

Current Topics

An Irish 'Outrage'

'We have long been on the lookout,' says our bright contemporary, the *Ave Maria*, 'for an Irish "crime" or "outrage" worthy to be linked with the heinous offence which we found recorded among "Irish crimes" a number of years ago—a ten-year-old child's walking on the grass of a public park. And at last we have succeeded. The horrible deed is thus chronicled in a recent issue of the *San Francisco Leader*:—"On November 30, in a little town in County Roscommon, Ireland, known as Killumed, a merchant, by name Matthew Carty, was fined a nominal sum for a crime unknown in the annals of any other country. Mr. Carty was found to be using a measure which was 'a quarter of a gill too large.'" Yet there are writers of both sexes in the English newspapers and reviews who often descant on "the extremes of Irish depravity"!

Father Damien's Successor

It is announced that Father Conrardy, one of the two young priests who, on the death of Father Damien, at once proceeded to take up his work among the lepers, has at last fallen a victim to the fell disease, and is now calmly awaiting his impending death. 'Greater love than this no man hath!' The self-sacrifice and charity and every-day heroism involved in assuaging this most repulsive of the miseries of humanity has justly won for our leper-priests the admiration of the world.

Reference to Father Damien recalls the fact that to-day there are many Molokais, and many Father Damiens among our foreign missionaries whom the world never hears of. As showing how ready our devoted priests are to step into the breach when deeds of heroic self-sacrifice are called for, we quote an interesting incident recorded in the English Roman weekly, *Rome*, for March 19. In the course of a lengthy account of the religious condition of the Philippines our contemporary says: 'In the island of Culion there is a large settlement of lepers numbering some 3000 souls. The Delegate (Mgr. Agius, O.S.B., deservedly esteemed by the American authorities themselves for his absolute devotedness) had some difficulty in supplying them with a priest; but the difficulty was that of the *embarras de choix*. Fourteen Spanish Jesuits—including Father Alguá, renowned in the Orient as an astronomer—and five American Jesuits advanced convincing reasons why each of them was just the man for the work. One of the Spaniards was chosen, and two of the Americans have since been sent to join him. At the request of Mr. Dean C. Worcester, the American Governor, Mgr. Agius sent four nurses to the leper colony, choosing them from the Mission Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. They set out joyfully, and finding that they had not only to nurse the lepers, but to wash the cloths and bandages—which would usually be done with native help—they took all in the best possible spirit. We are told that the Governor, upon visiting the colony later, was so impressed with the cheerful devotedness of the Sisters that, to signify his esteem, he invited them all to dine on his yacht.' At the close of the visit the Governor, desiring to give the nuns some permanent token of his high esteem for their work, asked the Rev. Mother to make a request. 'The Superior,' says *Rome*, 'accepting the kindly offer, begged for a day to think the matter over. This was a trifle alarming. Visions of a 60 h.p. motor-car, or of a yacht, or of some other highly expensive gift, haunted the appreciative Governor.' On returning next day, however, the Rev. Mother, with much diffidence and hesitancy, informed the Governor that 'the Sisters would be very grateful if his Excellency would kindly provide them with an *alarm clock*. This was all the return they asked for the kind of life, and possibly the death, to which they had so readily given themselves.'

An Anglican Plea for State Aid

Catholics have been so long accustomed to ploughing their furrow alone in regard to the education question that it is pleasant and refreshing to find a voice raised amongst our non-Catholic friends in support of Catholic principles even though that voice be a solitary one and a distant. In the course of a sermon the other day at Kelso, near Bathurst (N.S.W.), Archdeacon Oakes (Anglican) referred to the question of denominational education, and spoke plainly and unequivocally in favor of State aid to all denominational schools. Taking as his subject the 'Rule of Democracy,' the preacher said: 'The greatest gift for people is the stimulus of freedom to work out the salvation of body, mind, and spirit. This is true education. We

all need it to become a great nation. Spend money in this direction in an ungrudging, broad spirit. A nation that can afford to spend £4,000,000 sterling yearly in drink can afford to be lavish in educating its people. There is the public school system, with its ever-increasing efficiency for those who prefer it. Why, in common justice, should we not subsidise schools of any religious denomination which cannot conscientiously avail itself of a more secular system? This is the Church's great opportunity to unite in a broad spirit of Christian democracy controlling and regulating the aims and aspirations of the people. Democracy needs Christianity in all its fullness to purify and elevate its efforts. Let Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Salvationists, and other sections of the Christian Church unite their forces, each according to their own methods, to educate people to fight the evils which threaten to undermine national stability—or send men to Parliament who will legislate in accordance with Christian principles and the highest instincts of exalted humanity.'

Naturally the utterance aroused some comment, and for some days afterwards Archdeacon Oakes was pursued by anonymous letter-writers in the local press. Interviewed on the subject, he said he did not answer anonymous letters, but at the same time he would be glad to hear the reasons that could be advanced against the suggestions made by him. So far there had been only two:—(1) That it would militate against our present excellent system of education, and (2) that it would perpetuate sectarian differences. It appeared to him to be a new theory that healthy rivalry should prove a hindrance rather than a stimulus, and the second objection seemed to overlook the fact that the schools already existed, and that it was only a question of whether they should, as a matter of common justice, receive State aid, and be under State supervision. He would further point out that, in order to arrive at a just conclusion, religious prejudice which was so strong an element in every community must be entirely eliminated from the discussion.

To ask that Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Salvationists, etc., should unite with Catholics on a platform of State aid to denominational schools is—in the present state of men's minds—a little like crying for the moon. For the root of opposition to Catholic claims is as much sectarian as it is political. But there is no reason why one or two of the larger and more broad-minded religious bodies should not so unite. There is no earthly reason, for example, why Archdeacon Oakes's co-religionists—our Anglican fellow-colonists—should not set the example, and, adopting the Catholic objective, bring their forces into line with Catholic action in the struggle for Christian education. If they, or even a considerable section of them, did that in real earnest—or if, like their poorer Catholic neighbors, they set about building, equipping, and maintaining their own schools, the Education Question in New Zealand would soon settle itself.

The Christ of the Andes

A few weeks ago the 'quadrennial convention' of the body called 'The Student Volunteer Movement' was held at Rochester, N.Y., under the direction of John R. Mott, chairman of the executive committee of the 'Movement,' who has, if we remember rightly, made more than one visit to New Zealand. The speeches at the gathering were disfigured by the usual diatribes about South America, one infamous assertion in regard to the clergy being bolstered up by an alleged quotation from an alleged 'pastoral letter of the Bishop of Caracas in Venezuela.' It happens that the last Bishop of Caracas—the Carmelite, Juan Antonio de la Virgen María—was elected in 1792; so that a pastoral letter from him would obviously be valuable testimony to the condition of the clergy in 1910. If a man—or even a missionary—must lie, at least he might do it a little artistically. In the meantime we may set off against this reverend slanderer's calumny the verdict of Dr. Cleary, who has made careful investigations at first hand, who has personally met representative members of the South American clergy, and who is assuredly a competent and capable judge. According to an American contemporary—the *Morning Star*—Dr. Cleary 'solemnly declared that he has seen for himself and proclaims to the world that the hierarchy and clergy of the Latin-American countries are as grand and noble a set of men as are to be found anywhere, while the condition of the Church is vigorous and progressive, and her work truly holy and apostolic. She is admirably fulfilling the sacred mission confided to her by her Divine Founder.'

The gentleman who was, as *America* puts it, 'the star-performer in regard to Latin-America' at this convention was Robert E. Speer, one of the secretaries of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and in the course of