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Current Topics

AT HOME & ABROAD.



THE world is waiting with anxiety to learn whom the decision of the conclave will place upon the throne of the Fisherman. The non-Catholic world has already, during the lifetime of the great and good Pontiff, now taken away from us in the Providence of God, made many predictions on the subject, and, out of their ignorance, promoted to the vacant seat sundry of the cardinals. The London *Times* has declared for Cardinal Panebianco. Signor Bonghi has given, as his list of *Papabili*—Cardinals Moricheni, De Luca, Bilio, Monaco la Valletta, Simeoni, Franchi and Pecci, and we have frequently heard Cardinal Manning announced as the next Pope. We make no decision, and form no conjecture of whom it will be. It may be now as in 1846, when he was elected, whose dear memory all faithful Catholics must ever cherish in their hearts, that one who has escaped the expectations of all will be found the Vicar of Christ, and that the Catholic world will again rejoice at beholding virtues, fitted even to adorn so high a station, but which humility has hitherto endeavoured to conceal, displayed upon the chair of Peter. We doubt not but that the conclave will be guided by God to make choice of a Pope specially qualified to lead the Church amidst the perils of her position, and who will be firm as his predecessor, and alike formidable to the enemies of religion. The hopes of the anti-Catholic world are now bent upon the election of a Pope who would consent to make a compromise with the revolution, to relinquish the cause for which Pius IX. lived a life of martyrdom, and who would abandon his claim to the Temporal Power. Such a Pope can exist only in the imaginations of the infidels, the triple crown will never rest on such a head. The objections of Bonghi to Cardinal Manning are founded on the point alluded to—"At the present moment," he says, "one of the weightiest points on which the Sacred College will have to deliberate is this—Of what consequence is the Temporal Power in the exercise of the spiritual authority of the Church? Is it of such moment that the Pontificate should consider it the main aim and end of its policy?" And these two questions are already prejudged by Manning in his recent writings on the independence of the Holy See, where both are met with an affirmative answer." A like answer will be given by the successor of Pius IX., whoever he may be, Cardinal Manning or another, we know not whom. The Pope will not bear the stigma of "liberal." The right of *veto* has been rescinded; the present conclave will not even be influenced by this light restriction, and we look forward with confidence to a glorious result of their untrammelled election. Open violence only could interfere with the sitting of the august assembly, and that, we believe, will not under present circumstances be resorted to. We may, therefore, hope in the course of the next few weeks, to hear of the great vacancy being filled by the election of one worthy to succeed Pope Pius IX.—a higher or a holier we need not wish for.

WE perceive by a paragraph in an English paper that the martyred Dr. Slade has been expelled from Berlin. An opportunity is thus afforded our Dunedin Freethinkers of securing the services of another leader. The doctor is a man of wonderful resources. The freedom of his thought, moreover, is quite unlimited, although that of his practices seems occasionally interfered with, unfairly no doubt, by the laws of the countries which he honours with his presence. He would be found an inestimable acquisition by those of our enlightened fellow-colonists who are engaged in the noble work of endeavouring to kick against the trammels of the past,—"*Pros kontra laikizmin.*" It will be an inexcusable oversight in our school of "frog-spawn" philosophers if they do not strive to secure for themselves so valuable an instructor.

A MOVEMENT is now on foot which is deserving of the support of all reasonable citizens. It is that which has for its object the early closing of houses of business, so that those employees engaged in them may be admitted to the privileges of others who are obliged to labour in order to gain a livelihood. We do not consider

it necessary to enter upon any very long or intricate course of arguments for the purpose of recommending to the patronage of the public the movement in question, the excellence of its object must be apparent to all, and we can not fancy any-one so blindly selfish as to resist it. It must be admitted that it is a gross injustice to force any class of men to suffer a confinement in close warehouses, where the atmosphere is destructive to health, during prolonged hours, while the remedy lies within the easy reach of their neighbours. It is not now a question between employer and employee, the matter lies between both and the general public. So long as these will persist in deferring the time chosen by them in which to make their purchases to unreasonable hours, so long will the proprietors of business establishments be compelled to keep them open to suit the convenience of their customers, and so long will employers have to labour unreasonably to the deterioration of their mental and bodily powers. The matter is one for public consideration, and one in which the right-feeling of the public should consent to submit to even a trifling inconvenience, in order to remedy a crying evil, for which they are now accountable.

MARTYRDOM has, we perceive, won for Mr. G. E. Barton a legislative crown. We agree indeed in the opinion that the action of the judges in the case of the gentleman referred to was ill judged, and absurd in the extreme. It has covered them with ridicule, but we doubt very much as to whether it has, at the same time, invested their victim with a veritable robe of glory. We fancy that it would take a good deal in the way of purgation to cleanse Mr. G. E. Barton from the traces of his former obliquities, and whatever may be the purifying powers of the prison at Wellington, we fear they are hardly equal to so much. We shall be glad to find that we are in error, and that the member who is now in durance for an attempt at introducing "strange experiences" into a court of justice, will be as ardent in an endeavour to make matters hitherto unknown to it familiar to the Assembly, and that he may succeed in inducing that august body to pursue truth and justice in all its measures. We, however, fear that the honourable member will be found even more out of place amongst right-minded legislators, than he is in gaol, and that the electors who have returned him for their city may come to recognise that they have acted still more foolishly than the judges, and much more to the injury of the public weal.

COMING TO PASS.

THE telephone is not yet perfect enough for general use in telegraphy. It requires complete isolation of each wire used, unless the sound is to vanish in a confused concert; and until this defect has been overcome it can only be made available on lines containing but one wire which means practically that its area of operations will be very limited. *Appropos* to an exhibition of its powers at Malines, a French paper recalls an amusing incident. Some years ago a poor peasant woman, who had a son in the army at a distant garrison town, entered the telegraph office. She put down a franc, and asked the clerk to tell the soldier that she was waiting to speak to him. Of course the telegraphist laughed, and informed her that she mistook the functions of his instrument. "Put a message on paper," he said; "I will transmit it to your son. His answer will come, and I will take it down on paper for you." The good woman was indignant, and replied rather sharply: "I cannot write, monsieur, but I can speak, and I wish to say something to Baptiste which it is not the business of others to hear. Monsieur, he will listen with pleasure to the voice of the mother he loves, and I will feel joyful at hearing the voice of my boy." We believe the clerk did not laugh again, but pitied the creature, who was as simple as she was affectionate. That evening she recounted her misfortune to her neighbours of the village, and they smiled at her extraordinary conceit, and the anger she felt. Would they smile now? Such was the thought of a Malines journalist as he conversed with friends far off, listened to music transmitted by the immobile metal, and heard the human voice take every cadence of surprise, joy, discontent, and reproach. The poor peasant woman wanted something at which wiser people waxed hilarious, and behold it is realised to-day.

THE State Prosecutor in Cologne has again launched a most disgraceful writ of arrest against the Archbishop of Cologne, whom he describes like a common criminal. The document concludes with this sentence: "I therefore request the police authorities to watch for the said Melchers, to arrest him when found, and to bring him into my presence."