

Current Topics

Not so Bad

There is not quite fifty per cent. as much malice in neighbors as neighbors give neighbors credit for.

A Warning

We have once more to warn our Catholic readers against paying exorbitant prices for cheap and tawdry 'devotional' rubbish for the 'adornment' of their homes. Those who read the 'Tablet' will benefit by our advice; those who do not may learn wisdom, but they'll learn it as did the boy that paid too dear for the whistle.

A Hard Case

Abernethy's well-known prescription for gout was: 'Live on sixpence a day—and earn it'. But last week, in the capital of 'God's own country', the trustees of the Benevolent Institution came across a case in which an aged and respectable woman and her adopted son (a rheumatic patient) were both living on half-a-crown a week—all that was left of the former's pension after seven shillings and sixpence had been expended upon the rent of a hovel that was described as 'damp, dark, and wretched'. How they continued to live in this country on about twopence a day each (one-third of Abernethy's allowance for England), is a mystery which they can best solve. But we rather fear that at times they must have been short of even the modicum of comfort required by the old Spanish proverbial saying: 'All sorrows are bearable if there is bread'.

The Street Corner

The slope of Avernus has an easy grade, and the road adown it is beaten hard by traffic, and sandpapered and greased by the devil and his angels. Many parents see their sons 'coasting' down it on ball-bearings, and are not particularly concerned. For youths, the quickest ways of 'scooting' down the slippery slope are those learned at the devil's great University of Street Corner. Its benches are, in many of our cities, occupied in force, and its graduates swell, in time, the ranks of irreligion, and attain to the privilege of oakum-picking, while a few of the elect among them may reach at last the distinction of having His Royal Highness Jack Ketch preside at their passing to a worse or better world.

Bachelors and Spinsters

'Way out in Michigan—at Alpena, to be precise—it seems (in the words of Hudibras)

'That now the world is grown so wary,
That few of either sex do marry'.

The result is that there is in that remote and hilly district a greater number of unattached bachelors and spinsters. So, at least, thinks the pastor of Alpena, Father Flannery. He recently spoke to a crowd of the young women of the congregation on the matter. According to the 'True Voice', the maidens made reply and said: 'But, Father, there are no eligible young men'. The sequel was an interesting one. 'The next Sunday', says the 'True Voice', 'Father Flannery read from his pulpit a list of more than two hundred eligible young men belonging to his church'.

'In Australia and New Zealand the marriage market will, for Catholics, remain in a disturbed and uncertain condition until parents realise the necessity of giving the boys of the family the same educational advantages as they give to the girls. The girl whose training has (as is now so largely the fashion) run to seed in the direction of 'accomplishments' that are seldom carried far past the honeymoon, is commonly much given to looking down upon her more plainly

educated and simpler mannered brothers, and upon her brothers' male friends of her own rank and station in life. 'Women', says Chesterfield, 'and men who are like women, mind the binding more than the book'. The young girl who has been taught to regard 'accomplishments' as the chief end of education is very likely to carry that grievous misconception into such a serious affair as the selection of a partner for life. She runs a great risk of preferring polished brass to 'matt' (unburnished) gold. The very faults of her training will give her a mental warp which will tempt her to slight a suitable Barkis that is willin', in the person of one of her brothers' honest, sterling, warm-hearted companions. And she too often ends by bestowing herself upon some animated tailor's dummy, alien or hostile to her in faith, but with brass rings on his fingers, 'brilliantine' upon his hair, a 'real' gold-plated watchguard, a certain superficial smartness, and a capacity for saying the airy nonsense cycled 'small talk'. She sells herself cheap, and is generally surprised when—perhaps before the honeymoon is through—she is accepted at, or below, her own valuation. Men and women so often discover that they have married different persons from those to whom they plighted their troth on their wedding-day. The book is found to belie the cover; what was taken for burnished gold is mere lacquered brass; the polished idol has feet of clay. And in the bitterness of disillusion, the marriage is voted a failure.

In Spain

According to the April issue of the 'Messenger', Spain seems to have been making great strides since it has been relieved of its uncomfortable insular possessions, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and has had time to recover from the results of its long series of exhausting dynastic wars. The 'Messenger' quotes as follows, in part support of its statements, from the non-Catholic 'Quarterly': 'There is now an excellent system of elementary education and of secondary schools with colleges for the training of teachers in every part of the land. Indeed, in the very darkest of her days, Spain never lost her place in art and letters, but with the new era her painters, sculptors, poets, and writers have sprung into fresh activity, and are taking a high place in the literary and artistic world. Under her learned societies, the interesting records of her past art are daily being brought to light, while her critical historians are throwing light on hitherto obscure problems. Electrical science is perhaps in a more forward state than with us; at all events it is more widely diffused; and it is no uncommon thing to find a remote country village lighted by electricity. The telegraph system is better organised in the isolated country districts of Spain than it is in England. Railways now connect every portion of the kingdom with Madrid, and with the seaport towns with which Spain is so richly provided. Universities, schools of science, libraries, artistic and learned societies abound. Maura has revolutionized Spain; but as he always insisted it should be done, he has revolutionized it from the top. His energy is tireless; opposition falls before him. He is cleverness personified, but his cleverness never takes the place of justice. He has a horror of a wrong. He is a lover of the people, talks with them, studies them, and looks upon them as the only prop of the monarchy. Spain is proud of him and is repeating what one of Maura's sons has said: "Our day is coming, and we are going to work till it does." All friends of Spain will rejoice in this resurrection.'

'La Bandera Catolica'

Mark Twain has said that 'the difference between a cat and a lie is this, that the cat has only nine lives'. The truth of the great humorist's caustic statement is nowhere more apparent than in the 'faked' or fabricated 'quotations' which the most screamy and