

## Current Topics

### Roma's Luck

Up in Roma (Queensland), they were boring for water, but literally 'struck ile.'. The incident reminds us of the American whom fortune dogged through a lifetime with persistent failure, and who, when he one day bored for water, struck only a gold-mine.

### The Egg Argument

Last week the Feilding magistrates inflicted the salutary penalty of £5 or a month's imprisonment on an ill-conditioned wight who threw an egg into an election meeting in that rising centre of commerce. The egg was ostentatiously ancient; its odor was strong enough to draw the Auckland express; and it rendered unwearable and unapproachable several suits of clothes with which its contents came into contact in the crowded gathering. John Mitchel, who, as a public speaker, had had some experience of this sort of unsavory suasion, reminded one of his assailants that it was easier to go to a meeting with rotten eggs than with sound arguments. A similar experience once befell Charles Burleigh, the American Abolitionist. He was once addressing a crowded audience, in the anti-slavery interest, at a time when that particular political kettle was boiling fiercely. An advocate of the continuance of black slavery, who was present, threw an addled egg and scored a bull's-eye—he smote Burleigh full in the face. Burleigh produced his handkerchief and serenely wiped the foetid flow from his face and clothing, coolly remarking, as he did so: 'There's a proof of what I have always maintained, that pro-slavery arguments are very unsound.' Eggs that were conspicuously 'high' were once upon a time favorite arguments of both Whig and Tory. It is about time that they disappeared from the political arena. At £5 each for such 'arguments,' they are not likely to be much in evidence in future electioneering contests in New Zealand.

### A Dire Threat

The brethren of the Saffron Sash in Bendigo (Victoria) threatened (it is said) to boycott the popular and successful fête which was recently organised in the Golden City in aid of the splendid local orphanage and Magdalen Home conducted by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The threat was as barren a one as that of the Roundhead cavalrman who was pinned beneath his slain horse at the relief of Pontefract. Three of the enemy's musketeers attacked the helpless warrior, and he threatened to give them no quarter if they so much as touched him. The only power of offence left him was, however, his lung-power. It was even so with the brethren in Bendigo. Their power to injure the fête was in no way commensurate with the lung-power of their threat. And those who have a knowledge of the organisation and of its ways are aware that it has never yet turned aside from its cherished task of fomenting sectarian strife to aid, in ever so small a degree, any Catholic charity, or to found or endow even one solitary hospital, one home for the aged, one orphanage, or one institute of education, or to send a missionary to the heathen, or a voice to speak of Christ and His love to the dwellers in the slums. Where are the trophies of its charity? Echo answers: 'Where?'

### Kilkenny-cat Resolutions

The British Baptists, in annual meeting assembled, have passed two resolutions which, like the two historical cats of Kilkenny, have eaten each other up. In the first place, they passed a resolution, in unrestricted terms, in favor of equal religious liberty for all. They followed this up by another resolution approving of a penal law being put into operation by Mr. Asquith, depriving Catholics, at the recent Eucharistic Congress, of a liberty of worship that is accorded, as a matter of course, to Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Dippers, Jumpers, Quakers, Shakers, Little-endians, Big-endians, Turks, Jews, Mahomedans, and the thousand-and-one other creeds that, throughout the broad expanse of the Empire, point a thousand-and-one different roads to heaven. Our English Baptist brothers' idea of liberty of conscience recalls a historic dictum of Oliver Cromwell. During his Irish campaign, he was once negotiating with a Catholic garrison for the surrender of a fortress which they held. To the Governor of Ross he wrote saying that he 'would not meddle with any man's conscience.' This was a fair and comprehensive statement, akin to the first resolution of our Eng-

lish Baptist friends. 'Then followed the grim old Puritan's, equivalent to the second resolution referred to above. 'If,' added Cromwell, 'by liberty of conscience you mean a liberty to exercise the Mass, I judge it best to use plain dealing and to tell you now that, where the Parliament of England have power, that will not be allowed of.' History has a trick of repeating itself.

### Poisoned Books

People do not need to be told that a mental diet of criminal narrative has a dangerous influence upon the conduct of children and of persons of weak and impulsive character. Herein lies, for boys, the peril of the 'penny dreadful' and its stories of the exploits of 'Daring Dick' and other-such criminals with alliterative names. Last week, in Christchurch, a magistrate found it necessary to give a taste of 'the butt-end iv the law' to some young criminals who had evidently been lured off the path of righteousness by a desire to emulate the tinselled heroes of sundry 'penny dreadfuls' which were found in their possession. The magistrate pointed out the dangers of this class of printed rubbish that is, by courtesy, termed 'literature.' The moral of it all is this: that parents need to exercise as much vigilance over the reading of their children as over the company that they keep.

The professional poisoners of the middle ages received short shrift and little mercy when their crimes were brought to the light of day. Far more insidious, far more ruinous, are the operations of those coarse-grained writers of the sty who in our time poison the souls of youth with novels and romances that are reaching, practically unchecked, into every corner of 'God's own country.' A few weeks ago a Christchurch bookseller declared that the authors of some of this unspeakable stuff 'deserve to be boiled alive.' Mr. Bram Stoker writes as follows of the same class of foetid fiction in the September issue of the *Nineteenth Century and After*: 'Within a couple of years past quite a number of novels have been published in England that would be a disgrace to any country even less civilised than our own. The class of works to which I allude are meant by both authors and publishers to bring to the winning of commercial success the forces of inherent evil in man. . . The merest glance at some of their work will justify any harshness of judgment; the roughest synopsis will horrify. It is not well to name either these books or their authors, for such would but make known what is better suppressed, and give the writers the advertisement which they crave. . . The evil is a grave and dangerous one, and may, if it does not already, deeply affect the principles and lives of the young people of this country. . . The offenders are such as are amenable only to punitive measures. They may be described as a class which is thus designated in the searching Doric of the North of Ireland, "They would do little for God's sake, if the devil was dead!"'

### The '80,000 Converts'

Some sixteen years ago there arose a foolish and hot-headed schism, against the Catholic episcopal authority, among a few Polish congregations in Cleveland (United States). The author of the *Recreations of a Country Parson* says that few people can resist the temptation to deepen or heighten the color of a narrative. And in the case of the Cleveland schism there were a good many people who did not try to resist. They sent to the newspapers portentous accounts of the numerical strength of the troublesome Poles, credited them bodily, now to one religious organisation, now to another, and exaggerated the rumpus, even on this outer rim of the earth, in a manner worthy of the abortive and treasonable *los von Rom* movement in Austria. The *Cleveland Catholic Universe*, the *Philadelphia Catholic Standard*, the *Milwaukee Catholic Citizen*, and the rest of our many American exchanges, tell the sequel of the Cleveland schism: 'By an unanimous vote of the members of the Polish "Independent Catholic" Church of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Cleveland, to return to the true fold, the schism led by Rev. A. F. Kolaszewski, which sixteen years ago caused grave scandal, was terminated.' The *Catholic Universe* states that Father Kolaszewski himself took a prominent part in influencing those who followed him to return. He announced that he had performed his last act as an "independent Catholic." He publicly acknowledged his fault, and advised all to return to Mother Church. The independent church in Collinwood, a suburb of Cleveland, has also (according to the *Universe*) petitioned for a return to the fold of Catholic communion.

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