

Current Topics

Catholic Marriages

We direct the attention of our readers to the further popular explanations of the recent decree on betrothals and marriage which appear on pp. 11-12 of this issue. An editorial comment on a Christchurch controversy on the subject will be found on pp. 21-22.

Dead or Sleeping?

An esteemed Anglican reader, writing to us in reference to a recent editorial article of ours, laughingly warns us that the Bible-in-schools League is 'not so defunct as it seems', and that it 'may be heard from at the next general elections'. We have our doubts. The League is, we rather think, sleeping soundly where the lilies blow. And we rather think that our bantering friend's idea of its capacity for the motions of life was borrowed from some 'friend of the corpse' who does not like to make the avowal that the wearing of crape signifies. Chesterfield once neatly lit off this frame of mind when he said of himself and Lord Tyrawley—both then tottering at the brink of the grave: 'The fact is, Tyrawley and I have been dead—these two years, but we don't choose to have it known'.

Dublin Castle Jewels

The serious and the comic jostled each other in the opera-bouffe investigation over the stolen jewels of Dublin Castle. The story of its failure is recorded elsewhere in this issue by our Dublin correspondent. Recent cable messages told how the grave and reverend seigniors who conducted the inquiry listened with (presumably) portentous solemnity to the 'second-sight' 'visions' of professional charlatans. And they were so greatly impressed thereby, that they set out on a quest of the baubles among the gravestones of the dead in a weed-grown old cemetery far afield from the place where the inquiry was being officially conducted. But the stolen treasures of Dublin Castle have thus far eluded discovery, like the buried wealth of the roving corsair, Captain Kidd—or like 'the retired cat' of which the poet William Cowper sang:—

'For 'tis a truth well known to most,
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it, ere it come to light,
In every cranny but the right'.

A Sherlock Holmes, or even a plain Javert of the Victor Hugo type, may yet make the Castle baubles 'come to light'. But the recent commission of inquiry would have consulted their own dignity and reputation if, instead of listening with unsmiling gravity to the guesses of charlatans seeking a cheap advertisement, they had threatened to kick them to the Tropic of Capricorn.

Race Suicide

We raise our hat in friendly salutation to the Methodist Conference in Melbourne for the attitude it has taken up in regard to race suicide and to canary-bird and bulldog-pup 'families'. We do not quite gather that the fathers of the Conference have quite taken up the radical and reasoned position on this subject that the Catholic Church has made her own. But it is much to learn that they have adopted a resolution invoking legislation along lines where legislation can effect much good. 'One speaker', says the cable message, 'declared that women could be seen about the streets nursing black-faced dogs and fierce-eyed cats and that these women would be ashamed to be seen nursing a baby.'

'Tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis, 'tis true.

A few months ago a National Purity Congress was held at Battle Creek, Michigan (United States). One of

the speakers (Father J. M. Cleary, of Minneapolis) scored those advocates of social suicide who defend the violation of the divine law on the plea that quality, and not quantity, in the matter of children is what the world needs in our day. 'The assumption', said he, 'that one or two children will be reared to be better men and women than ten to a dozen in a Christian home is wholly false, and cannot be supported by the test of experience.' Which leads the 'S.H. Review' to remark as follows:—

'This assertion of Father Cleary's is supported by a writer in the "Popular Science Monthly", who has consulted the biographies of seventy-six of the most eminent men whom the race has produced. He finds that most of them were members of very large families; that on the average they had six brothers and sisters apiece, and that Thackeray, Robert L. Stevenson, John Ruskin, and Alexander Hamilton were about the only instances of notable single offspring.

'Horace Walpole was one of nineteen children, Benjamin Franklin one of seventeen, John Marshall one of fifteen, Peter the Great one of fourteen, Napoleon Bonaparte one of thirteen, Samuel Adams, Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, and Alfred Tennyson members of families containing twelve; Lord Nelson and Washington Irving, members of families containing eleven; Washington, Webster, Chase, Carlyle, and Henry George, members of families containing eleven. Grover Cleveland's father had nine children, and four of his other ancestors, reaching back in a straight line, had families ranging from ten to thirteen children—an unprecedented record. Jefferson and Dickens were each one of eight children, and Madison, Clay, Tilden, Longfellow, Bryant, and Paul Jones each one of seven.'

'This writer', adds the 'S.H. Review', 'gives the facts and does not attempt to theorize on them beyond noting that the members of large families have been apt to show marked firmness and independence—perhaps because they were not coddled and indulged by their parents, and even in childhood had to look out for themselves.'

We hear much of the 'yellow peril' in our time. But it is the white nations' outrage upon a divine law that alone makes the prolific Oriental a menace to the civilisation and the liberties of the Western peoples. Unless these cry 'halt' in their defiance of divine ordinances, an affirmative answer must before long be given to Bret Harte's query: 'Is the Caucasian played out?' And then the star of Empire will set upon the West and rise upon the glowing East.

Veteran Workers and Fighters

We do some things better in New Zealand. Take, for example, our legislation in regard to industrial accidents. In this respect, the worker in the United States is, by comparison, in sorry case. Mr. W. G. Fitzgerald, writing on the subject in a recent issue of the 'Sunday Magazine', says: 'If I produce a device to save time, I can sell it readily in twenty places; but if I offer an idea for saving life, I cannot dispose of it at all'. She who 'sang the song of the shirt' lamented

'That flesh and blood should be so cheap!'

When on pleasure bent, the pagan Romans in their decadent days were by no means of frugal mind in regard to the waste of human life. Yet the law which permitted scores or hundreds of people to be butchered 'to make a Roman holiday', required the circus-masters to provide nets in order to save the rope-walkers' epidermis from abrasion and their bones from fracture. In his 'Miss Kilmansegg', Hood apostrophises gold as

'Good or bad a thousand-fold.

How widely its agencies vary!

To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless!'

The excessive lust of gold-getting, such as prevails in the nation of hustlers, tends to make the Dollar the Last End of Man, and the worker a mere machine to