

Current Topics

Rayformers

'A man that 'd expect to thrain a lobster to fly in a year,' says 'Mr. Dooley,' 'is called a loonytic, but a man that thinks men can be turned into angels be election is called a rayformer, an' remains at large.'

Edward Gibbon Wakefield

A paragraph, that is now going the rounds of the New Zealand press, well illustrates the remark made by Beaconsfield in his *Sybil*: 'Quit the world, and the world forgets you.' The right hand of New Zealand should forget its cunning ere the memory of Edward Gibbon Wakefield—one of the foremost founders of the Dominion—should grow dim or blurred in Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud. But nowadays the world moves at so dizzy a pace that the great human landmarks of yesterday are often but specks upon the dim horizon of to-day. It is a curious commentary upon the evanescence of fame that the tomb of Edward Gibbon Wakefield should have to be 'discovered,' amidst a tangle of overgrown plant-life, at this time of the day. Yet so it is. The paragraph in question says:— 'An interesting discovery has been made in the old Wellington cemetery. Hidden among a small forest of shrubs and vegetable growth has been found an unpretentious tombstone bearing an inscription that shows it marks the last resting place of Mr. Gibbon Wakefield, whose name is intimately associated with the early founders of the Dominion. The task of renovating the neglected spot has been put into energetic hands, and if no monument is reared the memorial tablet and its surroundings will be placed in decent order.'

The 'forest of shrubs and vegetable growth' is a fit emblem of the manner in which new names and deeds and interests spring up and smother the memory of men who served their country well and even filled a generous space in its strenuous and pioneering day. Fame, like fortune, is fickle. As Samuel Butler says of one of his metrical heroes:

'For though Dame Fortune seem to smile,
And leer upon him for a while,
She'll after shew him, in the nick
Of all his glories, a dog-trick.

The mob of men are as fickle as both fame and fortune. To the good they often behave as the Parisians did towards some of its demi-gods. They laid Mirabeau in the Pantheon—the national Valhalla—amid a pomp and circumstance seldom accorded to human clay of lesser state than royalty. Later on, they 'fired' him from his niche of fame, and in his place set up the bones of Marat. Later on, they changed their minds once more, 'collected' Marat, and threw him into a sewer. Passive neglect here, careless oblivion there, active dishonor yonder—weeds in Wellington, cobwebs in Washington, the sewer in Paris—the methods of de-niching may vary. But the weeds and the cobwebs 'get there' first and stay longest. Fame—or notoriety—suffers little from the dishonor that is active. The remains of Cromwell (the author of the savage massacres of Drogheda and Wexford) were disinterred in Westminster Abbey, drawn on a cart to Tyburn, taken out of the coffin, hanged, and beheaded; and the cranium was kept hanging on Westminster Hall for twenty years. The Madhi's tomb at Khartoum was ripped open by shells, and his bones were disinterred and cast into the Nile. Among the hero-worshippers who worship such gods, neither of these two fervid fanatics' memory suffers from the senseless dishonor wreaked upon their inert clay. Both honest fame and mere notoriety are safe till the spider spins and the weeds begin to grow.

A Nelson Resolution

The following Press Association message from Nelson was published last week in the daily papers throughout New Zealand: 'At the close of a lecture on the Coronation Oath in the Methodist Church last night by the Rev. C. H. Garland, before a large audience, the following resolution was carried:—"That this meeting raise their protest against the disloyal utterance reported by the Press Association to have been made at the Eucharistic Congress on the 11th inst. by the Duke of Norfolk, who described the Royal declaration in taking the Coronation Oath as an insult to the King and the good sense of the nation." This meeting are of opinion that such an utterance, made on so important an occasion, is a gratuitous insult to a Protestant ruler and

people; and discloses a dangerous hostility to the Protestant throne."

In the year of grace 1868 a great meeting was held in St. James's Hall, London, to protest against the threatened disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland. The principal speaker was the witty Anglican Bishop Wilberforce. An Orange enthusiast, who was among the audience, kept interrupting the Bishop's speech with shouts of 'Speak up, my Lord, speak up!' At length Dr. Wilberforce turned and, in the dulcet tone that, with him, meant mischief, remarked: 'I am already speaking up. I always speak up, and I decline to speak down to the level of the ill-mannered person in the gallery.' The congregation in Nelson have cast aside their dignity and sense of fairness and have been 'speaking down' to the level of the ill-mannered person in the gallery. Their resolution belongs by better right to the twelfth of July than to the seventeenth of September. In the eighth year of the twentieth century they have, in effect, called for the revival of a 'relic of barbarism' which the British Parliament could not tolerate. They apparently want to have the English Sovereign insulted on his coronation day by having doubts cast upon his royal word and even his royal oath, and by requiring him to multiply phrases and protestations that he is no perjurer, and that he means what he says. They evidently wish the King to be again forced on his coronation day to express belief in sundry articles of faith (or, rather, coarse calumnies) that are now confined to Orange lodges and to suchlike hinterlands of thought—namely, that Catholics 'adore' the Blessed Virgin and the saints, that the Pope authorises people to lie and lie upon oath, and (among other things) that Catholic worship is 'superstitious and idolatrous.' Fortunately, the resolution will have as much effect in the desired direction as had the warning of the *Skibbereen Eagle* that it had its eye on the Czar of Russia. As all the world knows—except some good folk in Nelson—the old and savage Puritan form of the coronation oath was abolished by Parliament in 1902; it has not been taken at the crowning of British royalty since 1837; and the abolition of the outrageous form of the accession oath will, no doubt, follow in due time as a matter of course. The only effect of the resolution referred to will be to advertise throughout New Zealand

'The rarity
Of Christian charity'

among some professing Christians, and the amount of work that still remains for the schoolmaster in certain quarters of the fair city of Nelson.

More Cable-rigging

According to 'Mr. Dooley,' the people of 'the unchanging East' deserve the gold medal for the artistic finish of their fibbing. 'We make our lies be machinery,' says he; 'they turn out theirs be hand. They imitate the best iv' our canned lies to deceive people that likes that kind, but for artists they have lies that appeals to a more refined taste.' In regard to Vatican matters—and to Catholic matters generally—the cableman is usually (as we have frequently shown) an industrious but commonly crude and clumsy and (so to speak) untechnical sort of perverter of truth. His productions in this line lack the artistic finish of the article that, in the East, 'appeals to a more refined taste.' There was, for instance, a lack of verisimilitude in the story of a few days ago which credited the Pope with having declared that the 'prohibition' of the Eucharistic procession in London (which was really not 'prohibited'), had 'shaken his belief in English liberty.' The procession had been expressly sanctioned by the Home authorities; but 'Mr. Asquith,' says a previous cable message, 'sent Archbishop Bourne a confidential expression of opinion that the procession, which he deprecated, ought to be abandoned.' The incident did, of course, serve to emphasise the fact that Catholics do not enjoy the same religious liberties in England as their fellow-subjects of other creeds—the Salvation Army, for instance. It furthermore furnished ample room to the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, and other secular papers to flail the Government for their weakness, their irresolution, their 'readiness to make concessions to a few extremists who clamor,' and the tactless tardiness of their intervention. But all this does not justify the invention of a story calculated, if not intended, to create bitter feeling in England against the Pope personally.

The other side of Vatican news is usually (for lack of a live Catholic news agency) left to chase the flashing cablegram, as best it may, in the hold of a fourteen-knot mail steamer.

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