

Current Topics

Peary and the Pole

'Mr. Dooley' found it quite easy to believe both Cook and Peary, so long as they refrained from giving proofs. The difficulty of believing them *after* they have given the grounds on which their claim was based, appears to have presented itself to much more exalted characters than the philosopher of Archey Road. Peary's book, *The North Pole*, has been for some time past under review in the magazines; and the scientific papers are, perhaps, more sceptical than ever as to whether Peary really did reach the Pole. The following quotations, for example, from an editorial review in *Nature* of May 18 show sufficiently clearly the light in which that high authority views the question. 'In spite of the space available there are many omissions of the many things one would most like to know. . . . There is also little in this book to answer the criticism of those who have questioned Peary's actual attainment of the Pole. . . . Some adequate statement of the evidence that was laid before these distinguished authorities might have been given as one of the appendices, of which there are three. . . . The great increase in his pace after he parted from Captain Bartlett is not explained in the text. . . . It is not easy to follow the story of the last few days of the approach to the Pole. . . . A tabular statement of his marches would have been very useful. The numerous references to the observations taken and the fac-similes of some of the calculations are not convincing.' A New South Wales jokester, when exhibiting a carriage and pair at the Sydney Show early last year, announced that he had named the horses 'Cook' and 'Peary,' because 'they have the Pole between them.' And now—after all the controversy—we are left with the haunting suspicion that not even 'between them' have the enterprising claimants captured the elusive article.

Lying Trade Names

The Dublin Industrial Development Association has had a busy year—not the least fruitful department of its activity being that devoted to the exposure of the slim commercialists, in England and elsewhere, who try to 'commandeer' the market for Irish goods by the fraudulent use of Irish trade names. Every week of the year the Association has detected cross-Channel and other firms applying misleading labels and brands to their manufactures—misleading by reason of the fact that they bear Irish titles, emblems, and designs which are intended to deceive the public into the belief that the articles so branded were made in Ireland. Here are a few samples, which will give some idea of the 'charmin' variety' of Irish titles under which certain English goods have been masquerading during the year. English-made sheets were sold stamped with an outline map of Ireland, together with the word 'Killarney'; English cloth was put on the market as 'Highbury Donegal tweeds'; boxes of English-made hairpins were branded 'Shamrock'; brushes made in Bristol were labelled 'Irish'; cloths made in Leeds were offered variously as 'Connaught,' 'Shannon,' and 'Erin'; English-made cycle repair outfits were boomed under the fetching title 'Erin-go-bragh'; Sheffield-made razors were offered to the public as 'Faugh-a-ballagh'; sweets made in London were further sweetened by the title 'The Shamrock Mixture'; cloth made in Yorkshire was sold as 'Avoca' and 'Wicklow'; boots made in Northampton were branded 'Shamrock'; and so on. The result was that, not only were the general public deceived, but considerable quantities of imported manufactures were actually purchased in Ireland by persons who believed they were supporting Irish industries. The extent of the frauds may be gathered from the fact that during the past year the Association succeeded in procuring undertakings to discontinue this practice from twenty-six firms, or an average of one such undertaking per fortnight.

Modernism and Church-going

The leaders of Protestantism in England are making a brave attempt to explain and to face the black-looking problem of the churchless masses—the problem of the existence of whole portions of the population of England and Scotland who are as utterly pagan 'as the wildest savage roaming the forests of Africa.' Under the title of *Non-Church-going: its Reasons and Remedies*, a volume has just been published by Messrs. Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, in which the views and testimonies of the following eminent and representative men are collated: Sir Oliver Lodge, the Rev. Prebendary Carlile, F. Herbert Stead, M.A., the Rev. Professor Stalker, D.D., William Ward, the Rev. Frank Ballard, D.D., J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., the Rev. J. Ernest Rattenbury, Hector Macpherson, the Rev. Thomas Martin, D.D., P. Whitwell Wilson, John W. Gulland, M.P., and the Right Hon. J. Compton-Rickett, M.P. The subject has only an indirect concern for Catholics; for while in large city populations, as e.g., in London, Liverpool, etc., there is a certain amount of leakage amongst Catholics as amongst others, on the whole Catholics have emerged splendidly out of every test of comparative attendance, and in particular, the lament so often heard in relation to Protestant churches—that the congregations are composed almost exclusively of women—has absolutely no application to the Catholic body. Interesting, however, the testimony of these witnesses certainly is; and in some cases distinctly significant.

In the Introduction to the volume, by Mr. W. Forbes Gray, we are told: 'It is difficult to over-estimate the gravity of the situation; an appalling number of people never enter a church; only 3 per cent. of working men are directly influenced by the Christian faith.' The reference here is, of course, to the non-Catholic population. The explanations given are many and various; but the two following utterances strike us as being particularly weighty and impressive. The criticism in question is directed not against the weaker kinds of sermonising but against modern Scottish sermons and the better type of modern English sermons, such as are delivered characteristically from the Non-conformist pulpits. 'The emphasis upon brotherhood,' says Sir J. Compton-Rickett, M.P., 'the ethical teaching which has displaced the theological, the translation of dogma into poetry and into parable, have taken the taste out of the sermon and robbed the message of its once absorbing interest. The preacher has now become the moralist who counsels, and not the prophet who once denounced, reasoned, and persuaded.' Mr. Hector Macpherson, speaking with special reference to Scotland, bears precisely similar testimony: 'The preachers of to-day,' he says, 'especially the younger generation, loosed from their moorings and bereft of compass, are sailing on unknown seas. In other words, they have no arresting message. They are no longer ambassadors. In the sphere of the supernatural they have speculative opinions, surmises, but no certainties. Consequently, modern sermons, as a rule, are ethical rather than theological, intellectual rather than doctrinal. They are conducive to a species of religious Moderatism with an instinctive aversion to Revivalism. Now, where the Pentecostal element is eliminated from sermons, the churches become lethargic. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, and naturally seek fresh fields and pastures new. The Higher Criticism spells Moderatism, which again spells stagnation, and, as in the eighteenth century, decline of Church influence.' 'Let any impartial layman,' he continues, 'compare the fundamental points of the *Age of Reason* with the conclusions of the Higher Critics, and he will be astonished at the resemblance. In both there is the same denial of the infallibility of the Bible, the same insistence on its legendary and unhistorical character; the difference being that while Paine bars his reasonings with irreverent ridicule, the Higher Critics, after undermining the authority of the Bible, still claim for it a spiritual value. On such a platform it is impossible to deal with the hard-headed sceptical working man. . . . Before the churches can come within measurable distance of fulfilling their great mission they must