

## Current Topics

### Religious v. Secular Education

On the next two pages of this issue appears the twelfth and last of the series of articles on 'The Secular Phase of Our Education System,' which the editor of the *New Zealand Tablet* has been for some time past contributing to the *Otago Daily Times* (Dunedin). This closing article appeared in last Saturday's issue of our esteemed local contemporary. The same issue contained an editorial reply. We quote the following therefrom, as illustrating the kindly, dignified, and courteous—even courtly—spirit which the *Otago Daily Times* brings to the discussion of the theme: 'Our issue of this morning contains the final article of the series in which the editor of the *New Zealand Tablet* has been discussing, in our columns, the secular phase of our education system as viewed from the standpoint of the Roman Catholic body. A peculiar value attaches to this series of articles, since it has provided absolutely the first complete presentation that has appeared in any secular journal in the Australasian colonies, if not, indeed, in any secular journal anywhere, of the Roman Catholic opinion of the principles which should regulate any system of national education. The articles have also commanded respect by reason of the high degree of scholarship which their author has brought with him to the performance of his undertaking, of the conspicuous ability with which the views of the Roman Catholic community have been stated and its claims advanced by him, and of the dignified restraint which has marked his expression of these views and claims.'

The *Otago Daily Times* then proceeds to restate and defend its position with a dignity and a kindliness of feeling which add a fresh adornment to its old and honorable traditions. In fairness to our valued contemporary, we must here state that it does not accept as correct our statement that at one time it stood for religion in the school and for a denominational system side by side with that of the State. Our reperusal of its article of July 2, 1880, however, does not render it possible for us to recede from our view, as expressed in the course of the article that appears on the next two pages. So we shall agree to differ thereon, like reasonable people, in a reasonable and friendly way. A reply to the *Times* article, and to such criticisms as may arise, will bring the present writer's association with the discussion to a close. The discussion on the subject (with the exception of such matter irrelevant to the education issue as has been, or may be, injected into it) will be published in book-form at the office of the *New Zealand Tablet*. The editor of this paper desires to record, in the most emphatic way, his deep sense of the generosity of the space accorded to him for a series of articles, in criticism of our contemporary's policy, which went far beyond his original purpose and intent; likewise his profound sense of the fair, courteous, and even chivalrous treatment extended to him, in every way, in connection with this attempt to place the Catholic view of education before the wide circle of readers of the *Otago Daily Times*.

### The South Polar Expedition

One sultry summer day a poet sighed:—

'O for an iceberg or two at control!  
O for a pleasure trip up to the pole!'

It reminds one of Henry Kirke White's longing for consumption:—

'Gently, most gently, on thy victim's head,  
Consumption, lay thine hand!—let me decay  
Like the expiring lamp, unseen away,  
And softly go to slumber with the dead.'

But the romance of consumption passes 'like a snowflake on the river' as soon as swarms of the microscopic poisoners set their grip upon lung-tissue. In like manner, the near presence of 'an iceberg or two' in the far, far north or in the far, far south would, in all probability, speedily disperse all desire for a closer acquaintance; and a journey to the pole—whether north or south—would be anything like a picnic or a pleasure trip. Certainly Lieutenant Shackleton's perilous journey over the ice-fields towards the south pole was not the sort of thing that the poet or the arm-chair traveller would long for to any great extent. The story of that trying expedition is one of dire toil and of hunger and exposure such as would have severed the partnership of soul and body in men of lesser courage and endurance. Thus, in one of the terrible forced marches over the crevassed ice-fields, the party covered only sixteen miles in twenty-two hours. 'Half an hour before we came to camp,' said Lieutenant Shack-

ton, 'Adams fell in his harness, but directly he had recovered a little he went on again pulling.' They suffered agonies from dysentery the while, they had to toil and travel 126 days on 92 days' food rations, and from the middle of November till February 3, they had only two 'square' meals. 'At Chinaman depot,' adds the narrator, 'we loaded with horse-meat, and digging down in the snow, found the frozen blood of the horse; this we added to our stock of food, the daily ration now consisting of (for the whole day) one pannikin of half-cooked horse-meat [they had to shoot their ponies], with blood; and four-biscuits, two pannikins of tea, and half a spoonful of cocoa per man.'

The expedition discovered the Magnetic Pole in what has been provisionally estimated as the latitude of 72 degrees 25 minutes and the longitude of (approximately) 154 degrees; they trekked through blizzards and over great broken ice-fields to within ninety-seven miles of the South Pole; and they added greatly to our store of geographical, geological, and other scientific knowledge of the great lone land in the far south. We lift our hat to Lieutenant Shackleton and those that were with him on his perilous journey, and welcome them back from the ice-fields and the snow.

### Two Distinguished Converts

After years of conversion, and after several years in the sacred ministry, the distinguished author, Father Robert Hugh Benson, the convert son of the late Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, says: 'The Church promises a great deal, but my experience is that she gives ten times more. And if you put on the balance the most successful life outside the Church and the most unsuccessful and disastrous life within her fold, a thousand times rather choose the latter. The Catholic Church is supremely what she promises to be. She is the price pearl for which the greatest sacrifice is not too great.'

A similar experience is recorded in such happy phrase by Mr. C. Kegan Paul, the noted author and publisher, that it is worth quoting in full. We take it from the story of his conversion, which is so exquisitely told by himself in *Roads to Rome* (edited by Mr. Godfrey Raupert), the third edition of which is just to hand. 'Those who are not converts,' says Mr. Kegan Paul (pp. 203-4), 'are apt to think and say that converts join the Church in a certain exaltation of spirit, but that when it cools they regret what has been done, and would return but for very shame. It has been said of marriage that every one finds, when the ceremony is over, that he or she has married another, and not the bride or groom who seemed to have been won; and Clough takes the story of Jacob as a parable representing this fact. We wed Rachel, as we think, and in the morning, behold it is Leah. So the Church bears one aspect when seen from a distance, *ab extra*; another when you have given yourself to her keeping.'

'But,' continues our author, 'the Church is no Leah, rather a fairer Rachel than we dared to dream, her blessings are greater than we had hoped. I may say for myself that the happy tears shed at the tribunal of Penance, on that 12th day of August, the fervor of my first Communion, were as nothing to what I feel now. Day by day the mystery of the Altar seems greater, the unseen world nearer, God more a Father, our Lady more tender, the great company of the saints more friendly—if I dare use the word—my guardian angel closer to my side. All human relationships become holier, all human friends dearer, because they are explained and sanctified by the relationships and the friendships of another life. Sorrows have come to me in abundance since God gave me the grace to enter His Church, but I can bear them better than of old, and the blessing He has given me outweighs them all. May He forgive me that I so long resisted Him, and lead those I love unto the fair land wherein He has brought me to dwell! It will be said, and with truth, that I am very confident. My experience is like that of the blind man in the Gospel who was sure. He was still ignorant of much, nor could he fully explain how Jesus opened his eyes, but this he could say with unfaltering certainty: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."'

### 'Irish Outrages'

Russell Lowell's 'pious editor' believed 'in humbug generally,'

'Fer it's a thing that I believe  
To hev a solid vally'

(that is, value). In other countries 'humbug' may 'hev a solid vally'; but Ireland is, perhaps, the only country in the world where an 'agrarian outrage' is a great political asset, and where a politi-

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