

Current Topics

False Pretences

Hatred and calumny are mother and daughter. Both are lineal descendants of Beelzebub, whose features they inherit. They mask their hideousness as did the veiled prophet of Khorassan, with a glittering veil of virtue—justice, zeal for religion, love of 'civil and religious liberty', and the rest. The mask and veil are vice's tributes to virtue.

The Quackery Bill

Mr. Hornsby's Quackery and Other Frauds Suppression Bill was last week talked to death—slain by the favorite weapon of Samson. This was done, not because of any objection to the principle or even the details of the Bill, but for a political purpose quite apart from the merits of the measure. The law has recently been (metaphorically) giving the rinderpest to some smooth-tongued quacksalvers who, with the brains of a protozoon and the audacity of a Cagliostro, have been defrauding the simple-minded and the unwary in southern New Zealand. But it leaves these unprotected against many of the most dangerous classes of 'medical' mountebanks and their 'remedies'. We hope to see a Bill on lines similar to that of Mr. Hornsby's pushed in due course through both Houses as a Government measure.

Catholic Press Association

Bogus Vatican 'news'; malevolent, mendacious, or misleading anticlerical despatches from Paris; sham Irish agrarian 'outrages'; and the rest of the fraudulent 'Catholic' items that are sent to the ends of the earth by the cable-demon: we have had a surfeit of them for some months past. Catholics have thus been made to bitterly realise the extent to which the fastest-flowing channels of newspaper information in Europe have been captured and held by agencies hostile to the Ancient Faith. A thoughtful lay writer in the latest issue to hand of the Adelaide 'Southern Cross' advocates, in substance, the adoption of our scheme of a Catholic Press Association. By the same mail we received from an eminent Australian Prelate the expression of an earnest hope that Catholic newspapers in these countries would make a united effort to promptly expose those lying cable-messages that so often are dumped upon our shores from anticlerical and Masonic and other such-like hostile sources in Europe. Another devoted Prelate—poor as to shekels, but a Croesus in zealous and successful effort for the Kingdom of God—offers the munificent contribution of £10 a year to a live Catholic Press Association. There is in this matter the sluggard's tendency to patch our grief with the comforting proverb that 'hard words break no bones.' But are we to wait to be beaten black and blue by the cable agencies before we take steps for effective self-defence? And how long shall we continue to let the cast mud dry and harden upon the fair face of our Mother, the Church, before we raise a hand to wipe it away? Grate misrepresentation by cable would be mended or ended by an active, well-equipped, and well-organised Catholic Press Association, working in, as to these countries (if that could be arranged), with the secular agencies, and with the various Catholic Truth Societies and such organisations as the *Auskunftstelle der Katholischer Presse* of Germany. We have for years advocated this means of meeting and worsting careless or malevolent European cable-agents on their own ground. And we are confident that such an organisation will be in beneficent operation before many years are past.

Slanderers in Broadcloth

You can satisfy the cravings of a hungry tiger or a famished shark. But three things you can never

sate: ambition, avarice, and hate. With them, 'l'appetit', as the French say, 'vient en mangeant'—every mouthful serves only to whet the appetite. Witness, for instance, the devouring hate with which a few Australian Orange clerics have been for some years past gnawing at the good name of devoted Catholic Sisterhoods whose shoes they are not fit to shine. These half-dozen clergymen engaged in this campaign of unmanly calumny against women are doing more injury to religion than twice their number of infidel lecturers, and more harm to the peace and good order of society than ten times their number of criminals at large.

Is it Bashfulness?

'There is,' says the Philosopher of the Sandwich Islands, 'this difference between bashfulness and modesty: the one soon wears off, the other never does'. Is it bashfulness, or modesty—or is it the repentant publican's humility, or fear of earthquakes—that keeps so many young men glued about the church doors at the Sunday Masses? Here is the 'S.H. Review's' point of view on the subject: 'If some able-bodied young men were as coy about entering a bar as they seem to be about entering a church, there would be a great advance in sobriety. One would imagine from the bashfulness and timidity displayed by some stalwart specimens of masculinity about entering within the portals of the church, that something terrible were likely to befall them if they got in any further than the door. The Catholic who is content to hear Mass kneeling on one knee, and without the remotest chance of seeing the altar or of hearing a word that the priest says, is not a very valuable member of the Church'.

'Concilio!'

The 'message of hope' recently given to Ireland by Sir Antony MacDonnell and Mr. Bryce recalls to mind the noble speech on 'conciliation' delivered by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons. At the death of the Grand Old Man in 1898, the Rev. Joseph Dawson (a Protestant clergyman) wrote for a Scottish paper a parody on Longfellow's 'Excelsior'. The writer, however, retained the solemnity of character of the original—a trick which few parodists 'learn'. 'A few stanzas may be appropriately quoted at the present juncture:—

'The hearts of men were failing fast,
As to his place the old man passed,
And raised, 'mid Tory snow and ice,
A banner with the bold device,
"Concilio!"

'As on the session dragged, and still
'Contention did St. Stephen's fill,
Above the clamor raging there,
A calm voice smote the weary air,
"Concilio!"

'Amazed, the country gathered round,
As triumphs new his efforts crowned,
Till proud and high his banner waved
O'er Erin, wooed, and won, and saved—
"Concilio!"

'Beside his grave two nations stand,
Linked heart to heart, and hand in hand;
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice comes like a falling star,
"Concilio!"

It was a bold stretch of poetic fancy that made Gladstone live to witness the triumph of his conciliation policy—to see 'Erin wooed, and won, and saved,' and the two nations linked like sisters 'heart to heart, and hand in hand'. But

'We call those poets who are first to mark
Through earth's dull mists the coming of the dawn'.

So let us read the parting stanzas as the prophecy of things to come—of a dawn that is near at hand.

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