



IS THERE DANGER?

May Catholics Attend Protestant Colleges?

The Question Discussed in England—Our Means of Instruction Deficient—Catholic Youth in Non-Catholic Colleges.

By Clericus in the Providence Visitor.

I have just finished reading an article in an English Catholic paper on the subject of "Catholics and the Public Schools." A public school in England would correspond to many of our colleges, especially preparatory colleges. The leading public schools are known wherever English literature is known. Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse, Winchester are classical names in the educational world.

Father John Norris, the author of this paper, is an oratorian and the head of the Oratory School in Birmingham, famous through Newman. He is also the president of the Catholic Head Masters Conference of Great Britain. He is evidently a keen observer and has a winning way of admitting the truth without, as they say, putting a tooth in it.

From this interesting paper I discover that things in England are much the same as they are in this country.

I notice there is a disposition on the part of some of us who see occasionally an English Catholic paper to suppose our brethren in England are much better off than we, more loyal to their faith, more generous, more intellectual. Of course there is a large number of converts in England, a disproportionately large number, and many of them are ready writers, and write a great deal, which gives the impression that what they write is worth reading and that it is read, two things which often sadly need proof. Style is a wonderful thing and lifted, as I have often heard said, the border warfare of such politically insignificant people as the Greeks into the masterly prominence that great writer of fiction Thucydides gave it in his so-called histories. So our English brethren shine because they handle a ready pen, whereas we make no show because we cannot write and do not read.

But to return. Father Norris presents an earnest plea to Catholic parents to keep their children from Protestant schools. He fully states the dangers to faith and to morals arising from the intercourse with Protestants in these schools, and claims that if Catholics were not so niggardly Catholic schools and colleges might be just as strong and flourishing as Protestant. His paper has greatly interested me, for the subject he treats in such a masterly way has long engaged my attention.

It was Dr. O'Malley who in a recent number of the Catholic World told us how many Catholics there were attending Protestant colleges and universities—

some fifteen hundred, I believe, and I don't think his inquiry was exhaustive. But every year the number grows of Catholic young men and women, who, in search of knowledge and for the prestige which attaches to the name of a secular university, go jauntily forth to enter upon a course of studies in circumstances dangerous to their faith and often full of peril to their morals.

I've often heard it denied that there was any danger to faith in these institutions for a Catholic young man or woman who had a mind of his or her own. Alas, for theories, I have many sad facts to prove the grave danger raw youths run in such environment. Nowadays there is very little danger of proselytism. Why, people don't care whether you're a Buddhist or a Mohammedan for that matter. The tendency of non-Catholic culture is, however, to displace religion from the eminence it rightfully occupies and to make it a mere sentiment or vague emotion. Illustrating this subtle danger from secular environment Father Norris quotes with excellent effect from one of Father Rickaby's Oxford conferences. Speaking of the danger that threatens a young Catholic at Oxford he says:

That danger "consists not in any thing you hear from lecturers and tutors, not in attacks made by your equals upon your religion, but in that urbanity and courtesy, and gaiety, and good humor, and truth, and friendship, and vigor of mind and body, in that host of natural virtues which you admire in the society around you, all independent, it appears, of the grace of Christ, and the faith and sacraments of His Church. Then the question arises in the heart: What is the need of faith and sacraments and the restraints of Catholic belief and practice, when such fair gifts are to be had without them? who wants more than what he can find here, where the Church is not?"

The natural goodness that you see flourishing without the Catholic faith, is a snare and a temptation. Some power behind it seems to cry: "All these things I will give thee, if thou wilt resign thy part in Christ and thine inheritance in the Son of Mary!"

That is just the point. I have never known a young man to become a Protestant through the effect of university training, although there must be many who have thus apostatized. But I have known very many to have grown cold, critical, indifferent, and practically to have abandoned their religion through this experience. Pinning their faith to the word of a master, they tell you the Church has indeed done some things to deserve praise; but their only positive knowledge of its history seems to be connected with some muddled notions of scandals and abuses. It is irritating

to observe the knowing way in which they allude to the "dark" passages in the past as if they knew what they were talking about. I'm sure they do not for their professors don't. A young man, who was attending a post-graduate course at Harvard, told me once of his experience with a professor who was more than ordinarily complacent and well informed. Speaking of the Jesuit system of studies and of maintaining discipline, this kindly-disposed lecturer blandly informed his hearers that through the confessional the Jesuit Fathers were able to locate and publicly discipline the violators of the rules and also to control effectively the studies of the house. He was quite surprised when told that the Father Confessor of a Jesuit college was not a professor and certainly not at liberty to use at Faculty meetings the knowledge received in the confessional.

Now this was in a post-graduate course, and the students were older than the average student, but still quite as much dependent on the words of a master and quite as little disposed to call in question what he said.

As to the danger to morals, Father Norris quotes Arnold's words: "I am afraid the fact is indeed indisputable—Public schools ARE the very seats and nurseries of vice." He then proceeds to show how they are so. "That is properly a nursery of vice, where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home and gets, in their stead, others which are utterly low and base and mischievous, and where he loses his modesty, his respect for truth and his affectionateness and becomes coarse and false and unteeling."

