

Current Topics

A Versatile Monarch

An esteemed Dunedin contemporary has been aptly directing attention to the versatility of King George. It appears that just prior to his acceptance of a copy of the Authorised Version of the Bible and his eloquent remarks on the subject of the Tercentenary—which, by the way, the Dunedin Presbyterians wish to have placarded on the walls of our 'neutral' State schools—his Majesty had given his patronage to a music hall entertainment. A little later the cable informs us that he visited Newmarket and inspected his racing stables; and that while witnessing the racing he received a great ovation. Saturday's cables announce that his Majesty has just scored his first win on the turf. The *Pall Mall Gazette* recently issued a 'Sports and Pastimes' Supplement, containing an article headed 'The King's Racing Inheritance,' in the course of which the following information is given:—'It is in the highest degree appropriate that our Turf should have the King at its head. This is to be the King's year, and before the season is many weeks old we hope to see—indeed, we shall see—his Majesty's colors on our racecourses. King George has not heretofore allied himself very closely with racing, though from time to time he has attended some of the more important meetings. He has been an occasional visitor at Newmarket. We have seen him at Liverpool the guest of the Earl of Derby; at Goodwood a member of the Duke of Richmond's house party; at Epsom and Newbury, and, of course, at Ascot. Indeed, the impression that his Majesty derived but little satisfaction from the pursuit of racing was probably altogether erroneous. Whether or not, the situation is now changed. The King inherited from his father splendid racing and breeding studs. A fortnight after the late Monarch's death it was officially announced that—King Edward, having bequeathed his racing and breeding stud to the King, it is his Majesty's intention to carry on these establishments on the same lines as in the past.' It would be difficult to exaggerate the sense of satisfaction which that intimation occasioned in racing circles.

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'We know what Heaven or Hell may bring,
But no man knoweth the mind of the King.'

sings Kipling, in his rough way. The *Pall Mall Gazette's* statement that 'the impression that his Majesty derived but little satisfaction from the pursuit of racing was probably altogether erroneous,' will set people wondering what was the actual 'mind of the King' regarding the episodes mentioned above. Which of the three functions really appealed to him—the music hall, the turf, or the tercentenary? Possibly this is one of the cases where ignorance is bliss. It is, at any rate, safe to say that the King who can satisfy turfites and tercentenarians with equal ease is a man of no ordinary parts.

American Schools: A New Religion

The ease with which allegedly 'neutral' State schools can be 'secretly, silently, and surreptitiously,' yet withal effectively secularised, and made the medium for carrying on a distinctly materialistic propaganda, is strikingly illustrated by the statements contained in a pamphlet just published by the Honorable Bird S. Coler, of New York. Mr. Coler has long been prominent in the public and political life of New York; and his *brochure* is a protest against the admission of a new religion into the public schools. In answer to the questions, 'What new religion? Has not all religion been excluded from the schools?' Mr. Coler replies: 'No; for it is true in psychology as it is in physics that nature abhors a vacuum. The old religion is being excluded, but a new religion is rushing in to take its place. It is variously called. By some it is known as Agnosticism, by some Atheism, by some Socialism.' Mr. Coler classes them all under the head of Socialism. 'For though,' remarks *America*, commenting on the book, 'there are excellent men in the socialistic movement who would resent being called Atheists or Agnostics or Ethical Cultivists, and who maintain that Socialism is a mere matter of political economy and has nothing to do with religion, yet the fact is undeniable that Socialism is based on a theory of material civilisation from which God is excluded.' This new religion, which is affirmative, dogmatic, and intolerant, is, according to Mr. Coler, making straight for public school control, and has already, under the guise of humanitarianism, reduced many of its theories to a concrete expression.

