

## Current Topics

### Controversial Methods

Evidently all's fair in love and war—and local option controversy. From the way in which each side is belaboring the other in the advertising columns of the daily press one would suppose that both parties have borrowed their working formula from David Harum: 'Do unto the other fellow, as you think the other fellow is going to do unto you, and do it first.' Until after December 7 charity will have to be content with a very back seat.

### A Socialist Tragedy

The following cable from Paris appeared in last week's dailies: 'The well-known Socialist, Paul Lafargue, and his wife committed suicide. Madame Lafargue was a daughter of Karl Marx. Lafargue was threatened with paralysis. This is the second daughter of the famous Karl Marx that has committed suicide.' Lafargue was the author of *Social and Philosophical Studies*, which was translated by Chas. H. Kerr, an American Socialist, and a thorough-going advocate of the doctrine of free-love. The other daughter of Karl Marx here referred to—Miss Eleanor Marx—was also an ardent advocate of free-love. In the *Chicago Tribune* of November 14, 1906, she is reported as saying: 'Love is the only recognised marriage in Socialism, consequently no bonds of any kind would be required. Divorce would be impossible, as there would be nothing to divorce, for when love ceased, separation would naturally ensue.' The way in which the theory works out in actual practice is painfully illustrated in Miss Marx's tragic life story. This exceptionally talented woman fell in love with Dr. Edward Aveling, who gained an international reputation by translating Marx's *Capital* into English. He, too, was an atheist and a believer in free-love. With the full knowledge of Marx and the other Socialist leaders, the pair lived together as husband and wife, and worked together in the Socialist movement. In 1886 and 1887 they made a lecturing tour in the United States, Miss Marx travelling as Mrs. Aveling, though her companion had at that time an invalid wife in London. But it came to pass in course of time that Aveling's love grew cold; and Mrs. Caroline Corbin relates in *Labor and Capital*, April, 1903, that on the death of his legal wife in London, Aveling married another woman and discarded Miss Marx. Her fondness remaining unabated, the free-love wife, disgusted with the world, committed suicide. The story is a melancholy illustration of the domestic shipwreck which is almost sure to follow when the religious and legal sanctions which safeguard marriage are thrown to the winds.

### The Presbyterian Assembly and 'Ne Temere'

Last week a letter appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* from the Rev. R. Wood by way of answer to our previous communication regarding the Presbyterian Assembly and *Ne Temere*. The following reply, which appeared in the *Daily Times* of Thursday, gives a sufficient indication of the nature of Mr. Wood's communication:—

'SIR,—The Rev. Robert Wood has always shown such kindly consideration for the susceptibilities of Catholics—attacking them, as he does, with the utmost bitterness on every possible and impossible occasion—that I am naturally pained at having hurt his feelings by the plainness of speech which I employed towards his *fidus Achates*, the Rev. Dr. Gibb. I can only plead justification on the facts. I judged Dr. Gibb by his performances at the Assembly, as reported in the daily press. Here they are: He aroused 'a chorus of indignant denials' by declaring that those who—unlike himself—administered baptism to children whose parents were imperfectly instructed in the ordinance were 'reducing the sacrament to a farce' and by telling them—very uncouthly, as it strikes me—that 'they might as well sprinkle water in a dog's face.' Later,

his 'spirit waxed hot within him' because seventy of his brethren had the temerity to vote against him, and he politely told them they 'had not a ghost of a notion what they were doing.' Next, he is accused by one of the brethren of trying to 'jockey' the house. Then he is howled down and refused a 'hearing—the most emphatic way open to the Assembly of protesting against attempted bluster. Finally, he is charged by the Moderator with making a reference 'that was anything but parliamentary'; and the Assembly declines to listen to another word from him until he withdraws the offensive statement. On the top of all this, in the *Ne Temere* discussion, he talked what 'Civis' calls 'a plenitude of inflated rubbish,' and declaimed most valiantly about 'not submitting' to some imaginary 'servitude' which nobody in the world wanted him to submit to. That is Dr. Gibb as pictured in the press reports from day to day; and in the light of such a record it will probably be admitted that my description of him was sufficiently near the mark. If in any way it did him less than justice it is probably because Dr. Gibb did himself less than justice in the overbearing attitude which he so consistently adopted towards his brethren.

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I pass by without comment Mr. Wood's little dissertation on the subject of manners. A lecture on manners from the author of the 'R. W.' articles may always, quite safely, be regarded as a joke. Nor need the very much over-worked McCann case detain us long. Mr. Wood had said that the McCann story 'had never been shattered'—by which I understood him to imply that there was only one side, and that the Mrs. McCann side, to the story. I pointed out, in reply, that the other side had been presented on the floor of the House of Commons by (among others) Mr. J. Devlin, who submitted written statements from McCann and from the three priests in the district in emphatic contradiction to the version given by Mrs. McCann. Mr. Wood declines to believe these witnesses; I, on the other hand, most certainly decline to believe the volcanic Mr. Corkey, who, to judge by the quoted specimen of vitriolic eloquence with which Mr. Wood has favored us and by other hot-head utterances of his which lie before me, would be manifestly the last person in the world to go to for a judicial, impartial, and unexaggerated statement of the facts. I am in a position to fill quite as much of your valuable space as you are likely to be willing to allow with quotations from the written statements of McCann and the priests in the district; but so long as neither of us can regard the testimony of the other side as trustworthy, the mere pitting of witness against witness is not likely to bring us very much 'forrarder.' Personally, I entirely agree with the sane dictum of the editor of the *British Weekly* on the subject. 'If we understand rightly,' says the great Protestant organ, 'the Roman Catholics ask that the priest should be publicly named so that he may commence an action for libel in which all the facts will be brought out. We humbly submit that this is the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty. At any rate, it is in a court of law where evidence can be taken, and where statements can be sifted that the truth is most likely to be arrived at.' The Orange exploiters of Mrs. McCann were given the opportunity of putting the matter to the test in this way by repeated challenges from Mr. Devlin to publicly name the priest. The challenge was not taken up; and so long as the retailers of the story are afraid to face the music in this, the only way of finally settling the controversy, the no-Popery fireworks with which they attempt to cover their retreat will be taken for what they are—mere 'sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

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It will not escape the notice of your readers that Mr. Wood has made not the faintest attempt to face the other issues raised in my reply to the misstatements made in the Assembly discussion on *Ne Temere*. (1) I challenged him to publicly name the Canterbury priest who, he alleged, had used the decree as an instrument of 'conversion by coercion'—but he is discreetly silent on the subject. When a man makes slanderous state-