

ARCHBISHOP MANNIX

A NOTABLE ADDRESS AT CASTLEMAINE.

His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, was accorded a magnificent reception recently, on the occasion of his visit to Castlemaine to open St. Mary's new hall (says the *Tribune* of May 15).

The audience rose and cheered lustily as the Archbishop rose to address the gathering. He said he was very glad to find himself back again in Castlemaine, especially as he was getting better treatment than he got on another occasion. Then he could not get into any public hall. Now they had a hall of their own—St. Mary's Hall, or "Liberty Hall," as he might call it—the finest hall in Castlemaine; and, moreover, they had the gracious permission from the council to take over all the thoroughfares of Castlemaine for their great demonstration. That was a great change for Castlemaine—and he hoped it would continue. It was said that the erection of their hall, which reflected so much credit upon the pastor and his generous people, was really due to the senseless opposition of a section in Castlemaine. If so, Catholics were grateful to them, and they would repay them by giving them the use of this fine hall for any legitimate purpose whenever they had an audience to fill it.

When he was here before the people were asked to believe that he was an enemy of Australia and of the Empire; that he had betrayed the Australian soldiers; and that his mission to Australia was to foment sectarian strife and set up Rome rule in the Commonwealth. He knew that the vast body of non-Catholics did not believe these things. He had ample proof of that. But he would not dwell upon the matter just now. He would just read a letter received within the past few days from a Protestant soldier who had been, as he said, ploughing the battlefields of Europe for four years. The writer was not an Irishman, nor was he of Irish descent, and had no connection with Ireland, but whilst on furlough he visited Ireland. He writes:—

"Permit me to convey to you my appreciation of your attitude during the conscription campaign in Australia in 1917, and your logical utterances as a citizen of the Commonwealth who should win from Australian democracy the warmest appreciation. I am not a Catholic. I have been 'ploughing' up the battlefields of France during the past four years. . . . The military authorities forbid the Australian soldiers to take their furlough in Ireland. Ireland and Scotland are easily first favorites for the members of the Australian and American forces."

You would think, when reading the newspapers here sometimes, that it would take all the police in Castlemaine to separate the Australians from the Englishmen. They made it appear that they were falling upon each other's necks. That is not the view of this Australian Protestant soldier, and he makes no secret of it. He goes on:—

"It is just possible that, in the view of the military authorities, we were becoming too sympathetic with the aims and national aspirations of the Irish people. I hope to see the day when in sunny Australia there will be the same democratic ideals that I have discovered in Ireland."

Concluding the letter, the soldier said:—

"Briefly, I have given my impressions of your own country. I have no interest whatever in it, except that I am actuated by a sense of justice for one of the small nations for which we were told we were fighting."

Continuing, his Grace said, the soldier signs his number and his name, and gives his Australian address, and adds:—

"You will please observe that owing to military discipline, my name, for the present at all events, may not be made public."

That, said his Grace, was only one of many letters he had received from time to time from people who did not belong to his Church—from people who could

not be charged with being bigoted Catholics and hare-brained Irishmen. In the face of so much public criticism, he sometimes was tempted to ask who he was. He did not know whether he was an Irishman, an Australian, or an Austrian. In certain camps the prevailing theory was that he was an Austrian. It might be well for him if he were an Austrian or a Hungarian. The Czecho-Slovaks and the Jugo-Slavs were great favorites at present.

The Archbishop dealt at length with his attitude during the war, and contended that all, or most, of his statements had been justified by events.

Continuing, his Grace said he was not a politician, nor did he have any desire to be one; neither was he an orator or a poet, but had at all times tried to speak the truth on subjects, as it seemed to him, and he had succeeded in speaking the truth, for many of his statements had already been verified, and if they lived long enough they would see them all verified. It was learned that there were 25,000 honors to be conferred by the British King, and if that were so it would be hard to escape one of them. If they were to be conferred upon people for speaking the truth, then he (Dr. Mannix) would claim one of them. There were some people, he said, who picked up the *Age* and the *Argus*, and believed absolutely everything that was printed therein. They had no more intelligence or discrimination than a sheet of blotting paper. Even when the letter had gone to the fire or to the waste-paper basket, the writing was still on the blotting paper. The *Age* and the *Argus*, with the wrangling of the Peace Conference before them, would be ashamed to repeat all they wrote about the "little nations," and making the world "safe for democracy" and the pure, lofty ideals of the Allies. But, their dupes, the human sheets of blotting paper, still repeat the brave things said at the beginning of the war.

Speaking of the situation in Ireland, he said:—Ireland had always been the most crimeless country in Europe. If Australian people had put up with the same treatment as the Irish people, there would not be one rebellion in a generation, but one and only one rebellion, because they would settle the matter for all time. "As for ourselves at home," quoted the Archbishop from a letter he had just received from Ireland, "we are pounded into cinders by British oppression. Soldiers are everywhere. The gaols are full, and in these gaols the young fellows are treated in the most horrible and abominable manner." Fancy 100 of these Irish boys in Belfast Gaol, handcuffed day and night for the last eight weeks—these handcuffs never taken off even for the purposes of nature's functions—(cries of "Shame")—these men never left out of their "cells." They might talk about the Armenian and Turkish atrocities as long as they liked, but they could not beat that the world over. The writer of the letter concluded that the "determination of the Irish people was fixed, and they would yet succeed, and get the free government that Australia had."

People say why does Dr. Mannix constantly harp on these things. He would perhaps say less about them if the metropolitan dailies did not systematically defame his country. They told their readers that Ireland had no grievance at the present time; that Ireland was the "spoiled child of the Empire." Yes, but they tell nothing about the infamies now being perpetrated in Belfast Gaol under the shadow of the Union Jack. They are silly enough to think, or to pretend to think, that they can make people loyal by displaying the Union Jack at every corner and waving it in every procession. No doubt the Englishman, the Scotchman, the Welshman, and the Australian may look upon the flag as a symbol of the freedom they enjoy; but when an Irishman looked upon the flag it did not remind him of freedom, but of oppression. It did not remind him of justice, but of injustice. He wished the flag well in any place in which it ought to be. But there was no welcome and no room for it in Ireland. Of course he would be accused of holding extreme views and of having no good word or kind thought of England. Why, honest