

'TRUTH'S' SENSATIONAL UNTRUTH

'A COMPLETE AND UNQUALIFIED WITHDRAWAL'

In our last issue we pointed out how 'Truth' (Christchurch) published some weeks ago a sensational story which (it said) had been telephoned to the 'Mattino,' an anticlerical daily paper with which the city of Naples (Italy) is afflicted. It was, briefly, to this effect: that two Capuchin Fathers at Fiumara, in Calabria, quarrelled about a female penitent; that they pounded each other to the best of their respective abilities; that the other monks joined in the fray; and that a sort of Doonbrook melee proceeded merrily until the Prior, in desperation, rang an alarm bell, when the villagers appeared and the combatants dispersed. As soon as this tale from a far-off land appeared in our Christchurch contemporary we got upon its track. Inquiries are being made on our behalf at Fiumara. Pending the arrival of our special correspondent's report, we may state that our enterprising contemporary, the 'Glasgow Observer,' however, was in the field before us and in the issue to hand by the last American mail it prints a wholly satisfactory and authorised exposure of the now famous Calabrian 'scandal.' This was supplied by the 'Observer's' special correspondent. It consists of

A Complete and Unqualified Withdrawal of the accusation by the correspondent of the journals at Reggio, in Calabria, who first reported the story, and of a triumphant vindication of the Capuchin Fathers. Here (says the 'Observer') are

(1) A letter from the Capuchin Superior,

(2) Copy of the retraction appearing in the newspapers involved (July 2), which has also been sent to 'Daily Mail' and 'Weekly Scotsman,' where it appeared:—

Letter from the Superior of the Capuchins at Fiumara.
Fiumara, 5th July, 1905.

Dearest Sir,—At the same time that I send you this letter, I also forward you the two newspapers, "Mattino," of Naples, and "Gazzette," of Messina, where you will read the denial made by the correspondent of the said journals regarding the defamatory article which he had allowed himself to write. I earnestly trust that you will have this denial inserted in other foreign journals, and so destroy in part the poisonous seed which Satan everywhere seeks to scatter.

What can you expect, my dear Sir? There always have been persecutions against the Church and her clergy. Nevertheless, we know the enemies of Christ, while they persecute, do not overthrow—we shall always triumph. In thanking you in anticipation for the great pleasure you will do me in causing this to be inserted in other journals, I await a copy of them.—Yours devotedly,

'FRIAR FEDELE MARIA,
'Capuchin.'

(Translation.)

From the 'Gazzette' of Messina and Calabria, and the 'Mattino' of Naples:—

Calabria, Reggio, July 1.

'Concerning the supposed scandal in the Monastery of Fiumara. Dutiful Denial.

'Some time ago we sent to this journal a communication referring to a scandal which was supposed to have taken place between two Friars in the Monastery of Fiumara.

'The news contained in the communication by telephone was, as we said, not only reported, but was formally guaranteed by several persons, and amongst them principally by

An Evangelical Minister

of this place.

'The said communication caused an extraordinary uproar, was reproduced by many other journals in Italy and elsewhere, especially Protestant, and also in smaller sheets.

'The Fathers accused in this report took, as they had a perfect right to do, an action against the "Gazzette" of Messina and of Calabria, and its correspondent at Reggio, reserving action against the "Ora" of Palermo, and the "Mattino" of Naples.

'Having come to know this, we began to have serious doubts as to the truth of the facts narrated and reported, and we believed it was our duty to make enquiries regarding it among many persons worthy of credit, who could have no motive in falsifying the truth.

'With the greatest surprise we learned from them that the facts and circumstances reported by us are

destitute of any kind of foundation whatsoever, and ought to be attributed to enemies of the Franciscan Order rather than the personal enemies of the Friars.

'We have also visited in person Fiumara and the surrounding villages, and we are in a position to certify that the Friars of the Monastery of Fiumara, and especially the two Friars, P. and S., have at all times enjoyed, and always do enjoy, the esteem of everybody without distinction; as also we can certify that the facts have no foundation.

'Impartial as we have always been, are, and shall be, scrupulous and conscientious in the discharge of our delicate duties, we believe it is our duty to publish these declarations, as we published the first communication, the blame of which certainly cannot, and ought not, to be attributed to us, but to the implacable hatred which not a few bear to Catholicism and the Religious Orders.

'We do not think it superfluous or inopportune—lest we be accused of carelessness—to repeat that absolutely everything, even the most minute particulars contained in the communication, came, not only reported, but guaranteed to the full, from persons whose explicit statements we are preserving, ready to publish them whenever occasion demands.'

It is highly satisfactory (says the 'Glasgow Observer') to have one more lie against the Mother of Saints

Nailed to the Counter.

A few salient points remain to be noted:—

(1.) The principal liar concerned is an 'Evangelical Minister,' without doubt the same Bomba who was thrashed the other day for scoffing at a Catholic procession. Whether he is really a minister of some Protestant sect, or merely a lay preacher at the head of some meeting-house, or an agent of a Bible Society (either of the last two is the more probable), we do not know, nor does it matter much. Enough that he has paused to shine forth in lurid colors the sweetness and purity of that reformed Christianity with which he is so anxious to evangelise the faithful Calabrians. Anyone may be misled either by his own senses or by the mistake of others, and thus unwittingly form a rash judgment; but that an 'Evangelical Minister' of any species whatsoever should deliberately set himself to concoct such a vile story, down to the most minute particulars, and with such a circumstantiality of detail as to forbid the supposition that he was merely mistaken; further, that he should guarantee and certify it as the truth, for the purpose of ruining, if possible, the reputation of holy religious who are consecrated by the most solemn vows to serve God day and night—this, indeed, would be almost incredible were it not that we are already painfully familiar with it. Let us hope and pray that the unhappy man may soon emancipate himself from the dominion of Satan, whose servant he is.

(2.) Notice the contrast: the 'Evangelical Minister,' professing to preach a purer Gospel, fabricates

A Foul Lie

to destroy the character of the Friars—the Superior of the Friars, for charity's sake (as he wrote), withdraws the slander action by which he would have certainly, have gained much from the journals, and is content with a formal retraction. This breathes the spirit of Jesus. We cannot but feel that both Bomba and his dupes have got off extraordinarily cheap.

(3.) It is very remarkable that it is against the most saintly innocent men that these calumnies are directed. Now it is Leo XIII.; now it is Cardinal Rampolla, a model of piety and mortification. At Albano the Fathers slandered were held in the highest reputation for sanctity; so it is in this case. But it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master. 'If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you.' St. Gerard Majella, the lately canonised Redemptionist lay brother, lay for nine months, deprived of Holy Communion, and disgraced, under a most foul and awful imputation. Even St. Alphonsus was deceived. At last the calumniator wrote to St. Alphonsus to say that 'all she said about Brother Gerard was untrue and inspired by the devil.' When asked why he had not defended his innocence, the boy only replied, 'Does not the rule forbid me to excuse myself when I am blamed?' It was this (1754) that made St. Alphonsus say, 'Gerard is a great saint.'

(4.) It is obvious, from what the journals themselves admit—and they are a good authority on such a point—that the same

Anti-Catholic Agents

have been at work in Calabria as at Albano and Tivoli and Brindisi. It is the secret dagger of the Socialist, the Freemason, and the Infidel that is everywhere