

# Current Topics

## That Home

Like the Philosopher of the Sandwich Islands, we don't hanker to see a boy under fifteen, with more than fifteen bad habits. We see him, nevertheless, at times—without the hankering. And he sets us speculating sorrowfully about the place he calls Home.

## That 'Block Vote'

The two Queensland Catholic papers were ranged under opposing banners in the State electioneering contests which were decided at the ballot-boxes on last Saturday. Yet the battered and stuffed old bogey of 'the Catholic block vote' was trotted out pretty much as usual to scare old women of both sexes in the Northern State. The armored prejudice that in these countries tries hardest to make capital out of the 'block vote' bogey judges by feeling, not by reason; it has neither eyes to see nor ears to hear evidence. Its long, sharp tongue is balanced like the leaf of 'the light, quivering aspen', and wags with metallic harshness at the faintest breath of rumor. Your old-fashioned, sturdy, mail-clad prejudice is not to be argued with—it will cling to its darling delusion even 'though one rose from the dead'.

## Out of Place

A lay friend sends us the words of a rather mawkish, supposedly 'sacred,' and once-popular song, 'Some priests, I understand,' says he, 'disapprove of its use at Benediction. What think you of it?' We think that those 'some priests' are to be very much commended for their good taste, their reverence, and their sense of the fitness of things. We should have no objection to the piece in a drawing-room or on the concert platform. But there's a time and place for everything. 'A cow,' says Dr. Johnson, 'is a very good animal in a field, but we turn her out of a garden.'

## A Big Drink Bill

What a Gargantuan swill of 'lickwid-litenin' (as Artemus Ward calls it) is represented by the latest annual statement of Dr. Dawson Burns in the London 'Times'! According to the statistical Doctor, England, Scotland, and Ireland collectively swilled, in the one year of 1906, no less than (in round figures) 86,000,000 gallons of alcohol—22,402,414 in spirits, 61,052,582 in beer, 1,849,304 in wine, and 750,000 in 'other drinks.' A mighty dose, truly, for a population of under 44,000,000—even though they took twelve months to soak it all in. The cost (in round figures) was £166,500,000. And the expenditure per head of the population works out as follows: England and Wales, again on top, with £3 19s 9d, Scotland, £3 3s 1d; Ireland £3 2s 10d. There is manifestly room and verge enough in the British Isles for the temperance reformer.

## Christ and—Mazzini

A non-Catholic clergyman in a recent issue of the Melbourne 'Argus' finds the Bible very unsuitable as a school text-book 'without a great deal of wise interpretation'. He is an out-and-out opponent of the whole Bible-in-schools programme. And his remedy for the hard secularism of the public schools is 'an ethical text-book'. 'It should', said his reverence, 'contain many extracts from the Bible, but then it should contain also extracts from Marcus Aurelius and Mazzini'. The Savior of the world and Mazzini, the apostle of political assassination, bracketed together as ethical teachers! Heaven forbid! Something less outre and much more practical than this could be done for the souls of children in the schools, if only the clergy among our separated brethren devote (in this matter) less time

'To talk beneath the stars,  
And sleep beneath the sun,  
And lead the life of going to do,  
And die with nothing done'.

A few religious primary schools among our Reformed denominations would be a stronger evidence of zeal and a more eloquent appeal to the public conscience than a patent-office full of inventions for throwing the burden of Christian education on the shoulders of lay State officials.

## Lunatic Legislators

'Great wits are sure to madness near allied.' And some one has even gone so far as to maintain that, conversely, great madness is to wisdom near allied. But for the ordinary affairs of life one prefers the man whose mentality is of the normal type and whose 'bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne.' And especially is this true in regard to the difficult task of ruling a nation or an empire. The British House of Lords is perhaps the only legislative body in the world in which an imbecile or a lunatic may sit and vote. The House of Commons has ever exercised the power of declaring a seat vacant when its occupant becomes insane, and statutory powers for this purpose were passed in 1886. But not so the Upper House, whose reform is now in the air. 'A lunatic Peer,' says the 'Weekly Freeman,' 'was, in fact, brought from a lunatic asylum to vote against the Home Rule Bill in September, 1893, and a man like Lord Townsend, who has been declared by a judicial tribunal to be incompetent to manage his own affairs, is still regarded as competent to manage the affairs of the Nation in the House of Lords, and receives from the Crown a writ of summons enjoining his presence in that assembly.'

In this respect, at least, a reform of the House of Peers is in order.

## Botha

Political enmities, happily, die with a shorter agony than does the rabbit plague. Five years ago Botha was in the field with his trusty burghers, perforating numerous subjects of King Edward VII. with Mauser bullets and chipping slices off others of them with flying chunks of pom-pom shells. War correspondents painted the General and his armed farmers in the darkest colors of their palette—hanged, drew, and quartered them, so to speak, with pen and pencil. But even Satan may (it is said) be drawn in shadow. At the Conference of Colonial Premiers, the sturdy enemy, the hated guerillero, of yesterday sits as the Prime Minister of a self-governing Boer colony, ruled by a parliamentary majority of the Boer race and faith. And the streets that in 1902 echoed to shouts of execration for the burgher leader now resound to vivas in his praise. Carlyle wrote bilious sarcasm about this sort of thing on one of his 'livery' days. There is no call for it here. We, at least, see nothing in this happy change of feeling beyond this: It is good for Great Britain that even her mobs are generous enough to recognise a hero in a former foe; it is better still that her statesmen have sufficient of the old Roman colonising wisdom to repose much trust in some at least of the peoples that they have conquered but not subdued; and it is probably no bad thing for the liberties of the Transvaal that so many of its burghers have a reputation for shooting straight.

## The 'New' Theology

The re-hash of (mostly) old errors miscalled the 'new' theology is still in the journalistic air. Some of the secular papers have, for the moment, donned the white 'choker' and begun to echo like so many gramophones the

'Doctrines fashioned to the varying hour'

by a well advertised Independent clergyman who never studied in a theological school and never mastered the 'queen of the sciences' about which he dogmatizes so