

News, Notes and Notions.

The Pan-Anglican Congress has shown a singular disregard of the revelations recently made in London, on good authority, regarding the number of "heathen" in New Zealand. A diagram has been published, in connection with the sitting of the Congress, illustrating the proportion of Anglican clergy to Christian and heathen population in different countries—the purpose of the object lesson being evidently to show in a striking fashion the need for missionary zeal and enterprise. Thus China and Korea are shown to have 7 bishops and 130 clergymen, ministering to the spiritual needs of 401,000,000 persons, of whom 400,000,000 are classed as heathens. Similarly, Japan, with 6 bishops and 100 clergymen, is credited with a population of 40,153,000, of whom 46,000,000 are heathens; while South Africa's 7,000,000 heathens and 2,500,000 Christians have their souls looked after by 10 bishops and 550 clergymen. Coming to New Zealand, we find its population given as 1,000,000, who are ministered to by 6 bishops and 320 clergymen. Strange to say, however, no division is made between the Christians and the heathens; and as the same lack of distinction is followed in the case of Great Britain, the presumption is that the whole of the population of these countries are classed as Christians. Now, this is either a curious oversight, or otherwise it is a distinct slap in the face to Bishop Nelligan, who made certain alarming statements, backed by statistics founded on his own observation, as to the large number of "heathen" growing up in New Zealand as the result of our terrible system of secular education. It is impossible to conceive that the Congress would deliberately question the facts and figures set forth so convincingly by the Bishop of Auckland in his impassioned indictment of our education system. It would seem, therefore, that the Church is more concerned about the black, brown, and yellow "heathen" than it is about the "white heathen" of New Zealand. This is very sad, if true. A sane Christian Imperialism would surely pay at least as much regard to the white subjects sunk in "paganism" as to the coloured brethren given over to heathen bondage. It is to be feared that the majority of the members of the Pan-Anglican Congress are "Little Englanders," and are as heedless of the spiritual welfare of the "blasted colonies" as the Little England politicians are of their material prosperity and advancement.

Miss Maud Allan, whose remarkable dancing has been for some time the chief sensation of the London theatrical and variety season, is meeting with the kind of hostility, which, judging from photographs, seemed inevitable sooner or later. She has been banned by the Manchester authorities for the same reason that La Milo's studies of nude statuary have been banned in many towns—a lack of conformity with existing conventional ideas of modesty or decency. Miss Allan and her manager are, of course, indignant at the action of the Manchester "uncoloured," and the suggestion that any of her display borders in the least degree upon the improper. So far as we can judge, there is only one item of her repertoire which gives cause of offence, and that is the Salome dance. Apart from the ghastliness of the conspicuous part played by a grisly human head—or what appears to be such—in this presentation of the well-known Scripture tragedy, even the case for the defence does not dispute the proposition that the amount of drapery worn for this particular feature of the programme is, to put it mildly, somewhat attenuated. But Miss Allan urges that this is necessary in order to preserve artistic fidelity to the original of the character who portrays. But, assuming that Miss Allan has obtained reliable information as to the nature of the garb, or lack of garb, in which Herod's daughter danced, we venture to submit that that is somewhat beside the point at issue. Other times, other manners. Modesty or decency is

largely a matter of convention, or gradually built-up custom; and what passed muster as within the bounds in the East nineteen hundred years ago will not necessarily pass the censor among an Anglo-Saxon people in the Twentieth Century. If the plea of fidelity to historic accuracy in garb were admitted as conclusive, some performer, even more daring than Miss Allan, might conceive the idea of further reducing the covering of the human figure to fit a scene in the Garden of Eden. The point that has to be considered in the case is the standard of decency which obtains to-day, after the many revisions through which it has passed in the intervening generations; and, according to that standard, Miss Maud Allan's Salome dance has appealed to Manchester authorities as a daring piece of reaction. Otherwise her terpsichorean achievements were an artistic triumph and revelation to which no objection could be taken. We suspect, however, that without "Salome" there would have been less of a furor, since that is essentially the sensational part of Miss Allan's repertoire.

It would seem that the resident of Vienna who does not wish to be out of pocket must keep early hours, for after ten o'clock he is taxed on entering his own house or apartment, or, for the matter of that, any house. The speergeld, or door-opening tax, is not peculiar to Vienna, but is also found in other capitals of the Continent. The two million residents of the Austrian city are practically imprisoned in their own strongholds from 10 o'clock in the evening until 6 the next morning. They may go in or out only by paying the equivalent of twopenny to the janitor, or, as he is styled there, the "housemaster." Vienna is built on the flat plan. Rich people and working people alike live in quarters of this description. The houses are large, having five or six floors, with four flats on a floor; so it is not unusual to find upward of a hundred persons living under one roof. There is a common entrance from the street, and after ten o'clock at night this door is bolted and barred. From ten to twelve all that go in or out must pay the tax of 2d. After twelve the charge is doubled. The tax must be paid every time one passes through the doorway without exception. One who has dined with a friend must, if he stays late, pay 2d. to get out of his friend's house, and 2d. to get into his own. A telegram in the night requires the payment of the tax before the messenger boy can enter. The house master also collects and keeps duplicate copies of forms, on which every individual in the house must report to the police his age, birthplace and religion, his exact occupation, and other personal details that the Austrian authorities insist on knowing.

