

Current Topics

For the Boys

The 'Wairarapa Daily Times' remarks that there is a marked diminution in the number of 'smart youths' who scramble for advertised positions in shops and offices. 'The parents', says our contemporary, 'evidently think they have better things in store for their boys', and keep them at school. In this connection we may quote some homely advice from a recent issue of 'The Scholars' Own'. 'Now', it says, 'you lads who are leaving school, don't be in such a hurry to be earning something. Think of the future prospect rather than the present advantage. The man who can do something really well, whether it be the making of a table, the building of a house, or the writing of a book, will very seldom be unemployed. It is the boys in a hurry who are "little millionaires" on eight shillings a week at fourteen, and "big loafers" on nothing at eighteen, with no trade in their fingers, and no prospect but the life of a day laborer. Go slowly, boys—you'll go farther. Hurry is a dog that often goes off on a wrong scent. Patience and foresight are two dogs which hunt together; they are slow at "finding", but they are always "in at the death."'

A 'Loaded' Gift

Sundry municipal councils that are controlled by the atheistic 'bloc' or machine, of Paris joyfully accepted charge of the parish churches that were seized under the miscalled Separation Law. They did not then know that the gift was (so to speak) loaded. They know it now. The Prefect of the Department of Seine has recently issued a report stating that, before the separation of Church and State, the upkeep of religion cost the city a grand total of 250,000 francs (£10,000); and that now the expenditure is 2,745,000 francs (£109,800). The churches are now the legal property of the city, which is bound to keep them in repair—a work which was formerly done by the 'fabriques' or parish councils. The Catholic churches have treated the Radical-Socialist councils after the manner of McFingal's muskets, which

'Though oft well aimed at duck or plover,
Bear wide, and kick their owners over'.

Fire Discipline

The noted war-correspondent, Archibald Forbes, was once standing with a German General watching a skirmish that was proceeding within the circle of steel that shut in the beleaguered fortress of Metz in 1870. The German battalion that was engaged consisted chiefly of young soldiers unaccustomed to fire discipline, and unconvinced of the truth of the military axiom that it is good for soldiers to die a little occasionally, for the purpose of 'hardening up' their comrades. The German recruits were, like the recruits of other nations, somewhat unsteady when 'the band began to play' and the bullets to sing as they flew through the air. The old German General 'humph'd' and shrugged his shoulders and remarked to Forbes: 'Dey vant to be a little shot; dey vill do better next time'. And (adds Forbes in his 'Barracks, Bivouacs, and Battles'), 'all young soldiers want to be "a little shot".'

Faiths, as well as soldiers, are, generally speaking, all the better for being 'a little shot'. Persecution is the 'fire-discipline' that hardens them up, if they are not too weak and degenerate to learn the lessons of such a rigorous school. From many sources—some of them already noted by us—we learn that the official campaign against religion in France has had the bracing effect of a tonic upon the faith of many in that country. The latest testimony in point comes from the

Paris correspondent of the 'Birmingham Daily Post'. He writes in part as follows:—

'That the work of the French Church is not confined to weeding, but to sowing new seed, is a fact so noticeable that the "Acacia", the review of the Freemasons, has resorted to it several times of late. Take for example the following passage: "The effort being effected at this moment by the Church to reconstitute herself under the regime of liberty is considerable, and those who follow this movement in the clerical journals, especially in "La Croix", are struck by the activity and intelligence employed. The object proposed is evidently to reconquer the souls that had been left to glide into indifference under the dolce far niente of the Concordat regime. Will it succeed? That which is certain is that many people belonging to the mass of indifferents still consider certain ceremonies of religion, such as marriage, baptism, first Communion, and burials, as obligatory social rites. Look around you, and see for yourselves the number of purely civil marriages, non-baptism, and civil interments. Ask the school teachers what is the proportion of non-communicants to communicants among their pupils, and you will then realise the force, not of religion properly so called, but of the social rite of ecclesiastical ceremonies and consecrations. And from this accomplishment of the rite may result the return to religious belief.'

The propaganda of the religious press—the neglect of which was one of the causes of the present trials of the faith in France—is now being carried on with a fervor that is a star of hope amidst the blackness of the French persecution. The Freemason 'Acacia' (quoted in the 'Birmingham Daily Post') speaks of it as 'a formidable organisation' and adds that 'the printing works of "La Croix" is a veritable factory, turning out at every instant books, brochures, and tracts, sold for a mere trifle because they are printed by millions. . . . Up till lately, priests were the great propagators of "La Croix"; now we see occupying themselves two associations of ladies of society—the Ligue des Femmes Francaises and the Ligue Patriotique des Francaises. . . . Let us add that, during the past few months, the tone of "La Croix" has been raised. From the journalistic point of view, it is admirably conducted, and furnishes in abundance the aliments that suit priests and pious persons.'

'The way in which the churches of Paris have been thronged this Easter time', says the 'Post's' correspondent, 'is fully confirmatory of the views of the "Acacia". "We have left you the use of the churches", said a Ministerial senator to his Conservative colleagues. "Because you couldn't help yourselves", was the immediate retort. The whole question, as far as the attitude of the French Government is concerned, lies there. For some time to come, further acts of drastic legislation need not be feared. A church will be disaffected here and there, there will be solitary instances of gross tyranny and sacrilege, but the general sentiment is to let sleeping dogs lie. The Catholic revival has created a current of opinion which, imprudently interfered with, may grow into a torrent. M. Clemenceau has shown on numerous occasions of late a desire to act with a certain amount of consideration. He listens to complaints, and redresses them when, on inquiry, they are shown to be well founded.'

A Tale from 'Lloyd's'

An esteemed correspondent impounded and forwarded to us a cutting from 'Lloyd's Weekly' which has been circulated in Christchurch. The cutting is headed 'Criminal Clerics', with sundry sub-headings which one expects as a matter of course from such a source as 'Lloyd's' when dealing with such a theme. We quote hereunder, word for word, the principal item in the bill of 'criminal clerical' sensations provided by 'Lloyd's' for the delectation of those of its readers who are mentally gifted with the indiscriminate appetite that Mother Nature is credited with having given to the far-famed goat of Harlem. 'Lloyd's' pretty bit of No-Popery romance runneth thus:—

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