

Current Topics

Dreadnoughts, Old and New

The luxury of fighting, both on sea and land, grows more expensive year by year. Half a century ago men who went down to the sea in ships of war had comparatively inexpensive fighting craft to manage. The old British sailing Dreadnought (as we may by anticipation call it)—the first-class line-of-battleship—did not exceed £115,000 in cost. 'All the world wondered' when the *Warrior* (the first British ironclad) cost, in 1860, no less a sum than £350,000. Eight years later (1868) the Prussians 'went one better'—they put £500,000 into the big ironclad, the *König Wilhelm*. In 1876 the Italians sank £700,000 in the *Duilio*, and, ten years later, £1,000,000 in the *Italia*. Between 1860 and 1886—that is, in a quarter of a century—the cost of armored battleships increased nearly three-fold. Now—in another twenty-three years from 1886—the expense of a first-class floating fighting machine has practically doubled. For the Dreadnought of our day costs some two million sterling. New Zealand's promised first 'little gift' to the British navy would run into £2 per head of our entire population. And (so rapid is the whirligig of change in naval construction) a few years' time would render it obsolete—if it is fortunate enough to escape destruction by collision or by the bang of a £20 mine or by the insinuating nose of a £500 torpedo.

'An Impeached Nation'

A very able, learned, and widely known Australian priest writes to us in part as follows in regard to the latest and largest publication issued from the office of this paper: 'I have read your new book, *An Impeached Nation*, and I hasten to congratulate you on such an excellent and opportune publication. It is a veritable masterpiece of historical criticism on that hackneyed shibboleth, "Crime in Ireland"—and a true epic of cold facts and figures. . . . Your book should be in every home in Australasia.'

Our reverend correspondent from over-sea backs his kindly opinion in an eminently practical way—by a cheque for a large number of copies of the publication for sale among his people. Other reverend confrères have favored the publishers with orders ranging from £2 to £10, with the same intent. A large edition has been printed, and there are enough copies to go a good way round. The reader is referred to the managerial notice of the book which appears on the leader page.

The Catholic Paper

In a recent editorial article, the Brooklyn *Tablet* linked together the following litany of functions of the true Catholic paper: 'An eternal bond of unity. A channel of communication between the Bishops and clergy and the faithful people. The builder of Catholic thought and Catholic opinion on every question affecting Catholic interests. An organ of appeal and defence. The readiest exponent and defender of the Church's doctrines and practices. The medium of warning against danger to faith and morals. The voice that summons the Catholic people to protect their rights. The mirror of Catholic life. The powerful auxiliary of the pulpit and the complement of the parish school. The consecration of the great modern invention to the service of the Church. The antidote to the poison of the secular press. The destroyer of non-Catholic calumnies and prejudices. The blessing of clean, wholesome, Christian reading for the home.'

Thirty years ago, according to an exchange, M. Baudon, president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, gave utterance to this warning prediction, in writing for the Catholics of his country, France: 'The importance of the press is not understood enough by the faithful. They look to the building of churches, to the founding of communities, to the multiplying of homes for orphans and poor, all clearly necessary works, but they forget that over and above these needs there is another which the pressure of facts makes first of all—it is the extension of the Catholic press, at least in certain countries, of which France is one; for if the Catholic press is not supported, encouraged, elevated to the height of its sublime mission, then the churches, if not burned, will be empty, the religious communities will be expelled, and the homes for orphans and poor—nay, the very schools themselves—will be taken from the religion that founded them.'

'History,' says Mark Twain in his latest serious work, 'is a trustworthy prophet. History is always repeating itself, because conditions are always repeating themselves.'

Out of duplicate conditions history gets a duplicate product.'

A word to the wise ought to be sufficient.

The Pauper System

It seems as if the British Isles are at last within reach of some reform of those scandals of our time, those graves of decent poverty, the costly and inefficient union workhouses. As far back as 1837 Dickens scoured the grosser abuses of the system in the pathetic pages of his *Oliver Twist*. Therein he depicted, in many a moving incident, the sorrows of the poor, starved, ill-treated boy, who preserved a pure, gentle, and loving soul amidst the heartless cruelty of the workhouse system. And, on the other hand, he depicted the arrogance of parish authority dressed in the little brief authority of a Bumble, who was shocked almost to speechlessness at the unparalleled daring of hungry little Oliver asking for 'more' of the thin and unsatisfying gruel or 'skilly' that made a thin partition between existence and death by starvation. A Poor Law Commission has been making exhaustive inquiries into the system. The London special correspondent of the *Dunedin Evening Star* says that they have just issued two reports—a majority report and a minority report. Both condemn the system. And both recommend (says the *Star's* correspondent): 'A discontinuance of the term "Poor Law" with its unpleasant associations. The use of the phrase "public assistance" instead of "Poor Law relief." A complete change in the present constitution of workhouses. The provision of special accommodation for the sick, the aged, the mentally feeble, and the young. Closer co-operation between public assistance and private charity. A national scheme of labor exchanges. Labor colonies for the workless, with places of detention, with suitable labor, for the "won't works."'

We hope that the British Isles are now near the end of the penal treatment of decent poverty that was first introduced into Christian countries during the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century.

Catholics in the United States

One of the inanimate characters in Kipling's fable-story, *A Day's Work*, laid down the principle that 'there is no sense in telling too much truth.' As we pointed out at the time, some such idea seems to have motivated the following cable message from New York which appeared in our daily papers of January 30:—

'Including those persons who are affiliated by family ties to members, whether they belong to the organisation or not, the census gives the Roman Catholic Church of the United States a total of 22,474,440. This total, which includes the Philippines and other islands under the American flag, gives 14,235,451 as the number in the United States proper. Mr. Smalley, the New York correspondent of the *Times*, says that these statistics are useless for purposes of comparison, inasmuch as all other Churches enumerate the actual members of the Churches.'

The following is the substance of the same item of 'news' as given more fully by the New York correspondent of the London *Times*, in its issue of January 28:—

'What is called a Roman Catholic census of the United States, compiled from advance sheets of the official Roman Catholic *Directory*, is published to-day. It shows that the number of Roman Catholics in the country is 14,235,451. . . . These figures are impressive, but they ought not to be used for purposes of comparison with those of other denominations, especially in America. Roman Catholic statisticians, in compiling the numerical strength of the Church, do not, as those of other religious bodies do, confine their enumeration to actual membership. In the case of members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, for instance, who number only 880,659 . . . the inclusion of persons affiliated to that body by family ties would double that number of adherents. All such persons are included in the statistics of the Roman Catholic Church, whether they belong to the organisation or not, and the entire population of the so-called Roman Catholic countries swells the total.'

So runneth the statistical tale told to the ends of the earth by the *Times*. Now mark how plain a tale will put it down. The learned Archbishop of St. Paul (Dr. Ireland) tells the facts of the case in the *Times* of February 13. 'I am,' says he in part, 'writing of the United States, and there I know for certain only such persons are included in the Roman Catholic census as make personal profession of the Catholic faith; and persons merely affiliated to the Church by family ties (if mere family ties may in any manner be said to constitute an affiliation) are not included in the figures given out