

Church school to which he sends his children? This is said to be a country in which all citizens enjoy equal rights and privileges. We fail to see it. We shall demand the same privileges accorded to Roman Catholics.

IN WANT.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want."—St. Luke xv. 14.

There is an old legend of the north land, which tells us of a mysterious haunted mountain, where Venus, the goddess of beauty and of lust, had her abode. There stood the mountain, dark and mysterious, in a fair and smiling valley. One day a youthful pilgrim journeyed that way, and as he drew near the mountain, fair forms of women rose before him, white hands beckoned him, soft whispers called him, telling him of the delights of the Court of Venus. The youth yielded to the whispering words, and followed the beckoning hands, and presently the mountain seemed to open to him, and he passed from sight into the sins and delights of the home of Venus. A year and a day passed, and the mountain once more opened to let the youth go forth. He passed into the world, but only like the shadow of his former self. Instead of the young man, full of life, and hope, and brightness, he was now bent and weary, with sad, worn face, and hollow, hopeless eyes. He had longed to look again on God's pure sky and sunshine, but the light seemed to blind his eyes. He had longed to see once more his fellowmen, but they knew him not, and shrank back from him. He had gone away from faith, and purity, and honour, and now his place knew him no more. He had spent all on sin, and he began to be in want. It is the same with every prodigal. At first the ways of sin and self-pleasing seem strewed with flowers. At first the down-hill road is easy. At first the prodigal rejoices in what he calls his freedom in being his own master. But the pleasure soon fades; he finds life "flat, stale and unprofitable;" sin, which he thought so sweet, has lost its taste, and he is—

"Lord of himself—that heritage of woe,
That fearful empire which the human breast
But holds to rob the heart within of rest."

Sin always brings its servants to want. It is something like opium-eating. That fatal drug at first gives its victims delightful dreams and fancies; but they wake up to an unsatisfied longing, to ruined health, to premature decay. Sin, like the usurer of old, will have its pound of flesh, will exact the uttermost farthing. When a prodigal begins his course he is like a man borrowing of some hard money-lender. He is full of joy and laughter, for he has the money in his grasp. But by-and-by comes the day of reckoning; he has spent all, and the famine has come, and he is in want. My brothers, when you are tempted to be as the prodigal, look to the end. You look upon the young man walking in his own way, and boasting of his freedom, and laughing at restraint, and you think, perhaps, that you would like to follow in his steps. Look to the end; look at the same man ruined by his wilfulness and disobedience, starving by the swine-trough, homeless, friendless, disgraced and wretched. Go into our prisons, our workhouses, our lunatic asylums, and see there ruins of manhood, wrecks of humanity, and you will learn that these were prodigals, who walked in their own way, and wasted their substance in riotous living, and now they are paying the penalty—such is the end of them. These ruined men—criminals some of them, madmen

