

more than that which is ordinary in youth, and a solid, cool-headed, hard-faced earnestness that keeps on in the good work—often in the face of adverse circumstances—from New Year's day to St. Sylvester's. A foremost and most direct place belongs by right to the good influences which by word and example they give to Catholic youth in the cyclonic period that lies between their leaving school and getting permanently settled in life. It is the period when the fresh, budding life comes in contact with the thousand and one risks arising from idleness, evil companions, drink, dissipation; when pitfalls are dropped into; when faith is sometimes undermined or lost; when promising lives are often shaken out of their true centre of gravity. In the widening circle of the activities into which their beneficent zeal has been extending, they recognise the extent to which the intelligence of our rising (and risen) generation is day by day being played upon by myriad influences that tend to distort its notions of revealed truth. It cannot, happily, be said of New Zealand (as Robert Louis Stevenson said of another country) that its newspaper press is 'the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from an university chair, and everything ignoble finds its abode and pulpit'. But it is true that the atmosphere of current journalism is not favorable to the cultivation of Christian ideals; that the shallow sciolist finds the daily paper the best pulpit from which to air his dogmatic theories about the deepest questions of the whence and the whither of life; that some at least of the great channels of communication are in the hands of agencies hostile to the Catholic faith; that day by day the journalistic drag-net gathers in and casts indiscriminately before the eyes of young and old, of foolish and discreet, the stories of murders, suicides, robberies, frauds, scandals, divorces—and (in some flagrant cases, as well) 'the low tittle-tattle of the prize-ring, the racing-stable, and the green-room, bar-room gossip, and the coarse mouthings of the social riff-raff'. We have placed the criminal in excelsis—upon a lofty pedestal. And if we were to judge our day and country by the bulk of the secular press, our social history would be liberally bespangled with the Broad Arrow, and there would be a deadly measure of truth in Gibbon's cynical saying, that our annals are mere records of crime, folly, and misfortune.

This familiarity with evil—this 'liberal education in depravity and crime'—represents almost the only mental food supplied to many a Catholic household. And the indifferentist, agnostic, or neo-pagan spirit of many newspapers infects the social atmosphere about them with a subtle dioxide which Catholics—unless furnished with the neutralising agency of a sound instruction in their faith—may find it year by year more difficult to breathe. The great antidote—as our young men friends well realise—is the Catholic newspaper. It lowers the criminal and the divorcee from their throne. After all, the thieves and the forgers and the murderers are not the majority. The world does not wag for the most part to the pressure of a mainspring of conscious villainy. Simple faith and kindness and charity and self-sacrifice prevail vastly more, we believe, in it than the premeditated wickedness that is noisy and ostentatious. A Father Damien is a better type of our race, and a better example to set day by day before the mind's eye of the world than William Sykes or Charles Peace. And truth is the best antidote to administer to those who have imbibed the subtle poison of journalistic non-godliness, and who are unaware of the magnificent way in which (as, for instance, Dr. Pritchard has shown in his 'Nature and Revelation') the general development of scientific knowledge is friendly to the faith of Christians.

The great conflagrations of Paris and Chicago in 1871, and the incidents of summer life in the Australian bush, show that fire is sometimes the best element for

fighting fire. In the same way, a strong, active, well-equipped areligious or irreligious press is best met by a strong, active, and well-equipped religious press. Yet, for various reasons which we need not enter upon here, the extent of the clientele of Catholic newspapers leaves much indeed to be desired. We are working, as engineers say, 'linked-up'—at low pressure, which means low efficiency, and we are allowing the areligious press to do—even in religious matters—too much of our thinking. A thoughtful writer gives us the following warning in regard to this neglect of the Catholic paper:—

'We shall be deprived of eyes and ears in our social intercourse. In some degree the daily press must think for us. But this constant intercourse into which we are daily thrust by our constant contact with the anti-Catholic press must, if no means are taken to neutralise its effect, blunt our susceptibilities as Catholics and have a deteriorating effect upon our Catholic morale. We owe a duty to ourselves, not only to preserve the faith, but the instincts of faith—our instincts as Catholics. These, like every other instinct, may be lost if we take no care to preserve them. You cannot associate with bad company and find your social intercourse among it without losing the instincts of higher morality; and you cannot saturate the mind daily with anti-Catholic ideals without in some measure endangering the instincts of faith, the instincts of Catholic morality, which it is the object of the Church to foster and educate. . . . The cultivation of the Catholic press is—when we consider the nature of the peculiar evil to which we are exposed—a necessary duty, if we would preserve intact our Catholic faith. Inadequate as it may be to cope with the evil to which it is opposed, it is nevertheless the only means at our disposal. Its influence is gaining steadily, and the more we foster it, the greater will be its power and efficacy. . . . It is a necessary antidote to that six days' evil wherein is preached what is not to our interest, either as Catholics or as Christians.'

It was in great part through the splendid Catholic press of the German Empire that the illustrious quartet of Centre leaders—Windthorst, Mallencroft, and the two Reichenspergers—sent the Man of Blood and Iron to Canossa and broke the regime of persecution known as the Kulturkampf. West of the Rhine, party divisions and the neglect of the good press have combined to leave the Church for a time at least in the power of its enemies. It is difficult to fortell how far the present tidal wave of aggressive infidelity will spread before it recedes, as all similar movements have receded. But we hope it will never find us neglecting one of our main lines of our defensive works while zealously engaged in good and necessary operations of another kind for the honor of God and the spiritual good of our fellow men. There is a note of heart-breaking regret in the last lenten pastoral of the learned Bishop of St. Brieuc (France) which should serve as an inspiration and a warning to Catholics in lands that are more happily circumstanced: 'While we were building churches, they (our enemies) were founding newspapers. These newspapers created public opinion. This public opinion which they created was in their hands to do with as they pleased. They turned it against us, against the dogmas of our faith, against our worship; and they it was who emptied our churches. This fact ought to be for us a warning lesson. Against the evil press we should have directed all our effort; in favor of the good press, we should have made every sacrifice. Have we done so?'

Notes

In the World

Our esteemed contemporary the 'Outlook' (the Presbyterian-Methodist-Congregationalist organ of New Zealand) states in its issue of last Saturday (May 4) that there are in the world about 272,000,000 Catholics and 166,000,000 Protestants.

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