

Current Topics

Catholics in the United States

A frog's leg will twitch long after froggy's life-spark has been extinguished. And a fallacious argument will likewise often show signs of life after it has been killed 'fatally dead.' In Australia recently the fallacy, 'this is a Protestant country,' was advanced once more as a reason why justice should not be done to Catholics in the matter of education. It was tabled some weeks ago in the United States, in a similar connection. The San Francisco *Monitor* throws it into the dust-bin with the following brief comment: 'Is this a Protestant country? Not exactly! Of the 80,000,000 people in the United States, more than 50,000,000 are outside of all church affiliations and profess no religion. Of the remaining 30,000,000, 15,000,000 are Catholics. Allowing for the 1,000,000 Jews who are in the United States to-day, there remain 14,000,000 to be divided among the various Protestant Churches.'

Hair—restoring

Judging from a paragraph that is now going the rounds of the press, one at least of our New Zealand cities is doing a considerable trade in the manufacture of those triumphs of hope over experience, hair 'restorers.' Hope, indeed, seems to spring eternal in the breasts of those whose top-knot is thinning—or gone, leaving them, in nautical phrase, to run the course of old age 'under bare poles.' Synesius, a learned man of the fifth century, wrote a sort of panegyric on baldness. We do not know that he convinced anybody—except, perhaps, those who, making a virtue of a necessity, bore with resignation the affliction which Artemus Ward describes as 'a barefooted head.' Some years ago (according to the *Contemporary Review*) one M. Sebouriand announced the discovery that baldness is due to a specific microbe—it is always either a microbe or a sun-spot nowadays. And soon afterwards a German savant came forth with an account of the discovery of another microbe which was the 'natural enemy' of the first. But the latter does not seem to have been, thus far, harnessed to work. London *Truth's* bard sang to the rival microbes a lay of which the following is the closing stanza:

'So all this research microscopic
Which has tracked these new germs to their lair;
All the pars. on a hair-splitting topic
Leave things very much as they were;
And whichever bacillus proves winner,
We shall probably have to deplore
That our hair still goes on getting thinner,
The same as before.'

Domestic Science

Some gloom-pampered dyspeptic once described a bad cook as 'a hired assassin.' Josh Billings insists that every woman should learn how to be a reasonably good cook, and he is 'reddy to swear that if a man kin git a woman who can fri pankakes on both sides without burning them, and don't hanker to be a women's kommittee, the marrid state is a heaven and arth awl to onst.' The Otago University is just now (with generous outside help) endeavoring to make provision for a chair of Domestic Science, and thereby promote 'heaven-and-arth' homes. It was, we think, an experienced English matron who was asked by her daughter, on the eve of the latter's wedding, for some hints as to the management of her future husband. 'Feed the brute!' quoth the plain-spoken dame. The recently formed American Home Economics Association makes this, in effect, one of its methods of reforming social life with the aid of pots and pans and other such household ware. 'We believe,' recently said their president, 'that if all public schools of reasonable size, as well as universities and colleges, could be equipped with departments of domestic art and science, living conditions would improve materially, and that less household material would go to waste, the health of individuals would be better, the actual cost of living would decrease, and folk would be much happier.' This is a variant of a 'wisdom' of the famous French gourmet, Brillat-Savarin, that the happiness of a nation depends to an extent upon the way in which its food is cooked. They cook it well in France—so well that even the pigs are said to be happy there.

Why Men Don't Go to Church

In New Zealand, in Australia, in the United States, non-Catholic preachers and writers of 'letters to the editor' are still wrestling with the problem, 'Why Men Don't

Go to Church.' The explanations of the riddle are as numerous as the remedies for rheumatism and tic-douloureux. But most of the explainers avoid one rather obvious explanation as carefully as Mr. Vincent Crummies' Hamlet avoided thrusting his stage-sword where the legs of his opponent were plainly visible through the threadbare screen. Mr. Joseph Braithwaite (a non-Catholic and former Mayor of Dunedin) 'touches the spot' in the course of a letter to the *Otago Daily Times*. 'I believe,' writes he, 'the main cause of unbelief, and therefore of non-churchgoing, in this country is the absence, for 35 years, of daily religious teaching in our public schools. It will take a moral earthquake to put this right.' A substantially similar verdict was recently given by the Rev. Dr. Charles F. Aked, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church in New York. 'You have,' said he, 'poured out your wealth upon universities and other institutions of learning. I am not likely to depreciate it. But this I know: that your educational system will fail if your religion droops and dies. Your education without religion may work the destruction of the social system you are aiming to build up.' 'The best minds of the nation,' said the well-known Jewish Rabbi of Chicago, Dr. Emil G. Hirsch in a recent discourse, 'now agree that there must be some system of moral training in the public schools. The eighteenth century theory that knowledge is all sufficient to the building of character is a mistake and an exploded idea. To-day every master of pedagogy is certain that the imparting of knowledge, unless supplemented by something else, is insufficient in building character and virtue. The Catholic Church has long held this contention, and that Church is undoubtedly correct in its insistence that education must be more than a mere transfer of knowledge.' And Rabbi Hirsch bears out, in turn, what was said by Professor Coe, of the Northwestern University, in the course of a lecture in the same city over six years ago: 'The position of Roman Catholics in regard to religion and education, and their policy in the establishment of parochial schools, are absolutely correct. For corroboration of this opinion,' added he, 'I refer you to the work, *Philosophy of Education*, by Dr. Arnold Tompkins, principal of the Chicago Normal School, in which he says religious character is the proper end of all education.'

Catholics and Crime Statistics

Here and there throughout New Zealand there have been bouts of controversy over Sir Robert Stout's foolish statement that the children trained in State schools 'produce only half as many criminals in proportion to their number as those trained in the denominational schools.' There are, of course, no statistics whatever to give the smallest color to such a statement. The latest discussion on the theme took place in the *New Zealand Times* (Wellington) between an ex-headmaster (Mr. Gammell, who defended Sir Robert Stout) and Father Venning, S.M., who has made the subject of denominational prison-statistics quite a speciality. Father Venning scored easily and all along the line. The only regret one feels is that his fresh exposure of the worthlessness of our prison-statistics, by denominations, could not have fallen upon Sir Robert Stout instead of his local champion. As it was, the ex-headmaster served the same function as did the First Charles's whipping boy—he dutifully submitted himself to be drubbed for his master's faults. Space does not permit us to give Father Venning's communications in detail. We give, however, the following extracts from the last word in the controversy (*New Zealand Times*, June 23): Dealing with the fallacious assumption that all Catholic children in the Dominion are educated in Catholic schools, Father Venning says: "The total number of children of European descent (including such half-castes as live among Europeans) known to be receiving education at school at the end of 1906 was 159,281" (*Year Book*, 1908, p. 212). Now Catholics in New Zealand are 14.32 per cent. of the total population—or about one in seven. (*Year Book*, p. 182). We can very reasonably suppose, then, that Catholics have at least one-seventh of the total number of school children in New Zealand. Mr. Gammell will grant that much. . . . He might extend his favors and frankly admit that Catholics should have at least 22,754 children attending school in New Zealand (one-seventh of the total number). But what do we find? Only half that number are really trained at our Catholic schools in New Zealand! "There was an attendance of 11,948 children at the 154 Catholic schools in New Zealand at the end of 1906" (*Year Book*, p. 212). . . . I must confess these figures are painful to me. Only about 50 per cent. of our Catholic children in New Zealand are attending Catholic schools!"

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Father Venning challenged Sir Robert Stout's defender to make good the following four undue assumptions