

Building on this, Sir Archibald Michie, a former legal luminary of Victoria, asserted in a pamphlet that 'the cause or causes of the remarkable excess of Catholic crime, and its inevitably consequent check to the community, is as important a social question as the reader can address himself to. Is it too much to say that there is at least evidence that the cause, latent as it may be to many, lies in some of the principles of Romanist dogma?'

The Inadequacy of the Data.

Only very rarely nowadays do we hear these things hinted at. It may be that the Statists have come to see the records of mere arrests are worthless as a moral or even criminal index, seeing that not more than 15 or 16 persons are arrested for every 100 crimes committed, and only slightly more than half of those arrested are convicted. It is not the arrested man, but the convicted one, who is the criminal, and there are not more than about eight or nine convictions for each registered crime.

We must be careful to note the distinction between 'arrests' and 'convictions.' The Victorian Statist, in the period alluded to, told us: 'The offences with which the Irish were charged, however, could not have been of so serious a nature as those in respect to which the English and Welsh were arrested, as the number of the latter committed for trial were more than twice as numerous, in proportion to the numbers in the population.'

For example, in one year, out of 13,646 Catholics arrested, 13,211 of them were charged with drunkenness, assault, and unseemly conduct, which the Statist set down as 'minor offences, hardly amounting to crimes.' That means that 97 per cent. of Catholic 'crime' was no crime at all, but merely boisterous brawling.

Moreover, it has to be noted that sometimes 20 men may be arrested for a single crime, when only one man may be guilty and convicted. These tables of arrests, therefore, are utterly fallacious.

The Charge Repeated.

However, not long since, some of these aspersions were repeated in one quarter, where the speaker was at more pains to be offensive than careful to be accurate.

As Catholics, we have no right to blink any hard and solid fact, if it be a fact, nor should we seek to evade statistics by a shuffle. I have heard men trying to explain the over-proportion of Irish arrests by saying that prisoners frequently give false names and birth-places. Some may do so, but, for anything we may know, such exceptional cases are just as likely to tell for Catholics as against them. We had much better look the facts in the face, and ascertain exactly what is their value. The poet tells us that 'things are not what they seem.' Everyone who has studied statistics knows that figures are especially liable to fallacy, unless they are adequately and fully stated.

A man, judging from a mere surface presentment of such crime tables, may fall into an error similar to that of the untutored savage, who supposes that he sees the sun rise in the east, whereas, in fact, science knows that the sun does not rise at all.

We will try and get to close quarters in this. The inferences drawn from such facts, as used to be stated in Victoria more frequently than now, are—

1. Irishmen are mostly Catholics.
2. Irishmen and Catholics are proportionately greater offenders against the law than are Englishmen and Protestants.
3. Therefore, the much-boasted Catholic education fails in its moral objects.

My present object is to show that two or three propositions thus presented are not sustainable in fact, and that, if they were so, they would be faulty as a syllogism.

The first proposition may be accepted at once. Irishmen are unquestionably mostly Catholics. But are they more lawless than Anglo-Saxons? We will see. First we will look at home. In the year 1903, 22,175 Victorian persons were arrested, and of these 3060 were born in Ireland—that is, a little more than one-seventh of the whole. Only 482 of the Victorian total were for serious crimes; 19,201 were for drunkenness and petty offences against order. Now, it may be admitted that the 3060 Irish-born offenders were disproportionately large as compared with English-born and Victorian-born. But all this disproportion, whatever it was, is found amongst the 19,201 petty offenders against sobriety and order.

Open and Secret Inebriety.

There is a great deal of significance in this. Pat was always of a jovial turn, and generally fond of his liquor. But the Gael and the Saxon are equally amenable to the same general impeachment. I have figures by me which show that the Englishman's drink bill runs to over £4 per head, against about £2 15s for the Irishman's. The chronicles of the court may sometimes

show more Irish inebriates, but not more aggregate Irish drinking to excess. These court records are but very small factors in the sum.

