

testants of Belgium vanish to? Or did they all suddenly retire behind the scenes, make a lightning change, and march out again in front of the foot-lights disguised as 'converts from Rome'?

Just about the time that the Nelson 'Evening Mail' was cheering the spirits of its readers with the story of the Ten Thousand and the Whole Parishes, a simple-minded clergyman in South Australia was spinning the same interesting tale in the columns of the 'Adelaide Advertiser'. He was promptly challenged by Father Louwyck to 'name names'. Father Louwyck (who, by the way, is a gifted Belgian priest) succeeded in eliciting the unwilling and sweetly vague 'information' that the converted 'whole parishes' were in the 'districts' (!) of Liege, Charleroy, and Mons. Not one of the 'whole parishes' was, of course, mentioned. But with the meagre information dragged from his opponent, he got to work. From the Bishop of Liege (Dr. Rutten) he received a reply which we turn into English as follows:—

Diocese of Liege.—No parish in this diocese has become Protestant. Twelve years ago, the then Bishop of Liege, Mgr. Doutroux, appointed a priest to a newly formed parish. People of a small hamlet of that parish called in a Protestant minister, but after a time the Bishop appointed a priest for that hamlet, and since then all the families except one have returned to the Church. Protestant ministers are making a great effort, but without success. In a population of 1,100,000 there are not 15,000 Protestants, and these are mostly Germans who come to work here for a time. Every year about 100 Protestants are received into the Church. These are respectable people, living among Catholics; they see the truth of our religion, and ask to be admitted into the Church. There are in the whole diocese 670 parishes, and it has never been known that one of these became Protestant. No priest of this diocese has become Protestant. It is a calumny and a falsehood to say the contrary.—With best wishes, etc., M. R. Rutten, Bishop of Liege.

The Dean of Charleroy also wrote to Father Louwyck. The following is a translation of the portion of his letter which bears upon the matter under discussion:—

The population of the city of Charleroy is 28,000, all Catholics except 20 who are Protestants. In the whole district, among a population of 200,000, there are about 1000 Protestants, nearly all Germans who come here to work for a time. It is calumnious and untrue to say that Catholics are losing ground.—Believe me to be, etc., Canon Lalleux, Dean of Charleroy.

From other friends in Belgium Father Louwyck has received independent testimony confirming that given by the Bishop of Liege and the Dean of Charleroy. The Dean of Mons (Monsignor the Prince de Croy) was absent from home when the letter of his South Australian friend reached Belgium. Further communications are expected from him and from other distinguished Belgian ecclesiastics and laymen.

And so endeth—in smoke—another 'missionary tale'. The whole incident furnishes fresh evidence that for a member of the Universal Church 'the wide, wide world' is not, after all, so very wide. Pious fabulists must go farther afield than Belgium for romances of wholesale 'conversion'. Mexico is no longer safe. Neither is (as we have shown) Brazil or Bolivia or Argentina. The change of venue to Belgium was a singularly unfortunate one. Why not try Spitzbergen or Kamchatka? The Bain 'statistics' merited the sarcastic retort of the Melbourne 'Tribune': 'If they want to make a Catholic a member of a Reformed creed, they must catch him young—before the age of reason, if possible. If they get him when he is grown, it is not they who have caught him; he has caught them'.

The total revenue for the half-year ended September amounted to £3,482,569. This result is considered highly satisfactory.

Notes

'A Dead Cert'

Money lent is (says Plautus) commonly money lost. So is money invested in a 'dead cert.' The young investor should keep enough change in his pocket to pay his way home after the event has come off.

That French 'Scandal'

In their issues of September 1 and 2, the daily papers of New Zealand published the following cable-message, which purported to have been sent from Paris on August 31:—

'Father Cassan, the parish priest at Fangeres (near Beziers), who was arrested on suspicion of causing the death of a young girl, admits that he caused her death. He also acknowledges that he betrayed many women through the medium of the confessional.'

In our issue of September 6 we gave our readers cogent reasons for maintaining, previous to investigation, an open mind regarding injurious statements coming from French anticlerical sources concerning Catholic ecclesiastical persons and institutions. Like some of the so-called 'Irish outrages' that have recently been cabled to the Australian and New Zealand press, the story of 'the parish priest at Fangeres' seems to have been pretty musty when it was cabled to this end of the earth. It appeared in the American 'yellow' papers a week or two before the cable demon remembered Australia. And it was, journalistically, ancient history before it was sent across the Atlantic through the submarine wire. But there was one trifling circumstance that the impenitent Ananias at the Paris end of the line carefully omitted to say—namely, that three months before the story was wired to New Zealand, the incriminated pastor had been declared innocent by the hostile French tribunal that had tried him on the capital charge. So much we learn from American papers to hand by the last mail. The rest of the story is simply cable fiction. We have not found the story in the British secular press. The incident is a fresh illustration of the danger of taking French or other Catholic news that originates in hostile sources. Yet there are Catholics who furnish their households with no corrective to the malignant falsehoods that have been week after week oozing into our secular papers through the ocean cables ever since the Freemason-Radical-Socialist campaign against religion began in lodge-ridden France.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN

St. Joseph's Ladies' Club's annual social was held in the Victoria Hall on Friday evening, there being an excellent attendance. The arrangements of the evening were admirably carried out under the direction of Mr. D. O'Connell, assisted by Mr. D. Corcoran. During the evening vocal items were contributed by Misses L. Bryant and Hannagan, and Mr. Sweeney. Miss Staunton (president of the club) had charge of the supper arrangements.

The Boys' Club brought the season to a close on Monday evening last when the programme for the meeting was a mock banquet. The following toasts were proposed and responded to in a very capable manner:—'The Pope and King', Rev. Father Corcoran; 'The Clergy', Mr. H. Salmon, responded to by Rev. Father Corcoran; 'The Christian Brothers', Mr. E. Popplewell, responded to by Mr. J. Fogarty; 'Kindred Societies', Messrs. W. O'Connor and J. Dunne, responded to by Messrs. J. O'Sullivan, and T. Layburn; 'The President', Mr. W. Higgins, responded to by Rev. Father Corcoran. At the conclusion of the proceedings Rev. Father Corcoran referred to the very able manner in which all the toasts were proposed and responded to, and in intimating that this was the last meeting of the club for the current year, he took the opportunity of thanking his Lordship the Bishop, Rev. Bro. Brady, Dr. O'Neill, Miss Staunton and the Ladies' Club for the entertainments which they had provided throughout the year.

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