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## Current Topics AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### A FUNNY PROTEST.

THE *N.Z. Presbyterian* for April has some notes on education that are enough to give you a reel in your head. We have heard of Scotch caution, but this, as the saying is, "bangs Bannagher." What

on earth is the man afraid of that he does not speak out his mind? He evidently sees the evils of secularism plain enough, but he is afraid to denounce them openly. He lets the truth slip in one sentence, and then bites his tongue and contradicts it in the next. The schools, he says, are not godless, but there is no religion taught in them. There is not a famine there, it seems, but there is nothing to eat. The teachers are God-fearing men, but there is a tendency among them towards secularisation. They are better than might be expected, in fact—considering that they are on the high road to the devil. When they get there—as they certainly will if things go on as they now are—our pawky contemporary acknowledges, as well he may, that "the system will deserve the odious epithet so lavishly bestowed upon it by our Roman Catholic brethren." Meantime, we are told, larrikinism is growing; and though, as every one must understand, secularism is not to be accredited with its origin—tell it not in Gath—it will contribute its quota to it. But here is a fair sample of our contemporary's style—"In the Australian colonies," he says, "there is a distinct criminal taint in larrikinism, derived, no doubt, from the early convict associations; and it is not a little remarkable how closely the manners of the youth of one colony resemble those of another throughout Australasia. So much is this the case, that some people can scarcely help believing that larrikinism is in the air." Our cautious contemporary would not for the world speak out plump and plain, and say that there is a criminal taint in the larrikinism of New Zealand, though he gives us to understand that such is the case. He manages, nevertheless, to come to something like a candid conclusion. "For although it cannot be said," he writes, "that our secular system has produced the larrikin, we ought to have an education which would make him next to impossible, which would at least keep any considerable number of the colonial youth from sinking—in manners, habits, and aspirations—below their class." Well, let us be thankful that we have been brought so near the truth at long last. Under the circumstances it would be over-severe to be critical. But if our contemporary believes, as he evidently does, that secularism is not only incapable of hindering larrikinism among the people, but that it also tends to drive the teachers to the bad, in entering his protest by means of such a round-about kind of a rigmarole, instead of speaking out once for all, decisively and sharply, he exercises his caution at the expense of his charity.

### A PREGNANT FAILURE.

*Truth* of February 5 quotes some passages from a letter written by an English gentleman in Basutoland, and in which the writer gives his experiences of Christian missions in the country. We do not

however, suppose that he expects to be taken as an authority where Catholic missionaries are concerned. They are certainly not to be included among those whom he describes as leading easy, comfortable lives, and making money. In other respects we may look upon his information as accurate, especially since it only confirms what we had already been aware of:—"I am living," he writes, "quite close to a very large mission station, and personal observation every day convinces me more and more of the folly of their operations. Were the natives taught one creed, or even one code of morals, I should in many ways approve of the work; but here we have Wesleyan, Dutch Reform, Church of England, and Roman Catholic Missions, each showing these poor benighted creatures different ways to Heaven. For instance, the English Church Mission allows a man to have as many wives as he chooses to marry, and is ready to marry him to the whole of them. The Dutch Reformed Church Mission, on the other hand, tells him that he can have but one wife, and that he is damned if he has more. Again, the Nonconformist people do

not hesitate to impress on their disciples that the Christians belonging to the Roman Catholic mission are as bad as, if not worse than, the heathen Basutos. Between all these contradictory teachings, it is impossible that any native can understand what Christianity really means. The missionaries out here lead very easy, comfortable lives, and generally make money. When once they can persuade the natives to wear trousers or petticoats they flatter themselves that the people are converted. The truth is, and it is well known to every practical man who has lived among them, that the change of garment, instead of making them earnest Christians, renders them both immoral and dishonest, and gradually reduces them to far lower depths of depravity than they were in before this 'conversion.' It would delight me to be in England and to meet some of the people who support these missions. I could give them a few facts from my personal experience of converted natives and heathen natives which would open their eyes very considerably." *Truth* comments on these passages as follows:—"I have never disguised my opinion that these missions are a monstrous waste of money. That opinion I have formed on what can be discovered at this distance as to the progress of Christianity and the character of the Christianised African. When an observer on the spot—a Christian himself—forms the same opinion, there can be little doubt about the truth. I have no word to say against any Christian, who feels a call in that direction, going among the heathen to preach the Gospel. The propagation of religion; however, by means of rival, not to say hostile, associations in London, with salaried evangelists *in partibus*, is a vicious system. Christianity was not originally diffused by that method, and never could have been. St. Paul would not have been St. Paul had he been employed at so much a year by an office in Jerusalem, with a rise in salary for each addition to his family." But it is only on Catholic principles that missions such as those preached by St. Paul could be conducted. All this confusion in Basutoland is the fruits of departing from these principles, and the necessary results of Protestant methods. We find, in fact, in the inevitable failure of Protestantism to convert the heathen, and the positive hindrance it opposes to this, a convincing proof that it was not to it the commission of preaching the Gospel to the world was given. Its pretensions, therefore, are in all respects groundless and false.

### SINISTER RUMOURS

THE gossip inevitably attendant on the declining years of a reigning Pope as to the Cardinal likely to succeed him, and which for some time has now been going on with respect to Leo XIII, seems in

this instance to be affected by some motive more sinister than usual. We have, it is true, in this instance also the more ordinary claptrap. We have already alluded to the manner in which the late unhappy man Crouch, was allowed to defile the pages of a respectable periodical in Sydney by his impudent predications on the subject. The rumour besides more recently spread as to intrigues undertaken by Cardinal Parocchi was of the same kind. And we may remark in passing, that the rumour in question had, even before it was circulated, received a conclusive contradiction from the nature of an address delivered by the Cardinal in Rome. The address was that made by His Eminence on the occasion of his inaugurating a monument to the late Polish Cardinal Czicki, and when he referred to the position of Poland in a strain that was said to call out the disapproval of the Pope, as likely to give offence to Russia. For this, of course, it would be rash to vouch. The Pope finds many interpreters ready to speak for him, and to attribute to him utterances which he has never made. What is, nevertheless, certain, is that Cardinal Parocchi had expressed himself openly and on a public occasion in a manner that was understood to reflect severely on Russia's treatment of the Poles. But a Cardinal intriguing for the succession of the Papacy would avoid any expression of the kind and would be very careful as to incurring the resentment of any one of the great European powers. The mention, however, of Cardinal Lavigne especially as likely to succeed the present Pope is suggestive of a motive deeper than that from which idle gossip proceeds. The election of a Frenchman might be displeasing to both Germany and Italy—though, where the latter Power, at least, is concerned, it may be