

Current Topics

'Think of the Kaiser'

Thomas A. Edison is evidently something of a philosopher as well as a mechanician; and his inventive genius has recently exhibited itself in quite a new direction. To his already long list of achievements he has just added the invention of a recipe for worry. It is certainly timely, and has at least the merit of being simple and easily applied. As the cables informed us, Edison a short time ago lost part of his great manufacturing and experimenting works by fire. 'Are you worrying?' asked a New York reporter. 'Not a scrap,' replied Mr. Edison, puffing a cigar contentedly, 'we have a new standard of worry, beside which all others seem trivial. I look from the ruins of my works here across the Atlantic, and I see the Kaiser on the defensive on both fronts of the immense battlefields. When you realise that the Kaiser has been living for years in the atmosphere of his "impregnable General Staff," when you know he has been trained on the idea that a quick, smashing blow at France would enable him to rush to Russia and quell the Tsar, and then you realise what the Germans themselves must shortly realise, that final victory cannot be theirs—why, it is enough to make the gods, let alone mortals, weep. I have lost £600,000 worth of property by fire, but that is nothing to the Kaiser's loss. Here is my New Year's recipe for worry: "Think of the Kaiser, and realise that you are the luckiest dog imaginable."'

A Courageous Doctor

All honor to Dr. Foreman, chairman of the medical staff of the Sydney Royal Hospital for Women, who at the annual meeting of the institution the other day outspokenly condemned certain practices which are sapping the foundations of the vitality and morality of the race. According to a Press Association message in Friday's papers, 'He said the cases treated included 124 of that most abominable practice, criminal abortion, which was becoming a flourishing industry all over the place. Doctors, nurses, chemists, and illegal practitioners competed all over the city. It was a shocking state of affairs, and one that was increasing at a great rate. Those treated did not represent a twentieth part of the total number of cases. Dr. Foreman scathingly denounced the doctors who descended to such practices.'

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We can only hope that the denunciation and the lashing will get home; and it is to be hoped also that Dr. Foreman's exposure of the existing state of things will not be lost upon the Sydney police. It would seem quite evident that they have been neglecting their duty in the matter. We have no idea as to the extent to which the evil referred to may be prevalent in New Zealand; but occasionally facts are brought under our notice which give ground for the suspicion that race suicide, in one form or another, is very far from being unknown amongst us. Only a fortnight ago we received from the mother of a family resident in a country district a copy of a catalogue which had been posted to the household from a Christchurch chemist, in which instruments of vice for interfering with the laws of nature were openly listed and advertised. We are under the impression that this is a violation of the law, and further inquiry will be made into the matter. In any case, information of such a kind falling into the hands of young people would be capable of working irreparable mischief; and parents cannot be too strongly warned of the necessity for constant watchfulness and care, and of the strict obligation which rests upon them to keep all lists and catalogues of the kind well out of reach.

Public and Private

'The public (school),' remarks a sapient writer in the Christchurch *Star* of February 23, 'is no more like a private school than light is darkness. The one pro-

duces independence; the other submission; one a leader, the other a follower; one freedom and toleration, the other slavery and superstition. The public school makes good citizens, the private school makes good bigots.' Although this paragraph appears in a column ostensibly devoted to 'Topics of the Day' and is presumably intended to be taken as editorial, we have grave doubts as to its originality. It looks painfully like a scissors and paste production from the pages of Robert Ingersoll, or of some of the glib writers of his cheap and shallow school. But whoever the author is, it is certain that he writes without knowledge of his subject. He may know something about the public schools, and of course he is entitled to his own opinion regarding them. But unquestionably he has no extensive, first-hand, adequate acquaintance with private schools, or he would never have perpetrated the swift and sweeping generations above quoted.

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Just by way of contrast let us quote the considered opinion of one who has some claim to be regarded as an authority on the subject. The Hon. Bird S. Coler (Protestant), formerly Comptroller of New York City, has long been prominent in the public and political life of New York, and is the author of several valuable publications on educational subjects. He has made a long and careful study of the public school system, and has made some attempt also to investigate the work of the private schools. He was at first opposed to private schools, because he thought the idea was un-American, but he has now arrived at quite a different conclusion. In a recent address at the closing exercises of St. Patrick's Academy, Watervliet, N.Y., Mr. Coler bore the following generous testimony: 'I have found in the parish schools the saving principle which has been eliminated in the public school system. I have found in them a secular education which, in every recent test, has shown superior efficiency over the public school education. I have found the idea of authority dominating moral instruction, and the idea of Divinity vitalizing moral instruction. I have found the idea of personal responsibility to God pressed home upon the mind of youth. I know no other way of making good citizens. I can say that, in its parish school system, your Church has built an institution that makes for the conservation of the American ideal of life and government.' The Christchurch *Star* paragraphist thinks that the private school makes for slavery and superstition; the eminent American authority declares that it makes for the conservation of the highest ideals of life and government. The difference in the verdict is due to the difference in the equipment and competency of the judges.

Bible in Schools and the General Elections

The *Southern Cross*, a Methodist weekly edited by Dr. W. H. Fitchett and published in Melbourne, has been undertaking to enlighten Victorian politicians on the significance of the general elections held here in December last. It is always difficult for an outsider accurately to interpret the politics of a country, and it is not in the least surprising, therefore, to find Dr. Fitchett falling into divers blunders. First of all he gives some items of information which will certainly be new to New Zealanders. 'The political situation in New Zealand,' he writes, 'is interesting, and is full of warning to some Victorian politicians. At the recent elections in New Zealand Mr. Massey's majority was almost completely destroyed, to his own astonishment, and though he is still in office, he is no longer in power. He has a majority of only one, and that one is doubtful. Now, Mr. Massey is furious, and accuses the Bible-in-Schools League of having wrecked his Ministry.' When, where, and how did Mr. Massey display this fury, or make the accusation referred to? We claim to have read all the published speeches of Mr. Massey since the elections, and we defy Dr. Fitchett to point to a single utterance in which the Prime Minister displayed fury over the result of the elections, or in which he accused the Bible-in-Schools League of having wrecked his Ministry. On the contrary, Mr. Massey has never for a

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