

CURRENT COMMENT

It was Coleridge who uttered the well known aphorism: "Experience is the best schoolmaster, but the school fees are heavy."

It will be seen that Maurice Francis Egan's views as to the efficiency of Oxford teaching differ slightly from those entertained by the editor of the *Cosmopolitan*, "From the Union at Oxford," he writes, "have come the men who have moulded, not only the policy of England, but the policy of the world; and Cambridge has furnished its quota."

When the Canadian statesmen met at Quebec, they had to recognize several facts: (1) the existence of provinces with diverse interests; (2) the presence of a great French nationality, whose institutions had been protected by the Quebec and other Imperial statutes; (3) the apparent weaknesses of the federal system of their neighbors; (4) the necessity of maintaining the unwritten conventions and understandings of the British constitution—the flexible system of responsible or parliamentary government of England—in connection with a rigid written constitution guarding the rights of the provinces in a federal compact.

M. Thiers, at one time a prime minister of France, once uttered the following almost prophetic words:

"We must make education more religious than it has been up to the present moment. We must put it upon its former basis; for if we do not, I tremble for the future of France."

Alas for the country whose proud boast it was to be called the eldest daughter of the Church. This advice her statesmen refused to heed,—with what result? A second reign of terror has come upon the land—a reign under which infidelity, atheism, and anarchy gloat in triumph over the glorified cross. And the pity of it all is that there are so-called Christian sects, and so-called Christian ministers who rejoice, and not always secretly, in this insult to religion and to God. If this be their idea of Christian good will and Christian tolerance then indeed are the terms sadly perverted.

The strenuous efforts of many American preachers to fill their churches by means of novel attractions would be laughable were they not so shockingly incongruous and impious. Recently a clergyman of the Baptist persuasion introduced the phonograph into the pulpit. He says his object is to keep abreast with the times, and as his congregation think the usual way of conducting services is not according to modern, progressive, American ideals, he is determined to use the most up-to-date methods in order that his good people may with ease and relish partake of his spiritual pabulum. The world will watch with interest the outcome of the expedient. If brother Wriggle finds that even the phonograph as a magnetic force is incapable of filling his pews he humbly suggest that he secure the services of a bioscope where moving pictures can be shown. We imagine that a representation of the "Highland Fling," on the canvas to the accompaniment of "Tullochgorum" on the phonograph would be a star attraction worthy of the prayerful consideration of brother Wriggle. But we forget—our good brother is a Baptist, and dancing is barred. But the question here arises—what would John the Baptist have thought of the phonograph as an aid to piety?

D'Arcy McGee once paid this eulogy to the British Constitution: "One which rose like the coral islands by slow degrees, amidst storms of human intellect and passion—time but extends its borders, develops its beauties, and increases its strength."

The system of government of the United States is the English system of last century, adapted to the new circumstances of a federal republic. That of Canada is the English system of today, adjusted to the conditions of a federal state. Undoubtedly the constitutional principle of the Canadian and English system, which makes the ministry subject to an appeal to the people at any moment is the more democratic.

The oft repeated fallacy that the material prosperity or adversity of a nation can be interpreted as a visible sign of God's pleasure, or displeasure, to the thinking mind, hardly needs refutation. No where does Christ point to material progress as indicative of divine favor; on the contrary it may be said that so far as Our Lord's words bear on the subject a diametrically opposite conclusion must be drawn. The Ave Maria hit the nail on the head when it said—"the only promise of temporal prosperity recorded in the Bible was made, not by Christ, but by Satan on the pinnacle of the Temple. Pointing to the kingdoms of the earth, he said: 'All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.'"

The Constitution of Canada is an illustration of natural evolution. The men of the French Revolution of last century failed mainly because they did not take into account and build upon existing institutions. As it was they manufactured a constitution on the basis of mere theory, and, even amid conditions of peace and order, it must have failed. The strength of the constitution of the United States, like that of Canada, lies largely in the fact that the great men of the convention of 1787 built upon the foundations of the existing institutions of the thirteen colonies, and consequently on the basis of the common law and parliamentary system of England.

The Sacred Heart Review, in further supplementing the causes given by the Boston Transcript as bringing about the altered attitude of Protestantism towards Catholicism says:

"This change is also due in great part to the more accurate knowledge of Catholicism which Protestants have acquired of late years of the doctrine and history of the Church. For the dissemination of this more accurate and enlarged information, the Sacred Heart Review may well claim a little credit. The work alone of the Rev. Mr. Starbuck in our pages, week after week, for the past few years, has dispelled many a dense cloud of ignorance, concerning the Church, its place in history, and its teaching."

