

Both these suppositions are absurdly erroneous. It is true that his presence on such occasions is unavoidable. But very few people—including even the bride—pay any particular attention to him. Prospective bridegrooms will do well to make a note of all this. It is a bit of practical wisdom snapped up at a few odd hundreds of marriages here and there. It may diminish their nervousness on the wedding morn. It will not remove it altogether. In his *Vanity Fair* Thackeray says: 'After three or four marriage ceremonies you get accustomed to it, no doubt, but the first dip, everybody allows, is awful.'

However, that is mainly a friendly growl over some of our wedding customs. It would be difficult to conceive a greater rudeness than the widely-prevailing custom of rice throwing. I have witnessed it for eleven years past, and know it causes more or less keen distress to the newly-wedded pair. It advertises them as such along their honeymoon journey. And it makes a mess of the church grounds. I do not know whether this is generally, or at all, true; but it is whispered that rice-throwing is not absolutely always free from a *suspicion* of vindictiveness, and that the biggest handfuls are generally thrown with the greatest initial velocity, by the rejected male or female rivals of the bridegroom or the bride. The newly devised and much more objectionable *confetti* are said to be replacing rice as a promoter of protanity and discomfort at weddings. We are apparently getting back towards the brazen age of slipper-throwing. Within the memory of living persons a well-aimed slipper came with a sounding thwack against the cranium of the male half of a happy pair in England. As a result, their wedding closed somewhat after the fashion of that of the fair Maud of Malahide,

Who sank on the meadow—in one morning-tide
A wife and a widow, a maid and a bride.

The new *confetti*-throwing—and, for that matter, the older superstitious rice-throwing—are but little less barbarous in their way than the custom prevalent in parts of Prussia of shying broken crockery at the newly-wedded couple. Is it not time, for Catholics at least, to disassociate superstition and rudeness from the solemn conferring of one of the Sacraments of the Church?

UNCONSCIOUS IRONY, like unconscious wit, often gives a brilliant sparkle. The advertising columns of a daily paper are about as unlikely a place as any on earth to search for

either. It is almost as bad as seeking for grapes on thorns or figs on thistles. But you sometimes drop across a gem like the following, which appeared in an Australian daily:—

'FOR SALE, fine upstanding horse, rising five, suitable for doctor or undertaker.'

A Dunedin contemporary recently published the following on its front page under the heading of

'AMUSEMENTS.

'Salvation Army. Wonderful account of the life and conversion of Captain Hill, converted policeman! Thrilling incidents of police life in London.' In the Ferguslie Hall, N.E. Valley. Thursday, April 27, 8 p.m. Admission 6d.'

You know Tom Moore's comparison of hope
LAIRY GOLD. to the bird in the *Arabian Nights*—

Has Hope, like the bird in the story,
That flitted from tree to tree
With the talisman's glittering glory—
Has Hope been that bird to thee?
On branch after branch alighting,
The gem did she still display.
And, when nearest and most inviting,
Then waft the fair gem away!

Such has been the hope of the legions of undoubted cranks and the scores of genuine scientists as well, who down the long drift of ages have stood with stifled breath and pallid face over the fuming crucible in the endeavour to transmute scraps of leaden gutters and broken kettles into glistening ingots of mint gold. Success has ever been almost in sight of their straining vision—the coveted talisman almost in their grasp; but never quite. Alas!

The little more, and how much it is!
The little less, and what worlds away!

Poor, toil-weary children of a larger growth that bit by bit opened up the field of modern chemistry in the mad race to capture the end of a rainbow! Once and again, and ever so many times again, there rang out the cry: 'Eureka!' False every time! For instance, Kuineir's *Journey through Asia Minor, &c.*, tells of an Arabian philosopher who is alleged to have turned a piece of lead into solid gold in the presence of Mr. Colquhoun, the acting British Resident at Bassora. 'The gold,' says Kuineir, 'was subsequently valued at ninety piastres in the bazaar, or market place of the city. Just when the story becomes interesting, and one is left doubting as to whether the philosopher was a glorified alchemist or merely a

smart conjurer, he was spirited away in the darkness of the night by the Sheik of Grane, and the city of Caliph Omar saw him no more.

