

"Habitual Confession For The Young."

A BRIEF REVIEW BY "CRUX."

THIS week, being midsummer I had intended taking a holiday, consequently I did not prepare any contribution, along the lines I have been following of late. Just for a relaxation I turned over some pages of the June "Contemporary Review," and was attracted by an article bearing the suggestive title—"Habitual Confession for the Young." Going to the end of that contribution I found it was signed "Ambrose J. Wilson." Having read it carefully I could not come to any conclusion as to whether the writer of it is a clergyman or a layman. Without a doubt, however, he is an Anglican, and one who objects to confession for young persons, as it is practised in certain sections of the Anglican communion. I was obliged to read the article over twice before I could come to any fixed idea regarding the merits or demerits of his contentions. I had not proceeded far when I found that to seize properly the drift and significance of the article I had to read it as concerning Anglican confession entirely divesting myself of all thought of, or reference to the Sacrament of Penance as we in the Catholic Church possess it. Then I had to re-read it, keeping the Catholic doctrine in my mind. The reader can readily perceive that the same article may bear very different interpretations according to the standpoint from which the subject of it is considered.

It is not my purpose to deal with it, in detail, from the Anglican point of view. I will simply dispose of that reading in a single paragraph. While the writer—Ambrose J. Wilson—speaks here and there of a "Sacrament," and mentions "Holy Communion," it is obvious that he does not refer to the sacraments, as taught by Catholic theology. I am, therefore, confined to the general observation, that the Confession to which he refers is, in reality not a sacrament, while the Holy Communion is not the reception of the Holy Eucharist. It would be of no interest to the readers of the "True Witness," nor yet of any benefit for them, were I to fill columns with comments upon his opinions. We have nothing to gain nor to lose, whether the practice of confession prevails or does not prevail in that denomination. It is so entirely distinct from our conception of Confession that what applies, either as a support of or an objection to the one, has no application at all in the case of the other. Therefore, I must consider the article from the Catholic standpoint, ever keeping in view the fact the writer is not talking about Catholic Confession. But, on the broad principle, of the detrimental or the salutary effects of Confession upon the lives of young people, he is absolutely adverse to the practice, we are equally as favorable to it—hence we differ. I will, then, take up the leading arguments of this writer, in support of his contention, and—only in as far as they can affect our idea of Confession—show that they are both illogical and dangerous. I need not deal with his introductory paragraphs in which he speaks of the revival, after ages of disuse, of this practice in the Anglican Church. He claims that such revival is pernicious and a menace to the future generations. And to substantiate this broad assertion, he makes a passing reference to the effects of Confession in Catholic centres. With this we will begin.

"Some of us seem to be too far away, at a distance of some two score miles, to see how in the modern Roman Catholic world it (Confession) helps the spread of infidelity, degrades a priesthood from its true dignity, while increasing its domination, and ranges in antagonism to its sinister influence the mass of men that are most manly."

This is a direct shaft. The fact is that the writer is too far away—not in miles, but in spirit—from the Catholic world to know aught about it, and he simply paints this picture from his vivid fancy. Instead of spreading infidelity the Sacrament of Penance has been the bond that has kept millions moored to the Rock of Faith. Instead of degrading the priesthood, it raises the priest to the sublime office of dispenser of

God's pardon and of representative of God in that tribunal. Instead of turning the men who are most manly from the Church, it has had, and we have learned so from the experience of ages, frightened only the weak-hearted and cowardly, while it has fortified the brave in the hour of danger and has been the consolation and shield of some of the most heroic men that ever trod the earth. But as this writer speaks, as he admits, at too great a distance, to be able to know whereof he speaks, it is not necessary to try further to refute this imaginary statement of his.

He then tells us that "there are not a few motives calculated to set ardent and enthusiastic souls yearning for a renewal of systematic confession, as a recognized part of a remedial Anglicanism." This simply affects Anglicanism. As far as Catholicity is concerned there is no past, present, or future in regard to this sacrament. It never died out, has never to be revived, is as general to-day as it was in the catacombs, and will be as general at the end of the world as it is to-day.

I will pass over the absurdity of talking about the "four great sections of the Christian Church—Anglican, Greek, Lutheran and Roman." There is no Roman section. The other three are fragments detached from the last-mentioned one, and are therefore not even a part of it. Each of them constitutes an entity of its own distinct from the other, and still more distinct from the Catholic Church. The question which the writer indignantly asks, indicates this. He cries out: "Are there, then, indeed, those in our Church who are prepared to swallow all Roman dogmas, discipline and practice alike?" No; unless they are prepared to leave his Church and enter the Catholic fold. To do so they must accept all the dogmas, discipline and practices of the Church, without the minutest exception.

