

CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART,
TIMARU.

THE ANNUAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT FOR LADIES,
PREACHED BY

THE REVEREND G. KELLY, S.J.,

Will begin on the EVENING of WEDNESDAY, January 17th, and end
on MONDAY MORNING, January 22nd.

Ladies who wish to attend should apply as soon as possible to
THE REVEREND MOTHER.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

'ONE INTERESTED.'—(1) Very likely; (2) Such information could only be got by applying to the various Government Departments; (3) Yes, and it would be well to have the assistance of the local Parliamentary representative.

MARRIAGE

VENNING—KENT.—On Tuesday, January 9, 1906, at St. Patrick's Church, Waimate, by the Rev. Father Charles Venning (brother of the grooms), assisted by the Rev. Fathers Regnault, Tubman, and O'Connor, Lucy Agnes and Elizabeth Catherine, second and third eldest daughters of Mrs. Kent, 'Glenbane,' Waimate, to John George and Edward Lotan, first and third eldest sons of Mr. and Mrs. J. Venning, 'Roslyn,' Timaru.

DEATH

MAHONY.—At Fermoy, County Cork, Julia, relict of the late Timothy Mahony, of Kilclare and Garryan-taggart farms, and aunt of Canon Hegarty.—R.I.P.



To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the
ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO. XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1906

CONGO AND OTHER ATROCITIES



YOU may 'break' a general or impeach a Minister. But it is 'dour work' to impeach a nation. And this—judging by newspaper reports before us—seems to be the task set for himself by one Mr. Smith or Brown or Jones 'of London,' who is touring New Zealand with a magic lantern and a gory story. The impeached nation is Belgium. The impeachment covers its administration of the Congo Free State. And the impeacher is a money-raising missionary agent who thrills audiences in small halls with a grand assortment of atrocities at so much per thrill.

It is, perhaps, undeniable that serious oppression and even grave cruelty were practised upon natives by unworthy or brutal officials in the raw young days of the Congo Free State. A document before us, signed by long-established white residents, charges as much to the period from 1879 to 1884, when the great English explorer, Sir Henry M. Stanley, founded the new negro State and directed its early fortunes, under the auspices of the King of the Belgians. Later days may also have witnessed much isolated violence and wrong, especially among the hinterlands of the young Banfu State. It is largely a matter of men—and of opportunities. There is, thanks to Christian teaching and civilisation, a vast deal of cultivated good in human nature. But there is also, in a section of it, a world of unregenerate brute passion and impulse, that shows itself not merely amidst the throes of a French or Russian revolution, but may even turn a harmless festive celebration into the frantic pandemonium that has given to the English language the new word 'mafficking.' There is

more than a slender foundation for the saying of a noted writer that, were it not for the tremendous power of modern law, we should witness in our day a recrudescence of the red barbarities of the Coliseum. When the 'low white,' with power in his hands and the moral restraints of religion thrown aside, gets loose among unwelcome native races, beyond the reach of the King's writ, humanity may prepare to shed her tears. Witness the brutalities practised in recent years upon the hapless aborigines of Western Australia, and more lately still (as the official investigator testified early in 1905) upon slant-eyed Eastern serfs in the Nourse Deep, Witwatersrand, and other mines in the Transvaal. If such things come to pass in south latitude twenty-five, in white men's countries, with the British flag flying over them, may they not also happen under the equator, in a black man's land that is rising painfully towards Christian civilisation over its old dead or dying savage self of twenty years ago?

There is nothing inherently improbable in all this. But an impeachment of an individual or of a nation must have something more solid to stand upon than the mere absence of inherent improbabilities. It must stand, if at all, on fact and evidence duly attested—on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And here it is that we have a grievance against the man with the magic lantern and the bagful of atrocities. He manipulates his facts as well as his lantern. And the manipulation covers what he says as well as what he withholds. His case against Belgium is marked by gross exaggeration, by frequent misstatement, and by the wholesale suppression of facts that are vital to a proper understanding of the history of the 'Congo atrocities.' He may hold that the end he has in view justifies the use of such means. We do not. We therefore proceed to fill in some details that, if supplied by him, might possibly have diminished the thrills and the threepenny pieces, but would have given a fairer presentation of the facts of the anti-Congo agitation. The 'atrocity' campaign was begun and carried out chiefly by what is known as the Congo Reform Society. One of its founders was Mr. Holt, Vice-President of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. It was (as Mr. Fox Bourne admits) backed and in part financed by Liverpool merchants and shippers; and the 'Glasgow Observer' of December 23, 1904, describes it—accurately, we think—as a conspiracy to secure the profitable trade of the thirty million souls that form the population of the Congo. Liverpool merchants and shippers waxed fat and prosperous upon the negro slave. From Liverpool merchants and shippers came the last, longest, and most factious opposition to the abolition of traffic in human flesh. It is, no doubt, a touching sight to see their sons and grandsons weeping over the sorrows of the kith and kin of the Congolese who were steeped to the eyebrows in the nameless horrors of 'the middle passage' on board Liverpool slave-ships. But we think of sundry things as we see the big tears falling through the jewelled fingers. We ask ourselves, for instance: Was it a mere coincidence that the Congo Reform Society was launched at a time when trade—and especially the shipping trade—was flat and stale and unprofitable? Was it likewise a mere coincidence that the moneyed men of Liverpool started their 'Reform' only when they had before their eyes the financial success of a similar agitation for 'the women and children' and 'dear humanity's sake' in the Transvaal? We are a virtuous people and, alack! we know it. But we are given to get our virtue in fits. The Rand millionaires brought on one of the spasms. And in due course virtue had its own reward—in mines that return twenty millions sterling per annum, and Chinese slaves galore to work them for the price of an old song. But perhaps it was sheer softness of heart that moved the Liverpool merchants and shippers to invest their inherited slave-trade shekels in the interests of the negro under another flag? Mayhap. But it sets one wondering, all the more, that they had no shekels for such an investment when white children were dying like flies in insanitary concentration camps in South Africa; or when black men and women in Queensland and in Jamaica (British West Indies) were made the victims of admitted atrocities that were worse, we ween, than the doubtful or more than doubtful ones that our itinerant entertainer lays to the charge of the Congo administration.

There are many things in the history and proceedings of the Congo Reform Society that need strenuous explanation. And the man with the lantern owes, but has not given, it. The Congo Reformers were not as skilful engineers as were the nabobs of the Rand. In the first place, they had a harder nut to crack. For the independence of the little Dutch Republics was protected by no international guarantee. The position of the