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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

ODDS AND
ENDS.

OBVIOUS enough, Mr Dean, if that is your meaning, but not obvious otherwise. We allude to a remark made a day or two ago at the Anglican Synod of Dunedin by the Very Rev Dean Fitchett.

The Very Rev Dean said:—"It was obvious that the desire of the Roman Catholic Church was to get complete control of the child's life and to prevent it from associating with children of other religious bodies." Undoubtedly the Church desires to control the religious life of all her members, adults as well as children. To do so is her privilege and her duty. So far, therefore, as that was Dean Fitchett's meaning his assertion was true. Quite as undoubtedly, however, the Church does not desire to prevent her children from associating in everything lawful, except religion, with the children of other denominations. So far as the contrary was Dean Fitchett's meaning he was mistaken. It is charitable to hope that the Dean was mistaken and not actuated by malice prepense.

It is further obvious to Dean Fitchett that the Catholic Church could not provide its own schools. "He should imagine, therefore," he said, "that the New South Wales system"—a system providing for religious teaching in the schools by ministers or other religious teachers—"might there do something for the Roman Catholics." The imagination, nevertheless, is a hazardous thing to rely on. A divine of Dean Fitchett's standing might be expected to follow a surer guide.

As a matter of fact, the Church will accept no compromise. No doubt she finds a difficulty in providing her own schools, but her members, recognising their religion as worthy of sacrifice, will continue as heretofore—and not without a considerable measure of success to do their best.

Mr Dean proposes, too, that the block-vote should be called into play to bring about the mild dilution of godlessness that would satisfy the easy consciences of which he is himself a representative.

He explains that nothing can be done in the matter until the laity of the Church of England understand that the clergy are in earnest, and make the question paramount at the hustings. If the matter depends on this, then, secularists may still possess their souls in peace. We may give so much credit to the understanding of the laity of the Church of England.

A lay member of the Synod, meantime, put the matter very simply indeed—in more, perhaps, than one sense of the words. In the Bible," he said, "there was not any occasion to mention any sect but simply to put before the pupils the truths contained therein." The question, nevertheless, is to determine what those truths are. What else, we should like to know, has brought the innumerable sects into existence?

Dean Fitchett had drawn on his imagination. This speaker—Mr A. M. Barnett, drew on his recollection. In certain schools where the Bible was read and which he had attended as a child—beginning at the tender age of six—he said, "so far as his recollection served him he had never heard a word that would hurt the feelings of anybody."

The speaker drew a contrast between the teaching of the Bible and that of history. When, four years ago, he entered the Waitahuna Gully school as its master, he added, every Roman Catholic child left the room when he opened the history book.

He further mentioned that Sir Robert Stout had been his first Biblical instructor. It will be interesting to know who gives him his first lesson in common sense.

Mr Barnett's recollection of the happy hours of childhood, nevertheless, may be compared, and not altogether unfavourably, with the imagination of the Very Rev Dean Fitchett as that of a fully developed and doubly qualified divine.

Never before was the like of it heard—never, at least, since, as Father Prout chronicles, Danny Mullins made leather breeches and other fittings of the same material in the town of Cork.

Denny Mullins said he knew little about the ancient Greeks, "except what he had read in an author called Pope's 'Homer.'" There, explained Denny, he had read that they were 'well-gaitered' and he had learned to respect them.

Our allusion, we need hardly say, is to our festive friend "Civia," who, in one of his notes this week, expresses a somewhat similar sentiment—and, in fact, may we not rank Dean Fitchett as a kind of modern Greek? For that we have the oft repeated claim of Dr Nevill—"Dean Fitchett's gaitered calves," says "Civia," "have become an institution." Surely a privileged and familiar hand alone should thus playfully deal with dignitaries.

A curious people, too, are the French—a writer of notes hard up for matter, be it understood, must say much that is *à propos* of nothing. We have, for example heard among these French people of strange instances of bravado. Here is a couple. The one is rather grim; the other is of a lighter kind.

It is some thirty-five or forty years ago since all Europe was horrified by a murder which had been committed in Paris by a man of high rank. He had, under circumstances of especial brutality, murdered his wife. In after years the son of this unhappy pair—knowing the stigma that lay upon his name, and determined to brave it out—was wont to distribute among his friends and acquaintances his photograph, with the title he had inherited from his red-handed father written in red ink beneath the picture.

The other instance was that of a lady, also of high rank—a distinguished leader of fashion under the Third Empire. It happened that one of her admirers at his death, bequeathed to her a valuable collection—antiquities, curiosities, objects of art—something, at any rate, choice and rare. The lady's tastes, however, lay in a different direction, and the money value was what she prized. Accordingly she had an auction called and the whole lot sold off. But this provoked the derision of the set in which the lady moved, and of which she was a leader. She faced the situation bravely. She issued invitations for a fancy-ball—and herself appeared on the occasion as a personification of *La Vente*.

To return, however, to Denny Mullins, "Civia," and Dean Fitchett. If our festive friend has not performed for the Dunedin public towards Dean Fitchett's "gaitered calves" the same office that an author called Pope's "Homer" performed for Denny Mullins towards the ancient Greeks and taught his public to respect them, he has at least placed them beyond the reach of other wits. The Dean's gaiters are now his exclusive property.

Whatever may be the outcome of the existing situation—one of great confusion and no little menaces—in Turkey—there is hardly any sign of the times more notable than the formation of a Young Turkish party. It will be curious to watch the leaven of progress thus introduced into the stagnation of Mohammedanism and the results which it may bring about. The advanced spirit by which the party in question is actuated appears evident in the manifesto which they have issued—and in which, we are told, they appeal to the nations to assist in a reform of the Turkish Empire—without regard to race or to religion. This, indeed, marks a departure from the time-honoured tracks.

History has once more repeated itself—fortunately, nevertheless, with some modifications. A man has been drowned at Melbourne in

COMPARE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF STICKS.
Smoke T. C. Williams' JUNO. Smoke.