Having delivered himself of a tirade against those of his Church who would revive confessions, for the sake of olden forms and in imitation of Catholicity, he comes to the second point, and says:—

"But there is a second motive, hardly if at all less noble; the desire of helping to advance the spiritual life of others. There lies fascination, for one thing, in the mere idea of probing the deeper mysteries of human consciousness, the more hidden springs of human motive and desire. The same principle which leads the popular verdict to approve most of all that drama, or to demand most of all that novel, which most vividly presents the realities of human emotion and action, this same principle would dispose men to find a yet more delicate aroma of romance in the actual play of living passion and emotion, such as in Confession, is laid bare. And this, which so far is little more than a subtle manifestation of curiosity and self-indulgence, finds a nobler development in the unquestionably high altruistic delight of watching for other souls and helping them in their conflict. And yet such fascination and romance are obviously, in themselves, no arguments for 'Confession,' which stands or falls so far on grounds of utility, on the question whether it is beneficial to the person confessing rather than whether it is productive of gratification, be it ever so noble and spiritual, to the confessor. And the same is true of the sense of power, which has also its more selfless manifestation in the altruistic love of helpfulness. To gratify a love of power in the individual, or to realise an aspiration after power in a priesthood, is a little matter; and the nobler desire of helpfulness becomes effective only so far as it is clear that the help given makes for the best interests of those who receive it."

I cannot accentuate too strongly the fact that all this refers to Anglican confessions. In that which constitutes part of the Sacrament of Penance in the Catholic Church, there is not and cannot be either a craving for power over the penitent, or a morbid curiosity to know what evil he has done, in the breast of the priest. It is quite clear that the writer knows nothing practical of Confession in the Catholic Church. He never went to confession to a Catholic priest; he never met a Catholic priest, who, outside the confessional would speak of what therein occurred; he never met a Catholic lay person who told him about his experiences in the Confessional. Therefore, not knowing anything positive about it he cannot advance, as far as the Catholic priest is concerned, either the argument of curiosity, or that of power. And he does not do so directly; but by inference we may conclude, that since he objects to the revival of confessions and to the imitation of the Catholic practice, he ascribes to the latter the blamishes that he

finds in the Anglican system. If so he is at sea entirely.

To come more directly to the subject which he had in his mind at the outset, he says:—

"It is not proposed, at this time, to discuss the more general bearings of this argument of utility upon the attempted revival of systematic 'Confession,' but to limit the consideration to 'the claim which is put forward by some that it should find a place as a constant factor in the ethical and religious training of the young.'"

Having thus set forth his proposed subject, he takes the precaution to tell us that: "It is not primarily a question of religion, but partly of ethics and partly of religion and ethics in collaboration." If then he is not going to treat an essentially religious subject from a religious standpoint, we can only conclude that he regards Confession (in his Church) as a factor, like fashion, or horse-racing, or any special practice, in the moulding of a younger generation's characteristics. I would, therefore, wish to know, before going any further, what it is he intends to consider. It is possible that the following statement may cast a light upon it. He says:—"It is proposed, in what follows, to state a few of the objections to the system which an experience upon the notice and consideration of the writer. The practice naturally divides itself under two heads, Confession and Absolution, of which the latter, at least in the case of the young, and especially in view of the weakness of ecclesiastical discipline in our times, probably does the greater or present damage."

It is clear that he now proposes to set down his objections to Anglican Confession. For, if he referred to Catholic Confession, he would have added to the Confession and Absolution the Reparation—if ever he heard of that element. And the "weakness of ecclesiastical discipline" is not appropriate in the case of Catholic Confession—there is and can be no such weakness.

Now that I know with what we have to deal I will ask the reader to keep this article in mind until next week, when I will continue and complete this review.

THE ORANGE ORDER.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

Lord Erie, when delivering an address at an Orange banquet, in Dublin, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Boyne, made the statement that the order had a membership of seven hundred and fifty thousand—scattered all over the world. No doubt that three-quarters of a million is a pretty large figure; but, if we were to judge from what has been transpiring during the past few years, here as well as in other lands, we would come to the conclusion that the order has greatly decreased in its membership. Or if it has not, decidedly it is less obtrusive, less enthusiastic, and less offensive than it had been in the past. This change may not be due to either a decrease or an increase in numbers, but simply to the fact that the younger generation is too far removed from the irritating subjects of controversy that seemed to intoxicate their fathers and forefathers into a species of madness. Their friction with the great world of commerce and of affairs in general, and the degree to which they are brought into contact with those whom their Order once considered as deadly enemies, may have much to do with the change in sentiment and manners which is surely noticeable.

