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The Poor Children

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tolic times are pressing upon us of another century; our facile way of overcoming time and space problems has not lessened one whit the heavy pressure of the flesh on the spirit; and so it is that we have close at hand a *vademecum* which is literally a gift of God to man, His Love letter to the human race, the Sacred Scriptures.

If we read them with patience, with docility, with a humble seeking spirit, we shall discover that nothing in the ancient or modern secular literature can so pleasantly quench our thirst for truth and love; we shall then begin to understand what Christ meant, when He told the woman at the Samaritan well, "but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting."

JAMES W. BURKE

The Poor Children

Those who have been thinking about the problem of Religious Instruction in the Public Schools will be intrigued by the following statement.

The present administration of the... Law may be fairly characterized as a system on a very large scale for changing the religion of the Catholic poor who come under its operation. Thousands are thus lost to the Church and the religion of their fathers. In fact, we would ask, was any child ever known to have been through one of these... schools... and to have come out a Catholic? We sincerely confess we doubt it. Where every facility is given under the present system the children fall away when they come out... What must happen where no facilities whatever are afforded, or where... an hour in the week, or even less, is all that is at the priest's disposal to counteract the whole tone of the life the child leads and of the education it receives?

We beg our readers' attention to the fact that of the two thousand three hundred children in the... schools only nine ever see a priest... The trouble that the clergy have had to go through has been very great indeed in order to obtain access to this small number. And when they have succeeded in getting all the requisite formalities accomplished what good can they hope to do under the present system? In the majority of cases the children never assist at Mass, never hear a sermon, or enter

the doors of a Catholic Church. Their secular instruction is taken from books written by Protestants, and taught to them by Protestants...

Many readers will have recognized in this statement an exaggerated criticism of the situation which up to recently prevailed in regard to Religious Instruction in the Public Schools. And they will lament the fact that the writer's indignation caused him to be so careless of his facts. Certainly his statistics are away off. Moreover all the teachers are not Protestants. An unusually large number of the superintendents and principal teachers may be, but the rank and file of the teachers are Catholics. Obviously the present system has been open to some criticism; but one must be careful not to exaggerate.

It is not surprising that some discrepancies are noted between the contemporary Religious Instruction situation and the above description. The remarkable thing is that there should be any resemblance, because the quoted passage is a description of the condition of Catholic children in the English poorhouses in August 1860, and appeared in the *Dublin Review* for that month from the pen of Father John Morris.

It cannot but tickle the fancy of the reader that the Catholic children of this overwhelmingly Catholic nation should encounter, in however small a degree, the treatment meted out to the pauper children of English Catholics, at a time when Catholics were an underprivileged minority, but recently emancipated, and still hardly safe from physical persecution. It is only fair to add that things in the Philippines have taken a turn for the better and that responsible officials are alert to remove the hindrances which were so widespread a few years ago.

LEO A. CULLUM

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"It is an ill wind that blows no one good." The Communist persecution which forcibly expelled thousands of foreign missionaries from China has also occasioned some few useful by-products. There were some aspects of Missionary work for which it was thought—erroneously, perhaps—that men could not be spared from the active apostolate, at least not as a full-time occupation. Among others, there was the problem of how the Faith should be presented to pagans.