

ILLITERACY OF CATHOLIC COUNTRIES.

The following paper was read by Wm. C. De Brisay, Esq., at an entertainment given under the auspices of the Catholic Truth Society in the University Hall on the 7th of February ult. Mr. De Brisay makes no claim to originality, as he has drawn his material very extensively, and transferred large passages from a most valuable book recently published by the Catholic Book Exchange, New York, entitled "Catholic and Protestant Countries Compared," by Rev. Alfred Young, one of the Paulist Fathers.

There is not, I venture to say, a person in this hall to-night, who has not heard or read, over and over again, of the vast superiority, in every respect, of Protestant over Catholic countries; so persistently, indeed, is this assertion made, that it has come to be widely accepted as truth, not only by Protestants but by numbers of Catholics who have neither the time nor the opportunity to examine for themselves, and to prove it to be one of the myriad slanders invented by the father of lies against the Church of God.

How often is it cast in our faces that the Catholic Church discourages the spread of education, and fosters ignorance, so as to hold her children in the bonds of superstition and idolatry. Who make these assertions? Is it only persons who do not know any better? By no means! but these slanders are circulated chiefly by men of education, who occupy pulpits and profess to preach the word of God—and generally by men who hate the Catholic Church much more than they hate the devil—they are made by the men to whom our Blessed Lord referred when He told His disciples:—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The other day I picked up a copy of the American Citizen, an organ of the American Protective Association, published in Boston, Mass. Inside of it, I found folded up, a printed letter from a man calling himself the Rev. Madison C. Peters, D. D., who, to judge from his language, is an advanced anti-Catholic. I believe he is a Protestant minister. This letter is stated to have appeared in the New York Herald of the 7th of January last, just one month ago, so that it is not a "chestnut" by any means. Dr. Peters is overcome by the appalling illiteracy, criminality, and illegitimacy of Catholics, as compared with Protestant countries. He speaks of the illiteracy of Spain, 80 per cent. of whose population, he says, cannot read or write, as compared with less than 16 per cent. of Protestant America similarly be neglected, but he leaves us totally in the dark as to what portion of this continent he means by Protestant America. If Dr. Peters' figures can be relied on, Spain's record is not very creditable, yet it is remarkable that on the second page of his letter he should quote the statistics collected by the United States Bureau of Education in 1890, which gives Spain's percentage of illiteracy as only 63 per cent. Now here is a considerable difference of 17 per cent. between Dr. Peters and the authority he quotes. The discrepancy is instructive, and I ask you to bear it in mind.

Dr. Peters after issuing a defiant challenge for the "mention of one nation whose children the Catholics have taught to read and write," goes on to adduce eight Catholic countries, viz., Venezuela, Austria Hungary, France, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy, of whose aggregate population he says 91 per cent. are Catholic, and 69 per cent. are illiterate.

If Dr. Peters' figures with regard to these countries are no more trustworthy than they were regarding Spain, I fear they are valueless. It is worth enquiring how these estimates of illiteracy are obtained. One system is by noting how many couples who sign the marriage register, write their names or use a mark, and another mode is by observing, in those countries where enforced conscription for the army exists, how many of the conscripts sign their names. Such is the test of illiteracy as applied by statisticians, and upon figures thus procured, false witness like Peters base their slanders against the Church. I know of men who were able to write their names and nothing more—one such man was president of a bank—another was a member of parliament, and both of them in their day amassed large fortunes. The mere fact of being able to write their names saved them from being classed as illiterate, and consequently ignorant, according to Dr. Peters; yet they had actually no education. I have always been of the opinion that one of the most trying moments in a man's life is when he is getting married, and yet that period is selected for testing the educational attainments of the simple folk of Catholic countries. If the nervous, awkward swain, and the blushing, timid maiden cannot muster enough courage to sign their names in the register, they are enrolled immediately among the illiterate, but let them make any kind of a scrawl, it may be as undecipherable as Edward Blake's autograph, they are educated.

