

## Current Topics

### A Greeting

We wish all our readers the best joys of

'The happy night  
That to the cottage, as the crown,  
Brought tidings of salvation down,'

and the choicest blessings of Him

'Whose quickening birth  
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,  
To heaven and the under earth.'

And at every season of the circling year, we wish all our readers the good conscience which, says Franklin, is a continuous Christmas.

### A Commendable Reform

A paragraph that is going the rounds of the press states that 'the Wanganui Hotelkeepers' Association some time ago decided to restrict persons addicted to excessive drinking. At their last meeting, two more names of habitual drinkers were added to the list, and the persons interested have been requested to discontinue their visits to the hotels for the purpose of procuring intoxicating liquor.'

### Bible-burning

Our readers will readily recall the storms of frantic feeling which a few years ago circled around the burning of some worn and torn and battered Bibles at Naililili in Fiji. A small box, containing old and soiled Catholic prayer-books, a few damaged Bibles (Protestant version) belonging to some converts to the faith, and other pious objects, was treated with that cleansing mark of respect with which the Catholic Church has from time immemorial treated sacred vestments and other things that have gone beyond their use. And now (according to the Melbourne *Advocate* of December 5) the Bible in the local District Court was ordered by the magistrates to be burned. And yet, curiously enough, none of the people who stormed and raved over the Naililili affair have gone on fire. 'This action,' says the *Advocate*, 'was taken at the instigation of Dr. Kauffman, who, by the way, is an Orangeman.' But the clergy who steamed like Whakarewarewa fumaroles over the Fiji incident are now as undemonstrative as so many dabs of putty.

### That 'Relic of Barbarism'

The agitation arising out of the prohibited Eucharistic procession in London has already begun to score. The rather jaunty and supercilious refusal of Mr. Asquith to deal with the question of Catholic disabilities has been followed by the second-thought with which justice sometimes overtakes and trips up wrong. A cable message in last week's daily papers runs as follows:—'Earl Crewe, in reply to a question in the House of Lords, announced that the Government would shortly submit a proposal, hoping, with the co-operation of the Opposition, to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the King's accession declaration.'

The infusion of some truth and decency into that 'relic of barbarism' will be a welcome step in the path of complete religious tolerance towards Catholics in the British Isles.

### Boomerang Electioneering

The too eager greyhound of an overruns his hare; the impetuous politician runs the risk of overvaulting his purpose; and the precipitate assailant meets at times with poetic justice, and gets laid up for alterations and repairs. During the election campaign of 1905, for instance, there was published in Dunedin, in the columns of a short-lived little 'yellow' gutter-journal, a coarse attack upon New Zealand Catholic womanhood that was clearly intended to steel the stalwarts of the lodges, and others of their way of thinking, to vote in particular way at the approaching contest. The article in question produced, however, a result which the writer probably neither foresaw nor intended. Copies of the journal in question were eagerly sought for and circulated among Catholic women voters in one of the electorates. The indignation aroused among them brought to the polls on that occasion probably the

largest Catholic women's vote ever registered there, and exercised, we understand, an effect upon the result that the article writer could not well have desired. Catholics in this Dominion exercise their parliamentary vote precisely as their political preferences and leanings suggest, without either guidance or dictation of any sort from their ecclesiastical leaders. And this is but right and proper. The mortgaged Catholic 'block vote' is one of the fictions of electioneering that are pressed into electioneering purposes. There is only one way of organising a Catholic 'block vote' in any particular constituency. And that is, not by organisation or dictation from within (for such a course would neither be adopted nor tolerated), but by coarse and vehement attack from without, such as that which aroused the just indignation of Catholic womanhood in a Dunedin electorate in 1905.

A similar story of anti-Catholic attack and Catholic resentment was told to the London *Times* a few weeks ago by its Ottawa correspondent. An attempt (similar to one that found a strident voice in a Wanganui paper before the recent general elections) was made by some Canadian Orangemen to inflame religious passion against the brilliant and versatile Liberal leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, at the late parliamentary contest, on account of his profession and practice of the Catholic faith. The *Toronto Sentinel* (the organ of the lodges) raised the editorial clamor against Sir Wilfrid on religious grounds. It was reprinted, for circulation among voters of 'the right sort' only. 'To Liberals,' said the *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 'this production was a bonanza. It was the very thing for which they had been looking. The demand for the pamphlet became flattering to its author. It was impossible to fill all the orders. The Liberal managers, unable to secure the large numbers of copies they needed, printed more for their own use. They even had the production translated into various languages. There were German copies for Germans, and French copies for the French. Condensed issues were also circulated for those who merely wanted to get at the pith of the argument.' The too eager *Sentinel*, in fact, grievously overshot its purpose. The effect of a pamphlet of this kind,' says the Ottawa correspondent of the London *Times*, 'placed in the hands of wavering Roman Catholics at the last moment can well be understood. Thousands of votes were lost to the Conservative party. I have,' adds he, 'reports from fully a dozen ridings where it was effective in electing Liberals, and where, under ordinary circumstances, the seats would have gone to the Opposition. The lesson is obvious.'

### The 'Missing Link' Again

Many of our readers will remember the old-fashioned, cottage-shaped weather-glass (on the hygrometer principle) in which the figure of a man comes out through a spring doorway to indicate approaching rain, and the figure of a woman to foretell sunshiny days—the lady 'waits till the clouds roll by.' When Darby is out, Joan is in; and when Joan is out Darby is not visible. The sea-serpent and the 'missing link' seem to have got into a similar habit. One or other of the pair is commonly due about this season of the year. We cannot recall their simultaneous arrival. The sea-serpent made, during the past few years, two consecutive bows before a very thin audience and promptly played the vanishing trick. It was, therefore, 'up to' the 'missing link' to go and do likewise. And this he has obligingly done. For, since the last appearance of the sea-serpent, he has shown up (alive and frisky) in the Northern Territory (Australia) and, last week, mouldy and dusty and as dead as Holofernes, at Corrèze, in the central plateau of France. So much we learn from a cable message from Paris, which appeared in last week's daily papers, and which conveys the rather hazy and doubtful information that some remains found at Chapelle aux Saints, Corrèze, are 'supposed to be the "missing link" between ape and man.'

But people have 'found' the 'missing link' just as other people are said to have 'caught' the elusive and exasperating Irish elf, the leprechaun, or Puck the Fairy—

'The spite  
Of the merry midnight,  
Who laughs at weak mortals, and loves the moonlight.'

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