

## Current Topics

### Catholics in the Empire

The English 'Catholic Directory' for 1908 estimates at 12,035,000 the number of Catholics within the far-flung boundaries of the Empire.

### Kruger's Gold

'This is the last of earth! I am content.' So said John Quincy Adams when it was announced to him that the end had come. A somewhat similar sentiment may well have found lodgment in the mind of the bereaved and sorrow-smitten old ex-President Kruger when, in a troubled old age, he

'Fell like autumn fruit that mellowed long'.

He went into the grave under the shadow of an accusation that he had heavily lined his private fob with the public funds of the Transvaal. That shadow has been lifted by the official declaration of the Transvaal Premier, Mr. Botha, who (says a cable message of a few days ago) 'explains that Mr. Kruger handed the money to the late Government when he quitted the Transvaal, and it was expended by the various commanders. What Mr. Botha had offered Lord Milner was a financial statement of how the money went, not the money itself.'

It takes courage to be silent, and, at times, strength to sit still. Silence and self-control, under damning accusations of which one feels one's self guiltless, represent a moral courage that is as noble as it is secret and invisible. We saw the tall, massively built, silent old ex-President twice just after the war—once in Brussels in the midst of huzzaing crowds, and once on the shores of Lake Como. On the latter occasion, his greeting to us was of the briefest. He was a man of few words. And among those who knew him best, he was deemed to be one who could close his jaws like a steel trap and endure the torture of an Indian war-camp before he would re-open them in unwilling speech. And, in this matter of the Transvaal gold, so it proved. Patience, like a dose of aloes and gall, is easier to prescribe than to take. Now that the passions aroused by the little-big war in South Africa have burned themselves out, and have been replaced by gentler feelings and mutual trust, former foe will join with friend in rejoicing that the memory of the lone old man, whose last days were clouded with much sorrow, has been vindicated in this matter of 'Kruger's gold', and that his ashes rest in peace and honor.

### A Plucky Prelate

A brilliant friend and reader of the 'N.Z. Tablet'—one from whom we have received many a gracious word of commendation—is Archbishop Ireland, of St. Paul (United States). The Milwaukee 'Catholic Citizen' of a few weeks ago recorded an incident in the life of the distinguished Prelate which goes to show that he could shine in the strenuous time of war as well as in exercising the orator's voice which is 'a mighty power', and in wielding the pen, which 'has more sway o'er men than the mighty cannon's roar'. On October 4, 1862, the American Civil War was in full blast, and the Northerners (under Rosecrans) and the Southerners (under Price and Von Dom) were puncturing and hacking and skewering each other to the best of their respective abilities at Corinth. 'The right wing of the Union (Northern) army', says the 'Citizen', 'was being heavily engaged by the Southern force. The Confederates succeeded in piercing its lines and capturing many of its batteries. The Union troops were in a critical condition. A shout for "more ammunition" rang along the northern line, but the supply stored at a near-by point was exhausted.

Soon those in need of more cartridges beheld a man carrying a barrel of ammunition on his shoulder, shouting at the highest pitch of his voice: "Here, boys, here are the cartridges." The hero made frequent trips back to the main ammunition depot of the Federals, returning to the soldier boys each time with a barrel of powder, although shot and shell thickly rained around him, and rivers of blood flowed upon the battlefield. The man, the brave citizen, was United States Chaplain Father John Ireland, now Archbishop of St. Paul, and an honored friend of Grand Army veterans. Father Ireland's patriotism and heroic work for Old Glory, enabled the Fifth Minnesota regiment to close up the broken lines of the right wing of General Rosecrans' army. The lost batteries were recaptured. Archbishop Ireland is a member of the Grand Army of the Republic. He yields in patriotism to no American citizen.'

### Happy Belgium

Strong and fervent Catholicism and an almost unexampled all-round progress go hand to hand in happy little Belgium. And the tide of the country's fortunes set in from the day in which (in 1884) the Catholic party (still unbroken and undefeated) came into power. Despite its dense population (over six hundred people to the square mile), there is probably less misery within all its borders than there is within the narrow limits of one large English or American city. Among European nations, Belgium stands in the van of economic progress; Catholic clergy and laymen take a practical interest in the solution of social problems; vast tracks of the country are cultivated like a great Chinese market-garden; industries flourish apace; and civil and religious liberty flourishes there like the green bay tree.

'Civil liberty in Belgium', said the London 'Daily Telegraph' recently, 'exists in almost republican profusion. Even the fact that the Ultramontane' (that is, Catholic) 'priesthood garrison the land, does not prevent the Belgians from enjoying the utmost freedom in respect of religion. Commerce flourishes, and manufacturing industry advances at so rapid a pace that even we in Britain are every now and then pressed by the shadow of Belgian rivalry. Time would fail us, too, were we to speak at adequate length of the agricultural prosperity of the country. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is simply a huge garden; that every available spot of earth is under tillage of the finest sort; that every economist, from McCulloch down to Mill, has lavished the highest praises on the Belgian farmer, and on the condition to which he has brought high husbandry in his happy country'.

### Bad Writing

Bad writing is accepted by some as a sign of genius; but (as some one has remarked) it is about the only sign of genius that some people possess. With authors, musicians, and university professors, bad writing seems to be, as a general thing, more or less a matter of obligation, and some of their communications that we have seen were as difficult to decipher as the programme of a Chinese concert. 'The calligraphy of university professors', says the 'Dominion', 'is sometimes a thing to be wondered at, but not imitated. The difficulties experienced by the chairman of the Victoria College Council in reading a professorial communication on Wednesday caused a member of the council to remark that letters from the Professorial Board should be sent to the College office and typewritten. The chairman explained that he had read the letter first to himself to familiarise himself with its surprises, but the preparation was obviously not sufficient, for, after a few more faltering sentences, he exclaimed: "I think I'll have to let the registrar read this." The registrar rose to the occasion like a man who had threaded devious mazes many times, the council marvelling at his deft performance.'