

Current Topics

Some Travellers' Tales

A story is told—and is 'vouched for' by a traveller—at the expense of a shrewd Yankee who had been 'doing' the sights of Rome. The cute stranger from beyond the Atlantic was determined to get his money's worth, saw everything that was worth seeing—and if he did not see all that he desired, no false modesty prevented him endeavoring to do so and asking all about it. Of course he visited and revisited the Vatican, and was courteously shown over the Papal Palace and its wealth of varied treasures. He asked many questions, and desired to see everything. After all the customary sights had been shown, the guide who attended him asked: 'Is there anything else, Signor Americano, that you would like to see?' 'There's one thing,' answered the American, 'that I want to see more than anything else, and I haint been on the edge of it yet.' 'What is that, Signor?' 'The cattle-pens.' 'The cattle-pens? Why, we have nothing of that sort, Signor!' 'You haint? Then, where in the world do you keep them Papal bulls that we're always hearin' about?'

The tale is matched, if not bettered, by a story told by 'Civis' in the 'Passing Notes' column of the *Otago Daily Times* the other week, which certainly deserves to be passed on. Transatlantic millionaire at the Vatican is presented to the Pope; grasps his Holiness vigorously by the hand and remarks: 'Vurry pleased to meet you, sir. I knew your father, the late Pope.'

A Weighty Statement

It is interesting to note that the somewhat limited vision and contracted outlook of the *N.Z. Journal of Education* in regard to the place and importance of religious schools in a truly national system of education are not shared by its professional contemporaries in other lands. The New Zealand paper, it will be remembered, stated that it stood for the present secular or so-called 'national' system, and was opposed to the encouragement, in any shape or form, of the religious schools, on the ground that this would tend to weaken the 'national' system. Very different is the attitude of the New England *Journal of Education*, whose editor has given us one of the weightiest statements in vindication of the Catholic position that it has been our lot to come across. We have pleasure in reproducing it, and in order that our State school teachers may be given the opportunity of looking at the question from every angle, we hope that the *N.Z. Journal of Education* will 'please copy.' 'There is one Church,' says the New England *Journal of Education*, 'which makes religion an essential in education and that is the Catholic Church, in which the mothers teach their faith to the infants at the breast in their lullaby songs, and whose brotherhoods and priests, sisterhoods and nuns imprint their religion on souls as indelibly as the diamond marks the hardest glass. They ingrain their faith in human hearts when most plastic to the touch. Are they wrong, are they stupid, are they ignorant, that they found parish schools, convents, colleges in which religion is taught? Not if a man be worth more than a dog, or the human soul, with eternity for duration, is of more value than the span of animal existence for a day. If they are right we are wrong. If our Puritan fathers were wise, then we are foolish: looking upon it as a mere speculative question, with their policy they will increase; with ours, we will decrease. We are no prophet, but it does seem to us that Catholics retaining their religious teaching and we our heathen schools, will gaze upon cathedral crosses all over New England when our meeting houses will be turned into barns. Let them go on teaching their religion to the children and let us go on educating our children in schools without a recognition of God and without the reading of the Bible and they

will plant corn and train grape-vines on the unknown graves of the Plymouth Pilgrims and the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, and none will dispute their right of possession. We say this without expressing our own hopes or fears, but as inevitable from the fact that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' That is the Catholic argument in a nutshell; and it has never been more aptly or concisely stated.

The London 'Star' Tells a Tale

No sensible person nowadays thinks of turning to the columns of a sensation-loving evening daily, such as the London *Star*, for a sober statement of Catholic events or Catholic history, and the general public has long ago learned to take with considerably more than a grain of salt the tall tales and startling narratives that are from time to time served up to sell the paper. Mark Twain said in his *More Tramps*: 'I never could tell a lie that anybody would doubt, or a truth that anybody would believe.' But such high-art liars are, like poets, born, not made. The average newspaper fabricator, especially when handling Catholic matters, cannot lie plausibly or consistently. This is evidenced in a fairy tale printed in the *Taranaki Daily News* the other day, and quoted as having appeared in the London *Star*. It is all about an alleged love affair of Pius IX., in the days before he entered the ecclesiastical state. There is nothing in the story itself discreditable to the reputed lover, but the foolish and sensational headlines—'A Pope's Romance,' 'Bride Forsaken at the Altar'—certainly convey the impression that the incident happened after Pius IX. had ascended the Papal throne. According to the story, the young Italian, scion of a noble house, handsome, chivalrous, generous, etc., etc., formed a romantic attachment (duly reciprocated) for the lovely daughter of an Irish Anglican bishop. He proposed, was accepted, and the wedding-day fixed.

It was, of course, inevitable that the course of true love should not run smoothly. It never does—in fiction. The young 'lovers' had therefore to be separated in the time-honored way by interfering parents. The tragedy is thus narrated: 'But when the day arrived the Count was not at the church. The would-be bride waited for a long time, but he never arrived, and not for many years afterwards did she learn the reason, and know that he had after all been faithful. The explanation was simple. The Count came of a Jesuit family who had estimated his value to the Church, and determined that it should possess him. Letters were intercepted, and being persuaded that the beautiful Irish girl had ceased to love him, he took Orders, and was sent to the West Indies. His true worth soon told; he became a Bishop, and Archbishop, and Pope on the death of Gregory XVI. He learnt (how it is not stated) of his family's deceit, and on the day he ascended the Papal Throne he revealed the fact that he was the Count Mastai-Ferretti, who had failed to keep his wedding-morn engagement with Miss Foster. Thus was the truth revealed to the woman who had loved him so well.' The whole thing is, of course, purely legendary, and finds no place in the authentic biographies of Pius IX. But the idea of a Pope, on the very day on which he ascended the Papal throne, turning aside to tell the world all about his early love affairs is so absurdly and deliciously comical that we almost forgive the varlet for the rest of the nonsensical concoction. It is something to get an innocent laugh in these otherwise serious and sombre times.

Germany and Ireland

German papers and writers in the United States are making an earnest and determined—if rather belated and amusing—attempt to pose as the friend and protector, and even as the would-be ally, of Ireland. To this effect writes a Mr. Viereck, in the well-known German American paper, *The Fatherland*, of October 4. He has made the discovery—very late in the day, it must be admitted—that the Germans 'are one with

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