

# Current Topics

**Motto**  
 "The hardest when it is hardest to pray."  
 We have forgotten the name of the author of this motto. But the motto itself is worth remembering.

## The Catholic Missionary

In the course of a recent letter to Rev. Father Walsh, director of the Foreign Mission Bureau in Boston (U.S.A.), the Rev. Peter McQueen, a Protestant clergyman of that city, recently returned from an extended tour in Africa, said: "All over Africa, wherever I found a Catholic missionary, I found an earnest, unselfish consecrated man for whom God's work was true and practical."

## Good Citizens

"The hardy-hearted immigrants from Tipperary and from every part of the Emerald Isle," said President Taft recently at Clonmel, near Denver (U.S.A.), "have come to the front in America, as they deserve. There is no element, no strain, in our civilisation that has shown itself to be stronger, more enterprising, more shrewd in business, more stern in enforcing high moral principles than the Irishmen who came to this country to make it their own."

## Our Civilisation

The Man on Horseback rules to-day as never before. Ten shillings in every pound raised by European countries are (according to Earl Grey) devoted to making and sharpening swords to cut each others' throats. And armies and navies, now, cost, as much on a peace footing as they cost on a war footing a mere half century ago. The war club and sheer brute force are the arbiters of to-day to an extent hardly dreamed of by mere barbarians. Yet we call it civilisation and toss our caps into the air and huzza, and go dancing and singing around it.

## The Catholic Cable Agency

With our "au revoir" for a time, we present the following "good news" to our readers. The Catholic News Agency, for which we have so long pleaded, has "materialised" under the happiest auspices. The scheme which we advocated at the recent Catholic Congress was received with kindly marks of approval by prelates, priests, and laymen here present. And we now learn that the Australian Catholic Truth Society has set upon it, the seal of its warm approval and adopted it as part and parcel of the beneficent work of enlightenment in which it is engaged. The Society has already taken practical steps to secure representation in various countries, especially those most frequently misrepresented by the press in Great Britain and Australasia. The Australian Catholic Truth Society is likewise arranging to establish a connection, for this purpose, with kindred associations in other parts of the world, where such organisations do not exist, with the archbishops or bishops of the chief centres. When cable messages or articles, gravely reflecting on Catholic affairs, appear in the press, and the truth of the statements appears open to question, the Society will, when its arrangements are complete, have a number of responsible persons throughout the world to whom it could cable or write for correct information on the subject. The Society, of course, have to meet the expenses of cable transmission both ways, and will be ever ready to reciprocate the kindly office with any other country appealing to it for information on subjects connected with the Church in Australasia. The usefulness of this much-needed organisation largely depends, of course, upon the funds at its disposal. The cost of this new departure must be met chiefly by voluntary subscriptions. And these we feel sure will be forthcoming in generous proportions. Some of them are inserted for the good cause below, and be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer, Australian Catholic Truth Society, 312 Rensselaer Street, Melbourne. The Rev. James Coffey, Adm. of the Tablet, has likewise intimated his willingness to receive and transmit any New Zealand subscriptions that may be entrusted to him for the furtherance of this good work.

## The Seal of Confession

An old Spanish proverb says: "A secret among three is all man's property." The saying is singularly appropriate in so far as it applies to the sacrament of seal or secret of the Confession. The priest in the sacred tribunal acts not as a mere man, but as the minister of the Most High God, Who "casts behind His back" the sins of the truly penitent (Is., xxviii., 17), and throws them into the deep, and silent place of utter oblivion, whence they shall never again be remembered. The secret of confession differs from all others in the sacredness of its functions, in its far-reaching character, in the more than natural fidelity with which it has been observed down the course of the ages. Even among the human weeds that the Pope has thrown over their garden wall, every form of human frailty has respected the "hallowed silence" which guards for ever the secrets of God's tribunal of mercy. The sacrament of seal or secret of God's tribunal of mercy has furnished many instances (as we showed some years ago) in which priests have faced life, imprisonment and even death, when the occasion demanded it, rather than violate by act or word the solemn obligation of perpetual secrecy. We refer here to such cases as those of the St. John of Nepomuk, the martyr of the seal, Father McLaughlin of Ayr, Father Gillespie of Newry, Dame (Montreal), the martyred priests Fathers Dumoulin and Kopylowicz, and Father Lutz. One of these devoted priests (Father Dumoulin) who died in prison as a supposed murderer in the French epoch of the Revolution, just because he would not reveal the real criminal, who afterwards publicly avowed his own guilt—the *Surrey Morning Herald* said some eleven years ago that his "heroic devotion to a sense of duty constituted an act of heroism to which it would be hard to find a parallel."

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These remarks have been suggested to us by a statement made a short time ago in a section of the secular press in the United States to the effect that in a particular instance, a priest recently violated the seal of confession while testifying in one of the courts of that country. The *Philadelphia Catholic Standard* of October 23, dealing with the subject, says in an editorial paragraph: "Much ado about nothing" is the substantial fact regarding a loud flare of trumpets in the secular press over a so-called breach of the law of the Church in regard to the secrecy of the confessional. When the particulars of the case cited are examined, there is no real ground for the alarm to be found: it is just the case of a runaway knock by a small boy at a hall door before the electric bell rings. A woman penitent told in court, in presence of examination, some of what passed in confession between a priest and herself. The priest was not called on to testify, and if he had been he would most certainly have refused. No priest, even those put out of the Church by formal excommunication, has ever been known to betray a secret confided to him, under the seal of confession, in any of the instances on the disclosure.

## Littledale

Many years ago an Irish hotel proprietor overheard the driver of a side-car in Cork demanding as a legal right, an exorbitant fare from an unsuspecting foreigner who had set foot in the fair city "by the pleasant waters of the River Lee." The hotel-keeper closed a vigorous expostulation to the driver with the remark: "I wonder you haven't more regard for the truth." "Och indeed, thin," replied the unabashed extortioner, "I've a great dale more regard for the truth than for any other man's." Dr. Littledale, whose luridly misleading books still enjoy a certain vogue among Protestants of neglected instruction, was so confident that the Cork jaunting-car driver was to commerce. "He was a miser of truth and of fairness and of every quality that befits a minister of the Gospel of truth and brotherly love." One may say of his controversial publications, what St. Thomas More said of Tyndale's: "What a lie came in by his lips," and that, from beginning to end, he is so busy engaged in inventing or shaping facts, or otherwise evolving argumentative material out of his own inner consciousness.

In the course of his able and complete Penny pamphlet, *The Truth About Dr. Littledale*, recently published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society, the Hon. Mr. H. J. Innes, O.P., has indicated to the reader some idea of the extent to which Protestant opponents of Catholics and Catholicism is shared by the mendacious publications of that *apache* of religious controversy. "Some time ago," writes Father MacInerney (p. 12), "I went to inspect two Protestant clergymen's libraries which had been offered for sale in Adelaide. One was the library of a deceased Anglican Canon; the other had belonged to a Presbyterian minister. Curious to know from what sources the two clergymen might have obtained their libraries, I went through the books rather carefully. In the single Catholic work was to be found in either collection. The said books I discovered with a distinct bearing upon Catholicism were Littledale's *Plain Reasons* and one of the lucubrations of the pretended "Catholic," Michael McCarthy. The Anglican Canon had apparently drawn his ideas of Catholicism from Littledale while the Presbyterian minister had seemingly taken the "veracious" Michael McCarthy as the "high authentic source" of his information.