There is certainly less noise, less boastfulness, and less insulting tones perceptible. There was a time within our own memory, when the approach of the Twelfth of July meant general preparations on all sides for violence and the stirring up of animosities that took half a year to subside. That event is now passed over in the utmost tranquillity. We do not deny that in certain isolated cases there are still to be heard echoes of the old-time mutterings, but they are confined to very narrow circles, and especially to the less enlightened of the populace. Wherever the educating influence of the century, and of its new order of things, is made to be felt, the spirit of animosity that once kept two sections of citizens in a state of injurious distrust, has been succeeded by one of greater tolerance. Minds have grown larger, and men's sentiments are becoming more and more in harmony with that Christian teaching which, without exceptions, ordains that men should love each other. We are the very first to hail this change with pleasure, and to express the hope that yearly we will become further removed from old-time turmoils.

Our Curbstone Observer

ON 'CABINET MAKING'

HERE is nothing amuses me more than to note, whenever some very sensational bit of news is published, the different ways in which it is taken, the varied opinions that are expressed, and the assurance with which people assert their ideas. If a war is declared in some far off land, in the heart of Africa, or in the Islands of Oceania, or some place else in those out-of-the-way regions, you will hear men telling each other all about the situation, notwithstanding that a few hours earlier none of them had ever heard of that land, nor could one of them find it upon the map. Yet they are emphatic and dogmatic about it, and they speak with a familiarity on the subject that would astonish an ordinary person. And it is the same in many other affairs of life. A great man dies. The man on the corner knows all about him, although the day before he had never heard of him. But all these examples are as nothing compared to the facility and wisdom and assurance with which people construct and reconstruct cabinets, whenever there is occasion for such an operation. They know absolutely everything about it; they have long since had the man in their eye and they are ready to bet money upon him. This is all very natural, and, for me—who never says anything, merely listens—it is very amusing.

CABINET-MAKING.

—Last week the announcement came that Hon. Mr. Blair, ex-Minister of Railways, had resigned. As soon as I saw the notice of that event on the bulletin, I made up my mind to hang around and listen to what would be said. I went up to the Windsor and the first knowing one I met told me that Blair had resigned (I knew that already), and that Patterson was also going out. I made no remark. A moment later I saw an acquaintance sitting near a pillar, and I went over, and bound to have first innings, I at once told him that Blair was out. He gave me look that eloquently said: "That is no news, but I have the real news." I sat down, and he began to show me how this was "the beginning of the end," "the breaking of the ice," the "rumbling of the storm;" and he added that Cartwright had gone to Kingston on Saturday and did not attend the Council. He was also going to resign. I had my doubts, but I wisely kept them to myself. The next man told me that Fitzpatrick was going to succeed the late Judge Armour, Speaker Brodeur to become Lieutenant-Governor, Fielding to resign, Sutherland to take Railways and Canals, Prefontaine to get Public Works, Emerson to be Minister of Marine and Templeman or Hyman to enter the Cabinet without portfolio. This decidedly was a "Cabinet-maker" in good earnest. Despite the fact that none of his predictions came true, still he had the courage of his convictions, and I must say that he gave evidence of Napoleonic activity in settling affairs of State. After an hour at the Windsor I went to the St. Lawrence Hall, and the very first man I met told me that the Premier was going to call a general election for October, and that the Railway Bill would be the bone of contention between the two parties. He gave me no better authority for his assertion than that he felt "there is nothing else for them to do." As we are yet a long way off from October I was not prepared to dispute his statement nor yet to agree with it. But if ever a man was surprised I experienced that sensation a few moments later. A person with whom I was well acquainted and whom I knew to be absolutely devoid of all political knowledge, gave me the positive assurance that the Premier was to resign and to go on the Alaskan Boundary Commission, and Blair to be made chairman of the projected Railway Commission Board. And he emphasised his statement with a generous oath and a knowing wink of the eyes. Considering that I had secured about as much political information as I was well able to carry I resolved to go home. I had not been long there when my wife said she had been reading the papers in my

absence, and that she had come to the conclusion that there would be no haste in replacing Mr. Blair, not till after they had elaborated their Bill for the new railway. I asked her why. She said that another minister could run the department for a while, and that the appointing of a successor would necessitate his being elected, and the Government would not likely risk so grave an issue on a bye-election. Then, I said, how will they get over the ultimate necessity of appointing one? She said simply by giving a vacant portfolio to some Senator, and leaving matters as they are until the Bill is either passed or killed in the House.

