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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

SOME MORE
WONDERFUL
FIGURES AND
FACTS.

HERE are some more of those wonderful figures which, as given by Bishop Moran the other day, excited so much astonishment among certain of our candid friends. Our candid friends, however, will not exercise their candour by quoting them. Of that we may be very sure. The results of the

examinations of the Royal University of Ireland for the year just closed, that is 1890, give us the following:—At the first University examination, the number passed by the Queen's Colleges of Cork and Galway was 22, the same number being passed by the Catholic colleges of Stephen's Green, Dublin, and Black rock. The honours gained by the Queen's Colleges were 7; those gained by the Catholic colleges, 22. The Queen's Colleges gained 2 exhibitions and the Catholic colleges gained 9. At the second examination in Arts the Queen's Colleges passed 18, and the Catholic colleges 31. The Queen's Colleges gained 6 honours and 2 exhibitions, and the Catholic colleges gained 16 honours and 8 exhibitions. At the B.A. examinations the Queen's Colleges passed 17 and gained 9 honours and 7 exhibitions, while the two Catholic colleges passed 15 and gained 9 honours and 5 exhibitions. To sum up: At the three examinations, the two Queen's Colleges passed 57 and gained 33 honours and exhibitions, while the two Catholic colleges passed 68 and won 69 honours and exhibitions. So much for the manner in which figures testify to the results of Catholic education. Facts, moreover, are quite as eloquent in the matter as are figures. On Saturday, November the 8th, for example, Mr. William Mather, M.P., a gentleman who has been very active in the promotion of secular education in England, in laying the foundation-stone of a Catholic school at Prestwich, expressed himself to the following effect:—"He said that, as a Protestant, he regarded as a signal honour the invitation of the Catholic clergy to take part in a function connected with the public welfare. . . . They were aware that his views upon national elementary education were pronounced and that he had had a good deal to do with the advocacy of that widespread system of School Board instruction, and the establishment of School Boards which he knew the clergy of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were not entirely in sympathy with, but he had always shown the utmost respect for the voluntary zeal which manifested itself in those Churches. . . . He desired to testify to the great zeal and devotion to high principles which had marked the Catholic Church of this country for many years past. The clergy of England and Ireland belonging to that Church had shown they were capable of great self-sacrifices and lifelong devotion to what they considered the public welfare, and there had also been in their minds the widest tolerance and the most charitable respect for the clergy of other denominations. In the temperance movement they had been most active in promoting good habits amongst the people, which were now producing a totally different spirit amongst the lower classes in regard to the secular side of education. They had taken the children of the lowest class of our population and taught them in the most efficient manner in their elementary schools, and no one had begrudged the Catholic Church that amount of support from the Government which they had been able to earn. Although he was an advocate of free education, and for the enlargement of the sphere of the School Board influence, he should never be one to lessen the zeal of the Catholic clergy." Mr. E. J. Broadfield, a prominent member of the Manchester School Board, particularly known also as a secularist, spoke likewise on the occasion. "He said the Catholic Church had been almost unrivalled in its efforts to do its duty towards the children of its community. In the three R's the results in Catholic schools compared favourably to those of other schools, although their educational work was often carried on under great disadvantages. The grant per head of scholars in average attendance at the Voluntary schools of England and Wales was 17s 4½d, and in the Catholic schools it was 17s 3½d. That was greatly to the credit of Catholic school managers. In school pence they only took 9s 5d per head, while the other Voluntary schools

took 11s 1½d." Figures and facts, then, still prove the great efficiency of Catholic education. We see, moreover, that this is very effectively recognised and openly acknowledged by men whose position and experience particularly qualifies them to form sound judgments in the matter.

REMNANTS
OF
ANTIQUITY.

AMONG the more interesting discoveries of the day is the ancient gold-field recently found in South Africa, supposed, with a good deal of apparent probability, to be the Ophir whence Solomon obtained the gold used by him with such profusion in

building the Temple. A tract of country, it appears, has been partially explored and found to contain the remains of mining operations on a large scale and carried out by a civilised people. Our association of the Jews with religion exclusively has prevented our fully realising the position they occupied in the ancient world. We are accustomed to regard them as a people shunning friendly intercourse with the heathen nations around them, or only now and then, by a criminal lapse into idolatrous sympathies, forming relations with them. The wars they waged and the victories they won, or in which they were defeated, are the chief events that, for the most part, we recall as bringing them into contact with other peoples. The fact is, however, that the Jews were very actively engaged in trade. Dr. Yeates, for example, in his work "Growth and Vicissitudes of Commerce," assigns to them a place as traders only second to that occupied by the Phœnicians, the famous merchants and navigators of primitive times:—"Although the Phœnician trade," says Dr. Yeates, "was essentially marine, yet their inland trade was also extensive and valuable. With their neighbours, the Jews, their relations during the reigns of David and Solomon were very intimate. Hiram supplied David with cedars, and sent skilful metal-workers to Jerusalem to aid in building the King's palace, and, in the erection of Solomon's Temple, Jewish hewers of wood joined with those of Sidon in felling the timber of Lebanon. The resources of the two contiguous states differed greatly. Phœnicia produced scarcely any grain, but fruits, timber, and metals were abundant. Palestine was in great part a fertile river-plain, producing fine wheat, barley, millet, wine and oil, as well as balm, honey, gums, flax, byssus, cotton and wool, which the Tyrian princes were ready to receive in exchange for timber, gold, dyed cloths, metal-work of bronze and tin, glass, pottery, jewellery, and carved ivory, the produce of their foreign traffic, or of their home industry."—"The Jews," continues the writer, "carried on an extensive inland traffic, as factors, or middlemen for the Phœnicians. The conquests of David extended the confines of the Hebrew kingdom to the Syrian desert, and southwards over the land of Edom to the Red Sea, on the shores of which Solomon built the ports of Elath and Ezion-geber. The latter monarch also built Tadmor in the wilderness called by the Greeks Palmyra, or the City of Palm-trees, as a halting-place for the caravans between Syria and Mesopotamia. . . . Its ruins still attest its ancient grandeur. . . . Solomon in founding these ports and cities was not without a purpose. His subjects had as strong a predilection for inland as the Phœnicians had for maritime traffic, and each nation lent to the other its special division of labour. . . . The Hebrew ports on the Red Sea were open to the Phœnicians, who brought thither the products of India and Arabia, the Jews conveying them overland to Phœnicia."—We see, therefore, that there is nothing far-fetched or intrinsically improbable in the conjecture made respecting this newly-explored district in South Africa, to the effect that it was the ancient Ophir where the Phœnicians carried on mining, disposing of their gold to King Solomon. Nay, very possibly the lead felt in this matter may have led to the building by King Solomon of those ports of Elath and Ezion-geber on the Red Sea. Dr. Yeates, indeed, defines Arabia Felix and Ethiopia as forming the Ophir spoken of. "The rich countries, just referred to," he says, "were the ancient Ophir, whence the Jews obtained gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks."—But, with the exception of peacocks, all these things might also have been brought from Africa, and the same name perhaps was given to different parts of the unknown regions where they were obtained,—perhaps indeed by design, for the Phœnicians were jealous as to their trade and, cer-