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Religious Bulletin
February 9, 1927

Evasiveness: 36.

A long-winded correspondent who has keen observation of the obvious but obtuse practical judgment comes forth in answer to the request for comment on The Villagers' letter. He wants the Monogram Club, The Villagers, and the Bulletin relegated to their places. His strictures on the first two belong in the province of the Prefect of Discipline; the Bulletin is glad to give consideration to its own problems.

He accuses the editor of the Bulletin of having ^asplit personality, or being two-faced or double-tongued, or something to that effect; and he suggests for the University curriculum a new course to be called Evasiveness 36, with the editor of the Bulletin up. What the point is we do not know, but we will hazard a couple of guesses.

If he means that in public the Bulletin excoriates sin and in private the editor is merciful to sinners, we thank him for the compliment. Our Blessed Lord scourged the buyers and sellers with a rope, but that night when Nicodemus, one of the higher-ups responsible for the abuse called upon Him, He received him very kindly. That was always His way, so it can not be called inconsistent.

If he resents the fact that the Bulletin passed over a question of politeness to get at sin, he needs to re-read his Newman. In the Idea of a University, for instance, he will find: "The world is content with setting right the surface of things; the Church aims at regenerating the depths of the heart. She even begins with the beginning; and, as regards the multitude of her children, is never able to get beyond the beginning, but is continually employed in laying the foundation. She is engaged with what is essential, as previous and as introductory to the ornamental and attractive. She is curing men and keeping them clean of mortal sin; she is "treating of justice and chastity and the world to come;" she is insisting on faith and hope and honesty and the elements of charity; and has so much to do with precept, that she almost leaves to inspirations from Heaven to suggest what is of counsel and perfection. She aims at what is necessary rather than what is desirable..."

He may prefer a Church that preaches in terms of "beautiful and ugly" instead of "right and wrong." Dr. Fesdick is preaching that paganism to his John D. Rockefeller congregation down in New York at present. Newman found the same thing in the Anglican Church which he left. He says in his Saintliness the Standard of Christian Principles: "The national religion has many attractions; it leads to decency and order, propriety of conduct, justness of thought, beautiful domestic tastes; but it has not power to lead the multitude upward, nor to delineate for them the Heavenly City. It comes of mere nature, and its teaching is of nature. It uses religious words, of course, else it could not be called a religion; but it does not impress on the imagination, it does not engrave upon the heart, it does not inflict upon the conscience, the supernatural; it does not introduce into the popular mind any great ideas any great ideas, such as are to be recognized by one and all, as common property, and first principles or dogmas from which to start, to be taken for granted on all hands, and handed down as images and specimens of eternal truth from age to age...." And Gloomy Dean Inge, in his controversy with Belloc over Chesterton's conversion (vide The Atlantic Monthly) delineates his church in much the same terms as Newman does here.

Getting down to first principles, brushing aside the inconsequentials, is not evasiveness. Trying to carry water on both shoulders is evasiveness -- of principles. Our correspondent says he is a frequent communicant and a frequenter of rotten theatricals "If any man love Me, he will keep My commandments." To defend a show that makes light of the Sixth Commandment shows rotten principles or crass ignorance; the defender does not belong at the Altar Rail.

PRAYERS: Five sick relatives, two deceased persons, eight special intentions.