

school, but before I had finished my interview they frankly admitted that they had never been inside either a Catholic church or school. A few of the genuine Catholics stated that they would not have been in gaol if they had kept to the practice of their religion. The names of the prisoners mentioned in this article are enclosed, in order to be placed for reference in the *Tablet* archives.

One man assured me that he was a 'Roman Catholic.' On pressing the question, he admitted that he was not, but his wife was. I am still puzzled—because he is a bigamist, a much-married man with a bevy of three wives. Which one out of this collection of goods and chattels was the Catholic? This bigamist is not, as far as I could gather, even a baptised Catholic.—[In the course of a letter of inquiry, Father Venning states that this much-married individual claims to have been religiously instructed 'regularly' for twelve months and received into the Church by the Rev. James Coffey, Adm., Dunedin. Father Coffey emphatically states that he does not know the man; that he never gave him any instruction, religious or otherwise; and that he never received him into the Church.—Ed. N.Z.T.]

The following little tit-bit is taken from the *New Zealand Times* of January 27, 1909:—

'Archibald John McNeill, alias Lambie, alias Palmer, alias Long, alias McNamara, etc., is a native of Scotland. It all depends upon the religion of the arresting detective whether he is "Presbyterian" or "Church of England" as to sect.'

Yes, 'Archie' is not the only one who can change his name and his religion where there is the faintest shadow of a prospect of any advantage. 'Archie,' I hope, will not fall into the hands of a Catholic detective; if so we shall have him posing as a 'Roman Catholic' when next he enjoys the King's hospitality behind our prison bars.

At present there is a South African Jew who is entered in the gaol records as a 'Hebrew.' But among his many aliases is the tuneful one of 'Barry'!

The following information will be of interest to the Catholics of New Zealand, as showing how 'Roman Catholic' prisoners are manufactured: In my last article (published in your issue of December 24) I mentioned the case of a man who owned up to the trick he had played in describing himself as a 'Roman Catholic' on entering gaol. He has since 'reverted' to the Church of England, on the recommendation of the Catholic chaplain. I intend to watch further proceedings in his regard—how, for instance, will he be classified as to religious belief when the report is sent in at the end of the year to the Registrar-General? In the first place, who was to prevent him being a 'Roman Catholic' if he wished? What can be done with men of this type, who snap their fingers gaily at the command which places a discount on the bearing of false witness? What put it into this criminal's degenerate head to become a 'Roman Catholic,' to 'receive' himself into a Church which disowns him? The story is an interesting one. Some time ago, this interesting individual was wandering about, looking for work. He had 'that tired feeling' at the time—and at most times—and only wanted what he was pleased to call 'a bob' to see him through the night in safety. Now it so befell that on this particular night the organ-blower in one of the Catholic churches was ill. Our 'weary' friend offered his services—he was willing to blow the organ and thus earn his much-coveted 'bob.' He blew, and fobbed the coin. From that time forward he began to feel that he was a 'Roman Catholic.' Now it chanced that, a few months later, he was sentenced to a period of retirement—for forgery. Ah! here was an opportunity to show his gratitude for that hour at the organ. So he serenely informed the authorities at the gaol that he was a 'Roman Catholic.' I can vouch for the truth of this story. The man's name is enclosed for your museum of statistical curiosities.

Another case I met with last Saturday was that of a young man who assured me confidently he had been to the Catholic school, that he went to Mass every Sunday, that he was 'confirmed by Father —,' that his parents were good Catholics. Before the interview was finished he admitted that he had never been to a Catholic school, that he had never been to Mass, that he had never been inside a Catholic church, that he had never said a prayer in all his life, that he could not make the sign of the Cross, that he had not Catholic parents, but was an adopted child of Protestant parents. The name of this interesting statistical 'Roman Catholic' will be found among the others of his kind.

