

Current Topics

A Gentle Hint

'Several correspondents', says an American Catholic contemporary, 'have just sent us news items which were written from fifteen to twenty days after the events. Their fear that anything fresh will not bear transmission by the mails should be dismissed. The Government does not require that church news items should be cured like dried herrings before being put in the mails.'

We have from time to time similar experiences in the matter of belated reports. Most of them, however, go by the shortest cut to that cemetery of procrastinated literary effort—the waste-paper basket. Boracic and salicylic acid may preserve doubtful butter or fruit jelly, but they will not prevent the mildew gathering upon 'dead' news and imparting to it the ancient and fish-like flavor that renders it distasteful to the average reader's mental palate. News does not, like violins and wine, improve with age. Like eggs, it is best when freshest. And the most welcome correspondent is he who has learned the art of making his tomorrow be to-day.

'Cardinal Valpe'

Here is a cable-message from last Friday's daily papers: 'A youth whose family fortune had gone to the Propaganda, entered the Vatican during a public audience and asked Cardinal Valpe for assistance. On being refused he boxed the Cardinal's ears.' The cable-man has again been cracking the wrong head. For 'there ain't no sich a pusson' as 'Cardinal Valpe', either in or out of Rome. The 'rigger' might try to be accurate once in a while in the matter of Vatican news—just for the sake of variety. We would suggest the boxing of the cable-demon's ears, but for one serious difficulty that was pointed out by Theodore Hooke in a similar case—to wit, the difficulty of getting a box large enough for the purpose.

'High' Society

Father Vaughan (London) has been for some time scourging the sins of 'high society'. Packed congregations have listened to his words. And the picture that he draws of the 'high' life of our day recalls, in a manner, Juvenal's description of the demoralisation of ancient pagan Rome when the Orontes was turned into the Tiber—when the vices of the East were poured over those of the West. There are things to handle gently and things to handle roughly. There is a time for war and a time for peace, and a time for all things. And there is a time for hard, strong, reasoned invective—when, for instance, vice is flaunted in high places, brazen and aggressive and unashamed. And the more malignant the evil, the stronger must be the warning cry. Such evils as Father Vaughan denounces are not to be met with the stammering accents—the coins of hypocrisy—that fall from the languid lips of fops and exquisites. Christ Himself denounced Herod as 'that fox'. And others He described as 'serpents, a generation of vipers, hypocrites, blind guides, whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness.' Here, as in Father Vaughan's case, the epithets were true; the evidence of their truth was public and plain to all; and there was a just cause, and even an urgent necessity, for using them. And thus the laws of charity and justice were in no way violated; nay, they were observed both in the spirit and the letter.

Maud Gonne

Last Friday's daily papers contained the following cable message from Paris:—

'Mrs. Maud Gonne MacBride has been granted a separation, but the court refused her a divorce. A divorce was not granted in the action on the ground that she and her husband were Irish and that Irish Catholics did not permit divorce, and also owing to the fact that her husband's domicile was in Ireland.'

Here, in a squalid divorce case, endeth the romance of Maud Gonne. The daughter of a British officer, a State pensioner, she was permitted to rove without let or hindrance through Ireland delivering fiery anti-British harangues, while the representatives of the people were having their faces broken by constabulary batons for daring to address peaceable meetings of their constituents. Then she raved and stormed through America, where her handsome face and figure captivated the eye, and incautious and unsuspecting admirers dubbed her 'the Joan of Arc of Ireland.' George III. was puzzled to know how the apples got inside the apple-dumpling. We were puzzled to know how such fiery anti-British wrath got so suddenly inside the corset of Maud Gonne, and how a fair English damsel, whose living came from the State Treasury, succeeded so marvellously in escaping the bludgeon-blows that fell upon the heads of Irish M.P.'s, and the prison-cells that closed upon them for saying the half of what she said with complete impunity. We 'said things' of the lady at the time. In due course she 'committed matrimony' with Major McBride, an Irish-American fighter on the Boer side in the South African war. Her marriage, like her meteoric mission for the 'liberation' of Ireland, has been a failure. Professing to be a Catholic, she nevertheless (as it seems) applied for a divorce. But even a French court refused to tamper with a life-long bond that was contracted in the old Catholic land that knows no divorce legislation, and has no use for it. A judicial separation is the barrier beyond which the Irish civil courts cannot go. A man or woman having legal domicile in Ireland can secure a divorce (in our acceptance of the term—a vinculo) by the long-drawn and expensive luxury of an Act of Parliament dissolving the union. This was also the state of the law in England till 1857-58. The only instances that we know of, in which such legislation was sought in Ireland, were the Beaumont-Wallis case (Drishane Castle, County Cork), and Sir Robert McConnell, who was created a baronet while Mayor of Belfast. In both cases the parties were non-Catholics.

In the Catholic Church, the marriage-tie is not a slip-knot. Once properly bound, it,

'Admits no power of revocation,
Nor valuable consideration,
Nor writ of error, nor reverse
Of judgment past, for better or worse.'

Some—unfitted for its burdens—make the married state

'A slavery beyond enduring,
But, then, 'tis of their own procuring.
As spiders never seek the fly,
But leave him, of himself, t'apply;
So some are by themselves employed
To quit the freedom they enjoyed,
And run their necks into a noose,
They'd break 'em after, to break loose.
As some, whom death would not depart,
Have done the feat themselves, by art.'

Those misfit unions of nagging incompatibles, who have never learned to bear and forbear, recall the monologue that (according to Planche's 'Olympic Revels') Orpheus spoke in the depths of Tartarus.—

''Tis said that marriages are made above,
And so perhaps a few may be by love;
But from this smell of briarstone, I should say,
They must be making matches here all day.'

A short time ago, Professor Alfred W. Anthony, of the Cobb Divinity School, Maine (U.S.A.), said upon