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Current Topics

AT HOME & ABROAD.

THE following passage occurred in a letter signed "Erin-go-Bragh," and which appeared, in connection with a certain correspondence that does not otherwise concern us, in the *Daily Times* of last Saturday:—"Where is now the seed of those whom Cromwell tried to wipe out? History tells us. There are still in Ireland over five millions; America, twelve millions; and taking in the East and West Indies, Australia, and New Zealand, about five hundred thousand. If Oliver Cromwell's mission was to banish the Irish, the Almighty has turned his evil doings into much good for the rest of mankind. The Irish race have carried the brightness of their intellect and the light of their genius, which, thank God, Cromwell could not take from them, into all parts of the globe, and have succeeded in introducing Christianity in all its purity and truth wherever the foot of man has trodden. And allow me to inform "X.Y.Z." that wherever in Ireland he pulled down or plundered a Church consecrated to the living God, one more beautiful still has arisen in its place, and on nearly every spot where he shed the blood of Ireland's holy bishops and priests, churches have been erected shining in full splendour; for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and Ireland, the land of saints and scholars, has outlived the tyrant's persecutions." The writer speaks well—those who may justly be styled "Scourge of God" do not perform their work so imperfectly. Cromwell walked in the footsteps of Valens and Hunneric. Like them, he ravened in the fury of his heresy, and persecuted the Catholic Church; and, like them, he has passed away to that tribunal where we dare not follow him so much as in thought. All that remains of him is a blood-stained memory, but the Church, which he sought to injure, is the richer for his deeds by the possession of an additional band of martyrs. Persecution has ever been a characteristic of heresy, both ancient and modern. With two exceptions, says Lecky, "all the most eminent Reformers advocated persecution, and in nearly every country where their boasted reformation triumphed, the result is to be mainly attributed to coercion." But yet it did not kill the Catholic faith; everywhere a remnant remained steadfast. It was far otherwise with Protestantism. The Church does not sanction "aggressive intolerance." It has no where entered a country, and commanded that the religious rites celebrated there, should cease by virtue of the strong arm. This it was reserved for the "Reformation" to inaugurate:—"When the Reformation triumphed in Scotland," says Lecky again, "One of its first fruits was a law prohibiting any priest from celebrating, or any worshipper from hearing Mass, under pain of the confiscation of his goods for the first offence, of exile for the second, and of death for the third." (History of Rationalism, vol. ii., p. 45.) There is, however, a species of intolerance which the Church does sanction; it is that which is described as "protective intolerance," and which has for its end the preservation of a nation's unity of religion—a matter which the civil Government is also concerned to preserve, wherever it exists, since experience fully teaches that it cannot be broken without grave and dangerous disturbances of society. But wherever Protestantism has been thus discountenanced it has failed to maintain its place. In the sixteenth century, for instance, it bade fair at one time to make good its footing in Spain, but before repression it faded utterly away. Balines, whom we follow, continues:—"What has been said of Spain may be applied to Portugal and Italy, so that Protestantism was not able to hold its own in any of the countries, in which it found itself compelled to suffer a well sustained opposition. Wherever men were seriously determined to extirpate it, it was extirpated; presenting in this a notable contrast with Catholicity, which, even in the countries where it suffered the greatest shocks, has always been preserved, without its persecutors being able to effect its total extinction. In confirmation of this truth, recollect what has happened in Great Britain." (Letters to a Septic—Macdonald's translation, page 105.) If the verdict of Gamaliel be esteemed a true one,—and we fancy there are few Christians who will venture to contradict it,—Cromwell, by his slaughters in Ireland has left it on record that he was "found

even to fight against God," and—as it has been well pointed out by the correspondent to whom we have referred—wherever the Irish race exists in prosperity and faithfulness to their ancient creed, there is seen a monument of his impiety and its failure.

THE inquiry into the manner of the teaching of history in the Kaiapoi school, made by the Secretary of the Canterbury Board of Education, has resulted, as we expected it would result, in the acquittal of the parties accused. It would appear that the method pursued in giving the lessons referred to is for the pupils to take names, events, and dates from the table given in a work entitled "Brewers' Outlines of English History," and that then the teachers step in with their accumulated erudition and supply the various details. We can fancy how brilliant a historical lecture would thus be delivered by a man possessed of just sufficient education to have profited by the scanty lessons contained in class books, and unable to conceive that there might possibly be another side to the vilely bigoted views put forward. Mr. Rayner, the head-master, we conclude, swears by Collier; since, although it appears he has never read the book in his school, he referred to it in his letter to the Chairman of the School Committee, and justified his teaching by appealing to the lessons it contains. It is, therefore, natural for us to suppose that it is thence he has derived the sprit of his teaching, even if its letter immediately springs from the cultivated depths of his own mind. As to the manner of Mr. Matthews', the assistant teacher's, catechetical instructions, there is no room left for us to doubt. We have it under his own hand that he considers he would be neglecting his duty were he not to comply with the desires of those parents who, alarmed by the signs of the times, "wish their children to be fore-armed against superstition, credulity, and priestly tyranny." It is quite evident that for such a man as this to attempt an explanation of any historical facts relative to Catholic matters, must be for him to launch out into a sea of the most unmitigated calumny. If any thing, we should say that Mr. Lynskey's boy has put it very mildly, in accusing him of saying "that the suppression of monasteries did good, because men got together, and grew very bad in them." The Board of Education, however, did not consider that the charges had been proved by the very superficial investigation of their Secretary, and notwithstanding their gentle recommendation—intended, evidently, like the whole inquiry, as a mere concession to appearances—that "teachers should carefully guard against dealing with questions of history in a manner which might be offensive to any section of the community"—the teaching at Kaiapoi may continue of such a nature as to entitle it to the honourable distinction that has been claimed for it—that of being "shore lights" to warn the rising generation off the shoals of Rome.

PRINCE BISMARCK, in an interview with certain Protestant ministers of Wurtemberg, has explained to them the circumstances which led to the passing of the May laws. It was owing to the influence of the Radziwill family with King Frederick William IV. that the Catholic Church was allowed a privileged position in Prussia. In the troublous days of 1848 a special Catholic department was established in the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs to regulate the relations between Church and State. The members of this department were mere serfs to the Radziwill family, and an opportunity was thus afforded to soft-spoken benevolent Jesuits of sidling into the Government. If we may not discern here a petty jealousy of the princely family alluded to—one of the most elevated in the kingdom and connected, some generation or two back, by marriage with the royal house—at least the astute Chancellor might have been supposed capable of inventing some pretext that would have possessed the merit of originality. It sounds more ordinary drive, quite unworthy of his talents, to echo the trite cry of "Jesuit," and to fail in devising a fresher pretence for persecution than that so often pressed into this service during the last three centuries. It, however, affords a notable testimony in favour of the system oppressed by this arch-conspirator, that he has been able to advance nothing more damaging against it than a vulgar appeal to a nick-name—for used as its adversaries use it, notwithstanding the sanctity of its meaning, we can look upon the name alluded to as nothing short of this—and that he has been able only to cite in justification the imaginary misdemeanours of that Society, against whom, much as has been advanced, evidence has never been adduced to an amount that would avail to convict a