

sundry 'modern' philosophers: they are, indeed, feeble and imperfect, with little power of appeal to ordinary human minds and wills, especially in times of temptation—little influence against the inherent selfishness of our frail nature and its proneness to act under the stimulus of impulse and passion. 'Faith in a Personal God,' as someone has remarked, 'may be said to be hard to acquire; faith in an abstraction is vastly harder to brace the will.'

The broad Waikato cannot rise above its source. And to what high motive for the daily holocaust of domestic duty, and for the daily conquest of our natural love of ease, can we expect a hard materialistic philosophy to rise?—a philosophy which, for instance, looks upon human progress as the mere mechanical outcome of the play of tooth and claw and cunning in an incessant fight for self, self, self? What higher aim for the individual and the family could such a view of life offer than a selfish struggle, in which the strongest, the most cunning, and the most unprincipled would survive? If there were no element in duty but what is human and this-worldly, then duty would be based, on the one hand, on brute force (for the maintenance of public order), or, on the other hand, it would degenerate into unrestricted license to do what to each may seem advantageous. Why should a man aspire if the future were a blank, with no object beyond this life of sense worthy of his aspirations? Why curb passions or limit impulses, if his origin and destiny were the same as that of the goat, the ape, or the orang-outang?

There is no need to criticise in detail these philosophic systems (many of them mutually destructive) that have been built up apart from, and in opposition to, God and His Holy Gospel. Not one of them makes unselfish devotion, renunciation, self-sacrifice in the family and social circle a matter of real obligation. They can never touch the hearts of the mass of men or give a moral uplift to their lives. They are incapable of providing morality with a sound basis. 'They can give no satisfactory answer to those who ask why they are obliged to live, to toil, to be upright, to make sacrifices, to restrain their appetites, to devote themselves to the service of others, and to pursue with all their strength a lofty moral ideal.' 'They have,' says Garriguet in *The Social Value of the Gospel* (pp. 207-8), 'deceived the hopes reposed in them; they have led to a bankruptcy which even such men as MM. Buisson, Fournière, Séailles, and Deherme do not dream of disputing. These men, who are counted among our adversaries, do not conceal their alarm as to a deficiency, the dangerous consequences of which they understand better than anyone. "Without God," says M. G. Deherme, "we have not been able to invent an effectual moral code. . . . We find our hearts to-day emptied by philosophic criticism. All that has so far been offered to us as independent, scientific, rational, or positivist morality, is but a parody and a distortion of religious morality.'" Another atheistic French author and official, M. Payot, writing some time ago in the 'Volume' on 'the moral crisis which has disorganised French thought,' says: 'The men who ought to throw light on the road, throw light on nothing; they are themselves in the dark. . . . They have given up Catholicism, and but a short time is needed to see that they have put nothing in its place, and that their life is guided by their former habits

8. 'Le Morale Sociale,' p. 207. Despite the universality of the moral ideas and convictions of mankind, despite the testimony of consciousness to our moral freedom, free-will is denied by some 'modern' philosophers. It is so denied by some who hold the theory that human beings are mere pieces of soulless mechanism in a purposeless world. The outcome of such a theory may be gathered from the following extract from a book by Robert Blatchford, in the concluding chapters of which the author writes with much feeling on the failures of the methods devised for dealing with criminals. In the twelfth chapter of 'Not Guilty,' p. 203, he writes: 'A tramp has murdered a child on the highway, has robbed her of a few coppers, and has thrown her body into a ditch. Do you mean to say that tramp could not help doing that? Do you mean to say that he is not to blame? Do you mean to say he is not to be punished? Yes; I say all these things; and if all these things are not true, this book is not worth the paper it is printed on.' (Quoted by de Tonzelmann, p. 122).

Like so many other disbelievers in free-will, Mr. Blatchford, in his writings, denies and (directly or by necessary implication) also asserts free-will in a very curious way. Without free-will there cannot, of course, be any such thing as moral merit or demerit—that is, there can be no moral right or wrong

of feelings and thought.' 'We can,' says Benedict Malon, 'count on our fingers the men whom philosophy has ennobled. Four pages would contain the history of the aristocracy grouped under this title. The remainder, given up to its dreams, fears, or avarice, have rushed pell-mell through the dangerous valleys of instinct and delirium. They have endeavoured to find a justification for their actions and beliefs in the bewilderment of their brains and in the impulses of their hearts.'⁸ Even so sturdy a Rationalist as Renan, in *The Future of Science* (p. xviii.), deplored, as a 'serious thing,' his inability 'to perceive a means of providing humanity in the future' with an acceptable 'catechism,' except on the condition of returning to religious faith. 'Hence,' adds he, 'it is possible that the ruin of idealistic beliefs may be fated to follow hard upon the ruin of supernatural beliefs, and that the real abasement of the morality of humanity will date from the day it has seen the reality of things.' (By 'the reality of things' is here meant nature and life as seen through the medium of the irrational system that claims the name of Rationalism).

(To be continued next week.)

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

February 25.

Mr. C. J. Pfaff, hon. secretary of the West Coasters' Association, was presented at the Hotel Cecil last Thursday night with a gold medal and a set of gold sleeve links as an appreciation of his services. Mr. Pfaff is a prominent member of the Catholic Club.

The Marist Missionary Fathers (Rev. Fathers O'Connell, Kimbell, and McCarthy) will conduct a mission at the Sacred Heart Basilica, Thorndon, commencing on Sunday, March 10. The first fortnight will be devoted to the women, and the men will be attended to for the following fortnight.

During the Wellington season of the Henry Irving Company the management offered prizes amongst school children for the best studies in 'Hamlet.' There were over three hundred entries. In class A (students under 16), the second prize of one guinea was won by Miss Zillah Lucas, a pupil of the Sisters of Mercy Convent High School, Sussex Square. Miss Lucas is only twelve years of age.

It is pleasing to record the successes of our young men at examinations. At the last University examination for the first section of the LL.B. degree, Mr. John A. Scott, of the Department of Agriculture, was successful in passing with four subjects to his credit. Mr. Scott is an ex-pupil of the Marist Brothers, having received his primary tuition in the Boulcott street school, and finishing off at the Sacred Heart College, Auckland. Another successful entrant was Mr. Paul Verschaffelt, of the Lands Department, who passed in five subjects. Both Messrs. Scott and Verschaffelt are prominent members of the H.A.C.B. Society.

The St. Patrick's Day celebration committee have been successful in securing the services of Miss Adelaide Bruce, who was one of the star singers at the St. Patrick's night concert in Sydney last year. The committee is endeavoring to keep up the popularity of the St. Patrick's night concerts, and with such singers as Mr. W. Farquhar Young, Misses Adelaide Bruce, Teresa McEnroe, and Agnes Segrief, and others, it will be in a position to present a programme that will satisfy the most critical.

The Allen Doone Company opened here on Saturday night last and attracted a very large audience, when the piece 'Sweet County Kerry' was played. This was continued during the week, each evening attracting large audiences. The company received flattering press notices in the local press on the excellence of the acting and staging. To-night 'A Romance In Ireland' will be staged, and, judging by the first piece, a successful week's run is anticipated. Monday night was a vice-regal command night, his Excellency Lord Islington and suite being present.