

## Current Topics

### A Bigot

When Wells deals with the Catholic Church he takes leave of whatever little reasoning powers he normally possesses. Dean Inge is affected by the very word Catholic as a gobbling turkey is by a red rag—and even an Anglican paper has to call him to order and remind him that his profession warrants people in expecting him to be decent. A third of the same kidney is one Mr. Bertrand Russell who is a keen mathematician and a narrow-minded bigot. He surpasses even Inge in his fury and obeys Luther in persistently throwing mud and uttering calumnies about Catholics which make it plain that he must have concentrated so intently on mathematics that he learned nothing else—not even to be a gentleman. As some of the leading reviews give hospitality to this person it is as well to warn readers to expect from his pen much ignorance, passion, and distortions of truth. Recently, for example, he wrote in *The Outlook* the following passage which sufficiently illustrates Holy Writ's warning that the man who says in his heart that there is no God is usually a fool:

A man who is perpetually drunk, who kicks his wife when she is pregnant, and begets ten imbecile children, is not regarded by the Catholic Church as wicked.

There is no need to express how intelligent people regard a man who writes in that strain; nor is there profit in bothering further about this rabid person Russell.

### Credo Quia Impossibile

These words, meaning "I believe because it is impossible," are quoted now and then by rationalists to prove how credulous believers are. They are commonly attributed to Tertullian in a sense he never meant and in a form he never used. In his work *De Carne Christi*, written when he was not a Catholic but a Montanist, he says:

Natus est Dei Filius—non pudet quia pudendum est: et mortuus est Dei Filius—prorsus credibile est quia ineptum est: et sepultus resurrexit—certum est quia impossibile.

Only a free translation can make plain the meaning of the strained rhetoric of the original, thus:

The Son of God was born—we are not shocked, though humanly speaking, we should be: the Son of God suffered death—it is quite credible because meaningless to human intelligence: and after being buried He rose again—it is certain because beyond human power.

Any person can see that the great thinker was far from asserting that he believed against the evidence of truth when he wrote the foregoing, from which a little bit taken from the context is used so often and so foolishly by those who hate religion.

### The K. of C.

The editor of that able and fearless Catholic journal, the *Fortnightly Review*, soundly rates the Knights of Columbus for junketting with Freemasons. It looks like a case of the wolf lying down beside the lamb. Charity to all men is truly commendable, but charity begins at home, and the K. of C. are certainly not kind to themselves when they allow it to be reported in the secular press that they are fraternising freely with a secret society condemned by the Church and well known to be in nature and ideals hostile to Catholicism. Masons in English-speaking countries profess to be more or less harmless friendly societies. But if so why the secrecy and the oath? Broadmindedness can be carried to extremes, and when a Catholic brother-

hood becomes hail-fellow-well-met with members of a society which we are forbidden to join under pain of excommunication, it seems extreme beyond all doubt. Excursions beyond the limits of what the good sense of the faithful will permit are bound to be injurious to a Catholic society, and no doubt it is due to such practices that in some higher Catholic circles there has long been noticeable a coldness towards the Knights.

### Press Corruption in Paris

The whole world resounds to the echoes of the American oil scandals just now. Matters were even worse in England under recent governments but there was apparently nobody sufficiently clean to throw the first stone. All over the country one can hear astonishing stories of the way things were done in New Zealand during the War, and, again, there is nobody to clean up the mess. Now comes from *L'Humanité*, the chief organ of the French Socialists, under the flaring title of

#### *L'Abominable Venalité de la Press Française*

a series of documents, alleged to be drawn from the archives of the Russian Government, demonstrating that from 1897, right up to 1917, the Imperial Russian Government controlled a substantial number of the leading Paris newspapers, dictating their attitude on foreign policy, and, of course, paying them well for the privilege. How much Parisian journalists must have made out of the shameful transaction may be gathered from a note sent by the Russian agent to Kokovtzev, the Minister for Finance:

For the first ten months the abominable venality of the French press will have absorbed (over and above the advertising of the loan of 800 millions) a sum of 600 thousand francs, of which the banks have put up half. . . This payment is made to maintain the Russian prestige, and to soften the systematic attacks made on the Russian Government in general, though it cannot prevent them.

On March 1, 1905, he wrote again:

It is necessary, according to Verneuil, that we should put great pressure on the political section of the newspapers to publish, along with the telegrams, editorial notes calculated to reassure the public about the solvency of Russia and the improbability of revolutionary success. He reckons the expense at between two and three millions for the year. It seems a lot; in February, 1904, it took 1,200,000 francs.

Among the papers making a good thing out of Russia are named *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Petit Journal*, *La Liberté*, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Temps*. The latter undertook to publish special numbers about Russia when the mighty Empire was tottering during the War, and a contract to this effect was signed in Petersburg, in 1916, between the Imperial Minister for Finance and M. Rivet, Russian correspondent of the *Temps*.

The corruption is still worse because the French Government—if these documents are authentic—knew about the matter, encouraged, and, at times, directed it. Thus there is a letter, dated in 1912, in which Iswolski wrote:

From my conversation with M. Poincaré I feel sure that he is ready to give his co-operation in this matter, and to show us the most suitable lines along which to spread out the subsidies.

In a letter, dated February 14, 1913, he further says:

In the course of my conversation with M. Poincaré, now President of the Republic, I was convinced that he shares my opinion on this matter. Furthermore, M. Poincaré has expressed a wish that nothing should be done unknown to him, and that the distribution of the sums should be effected in co-operation with the French Government, and through M. Lenoir.