But anyone who has dealings with the average "college boy" does not need Dr. Arnold's words to tell him that the tone of morality is low in non-Catholic colleges. You don't have to be a Dr. Parkhurst to discover what the average Catholic or non-Catholic youth from eighteen to thirty years will do when free from restraint and indifferent to religion. Moreover Catholic boys in these colleges are apt to be more indifferent than others. They are too much Catholic to join any Protestant religious society. They are too little Catholic to live up to their faith. Raw and uninstructed, having had very little preliminary training, they let go religion altogether, and for the nonce are "fast boys." Mingle with them and you will discover the tone of morality which flourishes among many of them. Usually of Celtic ancestry, they have a love for games naturally and are drawn to the sporting element generally. Indeed, I have heard it said by those who ought to know that in Protestant Colleges or Universities, the Catholic boys have a decidedly

bad name, are thought little of for their scholarship and even less for their morality. This would not surprise me very much, for it stands to reason that, isolated as they are, they are peculiarly tempted and must be of fine stuff not to yield. That there have been some of this stamp who went through unscathed is a perennial invitation to weaker men to make the hazardous attempt.

What, then, will Catholic parents do? Take their chance and prefer the supposititious benefits of a "good course" and social standing to the immortal souls of their children? I'm sure I don't know. Immortal souls are not very highly valued by some of our Catholics, I'm sorry to say, but God certainly has a high value for souls, and it will be another thing when they have to answer for ruining their children through ambition, pride and worldliness.

HERR LIEBER.

Leader of the German Centre on a Visit to This Country.

Catholic Columbian.

For his own merits and work, and for the distinction that attaches to him as a leader of the Centrists, the German Catholic representatives in the Reichstag, Herr Lieber, who has come to this country, in fulfilment of a promise made to our German-American Catholic societies earlier in the year, is assured of a warm welcome here; and that welcome will be extended to him not alone by German-speaking Catholics, but by all their American co-religionists, who have a lively appreciation of the splendid achievements of the political party of which Herr Lieber is the recognized head. Herr Lieber comes to this country at the time when the man whom the Centre fought most stubbornly while he was in power was summoned to the other world, but the German Catholic leader had embarked on the other side of the Atlantic before Bismarck's death occurred. He comes at a time, too, when the Centre has just won a notable victory, by not only holding in the last general elections its former strength, but by increasing that strength and thus contradicting the predictions that it would not be as influential in the next Reichstag as in former ones.

The German parliamentary party, of which Herr Lieber is the leader, first came into prominence in the early seventies, when Bismarck and Dr. Falk were engaged in enforcing the Kulturkampf and the infamous May laws. It took the name of Centrum, or Centre, because it stood midway between the Prussian Junkers who regarded the imperial government as divinely ordained, and the Liberals, who voted with it on government measures, but gave it no support

when Catholic issues were the subject of debate. The first leader and one of the finest characters in the Centre was the lamented Herman Von Malinckrodt, whose early death deprived him of the satisfaction of seeing the Centre win the glorious victories it was destined to achieve. Luckily for the Centrists, they had to succeed him Ludwig von Windthorst, the "Pearl of Meppen," under whose leadership the Centre grew rapidly in strength and influence, and scored victory after victory over the government, until it compelled the resignation of Dr. Falk, caused the virtual abrogation of the Kulturkampf, and made it necessary for Bismarck to journey to Canossa.

The history of the patient, persevering and intelligent struggle which the Centrists, under Winthorst's leadership, waged with the iron chancellor and the mighty forces at his command, during the years from 1872 to 1880, and which they continued, in a milder form, up to Winthorst's death six years ago, is too well known to call for repetition here. At the time that Winthorst celebrated his eightieth birthday, in 1891, the Berliner Boersen-Courier printed an extended sketch of his parliamentary career; and in that sketch appeared this paragraph:

"Windthorst overthrew Bismarck on the open field of internal politics and the Kulturkampf. He saved the Centre from all extreme measures, and herein lies the great merit of the man. Bismarck alone took it ill that his plans were penetrated by Winthorst, whose speeches in those years ought to be preserved for posterity. With a rare clearness and patience, he laid bare the sore spots of the chancellor's policy. With delicate but biting humor he scourged the great empire-maker, and the worst of it was that the little pigmy from Meppen would not even grant that his giant enemy was a great man."

The Centre's cry against Bismarck was directed chiefly against the May laws, whose abolition was demanded as a prerequisite to peace between its members and the government. Outside agencies doubtless helped Winthorst and his devoted followers. The spread of socialism, the imperative needs of the ministry for their support in order that military bills and other measures might be legislated, and the sage policy of Leo XII., who, though repeatedly requested by Bismarck to bring his influence to bear upon the Centrists, uniformly declined to do so—all these things unquestionably helped the Centrists. But the real cause of their success and victories was their own unity, joined with the ability of their leaders. The whole story of Winthorst's defeat of Bismarck has not yet been, and