

## THE VALUE OF THE PRESS.

## A POWER FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL.

A Protestant Journalist's Views on the Catholic Press—Bluster and Brag of the Methodist Press—Interesting Statistics About Journalism.

[WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS.]

A few years ago, there appeared, from the London Catholic Press, a little pamphlet dealing with Catholic interests in England. It was readable, and had a wide circulation. Its author, in the first page, informs us that Catholics are, as a set, too depreciatory of themselves:—that they occupy a better position than they are willing to acknowledge. This may be true of England. One would not like to hazard a similar opinion of the States. Our critics are never weary of telling us how prone we are to exaggerate, how rash in our estimate. They laugh at the adjective conservative when it qualifies the town estimate. Statisticians toss their head when we number our strength, and find it exceeds their sleight-of-hand computation by a good round million. We may confess that we are different from our English-brothers, without meriting all the censures of our critics. Criticism need to be an earnest desire to find the best; now it may be defined an earnest desire to find the worst. When it touches the Papacy, it is neither illuminative nor constructive. Criticism and bigotry are not neighbourly. Criticism, I mean true criticism, lives in the arctic regions, where the intellect holds court; bigotry in the torrid zone, where passion is king. Most of our teachers acknowledge his away, and it takes a little laudation on our part, to keep our heads above the torrents of their dispraise. It will hardly be questioned, by those who weigh our times, in a just balance, that, for woe or woe, the Press is the greatest instrument. The age has been scientific; it has discovered much and speculated more. Its discoveries have been pressed into the service of the Press. The newspaper of to-day is the true representative of the age. Its pages mirror our current life, good, and bad, so strangely mixed. To ignore it were madness; not to use it were treachery to our cause. Fossils may pride themselves on holding aloof from its influence. They might as well pride themselves on

LIVING WITHOUT AIR.

The superstructure of this pride would be fiction; the base, ignorance. Live men—and they are the only kind that survive in a world like ours—know the value of the Press, and use it. If it has been made a power in the devil's camp, it can surely be made a power in the bringing men nearer to God. Brought under the sweet influence of Religion, what a power for good! The voice of the most powerful champion in God's warfare against sin can reach but a limited few. Let it be borne on the wings of the Press, and the millions are thrilled. The sermon of a Monsabre, or Agostino might die amid cathedral aisles; fostered by the Press, they live for the delight of ages yet to come. Men like Bishop Spaulding—leaders, not in the stormy and treacherous arena of politics, but in a greater one, the Coliseum of culture,—have long taught the power of the Press, and made noble use of it in the fight against the transient mud-gods of the age.

If, then, we Catholics have learned the power of this great instrument, or are learning it, it may be taken as the test of our worth as a growing and progressive factor of the forces for good. Our laudation will pass and the depreciation of our enemies will prove but a stimulus, what the spur is to a spirited horse. Let us see: The other night a well-known journalist, driven by the mountain winds to take refuge in my cottage, after a hot supper and a Havana, unbosomed himself in this wise: "I have been now and then writing articles against your church for a period of thirty years. The articles were not serious. Just smart shafts tabooing your statistics and bantering your pretended progress. It was the line of my paper,—a business matter, a bread-and-butter scheme. My arrows were too slight to pierce the pachydermatous skin of your religion. After so many centuries it is pretty well-seasoned against abuse. While I was grinding out this harmless fiction in regard to

THE MOTHER CHURCH, I learned the fact that your particular church was about the only church that

was making progress. The other churches were engaged in that fascinating game of running things to smash. Where did I get that idea? From your Press. It was my duty to call from it what my sister was pleased to term 'absurdities.' That is a big word. It may mean, at least the extracts, that were covered by the word "points of wisdom to Cardinal Gibbons." I am not so absurd as to call that cultivated man absurd; but then it all depends on your point of view. Your Press is really wonderful. A few years ago it was without head or tail, not worth the time spent on its perusal. To-day it is not to be ignored; it counts, it is a power. The Press of the sects that used to make merry over your few half-linked sheets stand in arms, combat a consolidated Press that is far superior to their own. With the exception of the Independent, edited ably by Ward, and the Christian Union, by Mabie, our Protestant Journals are a farce. They are filled with bluster and brag, weak swords to conquer with. Take that religious monopoly, the Methodist Advocate, they are all written for the ill-educated that peruse them. Despite the annual conference booming by the capitalists that are interested, I can assure you the Methodist Press exerts little influence. It is different with Catholic papers, they have a growing influence; a growing power. You are just learning how to use the Press, that once thoroughly learned, therein shall rest your strength." I was a little interested, and set about to see, if there was any foundation in fact, for optimistic views of this well-trained journalist. A few years ago, I had noted, that the German Catholics as a test of their strength and importance, and that in a crucial time, had adduced their Press as the most pointed point they could make. It was accepted by their enemies as a fair criterion of their standing; with this criterion in view let us glance at

## THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC PRESS.

To every impartial mind I am convinced that it will be a revelation. In order to see fully the development of this Press, let us have a starting point. "A list of Catholic Periodicals published in the United States for the year 1859 lies on my desk. The list runs:—

The New York Freeman Journal published every Saturday in the city of N. Y., J. A. McMaster, editor.

