

Current Topics

Various Misrepresentations

The reader's attention is directed to the article on the next following page dealing with various misrepresentations regarding the attitude of Catholics towards the passing of the 'free, secular, and compulsory' Education Act of 1877. In a letter that follows the editor of this paper refutes (among other things) an amazing misquotation having for its object to cast a slur upon the memory of the late Dr. Grace, of Wellington.

'Pulling his Leg'

The interest aroused by recent discussions regarding the Papal decree on Catholic marriages has extended even to the pages of the *Sydney Bulletin*. A correspondent signing himself 'Star'—who had had 'his leg pulled' to abnormal length by some of his non-Catholic friends, with the usual budget of assorted misconceptions regarding the meaning of the decree—had written to the well-known *Sydney* weekly to relieve his soul of its new and heavy burden. In the latest issue of our very secular contemporary a contributor sets the befogged one right in the following pithy fashion. "'Star,'" writes this contributor, 'has been deluded concerning the new R.C. marriage laws. Rome does not forbid "mixed marriages." Its attitude is that it doesn't approve of them. An R.C. priest is allowed to celebrate a "mixed marriage." But an agreement must be signed that all children of such a marriage shall be brought up in the R.C. faith. So long as the officiating cleric in a mixed marriage is an R.C. priest, the union is recognised and blessed by the Church. The children of "mixed marriages" celebrated in accordance with prescribed conditions are most certainly considered legitimate. Let "Star" read Cardinal Moran's penny tract, *The New Marriage Laws*, or, more fully, Father Cleary's *Catholic Marriages*, and he will be enabled to bring confusion on those who have been treating him injuriously as to his legs.'

'Irish' Linen from Japan

Our friends and 'allies' in the land of the Mikado have never been remarkable for over-strict notions in the matter of commercial morality, and their little weakness for pirating well-known trade-marks and palming off their own inferior productions under the names of the most reputable and popular manufacturers of other countries has been long known and often protested against. 'Pears' Soap,' 'Colman's Mustard,' even 'Holloway's Pills,' are now made in Japan and palmed off by these slim commercialists under the honored names that are familiar to the whole civilised world. The latest effort in this direction is an attempt to 'commandeer' the Irish linen market by ways that are dark and tricks that are vain. Says the *London Draper's Record* in a recent issue: 'One of the present sensations of the trade is due to the importation of "Irish" linen goods from the land of the wily Jap. The detail and elaboration of the work are alike astonishing. The prices are even more so.' This is the day of wooden nutmegs and sanded sugar, but 'Irish' linen from Japan just about touches the limit. If the Government cannot protect its people from being flooded with bogus goods and secure to its workers the just fruits of their skill, one is left to wonder what the Government exists for at all.

The Future of the Flying Machine

Our cables during the week announced that 'in the House of Commons Mr. J. T. Macpherson asked Mr. Haldane to stop the waste of money on aeroplanes.' In replying, Mr. Haldane said that £19,000 had already been expended, adding that the future policy was under consideration. And the cable adds: 'The *Times* correspondent at Pau (France) states that the representatives of foreign Governments are watching the aeroplane experiments in Britain with surprise and amusement.'

If the latter statement is correct, the 'surprise and amusement' displayed by the representatives of the foreign Governments arise from a sense of the clumsy, half-hearted, ridiculously inadequate way in which the British Government is dealing with the question, and certainly not from any want of confidence in the possibilities and future of the aeroplane itself. In this matter England has followed her old and general policy of bringing up an inglorious rear in the procession of the nations adopting new and improved mechanical methods of convincing her enemies by turning them—on the Chicago principle—into

