

Religious Bulletin.
June 9, 1924.

A Crime of Education.

(We must apologize for discussing so gruesome a matter as the Franks murder. It should be discussed here, however, because it will be discussed wherever you go this summer, and you should know the answer which Catholic education offers to the problem the case presents.)

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A few months ago the Religious Bulletin analyzed a statement of President Burton, of Michigan, in which he rejected the idea of objective morality. He professed a desire to see a conscience in people, but hedged his proposition with the restriction, "not that I would establish the absolute between right and wrong." Comes now a brilliant graduate of the University of Michigan and confesses a fiendish abduction and murder, stating at the same time: "It is no more wrong than impaling a beetle on a needle."

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Babe Leopold did not evolve that idea from his own fertile brain. He found it in the books, the magazines and the professor who drilled into him that "man is, after all, only a biological specimen." Take away the soul, take away God, take away eternal life, and you cannot show a positive obligation that protects human life.

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Leopold and Loeb belonged to the intelligentsia. They read books and magazines of the smart type, and they pitied their elders. God help the type! The fiercest battle of the Religious Bulletin this year has been for the suppression of that kind of reading at Notre Dame. The A.B.C.'s of the group are The American Mercury, Vanity Fair, Smart Set, the American novels; the more advanced studies are the Russian novelists and certain American and English psychologists, the graduate work is done by the German and French psychologists, the French novelists, and the Hindu mystics. We have hardly passed the elementary stage at Notre Dame. Thanks be to God, and we can retrace our steps.

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For the rest, a story by Owen S. Scott, in the South Bend Tribune, will give you food for thought:

CHICAGO, June 6. --The intellectual adventures of Nathan Leopold, Jr., and Richard Loeb, which culminated in their murder "for Thrill" of 14-year-old Robert Franks have turned the spot light of investigation on the Green Chalybeate club.

This club is made up of University of Chicago students of brilliant but erratic bent, and upon similar organizations which exist in many college circles throughout the country. Hunting down and smashing such organizations may be the bit of good that will come out of the brutal slaying of the Franks boy.

It was the sumptuous quarters of the Green Chalybeate club, and among its rare assortment of prevailing intelligentsia, the authorities say, that Leopold and Loeb fed their minds up on the cynical philosophy that made it possible for them to commit a heinous crime -- perhaps a series of heinous crimes -- for the intellectual "kick" it would give them.

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"It was a thoroughly bad condition of things, and there seemed to be no hope of solution, but what has happened in the last ten years is nothing short of miraculous. About thirty years ago began a new epoch of development in religious architecture and the other arts, and where once there was hardly two or three architects who could build even a decent church there are now at least fifty, in all parts of the United States, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Unitarian, while there are craftsmen in stained glass, wood work, metal work, embroidery, as well as painters and sculptors, and all of them doing work of the highest character.

Presbyterians now Active.

"The movement is wide spread and by no means confined to one section of Christianity. At the present moment the Presbyterians seem to be in the lead in demanding and getting good art of all kinds. The Episcopal Church is, of course, standing strongly for the best as it has stood for half a century. Lutheranism also is in the advance, together with the Congregationalists and Unitarians and recently several denominations have begun to establish advisory boards. The Roman Catholic Church that had to its credit all the immortal Christian art in the world, from Aya Sophia to Seville Cathedral, from Giotto to Tintoretto, from the Gregorian chant to Cesar Franck, which, during the nineteenth century had sunk to the lowest levels in all the arts, is working steadily for, and actually obtaining, the best art obtainable today.

"If the Christian people in America would think less about facilities for basketball and moving pictures and the broadcasting of sermons, and more about the supreme beauty that Christianity made manifest through the arts; if they would keep ever before them Rheims, Seville, Westminster Abbey, the pictures of Van Dyke and Fra Angelico and Leonardo, the sculpture of the twelfth century Spain and thirteenth century France, the music of St. Gregory and Palestrina, Bach and Cesar Franck, the Mosarabic and Sarum and Byzantine liturgies, as the glorious ideals toward which they were ever forcing their way, rejecting the falsities and vulgarities, the barrenness and the poverty of spirit of the wretched substitutes for Christian art that have lain on us now as an incubus for two hundred years, we should not only recover ourselves and recreate a great Christian art but we should also have to bother ourselves less about the 'decadence of Christianity' and the indifference of the world to religion,

John F. O'Hara, C.S.C.,
Prefect of Religion.