

cowardly resort of imputing unworthy motives. The Duke of Norfolk has been singled out by the spiteful nib-twisters of the London and Cape Press—and by some of their New Zealand echoes—for this particular form of 'back-wounding calumny.' We have been told with plaguy iteration that the 'real motive' which prompted the great English Catholic nobleman to volunteer for service in South Africa was petty pique at the attitude assumed by a Catholic newspaper in Rome (which, by the way, is not 'the Vatican organ') towards the tangled tussle between Boer and Briton in South Africa—an attitude which, we may remark, coincides with that adopted by the English Liberal and Labor organs and by practically the whole of the Continental and American Press. The wide diffusion of this Midas-eared bit of newspaper fiction in South Africa induced the reverend editor of the *S.A. Catholic Magazine* to call the Duke's attention to the matter. The Duke nailed the calumny in the following terms:—

'Bloemfontein, May 16, 1900.

'Dear Father O'Riley,—I have received your letter asking if you may contradict a statement which has appeared to the effect that, in volunteering to serve in the present war, I am in some way actuated by a wish to protest against views propounded by some papers in Rome who support the Vatican, but responsibility for whose utterances the Vatican has denied. I never contradict reports which are so absolutely foolish, but if you think it well to do so, you may certainly take that course. The report is utterly false and has no element of truth in it either direct or indirect.—Believe me,

'Yours very truly,
'NORFOLK.'

SIGNIFICANT FIGURES.

It would take a surgical operation to get a fact, as well as a joke, into some people's heads. But the brain-boxes of others are happily less imperviously adamant. For instance: In the course of a recent discussion on illegitimacy in the Melbourne *Herald*, Dr. Bevan, the leader of the Independent Church in Victoria, said that 'Ireland's pride of place in the records of illegitimacy arises largely from the fact that her priesthood is of a high standard of morality, and the confessional is necessarily influential.' A similar admission was made in 1872 by one so hostile as James Anthony Froude, whom the *Athenæum* described in its issue of February 22, 1896, as 'a fashionable preacher gone wrong,' and whose *English in Ireland* 'is intended,' says Lecky, 'to blacken to the utmost the character of the Irish people, and especially of the Irish Catholics.' In one of his lectures in New York he said: 'Ireland is one of the poorest countries in Europe, yet there is less theft there, less cheating of all kinds, than in any other country of the same size in the civilised world. In the last hundred years at least impurity has been almost unknown in Ireland. This absence of vulgar crime and this exceptional delicacy and modesty of character are due, to their everlasting honor, to the influence of the Catholic clergy.'

Every syllable of this unwilling testimony to the purity of Ireland's sons and daughters must have cost a pang to the fanatical cleric whose most serious work on the Irish people is aptly described by Justin H. McCarthy as having 'no more claim to impartiality than an election squib,' and whose deep-seated antipathy to everything Catholic, so colored his views and warped his statements of fact that, in the words of the *Athenæum*, he 'leaves us hopelessly struggling to distinguish between his history and his hysteria.' There is nothing easier than to bring a horse to the brink. And you may set a man full square before a fact as high and broad and vast as Mount Cook; but he may choose, in very spite of you, to close his eyes or to look the other way, or to glance briefly and contemptuously at it through the diminishing glass of a prejudice that is as hard as rock-crystal, and then turn homeward pooh-poohing your mountain for the merest mole-hill—a disfiguring pimple or freckle on the fair face of Dame Nature. But this time—for a wonder—James Anthony opened his orbits wide—and saw. So did others both before and since. But they have been for the most part statisticians and students of social science, whose books are of the dry-bone order that your devourer of literary whipped cream and yellow-backed agonies finds as dull and somnolent as Mark Twain's infallible remedy for sleeplessness—a child's German grammar. The constantly low rate of illegitimacy in Ireland as compared with the neighboring countries has long been a matter of surprise and speculation to statisticians. Singularly complete and instructive figures in point appear in Dr. Leffingwell's *Illegitimacy*, one of Swan Sonnenschein's 'Social Science Series' (published in 1892). Mulhall, in his *Dictionary of Statistics* for 1899 (p. 645) gives the following figures for the year 1896:—

