

Modern Demoralisation

A distinguished French priest, l'Abbé Ernest Dimnet, who is now visiting America, recently contributed to *Harper's* a paper conveying his impressions of the people—especially of the young people—of the United States. His words are well worth reproducing as they contain for us in New Zealand a very salutary lesson and a much needed warning. Of France, where in spite of atheists and secularists good mothers have preserved the home and its Christian traditions, he says:

"French people still cherish the lesson handed down from the past generations, that you stand a good chance of being well if you keep 'your head cool, your feet warm, and your heart cheerful.' But cheerfulness to the French of those wise epochs was the same thing with content and content is terribly near resignation. The French girl was (and still is) taught that *il faut souffrir pour être belle*, and neither she nor her brother was much surprised to read in their religious books that we must suffer in order to be happy. Happiness in its highest meaning was regarded as something sacred, the initial stage of the celestial bliss. The crude modern notion which we express by the word happiness was condemned as an idol or a mirage born of the heat of passion, and was branded as mere pleasure. . . . I should advise American mothers to keep the pursuit of happiness out of their daughters' constitution if they cannot keep it out of their country's. A girl who is given to understand every minute that she has a right to a good time is sure to declare before long that she wonders when the good time is coming, even if she has it at every hour. Do not make fastidious artists in happiness. Keep on the safe Puritan side: it does not always mean thin lips and spectacled eyes shooting reproach around at random. I am afraid the idea of happiness is made an obsession by a great deal of apparently moral literature. There is certainly a relation between the mushy advice daily doled out to hair-splitting girl questioners by dozens of 'Aunt Margarets' or 'Cheery Mabels' and the stuff we read last March in the pitiful diary of that Ruth somebody who killed herself in Chicago because, she said, happiness was only a word. . . . Is one very much surprised to hear an experienced American magistrate say that sixty divorces out of a hundred are not caused by any real incompatibility, or, above all, by any cruelty, and would never have taken place had not one of the parties had a more or less sudden vision of greater happiness in a new venture. The fact is that in America, as well as in France, we are confronted with the substitution of the right to happiness for a moral or religious principle."

What he says applies to New Zealand and to every country in which Christian principles have been attacked by atheist politicians. Our New Zealand State schools have banished God and taught the children that religion is a matter of less importance than having a good time. The result is the demoralised home and the flapper with her latch-key seeking her good time no matter whether it be from a married or single libertine who will take her for joy rides and pay for wine or lollies. What that result means for the people may be ascertained without any difficulty by any man who reads the daily chronicles of vice and corruption that spring like weeds on a midden-heap from the hearts and minds of a generation of unfortunate people who are never taught to remember that their business here is not to gratify every inclination but to serve God by ways of self-restraint and purity. It is true of the soul at any rate that beauty must be rooted in suffering, and, if it is, we know what to think of the interior and invisible and immortal parts of the poor deluded girls who are at such pains to decorate the pampered bodies that must wither like grass and nearly as quickly. We Catholics are saving the country a large sum yearly by our schools, but we are doing more than that: we are, almost alone, making a stand for pure homes, pure morals, pure marriages, and true social well-being.

Back to His Vomit

It would be an omission for which we could not

readily forgive ourselves were we to omit complimenting the Directors, the Editor, and that weekly correspondent, "Civis," of the *Otago Daily Times*. On February 5, we had a number of bishops and priests from all parts of New Zealand in Dunedin. More than one of them said to us that the "Passing Notes," written by "Civis" in the *Times* of that date, were the most consummate piece of journalistic blackguardism they ever saw. While reporting their remarks for the benefit of the Directors, the Editor, and the anonymous correspondent who supplies the blackguardism, we beg to call the attention of our readers to a still greater achievement by the same daily in the same low sphere. "Civis" once described Dr. Moran and his Catholic people as old Moran and his pigs. "Civis" was detected in a brazen forgery which he perpetrated in his anxiety to calumniate the Irish people. But there is even worse than that. The Editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, who published the passage, and who also published the latest blackguardism of "Civis," had not the gentlemanliness or the common honesty to publish a letter calling the attention of the public to the dastardly thing "Civis" had done in his paper. That action was in our opinion more dishonorable than anything "Civis" has ever done. After the recent outburst of "Civis," the man who had exposed the forgery wrote to the Editor to refute the latest calumnies of the forger. Again, the cultured and gentlemanly Editor refused to allow a defence of the attacked and calumniated Irish people to appear in his columns. There is room enough for the forger, "Civis"; but there is no room for one who exposes his lies and insults. The Editor who permitted the forger to use his columns and who refused to publish a defence is worthy of "Civis," and "Civis" is worthy of him. We congratulate the Directors, the shareholders, and the people who pay twopence for the *Otago Daily Times* on their successful support of a dastardly bigot who, sheltered by his anonymity, stops not even at forgery: we cannot congratulate them on anything else. Here is the letter which the Editor who once refused to expose the forger refused last week:

"The Editor,

Otago Daily Times.

"Sir,—After reading 'Passing Notes' in your issue of this morning one is tempted to think that the Irish, far from being objects of pity on account of the campaign of slander that is being carried on against them by the hack journalists of the Tory press, are to be envied as a people with a cause so righteous that it calls down the sneers and vituperation of forgers like 'Civis.' Not that anyone takes notice of 'Civis' (no one heeds a forger), but I merely mention the fact to show how just the claims of Ireland must be when it is only persons of the standing of 'Civis' who oppose them.

"Your contributor presents an added glitter to his notoriety as a forger of historical testimony when he shows us to what a depth of the ridiculous he allows his passion for licking the boots of the rich man to lead him. Because de Valera cannot go openly into Ireland owing to the fact that Lloyd George and the other stock-jobbers are overrunning the country with mercenariness, butchering old men, women, children, and unborn children, sacking, burning, looting, torturing prisoners, outraging females, and firing on unarmed crowds, it is, according to 'Civis,' proof positive that Ireland's claims have no moral force. It would be equally logical to say that the morality of claims depends upon the physical strength of murderers. It is the doctrine that Might is Right, which was so unpalatable to our jingoes when the Might was Germany's. That our rulers use it unblushingly to-day is evidence of the fact that they have no longer a morality, but only an etiquette. Of course, it is only a circumstance that Lloyd George recognised the justice of Ireland's claims while the war was on, and if it suited him to recognise them to-day, 'Civis' would again agree with him, for, as a penny-a-liner, he has no opinions of his own, but like a poll-parrot, echoes the slanders of the boss-junkers. It makes no difference if all the decent public men in England are sickened

Mrs. J. Aramburu

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