An American paper says that feasts of reason are to take the place of "freak parties" in fashionable circles in the United States. If this means, not that "book teas" are to become the vogue, but that conversation is to be cultivated as a fine art, the change will certainly be for the better; and it is worth while to consider what are the conditions which the successful practice of the art in question requires. The first condition is that parties should be small; the second that talk should be general; the third that all the bored, and all the people who want either to flirt or to talk about golf or bridge, should be rigorously excluded. Those, mutatis mutandis, were the rules observed in the French salons in the golden age of talk, whether the hostess was Mademoiselle Lespinasse, or Madame de Staël, or Madame de Recamier. Alike at the dinner table and in the drawing-room each speaker in turn addressed the company, instead of exchanging banalities with his immediate neighbour; and no one, whether man or woman, who was thought likely to utter banalities obtained invitations to the gatherings. The result was the most brilliant talk that the world has ever listened to; and it remains to be seen whether America, even by the adoption of identical methods, will succeed in breaking the record.

President Roosevelt has furnished yet another striking instance of the multifarious uses of the "big stick." He has announced to all Government employees who fail to pay their grocery bills that they will be dismissed the service. The announcement, which has been made through the medium of a letter addressed by Mr. Secretary Loeb to the National Wholesale Grocers' Association, has fallen like a bomb-shell on the households of thousands of Government servants. The association has been confronted by an alarming development in the ledgers of its members caused by the unpaid bills which have been run up by wives of Government employees, the worst offenders being, it appears, clerks in post offices. The association sent a petition to White House asking the assistance of the Administration in the collection of its debts. The President immediately replied expressing his sympathy with the grocers and informing them that though there was no law in existence to compel payment of debts contracted by Civil Servants, he had sent a notice to all Departments to the effect that the failure of employees to settle their grocery bills would be deemed sufficient ground for dismissal.

The Milton commemoration, which will overshadow all other literary anniversaries of 1908, is not the only tercentenary worth noting this year. The same month of December will mark the three-hundredth anniversary of the death of John Dee, who is a little unfortunate in being remembered only as the sorcerer who won the favour of Queen Elizabeth. "Master Dee" was a ripe scholar and mathematician, much in advance of his time in the matter of reforming the Calendar, and deserves some place in our literary annals by reason of his seventy-nine completed works, though less than a score of these have been printed. He seems to have been as much sinned against as sinning in his pretended intercourse with the spirit world, his unscrupulous assistant Kelly producing "angels" who persuaded Dee that he must not only share his occult secrets with him, but his wife as well, Kelly apparently being ready enough to do likewise. The community of wives was no more successful than the search for the philosopher's stone, though Dee, in this last regard, sent Elizabeth a piece of metal which he declared had been cut from a warming pan and transmuted into gold. Perhaps the cautious Elizabeth considered this insufficient proof of his success, for she disappointed him in many promises of preferment, and he died miserably poor.

A few days ago the door keeper of a house in Razryezja-street, St. Petersburg, was astounded to see a man jump from a window in the third story of the building and then, apparently uninjured, proceed at a brisk pace along the street. It took some time for the doorkeeper to recover from his astonishment, but when he did, he at once started in pursuit, for it seemed to him that the fugitive must be either a dynamiter or a burglar. Several other doorkeepers joined in the pursuit—for in Russia the doorkeeper has the powers of a constable—and at the corner of Glazova-street the unknown one was seized and handed over to the police. He turned out to be a Japanese called Yokado, eighteen years of age, and a member of a troupe of Japanese acrobats just then performing in St. Petersburg. He explained that one of the servants in the flat where he had a room had gone away with the key after locking the door, probably under the impression that there was nobody in the house. Yokado waited more than an hour for her return, and then, fearing that he would be late at the music-hall where he was performing, made the perilous jump which had so astonished the neighbourhood.

Some time ago, Sir Robert Ball, the famous astronomer, had a visit from an Irishman, who asked to be allowed to see the moon through the telescope. The astronomer explained that he would be delighted to comply with his request, only as it was broad daylight it would be impossible to do so just then. "However, if you will come again to-night," he added, "I will give you a good view, for it promises to be a very clear sky." "Indeed, an' phwat's the good o' that, at all!" asked the Irishman in disgust. "Sure, an' at night it's meself that can

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