England	...	42	illegitimate	births	per	1000
Scotland	...	72	"	"	"	"
Ireland	...	26	"	"	"	"

On the following page (646) he gives 'the number of illegitimate births in 1896, compared with that of women of 15 to

50 years of age in the various countries.' We append that portion of the Table which refers to the British Isles:—

	Women	Illegit. births	Per 10,000 Women
England	7,622,000	38,700	50
Scotland	1,068,000	9,300	87
Ireland	1,174,000	2,800	24

'A low rate of marriage' says an American authority, 'ought naturally to result in increased illegitimacy.' But Ireland presents at the same time the lowest rate of illegitimacy in Europe side by side with the lowest marriage rate. Irish youths and maidens may have a mind for marriage—as Æsop's frogs had for the water of the well into which they dared not jump. But they remain in chaste single blessedness more than any people in Europe. Their marriage rate, according to Mulhall (*Dictionary of Statistics*, 1899, p. 768) 'is 23 per cent. below the average of nations.' According to the same distinguished authority, out of 1000 persons, 608 are single in England, 647 in Scotland, as 667 in Ireland. And (p. 768) he gives the following as the proportion of adults, male and female, who are married and unmarried in the three countries:—

	Males, per Cent.		Females, per Cent.	
	Married	Un-married	Married	Un-Married
England	54.0	46.0	50.0	50.0
Scotland	49.1	50.9	44.0	56.0
Ireland	39.9	60.1	38.3	61.7

The significance of the returns of irregular births in Ireland becomes more manifest when we compare province with province: the rate increases as the proportion of Catholics in the population diminishes. The following table is compiled from the Registrar-General's returns for 1897 and varies very little from the figures given by Dr. Leffingwell for 1878-1891:—

Provinces	Percentage of Catholic Population	Per 100 births Illegitimacy
Connaught	96	0.68
Munster	93	2.35
Leinster	83	2.54
Ulster	50	3.58

But the most curious and instructive fact of all in connection with this subject is one which has been already demonstrated in the columns of the N. Z. TABLET: namely that the illegitimate birth-rate rises steadily with the fall, and falls with the rise, in the proportion of Catholics to the total population of each county in Ulster. The population of Dublin proper at the census of 1891 was 254,001; of Belfast 255,896. Yet, with practically equal populations, the illegitimate birth-rate is 42 per 1000 in Belfast as against 21 per 1000 in Dublin. The population of the counties of Down (Ulster) and Mayo (Connaught) are almost equal. But that of Down is almost wholly Protestant, while that of Mayo is almost wholly Catholic. And Leffingwell (pp. 28-9) shows that the rate of illegitimacy in Down is constantly about ten times greater than in Mayo. Donegal, the most Catholic county in Ulster, has the lowest rate of irregular births, and Down and Antrim, which are the least Catholic counties in Ireland (Antrim the least Catholic of all) have the highest of all. The following is taken from a table published in Leffingwell's work (p. 153) and compiled from reports of the Registrar-General for the ten years 1879-1888:—

County	Rate of Illegitimacy.	
	To 1000 total Births	To each 10,000 Unmarried Women (15 to 45 years old)
Mayo, Connaught	5	11.7
Sligo, "	8	14
Galway, "	10	20
Donegal, Ulster	16	23.5
Tyrone, "	41	52
Londonderry, "	46	66
Down, "	51	90
Antrim, "	52	94.6
Kerry, Munster	14	32
Clare, "	15	28
Limerick, "	27	45
All Ireland	26.5	43.5

All this gives Mr. J. A. Fox, a Protestant writer, occasion to make the following remarks in his *Key to the Irish Question*: 'Ulster, it is sad to tell, is *primus* amongst the Irish provinces in immorality only; Antrim, Armagh, Londonderry, Down, and Tyrone being the plague-spots of the most moral country in Europe. These counties, the *Pall Mall Gazette* says, are