

Current Topics

That Veto

'The unpleasant incident of the last Conclave,' says the *Philadelphia Catholic Standard*, 'wherein an attempt was made on the part of one of the European powers to revive the invidious practice of the veto in regard to the election of a Pope, will never again be repeated. No Cardinal can attempt to set up a bar against any candidate or favorite of a Conclave, no matter on what pretext, under the penalty of the greater excommunication. This had been given out informally from Rome, but now it is put in positive form.'

The School Difficulty

Ruskin once said that the man who clothes a useful thought in happy phrase does more real service to his kind than he that makes two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before. The *London Spectator* has earned this guerdon of praise by the singularly happy and epigrammatic turn that it recently gave to one of the truths that underlie the whole difficulty of religious education in countries of mixed faiths. 'Protestants and Catholics,' said the *Spectator*, 'who differ so widely in religion can only be educated together when both are agreed to keep religion so much out of sight that it is in danger of being out of mind.' Which moves the *Catholic Standard* to remark: 'The epigram quoted above is worthy of Sir Richard Steele, the Irish fighting partner. It cuts in twain at one blow the whole web of sophistry on which the system of "Birreligion" is woven, and leaves it just a mere ridiculous wreck of a scarecrow in a corn field after an electric storm.'

An Apt Description

'Statistical delirium tremens' is the apt description given by the *Melbourne Tribune* to a series of preposterously absurd figures which assert that 95 per cent. of American criminals profess the Catholic religion, and that from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 persons have 'defected' from the 'Romish' Church in the United States. 'Statistical delirium tremens' is a much neater fit for such ludicrous assertions than the term 'fabrication,' for 'fabrication' does not necessarily connote irrationality. It is, perhaps, sufficient to say that these droll 'statistics' are the latest of the long series of very pretty mare's nests discovered by the Grand Master of the Victorian brethren of the Saffron Sash—Mr. Snowball, and that he is the same Mr. Snowball who, some years ago, declared in a letter to the Rev. H. Bride-Barber published in the *Riponsire Advocate* (Beaufort, Victoria) that there is no need whatever to substantiate by proof statements reflecting on the 'Romish' Church, when such statements are made on so important an occasion as the Twelfth of July!

Man the Flyer

Flying machines and airships are now (in both a literal and figurative sense) very much 'in the air.' The big airships of the Zeppelin type suggest uneasy possibilities in connection with the warfare of the future, especially if Colonel Unge's new air torpedo justifies in any reasonable measure the hopes that are placed in it. In the matter of rival air-navies, a new meaning would be given to the anxious query of the Scottish lassie:—

'Gin a body meet a body
Flyin' through the air,
Gin a body hit a body,
Will it fly? and where?'

The future seems, in the bulk of scientific opinion, to lie with the aeroplane—the 'heavier-than-air,' or true flying machine. And this consummation has been brought about chiefly by the phenomenal success that has been achieved by the American brothers Wright. The description of their flights, as witnessed by the representatives of the *Autocar*, the *Motor*, and other motoring journals, makes wonderful reading, and we are not surprised to learn, by a recent cable message, that the Weiller Syndicate has so far considered their aeroplane satisfactory that they have purchased the French rights and have proceeded to the manufacture of fifty of them. The story of *Dædalus* is, after all, not altogether a myth. But it has taken long ages, and many a death and broken bone, before man could perform the feats of soaring, flying, turning, swooping, rising, and describing figure 8's with which the Wrights have lately been amazing onlookers in America and France.

Some Blunders

American humorists, from the days of Artemus Ward and the *Danbury News Man*, have sluiced many a nugget of humor out of such incongruities as the description of a prize-fight by the religious editor, or of a show of agricultural produce by the sporting reporter. The reports of Catholic events in the secular press contain, at times, gems of unconscious humor of purest ray serene that might, without blushing, take their place beside the conscious and deliberate blundering of America's professional funny men. In a recent issue, the *Melbourne Argus* 'worked off' a passably good instance of the minor sort when it said of Pius X. that he 'performed the ceremony of the Mass,' and that he 'hears and recites the Mass in the Shelta Sistina in the Vatican Palace.' The 'Shelta Sistina' is, presumably, the famous Cappella Sistina (Sixtine Chapel). The *Advocate* properly takes exception to the expressions, 'reciting the Mass' and 'performing the ceremony of the Mass,' and makes no secret of its surprise that 'ignorance of the doctrines and the ceremonies of the Catholic Church' is so 'often displayed' in the offices of great daily newspapers.

These occasional slips of the secular press are perpetrated in good faith and usually with a friendly intent, and arise solely from lack of acquaintance with our creed and ritual. Some years ago an Otago contemporary added to the gaiety of its Catholic readers by describing an 'evening Mass'; it was really reporting Vespers—only that and nothing more. The *Sydney Morning Herald* spoke of Bishop Higgins as 'administering High Mass.' An American daily paper told how a priest down in Omaha prevented a panic in his church by boldly throwing a 'blazing sacristy' into the street. And a writer in the *Catholic Sun* tells the following entertaining story:—'I had been requested, as being a Catholic, and thus familiar with church ceremonies, to report the obsequies of a celebrated archbishop for a daily paper. Having been taken ill, I could not attend. On the following morning an article appeared, very good in the main, but with this ludicrous description of the entrance of the bishops and priests to the sanctuary: "They wore long, flowing stoles and berettas, with cassocks on their heads, which they removed as they advanced to the altar." Picture to yourself the effect!' A historic instance of the blundering that is a joy for ever was that of the reporter on an English daily paper who, in his description of the new Westminster Cathedral, averred that he had seen 'several thurifers suspended from the ceiling'—forgetting, poor fellow, that the thurifer is the person who carries the thurible or censer. Reports of High Church Anglican functions have from time to time added their quota of inspired and well-meant blunders in ecclesiastical terminology. Thus, the *Westminster Gazette* some years ago quoted a report printed in a London daily paper which conveyed the portentous information that an Anglican vicar in the Modern Babylon had just been 'reported to the Archbishop of Canterbury for wearing a baldacchino'—a baldacchino being, by the way, the Italian name of a canopy erected over an altar or borne by four men over the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic processions.

In 1904 we reprinted from the *Glasgow Observer* some tolerably good specimens of ecclesiastical malapropisms which appeared in a local secular paper's elaborate report of the consecration of a Catholic bishop in St. Andrew's Cathedral. Some of these will bear repetition here. 'The writer,' said the *Observer*, 'noting that the procession genuflected as it passed the Lady Altar (where the Blessed Sacrament had been temporarily placed) stated that the clergy "paid homage to a brazen image of the Virgin." The vesting of the consecrating archbishop was summed up in the phrase: "His Grace was adorned with the amice," that all that was said of the long and solemn function was that "the Archbishop engaged at Mass at the foot of the altar." The *Observer* also tells of a reporter of a Highland paper who, describing a High Mass celebrated at the Fort Augustus Benedictine Monastery by the late Prior, the Very Rev. Jerome Vaughan, penned this inimitable sentence: "At this point of the proceedings the very rev. gentleman turned round and observed in stentorian tones, "Dominus vobiscum!"' 'It was an Edinburgh paper,' adds our Glasgow contemporary, 'which gravely stated that "the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles sang Haydn's Sixteenth Mass"; and it supplemented this remarkable item with the statement that "the thurifer was swung gently to and fro in front of the altar."'

There is no danger of the extinction of the joy-giving race of the Malaprops so long as there are non-Catholic reporters

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