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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

WHEN Bishop Wilberforce was suddenly NOT A 'GLAD SURPRISE.' killed by a fall from his horse, Carlyle's savage comment was: 'What a glad surprise!' The South African campaign has sprung upon the British War Office many a surprise of the kind that only the Boers and their friends would regard as 'glad.' But to the average Briton in the crowd the least gladsome and most exasperating surprise of all will probably be the fact that many Englishmen in South Africa have turned their rifles against their own countrymen. One of last week's cable messages stated that among the prisoners captured by the British troops in one of the encounters were a number of Englishmen, and it is known that numbers of others are scattered here and there among the ranks of the Boer army. The man in the crowd may rub his eyes at the news. But such an event was foreseen long before the opening of the conflict by those who knew best every ripple on the current of Uitlander feeling in the Transvaal. In his book, *Through South Africa*, published in London last year, Mr. H. M. Stanley tells how, when a leading Johannesburg Englishman had been a short time previously on a visit to London, a British statesman said to him: 'What would be the effect of sending 30,000 British troops to the Transvaal?' 'Where-upon,' says Stanley, 'he answered that he would be the first man who would take up his rifle against them.' On page 115 of the same book Stanley declares that 'English Uitlanders themselves have threatened to lift their rifles against us if we move to exert pressure against the Boers.' Like Selous, Bryden, and others who know the Boer well, Stanley was strongly opposed to armed intervention in the affairs of the Transvaal, and held that the Uitlander grievance could and ought to have been removed by the peaceful leverage of the stump-extractor of constitutional agitation.

SOME PROTESTANT CLERGY ON THE WAR. AFTER all, it does make some matter whose ox is goaded. When there was a question of war between the United States and Spain, the non-Catholic pulpit, both in and out of America, was as bellicose as the mythical Irishman who is supposed to have trailed his coat-tails at the Donnybrook fair. Some of the pulpiteers in the United States—and even here in New Zealand—made no secret of their desire to see the Spanish-American conflict turned into a *Jehad* or Holy War upon the unspeakable Don. Now, however, it is a question of a campaign against an unprogressive people who are Protestant of Protestants, and who dwell in what Stanley calls 'the China of South Africa.' There is consequently no room for religious, and little for racial, passion, and calm reason, therefore sits in cool majesty in the pulpits that last year rang with the cry of war and with fervent denunciations of the courtly Spaniard and his ways. With one conspicuous exception, the English Protestant pulpit has deplored the war. Many non-Catholic clergymen in these colonies have raised voice or pen against it. The Presbyterian organ of New Zealand, the *Outlook*, some time ago lashed in refreshing style 'the insatiable greed of gain and lust of power of the South African Chartered Co., as represented publicly by Mr. Cecil Rhodes and privately by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, to whose machinations the mischief is largely traceable.' Another prominent Presbyterian, the Rev. Dr. Rentoul, of Melbourne, referred to the war as 'another crime as black and baneful as the crime by which Disraeli delivered the Bulgarians and the Armenians to the clutch of Satan.' Yet another, the Rev. J. H. Mackay, of Bendigo (Victoria), moved the following resolution in the General Assembly at Melbourne: 'That the Assembly set aside a day of humiliation and prayer, on account of the unnecessary and unrighteous war in which the Empire is at present engaged.' The resolution was not carried. Another of a different kind met with a better fate: it was passed. According to the Melbourne *Argus* Dr. Rentoul thus referred to it in a lecture at the

Baptist Church, Collins street, on November 17: 'In my absence to-day they (the General Assembly) passed a resolution, asking all ministers to offer up prayers for the people who are trying to blow up the Boers with Lyddite shells and other infernal machines. I shall never do that, nor will other ministers. We should rather pray for the helpless widows and homeless ones.'

LORD EMLY. IN Ireland some unstated words of protest against the war have ended in Lord Emly being deprived of the Commission of the Peace. Lord Emly is a devoted Catholic, a staunch Nationalist and a warm and practical friend of the labouring man. He is just past what Dante terms 'the midway of this our mortal life'—just 41 years old, and was educated at Cardinal Newman's School (Edgbaston), and subsequently at the Jesuit Colleges of Beaumont and Stonyhurst. When he came of age he was appointed State Steward to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. During the vice-royalty of Earl Spencer an incident occurred which exhibited the personal grit as well as the practical faith of the young Irish Catholic nobleman. It was in 1885. He was at the time resident in Dublin Castle. 'Lord Spencer,' says the *Edinburgh Catholic Herald*, wanted to give a ball on the day that Cardinal McCabe [Archbishop Walsh's immediate predecessor in the See of Dublin] was lying dead in his house in Dublin. Lord Emly absolutely refused to go the ball. He was pressed to do so, but he threatened that if it were insisted that he should go, he would resign his appointment. It was not insisted upon, and so the matter ended.

Our Scottish contemporary records an incident of one of Lord Emly's ancestors that is well worth setting before our readers. It refers to the dark days of the penal laws, when the priest-hunter received £50 for the 'discovery' of an archbishop, bishop, or vicar-general, and £20 for each friar or unregistered priest. These rewards, says Lecky, 'called a regular race of priest-hunters into existence.' So much by way of introduction. The *Herald* story runneth thus:

'An informer, one of the many in the country at that time, came to him and said: "A priest is lying hid in your boathouse" (on the banks of the Shannon). This ancestor of Lord Emly, pretending to be delighted at the information, addressed his informant in these terms: "Now, my good man, go immediately, summon the Militia, gather the magistrates together, and give them the information that you have given me." The man hurried at once to carry out the instructions given him, whilst the other sent a private message to the priest, telling him that in three-quarters of an hour the Sheriff and a large force or Militia would be at the boathouse, and that should anybody be found there after that time it were very likely that he would be apprehended. He also despatched another message couched in these terms: "There is a vacant room in Tervoe." In twenty minutes afterwards the priest was at Tervoe, and in three-quarters of an hour the Militia were at the boathouse, every corner of which they searched. There was the greatest possible excitement, of course. The military put their swords through the boats in order to be certain that nobody was in them. Their search, it is needless to say, was vain. It was then that Lord Emly's ancestor had his revenge. Calling up the informer, he said to him: "Now, look here, my man. See the expense you have put us to. You have been the means of casting ridicule on the magistracy of this county. I personally look upon you as a most contemptible scoundrel, and I sentence you to be tied to the shafts of a cart, and the cart to be dragged by a donkey, and you to be whipped from one gate of Tervoe to the other gate of Tervoe." The extent of the flagellation can be very well realised when it is mentioned that the distance was exactly a couple of miles.'

TWO RACE MYTHS. MYTHS and superstitions usually live long and die hard—sometimes because they are kept alive by mere repetition, sometimes because they minister to national pride or religious prejudice. Two curious people-myths still cling to life down to our time—the one because the good-natured

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