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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A DISTINGUISHED American General said

CONTINGENTS: some time ago that in periods of international crises women are usually the strongest suggestions, enthusiasts for a resort to lead and steel.

But there is one woman up Ashburton way who has not got the war-fever in her blood to any great extent. According to the Ashburton *Mail*, the local Mayor received the following missive from her last week among a mass of correspondence relating to the Canterbury Troop: 'Do not put my husband's name down for the third contingent; he has a house full of little ones, and, if he goes, he must take them with him. He is in his fifty-fourth year, had his leg broken when drunk, cannot read without specs, and had his head sewn up. He gets fellows to tell and write lies for him. Please do not accept his name; he gets cramp, and only is making a fool of himself.' But if one woman in Canterbury succeeded in keeping her husband out of the way of Boer bullets and 'bully beef,' another in the same province succeeded in recovering the long-lost lord of her bosom in quite a romantic way. In the Christchurch *Press* the story runneth thus: 'A husband left his wife, and omitted to make adequate provision for her ordinary comfort during his absence. All efforts to trace him were in vain. But one day the injured wife rushed into a detective's office flourishing an issue of the *Press* containing a long list of shilling subscriptions. She did not address endearing terms to the unsuccessful detectives, as she impatiently pointed out her wicked husband's name among the contributors. His patriotism proved his undoing. The police were at once on his track, and the shilling he gave to the third contingent paved his way to Lyttelton.' He is now safe under lock and key, and bemoaning, perhaps, the luckless coin which has temporarily consigned him to durance vile.

'The Flaneur,' of the Sydney *Freeman*, has this other bright piece of correspondence on contingents: 'Mr. Colonna-Close, barrister-in-law, whose ears are not inconveniently short, writes thus to Wednesday's *Daily Telegraph*: "Sir,—There are about 570 solicitors and 153 barristers upon the rolls in Sydney—a sufficient number, with law clerks, to constitute a regiment. No more opportune moment than the present for its practical inception, etc." Whereupon 'The Flaneur' makes the following sarcastic comment: 'A regiment of lawyers! If not, why not? The members of the six-and-eightpence fraternity are not experts in warfare, but they are very devils to charge. Then again, how useful they would be to either British or Boers in drawing up a bill of costs when the war is finished?'

We may state that during the siege of Paris by the Germans in 1870-1871 the chief trades and professions within the city established regiments or battalions of their own. The lawyers donned the uniform in great numbers, and joined the artillery. The first shot they fired they burst a big gun. Even amid the accidents of war and siege the lawyers of the gay capital betrayed their weakness for heavy charges.

In New South Wales it is suggested that the lawyers should go to the front. In Western Australia still more radical ideas prevail: they would make cannon fodder of the law-makers. The *Kalgoorlie Sun* recently published the following petition, which bore about 50 signatures:—'To C. J. Moran, Esq., M.L.C.—Sir,—We, the undersigned, electors of the East Coolgardie goldfields, in view of the generous offer made by Mr. Conolly, M.L.A., to join the Australian contingent for the Transvaal, hereby respectfully request that you, as our representative, will do likewise. We firmly believe that a knowledge of your valour and our sincere wish would warrant English officers sending you early to the front of

battle; and assure you that during your absence from legislative duties our interests will in no wise be adversely affected. The favour herein solicited is the only one we, your constituents, are likely ever to ask, and should you grant the boon your return will be watched with unspeakable anxiety.'

**SOME POINTS
TO
REMEMBER.**

THE good old motto, 'The more dirt the less hurt,' is easily verified when due steps are taken to bring before the public the evil character and antecedents of the mud-slingers. This we have enabled every Catholic in New Zealand to do by the publication of our twin pamphlets on the unfortunate Slattery pair. Meantime, while the campaign of vilification is following its evil course in the Colony, we not only with pleasure the following pertinent facts:—

(1) The sham 'x-monk' Keohler—referred to on p. 5 of our pamphlet, *Joseph Slattery*—has reached his seventy-eighth year, and, with one foot standing by the brink of the grave, has formally 'owned up' and renounced the evil profession with which his name has been for so long notoriously associated. Some time ago (as we learn from the *Baltimore American*) he renounced the Baptist ministry, of which he had been for many years so dubious an adornment. This was at the close of a term of imprisonment in the Buffalo penitentiary. The unfortunate old fellow sought Father Lanigan (then administrator of the diocese), confessed that he had never been a monk nor even a Catholic, retracted his statements against the Church, and made an affidavit accordingly, which, by arrangement, was duly published. He applied for admission into the Catholic Church, and was supposed to have gone into retirement in Canada to do penance and fit himself for the step he was about to take. He was received into the Church—a dubious convert, perhaps—by Father Cleary, of St. Paul's Church, Reading, Pa. By him the repentant sham monk was sent to the Home of the Aged, conducted by the Little Sisters of the Poor, Valley and Preston streets, Baltimore. 'The poor old fellow (says *Church Progress*) is an object for pity and prayer. He has long since lost the power of harming anyone but himself. For him the sands of life will soon run out, and he will have to render an account to that Supreme Judge before whom ex-priests, A. P. Apes, and Rome-hating ministers will have to appear.' Whatever may be the *bona fides* of the unfortunate old fellow's conversion, he has begun the good work too late to feel, in Keble's words,

'Such calm old age as conscience pure
And self-commanding hearts ensure;
Waiting their summons to the sky,
Content to live, but not afraid to die.'

(2) Almost simultaneously came the news that when the bubonic plague was discovered in Adelaide, and when it became known that the victim was a Catholic, the Jesuit Fathers, the Passionists, and the secular clergy offered themselves in a body to attend the sufferer. The happy man selected for the dangerous duty was Father Nugent, a secular priest. He proceeded forthwith to Torrens Island, and there he remains cut off from the world in strict quarantine, sea-locked within a little Molokai, until the medical authorities give him permission to return once more to the mainland to the lesser risks of his ordinary duties. We have traced the history of some thirty or forty real and sham ex-priests. Most of them have, like Joseph Slattery, been 'retired' to the compulsory seclusion of prison-cells. But in no instance has one of the tribe departed from the sordid mission of money-getting in order to devote himself to the plague-stricken or the leper or the incurable. (3) Again: We learn from the last American mail that three Sisters of St. Francis have left Syracuse, N.Y., and cut themselves off forever from civilised life and its comforts for the purpose of devoting themselves wholly—as Father Damien did—to the service of the leper on that lone island of death, Molokai. (4) We have already published the statement of a correspondent of the *Times*, who paid such a glowing eulogy to the reckless courage of the nuns within the beleaguered lines of Mafeking; how 'these heroic Sisters,' as he terms them,

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