

Current Topics

Satan's Attorneys

It is said that the devil seldom appears by his proper attorney. If he did, his representative would be the sordid caitiff who, for a paltry gain, blights the fair blossom of youthful purity and innocence by the sale of books that might have been produced in Satan's own private printery. An Auckland bookseller has been confiding some uneasy, though not by any means new, information to a *Herald* reporter in connection with the black work which this evil class are doing in 'God's Own Country.' 'Some of the books,' said he, 'kept in some of these low-class places (fortunately there are not many of such), would make your hair stand on end, and fill any decent man with disgust. Yet there is a secret traffic going on in books, the authors and sellers of which ought to be boiled in oil; and it is that sort of filth the police ought to search out, and they should bring the purveyors to justice.'

Pulpit and Party Politics

We notice that the political parson is already out electioneering from the pulpit and afflicting a peaceable small town in the North Island with the din of his tin-trumpet. His reverence's statement that he 'speaks strongly because he feels deeply' reminds us of an incident that occurred after a fight on James Island (South Carolina) in 1862, during the course of the great American Civil War. A strongly-built young fellow was deafening a whole hospital ward with the outcry and hullabaloo which he raised over an unimportant wound on the foot. General Williams happened to be passing through the hospital at the time, visiting the wounded. He approached the stormy advertiser with the bandaged foot. 'Well,' asked he gruffly, 'what's the matter with you?' 'I'm wound-d,' said the patient, pointing to his foot. 'Stop your noise, man! Stop your noise!' exclaimed the General. 'There are men lying around with their heads knocked off, and they're not saving a word!' Well, there are probably men a-many in the clerical profession in this Dominion whose 'feelings,' as private citizens, are as 'deep' and as decided on many a political point as are those of the good man who has been doing such noisy barn-storming up North. But they have the good sense to remember that the pulpit is for the Gospel and not for the pitch of party politics. A gifted American writer has well remarked that 'party politics, when not a mud-puddle, are a bull-ring, and the preacher has no business in either.'

Newspaper Wars

Formerly kings made war. Then Parliaments determined the question of international blood-letting, and finally the newspaper press began to usurp this function. The era of the newspaper-made war began during the whirl of the Anglo-Russian crisis over the Holy Places in Palestine. Bright's voice rang out for war. Parliament was perplexed. The Ministerial mind swung as a pendulum between peace and strife. It was the *Times* that cast the die. It declared for war. The Ministry accepted the omen. And has not Kinglake told in polished phrase the blundering sequel of the Crimean War? Since that time newspapers have exercised full many a time, with happy-go-lucky nonchalance, their supposed right and privilege of fanning an international 'situation' into a 'difficulty,' a 'difficulty' into a 'crisis,' and a crisis into a war. During the past week-sundry journalists were busy—from the safety of their easy-chairs—'scaring up' the war fever in the Balkans—rousing popular passion to the point where it takes control of reason and prudence and at times forces even the steadiest Ministries off their feet. Their action gives a fresh point to the counsel given by Mr. Labouchere during the journalistic ferment that ended in the South African war. He recommended the precautionary hanging of a few batches of editors during every international crisis. This, he maintained, would serve to keep the national head cool, keep down the war-clamor, and give counsels of peace a chance of a hearing.

Race-Suicide Follies

Horse-feasts, dog-birth-day parties, and other such follies of the American wealthy lower orders have been easily surpassed by the following disgusting details of the lying-in-state and funeral of the canine pet of a couple in Wilmington (Delaware). We quote from the *S.H. Review*: 'The night the animal died an undertaker was sent for and a chestnut casket with a silver plate bearing the words "Our Darling" was made. The body was

laid out in the sitting-room of the home the next day, where it was viewed by many neighbors. It rested on a silk blanket, and was surrounded with flowers.'

Sterne weeping over the carcass of a dead donkey was sublime compared with this folly of dog-worship. Here in New Zealand we have not yet touched this degree of insanity. But, given this combination: starved maternal instinct, and wealth without a sense of its responsibilities, and New Zealand may witness within its borders as fantastic tricks before high heaven as the great republic that flies the Stars and Stripes. The latest report of our Department of Health contains no grain of comfort for those who love their country and regard the moral law. Dr. Mason, writing in connection with this grave question of race-suicide, says: 'Commissioners have sat in various parts of the world, and have discussed the subject in all its phases. Voluminous reports have been written, but it has all been as a beating of the wind. To my mind the remedy is not to be found in reports, but in a national awakening and an increase in patriotism. All sorts of cures have been advocated, such as grants of land to parents having over a certain number in the family, but I have little faith in such remedies.'

The disease is mainly a moral one, and is no more to be cured by such means than leprosy is to be cured by reciting the multiplication table. The radical remedy is a return to Catholic teaching in regard to the sacred obligations and responsibilities of wedded life.

That Missing Link

At intervals—usually during the journalistic 'silly season'—reports are published detailing the discovery of the 'missing link' between man and ape. Yesterday it was in tropical Africa, to-day it is in the Northern Territory of South Australia, now it is in the sands of the Amazon, again it is in the east, and anon, lo! it cometh out of the west. But whether in east or west, or in the African forest or elsewhere, the coy thing, like the spiritist's unwilling spook, refuses to 'materialise.' And men of foremost rank in science persist in maintaining that the 'missing link' is like Sairey Gamp's imaginary Mrs. Arris—there ain't no such a person. Among the great scientists who concur in this verdict now stands Professor Klaatsch, who has been moved to this conclusion by a life-study of the subject. 'The Darwinites,' says the *Philadelphia Catholic Standard*, 'have received a sad shock by the defection from their school of a foremost upholder of the theory of evolution. Professor Klaatsch, of the University of Breslau, a great scientist in anthropology, has announced his conclusion that both Darwin and Haeckel were wrong when they agreed that there was a progressive connection between prehistoric man and the man-shaped apes. He has devoted most of his life to the study of the skulls of each, and the result is his conclusion that the human skull has no true structural identity with that of the inferior species. The oldest human skull found—that of the Linderthal or Neander Valley man—has the same well-developed chin and nose as the modern "human"; and so the great "missing link" theory becomes merely a phantasm more unreal than the swamp fire called Will-o'-the-Wisp. Man is still the lord of creation, the highest work of the hand of his Maker, superb in intellect and unrivalled in physical attributes.'

American Catholic Progress

The epigraph to Bancroft's *History of the United States* is this variant of a famous line of Bishop Berkeley:

'Westward the star of empire takes its way.'

Westward, too, the Church's brightest triumphs take their way. A century ago Catholics were a small and scattered flock in the United States; to-day there are some 22,000,000 adherents of the Old Faith under the Stars and Stripes. The *Louisville Catholic Record* gives, in a recent issue, an idea of the triumphal march of Catholicism in the United States by quoting the figures of its progress for one year. It says: 'A conservative estimate of the growth of the Church in this country last year as against the previous year, 1906, may be stated as follows:—Increase in the number of the reverend clergy, 1171; increase in the number of churches, 699; increase in the number of students in our seminaries, 876; increase in the number of academies and colleges, 28; increase in the number of parochial schools, 162; increase in our Catholic population, 1,225,482. For the current year we estimate that fifteen Catholic churches are built and dedicated weekly in the United States.'

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