

PLAIN TRUTHS FOR CATHOLIC PARENTS.

Rev. Dr. Barry on the Mission of Church and School.

A Plea for the Children—The Practice of Withdrawing Them From the Class Room at Tender Ages Deplorable—Some Practical Lessons Regarding Education Generally.

Rev. Dr. Barry, speaking at Hope Hall, Liverpool, Eng., some time ago at the distribution of prizes to pupils of the Catholic Institute, made some practical observations on the question of education from many standpoints. He said:

It is delightful to look on at the giving out of prizes and good marks to children that have done well during the year. And our record is encouraging. Much excellent work, careful study, and in some cases a devotion to lessons which promises great things.

But, on the other hand, melancholy, too. For some of the best lads, who have done so well, will never be allowed to ripen and come to their full power. Just as their minds are opening out they themselves will be taken and flung headlong into the crush where everyone scrambles for a living. At the moment when they require discipline and would profit by their books, education for them comes to an end. They are left to struggle as if they were grown men, while they have the untrained, feeble and defenceless habits of children. We lose thousands of them every year. And when I say "We lose them," I mean that they are lost to the Church, to their parents, to society; that they are condemned to sink because they get no chance to rise; and that, if ever the chance does come to this or that one among them, he is commonly so illiterate that he cannot take advantage of it. Hence two things show which we see all around—the work of education is always beginning, only to stop before it has yielded fruit; it is a spring that has little harvest. And our lads, with their fine capacity for learning, for science, for what the modern world values and rewards, are thrown back into the mass of laborers, as if they were doomed to the lowest place by their own fault and beyond redemption.

2. It is not the fault of the children. It is their great misfortune. They do not want to leave school; and if they did want it, they ought not. Who is to blame? Let us consider this. Nowadays, all success depends on the start children get in life. Allowing for accidents, if we look round we shall see that in nine cases out of ten a man's position at thirty is fixed by the training he has had by the time he was twenty-one. These striking proofs may be given. The best educated people in Europe are the Germans and the Scotch. But who get on most successfully in business? Who hold responsible positions in every large city? Who furnish members of the Administration all over the British Empire? Certainly the Scotch. And who are beating Englishmen out of the markets they once controlled? Quite as certainly the Germans. Now the Scots themselves are proud of saying that they had good elementary and Latin schools a hundred years in advance of England. This is quite true, and it explains how they have come to be so successful. They have had foresight on behalf of their children. Has it not paid them well? As for the Germans, they educate the whole nation.

Why can't we do the same? We can, if we make up our minds to leave the children at school long enough for them to get a real and lasting education. But to leave them at school means, on our part, a conviction that it is our duty, and a resolution to pay the price. What price? Why this:

3. The schools are now called free. In other words, their chief or sole support comes out of the rates. Individual parents pay nothing towards them. Are parents, then, released from their obligation of seeing that their children get a fair start in life? By no manner of means. They are bound to see to it. And in taking them away from school at the age of twelve or thirteen is—I say it deliberately—depriving them of the chance to which they have a right. Now then comes the pinch. Here is the question of foresight or no foresight, of selfishness or legitimate ambition. Parents take their lads away from lessons and put them to work at this tender age for the sake of the few pence they will be earning. A very few pence, for how much can a lad without training get in the labor market at the age of twelve or thirteen? Reckon it up and you will see that for the sake of it, it may be, twenty pounds all told, you sell away your boy's chance of rising in the world, and by denying him an extra two years' training, you condemn him to be a common laborer, a mere Gibeonite all the days of his life. And that twenty pounds I have supposed comes in such tiny dribbles, so little at any one time, that I do not shrink from affirming that thousands of parents sell their children's future for a handful of sixpences.

4. It will not do to object and say, "Why should my children not do as I did? What was good enough for me is good enough for them." That would be cruel, unjust, and a shame to your sense of what fathers and mothers owe their children. We Catholics have not had justice done to us in time past. We have been persecuted, plundered, kept down, denied the means of rising, refused education, and in every way handled as enemies of the human race. But that is no longer.

