

## Mixed Marriages

There is hardly a point of religious doctrine or practice, however vital to man's eternal well-being, that has not been made by those outside the Catholic Fold the subject of endless clapper-clawing and more or less violent debate. But, amidst all this turmoil of contending theories, there is one point on which the heads of all the various Protestant creeds, as well as of the Hebrew faith, are in practically full agreement with us: namely, in their objection to mixed marriages. In the Jewish Church the legislation against such unions is even more drastic than ours. Under a Williamite law in the defunct and unlamented Irish penal code, if any Protestant woman, possessed of land to the value of £500 or over, wedded any man without a certificate from a bishop, minister, or magistrate, that he was 'a known Protestant,' both she and her husband forfeited their estates. Any person who gave a Protestant in marriage to a Catholic was liable to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £20. An Act passed in the twelfth year of George I. imposed the penalty of death without benefit of clergy upon any 'Popish priest' convicted of marrying two persons, either of whom was a Protestant. By an Act of the nineteenth year of George II. all such marriages were declared null and void. And till 1870 it was a crime punishable by two years' imprisonment, or a fine of £500, for any priest to celebrate a marriage between two Catholics if either or both of the contracting parties had not been Catholic for at least twelve months beforehand. We may add that in the Orange lodges to this hour expulsion and all its attendant disabilities await the 'brother' who marries, or even keeps company with, a Catholic girl.

A few weeks ago, at Newton-le-Willows, the Protestant Bishop of Liverpool poured a salvo of hot-shot at marriages between Anglicans and Catholics. In his view, those mixed unions operate to the benefit of the Catholic faith and to the disadvantage of Anglicanism. The Catholic Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. Whiteside), however, put a different complexion upon the affair in a subsequent discourse in the same town, and backed up his contention with figures which are of interest to us in these countries and add a fresh justification—if that were needed—for the attitude of strong disapproval with which the Church regards unions between persons of different faith. 'From the returns of the Newton mission,' said Bishop Whiteside, 'there were 144 mixed marriages in a period going back it might be forty years, and in all those cases Catholics entertained the very strongest hopes that the non-Catholics would come over to the Catholic religion. But in how many cases had that hope been realised? In only 13 cases. In 131 cases they had not resulted in conversion to the Catholic Church. Had there been any cases in which Catholics had become Protestants? He was sorry to say 43 Catholics had become Protestants. No wonder the Church detested mixed marriages. What could a priest say when a girl talked to him about the hope of conversion with those figures before him? And the figures were almost the same throughout the diocese. The priest might say, and with truth, to anyone who spoke of conversion, that there was just as much likelihood of a Protestant becoming a Catholic as a Catholic becoming a Protestant. And so they could judge of the past. There were no less than 87 children the issue of those 43 mixed marriages, and they were being brought up as Protestants. No wonder the Church hated and detested such marriages when she saw her children being lost in that way. It was the duty, therefore, of the parents to put down their feet when their children kept company with those who were not of the faith.'

Statistics that appear in Dr. Williams' 'Christian Life in Germany' (published in 1897), give substantially similar results. Exceptionally—and owing in a great measure to the possession of a catalogue of rare good qualities by both parties to the contract—mixed marriages may turn out well. But the common experience in these countries, as in Germany, is this: that no form of religious belief benefits by them. That, taken altogether, Christianity is the loser and indifferentism and infidelity the ultimate gainer by those ill-assorted unions, the parties to which are out of tune with each other in those sacred beliefs and emotions which should penetrate and direct every thought and act of their lives.

## Rough on the Stage Irishman

One of the peculiarities of the French theatres is the corps of paid claqueurs whose business it is to bestow upon the actors, at judicious intervals, a warm measure of that applause which is supposed to be a stimulus to noble minds. It is a bad principle that does not work both ways, like a double-ended ferry-boat. And the coarse degeneracy of the French stage of late years gave Senator Beranger the idea of organising a hissing brigade, on the lines of the claqueur corps, for the purpose of discouraging the growing indecency of dramatic representations in the gayest capital. 'True stage censorship,' said the Senator to a representative of the New York 'Herald,' 'has become such a mockery that I have favored organised hissing. No law permitting hissing is needed. Buying a ticket gives the right to hiss. The privilege is undisputed. But one man's hissing starts a riot, and he is ejected as disorderly. Right-minded men and women must act together. Then the police will not dare to interfere. There is a sort of freemasonry among authors and journalists here, and often the latter produce the worst plays, as no help comes from that direction.'

A somewhat similar organisation has been created by the Irish societies in New York and Philadelphia for strewing the path of the 'stage Irishman' with thorns and spikes and broken glass. Their first organised efforts were directed against a coarse caricature entitled 'McFadden's Row of Flats.' The 'demonstrators,' however, went far beyond the modest and reasonable campaigning methods of Senator Beranger. They pelted the performers with apples and vegetables; they shelled them with over 200 conspicuously ancient eggs; they painted the stage pig and donkey an odorous and dripping yellow, landed an omelette in his ear, smote the vermilion whiskers of the loud Yahoo who played the part of the Irish p'lecceman, damaged the green beard of the ape who took the part of McFadden, and chased the slatternly, drunken 'Irishwomen' off the stage amidst a scene of great excitement. A few nights later the 'play' was repeated in Philadelphia. So was the demonstration. Over-ripe eggs and other promiscuous missiles are, not, however, the most effective method of dealing with the sometimes indecent, always coarse and vulgar and apish valets who hold up Irishmen and Irishwomen to ridicule and derision upon the stage. 'If the Irish people,' says the Boston 'Pilot,' cannot cut off this dirty stream of immorality and insult they are themselves to blame. Aim at the pockets, not at the heads, of the enemy; the shillelah is played out; the modern Irish weapon, the boycott, is the thing; absent treatment is the medicine.'

The hissing brigade or a departure en masse from the hall is effective where—as sometimes happens—even at Catholic concerts in New Zealand—items are sprung upon the audience that are a rough and idiotic burlesque upon a faithful and sorely-tried Catholic people. We hope that something practical will come of the action taken in the matter by the H A C B S. at their recent conference in Sydney, on the motion of one of the New Zealand delegates. It is also about time that the stage Jew should be taken by the poll and bundled off the boards. We have no stage Englishman or Russian or Frenchman or Scotsman. But all those dramatic caricatures that publicly hold up any race or class in the community to contempt should be suppressed as dangers to the public weal as real as those of typhoid or the bubonic plague.

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