

is just and right that Christmas should be a time of rejoicing, that it should be a period of universal happiness. In order, however, that it may be such it is necessary that the preparation therefor be in accordance with the spirit of the Church. Let us look ahead and behold the dawn of salvation. The sun has not yet appeared, but we can see already "His star in the East." The flush of the morning is upon the horizon. But we have yet a portion of that vast desert of humany frailty to traverse. Let us do so with courage, with hope, with faith, and with love. For all of us the Advent season will soon glide past, and before we know well what has occurred we will find ourselves at the feet of the Divine Infant in the Bethlehem stable where the angels, the shepherds, the kings, and the representatives of the world adored Him. It is Advent; let us make use of the season, and when the day of rejoicing comes our happiness will be in proportion to our merits during the time of Advent.

OUR SCHOOLS AGAIN.

In our last issue we announced that a committee had been appointed by the Catholic Board of School Commissioners to inquire into the state of each of the schools, and to report to the Board the result of such investigation. Of course the motion upon which this committee was appointed was strongly combated by the Board; still it was carried, as it should have been. What object there could be in opposing such a committee is more than we can imagine. In the first place the sole object of the movement seems to be to let in more light upon a subject that has been for a great many years the cause of anxiety and deep dissatisfaction to the taxpayers. The committee by no means binds the Board to any action; even when its report is made the Board need not accept it, nor is it obliged to act thereon. Consequently such a strong opposition to this most reasonable demand for action can only indicate a desire to prevent the light of facts being cast upon a subject of universal interest. We may have been prejudiced somewhat by the recent series of events, in our views concerning motives for inaction; still we fail to be able to explain matters otherwise.

We are now desirous of placing the question fairly and squarely before our readers, as it is one that interests thousands of those who pay taxes for the education of their children. We might thus divide the schools for the sake of better explaining the situation. There are three categories of schools that may be said to come under the Board—or rather to affect the immediate interests of the taxpayers whose money that Board receives and is held to use for educational purposes. Firstly, there are the schools that belong to the Commissioners, that were built and are maintained by them. To this category we need not refer, as all the schools therein are in perfect condition and have all the requirements that they could desire. Nobody will accuse the Commissioners of ever having neglected these schools, and even in the exterior appearances we behold the evidence of the care and the money bestowed upon them. There is a second category of schools consisting of those intended for young girls, and sometimes boys, which are principally under the charge of nuns or else of lay female teachers. To these we shall refer on another occasion. For the present our interest, as far as this important question of the distribution of tax-moneys is concerned, is with the schools of the third category: that is to say, schools not built by the Commis-

sioners and yet used by them for the purpose of that education for which the rate-payers contribute their money.

Prior to the existence of the Board, when Educational administration was not organized as it is to-day, the Sulpicians held control of the various parishes of the city and owned property that came to them from the original powers that possessed the Island of Montreal. According as the city grew it became necessary to establish different parishes, such as St. Joseph's, St. Ann's, St. Bridget's, inclusive of St. Mary's and others. The gentlemen of the Seminary could not possibly attend to all the spiritual requirements of the rapidly increasing population. As a consequence they abandoned, one by one, those parishes, and handed them over to the secular clergy under their Ordinary. In so doing the Sulpicians still retained their rights upon the property whereon they had built schools or which they had intended for educational purposes. In all cases the Sulpicians gave over, *in perpetuity*, to the respective parishes, their rights upon such property, but on the condition that such property should be used for the purpose of educating the children of the tax payers. In case any of that property should be diverted to any other use, it was to revert to the original owners, the Sulpicians. In other words, the Sulpicians made a present to each parish which they abandoned of the property (land or buildings) on condition that the same should be used for the purpose of educating the children of said parish.

We trust that this is very plain. Now here comes the argument of the members of the Board who are opposed to granting even the necessary repairs to such schools. At first sight it may seem reasonable; but when carefully studied it becomes apparent that it is based upon most illogical premises. The argument amounts to this: The schools in question certainly are in need of repairs; it is true that from a sanitary standpoint they are anything but what should be desired; we admit that the children who frequent those schools are the sons of parents who pay their hard-earned money to secure proper education for the younger generation; but we do not own these schools, give them over to us as our property, and then we will be willing to expend the necessary amounts upon them. In a word, this Commission or Board is established by law for the purpose of "building and maintaining schools," and if the Board does not own the school it cannot be called upon to support it on an equal footing with the schools that it has built and that it does own.

Reduced to a few words, there is the argument; the most absurd and preposterous—especially in the light of existing facts—that could be imagined. To begin with, the quibble upon the word of the statute will not satisfy equity. The Board is *not* established for the simple purpose of building school-houses; its only *raison d'être* is the education of the children of the school tax payers. It is there to collect those moneys and to use them for the purpose of educating, or procuring a suitable education, for the children of the men who pay such taxes. And even if we come to the strict words of the law, the Board is obliged to maintain the said schools, whether it has built or has not built the houses in which such schools are held. We go another step and say that the absurdity of the contention is the more patent in the fact that the Board has not had the expense of building such schools, that it has the buildings and property free of any cost, and that all it is asked to do is to spend

upon such schools the money that comes from the people whose children are therein educated.