It stands to reason that we have much headway to make up; and the only way to make it up is by training—literary, technical, social, religious—in which everyone is bound to do his utmost, both for himself and for all those who belong to him by race, by faith and by suffering. If we say that we don't care, that we will not take the opening given us, we shall be left behind more than ever; and who will be to blame but ourselves? We are offered a share, and a large one, in the prizes and privileges that modern society holds out, offered on the condition of accepting its terms. And these terms are not disgraceful. They ask nothing contrary to our religious creed; they are simply the terms of self-improvement and self-help. But in England, at least, there is no compulsion to accept them. We have a freedom to waste our earnings, to let slip our opportunities, to turn aside out of an honorable race into the tavern, the workshop, the prison, the asylum. We can let ourselves and our children sink to the bottom with all degraded and diseased things just for want of a little steady looking ahead, because we will not be ambitious with the noble desire of leaving the world better than we found it, or because we think self control irksome and cry out at the notion of self-sacrifice. Yet we are only asked to do these good and wholesome things that our children may enjoy the benefit of them.

5. And what, after all, does the sacrifice amount to? I step out of this building and walk along the streets of Liverpool. At every turn I see great and splendid houses, glittering with plate glass, shining, lit up as for a festival. I ask, "Who pays for all this fine show?" And I am told it is purchased by the money of the laboring class. I think they might do better with some portion of that money. The man that spends his five pounds a year in drink, or the family that does so, which, as I understand, is the average sum expended in this way, might very well keep it for the children, as their ransom and their little inheritance, or stock in trade, when they have to begin life.

See what the whole thing means! Ah, if people would but open their eyes and do this sum of simple addition or subtraction! With one hand the father of a family pulls his lad out of school and pushes him into the street, and with the other he gives that lad's poor earnings to the wealthy brewer, the colossal spirit merchant, and the millionaire who is made by all these blind but voluntary contributions. Look the facts in the face. Is it not so? Is not this the balance-sheet of the laboring class that spends in drink and sells its own flesh and blood into economic slavery? Those young lads are toiling before their time, forgetting what they learn, learning what they ought never to know, slipping down into heathen poverty and unbelief, only that they may sacrifice their hopes here and hereafter for the benefit of a small company of money-grabbers. And who are the slave owners that carry out this bargain? Who? They are the fathers and mothers themselves, hastening to seize upon the children's wages and drink them down without a thought for to-morrow.

6. Let us take the other view. Observe those parents who say to themselves, "Our children shall have a better start than we had," and see the consequences. Instead of locking on their boys and girls as so much merchandise, and trying to hasten the day when they will have to work while the old people squander, these true Catholic fathers and mothers put a curb on themselves and feel the pressure of a noble motive that will not suffer them to be wastrels and spendthrifts. They do all in their power to give the growing children an example of sobriety, good conduct, order, decency in act and word; they practise their religion; they keep away from perilous places, and in doing their duty by their boys and girls they rise to heights of generosity, purity, kindness, which otherwise they never could have reached. Are not these the means and conditions of happiness? And will not that happiness grow as the years move forward, bringing with them gracious gifts in the shape of loving, prosperous, obedient children, a credit and an honor to every one who is called by their name? Can so much be bought at the cost of these few sixpence, given up when a lad was just old enough to earn them, and even if earned, likely to be spent so foolishly? What is there to say on the other side? Laziness, selfishness, drink—what sort of arguments are these? Yet I defy the man who takes his children away from school as early as the law will let him to produce any others. He can do without their earnings if he would not waste his own.