But illiteracy is not ignorance, although the two terms are often synonymously applied. An ignorant man may be illiterate, but an illiterate man is not necessarily intellectually deficient or morally debased. We must draw the distinction broadly between illiteracy and ignorance. Education is no guarantee for good behaviour, nor is it a preventive of criminality. The prison records show by the small proportion of "illiterate"

convicts compared with the educated ones that it is not to the lack of the ability to read and write that their criminal acts are to be attributed, but rather to the lack of having learned a trade or some honest means of earning a living, possessed of which one naturally associates himself with law-abiding citizens, seeking mutual protection for their property and handicraft.

In these days of intellectual pride, illiteracy has come to be commonly regarded as a fitting term of reproach, as though it were an ignominious and criminal defect, much as our proud age regards poverty, though never so honest, with scorn, and avoids contact with it, as though its very touch were pollution. To be "literate," or "illiterate," is a term which may, perhaps, be also rightly used as being "learned," but the opposite of ignorance is not learning but wisdom, and even the illiterate may be wise.

The true ideal of human happiness, as taught by the Catholic Church, lies in the cultivation and perfecting of man's spiritual nature, which is the only true and worthy end of human life and effort, "for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Opposed to the Catholic plan is the popular idea of the present day, which, neglecting the spiritual, exalts the material and seeks only the development of the useful as a means of satisfying our bodily necessities, comforts and luxuries. We are pointed to Protestant countries such as England, Germany and the United States, with their railways, their steamships, their telegraph lines, their innumerable inventions and discoveries, and last but not least, their millionaires, and then we are told to look at Catholic Italy, Spain, Mexico, South America, and the besotted ignorance in which the wretched, priest-ridden "Papists" of those Catholic countries are engulfed.

Another individual, prominent among the foul brood of revilers of the Catholic Church, is the Rev. Dr. Josiah Strong, the Chief Secretary in the United States of that well known Pro-Testant Association, "The Evangelical Alliance," and who, in a book which he wrote entitled "Our Country," made the following statement:

"Rome has never favored the education of the masses. In her relations with them she has adhered to her own proverb, 'Ignorance is the mother of devotion.' Rome's real attitude toward the education of the masses should be inferred from her course in those countries where she has, or has had, undisputed sway; and there she has kept the people in besotted ignorance. In France her own Italy, where 73 per cent. of the population are illiterate; or Spain, where we find 80 per cent.; or Mexico, where 93 per cent. belong to this class."

Dr. Strong is as unfortunate in figures as his friend Dr. Peters. The statistics of the Catholic countries Bureau of Education, quoted by Dr. Peters, charge Italy with only 48 per cent. of illiteracy; Dr. Strong increases it by only 25 per cent. Another instructive discrepancy.

I propose for a few minutes to look at these Catholic countries, and see what proofs we can find for the assertion that their people are kept in "besotted ignorance." Rejecting in toto the "faked-up" figures of Peters, Strong & Co., I refuse to accept statistics of illiteracy as evidence of ignorance. I ask you to bear in mind that I am not attempting to prove that, in matters of education, Catholic countries are ahead of Protestant countries: what I assert is that they do not suffer in comparison, but take very respectable rank, some Catholic countries being in advance of some Protestant countries, and vice versa.

Leaving the South American States till later on, let us enquire into the condition of the Catholic countries of Europe. Take Austria-Hungary first, where, out of a population, in 1890, of 41,000,000, 32,000,000 were Catholics, and only 4,000,000 Protestants. From Chamber's Encyclopaedia we quote regarding this country:

"The following figures show how amply the Government has provided for the educational wants of the people. (And then the article proceeds to give the numbers of the educational institutions, etc.) Instruction, whether high or low, is mostly gratuitous, or is given at a trifling cost. The primary schools in Austria are to a very large extent in the hands of the clergy, and there the Roman Catholic religion forms an essential part of the instruction. The law enforces compulsory attendance at the national schools, of all children between the ages of six and twelve, and only where Jews or Protestants have established elementary schools of their own, can they keep their children from the national institutions."

