

RANDOM THOUGHTS.

In conversation the other night with my friend Smith, we happened amongst other subjects, to discuss the paper which has the honor of giving to the public the effusions of that eminent contributor K.Y.Z. My friend caught sight of the admirably faithful representation of Dublin, which graces the first page of last week's TABLET, and that gave rise to a train of memories, the relation of which did not tend to keep the flowing bowl idle, or render less sweet the taste of the fragrant narcotic weed. But whilst the insinuating potteen disappeared, and the smoke from Smith's meerschaum curled and wreathed itself into fantastic shapes above his head, his memory travelled back many past years to the time when, as the whining schoolboy, he used to creep across Carlisle bridge unwillingly to school, carrying his satchel on his back, and bringing back on that part of his person more, perhaps, than his satchel in the evening. The battles he had fought, the "mitchings" he was guilty of, the orchards he robbed, grew more vivid at every fresh puff. "Just there," he said, pointing to a building close to the bridge on the left hand side of Sackville-street, as you go towards Nelson's Pillar, "was a large confectioner's; I suppose it was a confectioner's, though, as far as I remember, they sold nothing but lollies, and many a penny's-worth I had there. And what a large place it was. My remembrance is that it was of immense extent, and that crowds of people were going in and out of it all day long. But I suppose if I could see it now, I would be surprised at how small it had become."

But what Smith was most eloquent upon were his battles. The battle field at his school consisted of a piece of vacant ground at the back of the lodge entrance, and when one youthful warrior wished to test his strength in battle against another, the mode of challenge was to demand of his antagonist personally, or by deputy, "to come behind the lodge." When this dreadful sentence once went forth, all peaceable measures were at an end. The rubicon was then passed, and there was no alternative but a combat to the death. There was one other method of showing your superior courage and hostility to a rival—a method much in vogue with those who were, from various reasons, inclined to look down upon the noble art of pugilism as vulgar, and this was to tell your enemy "to keep his distance." If, after that, either spoke to the other, for the space of three months at least, he was considered as lost to all sense of honor and decency, and as not fit for the company of high-minded gentlemen. After that time they might commence to look at one another, to take part in the same games, and to talk of one another in each other's hearing, but no direct word must pass from one to the other until a formal reconciliation had taken place. This was always a difficult and most delicate proceeding. After the "distance had been kept" for a sufficiently long time, some friends of the sundered twain met and selected a boy, or perhaps two, who had acquired a reputation in the school as being first-rate peacemakers, and they were commissioned to break the charm of silence between the two "distance keepers." Two or three diplomatists who, since those days, have achieved European fame by skill in their profession, owe their success in great measure to their early practice as peacemakers in this very school. It was a difficult rôle to fill, and only one or two in my friend's time showed any talent for the position, and in this school there was a great deal of heavy work to be done in this direction. The formality of the reconciliation consisted simply in "touching hands." Once the hands touched, then like an electric shock their tongues unloosed, and silence no longer reigned supreme. There was no need to shake, only to touch hands. I am particular about this, because there seemed to be a peculiar charm in it, for when the diplomatists entirely failed in their efforts (as diplomatists sometimes will fail when they have such "Turks" to deal with), and the two belligerents persisted in maintaining a hostile attitude, then, as a last resource, the friends on both sides dragged them together by main force, and when in that position, if their hands barely touched or even grazed, peace was instantly established, and the intervening powers rested happy. But if this magical union did not take place, by reason, perhaps, of their hands being kept tightly in their pockets, or that they were strong, and successfully resisted all efforts to bring their hands into contact, then, no matter how closely they might otherwise be brought together, even if their lips met, the good intentions of the intervening powers were completely frustrated, and the two hostile forces became more bitter to each other than ever. Indeed, these efforts sometimes ended in a breach between the two principals and their immediate friends. If, for instance, the friends of these silent gentlemen succeeded in bringing their arms only into contact, the result of their kindly intentions would often be an invitation "to come behind the lodge," given to one who had used considerable force in trying to establish a peace. On such slight events do peace and war depend; whereas, if hands had once been joined all would have gone as merry as a marriage bell, no matter what amount of roughness might have been used, and the invitation would then be to come not "behind" but "in front" of the lodge, where the event would be celebrated by a liberal patronage of an old apple woman, whose voice was ever raised in the interests of peace.

