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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

SEEKING
A
SCAPEGOAT.

THE treatment meted out by rampant journalists and a fool-headed public to General Sir William Butler recalls the accusations launched against the first Napoleon in the opening number of *Rejected*

Addresses:—

Who burnt (confound his soul) the houses twain
Of Covent Garden and of Drury Lane?
Who, while the British squadron lay off Cork
(God bless the Regent and the Duke of York!)
With a foul earthquake ravaged the Caraccas,
And raised the price of dry goods and tobaccos?
Who makes the quatern loaf and Luddites rise?
Who fills the butchers' shops with large blue flies?
Who thought in flames St. James's court to pinch?
Who burnt the wardrobe of poor Lady Finch?

And the answer is ever and ever: 'Boney,' of course! General Sir William Butler was in like fashion made by hysterical English journalists and by the easy-chair amateur strategists of the clubs the prime cause of every blunder and disaster that has taken place in the South African campaign. Among other things he was accused of pro-Boerism, of disloyalty, and—as the *Westminster Gazette* tells us—he was blamed 'for the inaccurate counting of the enemy's guns, for the underestimate which was formed of the forces which the enemy could put in the field, for the numerical weakness of our army in South Africa at the outbreak of hostilities, and a thousand other things besides.' The army regulations compelled the gallant Catholic General to bear this wild tongue-lashing in silence. The outraged officer closed his mouth and held it grimly shut. He has now at length realised the truth of Horace's lines:—

Est et fidei tuta silentio
Merces:

The reward of silence is a sure reward.

But there is a sane portion of the British Press that keeps its brain packed about with ice-bags even in periods of popular delirium. And it has taken up the cudgels right vigorously for General Butler. The *Westminster Gazette* has fairly cut the ground from beneath his critics and conclusively shown by an appeal to the plain facts of the case 'that Sir William Butler's sole offence lies in the fact that he failed to estimate rightly the pugnacity of the Cabinet, and, further, that he, more clearly than any other man, foresaw the magnitude of the struggle in which we were engaging with so light a heart, and the strain which would be put upon our national resources before we could hope to bring it to a successful issue.' That was the head and front of his offending. *Truth* of December 21 has the following note on the subject:—

Even worse than the veiled attack of the Jingo Press on our generals in the field is the campaign of calumny that has been started against Sir William Butler. It has already been indicated in *Truth* that Sir William, before he offered to resign his command, warned the Government of the probable difficulties of a campaign against the Boers. The *Westminster Gazette*, in the ample vindication of Sir William which it published on Monday, states expressly what the nature of the warning given was. It was to the effect (1) that in the event of war it would be impossible to hold Northern Natal; (2) that, to prevent the Boers overrunning the whole of that colony, a force of 20,000 men would be required to hold the line of the Tugela; (3) that to strike effectually at the Boers *via* Bloemfontein, an army of 100,000 would be required in Cape Colony. There is not an honest man who can deny that this opinion stands amply justified by the results of the campaign, or that if Sir William Butler's advice had been taken we should not be in the position in which we find ourselves to-day.

But in the meantime the senseless clamour of the Press against General Butler has, says the *Westminster Gazette*, rendered it 'practically impossible for a weak-kneed Depart-

ment to send him back to a place where the want of a really scientific general is making itself so woefully felt,' and 'is robbing the country of one of its best weapons.' Sir William, the same paper says, knows the tricks of the difficult game of war in South Africa better than either Sir Charles Warren or Sir Redvers Buller, and he is nevertheless left to eat out his heart at Devonport, 'scorned, abused, and slandered, because he foresaw more clearly than his fellows the horrors of the present, and strove valiantly to avert what he believed to be a national calamity.'

'HE CUSSES
THE
POST LUST.'

'THE creature's at his dirty work again.' Slattery and the female impostor that accompanies him are creeping slowly southwards on their evil mission of stirring up strife and appealing to the low instincts of the purrient

at the rates that rule in the cheap monstrosity show—'front seats one shilling, back seats sixpence.' Thus far the pink pamphlets have done their work very satisfactorily. The unhappy pair have been cold-shouldered or denounced by the Protestant clergy, snubbed by the Press, avoided as the bubonic plague by decent-minded Protestants, and left to the purrient who wallow like unclean animals in a filthy tale and to the Orangemen who invited the roving lecturers to do for money the devil's work of arousing sectarian hate and racial passion in a young country where people of all creeds and parties have been for so long content to work together in harmony for the common good. The *fiasco* which marked Slattery's visit to Thames will, we trust, be repeated in many a centre of population in New Zealand. It was a tribute alike to the value of the pink pamphlets, the good sense of the non-Catholic clergy, and the honest disgust of the Thames public at the campaign of shameless and sensational vilification which Slattery and the fraudulent female partner in his 'venture' are carrying out with a view to raking in a supply of coins of the realm and then flitting to other shores, leaving behind them an evil legacy of distrust and hatred between the working classes of one creed and the working classes of another.

We have described Slattery as a bold but clumsy liar. The two fellow-Orangemen who composed the law case between him and his nephew in Melbourne were even less choice in their speech: they labelled him 'an unmitigated liar.' He still persists in describing the vulgar impostor that accompanies him as 'the escaped nun.' She still poses as such. Money is still charged for admission to her lectures. That money is, in plain terms, obtained under a false pretence. At Napier Slattery repeated the old gag about having been 'all his life an absolute total abstainer' and having been 'always in the favour of his bishop.' The original correspondence between him and Cardinal MacCabe, which proves him to have been dismissed from the priesthood by his bishop for drunkenness, is in our possession and open to inspection by the proper persons. Photographic copies of it have been posted by us to Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Had Slattery posed as a reformed inebriate, people who know his history might have been prepared to take his word on the subject for what it was worth. But when, in the face of his own handwriting and the rest of the evidence against him, he announces himself a life-long total abstainer, he happily for the cause of truth, furnishes evidence which vitiates his purely personal testimony on any subject whatsoever. And this, as we have shown in our pamphlet, he has supplied in rank abundance. An original affidavit by his nephew, now in our possession, deposes that the ex-priest was not by any means a teetotaler up to July 25, 1899. Whether he is so now or not is little to the purpose. It can in no way mend his hopeless inveracity nor palliate his association in a discreditable business with a notorious and proven female impostor. It was only after his dismissal from the ranks of the clergy that he discovered those 'errors of Rome,' which landed him for a long term into a prison cell at Pittsburg. His 'conversion' recalls the words of Josh Billings: 'I notice that when a man runs hijz hed

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