

Current Topics

The Lesson of the By-Election

At the second ballot in the Grey by-election, held last Thursday, Mr. Michel, who headed the poll at the first ballot, was defeated, and Mr. Webb was returned by the substantial majority of 635 votes. The significance of this second ballot is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to point it out; and it only remains to hope that politicians and political parties will take the lesson to heart. When the supporters of a political candidate adopt, as part of their election methods, not only personal vilification of the Catholic candidate but also deliberate appeal to bigotry and sectarian bitterness, it is time for Catholic voters to hit and hit hard. This the Catholic voters of Grey have done; and, as we have said, we hope the lesson will not be lost on those whom it most concerns. Catholics and Catholic candidates ask for nothing but fair play and the much talked of 'square deal'; and the individual or the party which gives them that can count with confidence on getting the same in return. As to Mr. Michel, it will take him all he knows to live down the 'bad blood' and ill impression left by this most unpleasant and embittered contest.

An American Lie Factory

Some short time ago we made some comments in these columns on an American no-Popery gutter journal, called the *Menace*; and we have read from time to time in our American Catholic contemporaries some fairly vigorous denunciations of the publication. But all that either we or they have said on the subject is a mere 'circumstance' to the way in which the *Menace* production is lashed by some of its Protestant contemporaries at its own doors. Here is a sample from the January issue of the *Iconoclast*, a non-Catholic paper published at Chicago, Ill. It deserves to go on record if only as a specimen of powerful invective—and invective that is all the more powerful, because it is employed on the side of truth and justice. 'As I write,' says the editor, 'there lies before me a great pile of Walker's paper—*The Menace*—reeking with slime, slander, and falsehood. They are filled with lies about priests, lies about Homes of the Good Shepherd, lies about the Knights of Columbus, lies about nuns, lies about the "Little Sisters of the Poor," lies about Bishops, lies about Archbishops, Cardinals, and Popes, lies about Catholics in general and Catholic politicians in particular. Big lies, little lies, foolish lies, insane lies—lies livid with malice—lies beslimed by ignorance—lies shameful and shameless—lies black, blue, green and speckled—rotten lies—bare-faced lies—single, double and triple-jointed lies—lies distorted and twisted lies—old and new—adulterated and unadulterated lies—lies born of hate, prejudice and bigotry—domestic and imported lies—lies borrowed, stolen, invented and created by the genius of mendacity, together with every other species of damnable lies ever known on earth or in hell, and all employed by Walker for the purpose of deceiving honest Protestants and making them hate their Catholic neighbors and friends!'

Freemasons and the Army

Some short time ago the Belgian Government issued a regulation definitely forbidding the officers of the army to belong to the Masonic organisation. The reasons advanced for this much-called for action were the sufficiently obvious ones that in Europe the Masonic Lodges are active political clubs, and as such are no place for officers of the army; and that they are, moreover, secret oath-bound organisations, working, in Continental monarchical countries, against the existing constitution and social institutions which the army is sworn to defend. An officer joining them takes an oath, therefore, which not only may come into open conflict with his military oath, but which is entirely opposed to the whole aim and spirit of that oath. Amongst the official Masonic documents quoted in the Chamber of Deputies in justification of the Government's action by the Belgian Minister of War was a

significant one which recommended a strict observance of secrecy as necessary from the *military point of view*, and illustrated this necessity by a reference to the late revolution in Portugal, which took the outside world completely by surprise but which had been confidently expected by the initiated who had been fully informed of its preparation in the Portuguese Lodges. It closed with these ominous words: 'On the day when our unhappy country shall be delivered from the tyranny that oppresses it, shall we also have the satisfaction of saying to ourselves that Belgian Masonry has been the chief artisan of the liberation of the nation?' If Belgian Masonry is sworn to conceal the plots against the Throne and Government which the army is bound to defend, it is obvious that the soldier-Mason is left with no alternative but to be either an oath-breaker or a traitor. Under such circumstances it is clear that the Lodge is no place for soldiers, much less for army officers.

It is an agreeable surprise to find that the same truth is beginning to dawn upon the authorities even in lodge-imbued Italy. Speaking recently before the Italian Senate, the Italian War Minister, General Spingardi, made the following unexpected declaration: 'I am convinced that it is not only desirable, but that it is a matter of duty, that no member of the military service should belong to a secret association; and I wish that this public manifestation of my views shall be taken as a warning by all who have doubts on the subject.' These words, we are told, 'were received with loud applause, which was renewed when Admiral Cattolica, the Minister of Marine, expressed the same views on behalf of the Navy.' Still more remarkable and significant was the way in which these Ministerial declarations were endorsed and emphasised by the Italian press. Referring to these two utterances, the Rome correspondent of the London *Times* says: 'Secret associations, notably Freemasonry, have played a very important part in Italy in the past; the Freemasons are still to-day believed to exercise a widespread influence in public life; that they should be publicly banned, without a single voice being raised in their defence, would show that their day of usefulness is recognised as ended, and that the confidence of the great mass of the public in its institutions, in the Throne, in the Army and Navy, in religion, has been strongly renewed. The statements of the two Ministers have only been emphasized by the Italian press, which warns officers against entering the ranks of Freemasons, and calls upon those who are already members of the association to leave it at once.' If only France would learn the same lesson, a new and brighter chapter in her history would be begun.

Archbishop Carr on the Bible Lessons Scheme

Of the writings and utterances of his Grace Archbishop Carr it may truthfully be said, as was said of the classic writer of old, that he touches nothing which he does not adorn; and most conspicuously is this the case in regard to his Grace's pronouncements on the subject of education. His latest utterance on the question is a fresh illustration in point. On Sunday, July 13, a new wing of the Christian Brothers' College at North Melbourne was blessed and opened by the Archbishop; and in the address delivered by him on the occasion his Grace contrived to pack into quite a modest compass a very fine vindication of the Catholic Church's opposition to the ill-considered, unjust, one-sided, and, as the speaker called it, 'hybrid system of mixed religious instruction' now advocated by the Bible in State Schools Leagues. At the outset his Grace brushed aside the pretence that the Bible lessons to be administered by the teacher are, or can be, really unsectarian and undogmatic in character. 'By way of excuse,' he said, 'for this backsliding (of the clergy), we are told that the religion which State school teachers will be asked to teach will be unsectarian and undogmatic religion. This palpable evasion is set aside by the words of Mr. Balfour, when introducing the Education Bill of 1902. "Do not," he said, "let us frame our system so as to produce the fantastic illusion that there is such a thing as undogmatic religion."'