

Current Topics

The Irish Envoys

In another column there appear the latest particulars to hand regarding the approaching visit of Messrs. Devlin and Donovan, the envoys of the Irish people to New Zealand. The South is to be favored with the first visits of the delegates from the Green Isle. The time for preparation is short and precious; and in every centre where a visit is expected those interested should be up and doing, arranging for the welcoming of the envoys and the holding of meetings, and forming committees of people of every creed and country that believe in extending to the desolate and depopulated land of the tear and the smile those rights and liberties which have enabled these countries under the Southern Cross to grow almost at a bound into strong and prosperous young nations. We hope the air will vibrate with the welcome that will be accorded by this bright and happy young country to the envoys from the old and most distressful land seeking some of the elementary popular rights that we enjoy.

Lest We Forget

'Tew bring up a child in the way he should go—travel that way yourself.' The 'wisdom' is right, although the (artificially poor) spelling needs reform. But the author, like Marlborough and Marshal Saxe, was stronger in action than in orthography. The true housefather and housemother, like the pastor of 'Sweet Auburn', 'allure to brighter worlds'; and, like him, too, they take care to 'lead the way'. A gossamer thread of good example will draw where a dozen stockwhips will not drive.

Went to Smithers

Experience is (or should be) a lamp to the feet. But the lamp, like that which fired Chicago, sometimes gets kicked over, and with instructive if not often pleasant results. At the Presbyterian Assembly in Dunedin last week a genial Northern pastor told (according to the 'Star' report) how his experience led him to make up his mind never to join a society started by clergymen. But in a moment of good-natured acquiescence he kicked his lamp over. 'I joined', said he, 'the Bible-in-schools League started by Bishop Neligan, and it went to smithers'. It is a weakness of all such schemes. They are architected on the wrong lines. And when they fall and break into 'smithers', there is in every 'smithier' a warning lesson that he who runs may read. Has not Young somewhere said that even on the thorns of life 'delightful wisdom grows'?

Prize Books

The approaching annual school distributions remind us once more of the need of an annual warning against the jolt-headed practice of selecting prize-books by no better criterion than the sound of the title or the glint of gold-leaf or silver-foil upon the binding. We have to remind those whom it may concern that such methods of choice have, to our knowledge, led to the circulation, among sundry Catholic children in New Zealand, of literature of an extremely objectionable kind. We have more than once pointed out specific instances in which No-Popery publications of an outrageous kind have been distributed as prizes to Catholic children at State schools. And we have reason to fear that slipshod and haphazard methods of selection have resulted in pupils attending even Catholic schools being 'rewarded' for proficiency in their work by gifts of the sort of printed stuff which Twain designated by the title 'literary oleomargarine', and to which another author affixed the apt verbal labels, 'exotic, neurotic, and tommy-rotic'. We know of no better service that could be done to deserving movements than to see the

annual prize distributions made the occasion for the extensive distribution of such excellent publications as those of the 'Ave Maria', the Boston 'Pilot' Publishing Company (especially Miss Conway's works), and the various Catholic Truth Societies (English, Australian, and International). To those interested we would repeat Captain Cuttle's reminder, that 'the bearings of this observation lays in the application on it'.

Bible-in-schools, R.I.P.

The 'overwhelming majorities' of the Bible-in-schools leaders have at length vanished, their bounding hopes are shattered, and their rose-colored curtains are now drawn around the corpse of the movement for the sectarianising of our public schools. On last Friday the Rev. Dr. Gibb laid before the Assembly of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church at Dunedin a report from the Bible-in-schools Committee announcing the demise of the movement. The report said in part:—

'The hopes entertained a year ago that the general election would advance the cause of Bible-in-schools by bringing a Plebiscite Bill within measurable distance were unhappily falsified by the event. Very few of the members of the new Parliament favor any form of Bible teaching in the national schools, and only some thirty of them promised to support a special referendum of the question to the electors. In the face of these things, the executive of the Referendum League could only conclude that the time was inopportune for the continuance of the campaign which they had been strenuously conducting up to the date of the election. Very regretfully they resolved to discontinue the services of the agent, and to desist for the present from the various other activities in which they had been engaged. There is no good in blinking the fact that the cause of the Bible-in-schools, regarded both from the standpoint of parliamentary approval and popular sympathy, shows not a few symptoms of decadence when comparison is made between the state of matters existing to-day and that which obtained three years ago.'

And so on. Even the strenuous and roseate-viewed Dr. Gibb—who bore the movement on his shoulders—admits 'if not a defeat, at least a serious reverse.' 'The members of Parliament,' added he, 'knew quite well what the position was, and had decided to do nothing in the matter.' And the Rev. R. J. Porter averred that 'they were now further from having the Bible restored than they were five years ago.' The Bible-in-schools movement, like Macdonagh's cadaverous Irish waiter, was 'dead long ago,' only it 'had not energy enough to close its eyes.' This charitable office has now been performed for it. We cannot say that we regret its demise. It may, perhaps, lead to the formulating of some scheme of settlement of the school difficulty in which fair and equal treatment will be meted out to Catholics, Jews, and Protestant dissidents. If it does, the League will not have died in vain.

Home Rule

There is (according to Livingstone) a tribe of barbarians in darkest Africa who have a motto which runneth thus: 'Labor kills a man but strengthens a woman.' And among the 'superior' races there are some who believe (or profess to believe) that the Home Rule which strengthens the rest of the Empire would kill Ireland 'fatally dead.' It is the only white man's country in all the King's dominions which (according to the same school of statecraft) it is right and proper to govern in accordance with the wishes of a small minority or 'garrison' that are alien in blood, in religion, and in sympathies and aspirations from the vast bulk of the population. Happily, in this connection, 'a great change' (says Mr. Labouchere in London 'Truth') 'has come over British public opinion. The colonies have always been in favor of Home Rule being granted. The Irish are steadfast in their demand for it. In England and in Scotland, my firm belief is that there is now a majority for it. I have always been a Home Ruler, because I believe in this

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