The Statesman's Year Book for 1894 states that in 1889 in Hungary proper 81.49 per cent. of the children were at elementary schools; and in Austria, in 1891, 86 per cent. of the children were attending school. I could enumerate the various kinds of educational institutions which exist in this land of "Papist" ignorance, but it would occupy more time than I have at my disposal. Any one desiring information is referred to the Statesman's Year Book. I may say, however, that, great and small, the educational institutions number about 40,000.

Coming to France, and quoting from the Statesman's Year Book, we find that in 1891 the total number of children of school age was 4,654,000. In 1890, 4,544,775 children of school age were enrolled in primary and infant schools; besides 70,900 in Algeria, about 78,000 were taught in higher

schools and nearly 10,000 at home: so the Statesman's Year Book very impartially concludes that "the number of untaught children is thus very small," and it adds that there was one elementary school for every 445 inhabitants, and one pupil in every six of the population; while in 1891, there were only fifty-eight school sections in the whole country without for their property and handicraft. I may be allowed to say in parenthesis that in Nova Scotia in 1893 there were 196 sections without schools! So much for another country of besotted ignorance.

A friend of mine said to me the other day, when taking over this question: "I suppose you will class France as a Catholic country." "Most assuredly," I replied. "Why," said he, "there are nearly 8,000,000 of the population who profess no religion at all!" "I am aware of that," I replied, "but this is a question between Catholic and Protestant, and the Statesman's Year Book gives the population of France, at the census of 1881 as consisting of 29,201,703 Roman Catholics, being 78.50 per cent. of the total population, and 692,830 Protestants, or 1.8 per cent. of the population. Those who declined to make any declaration of religious belief numbered 7,684,906 persons."

If France is not Catholic, what is she? She is certainly not Protestant; neither is she without religion, unless the tail wag the dog. In Spain the Statesman's Year Book, after remarking that a large proportion of the inhabitants are illiterate, gives the number of primary schools in 1885 as 90,105, or one for every 590 inhabitants, and attended by 1,843,183 pupils. Secondary education is conducted in middle class schools, which are largely attended. Chamber's Encyclopaedia gives the number of these institutions as 70, with 356 affiliated colleges, but does not mention the number of pupils. There are ten universities with 17,000 students, besides 9,063 others attending episcopal seminaries and religious schools. The Year Book ascribes the inefficiency of the primary schools partly to political causes and partly to the wretched pay of the teachers. The expenditure on education in 1885 was \$5,000,000.

In Portugal, Chamber's Encyclopaedia informs us that "Education is entirely free from the supervision and control of the Church. Compulsory education was enacted in 1844, but is far from being fully enforced, consequently Portugal lags behind in education and general intelligence. Still there are over 5,600 elementary schools (the population is under 5,000,000), 22 lycées, numerous private schools, polytechnic academies, clerical, medical, agricultural, naval and military training schools, besides 30 schools for training in the industrial arts, and a university, one of the oldest in Europe." The Statesman's Year Book for 1894 gives the total school population of Portugal in 1885 as 332,281, and the students in attendance at the various educational institutions, great and small, for which they had statistics, some of 1890-91, and 92, as 355,289.

And now we come to the most densely populated country of Europe and at the same time the most Catholic. Surely if we are on the lookout for "besotted ignorance," we should expect to find it in Belgium. Yet the statistics of the United States Bureau of Education in 1890, as quoted by Dr. Madison C. Peters, charge Belgium with an illiteracy of only 12 per cent. In 1892, the pupils receiving instruction in the various institutions, great and small, numbered over 900,000, the whole population being a little more than 6,000,000 and only 10,000 of them Protestants.

You will remember that Dr. Josiah Strong placed the illiteracy of Italy at 73 per cent. of the population, while the United States Bureau of Education in 1890 gave 48 as the percentage. As Chamber's Encyclopaedia places the percentage in 1887 as 52.58 per cent. I prefer the United States Bureau figures to those of Dr. Strong. Forty-eight per cent. is a large figure, yet education is very far from being neglected. Out of a total population of 31,000,000 of whom all but about 100,000 are Catholics, there are over 3,000,000 attending the various institutions of learning and in 1887 there were over 54,000 primary and infant schools, besides some 11,000 evening schools and technical institutes.