not a few—were once innocent, happy children. Those faces, now lined and scarred with every evil vice and passion, were once consecrated by a mother's kiss. A great writer of our day has described some rough, lawless gold-diggers listening to the song of an English skylark under Australian skies. The familiar music of the bird recalls the time when these prodigals were innocent and happy in their father's house. "These shaggy men, full of oaths, and strife, and cupidity, had once been white-headed boys, and had strolled about the English fields with little sisters and little brothers, and heard the lark sing this very song. The little playmates lay in the churchyard, and they were full of oaths, and drink, and lust, and remorse—but no note was changed in this immortal song. And so for a moment or two years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud from the memory, and the past shone out; they came back, bright as the immortal notes that lighted them, those faded pictures and those fledged days; the cottage, the old mother's tears when he left her without one grain of sorrow; the village church with its simple chimes, the clover field hard by in which he lay and gambolled, whilst the lark praised God overhead; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked, the sweet hours of youth, and innocence, and home." The sight of a ruin is ever a sad one, but saddest of all is it to look on the ruin of a man made in God's image, made to be pure, and noble, and upright, and just. When the prodigal had spent all, he began to be in want. If you were to visit the gambling-houses which disgrace the continent, and are not unknown amongst ourselves, you would see the story of the prodigal son over and over again, but without its brighter ending. You would see the gambler with his hands full of money and his face full of smiles. Presently, when he has spent all, you will see that same gambler, with white, set face, and despair in his eyes, rushing forth from the scene of his ruin, hurrying perhaps to suicide. You look at the drunkard in his day of festivity, and you think, perhaps, what a happy life he leads. Lift the curtain a little later, and look on the last scene of such a life—ruin, disgrace, a maddened brain, quivering limbs, and trembling lips. When he has spent all, he begins to be in want. It is ever so with the sinner against God our Father. He wastes God's gifts upon his sins, he spends all, and he begins to be in want. Like Israel of old, "hungry and thirsty, his soul faints within him." He is in want of a home, of a father, of a friend. He is in want of peace—that peace which the world cannot give. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." The sinner in his restless misery asks sympathy of the world, even as Judas asked it of the Chief Priests. And the world answers him even as they answered Judas—"What is that to us? see thou to that." The companions of the prodigal, who had been the partners of his sins, forsook him when he had spent all. Those who had revelled and gambled with him, cast him out of doors when he had nothing left—"the way of transgressors is hard." And now the prodigal falls lower and lower. Instead of the comforts of home and the society of his equals, he herds with the swine, and is worse fed than they. In place of the best robe there are rags—he has lost all. Yes, sin ever robs us of all—of good name, of right feeling, of self-respect. A convict ceases to be known by his name; he is recognized merely by a number among other felons. So the sinner loses his name, the name of God's child, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; he has disgraced his Christian name,

honoured his father dish; he has spent all, and he is in want. Whilst the prodigal is absent from home in the far country, the loving heart of his father yearns over him, and longs for him. Ah, it is ever so with those who love us. We may be thoughtless, careless, selfish, but true love still clings to us, and mourns for us. David's heart was breaking with love for handsome, treacherous Absalom; many a parent's heart is sore to-day for some prodigal away in the far country, far from home. There stands the vacant chair he used to occupy; and to the mother's eyes the child is there as he used to be in his innocence, when "heaven lay all around him in his infancy," and no thought of evil had clouded his young brow. And now that once innocent boy is a wanderer on the face of the earth, stained and hardened by sin; yet the parents' hearts go out to him in his unknown wanderings. We ever love best that which we have lost. You speak to a mother about her children at her knee, but her thoughts fly sadly to the little graves in the churchyard. You praise the work of the eldest son, but the father's heart is sorrowing after the younger, the prodigal in a far country. Those who are still with us can never exactly fill the place of those who are gone. As says the poet of his dead child—

"Our Rose was but in blossom;
Our life was but in spring;
When down the solemn midnight
We heard the spirits sing:
'Another bud of infancy
With holy dews impearled;
And in their hands they bore our wee
White Rose of all the world.'

You scarce would think so small a thing
Could leave a loss so large;
Her little light such shadow fling
From dawn to sunset's marge.
In other springs our life may be
In bannered bloom unfurled,
But never, never match our wee
White Rose of all the world."

My brethren, God our Father, Jesus our Saviour, feel that yearning love for those of us who have wandered from home as prodigals. The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and goes after one which has strayed. He has come "to seek and to save that which was lost." Our Holy Mother—the Church—like the woman in the parable, lights a candle, and sweeps, and searches diligently for the one lost piece. The angels of God in heaven do not rejoice over the ninety-nine self-righteous, who think they have no need of repentance, but over the one sinner who repents. Jesus tells us that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It is not to the proud, self-satisfied man from the uppermost seats in the synagogue that Christ's invitation comes; it is to the weary and heavy-laden, sad with sorrow and sick with sin, that the gracious words are spoken—"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." It is to the poor, stained, yet penitent woman, trembling beneath the fierce looks of the Jewish rulers; it is to Magdalene, weary of the streets of a sinful city, or to the humble publican, bowed down to the earth before his God, that the blessed words are spoken—"Thy sins be forgiven thee." My brothers, if any of you are prodigals in the far country, disobedient to God's laws, remember this, God still loves you. As a father pitieth his children, so the Heart of God longs after you. God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live. In the far country there is sorrow, want, hunger of the soul, foul rags, dishonour. In our Father's house there is enough and to spare, safety, peace,