I considered that she knew more about it than the whole batch of chattering politicians that frequent the lobbies and rotundas of the hotels. In fact, I was convinced that it is not on the street, but in the quiet of the home that all subjects, political as well as social, scientific, or religious, can best be understood and appreciated.

I did not care to say so, for it might flatter the vanity of my better half, but I made up my mind, when next a great issue would be before the public, to give her the paper to read, go out to the hotels for a couple of hours to listen to nonsense, and then return home to get the news and proper information.

Our Reviewer's Notes.

THE FICTION OF THE HOUR.

—In the New York "Reader," a Catholic literary critic, named John J. a-Becket, has published some strong and well-directed criticism on the manner in which certain modern writers, in the field of romance especially, have used and abused the Church and her doctrines, when employing them as subject matter for their light fiction. He is principally severe upon such writers as Mrs. Humphry Ward and Emile Zola. There are also very just exposures, in his contribution, of Edith Wharton, Mrs. Gertrude Atherton, Hall Caine, Marie Corelli and others—all of whom are more or less dangerous and misleading.

As to Mrs. Wharton the writer confines himself, in his strictures, to the abominable moral that her poem entitled "Margaret of Cortona" teaches. He says that "it is incredible that a writer of Mrs. Wharton's refinement and ability should have taken a canonized saint as the subject on which to exercise her unseemly play of fancy." She has represented the saint, after years of repentant life, as avowing, on her death-bed, a preference for her former lover's caresses to the love of the Lord. He decidedly exposes in a manner deserving of the thanks of all honest and moral souls, the abominations of literature, exemplified in such writings. But where he is the strongest is when he deals with the misrepresentations of Catholic dogmas. And, after all, offences such as those of Mrs. Wharton, as illustrated above, or of Mrs. Atherton, who did not know the difference between the Nativity and the Resurrection, are such that any ordinary Christian must perceive their enormity and repudiate them with a whole heart. It is different when the teachings of the Church are brought under the dissecting knife of the fiction writer. The reader may then be easily led into grave error, by accepting as truth that which is wholly imaginary. It is thus the writer sets forth his general ideas concerning these traducers of Catholic doctrine:—

"It is where the dogmas of the church are misrepresented or scoffed at; where the spirit of the church is belied, and her practices and ceremonial are derided or falsely presented; where the character of her ministers is assailed, that the Catholic feels most resentment; and it is in these respects that he feels calamitated where the Christian believer who is not a Catholic may not. Especially is his vigorous repudiation called forth when the offenders are the more guilty because of their greater intelligence or knowledge of facts. There are those who deliberately traduce the church because of hatred of her and her teaching. These, of course, are entitled to no mercy. The temerarious handling of things Catholic by such writers as Mrs. Humphry Ward or Richard Bagot arouse the deepest feeling of resentment on the part of Catholics." In dealing with Mr. Bagot's novel "A Roman Mystery," Mr. a-Becket says that the representing a Catholic as accepting the dogma of Papal

infallibility while not believing it, is simply "idiotic." And in reference to Mrs. Humphry Ward we say that she is far more offensive to the Catholic than is the petulant Mr. Bagot, because she is more intellectual, her antagonism to the Church is more virulent, and it is displayed with insidiousness. "She gets in her fine work by the obtrusion of a dispassionate, philosophic spirit, with not even a flicker of humor to derogate from it." He then takes up her "Helbeck of Bannisdale," the study of a Catholic layman. He is a good Catholic and consistently portrayed. At bottom, a rather noble character, relentlessly faithful to his ideals, but he falls in love with a lively girl much younger than himself, who is an agnostic, and who is repelled by the Church. Helbeck is not a very attractive man, but is entitled to respect owing to his peculiarities. "The main objection to this book," he says, "is that Mrs. Ward so deftly saddles on the Church, or, at least, divelges the non-Catholic reader into so doing, what should be ascribed to the severe, gloomy personality of Helbeck himself."

He then mentions her "nasty stabs at the Church," as when she says, that "the Catholic who is in love with his Church realize truly what the Rome, of the Renaissance meant." Mr. a-Becket says that the most intelligent and fervent Catholic can admit with unreserved composure of faith the scandals that have occurred among clerical and lay members of the Church. He knows that not even the Pope is immune against sin. But while grieved by such misdeeds, he does not confound them with the Catholic faith.

