

Current Topics

Low Comedy 'Logic'

Even Johnny Raw must have some knowledge and practice before he can be trusted to waltz a 'balmoral' or solder a tin kettle. But some fine day he stumbles through a lecture by the shallow plagiarist Ingersoll, or the latest of the shifting and contradictory theories of the Rationalist Press, and, presto! he finds himself capable of deciding the deepest mysteries of time and space, of matter, life, free-will, mind, and all the rest of the riddles of the universe. All is at once as plain and open to him as the making of a mud pie. One of the usual type of these Sir Oracles of neglected mental training has recently been airing his borrowed and misunderstood views in a Northern contemporary. His sweeping positiveness, his serene assumption that his bare assertion is on any point sufficient proof, and the fierce indignation with which he resents the gentlest questioning or contradiction—all these are true to type, and are a joy for ever to such as delight in what we may call low comedy 'logic' or the Humpty-Dumpty 'argument'.

Some years ago (so runneth a story told by Dr. George P. Hays) one of the Johnny Raw class of infidels was to lecture at a 'little red schoolhouse' in Pennsylvania. The lecturer was young, and therefore very positive indeed. A hard-headed old German farmer met him near the village and queried:—

'You de young man vot is to schpeak dis evening?'

'Yes, stranger, I am.'

'Vell, vot you schpeak about?'

'My subject is this: "Resolved, That I will never believe anything I do not understand."'

'Oh, my!' exclaimed the German. 'Is dot it? Vell, now, you shoost take von liddle example. There, you see dat field—my pasture over there. Now my horse, he eat de grass, und it come up hair all over he's pack (back). Then my sheep, he eat shoost de same grass, und it grow wool all over him. Und vot you tink? My goose, he eat de grass too, und sure's I tell you it comes all over him fadders. You understand dot? Heigh?'

The youth did not understand—even though the making and preserving of a universe, and of all things animate and inanimate was no more a mystery to him than (as Carlyle puts it) the making of an apple-dumpling.

Home Rule Near

After the passing of the Act of Union, Ireland's hope for the restoration of her traditional legislative rights was

'Like the bird in the story
That flitted from tree unto tree
With the talisman's glittering glory.'

But it looks as if the oft-flitting hope is now at last about to settle and allow the people of the Emerald Isle to seize the fair political jewel of self-rule which they have been patiently pursuing ever since it was taken from them 'by force and fraud' more than a hundred years ago. In a recent interview with an American paper, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., declares that 'a self-government Bill will be presented to the House of Commons in January or February, and will pass by a majority of at least 150. It would, he adds, 'pass by that majority even if we stopped our work at this very minute, for the Campbell-Bannerman administration is not opposing us, and recognises the justice of our contentions. The Premier himself has said from the stump that he is not unfriendly to Home Rule—or self-government, for that is a better term. With a majority of more than 150 for the measure we hope—and, I was going to say, anticipate, but I will content myself with saying "hope"'

—that the House of Lords will realise that the great body of the English people are favorable to the self-governing proposition of our party, and will refrain from killing the measure. It may be that when the Bill reaches the House of Lords it will be nullified by a crowd of amendments, but if public pressure is strong enough it may have a more fortunate fate. In our fight for self-government, our party is assisted by the Labor party, which within the last few years has gained greatly in strength and importance. The Labor party now has fifty-one members in the House of Commons. We have eighty-two, so you see that our combined strength is quite formidable. Nearly all of the important labor Bills that have been passed during the last few years have been put through with our assistance, so that when we need help it is only natural that we should look to them for votes.'

A Long Deferred Hope

'Hitherto,' says the 'Catholic Times,' 'sufferers from cancer have had no very bright hopes when undergoing medical treatment. The news which now comes from Paris will cause all who are so afflicted to be of good heart. Absolute certainty of cure can as yet, it is true, be scarcely entertained in all cases, but Dr. Doyen has cured and is curing many. Since June of last year a great change has come over the opinion of experts as to the discoverer's success. A commission then held that the treatment was not effectual. Meanwhile cures have been wrought. Twenty-four of Dr. Doyen's cancer-patients who were despaired of in June, 1905, are now doing well, and out of a total of sixty-four cases that have come under his treatment fifty-six cases are reported to have progressed favorably. Dr. Metchnikoff, Pasteur's successor at the Institute, is convinced that the microbe of cancer has been discovered, and Dr. Doyen was accorded a most cordial reception at the Congress of Surgeons just held in Paris. Of all the experts present only one, it is said, doubts the efficacy of his remedy. Happily it looks as if the medical faculty are at last winning in the battle against cancer.'

It seems to be well established that cancer is not hereditary. And in a great way this is more than a small mercy to be thankful for. Some years ago (it was, we think, in 1899) Dr. Bra, a pupil of the illustrious Catholic scientist Pasteur, discovered, isolated, and cultivated the parasite which gives rise to cancerous growths. It took a long time to run the microscopic king of terrors to earth. It turned out to be a mere rag-tag-and-bobtail member of the great fungus family—a low microscopic fungus' was the discoverer's description, after his long hunt had ended in a capture. It is about the thirty-millionth of an inch in diameter, but the name (ascumycetus) is big enough for an asteroid. With cultures of this parasite, the fell disease has been produced in various animals, and specially favorable opportunities have been thus offered to studying the nature and treatment of this dreaded constitutional malady. The hope deferred that maketh the heart sick seems now on the verge of realisation. But in the meantime—and in every event—patients should kick downstairs the quack 'cancer curers' that infest various communities in this Colony. Apart from the new treatment, which seems to be big with promise, what the surgeon's knife can't cure must be endured—until the better thing has stood the test and comes our way.

Bible-in-schools Tyranny.

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We rub each other's angles down.'

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