

orial ages in the school. Take away these dogmas, and you sweep aside the whole foundation on which our Education Act is built. We Catholics repudiate these State doctrines; we know them to be educationally unsound, historically false, and morally indefensible.

But the State goes further than the implied formulating of a dogmatic view of religion. It rewards with free instruction the children of those who can in conscience accept the State creed. It penalises conscientious dissenters in one of two ways: (a) it places many in the position where they are forced to accept a system which their conscience disapproves; (b) the only other alternative is to pay for the system which their conscience demands—and at the same time pay for the system which their conscience utterly rejects. This is how the Catholic parent is treated in a democratic country in which dogmas regarding religion are supposed to stand on an equality before the law. I have said these things before. It is well that you should say them, too, and say them often and loudly, so often and so loudly that people will hear you, and say them, moreover, in such a way as to convince them that you are no longer going to lie placidly down under so great a wrong.

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We Catholics believe, as much as the politicians do, in helping youth to surmount the difficulties arising from adverse environment. We believe as much as they do, in storing the intellects of our pupils with human knowledge and wisdom, and in pushing the conquest of nature to further and fuller triumphs. But we know that there are other ends to be achieved in the school besides the sharpening of wits and the extension of material power. We know that the highest values in human life are moral values, and that no school training can increase real happiness unless it makes for truth and justice and moral restraint—in a word, unless it makes for sound character. You may sharpen the intellect without sharpening the moral sense; you may train the hand without strengthening the will; and unless you train a child to be morally better, as well as mentally brighter, his intellectual attainments will be little better than Dead Sea apples in an idle hand. For (in Tennyson's phrase) a youth or man may be "gorged with knowledge" and yet be really uneducated; for mere instruction is not ethical; it is not enough to form even the intellect, much less to mould the heart and will and form the character, which is the real end of education.

Schools without God tend to make children without godliness. You cannot get either out of an iron bucket or out of an education system more than is put into it. You cannot gather figs from thistles, nor grapes from brambles. An Eastern philosopher said to his servant Lukman: "Go into the field and sow wheat." But he sowed oats. At the harvest time the master angrily cried: "Did I not tell you to sow wheat there? Why then, did you sow oats?" "I sowed oats in the hope that wheat would grow up." The master said: "What foolish idea is this? Have you ever heard of the like?" Lukman replied: "You yourself are constantly sowing in the field of the world the seeds of evil, and you expect to reap in the after-life fruits of virtue. Therefore I also thought I might get wheat at the harvest by sowing oats in the springtime."

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Politicians are—some of them—men of much promise and of great expectations. There are probably among them Lukmans who expect to reap the wheat of sound morality where its true seed, its only firm principles (those of religion), have never been set; they may expect to gather in Christian virtue where they have thrown spiritual and religious development over the wall, and where they have established what is, in effect, a dogmatic form of State agnosticism. But wiser heads knew better than they. After a long experience of the first system of godless public instruction, so great a statesman as the first Napoleon found it necessary to reintroduce religion into the schools of France. Holland tried the secular system and sickened of it. So did Belgium. The Duke of Wellington deprecated the purely secular system as "a scheme of

social destruction." And Washington, "The Father of his Country," left to his people the sacred legacy of these weighty words: "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." And (as Humboldt remarked) "whatever we wish to see introduced into the life of a nation must first be introduced into its schools."

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These Christian principles we seek to instil into the minds of our youth—to mould therewith their intellects and hearts and wills and consciences. Our Great Teacher has said: "This is life everlasting, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." (John, 17, 3.) It is indeed the highest wisdom "to know Christ and Him crucified," "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (I. Cor., 2, 2; and Col., 2, 3.) In this knowledge, in these truths and principles we have the only sure foundation of morality. Any system of public instruction which excludes these truths and principles from its operations, can only lead to national disaster. "I am satisfied," said Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield) "that a system of national education which either relinquishes religion, or makes it subordinate, will be the greatest failure that ever occurred—but more fatal to the State than to the Church."

For us the school is, as it ever was, sacred ground—sacred like the Bush of Horeb or the Temple of God—one of the ante-chambers through which the soul of the child passes on its way back to God. We Catholics make sacrifices for the children, simply because we know what true child-training involves, because we know the perils and the possibilities of youth, and because we know that the future is with those who secure the children of to-day.

Long, on my recent visit down the East Coast,

"Out seaward hung the brooding mist,
We saw it rolling, fold on fold,
And marked the great sun alchemist
Turn all its leaden edge to gold.
Look well, look well, O friend of mine,
The grey below, the gold above:
For so the present life may shine
All golden in the light of love."

The grey thick mists of doubt, of unfaith, and of unstable moral principles are rolling in, fold upon fold, upon a social system grounded upon the material absorption created by a dogmatic secular system. But a great sun alchemist "turns all its leaden edge to gold." That great alchemist is the light and warmth of our Catholic love of the "little ones" of Christ. "The grey below, the gold above"; below the dark heavy drift towards unbelief; above is the serener heights of Christian education. Our present and our future alike shine "all golden in the light of love."

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It would be an evil day for the Faith in New Zealand if the love of Catholics for the souls of the children cooled off, if the zeal for religious education lost its fire and motive force. But we need new zeal, new fire, new force, in that sacred cause. We need more earnestness in the struggle for the right; we need a hearty union in pressing the constitutional effort for the removal of the cruel wrong inflicted upon us just because we cannot in conscience accept the pernicious State dogmas on which our Education Act is based. We must, then, fight for justice by every legitimate means at our disposal. And, until justice is done, we must tread patiently our accustomed path of sacrifice, confident that what we sow in tears to-day, we shall to-morrow reap in joy.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondence intended for our issue of December 28 should reach this office not later than the morning of December 23. Only brief items of news received up to Wednesday morning, December 27, can be inserted.

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