Our later alchemists are less ambitious. They are shy of iron pots and compo gas-pipes, and baser metals generally, and focus their surplus energies on well-meant attempts to turn silver into gold. In 1893, Mr. Carey Lea claimed to have produced from silver a strange hybrid. Its physical properties were very like those of gold, its chemical properties those of silver. Edison, the great northern wizard of electricity, produced another metallic 'cross.' Tesla harnessed the X-rays to the contract with a similar result. Professor Reimsen, of the John Hopkins University (U.S.A.) is still hard at work in the same direction (results if any) unknown. Dr. Emmens, of New York—the inventor of the high explosive Emmensite—claimed to have produced from Mexican dollars a metal so strongly resembling gold that he named it argentaurum or silver-gold. This was towards the close of 1896. The 'Argentaurum Syndicate' was formed to work the new discovery. Scientific journals—French, English, and American—devoted odd roods of paper to the process which was to have realised the long-drawn dream of the middle ages. But it is still the same old bird of the story that flitted from tree to tree. It holds the talisman in its beak still, and has flitted to another tree, with Prince Man still in hopeful pursuit. All went smoothly with the Emmens business. The gold-transmutation seemed to be getting 'a bid for a day,' when, one fine morning—and for a good many mornings—the *New York Herald* challenged Dr. Emmens to a scientific test of his machine. The Doctor hemmed and hawed and demanded impossible conditions—including a preposterously large sum of money down—before he would condescend to treat a single Mexican dollar. That is only a few weeks ago. People do not take so much interest in argentaurum now. And the gold miners up Central Otago and on the West Coast and away on the Thames, and Heaven knows where else, may sleep soundly o' nights once more and not dream uneasy dreams of modern alchemists and argentaurum.

OUR friends the Orangemen used to have
THEY WINNA only one crowning grievance: the un-
STAND IT. speakable Papist. He was the double-

concentrated quintessence of abysmal wickedness. Within the past few years, however, they have discovered hooves, horns, and tail in the Ritualist. They are consequently happy in a dismal way, and are bestowing upon the High Church clergymen a tolerably high percentage of the fetid favours which they had hitherto reserved almost exclusively for the children of the Mistress of Abominations—that is to say, of the Catholic Church.

An amusing instance of the animosity of the average 'son of William' to Ritualism or to anything savouring of 'truckling to Rome'—that is the expression commonly used in lodge literature—is given by a correspondent in the *Church Times* (Anglican). St. Clement's Church, Belfast, is the one referred to in last week's 'Current Topics' as the place where the anti-Ritualistic crusade reached its maximum of uproar and general confusion. It was even threatened with total demolition by an enraged mob composed chiefly of 'lambs' from Sandy Row. The writer in the *Church Times* tells the following tale.—

While lately travelling by train through part of Munster, I met a Northern Orangemen, who seemed rather a castaway in that region. Nevertheless, full of his subject, he began to talk of St. Clement's, Belfast. I regret that I can do such imperfect justice to his remarks, but the following is the substance:—

'A suppose ye've heard tell of yon man Peoples in Belfast?'

'Yes.'

'He's a terrible man. A went to his church twice maself.'

'But with what do you find fault?'

'Find fault! Why he comes into church wi' his hands pressed palm to palm, and his eyes lookin' atore him at naethin', an' he has two wee boys for a choir, and ye'd think he was at the head of a regiment.'

'But what is the harm in that?'

'Harm! Can ye no see the harm? He's jeest like an oul' priest. I tell ye the Belfast men will not stand it. He giv oot a hymn to the Virgin Mary, too, an' I hissed him mysel', man; I did that. There was some folk late comin' into the church; he took oot his watch; half-an-hour late sez he, nice time to be attendin' divine service; jeest for all the world like an oul' priest. They sent roon the plate and they got tuppence, I counted it meself.'

'Well, what else?'

'Well, man, he goed up into the pulpit and he niver said a prayer, but he called oot, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Was the like iver heard tell o'?' but I tell ye the Belfast people dinna stand it. He disna' preach the Gospel at all. He says the Church sez this an' the