Current Topics

Chesterton on the Press

In the course of a debate in London on modern journalism, Mr. G. K. Chesterton emphasised the enormous superiority of what journalists say to what they write. It was remarkable that the man who wrote a long and tiresome leading article, in which he said: "We trust that we shall hear no more of these allegations such as have never before been brought against a Cabinet Minister"—that that same man the night before in some tavern or other healthy place had been telling extremely funny and truthful stories about Lloyd George or Bonar Law. Newspapers were, as a matter of fact, much below the ordinary tone of conversation.

Did the British public learn anything from the press about the extraordinary events that caused the change of front towards Ireland? All the press did was to call Michael Collins a murderous assassin on the Monday and a noble national hero on the Tuesday. (Laughter.) He always thought the Irish should govern themselves, but he wanted the English to govern themselves, too, and in order that they should be able to do that they ought to have some remote notion of what their rulers were up to.

If the papers had given space to such things as the defeat of Socialism by the peasants in Russia or the truth about the sale of peerages and the party funds, we might perhaps have had only eight instead of ten pictures of ladies paddling at Ramsgate, or less than a whole page of one of those elevating Sunday papers devoted to the views of Miss Jane Burr on why she wore trousers. (Laughter.)

We might have missed some of these things in return for getting commonplace daily knowledge of our own affairs and those of the world. The price we did in fact pay for the press, and it was not worth it, was the bewilderment of the English people and the failure of the English power.

In lighter vein "Lucio," in the *Manchester Guardian*, thus satirises Fleet Street and its penmen:

A week ago the weather was mellifluous and bland;
Mild anti-cyclones brooded o'er a truly grateful land;
Whereat the evening papers promptly started to repeat
Their annual apprehensions of intolerable heat.

Perhaps they're feeling better now; the danger should be past;
The land is swept and ravaged by a bold and bitter blast;
The anti-cyclones vanish—and, by this disgusting day,
I accuse these wretched scribes of having frightened them away!

I wish there were a Press Bureau empowered to extirpate
The men who write and even more—the men who instigate
These yarns about a "heat wave" and the need for cooling drinks
When "Bless me, what a topping day!" is all the wise man thinks.

However, they have had their way; with troubles at an end
They now can watch the deluge (and the mercury) descend.
And I hope they like their picture; but for me I sit and grunt,
"Confound the man who treats a little sunshine as a stunt!"

Irish Graves in Rome

A writer quoted by the *Irish Catholic* gives us an interesting paragraph about the most historic of the graves of exiled Gaels in Rome:

"When the evening sun is low, men of Celtic blood from three continents in Rome love to climb the Janiculum Hill to kneel by the tomb of a more heroic prince, the great Hugh O'Neill, who with Rory O'Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnel, are the subject of *The Flight of the Earls*, written on their escape from the clutches of Elizabeth in 1608. After the failure of their rising against the foreign host the Prince of Tyrone and the Prince of Tyrconnel left the soil which their ancestors had ruled for a thousand years, and, tired in body but dauntless in soul, arrived at Rome welcomed by Pope Pius V., who with all Christendom regarded them as confessors of the Faith. In the nave of the Church of S. Pietro in Montorio are the gravestones of Hugh O'Neill, Prince of Tyrone (died old and blind in 1616); of Hugh, his son, Baron of Dungannon (died 1609); and of Roderick (Rory) O'Donnell (died in 1608). When the Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, now Coadjutor of Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh, preached at the celebration of the Third Centenary of the death of the great Hugh on the Janiculum Hill in May, 1920, in presence of so many prelates, priests, and laymen from America, Australia, and various parts of Europe, people welcomed once more in Rome the voice of 'one of the royal O'Donnells.'"

Now arises the memory of November days when in our *Lehrejahren* we used to kneel by a vault in the Campo Santo at San Lorenzo to pray for our fellow students, young Irish Levites whose studies were interrupted by death, whose services were great in intention only, and not measured by the long lapse of years. Among those youths, sons of our dear *Alma Mater*, slept, awaiting a glorious resurrection, the saintly Archbishop of Ephesus, Tobias Kirby, for long years Rector of the Collegio Irlandese, and from studenthood to death the friend of the great and gifted Leo XIII. There are others yet. To Tivoli, with its delightful mountain breezes, its grateful shades of immemorial olive groves, its historical ruins, its thundering cascades, we used to adjourn for rest and recreation during the hot months of the Roman summer. And there, in a quiet graveyard under the hills, close by the headling Anio, some of the boys found a long rest that knows no waking in this world. *Roma, Amor!* The Eternal City holds them all for the day when they shall arise for eternity. They came to her with love, and with love she clasps them in her sacred soil, those wild geese of Eire whose tombs we used to pray beside in the down-gone years when every day was as long as twenty days are now. The love of Rome lasts lifelong. They who have learned to know her can never forget her. Which of us that knelt at her shrines, prayed by her graves, climbed her hills, has not yearned to return in after life and haply to lie down there to rest when the end of the day is nigh?

Education—Old and New

The tendency in modern education to specialise, in accordance with the views of the supporters of the elective system, is condemned on many grounds, not only by Catholics but by thinkers of all classes and creeds. Electivism is a growth of the fanciful and mischievous dreams of Rousseau, who would allow a child to follow his natural bent even though it led to harm. It has its proper place in the selection of special university courses, but it is wrong and malignant in its effects when introduced into colleges and high schools. Commenting on this modern fad, Lowell said: "I had rather the college turn out one of Aristotle's four-square men, capable of holding his own in whatever field he may be cast, than a score of lop-sided ones, developed abnormally in one direction." The outcome of such education, or rather instruction—for it is not education in the true sense—is mental deformity. A student turned out in this way is likely to be a failure. "He becomes a narrow specialist, he swells the host of those men who even now afflict the community, men who are incapable of forming a sane opinion on any question which cannot be decided by a laboratory experiment. Such men have no perception of the interrelations of the various branches of knowledge; they lack all appreciation of what is noble and sublime; above all they are liable to ignore, or even