Figures are generally acknowledged to be dry and uninteresting, and lest I should weary you, I have omitted many details corroborative of my contention; but I submit that I have adduced sufficient evidence to prove that education is not neglected in the Catholic countries of the old world. I care not for the statistics of illiteracy which by the defamers of the Catholic Church are held up as the sole standard by which we are to be judged. But if statistics must be applied, I appeal to Mulhall, who is everywhere known as eminent among statisticians, and who is universally acknowledged as an authority. Let us take his Dictionary of Statistics (edition of 1892) and from his article on Education compare what proportion of the people in certain Protestant and Catholic countries is attending school. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, which have 8,340,500 Protestants to 4,500 Catholics, 14 per cent. of the population attend school. In the United States, where the population is 51,000,000 Protestants to 9,000,000 Catholics, the proportion is 13 per cent. In Great Britain and Ireland, where the Protestants are 29,500,000 to 5,500,000 of Catholics, the proportion is 12.3 per cent. Now let

us take some Catholic countries. In France, where there are over 29,000,000 of Catholics to 700,000 Protestants, the proportion is 17 per cent. In Belgium, where there are 6,000,000 of Catholics to 10,000 Protestants, the proportion is 13 1/2 per cent. In Austria, where there are over 20,000,000 of Catholics to 400,000 Protestants, the proportion is 13 per cent. In Spain, where there are 17,500,000 of Catholics to 8,000 Protestants, the proportion is 10.6 per cent.; and in Italy, where there are over 28,000,000 of Catholics to 62,000 Protestants the proportion is 9 per cent.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE WAGER OF GERALD O'ROURKE.

BY FRANCIS J. FINN, S. J.

III.

"You are out of sorts, Henry," Mrs. Bush remarked to her husband toward sundown of the same day. "So I am, Margaret. I don't feel at all well in body, and besides I'm distressed about a business matter. I'm afraid I shall be obliged to get a new business manager."

"What! discharge Mr. O'Rourke? Why you used to say that he was the best and longest-sighted business man you ever met; and that he was worth far more than his six thousand a year."

"I say so yet. By rights, he should have eight or ten thousand. But instead of thinking of raising his salary, I'm worried night and day, by word and by letter, to replace him with a John Landen. Landen has many wondrous advantages over O'Rourke."

"In the first place, Landen is not a Catholic, and in the second, he belongs to at least five secret degrees above me."

"It was a sad day for you, Henry, when you joined that society."

"No, it wasn't—it brought me business."

"Yes; but it took away your religion."

"Not at all, Margaret. I'm a Catholic, and, what's more, I'll die a Catholic."

"In the meantime, Henry, couldn't you manage to live one?"

"For answer, Mr. Bush gave a growl, and took up the evening paper."

"To-morrow, my dear, is Christmas. Won't you please promise to come to Mass with me? The children are all praying so earnestly; they are sure that they are to be heard this time. It's fifteen years nearly since you entered a church. Come, dear, promise."

"There were tears in Mrs. Bush's eyes as she spoke, and a perceptible trembling in her voice. Mr. Bush was moved."

He was now growing gray, and age was telling upon his health. For a moment he pondered the request, and, as he pondered, a sharp pain shot through his head.

"I'm too worried just now, Margaret—some other Christmas. I'll go yet."

"But, Henry, how can you promise yourself another Christmas?"

"Margaret, Margaret!" he cried, rising impatiently from his chair, tossing the evening paper upon a table, and putting his hands to his head, "for God's sake, don't worry me. I am wretched."

The poor, good lady had unwittingly jarred upon her husband's feelings. All that day had the thought of death pursued him; and he had built his heaven upon this earth.

Mr. Bush was a millionaire many times over. When a young man, he had been a practical Catholic. But business and gain had gradually drawn him away from his religious practices, till he had become content with fulfilling his Easter duty. Then had come the allurements of a secret society. Against this temptation he held out for some time; but, unfortunately for him at this period of trial, there arose an unpleasantness between him and his parish priest. Mr. Bush was in the wrong; yet, in a fit of passion, he joined the secret society, and his place in church knew him no more.

