

## Current Topics

### Catholic Population

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda has recently presented to the Holy Father the results of the last general census of the Catholic population of the world. The number of Catholics scattered over the world is set down at 263 millions, and the yearly increase at 9 per cent. And yet some people write books about the decay of the Church of Rome!

### 'Grotesquely Truthful'

Tennyson used to speak of his intimate friend, William George Ward, one of the great converts of the Oxford Movement, as being 'grotesquely truthful.' The following incident, given in the current number of the *Australian Catholic Record*, bears out the truth of the description. In order to provide for his family Ward had to insure his life. 'Is your general health good?' he was asked by the insurance office. 'It is deplorably bad,' came the answer. 'Has your family any hereditary complaint?' 'I should fully expect so.' 'Well, but you look well; I suppose you eat and sleep well?' 'I have never had a good night's sleep in my life.' It must have been a unique experience for the medical officer to get such answers, and he signalled the occasion by putting the young man of 38 on the 60-70 years' list.

### Educational Progress in America

America leads the way in many things, and Catholic America also teaches many a useful lesson. Recently efforts have been made to secure uniformity in the Catholic schools, which according to reliable statistics, educate some 1,500,000 children. To this end, a Summer Session has been held at the Catholic University of America for the benefit of the Sisters, especially the head-teachers, engaged in the work of the schools. The second of these Sessions was held this year, June 30 to August 9. Students to the number of 314 attended the lectures. Of this number 11 were lay students and 303 were religious, who represented 26 Orders or Congregations, and who came from 55 dioceses of the United States and Canada. Fifty-eight courses conducted by the Professors of the University were given in religious knowledge, education, philosophy, *belles-lettres*, mathematics, science, history, sociology, music, and art. The school day lasted from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a recess of two hours at noon.

One of the Sisters explains in the *Catholic Educational Review* (September, 1912) the secret of the wonderful self-sacrifice shown both by professors and Sisters in devoting their vacation to this arduous work. 'All working in unison, with the one end in view that we might become more efficient instruments in carrying on the work confided to us by our bishops and pastors—the strengthening of Christ's Kingdom in the hearts of His children. A sense of this personal responsibility was brought home to us in a striking manner when we had the privilege of visiting some of the public buildings that are of interest from an educational point of view. In this instance, it was the Bureau of Engraving. As we watched that army of employees intent on their work, rejecting at each stage of development any copy that bore the least blemish, and learned that by a perfect system of organisation any mark of carelessness might be directly traced to the particular offender, we asked ourselves, "What about those who are engraving, not on paper, but on immortal souls?" And finally, when we were shown the original plate and had been duly impressed with the necessity of its perfect elaboration, the analogy was complete. Why should we wonder that our Holy Father, that the hierarchy of the Church, that our religious Superiors, should attach so much importance to the training of teachers, when we consider how far-reaching is their influence and how stupendous is its consequence?'

### The Catholic Revival in France

For some years the Church in France has been passing through a furnace of persecution, and at times it must have seemed to all except believers in Christ's protecting promise that she would be scorched and shrivelled up. But now there are many signs of a widespread and general revival of religion. The character of this revival will be understood better when it is contrasted with the period of trouble preceding. Preparations had been made for many years in the Masonic lodges; the war broke out in earnest in 1901. First non-authorised, and then authorised, congregations were declared illegal and disbanded, great numbers of their members being forced to take refuge in foreign countries. Those individuals who remained behind were forbidden to take part in the work of education. As a result some 16,000 religious schools were closed. When this work was completed, the new rulers set about effecting an open rupture with the Holy See. M. Loubet, President of the Republic, went to Rome, but though he was the head of a so-called Catholic nation, he could not see his way to pay the ceremonial visit to the Pope, honored by immemorial custom. Shortly after the French Ambassador to the Vatican left Rome without observing the usual diplomatic courtesies, while the Papal Nuncio at Paris was subjected to all sorts of insults and was finally conveyed across the French frontier as an undesirable! The Concordat, the celebrated treaty concluded between Napoleon and Pius VII. on July 15, 1801, which as a bilateral contract could not be abrogated by one of the parties only, was treated by the French Government as though it had no existence. In July, 1905, M. Briand's Separation Bill was passed. By this measure of confiscation, all Church property—churches, schools, seminaries, presbyteries, etc.—would cease to belong to the rightful owners, unless these formed themselves into *associations cultuelles*. As these *associations* were simply boards of administration controlled by the civil authorities, the bishops, instructed by the Pope, refused to form them. The result was that all Church property, together with pious foundations to the value of twenty millions, was confiscated to the State. The wisdom of the Pope and his advisers was of course questioned by some wiseacres, but time is proving that he was right, for though in 1906 the French Church found itself in a state of absolute poverty and banished from its rightful place in the laws and institutions of the country, it gained in exchange the precious gift of Liberty.

Mr. Arkell, who has resided in Paris for the past twenty years as a newspaper correspondent, has recently been telling the readers of the *Hibbert Journal* (a Liberal, if not a Rationalistic publication) what use the French Catholics have made in a few years of this gift. 'The question of the schools was of pressing importance. . . . For a time a number of Church schools were kept on by the disbanded teachers. . . . In the meantime, training colleges were started, and gradually new Church schools sprang up, until at this moment there is a fair prospect of lost ground being recovered. . . . It grew to be the fashion to teach in many of the State schools that belief in God and in a future life was a superstition of the Dark Ages, and that religion and reason were contradictory terms. Hence in 1910, the French Bishops published a collective letter condemning some of the text-books that were used in the State schools, and calling upon Christian parents to protect the faith of their children. The answer to that appeal was the creation of associations of *pères de famille* pledged to watch over the kind of instruction given in the State schools, and to take action accordingly. There are about 400,000 French fathers who take part in this movement, a truly formidable result. As a consequence, although Government threatened repressive measures, and introduced two Bills to that effect into Parliament, two years have been allowed to pass without further action being taken, a proof that the Catholic party has grown strong enough to show effective resistance.' Another illustration of the truth that there is only one way of dealing with politicians—and that is, to squeeze them. 'It was

## Better Teeth

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