dead meat with the greatest possible neatness and despatch. Thus, she was behind the other Great Powers in the adoption of gun-sights, rifled cannon, armored ships, breech-loading rifles, and magazine rifles. And to-day she is lumbering along in the rear of France, Germany, and the United States in the matter of the air-ship and the aeroplane, which promise to play an important part in the warfare of the future. At the first dinner of the Aeroplane Club held in London a few weeks ago, and attended by many foreign representatives, Colonel H. S. Massy, C.B., F.R.G.S., remarked that 'as usual England was behind with aeronautics,' but he hoped that, in spite of her many formidable competitors, she would eventually 'muddle through.' Following on this speech, Mr. Stephen A. Marples read a paper, the keynote of which was, 'Wake up, England!' Mr. Marples recalled the fact that the tortoise in the fable won the race, but then the hare took a nap, and it was hardly to be supposed that the foreign aeroplanists would sleep and allow the English tortoise to gain an easy victory. As a matter of fact, so far from ridiculing the aeroplane, the leading Governments of the world, outside of England, are vying with one another in their eagerness to get possession of a safe, satisfactory, completely successful flying machine. Many months ago the American Government entered into a contract with those big human birds, the Wright Brothers, and if these famous aeronauts are able to meet the Government's requirements, the United States Army will at once take up the Wright aeroplane for war purposes. The time allowed for completing the contract and carrying out the difficult programme of tests stipulated for by the American Government expires at the end of June. In France, the Government has already a military airship of its own, the *République*, which carries a crew of four and is stationed at Belfort. Three others have been ordered. One is to be used as a 'training ship,' and the others are to be stationed on the Franco-German frontier. In Germany, as is well known, Count Zeppelin, with the help of a Government grant and a national subscription, has built his most powerful airship, *Zeppelin No. 5*, which, in November last, was purchased by the German army, after it had carried the Crown Prince from Friedrichshafen to Donaueschingen to meet the Emperor. The latter takes a keen interest in aeronautics from a military point of view, and has appointed a commission to go into the whole question. In Spain, King Alfonso has given a great impetus to aerial navigation; and in Belgium, where a special type of airship has been invented, there are military aerostatic stations at Antwerp, Namur, and Liege.

But the most striking and practical proof that the potentialities of the aeroplane for war purposes are fully recognised and taken very seriously by the most advanced nations is to be found in the fact that the German War Office have just turned out two types of armored motor cars, made and designed for the express purpose of fighting airships. One of these vehicles is completely armored, the other semi-armored. According to *The Motor*, each has a petrol engine of 60 horse-power, which can, at a pinch, send those land ironclads snorting along at over 40 miles an hour, and thus keep it in touch with a fast airship. Nickel steel an eighth of an inch thick has furnished the material for the plating. In front are two seats, for driver and commanding officer respectively; at the back, the gunners' seats, underneath which is provided locker space for 100 balloon-shrapnel shells, each with a bursting charge of 40 grammes (about 1.5oz), 128 hard-lead bullets, and 27 other chunks of argument in the shape of hard lead. We are informed further that 'the aluminium double-fuse possesses three brass vanes, toothed and pivotally attached to its bottom surface, which, in flight, swing outwards in consequence of the rotatory motion, and are intended to favor the ripping up of the balloon fabric hit.' The gun, which is a five-centimetre (nearly 2in) quick-firing Ehrhardt, can be elevated almost vertically. Car, gun, ammunition, and men in charge weigh over three tons. Truly, where questions of war are concerned, they take time by the forelock in the German Fatherland.

While on the subject of flying machines, it is worth noting, in passing, that the distinction of being the author of this wonderful invention belongs to a Catholic priest. Father Bartholomew Gusmao is the true founder of aerial navigation. He occupied for fifteen years the chair of philosophy at Rio Janeiro, and was recognised as a high authority on the physical sciences. He constructed a machine, in the form of a bird, with tubes and bellows to supply the wings with air. After one or two unsuccessful attempts the gigantic bird rose majestically in the air. 'For several minutes,' says a recent issue of the *New York Tribune*, referring to Father Gusmao's invention, 'the machine moved about on the same level, under perfect control, and then for several minutes was held almost motion-

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