The drunkenness which comes before the courts is certainly not five per cent. of the total drunkenness in society. Are we to judge of this drunkenness by the 5 per cent. and leave the 95 per cent. without question? We can no more form a true opinion on this data than can the fisherman judge of the fish in the sea by those which he has in his net. A little reflection will show this. Drinking is a universal custom. But different people take their liquor in different ways. The less well-to-do—of which numbers are the mass of Irish Catholics—go to the bar for their liquor. They drink in the open, under the eye of the police, and when they exceed they stagger out of the taproom into the arms of the night watchman. It is not so with the richer bibbers, who frequent the private resorts of the city, and who, in their cups, are sent home safely in cabs, or kept in privacy to sleep off their debauches. I have known men who were drunk regularly once or twice a week, but who never got into the hands of a policeman. The Anglo-Saxon can carouse and go home quietly to bed. The Celt's excess expends itself in noise, in the breaking of a head or a window. In the first case, the courts never hear of a complaint; in the second, the same man may figure as three or four separate offenders. This is a fact which used to be vouched for by the Statist himself, and which so completely destroys the value of the figures that they have been discontinued in the old form.

What we have said, therefore, completely upsets the inference drawn from mere 'arrests,' that Irish Catholics are in any degree more lawless, even in minor matters, than others. If the arrests are only 15 or 16 per cent. of the recorded offences, and the convictions only about half as many as the arrests, an argument built on arrests is about as unstable as would be the calculations of a meteorologist who should estimate the rainfall of the whole State by the gauge of a single night taken in a special locality.

The Influence of 'Romanist Dogma.'

We can now proceed to inquire as to whether Catholic education has in any sense failed in its moral effect. This brings us to Sir Archibald Michie's assertion that the cause of Catholic crime is to be found in the 'principles of Romanist Dogma.' Is it true or grotesquely false that Catholic misdoing is traceable to Catholic teaching? If it be true, we shall everywhere find the greater crime where the people are most devotedly Catholic, that must be admitted. Do we find it so? Just the reverse. In New Zealand the Catholics number about 15 per cent. of the people, and in Victoria about 21, but there are more offences against property in New Zealand than in Victoria. Of course, it may be replied that other disturbing causes may account for that. And that is true. The figures prove nothing either way, except that they cannot be taken as the result of 'Romanist dogma.' Indeed, if that doctrine were true, Catholic Ireland—the land par excellence of Catholic faith and practice, the brightest jewel of religious fidelity in the Pope's tiara—ought to be a pandemonium of crime. Clearly, if 'Romanist dogma' tends to crime, we shall find Ireland a hissing iniquity among nations. But what do we find? All Statists agree that recorded Irish crime is less than that in either England, Wales, Scotland, or any of the Australian colonies, taken per thousand of the respective populations. A reference to the 'Statesman's Year Book' will set that matter at rest.

A computation I made some time ago for a period over ten years from the Victorian Statist gave the average number of convictions, per 10,000 of the Australian population, at 8.10; for England, Scotland, and Wales, at 4.98; for Ireland, at 4.10.

If it be replied that there are many criminals in Ireland who are never convicted, I reply: 'Precisely. But that is true, too, of all countries, and is the very reason why neither "arrests" nor "convictions" are any true test of the moral condition of the people.' It is a reason why these charges should not have been built by men like Sir Archibald Michie upon such defective data. I do not put forward my figures as a proof of Ireland's greater morality, but as a very convincing proof that any deductions from such tables as those cited as to Irish offences in the courts are quite valueless as a test of the moral condition of Irish Catholics.

Vice versus Crime.

Here I may push the argument just a short stage further. To get at the moral condition of a people by means of mere statistics is really impossible, because the inquiry would lead from what is mere legal crime into the region of moral philosophy, and to distinctions between vice and crime. We should have to trace the cause and current of society's more hidden sins and immoralities, as they operate before they ultimate in crime, and come under the ken of the policeman. Racial