

Current Topics

In Vain!

'In vain', says Pius X., will you build churches, give missions, found schools—all your works, all your efforts will be destroyed if you are not able to wield the defensive and offensive weapon of a loyal and sincere Catholic press.'

'Get Words'

There was much good sense in a remark made upon the swearing habit, in our hearing, the other day. 'Easy to say "break off"', quoth John Doe. 'Easy enough', rejoined Richard Roe; 'buy a dictionary, and get words'. A too limited vocabulary is one of the causes provocative of profanity. And, personally, some of the most voluminous swearers that we ever met were men whose command of unprofane slang and of Queen's English did not run into more than three hundred or four hundred words. Habit, of course, forges its chains on this as on other frailties. But a sufficient command of clean speech should, of itself, tend to diminish the temptation to eke out ideas with the speech that, if more profane, is less clear-cut and expressive. The noted American lecturer, Eli Perkins, once met, in a train, a commercial traveller whose poverty of rhetoric was only equalled by his wealth of coruscating profanity. 'Are you paid for swearing?' Eli asked. 'No', replied the 'drummer'; 'I do it for nothing'. 'Well', said Perkins, 'you work cheap. You lay aside your character as a gentleman, inflict pain on your friends, break a commandment, and lose your own soul—and for nothing! You certainly do work cheap—very cheap!'

A Controversial Gem

A once popular ditty told how 'one summer eve, with pensive thought' ('pensive thought' is rather good), the singer 'wandered by a sea-beat shore'. While doing so, he picked up an assortment of shells, 'and threw them one by one away'. He probably found nothing in them to reward his search. In wandering 'with pensive thought' along the shores of journalistic life, we pick up our pile of shells, and 'throw them one by one away'. But sometimes we come across a shell that holds a pearl of price. This was what happened a few days ago, when we picked up an esteemed Otago contemporary. We were about to throw it away, when, in a too obscure corner, we found a gem of controversy, which deserves the best setting we can give it. So we mount it as best we may, and set it in our best showcase—to wit, our first editorial page, so that all may see and admire the play of its purest ray serene.

Like all pearls, this one was produced by irritation. In the present case the irritation was produced by the series of sweeping victories which the boys of the Christian Brothers' School, Dunedin, have been winning year by year in the Otago schools' athletic championships. At the last meeting (reported in our issue of April 9) twenty-four of the leading schools of Otago competed, and over five hundred and fifty competitors took part in the contests. The Christian Brothers' boys secured sixteen firsts out of a possible twenty-four (carrying off twenty silver medals out of the thirty awarded), and won, besides, fourteen seconds (with bronze medals) and seven thirds. It is, perhaps, more than a mere coincidence that some other Catholic schools in the Dominion have also acquitted themselves with great credit in the field of manly sports, while at the same time holding (like the Dunedin school) a high place for success in scholastic work. The overwhelming victory recorded above was the irritating grit that led to the secretion of the gem in question. Here's the jewel itself:—

'SCHOOLS' CHAMPIONSHIPS.

To the Editor.

'Sir,—I would suggest to the Committee of Management of the above sports that the denominational schools of the city be debarred from competing at the annual demonstration. In the first place the sports are for the children attending the public schools of the city, and no one can call the Christian Brothers' School a public school. It is a purely denominational institution, and its primary object is to keep Romanism alive in the breasts of the children of the adherents of that religion. I do not mind the boys winning a few prizes at the sports, but I do contend that there are many boys attending our schools who are in every way as good, and better, athletes than those boys whose names appear in the paper this morning, but who are too modest to come forward to compete. The Rugby Union weeded this school out of its competitions, and I think it is time that they were disqualified from competing in what should be a purely public schools competition.—I am, etc.,

Dunedin, April 6.

'ULSTER.'

The country yokel in an old English play said that, if he were a king, he would live like a lord, gorge pease and fat bacon every day, and carry a whip that cried 'Slash!' His personal ideal was not a high one. But it had at least the negative merit of not being so low as the social ideal that would howl at and penalise pluck and stamina and skill and public spirit, merely because these qualities—so useful for a young country—are displayed by Catholic boys in open and manly competition with all comers of their age. Happily, this spirit is rare. So far, indeed, is this true that the chief value of the pearl of controversy set in this page is derived, not from its beauty, but from its rarity. As time flies, and the schoolmaster gets abroad, this sort of thing will be valued only as a historical curiosity—like some of the relics of the olden time that meet the gaze of the curious sightseer in the Tower of London. The boys' spirited reply is given in another part of this issue. It shows that they can wield the pen as well as kick a goal or show competing schools the way over a measured space of green sward or asphalt track.

Fairy Gold

The fairy gold of Irish folk-lore glistens with the yellow sheen of the royal metal so long as night envelops the earth and the 'wee folk' or 'good people' are free to play their gambols among the lilies and the heather-bells. But when daylight comes, the yellow wealth of the night turns to withered leaves. A similar fate befalls the showers of fairy gold which certain enterprising journalists periodically pour into the treasury of the Vatican. On the death of the late Pope, (e.g.), one imaginative nib-twister announced the discovery of over three tons of gold coin behind a few books on a Vatican bookshelf. When the light of investigation was switched on, that precious 'find' turned out to be as evanescent as the gold of Nibelungen. The same thing happens to the odd millions that periodically drop from the (anti-Vatican) sky into the papal fob—the idea being, rather palpably, an effort to dry up, or diminish the flow of, the fount of the Catholic generosity that maintains the dignity of the Holy See, and secures the Pope against the indignity of being the pensioner of the Italian Government.

The latest story of a big windfall for the Vatican treasury circles around the engagement of the Catholic Prince of Bulgaria to the Princess of Reuss (who is at present a Protestant). 'The statement in this case', says the Edinburgh 'Catholic Herald' of February 29, 'is that the Holy See has given permission for a Catholic wedding, demanding, however, an enormous sum for the concession. This rumor is quite as mendacious as those referred to above (several are there enumerated—Ed. 'N.Z.T.'). The dispensation for a mixed marriage in the case of Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria and his bride has been given not by the Holy See, but by the Prince's own Ordinary, the Archbishop