The Review is right. There are many indications of a growing disposition on the part of non-Catholic scholars and thinkers to be perfectly fair in treating of the doctrines and practices of the Church. And this result has been largely brought about through the dissemination of good Catholic literature of the kind the Review furnishes its readers week in and week out. Educated, broad minded non-Catholics are beginning to realize that Catholics and Catholicism are not so monstrous as both loom up distorted by distance and the up magnifying mists of prejudice. Unquestionably the letters of Dr. Starbuck have done, and are doing much in the direction indicated. Indeed it is hard to speak of him as a Protestant theologian.

On another page will be found an excellent new translation of the world-famous "Stabat Mater," by Judge Donahoe of the Connecticut Bar.

The rate of taxation in Catholic Belgium is a little over seven dollars per capita, as compared with eighteen dollars in Protestant England. With the possible exception of the Swiss the Belgians pay less taxes than all other peoples.

Andrew Carnegie in his letter to Mr. Winckler, quoted elsewhere, thinks that some day Canada will annex the United States. Why Andy, chiel, the folk awa oot west canna transfer their land quick enough tae please Sammy's bairnies. We're annexin' them mon by the thousand. An' they'll mak' gude Canucks too, wull these canny Yankees.

We hear a deal nowadays of the dangers of clerical domination. Now Belgium is, as we have elsewhere pointed out, the most Catholic of Catholic countries. Here, if anywhere, surely, we have, in a large measure, the rule of the clerics. Has such rule been antagonistic to civil liberty? The Daily Telegraph, London, says no—it says: "Civil liberty in Belgium exists in almost republican profusion. . . . Commerce flourishes, and manufacturing industries advance at a pace so rapid that even we in Britain are every now and then pressed by the shadow of Belgian rivalry."

A writer in the Western Watchman says that since the Catholic party obtained power in Belgium many reforms in favor of the workmen have been instituted. We here enumerate a few: Pensioning of aged workers; reduction in railroad fares to workmen; exemption of workmen's homes from taxation; reduction in legal expenses of property transfers in which workmen are interested; loaning of money by the State at a low rate of interest to workmen anxious to purchase homes. The government has over \$10,000,000 outstanding on these homes—an immense sum considering the size of the country.

Father Cunningham put it very neatly, in answering a question Wednesday evening re the proposed organic union of some non-Catholic sects, when he pointed out that this striving after organic union pre-supposes existing disunion. What follows? Simply this that if unity be a mark of the true Church then these churches cannot consider themselves as belonging to that true Church established by Jesus Christ. Even if this organic union is attained can it last? The eloquent Passionist failed to see how organic union and doctrinal diversity could exist at one and the same time. Sooner or later they would come in conflict.

Over thirty years have passed since the British North America Act united the old provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick under a federal system of government. During this memorable period, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and the great Territories which stretch west of that province to the Rocky Mountains and north to the Arctic regions, have been included in Canada. The people who possess this imperial domain have every reason to be satisfied with the plan of union which has now been on trial for more than a quarter of a century. They owe a debt of gratitude to the statesmen of the Quebec conference, whose comprehension of the needs of their several provinces, adjustment of diverse interests, and practical insight into the operation of the federal system of our Republican neighbors which necessarily at-

tracted their earnest study above all other federal constitutions, have been fully justified by the results of their work. Perfection in any written instrument of government is impossible, and there are probably defects inherent in the British North America Act of 1867 to be removed by future legislation. On the whole, however, the instrument is excellent.

At the mission given to non-Catholics at St. Mary's Church many astounding and amusing questions were asked. One could not but be impressed with the fact that many of our non-Catholic friends are lamentably ignorant of even the first principles of Catholic doctrine, and that this, in a large measure, accounts for the widespread misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine and practices. Another fact that stood prominently forth is the belief entertained by many non-Catholics that Catholic countries are unprogressive and uneducated. Now this is surely vincible ignorance on the part of those who think so. Take the case if you will, of Catholic Belgium, the most Catholic of Catholic countries. This is what a Mr. Rae, a Protestant, in the *Contemporary Review* says of Belgium: "It has adopted from the first the most modern of modern constitutions, embodying every popular liberty in its complete length and breadth. Freedom of conscience, religious equality, freedom of the press, of meeting, of association, of education, parliamentary government, ministerial responsibility, universal suffrage, inviolability of person and of house, equality before the law, trial by jury, permanence of judicial appointments have all been not only legalized but protected in Belgium, without any of the evasions which make similar legislation, in some countries, virtually a dead letter."

