

Current Topics

A Cable Lie

The following cable message appeared in our New Zealand dailies of January 24: 'Paris, January 22.—A woman named Alice Crespy has been arrested on a charge of shooting a priest named Chassaing, whom she met in the confessional. The bishop, to prevent a scandal, had transferred Chassaing, and the woman subsequently reported the priest's suicide at her house, explaining that his act was the result of grief over their separation.' We cut this out at the time, in the assured conviction that later information would throw a different complexion on this wildly improbable looking tale. The element of fact in the message was that the priest was found dead, having been shot. It now appears that the account of the 'suicide' of the priest, together with the statement as to its alleged cause, was the concoction of a hysterical and desigining woman. The other side of the story has been given in the *London Daily Mail*. According to the London paper this woman had so pestered the priest by her unwelcome attentions that he had ordered the sacristan to prevent her entering the church. And, according to the same authority, his bishop makes the statement that he had transferred the priest as a promotion, and that the priest was greatly pleased at the prospect. And to prove that he had no intention of committing suicide many have given their evidence of various practical preparations he was making for his new parish. The woman is described in the French press as a 'poetess'—from which it may be inferred that she had a tendency towards romance and towards the imaginative. It is a shame that the 'explanation' of a scheming woman, involving dishonor to the memory of a dead priest, should be cabled to the uttermost parts of the earth, and that not a word should be said regarding his bishop's refutation and vindication.

A Jewish Protest

It is very natural that the members of the Jewish body should feel keenly the injustice of the Bible-in-Schools League proposals, and that a New Zealand Rabbi should declare, in a letter which has been submitted to us: 'No conscientious Jewish teacher, loyal to his faith, could teach and explain the passages (in certain of the Bible lessons) in such a way that the children would understand them "as intelligently as any other lesson."' To do so would be to act the hypocrite.' How acutely sensitive the followers of the ancient faith are to the slightest danger of religious proselytism in connection with the public education system, or to any invasion of their rights of conscience, may be gathered from the opposition offered by Jews in the United States to what would be regarded by Bible Leaguers here as a very harmless and innocuous proposal. We find recorded in the *Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times* of May 17 the following telegram, which had just been sent to the Governor of Pennsylvania (Governor Tener) by the Jewish Community of Philadelphia, of which Dr. Cyrus Adler is the president:

'Hon. John K. Tener,—The Executive Council of the Jewish Community of Philadelphia, representing over one hundred organisations, respectfully urges you to veto the bill making it compulsory, under severe penalty, for teachers in the schools to read ten verses of the Bible daily. We believe this act would impose upon the Jewish pupils in the public schools religious exercises, which are in violation of the spirit of the American institutions, and of the fundamental right of the freedom of conscience. We further point out that at least five versions of the English Bible are in current use by different denominations, and that the carrying out of this act would inevitably introduce sectarian strife in our public schools.

JOSEPH L. KUN, Secretary.

CYRUS ADLER, President.

The proposal in the Bill here protested against was merely that the teachers should be compelled to read ten verses of the Bible daily, apparently without explanation or comment of any kind. How the Phila-

delphia Jews would have felt if the teachers were to be compelled to teach 'as intelligently as any other lesson' the New Testament accounts of 'The Betrayal of Christ,' 'The Crucifixion,' etc., we can fairly well imagine.

A Scientist's Lapse

Judged by his writings, Sir William Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University, is such a broad-viewed and tolerant character, and such a kindly and attractive personality withal, that he can hardly be taken seriously in the shallow, surprising, and entirely uncharacteristic remarks which he made in an address delivered at the John Hopkins Hospital the other day. Here is the ill-considered utterance: 'In the present state of our mental development 99 per cent. of our fellow creatures, when in trouble, sorrow, or sickness, trust to charms, incantations, and to the saints. Many a shrine has more followers than Pasteur, many a saint more believers than Lister. Less than twenty years have passed since the last witch was burned in the British Isles.' Clearly the speaker had given very little thought to the point he was making or he would never have mentioned Pasteur's name in such a connection. Pasteur was known not less for earnestness and sincerity in the practice of his religion than for his scientific eminence; and it is an historic fact that he uttered the oft-quoted and weighty declaration: 'The more I know (of science), the more nearly is my faith that of the Breton peasant; could I but know all, I would have the faith of the Breton peasant's wife.' Clearly, if Pasteur's name is to be used at all in respect to such matters as prayer and the invocation of the saints—and no name in the world of science has higher claim to be invoked—it must be as a witness to the other side from that apparently taken by Sir William Osler.

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Cardinal Gibbons, who was evidently a close friend of the distinguished physician when he practised for years in Baltimore, was naturally surprised at a seeming attack on Christianity from such an unexpected quarter, and took the speaker to task with some vigor in the press. His Eminence said: 'Scientists in any line sometimes make statements such as that of Dr. Osler, and only a short time ago I had to defend some truths that Thomas A. Edison attacked. These scientific specialists think their statements should go unchallenged, but this one of Dr. Osler's shall not and I shall write to him asking him to retract it. I would like to call the attention of Dr. Osler to the fact that Pasteur was a devoted Catholic and put his trust in the saints. He said that, as his knowledge of medicine increased his faith grew likewise. The statements attributed to Dr. Osler are an attack on Christianity. I am surprised that he should make such attacks in this age. What do the things that Dr. Osler preaches stand for, anyhow? His whole doctrine is based on theory. Fifty years ago the scientists of that day imagined they knew all that was to be known of medicine; yet to-day their conclusions are overthrown by later discoveries. The Catholic Church is not founded on theory; and, whereas, the whole world is informed of its doctrines, the conclusions of Dr. Osler are known to comparatively few. The world at present is alarmed by the condition of the head of the Church and changes in his health are of great interest—more, perhaps, than that of any scientist whom we know now.' The request for a retraction will evidently meet with no unfriendly reception; for a late exchange mentions that when questioned at Baltimore, Sir William said he was no enemy of the saints, and would talk to his friend the Cardinal on the subject.

The Latest Text Story

The practice of taking a text for pulpit discourses—a practice which, according as convenience dictates, is adopted or dispensed with in Catholic churches—is very strictly adhered to by Protestant ministers: and the process of selection often affords scope for the exercise of considerable ingenuity. Occasionally the text is used for the purpose of 'getting even' with a member of the congregation who has been obstreperous

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