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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE DREDGING BOOM. A SHORT time ago a speculating medico made the following remark on the gold-dredging boom in Otago: 'Twelve months ago you couldn't float a cork in Dunedin;

now you could float a bar of iron.' The phenomenal success of the Hartley and Riley claim and the widening knowledge of the extent of gold-bearing rivers in Otago have set the pulse of speculators beating at the double with the dredging fever. The boom goes gaily on. Every week new ventures are being placed upon the market, and the shares are gobbled up without examination or inquiry, just as your greedy adjutant bird gulps down with perfect impartiality a healthy frog, a chunk of quartz, or a twelve-penny nail. Thus far flotations have been, as far as we know, of the kind called 'straight.' But a would-be purchaser of a 'claim' published a warning note in Saturday's Dunedin dailies, which should make intending investors deal with new ventures on their merits, even though they may not follow the extreme counsel of Mark Twain, who declared that 'there are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate—when he can afford it and when he can't.'

A PEN-DUEL IN AUCKLAND.

A CONTROVERSY on the religion of the Early British Church has been wagging its tongue for some time past in Auckland. A writer who conceals his identity under the pen-name 'Justitia' holds the right end of the discus-

sion in so far as he maintains the thesis that the Early British Church was Roman in doctrine and liturgy, that it believed in bishops, priests, deacons, sub-deacons, etc., in the primacy of the Pope, the Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers for the dead, intercession of saints, anointing with holy oil, confession, forgiveness of sins through the Sacrament of Penance, reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the Real Presence, pilgrimages, the monastic system, the canon of Scriptures as used in Rome, fasting, Latin liturgy, and other doctrines and practices peculiarly characteristic of the Catholic Church. So much may be learned from the *Book of Llandaff* and the works of the monk Gildas the Wise, who flourished in the sixth century and was a personal witness of the faith of the Early British Church in his day. The editorial scissors snipped the vitals out of 'Justitia's' latest contribution to the controversy, so that we do not know precisely how he bore himself in the latest phase of the encounter. But we fancy he might easily have made in this connection, and indeed on most of the ground covered by the controversy, a deadlier use of the works of such foremost Protestant writers as Ussher, Spelman, Collier, Dugdale, Cressy, Goodwin, Lhuys, Pughe, Wharton, Rees, Woodward, Bishop Short, Schaff, Skene, Haddon and Stubbs, Pryce, Green, Bright, and a room-full of others. He might, indeed, have fought out the controversy on their testimony alone, without having to appeal to the convincing evidence of Lingard and the Fathers. We recommend him and all interested in the subject to procure, through any bookseller, copies of Archbishop Carr's admirable lectures on *The Origin of the Church of England* (Melbourne: Verga, 154 Little Collins street, 6d). This is the last word on the subject, and the best. 'Justitia' might present a copy of it to his late opponent. If, after a careful perusal of its contents, they again set about tossing each other in the same controversial blanket, 'Justitia' would, from the first bout, put 'G.A.' through a whirlwind of somersaults that would leave him (metaphorically, of course) black and blue for a month of Sundays.

THE WORST ARGUMENT.

A CORRESPONDENT asks us to publish 'the best argument against a toper.' Well—um—a good deal depends. Topers, you know—like certain other people—are kittle cattle. They

have as many moods as a September day, and, if you want

them to 'swear off,' you must take them in their proper mood—and tense. What moves Jack may not move budge Jill, and the argument that is good on Friday has often been found inoperative on Saturday night. It is as easy to get some men to 'sign' as to lead a horse to water. Others take a good deal of convincing. Others still are—short of physical force—open to no kind of conviction yet devised. But it is generally bad policy to use reasoning that is in the face of it inconclusive—and least of all the stock arguments based upon the generally temperate habits of the brute creation. These are, without exception, the worst arguments to fling at the head of the toper. There is, in the first place, an implied 'odorous comparison' in favour of the cow and the horse which seldom conciliates good-will; and, in the second place, even a toper can usually see in his muddled sort of a way that the argument is somehow limping and lopsided and out of plumb. 'Just look at that poor cow there at the stream,' said an Irish priest to a parishioner who had a habit of looking at his country's wine when it sparkled in the glass. 'Just look at her. You may be sure she won't drink too much.' 'Who'd thank her,' said the toper, 'when it's only wather?' Father Matthew, the greatest apostle of temperance of modern times, fell into a similar pitfall in addressing an audience of Dublin car-drivers away back in the forties. He determined to teach his audience a lesson in temperance from a class of quadrupeds other than the harmless, necessary cow. 'If,' said he, 'I were to set before one of your horses a bucket of water and a bucket of whisky, you know which the wise beast would take.' Now the wit of the Dublin car-men is not of the leaden-heeled variety, and one of the Father's audience promptly replied: 'Well, Father, if I wor to place before me horse a truss of hay an' a beefsteak, you know which the wise baste would choose. But, Father, does it follow that the hay is the best for me?'

'SWEET KILKENNY!'

ARCHBISHOP IRELAND once reached the citadel of a toper's heart by an unexpected and unsuspected route—just as Wolfe captured Quebec by a steep and unknown track

in 1759. The great American temperance orator told the story himself a few weeks ago in the Cork theatre. We give it in his own words:—

'Some thirty years ago I began the work in St. Paul, and I was succeeding very well, owing to the generous hearts and strong faith of the people to whom I was appealing. However, down in a street called Minnesota street there were some ten or twelve Irishmen who boasted that Father Ireland, whatever he might do, could not touch Minnesota street, and one man particularly. I can use now his name, because it is an honour to him, and he is in heaven—John Shortall was the leader, and he said: "No; nothing can be done here; we shall have our liberty"—liberty to drink themselves to death. One day I met John Shortall. He was half-drunk, but yet full of good sense—for it takes a deal of drunkenness to drive out all the good sense from an Irishman—and he said: "You cannot do anything in Minnesota street." A bright thought struck me. I said: "John, I have been reading lately some interesting news from Kilkenny" (John was from Kilkenny). He said: "Sweet Kilkenny!" I saw my opportunity. I said: "Will you do me a favour for the sake of sweet Kilkenny?" "Yes—anything," he said. "Very well, take the pledge for the sake of sweet Kilkenny." His quick answer was: "You have made me." From that day there was in St. Paul no more pious Catholic, there was no more loving father, there was no happier man, than John Shortall. Eight months ago he was near his end, and I went to see him. He said: "Archbishop, I am blind. I cannot see you. I pray that the light of heaven may be upon your soul. I pray for you every day." And he went to heaven. He was a saint, because for the sake of "sweet Kilkenny" he took the pledge.'

THE CABLE FIEND.

SOME fine day in the sweet by-and-by of scientific gardening we may gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles, and extract sunbeams from cucumbers. And some

other fine day—when the cow jumps over the moon—we may