

Current Topics

Where the 'Sisters' Go

The change which is stealing over the spirit of the Reformed creeds manifests itself in many and various ways. For many years past, for instance, Anglicans have been paying our Sisterhoods the honest flattery of imitation. Our Wesleyan fellow-colonists are also in the field, and they surround the ceremony of 'dedicating' their 'Sisters' with a degree of pomp and circumstance and general publicity that goes to show that, in theory at least, they have no mean conception of the importance of the functions which consecrated virgins should exercise under the Christian dispensation. But the complete adoption of the Catholic principle is still apparently regarded as a trifle too heroic. We had often wondered, on reading of the 'dedication' of a new 'Sister,' what had caused the vacancy which the later arrival had come to fill. The following paragraph from Tuesday's *Dunedin Evening Star* seems to throw some light on the question.

*

'As soon as the Methodist Conference rose to-day,' says our contemporary, 'Trinity Church was decorated and made ready for a wedding that attracted a full congregation at 1.30 p.m., the contracting parties being the Rev. Ernest Oswald Blamires, for some time associated with the Rev. W. Slade at the Central Mission, and Miss Annie Anderson, better known as Sister Annie, who went from Greymouth to England to be trained as a deaconess, and has for two years filled that position in connection with Trinity Church. The service was conducted by the Rev. W. L. Blamires, of Victoria, father of the bridegroom, assisted by the Rev. P. W. Fairclough and the Rev. E. P. Blamires. Mr. D. A. Anderson, who attended to give his daughter in marriage, was accompanied by his wife. The Rev. F. Rands was groomsmen, and the bridesmaids were Miss Isitt (daughter of the Rev. F. Isitt) and the Misses Nettie and Dulcie Grigg. Miss Hartley played "Lohengrin" music before the ceremony and the Wedding March afterwards, and the choir led in the hymn "The voice that breathed o'er Eden." The happy couple had intended making a trip to the Old Country, but owing to Mr. Blamires being appointed to the Wellington Central Mission that holiday has been given up. Many ministers who attended the Conference were present.'

*

So that is how the 'Sisterhoods' are depleted. To 'Lohengrin music' and 'The voice that breathed o'er Eden' the 'Sister'—from what was to have been her life-work—is gently wafted out to the sea of matrimony. Perhaps in time our Wesleyan friends will rise to the higher level and place their Sisterhoods on a more enduring basis.

Prayer in the Prize Ring

The poor prize-fighter is usually regarded as just about past praying for, and he is left for the most part to work out his salvation as best he may, without any embarrassing attention from clergy, district visitor, or Y.M.C.A. Even the purveyor of the harmless, necessary tract 'side-steps' him; and under all the circumstances the wonder is not that his religious notions are somewhat topsy-turvy, but that he has any notions on the subject at all. Yet apparently he has, and from time to time little facts and incidents come to light which go to show that in some cases, at least, he is not quite so low in the scale as he is usually painted. The latest case in point is recorded in a recent issue of the *Sydney Referee* in the course of a report of what is described as 'a sustained, vigorous, exciting battle' between one Johnny Summers, a fighter from England, and Rudie Unholz, a German from South Africa. It was anticipated that Unholz would have an easy victory, but as a matter of fact—according to the *Referee*—the English lad had all the best of it, and when the umpire gave his decision as a 'draw' there was prolonged uproar and hooting from the crowd by way of protest. Summers's display was evidently something in the nature of a revelation, and the *Referee* reporter says that as a scientific exhibition the contest was the best that has yet been seen at the Stadium. Both boys are described as 'having thrown their very souls into their work'; but the striking feature of the affair was the fact that the English boy was seen from time to time to quietly, openly, and deliberately 'bless' himself, and during the minute's interval allowed between each round he momentarily slipped on one knee as if praying.

*

The *Referee* reporter gives the following account of the incident:—'A feature of the contest was the spectacle of the Englishman apparently invoking the assistance of the

"Great Master." Summers bent one knee ere sitting down for the minute's spell and again as he rose in response to the call of time, and between whiles he would "cross" himself. This, I am informed, is the lad's custom, and has been all through his career. He is a most devout Roman Catholic, but Johnny's actions were misconstrued by many. Every time he bent while in his corner his glove appeared to sweep the resin-covered floor slightly, and that, it was thought, meant no good for the other man. Indeed, one old-timer crept up to me and said: "D'yer see his game; 'e's pickin' up the resin on his glove and no one notices him," but that was nonsense. Nothing was further from the honest young Englishman's thoughts.' From the respectful tone in which the reporter refers to the English boy's action it would appear as if this open acknowledgment of a Higher Power—however mixed may have been the motives which inspired it—had given the more intelligent portion of the crowd some little food for thought.

St. Patrick's Day

Our issue this week bears the imprint March 17—the day which Cardinal Moran not long ago happily designated 'Ireland's Empire Day.' It is difficult, if not impossible, for one not born an Irishman—no matter how ardently he may sympathise with the hopes and aspirations of the Irish race—to fully realise all that is brought to the mind of an Irishman by the thought of St. Patrick's Day. The two most marked features in the Irish character are love for religion and love for native land. Even the bitterest enemies of the Irish people admit their patriotism, and centuries of cruel persecution have failed to shake or weaken their fidelity to their Faith. It is probably because the anniversary of Ireland's patron saint affords ample scope for the exercise of both these feelings—the religious and the patriotic—that the celebration of St. Patrick's Day has taken such a deep hold everywhere on the hearts of the Irish people. In the first place, it is a great religious festival. St. Patrick, the apostle of Catholicity, found Ireland in a state of heathenism, and he left it a Christian land. During his glorious apostolate churches without number were erected and schools and convents rose almost simultaneously throughout the land. He plucked the green shamrock from the sword of Tara, and of its triple leaf he made at one and the same time an illustration of his sacred subject and an emblem of Christian Ireland. It is natural and fitting that his spiritual children throughout the world should unite to honor and revere the great servant of God to whose labors and prayers they owe their most precious possession—the Catholic faith.

*

But St. Patrick was not only an apostle; he was also in the highest and best sense of the word a nation-builder. Religion is the truest and surest foundation of national life, and broad and deep were the foundations thus laid by the great saint. He knit the national energies of the people together in the bonds of a common worship and a common faith, and his work has had a deep and lasting influence, not only on the religious but also on the national life of the Irish race. It is, therefore, the special glory of the Irish national festival that it combines the two-fold element of nationality and religion, and every recurrence of the celebration is a renewal of the strength of the ties that bind the Irish people together. Then, too, for those who have left the Old Land—for those who may, in a sense, be called the 'exiles of Erin'—what memories and never-to-be-forgotten scenes are brought to mind by the return of the festive day.

The forms and faces that are gone,
The hopes and dreams and days of old
That shrined within their hearts live on,
Their varying charms again unfold
On Patrick's Day.

He would be a poor Irishman indeed, and altogether unworthy of the name, who could let this memorable day come and go without a touch of emotion and a thrill of pride.

The Church and Education: A Presbyterian Tribute

In the course of a brief but thoughtful address on 'Heredity and Environment' delivered at the annual meeting of the Froebel Club last week, the Rev. R. E. Davies, minister of Knox Church, Dunedin, made some apt and interesting points. After showing how the environment of the child could be made a most helpful factor in the development of character, Mr. Davies effectively disposed of the old excuse—so often put forward in criticism of attempts at reformation both of children and of adults—that such attempts must necessarily be useless and futile because we are all the creatures of heredity. 'As for the