Yet another case. A man, who is undergoing a sentence of five years for sodomy, declared that he was a 'Roman Catholic,' that he went to a Catholic school, and that he was 'confirmed by Father —!' A few minutes afterwards he admitted to me that he had never been to school in his life, that he could neither read nor write, and that he had never been confirmed. When asked what

church he attended before coming to gaol, he replied: 'Well, it's this way: if I am near a Catholic church I go there, if I am near a Protestant church I go there.' We may ask: 'Which Church is to be held responsible for this gentleman's downfall? The man is an indifferentist, which means simply that he is not a Catholic. He does not seem to know where he was baptised or where he was born. Like Topsy, he 'specks he grewed.'

Here is a strange case: Some time ago a man was sentenced for a serious crime to two years' imprisonment. He entered the gaol as an 'atheist'—said he was 'nothing.' After having spent a time in prison, he one day assaulted the governor. A few days afterwards this prisoner suddenly became a 'Roman Catholic.' We read of St. Paul's sudden conversion. Is this gaol conversion another such? From 'no religion,' 'free thinker,' 'atheist,' he suddenly was changed into 'Roman Catholic.' But, like the marriage proposal in the play, it was—'so s-sudden!' But there he is—for the nonce 'one of us.' He has nailed his (statistical) colors to the statistical mast. Sentence of three years has just been passed on him for 'bodily assault' on the Governor of the gaol. The Judge had the man examined as to his mental state, and two doctors declared that the man is a fit subject for an asylum. Yet this professing atheist's statement (that he is a 'Roman Catholic') must remain on the books till doomsday. Such strange things are prison statistics!

Here is the 'plum' of all in conclusion. Last week I met a prisoner with a name (names are not always much help) that sounded strange as 'a Catholic name.' Any day I visit the gaol I am as likely as not to meet one of these Protestant-'Roman Catholic' freethinker hybrids. This latest addition to the gaol population was sentenced the other day to seven years for breaking, entering, and theft (two charges). He had pleaded guilty in the Magistrate's Court, and only awaited sentence at the Supreme Court. In sentencing the prisoner, Mr. Justice Cooper described him as a 'most dangerous criminal; the only safe place was to keep him locked up.' This man had the brazen impudence to tell me that he was a 'Roman Catholic.' I had my doubts from the start. Here is what took place when I interviewed him:

'Have you been baptised a Catholic?'—'Yes; of course I was, else why would I be down as Roman Catholic? Would you accuse me of telling a lie?'

'Have you ever been to confession?'—'Yes.'

'How old were you when you made your first confession?'—'FOUR.'—!!!!*!!!!*!!!!*!!!!*!!!!

[The setting-up of this answer gave our linotype machine a passing fit of epilepsy.—THE OPERATOR.]

'Have you made your first Communion?'—'Yes; of course I have.'

'Were you confirmed?'—'Yes.'

'Who confirmed you?'—'Father —.'

How old were you when you made your first Communion?'—'Don't know; might have been ten, might have been twenty.' (At present he is forty years of age.)

'Were you ever inside a Catholic school?'—'No.' (This was the first time he spoke the truth.)

'Have you been attending the Catholic church?'—'Yes.'

'How often?'—'Every Sunday.'

Now comes the turn in the tide.

'Make the sign of the Cross.'—'Can't.'

'What words are used by Catholics when they make the sign of the Cross?'—'I don't know.'

'Say the "Our Father."'—'I don't know it. I never said a prayer in my life; I never was in a Catholic church; in fact, I don't believe there is a God.'

'What religion were you professing before you came here to gaol?'—'None.'

'Where were you living before your arrest?'—'In — street.' (This street has been the nursery of hundreds of criminals; it is a hotbed of moral filth.)

'Why did you put yourself down as a Catholic when you have no claim whatever to the title? On your own admission, you are not, never have been, a Catholic.'—'I had to say something when I was asked what religion I was, so I said "Roman Catholic." It didn't make much difference to me what religion I follow; I believe in nothing.'

These facts will, I trust, prove of interest to the readers of the *New Zealand Tablet*. The moral of it all is that we should not let even one of these cases of the 'Roman Catholicism' of the gaols go unchallenged where there exist the smallest grounds of suspicion. Readers of the *New Zealand Tablet* will receive details of other such cases of fraudulent misdescription as occasion may serve.

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