

The Need of an Antidote

When the recent epidemic was raging amongst us most people spent a considerable sum of money on more or less effective prophylactics; and surely, granting the preventives were efficacious, the expenditure was wise. There is another plague in our midst, and it argues a want of intelligence and common sense on our part that as a body we are inclined to spend very little on antidotes. The plague is our environment which is decidedly hostile to a healthy Catholic tone and a breeding place for infidelity and irreligion. It is a truism to say that the English mind is a pagan mind nowadays. There are exceptions, of course; but on the whole the attitude to religion may be gauged by the tone of our press and our literature. Judging from these, the standard is very low indeed. The average novel might as well be the work of a professed Pagan; many decent Pagans would be ashamed to put their names to some of the works of fiction exposed for sale in our book stores and read with avidity by our young people. The press exhibits a total disregard for the higher principles of Right and Wrong, with a very few exceptions. Utilitarianism is the guiding law of politicians, as it has been for centuries; and the degradation of English public opinion was clearly proved the other day when President Wilson's programme—to which the Allies had previously agreed—was described by an honest Pagan journalist as being a "new morality" to Englishmen. From our press, again, and from our novels, we are forced to conclude that the moral standard, the standard of social purity, is very low, and the national feeling very dead. We have only to keep our eyes open in the streets to see that material comfort, and the selfishness it begets, have taken firm hold of all classes. And as a consequence of the deterioration old-fashioned courtesy and good breeding are becoming rarer every day. It was against such an environment the Gaelic League set its face in Ireland when it called on the nation to revive old Irish customs and to shun the West-British contamination which was already tending to sap the vitality of the people, acting on them as surely as the inoculation of plague-germs. And we cannot do better than imitate the Gaelic League and make a great effort to arouse our people from their comatose state and make them realise what a heritage of Catholic education and ideals they are bartering for a mess of pottage. Our Catholic heritage is spiritual; the English ideals are earthy and material; and so gross and so pervading is our environment that we must make a real effort if we are to revive a sound Catholic spirit among all our people. The Gaelic League succeeded in making Irishmen and women proud of their race; surely we have no less reason to be proud of our Catholic traditions. Surely we would be nothing less than fools were we to lose our ideals for the sake of conformity with those around us. It is very easy to descend in the moral as well as in the intellectual order, and the natural tendency is to recede and fall back. To keep our position is comparatively easy in comparison with the labor entailed in regaining a single step once lost.

Facilis descensus Avernii, sed retroire gradus, superasque evadere ad auras, hoc opus, hic labor est.

We therefore need an antidote. The antidote is close connection with Catholic principles and ideals. The place to seek them is in the works of Catholic writers, in the Catholic papers, through Catholic schools, through lectures and preaching; and it is clear that unless we make it our business to seek them out there we shall not find them. And, not finding them, we shall become more and more degenerate. And a degenerate Catholic, or a degenerate Irishman, is not the companion we would recommend to anybody. For here the old saying is often verified: *Optimi pessima corruptio*—"the best when corrupted becomes the worst." Therefore it is a matter of duty to take such precautions as will arrest the plague and save us from infection. As we would spend money on germifuges and germicides, let us spend some on Catholic literature. Let us get a Catholic paper regularly; let us buy a

good Catholic book frequently; let us remember that there is nothing in the whole round world of which we have such reason to be proud as the fact that we are Catholics, of the faith of the heroic martyrs who were never yet conquered in the fight they fought for that faith. Descent from a line of kings is but smoke and dust compared with our lineage from the Irish martyrs. So let us remember them and how they appreciated the faith.

Divorce

Some time ago our pious editors raised their hands in holy horror and told the world under heavy headlines how the Germans were advocating polygamy, which happened after all to be but one of the many lies and calumnies which pious editors in defiance of the Ten Commandments think they are justified in spreading about the enemy, and which they have no sort of qualm of conscience about allowing to go without retraction when it has been clearly proved that there was absolutely no foundation for the charges made. In the matter of polygamy we need not go to Germany at all if we want to find wickedness. We have plenty of it at home, and it is characteristic of the ideals of many among us that they have no word of blame for crimes of our own which they denounce our enemies for. Perhaps it may be said that polygamy among us is hidden and not advocated openly. Yet we remember a certain egregious venture into the domain of theology by Conan Doyle, and we also recall certain articles in one of the English Sunday papers on the subject of "Visiting Husbands" which were remarkably like open and unblushing advocacy of polygamy. We are constrained to think from our observation of the conduct of many critics that it is not what is wrong they detest, but only what is wrong in the enemy; which is by no means a matter of congratulation for those who retain respect for the good name of the Empire. For true Christians divorce is the same as polygamy: it is in matter of fact tandem polygamy. As far as its culpability and its offensiveness in the sight of God are concerned, it is on a level with adultery and ordinary polygamy such as we denounced the Germans for advocating. The Christian law is: "What God has joined let no man put asunder"; and the Christian interpretation of these words is that while life lasts the conjugal union of one man with one wife lasts also and no power on earth can break it. We know that the laws made by men have sanctioned the dissolution; but the laws of God cannot be abrogated by kings or parliaments, even if a whole bench of State theologians and reformers say that they can. Leo XIII. wrote: "When the Christian religion is rejected and repudiated, marriage sinks of necessity into the slavery of man's vicious nature and vile passions, and finds but little protection in the help of natural goodness. A very torrent of evil has flowed from this source, not only into private families, but also into the State." And the Protestant historian Milman tells us that "throughout the Roman Empire there can be no doubt that this dissolution of those bonds which unite the family was the corroding plague of Roman society." With reference to the state of things in America, where divorce has attained to such shameful proportions, Dr. S. Dilke, correspondent secretary of the "National League for the Protection of the Family," says: "However humane in intent divorce may be, whatever the perils of incontinence without it, we find no historical ground for the contention that easy divorce has increased social purity or happiness, but that restlessness, sexual laxity, temptation to other attachments, corruption of home atmosphere, and selfishness instead of public well-being cause or accompany this social peril." There can be no doubt in the mind of a man of intelligence and honesty as to the evil effects of divorce. No stronger condemnation of it can be written than that it is the fertile cause of the corruption of home life and a powerful disintegrating factor in the very heart of the State. No man will deny that divorce sometimes frees an innocent party from the companionship of a

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