

## Current Topics

### A Time'y Warning

'Read and reread the catechism for your own enlightenment and sanctification.' In a recent discourse to an immense audience America's greatest orator, Archbishop Ireland, could think of no better piece of advice than this, and he illustrated his point by a very apt reference to an experience of Cardinal Newman's. Newman, whilst still an Anglican, met three Anglican parsons who told him how, having taken as their guide in a recent tour through the mountainous districts of the West of Ireland, a boy fourteen years of age, they had not resisted the temptation to heckle him on his Catholic faith. The boy's only answer was: 'I tell you what my catechism tells me, and the teaching of the catechism is the teaching of the Catholic Church.' Happily the travellers were intelligent enough to see and open enough to confess that the quotations from the catechism met their objections and opened up to them new mental visions.

### The Dangers of the Picture Shows

Despite the official censorship of pictures—for which our Catholic Federation is to be thanked most warmly—we are not sure that all our picture theatres are quite free from suggestive and dangerous films. These films come from England and America for the most part, and in both these countries it were much to be desired that a higher standard of decency should prevail. The young especially are the sufferers. The Home Secretary (according to the *Month*), in view of the startling increase of juvenile crime,—charges for punishable offences have grown by nearly a thousand, comparing the records of 17 large English towns during last December, January, and February with the corresponding previous period—has announced that the whole question of the censorship of films is under consideration, much of the youthful depravity being traceable to these performances. 'A census taken lately in Birmingham disclosed the fact that from eleven to twelve thousand children attended in one afternoon some 24 picture palaces. In eleven cases the programme included films of murders and stabbings, in twelve cases robberies and burglaries, and three dealt with illicit sex-relationships.' The Governor of a Michigan State Prison recently complained that it was a hard job to get moving picture films clean enough to show to his convicts. Things are not so bad in New Zealand as elsewhere, but there is room for improvement, and the censor should know that in his efforts to purify the cinematograph he has the sympathy and support of all decent-minded people. The innocent need to be protected, and Catholics especially, remembering how much good Christian principles and influences have done in the past, will second with all their might the efforts of the State in this direction.

### Progress of the Church in Australasia

It is refreshing at times to leave the narrow valley and climbing some lofty hill drink in the wide expanse of the mountain and dale, sea and plain. It is inspiring also to forget for a moment the petty round of one's own life and to take a broad view of the world. The recently published statistics of the Church in Australasia unfold a tale of continued progress that should bring joy and courage to the most despondent. In Australia itself there are 1731 churches, ministered to by 857 secular and 285 regular priests. Three ecclesiastical seminaries train candidates for the priesthood. Higher education is provided for Catholic children in 37 boys' colleges, 183 boarding schools for girls and 177 superior day schools, whilst 918 schools are used for the primary education of no fewer than 138,335 pupils. This magnificent work of education is carried on by 570 religious Brothers and 6240 nuns. Charitable institutions of every conceivable kind number no less than 101. The Catholic population stands

at 924,627. Turning to New Zealand, we find the figures equally impressive in proportion to the population of the country. The 141,500 Catholics of the Dominion possess 349 churches, in which the never-ending sacrifice of Calvary is renewed by 135 secular and 104 regular priests. Educational and charitable work is placed in the skilful and highly successful hands of 67 religious Brothers and 1126 nuns. The number of aspirants to the priesthood in our two ecclesiastical seminaries runs up as high as 87. There are 4 colleges for boys, 22 for girls, 37 superior day schools, and 140 primary schools, the total number of children who receive a full Christian education being 17,311. Fifteen charitable institutions, kept going by the generosity of priests and people and by the unselfish devotion of many Sisters, include such useful institutions as orphanages, homes for the aged poor, Magdalen asylum, industrial and preservation schools for girls, industrial school for boys, homes for incurables, and hospitals.

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In view of these figures who can doubt that God's rich blessings have fallen on the Church in Australasia? It has been blessed in the cruel misgovernment which drove so many thousand Irishmen and Irishwomen from their own dear country into exile. *O felix culpa!* It has been specially blessed in that happy bond of charity and unity, which is the characteristic of the true Church, and—shall we not say it too?—in the bitter prejudices which have helped to keep it awake.

### Religious Vocations

It is the privilege and glory of the Catholic Church, with the fame of whose mighty influence the world is filled to-day, to have been the first to understand woman's right to the highest education, to provide for her the opportunities of obtaining it, and, apart from a perfectly negligible number, to be the only religious society to press into her service thousands upon thousands of young men and women for numberless and ceaseless works of education and mercy. We Catholics whose ancestors in the faith first uplifted to the eyes of the world Mary, the Ideal Woman, who have ever been the foremost in proclaiming the infinite worth of chastity, the mother-virtue of womanhood, we naturally feel a thrill of joy when we behold the Church throwing wide open the doors of educational and charitable work not only to men but also to those fair maiden souls that are drawn to God by the love of truth and goodness and beauty. Men and women enter religious communities for different reasons. Experiences are endless, and yet the fact that all find happiness in the state of their choice confirms the regularity of their entrance into religion. On being questioned some can only say they entered because they wished to give themselves to God in the most perfect service they could offer Him. Long, serious, and vexed considerations, novenas, retreats, puzzled spiritual directors, changes of purpose, earthly ambitions and spiritual attractions, with accompanying worry of soul and even moments of desperation, blaze the paths of others until enlightenment comes and a peace beyond words floods the heart of the novice. Some have had the experience of the poet in the *Hound of Heaven*:

'For, though I knew His love Who followed,  
Yet was I sore adread  
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.'

Yet it was impossible to escape 'from those strong Feet that followed, followed after': 'fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue'; and the harassed soul found in the end that what their Heavenly Master took from it was taken,

'Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  
All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:  
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!'

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