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As far back as 1887 the *Princeton Review* informed its readers that the Superintendent of Public Schools in Chicago refused a work on political economy 'because the

first sentence damned it for public schools.' The first sentence was: 'All natural wealth is due to the beneficence of God.' But in respect to the encroachment of atheistic Socialism New York, Mr. Coler tells us, has outrun Chicago; and this exclusion of even the name of God from the textbooks of the public schools is now, he declares, becoming the rule. 'The teacher in our public schools may deal with the faith of the Egyptians, with the Olympian deities of the Greeks, with the Manitou of the Indians, but Christmas is taboo, Easter is a subject prohibited. No one believes there was ever a Mercury with wings on his heels, but that my be taught in schools. Everyone knows that there was a Jesus of Nazareth, but that must not be mentioned.' The gulf between present-day developments and the old ideals of the Republic is well brought out. 'If that be right,' continues the writer, 'the logical thing to do is to cut the name of God out of the Declaration of Independence, to publish without it the Farewell Address of the Father of his Country, to leave some significant blanks in the sublime sentences of Lincoln over the dead of Gettysburg. We are forming a nation of atheists.' These are not the words, as *America* points out, of a priest or a Catholic layman; they are the earnest and unbiased utterance of a Christian public man who sees the danger, and raises his voice in warning while yet there is time.

The Luther Legend

The Luther legend—to the effect that, when a Catholic monk, he did not know there was such a thing as a Bible in existence until he accidentally 'discovered' one chained to the wall of his monastery—has been so thoroughly riddled by learned historians that it may be permitted to us to hope that it is at last reasonably dead. At least it is satisfactory to note that scholarly and representative Protestants have themselves frankly abandoned it. The current issue of our Dunedin contemporary—the *Christian Outlook*—contains a quotation in point from a series of articles on Luther which are being contributed to the *Century Magazine* by Professor Arthur M'Giffert, who occupies the chair of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. Our contemporary explains that the Union Seminary occupies a peculiar position, in that, while a Presbyterian college, it is not controlled by the General Assembly of the American Church, being privately endowed; and that consequently its theological trend is somewhat more liberal than the conservative position held by the American Church. Our contemporary quotes as follows from Professor M'Giffert: 'Luther's studies embraced the writings of the Church Fathers and particularly the Bible, to which he was becoming more and more attached. He tells us that it was in his twentieth year that he first saw a complete copy of the Scriptures, in the University Library at Erfurt. He had hitherto supposed that they embraced only lessons read in the public services, and was delighted to find much that was quite unfamiliar to him. His ignorance, it may be remarked, though not exceptional, was his own fault. The notion that Bible-reading was frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authorities of that age is quite unfounded. To be sure it was not considered part of a Christian's duty, as it is in many Protestant churches, and few homes possessed a copy of the Scriptures, but they were read regularly in church, and their study was no more prohibited to University students of that day than to those of this, and was probably as little practised by most of them as it is now.'

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That is interesting as a Presbyterian vindication of the Catholic Church from the charge of hostility to the reading of the Scriptures; but Professor M'Giffert is still too generous in his concession to the old traditional version of the alleged Luther episode. The legend—to which the name of D'Aubigné gave such extensive currency—that Luther did not know what a Bible was until he made his 'discovery,' has been left literally without a leg to stand on, by the researches and testimony of the learned Anglican, Dean Maitland. 'To say nothing of parts of the Bible,' he writes (*Dark Ages*, p. 506), 'or of books whose place is uncertain, we know of at least twenty different editions of the whole Latin Bible printed in Germany only, before Luther was born. These had issued from Augsburg, Strassburg, Cologne, Uhn, Mainz (two), Basle (four), Nuremberg (ten), and were dispersed through Germany, I repeat, before Luther was born; and I may add that before that event there was a printing-press at work in this very town of Erfurt, where more than twenty years after, he is said to have made his 'discovery.' And yet . . . we find a young man who had received 'a very liberal education,' who 'had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburgh, Eisenach, and Erfurt,' and who, nevertheless, did not know what a Bible was, simply because 'the Bible was unknown in those days.' On Maitland's exposure of the absurdity of this story, D'Aubigné tried to escape responsibility by fathering the tale on to some early 'authority'—which authority, by the way, on being