

Adelaide: Friday, February 13, 1914.

An Objectionable Text Book

When the Education Sub-Committee of the Catholic Federation met on Monday evening attention was directed to a selection in one of the text books prescribed for the University Senior Examination this year, and which is at present in use in the classes in our Catholic colleges and high schools preparing for that examination. The book in question is entitled "Selections from Carlyle," edited by Elizabeth Lee, and it forms one of the series known as "Bell's English Texts for Secondary Schools," used in the English Literature course. The particular selection to which objection is most justly made is entitled "Martin Luther," and it is taken from Carlyle's well-known book "Heroes and Hero-Worship."

This extract on Martin Luther does not contain all the most objectionable passages in Carlyle's deification of the apostate and foul-mouthed monk as "a right Spiritual Hero and Prophet"—were ever epithets more misplaced?—but that it contains much of an objectionable nature can be shown by a few quotations. One of the first things we come across is this passage: "It must have been a blessed discovery, that of an old Latin Bible, which he found in the Erfurt Library about this time. He had never seen the book before." Here we have again the old lying legend of Luther's discovery and translation of the Protestant Bible, which had been kept from the people by the Church! This story was first related by D'Aubigne, in his "History of the Protestant Reformation." Its inherent improbability was so great that it is surprising how it ever gained credence even from Protestants, and it has been a subject for the scornful comment of every well-informed writer since Dean Maitland, the learned Anglican writer, in his "Dark Ages," exposed the audacious falsehood, and D'Aubigne, by discreditable subterfuges, tried to wriggle out of it.

How D'Aubigne could actually set it down as history that Luther had had the advantage of a Catholic education, and had studied two years in the University of Erfurt, where "he had read the philosophy of the Middle Ages in the writings of Occam, Scotus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas," which are permeated with the Scriptures, and yet assert that he had not known there was such a thing as a Bible in existence, is one of those things which it is difficult to understand, unless we believe him to have written it deliberately, and in bad faith, with ulterior objects. It is still more difficult to understand how writers with any pretence to scholarship or research could swallow the statement and repeat it, as Carlyle does. We can only account for it on the score of the bitter prejudice and bigotry against everything Catholic in which the sour old Presbyterian cynic was reared.

As a matter of fact it can easily be proved that before Luther saw the light of day there had been printed 58 editions of the Latin Bible alone, and that before the year of his discovery there had been published 129, and of these 38 editions had been published in Germany. A German translation from the Latin Vulgate (then the common tongue of the learned in Europe) was printed in 1460,

17 years before Luther was born, and it was republished at least 16 times, with improvements, before Luther's Bible was printed in 1534. It can even be shown that Luther plagiarised this old German Bible in his so-called original translation. For further information on this subject the reader may be referred to Archbishop Carr's chapter on "Luther and the Bible," in "Lectures and Replies," published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society.

We have devoted so much time to exposing this initial falsehood in Carlyle's article that we must pass over other mis-statements with scant notice. Here are a few specimens: Describing Luther's visit to Rome as a young man, Carlyle says—"He had come as to the Sacred City, throne of God's High Priest on Earth; and he found it as what we know. . . . This Rome, this scene of

false priests, clothed not in the beauty of holiness, but in far other vesture, is false." Then we are, of course, told about "the Monk Tetzal, sent out carelessly in the way of trade by Leo Tenth—who merely wanted to raise a little money, and for the rest seems to have been a Pagan rather than a Christian, so far as he was anything—arrived at Wittenberg, and drove his scandalous trade there. Luther's flock bought indulgences; in the confessional of his church people pleaded to him that they had got their sins pardoned." Here we have once more the old Protestant misapprehension or distortion of the doctrine of indulgences. Every instructed Catholic—even the little child who learns its Catechism properly—knows that mortal sin cannot be pardoned except through perfect contrition or sacramental confession in the tribunal of Penance. The doctrine of indulgences is also stated in a misleading manner by the editor in a note, which says: "In the Roman Catholic Church an indulgence is an entire or partial remission of punishment due to sin." Of course, as every instructed Catholic knows, indulgences have no effect as regards the eternal punishment due to unrepented mortal sins. They are only of effect as regards the temporal punishment to be suffered in this life, or hereafter in Purgatory, for venial sins or the expiation still remaining after mortal sins have been forgiven through the Sacrament of Penance.

We could go on quoting further passages from this objectionable and untruthful piece of writing which the University authorities have chosen to force on our Catholic students. Even if Carlyle's statements were capable of proof, they are injurious and insulting to Catholics, and good taste would have counselled the omission of such a selection from a book intended for use by pupils of all denominations. But in view of the fact that the Catholic historians, Denifle, Janssen, and Grisar, as well as a number of modern Protestant writers, have thoroughly demolished the Luther legend, and shown from his own writings, and those of his Protestant contemporaries, the true character of the man, it is simply monstrous that Carlyle's travesty should be thus foisted on the rising generation. It may be pleaded that the selection is regarded merely as literature, but even in that guise it should not be forced on Catholic students.

Some years ago "The Southern Cross" was instrumental in having Kingsley's very objectionable work, "Westward Ho!" removed from the text books prescribed for teachers in this State; and this is

the first time since that such another outrage on Catholic feeling and sentiment has been attempted. We find that in Tasmania and Western Australia, in which latter State the new University has only just been established, Catholics have also had to raise objection to passages in the text books prescribed. Eternal vigilance is said to be the price of liberty; and Catholics have ever to be on the alert to prevent such invasions of their rights and privileges, to say nothing of the outrage on their beliefs and sentiments. Universities are supposed to be non-sectarian institutions, though it would seem from the text books they sometimes select that they have an itching for sectarian literature. They are subsidised by the Government from the revenue contributed by Catholics and non-Catholics, and they should be perfectly neutral in religious matters, and should be careful not to introduce contentious matter about men like Luther in text books prescribed either for history or literature. If they wish to prescribe such literature for Protestant students, Catholic scholars should be allowed to take other books as an alternative. It is a wrong thing and a violation of Catholic conscience that a book containing such a selection should enter either our Catholic schools or homes. Even if the University authorities did not insist on Catholics studying this objectionable selection, it would still be in the book which Catholic students have to handle for the senior examination, and an antidote for the poison would be required. We believe that the Catholic Federation intends to take up the matter strongly, and we trust that they will do it in such a way that there will be no recurrence of such an intolerable scandal.