

## Current Topics

### Our Big Land Owners

The bursting up of big estates has long been going merrily on in New Zealand. Yet despite the united operations of the Government and of private owners and eighteen years of the persuasive pressure of a progressive land tax, nine hundred and twenty persons (according to the *Wanganui Herald*) still own half the occupied land in New Zealand.

### Barcelona

'There is one thing certain about the Barcelona outbreak,' says the *Boston Pilot*. 'No one on this side of the ocean can, from the printed reports, form any clear notion of what took place or who was responsible for what took place. It is a triumph for the foreign correspondent and the cable service, that with every modern device of science at their disposal the representatives of American journals have given us nothing except a farrago of conflicting stories.'

### New Diseases

Every new form of sport or locomotion develops (according to sundry medicoes) a specific malady. Thus we have had bicycle knee, tennis elbow, golf wrist, and motor face. Aeroplane lungs promise to be the latest addition to the list of medical terrors. Some years ago, when the present writer was in New York, one of the local qualified fighters of disease discovered (whether rightly or wrongly this depends sayeth not) that the passing craze of the time, ping-pong, developed a painful inflammatory condition of the ankle joint. The new disease was promptly labelled by a New York evening paper as 'the ping-pong pang.'

### 'Idolators' in the Navy

'It appears,' says the *New York Freeman's Journal* of September 11, 'there are more Catholics in the British Navy than there are members of any of the "Nonconformist" denominations. In the House of Commons recently, in reply to a question on the subject, the official figures were thus given: Home Fleet—Nore Division, 715 Presbyterians, 835 Wesleyans, 905 Roman Catholics; Portsmouth Division, 114 Presbyterians, 377 Wesleyans, 369 Roman Catholics; Devonport Division, 285 Presbyterians, 648 Wesleyans, 1190 Roman Catholics; Atlantic Fleet, 271 Presbyterians, 610 Wesleyans, 892 Roman Catholics; Mediterranean Fleet, 339 Presbyterians, 588 Wesleyans, 1360 Roman Catholics; China, 203 Presbyterians, 314 Wesleyans, 513 Roman Catholics (including 11 native Roman Catholics). Yet,' adds our New York contemporary, 'the King of England on his accession to the throne had to take an oath repudiating as "idolatry" the most sacred doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. The "idolators" come in handy when there is any fighting to be done for the British Empire.'

### Earthquake Warnings

The Philistines who assembled in their temple to make sport of Sampson were not caught in a worse trap than are the people who have pitched their city or village upon a quaky spot like Messina, when the earth's crust suddenly collapses or crumples up beneath them. An Italian Franciscan Father has, however, succeeded in inventing a delicate piece of mechanism which, even in its more or less tentative form, gives sufficient warning to allow people in quaky areas to view the work of destruction from the vantage point of the open air. The Italian correspondent of the Philadelphia 'Catholic Standard' describes the results as follows:—

'The writer happened to be in the zone of the shocks that did some injury last week at Sienna, and learned an interesting item as to the instrument invented by a Franciscan priest there for the purpose of giving warning as to the approach of earthquakes. The instrument, so far, gives notice only four and a-half minutes before the shock. It is a delicate little thing. A small bell is rung on the instrument, the shock comes, the machine breaks—and that is all. Now, on the night of the shock at Sienna the little bell of the machine was rung, and it awakened the guardian who slept beside it. He at once rang the great bell to warn the citizens to clear out of their houses. However, the

sounds of his bell were mistaken for those of the "Big Ben" of the Capuchin Church, with, happily, not very bad results. The learned Regular hopes to perfect his instrument so that warning may be given a considerable time before the approach of an earthquake.'

### Race Suicide

A Christchurch politician proposes to 'cure' race suicide by making some adjustment of taxation in favour of married couples with large families. So did Sir Kenelm Digby—that hearty, thorough-paced liar,' as Charles Lamb calls him—undertake to 'cure' cancer with his absurd 'sympathetic powder.' So did Mrs. Stephens with 'Stephen's Specific,' for the secret of which the British Parliament paid her £5,000 cash down in advance—only to find that the worthless nostrum consisted of eggs, snail-shells (with the snail in them), hips and haws, swine-cess and a few other assorted vegetables—all burned and mixed together. The Christchurch politician's nostrum is about as likely to 'cure' or even appreciably ameliorate race suicide as those pretentious 'remedies' were to settle with, or seriously stop the ravages of, cancer. Our reverend friends of other faiths lately gathered in council have made a better diagnosis of the disorder. They know that it is a moral one first and above all, and an economical one last—if at all; for the chief sinners are not the poor, but the well-to-do and the rich. And the one effective remedy must be a moral one, too—namely, a return to the old Catholic teaching in regard to the sacred duties and responsibilities of wedlock. So far, good. But, curiously enough, we have recently found the 'Actuarial Statistical Register' quoted to this effect: that, whereas the average family among the married clergy was about four children in 1895, it has now dropped to below two. And it is strange a further comment on the recent deliberations on the subject of race suicide is furnished by two recent advertisements in the secular Press of New Zealand in regard to vacant positions in great ecclesiastical establishments conducted by the clergy of one of the Churches that have lately been lamenting the shirking of parental responsibility. Both advertisements call for applications from married couples—one of them requires the pair to be 'without encumbrances'; the other notified that a couple without encumbrances would be preferred. Consistency is called a jewel—probably on account of its rarity.

### The Suffragettes

Great movements sometimes turn on very small pivots. In the strenuous days of 1866 one man in a vast crowd shook the railings of Hyde Park, London. The railings were soon levelled, and a series of connected events followed in swift succession which won Reform. The victory belonged to the man who first shook the railings. But he was, so to speak, merely the trigger that fired the heavily-charged mass of popular feeling. There is little in common between the Reform movement, in any of its varied times and phases, and the freakish skirmishings and kickings and hysteria and ill-aimed brickbats and vicious vitriol or pyrogallol of the British suffragettes. We believe in women's suffrage. Assassination, we are told, never changed the history of the world. And the history of the suffrage in Great Britain is not likely to be altered by the unwomanly and insensate flopping and high-kicking and screeching of unsexed females, like those of the Women's Freedom League, who have lately been dancing political can-cans in the limelight of London's famous town. Pope tells us that—

'The mouse that always trusts to one poor hole  
Can never be a mouse of any soul.'

The suffragettes who trust to one poor method of political agitation—the method of hysteria and epileptic fits—have not in them the soul that is to carry to a successful issue a movement for raising women to a higher political level. Hysteria makes but little history.

In a recent issue of the 'Living Age,' Gilbert K. Chesterton aims at the suffragettes the winged arrows of his subtle satire. 'The female suffrage movement,' says he, 'is simply the breakdown of the pride of woman; her surrender of that throne of satire, realism, and detachment, from which she has so long laughed at the solemnities and moderated the manias of the mere politician.' Women tempered the gravity of politics as she tempers the gravity of