An one occasion only was Smith aware of a reconciliation being effected in any other way than those mentioned. He had been "keeping his distance" for some time with a boy with whom he had been previously a great chum. This boy left the school without the orthodox reconciliation taking place, and thus rendered the distance very distant indeed. Shortly after, Smith received a letter from him, begging of him (Smith) to touch hands in spirit, that he could not be happy with this terrible silence hanging over him, and that as he lived many miles away, he could not come and have the "distance broken" in the proper manner. This request was laid before the leading boys of the school, and after much anxious deliberation it was agreed, under the circumstances, to allow "the silence to be broken," but with a strict proviso that it

was never to be drawn into a precedent; that the boy in the future who ever left the school in a state of "distance," should go through life with that terrible curse hanging over him. One boy, who was foolishly enough to quit the school in that state, Smith met many years afterwards in Melbourne, and it was a pitiable sight to see him. The curse seemed to be on him, for he did no good. He was ever restless, and after many wanderings through Victoria, he finally betook himself to Fiji, where he was killed and eaten by the blacks.

An attempt was made at one time to shift the battle ground from the old trying place "behind the lodge," but it ignominiously failed. Smith was also the hero of this event. It seems there had been three terrible battles between him and another boy—a very big boy, far heavier and stronger than Smith—for the position of cock of the school. They were so equally matched that neither of them could be proclaimed conqueror. The school was in a great state of ferment. How was this matter to be decided? They fought and fought, and yet neither could get the better of the other. There could not be two cocks that was quite clear. No properly conducted school ever heard of such a thing. This all important subject was fast engrossing the attention of the school to the exclusion of every other matter—even lessons became a secondary consideration—when one day, at the end of a lesson, a master, the most venerable and beloved of pedagogues, in dismissing the class called out, "Smith and Jones" (Jones was the name of Smith's terrible opponent) "remain behind." As soon as all the other boys had disappeared, this wise old gentleman commenced vigorously moving away the desks and forms, and continued until he had a large clear space round him, then he bid the two boys to take off their jackets and vests, and "Now," said he, "here is a good ring for you, set to and fight it out, and I shall see fair play." Smith and Jones looked at one another for a few moments, felt very stupid, then laughed, and then shook hands; and that school is not only remarkable in having sent such a man as Smith out into the world, but also as having possessed for a short period two friendly cocks, reigning at the same time; for ever after that they were firm allies.

X.Y.Z.

FATHER STAFFORD IN IRELAND.

He went on to Wexford, and described the great work of a man named Devereux. This man was now eighty-two years of age; but he heard Mass four times daily, and attended to his large business as regularly as he did forty years ago, and spent immense sums for the benefit of the poor. At the time of the famine he was in ordinary circumstances, and had a small mill which he ran free day and night for the benefit of the starving people. His fortune had since then gone on accumulating in a very astonishing manner; and he had devoted immense sums to the good of his fellow-countrymen. He first spent \$60,000 on a fine school-house for poor children, and a residence for the Christian Brothers. He then built another school for poor children at a cost of \$7,000, and expended \$11,000 in additions and extensions thereto. He next built an industrial school and endowed it with \$100,000. He handed the Bishop \$15,000 sterling to carry on his work with. Then having done all that was necessary there, he removed to another town and spent \$100,000 in a similar way, and went on to another town and spent as much more. And he still goes on devoting the profits of his ships and mills to the amelioration of the condition of his fellowmen, and particularly to providing an education for the poor. They say there is not, perhaps, in the whole world his equal to be found. In other parts of the country men are imitating his example to a limited extent. In Cork one man, who has made his money out of making smoking-pipes, has spent \$6,000 in placing a suitable altar in a church there. He (Father Stafford) had gone into King's country and spent some hours at a fair at Tipperary, and was around among the men, and never heard an angry word spoken; and was told that as regards liquor gallant Tipperary was one of the counties least afflicted with that curse. He visited Fernuoy, the magnificent buildings of which were described at some length, and was glad to see that good work was done in the convent there. The convent there was the one from which the Lindsay Convent had been founded, and he found that the Loretto nuns ranked foremost among the first and best as teachers. At Cork he found churches, schools, and convents going up on every side. They were building, at a cost of \$600,000, and had nearly completed, one of the largest churches in Ireland, and they had just finished a very magnificent church. In every part of Ireland he had found a state of things that would make one think Ireland was just after being converted or was recently settled. Everywhere there was progress, the like of which no country in the world had ever seen. The material progress of the country was something wonderful. The agricultural interest of the country was, however, diminishing, and the country was going into grass largely. This was to be regretted, for he would sooner see agricultural laborers than fat oxen. In that respect Ireland is going back. During the last twelve months one hundred thousand acres of land had passed from tillage into pasturage, and that, strictly speaking, was looked upon as a misfortune.—'True Witness.'

Nothing is too small or too large to engage Mr. Gladstone's attention. One of his latest pronouncements has been on the question of vaccination! An anti-vaccinationist, if we may use the word, wrote to gain the ex-Prime Minister's aid in the agitation which the Keighley Guardians have made for ever famous, and the answer was that the whole matter was one upon which Mr. Gladstone will keep his mind "open." It appears, to us that after this it is of no importance whatever whether his mind is kept open or shut on any given subject.—'Nation.'