N. Y. Tablet published every Saturday, D. and J. Sadlier, publishers.

The United States Catholic Miscellany published every Saturday in Cincinnati; edited by V. Rev. Edward Purcell, Rev. S. Rosecrans, D.D.

Catholic Herald Visitor published every Thursday in Philadelphia; edited by Joseph R. Chandler.

Le Propagateur Catholique (French paper) published every Saturday in New Orleans, La., by H. Meridier.

The Pittsburgh Catholic published every Saturday by Jacob Porter, Pittsburgh, Pa.

The Catholic Mirror published every Saturday by P. J. Hedian, Baltimore.

The Pilot published every Saturday at Boston and New York. Pat. Donahoe publisher and proprietor. Der Herald des Glaubens, published every Saturday at St. Louis Mo.

## Weekly.

Der Wahrheit's Freund, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Der Religion Freund, weekly, Baltimore, Md.

Katholische Kirchen Zeitung, weekly, N. Y.

Buffalo Sentinel weekly, Buffalo, N. Y.; edited by Michael Hagan.

Catholic Standard, Weekly, New Orleans, La.; edited by Jas. A. Kennedy.

Western Star, Weekly, Dubuque, Iowa.

The Guardian, Louisville, Ky.; pub. by Webb.

The Monitor, Weekly, San Francisco, Cal.

## Monthly.

The Metropolitan, Baltimore; edited by M. Kearney.

The Catholic Youths Magazine, Baltimore.

The Catholic Institute Magazine, Newburgh, N. Y.

Theodora, German, Springfield, Illinois.

## Quarterly.

Brownson's, devoted to religion, philosophy and general literature, published in N. Y.; edited by Orestes Brownson.

In 1859 the total of our publications amounted to 24, in 1893 it amounted to 200, and that exclusive of College Journals, many of them better worth reading than the weeklies

of '59. In that year there were published 17 in English, six in German, one in French. To-day there are 136 English, 37 German, 14 French, 5 Polish, 2 Italian, 2 English and German, 1 Hol-landish, 1 Spanish, 1 Bohemian, 1 Slavonian. In '59 there were 13 English weeklies published; in '93 the number had increased to 84. In New York city last year were published more papers than the whole country published in 1859. This may be seen from the actual figures. 1859, total Catholic papers published in the United States, 24; 1893, Catholic papers published in N. Y. city, 30. In 1859 there were 3 monthlies; to-day the number has doubled. Brownson's Quarterly, it is true, was a great power in the days of '59. Every page bore the impress of that great man and profound thinker. While we miss Brownson, it is but truth to state that the Catholic Quarterly of Philadelphia has ably man- n- d the breach made by his death. The articles in that periodical, in point of scholarship and erudition, may well claim comparison with the heavy artillery of England, as the Nineteenth Century, Fortnightly, etc. In comparing the press of '59 with that of '93, its increase and its wider circulation, is not, what astonishes most. It is the superiority of the journal of to-day compared with that of thirty years ago. With the single exception of MacMaster, an able journalist after a fashion, well fitted for those stirring times to plead the cause of a hopeless minority, the Catholic Press did not have a journalist of any prominence. It was not to be wondered at, as journals in those days led the same precarious existence as the boiler-plate sheets of our time. It is fairly a question whether in the true sense of the word, these journals might be called Catholic or not. Their columns contained little of the practice or doctrine of their Church. More than three-fourths of their pages were occupied, in discussing lunary schemes to free green Erin from the Sassenach. The editorials were rant, prancing in the same direction. The influence, if any, was limited to the particular faction of the schemers, whose scheme the editor supported. The difference may best be seen by comparing the Pilot or Tablet of the sixties, with that of to-day. The readers of those papers, to-day, will demand news up to date, not only in things Catholic, but an intelligent calling of the world's news. They will demand editorials that will put before them in an able and comprehensive form, the live issues of their time. If they dabble in Irish matters, it will be to reproduce the cream of Irish-thought, not the bitter word-madness of professional agitators.

Let it be borne in mind, and that despite the recent magazine clap-trap to the contrary, that to produce a live paper you must have a live editor. To paraphrase the poet.

The editor makes the paper  
The want of him the sheet.

