

Current Topics

Thanks!

Thanks to the many friends who have sent us kind greetings on the enlargement of the 'Tablet': This is a case in which, 'when we're not thanked at all, we're thanked enough'. But we shall try to merit, as best we may, our correspondents' encouraging commendations. For the which, once more, thanks!

Bible or Koran?

Somebody has defined hell to be a place where people mind their own business. Some people—of the Paul Pry type—would find this earth a place of torment if, by some stroke of good or evil fortune, they were prevented from poking their busybody fingers into other people's pies. Catholics, from the Pope down to the school-child, have been receiving a good deal of hysterical and meddlesome attention during the past week or ten days from (mostly) Reverend Paul Prys in saffron sashes in various parts of New Zealand. Judging from communications that have reached us, some of those sanctified fire-eaters surpassed themselves in the high-pressure and the concentration of the more than Mahomedan hate with which they hosed their 'Papist' fellow-colonists. We are treasuring up a specially selected sample for use at an opportune time. Well-bachelors' wives and maidens' children are well trained. So saith Poor Richard. By this time the self-appointed and rather volcanic managers of the Catholic Church may, perhaps, have burned out sufficiently to listen to a timely motto of the beatified Cure of Ars: 'As soon as we begin to hate our neighbor, God hates us'. This, in turn, is a concentrated variant of the words of the Apostle of brotherly love: 'He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walleth in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because the darkness hath blinded his eyes' (1. John, ii, 11). If the 'yellow' clergy searched the Scriptures a little more and to better purpose, we should be spared those indecent public exhibitions of busybody fanaticism that would disgrace even half-civilised Mahomedan Sunnees or Shyaees in the deserts of Arabia.

God Speed!

Bad books (as Ferreyve points out) corrupt the mind and blot out the boundary lines of honor. But an even more insidious evil lies in the detestable leaflets and pamphlets that are distributed through the mails by 'medical' quackheads. The Medical Association has at last taken the evil in hand. Here is a Press Association telegram from last Friday's daily papers:—

'A deputation from the Medical Association waited on the Minister for Justice to-day, and urged that something should be done to prevent the circulation of indecent pamphlets of a quasi-medical character, and the publication of questionable advertisements by quacks in newspapers. The Minister admitted the importance of the matter, but saw difficulties in the way of properly dealing with the evil. He promised to give the subject consideration.'

We wish the Medical Association God-speed in their crusade. And we hope, as one result of their representations, that 'the butt-end of the law' will fall heavily upon the purveyors of the blackguardly stuff that is mailed all over the Colony by the proprietors of certain quack 'electric' remedies. The same remark applies to certain quack advertisements that are accorded the hospitality of the advertising columns of the secular press. Some years ago Chief Justice Darley (N.S.W.) declared that certain of the advertisements here referred to are responsible for an enormous amount of secret murder in the community. The young people of both sexes who peruse the announcements and the pamphlets in question receive what has been aptly termed 'a liberal education in depravity and crime'. The proposal urged upon the Minister of Justice by the Medical Association would at least, if acted upon, diminish the

volume of indecent and criminal suggestion that is at present allowed to flow unchecked into the public mind. It would thus strongly tend, in so far, to check one of the prolific causes of youthful demoralisation.

Where Honor's Due

A cable message from Melbourne in last Saturday's daily papers reads as follows:—

'The first Australian experiment in wireless telegraphy has been made between Queenscliff and Devonport. A congratulatory message was successfully exchanged between the Governor-General (Lord Northcote) and the State Governor and Governor of Tasmania. The Marconi system was used.'

The first sentence in this message is what is now known in the English political world as 'a terminological inexactitude.' As a matter of fact this was not 'the first Australian experiment in wireless telegraphy.' Some years ago wireless messages were sent and received by the noted Catholic scientist, Father Slattery, C.M., at St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst, New South Wales. Father Slattery had, and still has, a wireless telegraphic installation in the College, and with its aid he and his natural science classes sent numerous messages over considerable distances. In the physical laboratories of the same College the X-rays were also, we think, first used in Australia for medical and surgical work. Alexander would not steal a victory from one of his generals. And in the matter here under consideration, let us not strip the mantle of honor from the shoulders that rightly bear it.

The Napier 'Code'

It is never too late to learn. Old Sweedlepepper fancied for eighty years of his life that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. Then he was persuaded to hear a sermon, and found that they were nothing but cities. Up to a certain point the Napier 'Daily Telegraph' imagined that there was an anti-biblical (and presumably agnostic or materialistic) 'code of morals' which made every kind of resort to chance for a stake or prize (and, specifically, church art unions) 'a social scourge', 'a great moral evil', 'a curse and a crime'. The 'Telegraph' knows better now. Like Sweedlepepper, it has learned its lesson rather late. But it has learned it. And that, after all, is the main thing. It was happy—and enthusiastically positive—until challenged to produce its 'code'. But when it went to fetch it from its locker, the 'code' had melted 'like fairy gifts fading away.' And thus it found itself in the sad plight of

'Old Mother Hubbard,
Who went to her cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone.'

'When she went there, the cupboard was bare'. The 'Telegraph' cannot find so much as a thread or fibre of a code. Therefore it cannot produce it. Much less can it accept our challenge to establish the details, the sanction, the standard of its vanished 'code'. 'Mental education,' as Faraday says, 'has for its first and last step humility.' But in the 'Telegraph's' lapse from the canons of journalistic caution, we have a striking instance of the over-confidence and aggressive dogmatism that so often accompany defective training—and lure their owner to a fall.

There were two chief issues raised by the 'Daily Telegraph'—(1) the fundamental one, which is referred to above; and (2) a charge levelled against the Sacred Scriptures of having 'commanded' unjust slaughter and 'sexual barbarities' in war. On this latter subject it issued a defiance to all and sundry. It is more chastened now, and in regard to this, as in regard to the 'code', the 'cold chain of silence' now hangs over its columns. It has probably been searching the Scriptures and learning how grievously it has misrepresented them. We four times in succession challenged our Hawke's Bay contemporary to produce its 'code'. Our

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