How is that for a "priest-ridden" country?

Signs are not wanting that the French people are being roused at last against the impious and sacrilegious men who now control the machinery of government in that country. More than 4,000 people were present in the Cathedral of Holy Cross, Orleans, when Mgr. Touchet the Bishop of Orleans, made his strong protest against the action of the French Government in removing the crucifix from the courts of justice.

"I know of only two countries where such a cowardly decree has ever been enacted," said the Bishop. "The first is China, and the second—let us speak low—is France. China! France! The France of Clovis, of St. Remy, of St. Louis; France, land of liberty, of justice, of fraternity; land not of conquest, but of emancipation; France, do you hear, I said France, and China!"

"The Cross of Jesus Christ," he continued, "is always victorious. Where is Diocletian, where is Julian the Apostate, where is Couthon and St. Just? The cross is everywhere living and triumphant. Seeing this we must be hopeful. In the joy of our hearts let us say: 'Glory, adoration to Jesus Christ and His Cross.' May this cry proceeding from the city of Orleans, awaken the whole of France!"

At the conclusion of the eloquent Bishop's noble effort many of those present carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, were for applauding even in church, but a gesture of dissent from the Bishop quickly arrested the movement. After Mass, however, the good people would not be denied, and once in the open air they repeatedly cried "Vive Monseigneur!" A few of these cries emanating from the sturdy peasantry of France, may, cause Combes and his cohorts some little uneasiness.

Persons and Facts

An associated press dispatch of recent date says that the chamber of Deputies by a large majority sanctioned the recall of M. Nizard, France's representative at Rome. A motion coming from the extreme left that all relations with the Holy See be broken off was voted down.

The first centenarian to cross the Atlantic from America is Mr. John O'Reilly, who a few weeks ago left New York for his old home in Carlow, Ireland. Mr. O'Reilly was accompanied by his wife who is ninety years old. This courageous centenarian is reported remarkably active, being able to dispense with the stick considered necessary even by much younger men.

On the 16th of June there will be a pilgrimage to Ste. Anne de Beaupre. The return ticket is \$40, good for thirty days on all trains. Special cars will be reserved for pilgrims, and if numerous enough, a special train will be chartered. The ticket is a "first class" one. Those who wish a pullman or a tourist car must pay extra. The train will go straight to Ste. Anne de Beaupre. No doubt many of the Catholics of Winnipeg and St. Boniface will avail themselves of this opportunity to visit this interesting shrine.

The secular press of the country having announced that Cardinal Satolli's proposed visit to the United States is for the purpose of settling disputes which have arisen in ecclesiastical circles on account of the alleged American spirit of liberty the Apostolic Legation at Washington, a few days ago, gave out the following statement:

"There is no friction whatever between the Apostolic Delegate and the American hierarchy. The American bishops are united and in perfect accord with the views of the Holy Father, and Rome is not apprehensive that they will ever be otherwise."

The following brief sketch of the life of late African explorer Sir H. M. Stanley, is taken from the *London Universe*:

"Starting life as a pauper, young Stanley, who was then surnamed from his father, a cottager, John Rowland, went early from a Welsh workhouse to the States, where he took a situation from a Mr. Stanley, who adopted him, and from him he took the surname he bore in later years. Sir Henry was married in Westminster Abbey in 1890 to Miss Dorothy Tennant, who became a devoted wife to him. As a member of parliament for North Lambeth he was not a success, suffering from that frequent impediment among men of action, nervousness in speaking. Since 1900, when he retired from parliamentary interest owing to ill-health, Sir H. Stanley has been invalidated through the severe test to which his stamina was put in his many African journeys.

A capital idea to spread the Irish literary light at the St. Louis Exhibition has been initiated by some contemporary Irish writers. This will take the form of a new volume of original essays, poems, and stories by contemporary Irish writers, to be entitled "Irish Voices." Mr. D. J. O'Donoghue has undertaken the editorship, and among the contributors are Dr. George Sigerson, Dr. Douglas Hyde, Mr. W. B. Yeats, Miss Jane Barlow, "A.E.," Mrs. Hinkson (Katherine Tynan), Mrs. Clement Shorter, Mr. T. P. Gill, Mr. Stephen Gwynn and others. The books will be published in Ireland and copyrighted in America, and the pro-