In the sixties with the single exception of MacMaster, there were no editors. It is different now-a-days. The Catholic Press numbers among her editors the best minds of her communion; no wonder then her best thought. Among the clergy, a new force, and, if judged by ability, the strongest, one must begin with Lambert, whose irresistible logic, couched in trenchant style, makes wroth to silence the agnostic fry; Cronin whose style is nimble and effective; Whelan, pricker of shams; Conway; Malone, full of the eagerness of the West. Among the laity what a brilliant list.—Roche, Pallen, Tello, Wolff, Valette, Flanagan, Hyde; Editor of Facts; Connecticut Catholic, etc. One might fill a page with names, whose work is the good seed, weekly nourishing the thousand Catholic homes.

The monthlies of those days were of the most slender build. One must pity our fathers, whose literary pabulum, was supplied by the monthlies. They were not hard to please. The bill of fare consisted of goody, goody stories, where villains painted pie-bald wisdom and died dramatically penitent, saccharine dishes from the French, and poems fresh from the tortured brain of rural bards. The editing was slipshod and the pace, one that child's. Compare them with the new competitor for fame. Donahoe's, that genuine triumph, and

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honor to us Catholics and, but we will not be harsh. There is no comparison possible. In conclusion I believe I have but established the truth of the journalist's assertion, and by the way, that we can afford to be landatory at the risk of offending the so-called critics and statisticians.

At the same time let us hold before us a high ideal of journalism and aim to do better and better. The nearer we approach the ideal, the better the real journal. The writer is not blind to the many defects of the Catholic Press, defects that will be overcome; chief among them is the reckless use that some jour-nal-ists make of stereotype matter. A Catholic editor showed the writer, a scrap-book, made up of extracts taken, from Catholic Weeklies. These extracts if published in book-form would find a place on the index. The writer read a vile attack on Jansens the Catholic historian in the padded pages of a Catholic Weekly. Such papers are dangerous, it is surely the wolf in sheep's-clothing. A Catholic editor must be vigilant. Even if his paper is poor he must aim high, never distrust his, must be a great heart, and as Spaulding has it. "Distrust is the last wisdom a great heart learns."

WALTER LECKY.

## THE COUNT TIPPERARY.

"Gallant Tipperary" does not hold its own against the forces working for the population of Ireland. No country has suffered more than the premier country. The population of 435,533 which it had in 1841 was reduced before 1881 to 190,612; the 66,381 homes which nestled in Tipperary in the following year to 35,302. Now a further reduction has to be recorded. The country lost by emigration, during the past decade, 32,762, or over 6,300 more than in the previous decade, and the reduction in the population is 26,424, or 13.2 per cent. This is one of the highest rates for Ireland. One portion of the country—that of part of Callan Union which falls within it, lost nearly one-fifth of its inhabitants—19.6 per cent. The heaviest decrease in the baronies was in the Baronies of Silevardagh and Middlethird, the lowest in Upper Ormond and Ikerrin.

One of the most remarkable features of the decline is that the towns have suffered nearly as much as the rural districts. The percentage of decrease in the former was 12.2, and in the latter 13.5. Cashel and Carrick-on-Suir show the greatest falling away. The Catholic population shows, on the whole, a greater decrease than the Protestant. The proportion of Catholics has slightly fallen from 94.2 to 94.0 per cent. The war against illiteracy goes steadily and successfully on. The percentage of illiterates in the population over 5 years of age has decreased from 21.7 to 15.1; while the percentage of persons between the ages of 5 and 20 who were at school on census days increasing from 46.9 to 48.1. The schoolgoers, who were only 8.72 per cent of the population in 1891, 16.29; the Catholics percentage for the two years were 8.51 and 16.51.

The Irish language is dying there. The decrease in bilingual Tipperary was nearly 50 per cent. for the decade. In 1881 there were in Tipperary 248 persons who could speak Irish only, and 23,558 who speak Irish and English. The numbers fell to 68 and 12,244 for 1891. Even these figures do not represent the decay. "The child is father of the man," and while of the parents of the Tipperary of the future 1,488 knew Irish in 1881 only 517 knew the language in 1891. Ifa and Offa, Clanwilliam and Middlethird, are the homes of the Irish-speakers. Only in Ifa and Offa West are children taught to speak it. As elsewhere, so in Tipperary—pauperism does not decrease with the export of the country's strength. The pouper rate has receded only from 1 to 26 to in 28 of the population; while the marriage rate was low, even for Ireland—3.7 per 1,006. Moreover, the deathrate was nearly up to the average, although over 77 per cent. of the population is rural. The Sangrado policy is not a prospering one.—*Irish American*.

## A PLAIN STATEMENT.

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