At supper time that evening his little daughter said:

"Papa, won't you please take me to Mass to-morrow?"

All the children, as Laura spoke, looked earnestly at their father.

"I can't, my little one; I'm not well."

And Mr. Bush, not without emotion, saw the signs of bitter disappointment upon their young faces.

"There must have been something wrong about that novena of ours," growled Harry, a classmate of Gerald's.

Mary, the eldest of the three sisters, motioned to him to be quiet.

"Oh, I guess I can talk a little," pursued the undaunted youth. "At least, papa, you ought to come and hear the singing. I'm in the chorus myself, but I'm nothing extra. Gerald O'Rourke's the boy. He's got a voice like an angel, only angels don't play tricks. You just ought to hear him; you'd be willing to go out and die."

Gerald's one of the nicest boys in Milwaukee—a heap nicer than I am. I like him immensely. Say, papa, I'm going to bring him home with me to-morrow. I'm sure you'd like to talk to him."

"You haven't seen him now for almost a year. He's nicer than ever."

"Whatever else you do," roared Mr. Bush, bringing down his fist on the table, and scowling fiercely, "don't bring that boy near this house. I don't want to see him."

And to the consternation of all, Mr. Bush hurried from the room. He was very ill and very wretched. Poor millionaire!

The children, some hours later, were

peacefully, when Mr. Bush entered the large room devoted to Laura and Edith and Mary.

They had very long stockings, these little mites, which were carefully pinned to the mantel over the fireplace. Prominent among the bric a brac on the mantelpiece stood a statue of the Sacred Heart.

Mr. Bush dropped a shining yellow coin into each stocking, one of which fell to the floor. He picked it up carefully, and, not finding the intention of holding of the statue with the intention of using it as a weight to hold the stocking in place. There was a letter, an open letter, under the statue. Mr. Bush adjusted his glasses and read:

Dear Babe of Bethlehem—A merry Christmas to you! It will surely be merry to you, if people love you who do not love you now. It will be very merry to us, if papa comes to Mass with us. Oh, he's such a good papa; we are sure you would like him, if you knew him better. Now please get papa to come to Mass. I have made the Nine First Fridays all for papa, and we're sure that papa will come to Mass, and we're going to give all the money that papa drops in our stockings to a priest to put flowers on the altar. When we get up on Christmas, dear Babe of Bethlehem, we expect that this letter will not be here. That is to be the sign that papa will go to Mass on Christmas Day. With much love, dear Babe of Bethlehem, we are, your dear little ones,

MARY (I'm ten and I wrote this letter by myself). EDITH (she's eight). LAURA (she's six).

After some moments of irresolution, Mr. Bush put this letter in his pocket, and with swimming eyes turned to leave the room. He stopped on the threshold, passed his hands through his hair, groaned, and with an expression of extreme misery returned to place the letter where he had found it. He departed very ill, very unhappy. Tossing restlessly, he got no wink of sleep that night.

Poor millionaire!

TO BE CONTINUED.

Catholics in High Places.

That fidelity to the profession and practice of the Catholic religion is not always detrimental to the highest success in life, is illustrated in the advancement of the late Sir John Thompson to the Premiership of Canada, the elevation of Sir Charles Russell to the Chief Justiceship of England, and the election of Doctor Zemp to the Presidency of the Swiss Confederation. To this list of recent triumphs, might be added the appointment of Prince von Hohenlohe to the Chancellorship of the German Empire, if his record of devotedness to his religion were not touched with the objectionable quality called Liberalism. The most recent instance of conspicuous triumph of Catholics in public affairs in the United States, are the appointment of Judge White to the Supreme Court bench and the election of Honorable Thomas H. Carter as United States Senator from Montana.

We are glad to see Catholics coming to the front, partly because they have been kept back in so many countries for so many years that their eminence now is a proof of progress in true liberality, and partly because of the influence for good with which their exalted position endows them.—Catholic Review.

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