

# Current Topics

## Compensations

Man seldom closes a door but God opens another. The defection of some of the Teutonic nations of northern Europe in the sixteenth century found its compensation in the conquests of the cross in the New World beyond the Atlantic. And the plunder and proscription of the religious Orders in France have given a new impetus to the faith in missionary lands. 'When', says George Eliot, 'a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in'.

## The Fasting Cure

The 'Dominion' of October 17 gives interesting details—including a diary—of a successful cure wrought by twenty-five days' starvation upon a resident of Wanganui. 'He was', says the 'Dominion', 'suffering from a general run-down, and in his weakness his nervous system had become seriously affected—so seriously that he was advised by his medical men to cease work immediately and travel for a year'. Such a course was, however, out of the question for a very busy man. Details of the fasting cure came accidentally to the patient's knowledge and fired his imagination. For the period mentioned he subsisted on water and lemon-juice. His recovery is said to have been complete. The incident gives a fresh point to the wisdom, even from the point of view of personal hygiene, of the Church's law of fast and abstinence. There was a time when it was derided, even from many a pulpit, as 'the folly of fasting'. But the whole trend of modern medical opinion favors 'the simple life' and justifies the dictum of the great surgeon Abernethy, who declared that a vast number of the diseases that afflict humanity are due to 'gormandising and stuffing', fidgeting and discontent, and the lack of restraint of impulses that need the control of faith and right reason.

## National Defence

A West Coast correspondent comments as follows upon our article on volunteering in last issue:—

'Why encourage militarism? There is no prospect of invasion in anything like the near future. And in any event, should the need arise, New Zealand would rise as one man against the foe'.

New Zealand might, indeed, 'rise as one man'. But it would rise, not as a skilled and disciplined army, but as a more or less armed rabble. And even armed mobs have long ago ceased to be formidable on 'the field of fame, fresh and gory'. We do not suggest conscription, with its dangers of barrack-life, nor the other things that are usually understood by the term 'militarism'. But we recognise, none the less, the need of national defence, of reasonable preparedness, and the fact that men are not trained in a few days, or even a few weeks, to the use of modern weapons and modern methods of war—nor even to the more elementary arts of fisticuffs or the 'savate'. Hence the benison which we bestowed upon the volunteer and cadet movements. International crises, too, develop quickly nowadays. The motto runs:—

'Thrice is he blest that hath his quarrel just,  
But four times blest that gets his blow in fust'.

And woe to him that is unprepared when the stranger sits before his gates. Aesop of old conveyed the lesson of national defence in his Fable of the Wild Boar and the Fox:—

'A wild Boar stood under a tree, and rubbed his tusks against the trunk. A Fox passing by asked him why he thus sharpened his teeth when there was no danger threatening from either huntsman or hound. He replied: "I do it advisedly; for it would never do

to have to sharpen my weapons just at the time I ought to be using them".'

And the moral of the story is this: 'To be well prepared for war is the best guarantee of peace'.

## By-and-By — Never

The Right Rev. Dr. Neligan, Anglican Bishop of Auckland, is reported to have spoken as follows in the course of an address to his synod last week:—

'If the Government puts not the Bible into the curriculum of the State schools, the national scheme of State schools will be upset in New Zealand, because it is contrary to the very fundamentals of democracy that religious education for their children should be reserved only as the privilege of those who can afford to send their children to a school where payment has to be made. The absence of Bible lessons from State schools continued long enough will force the people who care for education in its only true sense to start and maintain denominational elementary schools, as have the members of the Church of Rome in this Dominion. In my own mind I have not a doubt that the issue must work out thus: Logic cannot stop it. It may take 25 years or more before it happens, but happen it must. Regarding either result as an evil, as perhaps politicians may, it is for them to choose whichever they may deem in their wisdom to be the lesser evil.'

We take leave to remark: (1) Catholics in New Zealand stand almost alone in the practical advocacy of the thorough education of youth in body, mind, heart, soul. At the same time they stand by the democratic principle of fairness all round—to Protestant, Catholic, Jew, secularist, etc.—claiming nothing for themselves but what they are prepared to concede to others. (2) It has been abundantly shown that any and every scheme for the proposed introduction of the (Protestant version of the) Bible into the curriculum of the public schools without equal provision for conscientious dissent, would practically mean the establishment of a State school creed on Protestant lines, would violate the principles of democracy, and would leave the last state of education in New Zealand worse than the first. (3) The Bible-in-schools movement in the Dominion had its death-knell tolled long ago. It now lies where the lilies blow, and its influence on New Zealand public and social life is apparently not appreciably greater than is that of the 'dead corpse' of Ginx's Baby. The rattling of the dead bones of a dead movement is not likely to scare politicians—even lapdog politicians—into a course that does not commend itself to their principles (if any), their interests, or their fears. There may be sundry stuffed lay-figure politicians in the House; but there are no dead bones on the electoral rolls. And 'tis the votes that count.

(4) The New Zealand public would be more impressed by the starting and maintenance of a few 'denominational primary schools' by our separated brethren, than by all the Ossas of resolutions that synods, assemblies, and conferences have piled upon Pelions of talk about 'education in its only true sense' for a whole generation past. It has taken them a weary time to make up their minds to act 'as have the members of the Church of Rome in this Dominion'. If they would only take heart of grace and follow the lead of people who are poor in the world's goods but rich in faith and the spirit of sacrifice, the education question would soon settle itself. But—'it may take another 25 years before it happens'. In the meantime, religion will be, not an intimate rule of life, but a mere casual incident in the school careers of tens of thousands of children. And the results, who shall foresee? To Catholics, this toying and paltering with a desperate situation is

'All a problem,  
Prob-prob-problem,  
A dark and mighty problem'