

Current Topics

The 'Ne Temere' Decree

In spite of the copious explanations that have been given, and of the voluminous discussions that have taken place, in connection with the decree *Ne Temere*, there are still a few people of limited intelligence, and of still more doubtful sincerity, who affect to believe—and who try to make others believe—that the decree condemns all Protestant marriages as invalid, and also that, by virtue of the decree, the Catholic party to a mixed marriage not solemnised by a priest is absolutely released from the obligations to the non-Catholic party which arise under the civil law. On these two points, the words used by the Bishop of Galloway (Scotland), in his Lenten Pastoral to the clergy and laity of his diocese, put the matter so clearly and explicitly that the simplest reader is left without excuse for further misunderstanding. We especially commend to our readers' attention the Bishop's reference to the second point mentioned above, in respect to which his Lordship, if he does not actually break new ground, at least puts the subject in a new light.

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'We may remind those,' says his Lordship, 'who accuse us of condemning Protestant marriages, that the very contrary of that is the truth. The Church has expressly declared that she does not refer to the marriages of Protestants in the *Ne Temere* Decree of 1908, but freely accepts as lawful and valid those marriages which Protestants for themselves hold to be such. The Church's legislation applies to Catholics only. But someone may object that, in the case of a mixed marriage, the Decree brands the Protestant party as an infamous person living in sin. I reply that the Decree contains no such doctrine or insinuation; because it expressly excludes non-Catholics from its purview; but it distinctly declares that the Catholic party, who has violated the solemn law for the celebration of marriage, is living in sin. The two conditions are perfectly possible; one party may be in absolute good faith, while the other may be living in direct opposition to the dictates of his conscience. In saying so, the Church, however, does not, as has been falsely stated by some of our traducers, release the Catholic from whatever obligations he by his irregular conduct freely took upon himself towards the non-Catholic party under the civil law; he is *legally* married, and the civil obligations thereby undertaken certainly bind him until the secular authority, whose sanction alone he sought, is pleased to relieve him, which I should think is very unlikely.'

'A Conspiracy of Silence'

The brethren of the saffron sash have been holding conference and sweet converse in Christchurch during Easter week; and in spite of the usual expressions of self-satisfaction and mutual admiration, an unmistakable minor note could be detected running through the proceedings. The explanation came out at last in the course of a 'banquet' given to the officers of the Grand Lodge. There—amidst the 'feast of reason and the flow of soul'—one would have imagined that even Orangemen might have managed to be cheerful. But there was a skeleton at the feast—their glorious, pious, and immortal feelings had been hurt in a very tender place. The brethren have for years been nursing a grievance—and at last it has found voice. The wicked press, in New Zealand in general and in Christchurch in particular, have quite refused to take the Orange Society seriously—there has been in fact 'a conspiracy of silence' against them. The cause of the trouble was not even hinted at—presumably because it was taken for granted—but it appears that there can be no possible doubt about the fact. Hear the lamentation of Grand Master Bro. R. Meredith on the point:—'In the course of an address at a banquet to the officers of the Grand Lodge of the Orange Order last evening,' says the press report, 'the Grand Master, Bro. R. Meredith, bitterly complained of the attitude of the majority of New Zealand newspapers towards the Order, and particularly mentioned the morning journals of Christchurch as showing bias against Orangemen. These journals, he said, had deteriorated considerably during the past forty years. At the time when the late Mr. Edward Fitzgerald edited one of these papers the utterances of great men in the Home land on the twelfth of July anniversary were cabled to New Zealand and published in the Christchurch newspapers. He regretted exceedingly the difficulty which had been experienced during the present Grand Lodge session in obtaining space to give publicity to the important questions under consideration, and the important decisions arrived at on these questions. All that the Orange Order wanted from the newspapers was fair play, and they were entitled to it. A conspiracy of silence had been entered upon by the newspapers of the city of

Christchurch. He spoke with considerable and extensive knowledge of the history of Canterbury province and of Christchurch, and he regretted that the proprietors of the Christchurch newspapers had not considered it wise or prudent to allow a fair amount of space for the reports of the Orange institution.'