Suppose for a moment that the parishioners of St. Joseph's, St. Ann's, St. Mary's, or of any other of these parishes, should say, "we give up these buildings, we rent, or hand them back to the Seminary; now that we have no buildings to allow the Board to use free of all rent and cost, we demand a school according to the taxes we pay, and we insist upon our right." The Board would simply have to accept the situation, to spend several thousand dollars in building schools to replace those that it now enjoys free of cost, and over and above to spend the money upon the repairs and the maintenance of such school that is now demanded. In return for free use of property, for buildings which it had not erected, and for taxes paid in by the rate-payers, the Board wishes to boycott these schools in as far as an even and fairly proportionate distribution of funds is concerned.

This is not a mere cry of "wolf," it is a plain statement of the condition of things in so far as our schools are concerned. We are prepared to ask the pastor of any one of the parishes in question how much his section has received of the money paid in by the taxpayers of his district, and we are confident that each of them will make the same reply, "not one cent." And where, then, is that money spent? On the palaces that have been built up in different parts of the city by the Board, and which have more than they need for the proper accommodation of pupils and the work of education. We will return shortly to the question of the wonderful outlays made upon some of the leading schools which the Commissioners own. We have a long indictment to set before the grand jury of the public, and it is a document of many counts. Meanwhile we simply wish to point out the ungenerous and illogical reasoning of men who wish to hide behind the law—as they so wrongly interpret it—in order to deprive the very sections that afford them the most assistance of the return which their contributions demanded. Complaint after complaint was sent in from different schools regarding the absence of proper accommodations, of suitable desks, of the very necessities of educational work, and such complaints were met by the same reply, "give us over the schools and we will give you the required funds; at present the property is not ours."

No; but that property became so deteriorated, it became in need of repairs, it was worn out in doing *your work*, in educating the children whom you, according to equity, are obliged to educate. You spent nothing to build those schools, you got the property *gratis*, you have the work done for you, you are paid the taxes for the *maintenance* of such schools, and yet you decline to do for them that which you would be obliged to do had you never had them free of cost, and had you been obliged to pay for their erection. One more argument, and we have done for this week. Who owns these schools? The Sulpicians did own them, but they gave them to the parishioners, as long as the parishioners used them for purposes of education. The parishioners, then, as long as that condition is fulfilled, are the owners. These parishioners pay their money into the Board in order that it may be expended upon their property for the education of their children. If the Board is unwilling to so expend that money, then it has no right to receive it. If it will not make use of it for the *maintenance* of such schools, it is not justified in collecting such taxes. The people of these parishes pay their taxes in order to have schools

for their own children and not as donations to the construction of unnecessary marble walls for the use of others, whose contributions to the school fund are often inferior to theirs. We regard this question came up, and we rejoice that the committee was appointed. We trust that more light will be let in upon the situation—the more the better. Meanwhile we reserve our other comments for the opportune moment. Now, gentlemen, if you don't feel inclined to keep those schools in repair, please build schools for them in return for the taxes you receive.

ACCORDING to the Cork Examiner, Queenstown is threatened with a serious loss in a proposed plan to cease calling for the transatlantic mails at that port. In fact it would look as if the Cunard Company intended boycotting Ireland, and the Dublin Steam Packet Company, as well as the Post Office, has a finger in the pie. It would be a very serious injury inflicted not only on Queenstown, but on all Ireland, were the plan to be realized.

A CRYING EVIL SCORED BY REV. FATHER O'NEIL.

TOO MANY CATHOLIC PUBLICATIONS.

Rev. J. L. O'Neil, O.P., editor of The Rosary, has published a lecture which he delivered before the last session of the Catholic Summer School at Pottsville, on "Catholic Literature in Catholic Homes." With a view of giving his treatment of the subject weight with the clergy, he has dedicated the lecture to Archbishop Corrigan.

One of the opinions expressed by Father O'Neil is that there are too many Catholic publications. "The elimination of three-fourths of our modern pious books would entail no loss in the spiritual life," he says; and he thinks that from a literary, religious and financial standpoint, the Catholic community would be benefited if there were fewer Catholic organs. Of a number of so-called Catholic weeklies issued from time to time by job printers or literary speculators, he says: "Nothing in their life so becomes them as their leaving it."

He speaks of a time when the conditions will be more favorable for the development of strong Catholic periodicals and that time will be when literary sucklings, swaddlings and cradlings will have been put in their cradles for rest, and when journals, published by beardless youths for the sake of chance grocery or saloon advertisements and in the name of literary societies, are discouraged by the Catholic public. This portion of Father O'Neil's argument is well sustained.

It would seem to be the policy of well-established Catholic papers, while encouraging new periodicals that bear upon their face the evidence of strength and merit, to discourage the flock of small, petty and transient publications that from time to time are entering the field of Catholic journalism. We enumerate: The patent inside weeklies with a Catholic heading that from time to time are issued in small cities by enterprising job printers; the wispy-washy literary dilutions gotten out from time to time by Catholic societies and fraternal organizations; that species of garbage literature thrown into the pews of Catholic churches and paid for by permitting some job printer to levy contributions on the groceries and saloons in the congregation, and the numerous petty pious monthlies dedicated to some saint, or some devotion, or to some shrine. All these petty publications to a certain extent encumber the path of the live progressive Catholic periodicals, because there is not that discrimination to prefer the best periodical, and to ignore the claims of the local and alms-seeking publication. The well established Catholic periodicals of the country must, even at the risk of giving offense in certain quarters, educate their readers to prefer and to take the best literature that the market affords; and they must also educate their readers into a disposition of paying fifty cents or a dollar more for a strong, well conducted periodical, rather than to take the cheaper and poorer publication at a small discount.—*Catholic Citizen*.