

# Current Topics

## Sunday

The gifted Dunedin Presbyterian clergyman, Dr. Waddell, has been blistering some professing Christians for the manner in which they spend the Sunday. 'It is,' said he on last Sunday, 'a day on which they may sleep more, and smoke more, and eat more and lounge more. It is clean-shirt day, loll about day, visiting day, gossiping day, generally vacant and self-indulgent day.'

Catholics are, of all Christians in these countries, the best church-goers. But there are among them a few whom the learned Doctor's description fits like a yellow kid glove.

## Broken Hearts

'A town in Missouri,' says the 'S.H. Review,' 'has a pharmacy known as the Broken Heart Drug Store. In towns nearer to us than Missouri there are quite a number of broken pledge drug stores.'

Now 'the Philosopher of the Sandwich Islands' had a pretty close insight into the ways and wiles of the human heart, and the stuff it is made of; and he had no abiding faith in the existence of the broken ones. 'My experience,' says he in his 'Afferisms,' 'is that, next to the gizzard, the harte is the tuffest peace of meat in the whole critter.'

## Bad Mothers and Bad Companions

A parent (a former Government official) writes to us in reference to an editorial paragraph on 'Bad Mothers' that appeared in our issue of last week. He is in entire agreement with the statement of our experienced clerical prison visitor—namely, that, in the immense majority of cases, young men, well brought up so far as church and school do their up-bringing, owe their downfall to bad mothers. Bad companionships (adds our ex-official friend) are another, though less potent, factor in the destruction of youth, and especially of boys and young men whom a dire necessity forces to work in shop or factory or Government position far away from the sweet and bracing influences of a good home. Our correspondent mentions several instances in point that have lately come within his knowledge. They are cases such as those with which every priest in great cities has a melancholy familiarity. There is a family resemblance in them all: the undesirable companions met at work or in boarding-houses, the hasty friendships, the low amusements, gambling, the familiar speech at the 'bar'—'same again,' and the young man that came from a clean, pure home in the country or in a provincial township

'Becomes what you would call a "Blood,"  
One part whiskey, three parts mud,  
The kind that chews the devil's cud,  
And chews it to excess.'

The slippery slope of Avernus is well greased and sand-papery, and the young 'blood' often spins down it on ball-bearings. And His Majesty's is often, for him, merely the Halfway House to hell—or the ante-chamber of the Pit.

## Holland

'Many,' says Mr. Dudley Baxter in the 'Ave Maria,' 'seem under the impression that Holland is decidedly a Protestant country, as contrasted with its Catholic neighbour, Belgium. In reality, Holland is now almost as much Catholic as Calvinist, the actual proportion being two-fifths; and every year this happy change becomes more emphatic. The number and splendour of Dutch Catholic churches afford quite a remarkable surprise. In every town and in many villages, often almost side by side, new edifices arise in place of the old fabrics taken from us centuries ago.'

## Anger-Cures

In the old Irish fairy-tale of Will-o'-the-Wisp the devil, when enticed into Will the Blacksmith's magic easy chair, was quite powerless for mischief, and became, like one of his famous children,

'The mildest-mannered man  
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat.'

There was, perhaps, better psycho-physiology in that fairy-tale than its unknown author was aware of; for we find it laid down in Lotze's 'Microcosmus' (vol. ii., p. 28) that 'rage is quieted by muscular repose,' and that 'it is a dictate of prudence to get an angry man to sit down in an easy-chair.' It would, we fear, be difficult to get some angry men or angry women into easy-chairs without the moral suasion of a knotty club. Still, the easy-chair cure may be worth bearing in mind. At Walsall, in the olden days, scolds were 'treated' with iron collars around their necks and iron plates held fast upon their tongues; and it is said that in Pekin the dumb asylums are in part supported by fines levied off dames who fail to control their tongues. Shakespeare recommends angry people to go over 'the four-and-twenty letters' of the alphabet; and Max O'Rell urges upon all concerned the old French motto: Before speaking, let your tongue go seven times around your mouth. In such circumstances, of all others, there is (according to an old Celtic proverbial saying) melody in a closed mouth; and to the angry, one might well address the remark that the Countess of Pembroke made to Chaucer of the halting tongue and fluent pen—'Your silence pleases infinitely more than your speech.' He was a philosopher who thought of repeating the alphabet when urged by anger, and who discovered the value of making the tongue, in the same circumstances, travel seven times around the mouth. But, alack! not every man or every woman knows when he or she is angry. And the discovery too often comes, like the p'leeceman of melodrama, when the mischief has been done; and then there commonly remains only the surly repentance that is a fresh offence, or the chorished bitterness that is invested at a nsurious rate of interest.

## Catholic Marriages

In the course of our pamphlet on Catholic Marriages, we pointed out the evils that have, in large historic instances, flowed upon society through a relaxation of the old Church laws against marriages of consanguinity and of affinity. 'Under God,' said we, 'the world owes largely to the Church's laws against marriages of blood relatives, and against marriages of affinity, that sweetness and that purity of our cherished domestic relationships that constitute one of the proudest glories of Christian society.' The New York 'Times' said in a recent number that this legislation of the Catholic Church, and her insistence upon the lasting nature of the marriage bond and upon the necessity of thought and deliberation in entering thereupon, must win the approval of all reasonable persons, whatever may be their religious belief or lack of religious belief. 'It is the view of the Church,' says that widely circulated journal, 'that this relation is to be considered not simply, and hardly chiefly, with reference only to the immediate parties to it, but rather with full consideration of the welfare of offspring. There has been a good deal of loose talk, some of it with certain scientific pretension, as to the subject of what, in the slang of the day, is called "eugenics," and the contributions to it have ranged from suggestions of trial marriage to the notion of complete State regulation of the production and rearing of children. But it is the dictate of common sense and the world's experience that the most trustworthy guarantee of desirable offspring is care and intelligence in the assumption of the marriage relation. It is to this that the Church of Rome directs its most persistent and careful regulations. Its legislation, though not enacted by public agencies, has a sanction recognised by those to whom it is addressed, and there is a widespread, thorough, and devoted organisation for giving it effect. It is not easy to exaggerate the benefit to the community thus secured, and which could not otherwise be had.'

## Church Progress in Australia

Some figures remind us of lines of soldiers on parade, strong, victorious in the past, confident of the future. Such, for instance, are the figures that we publish from time to time showing the triumphant progress of the Church in America and Australia—and, in the latter country, notably