

Current Topics

A Pleasant Story

Under this heading an exchange records an incident which has interested and impressed even the secular papers in New York—as well it might. 'The Saints Are Still With Us' (it says) is the reinvigorating caption of an editorial paragraph in which the *New York Evening World*, in a recent issue, thanks heaven, 'the world cannot yet do its work wholly without faith and sentiment.' On November 16 the editor wrote: 'To-day the people of a little town in Sicily are proudly enshrining in their tiny church an 800-dollar statue of St. Joseph—all because a Brooklyn contractor put through a tough job of sewer-building in our neighboring borough without mishap.'

It appears that in a certain section of the newly completed 3,000,000-dollar sewer system for Richmond Hill, just outside of Brooklyn, an inverted siphon had to be built under the big ten-foot conduit which supplies all Brooklyn with drinking water. The Italian contractor for the building of this siphon recognised what a break in the conduit might mean, and as he later told the borough president: 'I prayed to (invoked) St. Joseph on my knees beside a little construction shack that I might finish this section of the sewer without accident.' And when the work had been conscientiously done without mishap of any kind he honored the saint in the little home church across the seas. 'A pleasant story,' is the *World* comment, 'of a good workman and a fine faith.'

To Those About to Marry

Several years ago, as we learn from our contemporary *America*, the increase in divorce in Kansas City became so alarming that the Circuit Judges of Jackson County had a Proctor appointed to investigate each application and help to check the growing evil. Though he had no legal standing, his efforts resulted in the reduction of divorce decrees from 1224 in 1911, to 881 in 1912. The Proctor has now compiled a statement of his observations in more than a thousand cases; and these are often valuable and always interesting. His enumeration of the causes of divorce is very comprehensive, including not only 'immorality, drunkenness, desertion, flirting, economic conditions, childless homes,' etc., but also such indirect and possibly unsuspected items as 'suffragettes of the undesirable type' and 'motor cars.'

But the most valuable portion of the Proctor's comments is that in which he indicates how occasions for separation may be avoided by means of a wise matrimonial choice and by taking precautions to secure a happy married life. And unlike most of those who discuss matrimonial problems he 'condescends to particulars,' and is entirely definite and practical. First, as to the kind of women who make good wives. Our young men, who, like Froggy in the nursery rhyme, 'would a-wooing go,' would do well to paste in their hats the following summary of the qualities to be sought for in their prospective partners. Those women makes good wives who 'love home life and children; are healthy; understand domestic duties and relations; have a high standard of morals and live up to it; think of something besides clothes and dress and show; are neat, refined, and modest; are educated and can speak correctly; are religious; have had experience with children and housekeeping; appreciate cleanliness; are over 21 years old; know the value of money.' In regard to desirable husbands, the following is recommended to the earnest attention of our maidens who are matrimonially inclined. Those men make good husbands who 'are making good at something; can provide comfortably for more than two at the time of marriage; have at least respect for the religious belief of others; are healthy; have ambition and a fair prospect of an independent business; are educated and moral gentlemen.' We do not see why the religious qualification

should be required only in the case of the wives. With this addition, the foregoing list of requirements for the desirable husband may be taken as fairly complete.

Modernism in the Sunday School

If the statements of a responsible writer in the *Presbyterian Outlook* are to be accepted, Modernism, in its crudest form, is being openly taught in Protestant Sunday schools in this country. The handbooks in use in many schools are a series known as the 'Graded Lessons'; and according to a letter written to our contemporary of a recent date by the Rev. A. A. Murray, Presbyterian minister of St. Andrew's, Auckland, they are 'in many respects utterly pagan.' He gives the following extract from one of the series: 'It is easy to see that the age that produced the Gospels would not be anxious for scientific accounts of the deeds of Jesus, but that it would expect of Him exactly the acts that are attributed to Him. It is possible, therefore, that some events, like the restoration of the centurion's servant, were simply coincidences; that others like the apparent walking of Jesus on the water, were natural deeds which the darkness and confusion caused to be misunderstood; that others, like the turning of water into wine, were really parables that came in course of time changed into miracles. As nearly all the miracles not of healing had their prototypes in the Old Testament, many of them at least were attributed to Jesus because men expected such deeds from their Messiah, and finally became convinced that He must have performed them.' This is Paine, Voltaire, and Ingersoll, in very thin disguise; and this teaching, according to Mr. Murray, 'is being disseminated in Sunday schools.'

Some Curious Arguments

In essaying last week to answer, in the *Otago Daily Times*, one or two of the questions submitted by Mr. J. A. Scott to the Bible in State Schools League, Mr. A. Morris Barnett, advanced some remarkable arguments. What they were will be gathered from Mr. Scott's reply, which has been forwarded to the *Otago Daily Times*.

Mr. Scott wrote as follows:—

'Sir,—League apologists seem to have a weakness for dealing in ancient history. Canon Garland, instead of meeting present-day difficulties connected with his scheme, descants everywhere and at large upon King Alfred; and Mr. A. M. Barnett, instead of giving a plain answer to my plain questions, harks back to the emancipation of the Jews. What earthly connection there is between the latter event and the Bible-in-State Schools League's proposals in New Zealand may be known to Mr. Barnett but it will not be apparent to any other of your readers. Your correspondent apparently argues thus: Because England 'emancipated' the Jews—i.e. gave them the elementary rights of freedom and of citizenship which were their due—therefore the New Zealand Government has the right to force a Jewish teacher, whose salary is paid in part by Jewish and other non-Christian tax-payers, to give lessons on "The Crucifixion," "The Resurrection," etc., in violation of religious beliefs which are to him most sacred. If this is League logic, preserve us from it. The conclusion should, of course, be quite the other way about. If England has 'emancipated' the Jews she has thereby given them rights and full status as members of the Empire, and she is bound in strict honor and morality to scrupulously respect those rights. As a matter of fact, the question of emancipation has nothing to do with the matter. The rights of conscience of any man, be he bond or free, emancipated or unemancipated, are a matter between the individual and his Creator, and no State and no organisation has the right to interfere with them.'

'Mr. Barnett tells us that his grandparents on his mother's side were Jews, and he may be presumed, therefore, to have some knowledge of Jewish tenets. Like the majority of people, the Jews have received

Better Teeth

AT HOWEY WALKER'S,

QUEEN STREET, AUCKLAND,