I must not be supposed to believe, or to maintain, that every workman is paid as he ought to get. I know well how often that is not the case. But granting all this, still I think, and indeed am convinced, that most of the children attending our schools could be kept there another year and even longer, without additional suffering at home. And if that be so, then it is the parents who prove their worst enemies by withdrawing them, or their best friends by letting them finish their studies. Undoubtedly, as the law stands at present, this matter lies in your own hands. But I reflect on what the country has to pay for its ill-trained subjects, if we count up the loss of good citizens and the cost of manufacturing bad ones, it is possible that the law will not always remain helpless in the presence of so tremendous an evil. This child labor, now enforced by thrifless or mindless parents, may have one day to be stamped out, as slavery has been put down, and as many of the former abominations of the factory system were clean swept away, because the cry of them rose up to Heaven, and their stench was in all good men's nostrils. To send out little children from school before they are able to protect themselves in body and mind against grown-up evil is to

squander our capital, to sell the future for a mess of pottage, and to invite the bankruptcy of Catholicism as a social power.

Are not these mighty inducements to obey our better feelings in a subject which lies near the heart of every one of us? If I could speak to fathers and mothers one by one I would say to them: "Did the Almighty mean you to take care of your children only till they could make a few miserable shillings, and not until they were truly able to take care of themselves? Did He give them to you as wage earning slaves, and not as the crown and glory of your old age? Is it lawful, decent or Christian to turn them into the street, the mill, the workshop, unfedged and callow, knowing what is likely to befall them there? Has the Church no claim on them to see that they are made good Catholics, well instructed, carefully disciplined, at a time of life the most dangerous and uncertain? Has the country no right to see them growing up into worthy citizens, capable of rendering to their day and generation a service of honor? Will you let them be ruined, without advantage to anyone but the tavern keeper and with immense discredit to your religion and yourselves?" And in putting these questions I should be suggesting all along that the Church and the school combined deserve our utmost support, because they enjoy and do away with the public-house, the prison, the asylum, the union.

Let the Church and the school prepare your children as they ought to be prepared for the workshop, and, believe me—or rather, believe experience—you will have put the Christian, the Catholic, home upon a secure foundation. Suffer your children to be fairly educated and they will be the comfort and the stay of your own helpless years. Your children are the future; let them not be sacrificed to a miserable past, or a selfish and short-sighted present. It is not enough to have given them life, unless you add those graces and good qualities which make life a blessing. But these are summed up in the words: "A good Catholic education, continued until the child is fit to face the world and make the best of it in God's name." Surely you will not refuse to join with your clergy and your country, with your priests and teachers, in so fair and beneficent a task. We plead for the child because they cannot plead for themselves. Will you be the less persuaded on that account? The law itself makes you responsible for them until they are sixteen. But if you would keep them under the discipline of school until near that age, in the generation now growing up we should have such admirable Catholic scholars and citizens, as would take away our reproach and begin a new era for the Church in this country.

BRIEF NOTES OF NEWS.

Mr. W. W. Ogilvie, the well known miller of this city, is about to construct a two-million bushel grain elevator on his property on Mill street.

The death of Dr. William Kingsford, the Protestant historian, took place on Thursday of last week, after a comparatively brief illness, at his home in Ottawa.

The handsome sum of \$25,000 has been collected in Spain for the erection of a chapel in the New Westminster Cathedral, to be known as the Spanish chapel.

The Ottawa Board of Works has decided to recommend that the nine hour day and fifteen cents an hour schedule be adopted on all civic and contract work with the city.

A notice has been received from Ottawa at the Custom House, requesting all collectors of customs to refuse to receive postage stamps in payment of duties, as in future these stamps are not to be redeemed at the office.

A despatch from St. Paul, Minn., says:

Forest fires are doing great damage in this section. Sixteen farm houses were reported to have been burned. The wind was blowing a gale, and served to fan the flames. At Cedar Lake the fire destroyed considerable property owned by the Knapp Stout Lumber Company. A large portion of Cedar Lake, a town of 600 inhabitants, is reported destroyed.

