as in Southern Europe), out-of-door life, and the legal right of inquiry into paternity are also alleged as factors that tend to increased rates of illegitimacy (Lecky, 'European Morals,' 12th ed., vol. 1, p. 115; Leffingwell, p. 19).

8. All great national convulsions—such as wars and revolutions—which seriously affect the equilibrium of people's minds, disturb the established social order, or dislocate or impair the machinery of the Church. England, for instance, suffered terribly in its social and domestic morals for over 100 years after its two comparatively little revolutions of the seventeenth century. Italy, Spain, Austria and France have been through the agony of much more serious upheavals at comparatively recent dates. Some of the evil principles of the Great Revolution of 1789-1799 are still at work upon the social and domestic life of considerable parts of France. And the situation is aggravated by the savage campaign which has been carried on for thirty years by a well-organised minority having the reins of power (Lecky, 'Democracy and Liberty,' vol. 1, p. 48) to cripple and enslave the Church and to banish the whole code of Christian morality and the very idea of religion from the hearts of the people.

On the other hand, 'we cannot always,' says Leffingwell (p. 87), 'infer the existence of a higher tone of morals from

#### A Low Rate of Illegitimacy

(1) in countries where ante-natal destruction of life largely prevails, (2) in countries where young women are specially guarded before marriage, yet wherein marital fidelity may be less observed; (3) in countries wherein polyandry is alleged to exist as an acknowledged custom; (4) in great cities, where other vices counteract the tendency to this, and where opportunities for concealment are far greater than in country districts.'

'In Great Britain,' says Mulhall, 'the death-rate of infants is 50 per cent. higher than in Ireland ('Dictionary of Statistics,' ed. 1899, p. 685). This may be in great part accounted for by the fearful prevalence of pre-natal murder and infanticide, for which I refer the reader to Lecky ('European Morals,' 12th ed., vol. 1, p. 285), and (not to mention a score of others) to the heart-breaking books and articles of the Rev. Benjamin Waugh. 'It is possible,' says Leffingwell (p. 69) 'that the great majority of girl-mothers of the middle ranks' in Great Britain completely 'hide their fall.' Elsewhere (p. 4) he says of the statistics of illegitimacy, 'Concealment and infanticide undoubtedly make the record everywhere less frightful than its awful reality.'

To the four factors enumerated above by Leffingwell we should add (5) artificial sterility and (6) the social evil. In France and Italy, and perhaps in other Continental countries as well, this great evil is carefully limited and regulated by the State, and its results in the physical order enormously reduced. In Great Britain no such restraints exist, and the social evil there seems to have touched its greatest extent, and (so far as Europe is concerned) its most revolting depths of degradation. 'In no other European country,' says Lecky, 'is it so hopelessly vicious and so irrevocable' ('European Morals,' 12th ed., vol. 1, p. 86). This may to some extent account for the first part of Leffingwell's statement (p. 86) that in Great Britain illegitimacy 'seems to prevail least among the population of cities and chiefly in rural communities.' The six factors enumerated here are, no doubt, more or less at work in other countries also, and in varying degrees modify the returns of their illegitimate births.

7. Venereal disease is also a factor that

#### Tends to Reduce the Rate

of illegitimacy without in any way diminishing the total of a country's immorality. A correspondent in your columns, speaking in reference to Ireland, 'and more especially Catholic Ireland,' says:—'There are more ways of keeping a country moral than by refraining.' The 'ways' that he instances consist of the spread of venereal disease. And he refers to the 'country' at large. The inference which he leaves the reader to draw is perfectly obvious and unmistakable. As regards Ireland at large, he has not a scrap of evidence to offer. As regards even any part of it, he still has none—nothing but a bald and unsupported assertion that there are (or were) in Ireland only two institutions (known as lock hospitals) for the treatment of those loathsome disorders; that these are in Dublin