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As we have said, Bro. Meredith, in his jeremiad, does not hint at the cause of the present weepful state of affairs, but that cause is not far to seek. The Orange organisation is ignored by an enlightened public opinion, in the first place, because of its intrinsic insignificance. It is ignored, in the second place, because its methods—those of noisy vituperation, coarse abuse, and underhand and unscrupulous attack—are recognised as being out of place in a reasonably civilised community. And it is ignored, in the third place, because its cause—that of fomenting religious strife and of keeping alive sectarian animosities which should have no place in this new land—is one which does not, and which never will, appeal to broad-minded New Zealanders. In a word, the Order is ignored because, from every point of view, it thoroughly deserves to be; and both it, and its portentous 'manifesto,' will continue to be perfectly negligible quantities.

Books About Spain

Ever since the recent revived interest in Spain—due to the violent anti-clerical developments in the policy of Senhor Canalejas—a number of literary peddlers, with an eye to the main chance, have perpetrated books about that interesting country. The volumes announce themselves under such titles as 'Spain from Within,' 'The Truth about Spain,' 'Spain as She Is,' etc.; and almost invariably claim to impart first-hand and quite exclusive information on the subject. They are for the most part written simply to sell; and their authors are characterised by a perfectly obvious bias, by a weakness for wild exaggeration, and by a bountiful ignorance of the language, customs, institutions and spirit, of the people about whom they presume to write. Mrs. C. E. Jeffery, who, from many years' residence amongst them, knows the Spanish people through and through, has contributed to the *Liverpool Catholic Times* a number of vigorous articles in refutation of the calumnies and prejudiced misstatements so freely circulated by the pot-boiling authors we have referred to. And now, in the issue of our contemporary just to hand, this writer gives us a terse and pithy description of how the thing is done—of precisely what it is that goes to the making of the average anti-Catholic 'Book about Spain.' 'The genesis of all such books,' she writes, 'is not far to seek. The intending author of calumnies about Spain sets forth with the distinct object of discovering mares' nests, and he discovers them. His equipment for his self-imposed task is simple. It consists of hatred of the Catholic Church, profound ignorance of the country and the people, boundless credulity, and a firm determination to shut his eyes to all he has not come to see, or which disagrees with his preconceived ideas. He takes with him a notebook and letters of introduction to the sort of people who are likely to assist him, and who do assist him with information of a sort which would be invaluable to burn on a rubbish heap. Arrived in Spain, he at once seeks the headquarters of the nearest Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist missionary society's agent, running an evangelical schism shop in some obscure back slum; interviews the pastor and the pastor's women folk, and asks them to state their views on the Spanish hierarchy, Bishops, Cardinals, priests, the morals of the monks and nuns, and the whole state of religion in Spain. Naturally his entertainers receive him with open arms, and proceed to stuff him up with cock-and-bull stories till his notebook bulges and he himself is like a crammed fowl at a Sussex poultry farm.'

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Having exhausted the stock of fables at the disposal of the missionaries, the intending author of the book on Spain next scrapes acquaintance with the type of Spaniard he requires to confirm them. The type is not far to seek: it abounds in wine-shops, casinos, hotel bars, and billiard rooms. Freemasons, Socialists, anti-clericals, the enemies of religion and order, all are willing to smoke with him, and fill him to his fullest capacity with the sort of "information" he wants. They take his measure, and see that nothing is too gross, too monstrous, and too far-fetched for him to believe, and so they conclude to fill him up. Then he returns to England, writes his book, and labels it "Gospel Truth About Spain," or something equally appropriate, and the British press applauds it in fulsome reviews, just as they would any other drivel if only it labelled the Catholic Church and the Catholic clergy.'

Why We Are Penalised

Some short time ago an influential Wellington paper—not the *Evening Post*—sanely and sensibly remarked that the fact that, in addition to secular teaching, religious