Almen, a town of 800, and Poskin, a town of 200, both on the Soo Line, this county, are said to have been wiped out, but no loss of life has been reported. A slight rain began to fall in the evening, and it is believed the fires will be checked.

Mr. Matthew A. Hall, British Consul at Omaha, visited Ottawa last week and delivered to the Ministers an invitation to attend the peace jubilee celebration, to be held at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition from October 10 to 15. The affair will be a commemoration of the triumph of the United States arms in the war with Spain and a welcome of the return of peace to the nation. Another object Mr. Hall has in visiting Canada is to make arrangements in connection with Canadian Day, October 18, at the Fair. Every State has had its day, and the directorate have felt that Canada, whose magnificent exhibit has attracted so much attention and admiration, should have a day especially set apart in her honor. The scheme is being carried out as a compliment to the many Canadians who are living in the northwestern and middle States.

A correspondent of the Toronto Globe, signing himself P. A. O'Farrell, writing from Vancouver, says that it has been transformed by the Klondike boom. Two years ago empty houses, vacant stores and idle buildings stared you everywhere. The terminal city was a

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If you prefer to consult our physicians personally you can call at our Dispensary, No. 274 St. Denis street, every day, Sunday excepted, between 10:30 A.M. and 5 P.M. Consultations absolutely free.

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neat of pessimists, and those that could not get away without waiting on Providence. And the writers on Providence were rewarded, for with the stamped: to the golden north. Vancouver's prosperity returned with a rush. It is now striding forward like a young giant, roused from slumber. The household hammer and the stonecutter's chisel are heard on every side, and the good old times of the boom have come to stay. This is no surprise to the se who knew Vancouver and its material situation well, for they need no inspiration of the Gods to foretell that Vancouver is unmistakably stamped and marked with all the characteristics of a great and glorious city.

As a general thing our people have no idea what an excellent customer American products possess in Ireland. For instance, I observe by the shipping notes of a Baltimore journal, that "three steamers have left that port for Irish ports within a week, whose combined cargoes aggregate 14,805 tons of dead weight merchandise. The steamers carrying these goods to the Emerald Isle are the Lord Dufferin, Lord Antrim and the Lord Charlemont, all belonging to the fleet of Sir Daniel Dixon, of Belfast. They deliver their cargoes at Belfast and Dublin. On the Lord Charlemont are American tiles for the roof of the power house being erected in Dublin for the electric railway building of that city, and in addition for the same structure are three hundred tons of steel frame work. The electric outfit was sent out from the States by the Lord line."

There is a rush in lumber at the Chaudiere at present. The cause of it is the heavy fall shipment to Quebec for export to the British market. The docks around the Chaudiere are lined with barges, all being loaded with high grade lumber.

An exchange says:—There is one Christian minister for every 900 of the population in Great Britain; one in every 114,000 in Japan, one in 195,000 in India, one in 222,000 in Africa, and one in 437,000 in the Chinese empire.

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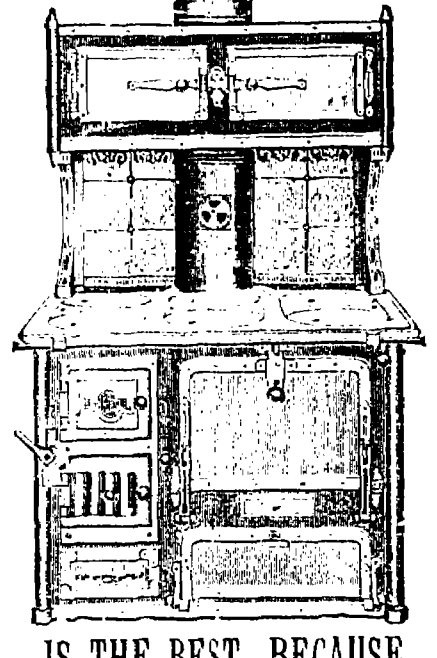
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