Such articles as this one are exactly what we need in the present age. It is thus that the critic refers to misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine:—

"One may understand, then, the Catholic standpoint as to all that touches on Catholicity in literary work. It is misrepresentation of Catholic truth and tendencies; false Catholic atmosphere, that wounds him most, and which he protests against most strongly. Of course, fiction that is immoral affects him as it does any adherent of rectitude. If the tendency of a novel is to hurt the morality of the individual or the community, he deprecates it; but so do sincere believers in the multifarious sects. He is not shocked if in some masterly picture of human nature, sin, evil, falsehood, treachery, selfishness, or what not of human defectibility, enter in. They enter into the actual life of humanity. But just as the most intelligent and most devoted Catholics are naturally the most liberal and the most broad, so are they the ones who feel the most strongly, and resent with more vigor, aspersions on their faith, misrepresentation of Catholic views, or customs, or tendencies, and most of all, when these distortions of truth are knowingly made, or worse still, craftily disguised, so as to secure the evil result without incriminating their authors of evil intent."

THE CATHOLIC PRESS.

In speaking recently at a meeting held in London to promote the circulation of Catholic literature, the Very Rev. Dom Gilbert Higgins, C.R.L., expressed himself as follows:— "People, he said, often grumbled about the Catholic Press, but they must remember that if such people only threw themselves into the work and caused the papers to be better known, and to see they were sold wherever possible, the proprietors would feel it their duty to spend more money in the production of a better article. Catholics had it in their power to elevate the Catholic Press, as they desired it to be lifted still higher, so that Catholics and Protestants alike knew that there was culture, there was something for the mind in the Catholic newspaper. They knew that progress was to be made, but let them be practical, let them try and provide the sinews of war so that Catholic newspaper proprietors could do better."

ANOTHER LESSON.

In France during the last twenty years the State has kept religion out of the public schools. What has been the result? In the current number of the "Nouvelle Revue" M. Garnier sums it up briefly by declaring that "during recent years juvenile depravity and criminality have increased terribly over all France, and more especially in Paris." This statement is not from a Catholic source, therefore it ought to be considered impartial. Wherever the school exists without religion it is laying the foundation for the destruction of the State.

Some Notes On the Organization Of The Church

Rev. Dr. D. S. McMackin's Cathedral, New York article, published in "The Post," of that city, outlines features of the relations of the Cardinals and to the Cardinals and to the Cardinals in the Roman member of five Roman cardinals and of the Biblical Commission when asked what he considered fundamental principle of vast administration of the preme Pontiff, while possessing plenitude of power, never in an arbitrary manner after mature consultation of profound learning and the immediate council. The Cardinals, Pope are the Cardinals, tute the Supreme Council of the Church. In like manner archbishop or bishop in respective diocese has a board of advisors, who assist him in the exercise of his jurisdiction. Before Paul III, and Sixtus V. and Cardinals discussed matters in public consisted of the Congregation of the Holy Office, whose purpose to-day, as then, but hereby and false doctrine. Sixtus V., following the adopted by Paul III, 500 congregations (Bull Aeterni Dei, Jan. 22, each of which he assigned work, a definite procedure jurisdiction. Thus the Consistorial Congregation (Sixtus V., 1588) prepares, and examines the which the Pope is to treat in his allocution to the in a private or public con matters concerning the union, or division of metropolitan cathedrals, the candidates for the episcopate, granting of palliums and astical dignities, are referred to the Congregation for the Dismissing Churches by Leo XIII., in 1896, for the special purpose of studying that have divided Christ a multitude of sects and lishing a preparatory reconciliation of these with the Roman Catholic. The Holy Father himself over the three congregations mentioned, because the Holy Office, discusses of faith and morals; the Consistorial, deals with which call for a formal ment of the Pope; and the Commission for Reun examining differences of was created to hasten t faith in which is the peace—a work particularly the great heart of Leo had the courage and m to begin the vast project given it his own persona

The Congregation of the Regulars is perhaps the most important congregation of Curia. Its special office upon all difficulties between the bishops and directly subject to them, the bishops and the men religious orders residing case. It is a court of which the seculars or th may refer the decisions ops. This commission a and approves the rules of orders. The Congregation of the instituted by Paul IV. is the power of giving an interpretation to the decrees of Trent, excepting on matters of faith. increased its powers, cov the examination of urovis held in the various- the examination of prov bishops of his province,