

Current Topics

Switch Me to Sleep

Sleep, according to Dr. Nagelschmidt, a German physician, can be induced at will by the application of an electric current to the base of the brain. 'We shall have to re-write some of our popular songs,' says the *London Evening News*:—

When days are lonely
And nights but tire,
I want you only, only
You and your wire.
Let thy sweet coma
Over me creep,
Kind Dr. Nagelschmidt
Switch me to sleep!

The Jewish View of Cremation

The Catholic Church, as is now tolerably well known, condemns cremation, partly on practical grounds, and partly on certain broad, general principles; and of these latter not the least important is the fact that in its origin cremation was associated in the minds of the majority—and still is, by many of its chief supporters—with the denial of a belief in a future life. It is interesting to note that high Jewish authorities reprobate the practice on precisely similar grounds. In Bavaria the propaganda of cremation by extreme Socialists and others has lately become so insistent that even Catholics were in danger of being carried away with the movement; and the Bavarian Episcopate deemed it advisable to issue an explicit statement of the Catholic attitude on the question. The opposition of the Bavarian Bishops to the practice has been strongly seconded by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. M. Lerner, who wrote as follows:—'Not less reprehensible than the ancient heathen practice of burning the body, that sign of idolatrous error, is the modern practice of incineration, which constitutes a public demonstration on the part of atheism and monism against religion. . . . Cremation, therefore, which undermines the faith in the resurrection and immortality, is no indication of any progress upon which modern culture may pride itself, but a retrogression into barbarian impiety, and a return to pagan brutality.' And the reasons given by the Chief Rabbi for Jewish opposition to the practice are practically on all fours with the Catholic attitude: 'It is a transgression of the divine commandment ordaining the consigning of the body to the earth; it is a desecration of the mortal remains; it is a refusal of that reparation for sin which is said to be connected with the dissolution of the human body in the earth and thus of its conversion into the dust from which it came; and lastly it is a public denial of belief in God and of a final judgment.'

Nelson Takes a Stand

Preaching at Palmerston North on Sunday of last week from the text, 'Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,' Canon Garland delivered a decidedly dolorous discourse. 'If they did not obey this call to go forward,' he asked, 'where would they be? In the camp of the Church which had always opposed the right of access to the Bible. . . . They had to follow the lead of their Church or the lead of another Church which did not make for freedom. To him it was lamentable, pitiable to find members of their own communion who preferred to ignore the lead of their own Churches, and do all they could to strengthen another Church, which had not been the friend of the Empire (of which they were thinking that day), and which he ventured to say had it been successful in its attempts would have prevented the Empire from ever becoming what it was to-day. In conclusion, he called upon his hearers not to despair.'

The Organising Secretary will have another fit of the weeps when he reads the following Press Association message, dated Blenheim, May 28, which appeared

in last Thursday's papers: 'A meeting of the Nelson Presbytery was held at Blenheim to-day. The Presbytery considered the remit from the General Assembly with regard to the Bible-in-Schools League movement, and the following resolution was carried unanimously: "Whereas the General Assembly adopted the Bible-in-Schools League's scheme without consulting the Presbyteries, and whereas this Presbytery does not sympathise with the League's proposed right of entry, this Presbytery respectfully declines the Assembly's request to assist the movement in question." We have only to add that the membership of the Nelson Presbytery is not bounded by the Nelson city area, but contains representatives—ministerial and lay—from the Nelson, Blenheim, Riwaka, Picton, and Kaikoura districts. That a resolution of opposition to the Bible-in-Schools League's proposals should be carried unanimously indicates, therefore, a fairly wide feeling on the subject.'

Amundsen and the South Pole

Captain Roald Amundsen, who discovered the South Pole in December, 1911, so shortly in advance of Captain Scott, is now in the United States, and has given this picture of the desolate South Pole—and his comments on its supposed possibilities—to the *New York Independent*:—'There is no life at the South Pole, no kind of life, in air or water or on land. There is a great continent covered by ice and snow. Animal life, so far as was observed, does not extend beyond the Barrier, which is 700 miles distant from the Pole.'

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'We found bare spaces on the land and collected geological specimens, but nothing to show that the South Pole region holds treasures which would interest our civilisation. We found no evidence of gold, silver, copper, or iron. I am not responsible for the statement that there are in that region some of the largest coal deposits ever discovered, and I did not express a hope that they would soon be developed. Information on the subject of the coal comes, I believe, from Sir Ernest Shackleton. . . . But even if there are in the South Polar region very large deposits of coal and of precious metal they will simply be something to sigh over—they are inaccessible. Miners cannot live there, and even if they could live and could work mines, no one would be the better off, as there would be no way to get their products out to a point where commerce could reach it. The lowest temperature we found at or around the South Pole was 75 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. The highest velocity of wind was 20 metres per second. It is a region of storms.'

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'No, I doubt that South Polar exploration will realise anything that can be directly made of material benefit. But, on the other hand, any addition to our present fund of scientific knowledge is of immense importance, and our magnetic observations taken at or near the Pole are, therefore, most valuable. So also our geological specimens. I will remain in this country lecturing until next July, when I will away, this time to the North Polar region, to work again.'

The Gift of the Dreadnought

Owing to the exigency of the Monday holiday these lines have to be written before the day on which the battleship *New Zealand* is timed to appear on the Dunedin horizon; and at the present moment the captain's plans as to the anchorage of the vessel are so uncertain, and the general arrangements in connection with the visit are so indefinite, that it is by no means sure that either children or citizens will have any opportunity at all of actually boarding or making the much-desired close inspection of New Zealand's gift to the Empire. One thing, however, there is no doubt about—and that is the intense and enthusiastic interest with which the visit of the leviathan is almost universally regarded. In this connection it is somewhat striking to note the contrast between the feeling now prevailing and that which dominated the mind of the public and of the politicians when Sir Joseph Ward came forward with the original proposal to present

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