

Something of which Catholics Should be Ashamed

A disposition of mind which strains our forbearance to the bursting point is that of the Catholic person who has an ever-ready apology on his lips for his faith and all things Catholic, and an equally ready and cringing admiration for the views and work of outsiders (says the *Ave Maria*). The disposition grows out of rank ignorance, and is fostered by a human respect as cowardly as it is inane. One such victim of this folly writes to the *Catholic News* of the manner of his disillusionment and enlightenment. He says:—

'I belong to that large class of Catholics who like to find fault with their own people, and so sometimes—alas! I should say frequently—I criticise our charitable works. But last week I had an experience which brought me up with a jolt, and got me to thinking I had a little restitution to make. I shall try in the future to make it. This is what happened.

I had two old ladies incurably sick with cancer; and I spent an hour and a half in the office of a big non-sectarian institution, gradually going down the ladder of hope till I reached the ground-floor, with the sign staring me in the face: "This way out." It was a case of "No tickie, no washee"—or, in other words, "Pay up, or nothing doing." During my wait in the office I had a chance to read over last year's report, and I saw there large sums of money paid by the city of New York for the keep of patients, and a long list of special benefactors, some of whom were Catholics.

I went home doing a heap of thinking, and immediately telephoned to the House of Calvary at 5 Perry street. It was rude to telephone, but I did. I explained the case to the Sister, not mentioning anything of my morning's experience; and before I got halfway through she said: "Send both old ladies to us at once." Moreover, she added: "Whenever you come across any such cases in the future, let us have them without delay."

The class of Catholics 'who like to find fault with their own people'—there you have them characterised, the meanest of the mean. Contrast with their attitude the disposition of outsiders, distinguished non-Catholics in all the walks of life, who are vieing with one another in their commendation and appreciation of Catholic genius and Catholic activity. In the last year two works of apologetics for the Church have been compiled on the basis of just such evidence. Of course there are defects in men and methods and institutions. But the people who shout their criticism from the housetops are not the ones to come down and take up the burden and help to make things better. Let us leave the fault-finding and detraction to the enemies of religion, who are numerous and active enough.

The class of Catholics 'who like to find fault with their own people' has, too, an intellectual or academic wing. They are our 'advanced thinkers'; some of them fall under another designation formed by Papal judgment. But, without being Modernists, these Catholics have high regard for the 'method' and 'temper' of heterodox and rationalistic writers, and a corresponding scorn for the slow, if sure-footed, wisdom of Catholic scholars. This phase of the delusion is well analysed in a recent issue of *America*, in an article called 'A Snare of Rationalism,' by the Rev. Henry Woods, S.J. Referring more especially to the study of Scripture, he says: 'This manufacturing of reputations for the unorthodox, and the systematic depreciation of the orthodox, is a common practice of the adversaries of the truth. Haeckel is a great biologist; Wasmann is a petty dabbler. Acton was an historian of tremendous weight, though his letters to Mary Gladstone will hardly bear this out. There are few works so overrated as the *Cambridge Modern History*, which he planned. Its articles are superficial, worthy only of a magazine. It is expanded to twelve large volumes by means of large print, wide margins, and copious bibliographies. The modern bibliography is a base imposition. It is purely mechanical, rarely indicating an author's research.' And further Father Woods writes:

'We have our historians of real worth, men of laborious research—Gasquets, Stevensons, Pollens, Bede Camms, Moyes, Janssens, and others too numerous to mention. But the world ignores them; no self-sufficient journalist ever calls them scholarly, learned, or profound. We have had our writers who, had they been against us, would have won fame. Where is there such an author on ethics and natural right in the rationalist host as Tapparelli, reconstructing with rigorous logic the scholastic system of ethics, to whom his successors, though not agreeing with him absolutely, acknowledge themselves to owe so much? Where can one find amongst our enemies such philosophers as the Neo-Thomists, Kleutgen, Liberatore, Zigliara, Cornoldi, to mention only those who have passed from this world? The Church has amongst its faithful sons intellects of the highest order, and the cure for Rationalism amongst its children to-day is to study their works, not to scoff at them.'

A final word and we have done with this detestable snobbishness. Catholic writers in general, especially in our country, fall under this ignorant ostracism. How many Catholics, we wonder, have read *The Golden Rose*, for example, *Come Rack! Come Rope!* or *The Light of the Vision!* Yet these ought to be Catholic 'best-sellers'; and, incidentally, they have not their superiors as works of fiction amongst the 'six best-sellers' of the last twenty years. It is high time for Catholics to 'come to.' Living in an environment certainly not Catholic—rather anti-Catholic—we are apt to take on the complexion of the time; we are prone to misprize and overlook ourselves. But the Church to-day, and Catholic men and women to-day, as in every age of our history, in whatever field of activity they enter, are making high and shining marks upon the world around them.

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The Rev. Father G. P. Birch, O.F.M., who has labored in the parishes of Paddington and Waverley for the past 26 years, is about to take a holiday trip to Ireland and the Continent. He was entertained at a valedictory gathering in St. Francis' School-hall, Paddington, on the evening of April 21.

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