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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

ODDS AND  
ENDS.

THE funeral of the late Rev Dr Stuart, which took place on Wednesday, the 16th inst., was attended by crowds of people, representing all classes and denominations of the community. The Very Rev Father Lynch, Rector of St Joseph's Cathedral, representing the Bishop; and the Rev Father Murphy, joined the procession in the street and followed the remains to the cemetery. The funeral was certainly the largest that had ever been witnessed in this city, and it is safe to predict, that, of its kind, nothing on so vast a scale will be seen here again. The deceased had belonged to a state of things gone by, but whose memories and associations, though in their turn dying out, were still sufficiently strong to be manifested. The religious spirit of the past, too, now lingering faintly, is ere long destined completely to expire. No Protestant minister in Dunedin will ever again hold the place that was occupied here by Dr Stuart. For those of us who realised this, the funeral took something more than the accustomed tone of solemnity. It was the last great Christian demonstration that our non-Catholic fellow-citizens would ever make, and in the passing away of any form of Christianity there is much that is ominous and gloomy. The funeral, in a manner, was that of a Christian past as well as of a dead minister.

Our contemporary, the *Auckland Weekly Standard*, discusses, though not, he says, with controversial intent, an article in praise of clerical celibacy recently quoted by us from an Anglican publication. Our *Auckland* contemporary, on the contrary, overflows with praise of matrimony of all kinds. He thinks a man is even the better of having a wife to help him to starve. The article quoted by us speaks, among the rest, of the misery of a married man's battle with the wolf at the door, which, it says, is worse than almost any torture. "He is welcome to his choice," says the *Standard*, "but of the two give us the latter (the wolf) with a sweet and sympathising feminine partner." But that is too charming for prose. Our contemporary should have given it to us in poetry. Meantime the parson himself may be divided in his views as to the matter referred to. There was, for example, an elderly divine, a good many years ago—fifty or sixty at least—in the South of Ireland, who had survived three wives. He was wont to describe them, neatly and piously, as "the world, the flesh, and the devil." The first had been a lady of fashion, fond of company and seldom at home. The second was a notable housewife, who looked after her cook and kept things comfortable. The third had had a temper, and life with her had been that of cat and dog. The writer in the *Standard* testifies highly to his personal experience of clergymen's wives, and the aid they give their rev husbands. For our own part, we recall only one marked exception. It was that of the wife of a rector during the famine of the later "forties" in Ireland. He, we may remark in passing, was an Englishman, a man of great benevolence—and she? Well, her opposition to her husband's efforts for the relief of the starving poor landed him in a mad-house, but fortunately only for a time. However, though we quoted the article referred to, *faute de mieux* perhaps, we had no desire whatever to reflect adversely on the matrimonial conditions and prospects of the clergy of the Church of England, and are now as little disposed for controversy on the point as is our contemporary.

A curious case has recently been heard at Parramatta, N.S.W. in which some infringement of the rights of liberty of conscience seems to have taken place. The proceedings, however, were quite in accordance with law—a law of the reign of King Charles II. The defendants were two men belonging to the sect of the "Seventh Day Adventists," and the offence charged against them was that of grubbing up stumps and burning off on Sundays. Their defence was that they observed as a Sabbath the seventh day—that is Saturday, and that they did not think they would be justified in remaining idle for two days in the week. They were, nevertheless, sentenced to a fine of 5s, and "to be set publicly in the stocks for two hours." The second portion of the sentence was greeted by the audience present in the court with laughter—which was suppressed with great severity

and dignity by the magistrate. And, in fact, we remember seeing some thirty-eight years ago, stocks that still remained. It was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Surringhill, a village on the borders of Surrey and Berkshire, and around which, notwithstanding the comparative closeness of London, there then lingered retired nooks and lonely heaths. The old stocks in question were shown as a curiosity of which the neighbours seemed rather proud. They were not suggestive of comfort. There was a stool on which the delinquent sat, and, in front of it, supported by a frame, were two boards, so placed, edgeways, that the upper could be lifted to give admission into holes, made half in one board half in the other, of the offender's ankles, leaving his legs stretched and his feet sticking out on the other side. When the top board was lowered it was fastened down, locked by a padlock, and the beadle remained master of the situation. The stocks stood in the open air, and must have afforded a pastime to the boys of the period. It should take a good deal of magisterial severity and dignity to suppress the sensation that must arise among the orange groves of Parramatta were any culprit now to be so punished there. The invocation of the stocks, nevertheless, was not altogether out of place in a case in which men were punished for availing themselves of their privilege of private interpretation of Holy Scripture and of acting upon it. In fact hardly any case, if it be fully considered, can make the pretences of Protestantism seem more absurd.

A curious case, too, is pending at Wellington. It is one in which a spiritualist's medium, named Hackett, and his sister, are being prosecuted for imposture. The offence is said to have taken place at a *seance* held at Petone—where gauze and luscious oil are described as having been made to represent spirits. A more curious charge brought against Hackett, doubtless also in accordance with some antiquated law—is that of having pretended to exercise enchantment and have communion with the spirits of the dead. This is a charge of a much wider interest, and which concerns many people who are capable of saying a good deal on the subject. Mr Stead, for example, will possibly make himself heard with regard to it. As to the prosecution of mediums, beyond the punishment of the individual cheat, very little is to be hoped from it. It has taken place over and over again, without any other effect. Nay, some leaders of high repute among spiritualists admit that deception is common, and, considering the nature of the case, inevitable. They even defend and sympathise with mediums who have been detected in fraud. As to the victims deceived, considering the frequent exposures made, and the character of the communications into which they enter, they seem deserving of very little commiseration.

The movement for the preservation and revival of the Irish language continues active, and if influence and earnestness on the part of those who are engaged in it ensure success, its result is certain. At a congress recently held at the Mansion House in Dublin for its promotion, many influential men were present, and wighty arguments were advanced. One of the speakers said of the language: "It was a beautiful tongue. All the wit and the cleverness, and the sparkling intelligence, and the power, and the passion of the Irish people were embodied in it." The eminent Celtic scholar, Dr Douglas Hyde, testified as to the intellectual bearing of the language on those who made use of it. He contrasted the men of more advanced years, those of 40 or 50 years of age, who had received no education, or only that of the hedge school, yet who were infinitely more intelligent, more pleasant companions, and better educated, in the higher sense of the word, than their children. "If one asked the old people the name of a cloud in the sky, the name of a plant, the name of a small bird, they could give it to them and knew all about these things, but the young people who had been taught in English were hopelessly ignorant about all these matters." The McGillicuddy attributed to the decay of the Irish language Ireland's prospect of losing her place among the nations of the earth.—A little before the sitting of this congress in Dublin, at a meeting held in Providence, Rhode Island, Professor Alonzo Williams, of Brown University, urged upon scholars the necessity of studying Celtic. It had lately been found necessary, he said, to take up the study in connection with that of Gothic. The study, he explained, was generally necessary because of the construction and literature of the language, and