

Current Topics

Faithful Servants

During the first eight days of July New Zealand lost two devoted priests who were called to their eternal reward after long and faithful service in the Master's Vineyard. On last Wednesday we stood by the grave which received the mortal remains of Father Patrick O'Neill, the exemplary and saintly pastor of Winton, a member of that fine company of Irish missionaries who came to New Zealand thirty-three years ago with Bishop Moran. Under his care they came to this country, under his watchful and paternal eye they began their labors, and to the end the example and the teaching of Dunedin's first Bishop were as lamps to their feet. Death was also busy in the ranks of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Wellington. On Sunday we received a telegram announcing the death of Dean Thomas McKenna, the parish priest of New Plymouth. Dean McKenna came to New Zealand over thirty years ago. After working as a curate with his brother, the Right Reverend Monsignor McKenna, of Masterton, deceased became pastor of Pahiatua, whence he was promoted to Newtown, with the title of Dean, about five years ago. On the death of the late Dean James McKenna, Dean Thomas McKenna was appointed to the important parish of New Plymouth, where he died on last Sunday morning. He was a remarkably amiable man and few saggarts held such a place in the hearts of the people as did "Father Tom," as he was affectionately called by his old parishioners. To great zeal and energy, he added incomparable gentleness and charity; and as was well said of Father O'Neill, it may be said of him that his good example was his best preaching. He had the esteem of his superiors and of his brethren in the Sacred Ministry, and he will be deeply mourned by priests and people. To the friends and relatives of both deceased priests we offer our cordial sympathy in their sorrow.

Potter Punctured

When Lord Bryce described the New Zealand Parliament as composed of men below the average in education and manners, he was harsh if just. Had he known Mr. Vivian Potter he would have added another clause to his condemnation; for a recent happening in Wellington has made it clear that for entrance into the assembly of our legislators not even common decency is required. This Mr. Potter made a characteristically ignorant and defamatory P.P.A. attack on the Catholic clergy in a speech in the august House one day recently. For his ammunition he went to the dust bin of No Popery spouters and disinterred the old calumnies concerning oaths taken by priests and Sinn Feiners—oaths which to our knowledge no priest or Sinn Feiner takes, and which exist only in such diseased minds as that which concocted certain letters that were followed by a well-merited horse-whipping. When challenged by Father Gondringer to prove his assertions, the illustrious Potter ran away with the cowardice and want of honor usually displayed by people who make such charges. As Father Gondringer pointed out, he was not too busy to utter his calumnies but he was too busy to defend himself when his truthfulness and honor were publicly impugned. Like a P.P.A. warrior he fled from the battle and called on his friends to save him. Hence, we find that another person, whom Father Gondringer treats with open contempt, tried to take up the cudgels for the discomfited Potter, and, needless to say, fails to attract notice or to make better a bad case. While, with commendable taste, he ignores this person, Father Gondringer throws a disconcerting flood of limelight on Mr. Potter and his ways in the following letter to the *Evening Post*, of July 4:

Sir,—In the House on June 26, Mr. Potter said that Catholic priests are bound to take an oath, as follows: "I renounce and disown any allegiance as due

to any Protestant King, prince, or 'State'; and again, "I will do my utmost to extirpate the Protestants and their power, legal or otherwise." Thereupon I issued him what I thought was a very clear challenge. I asked him to mention by name an individual Catholic priest who had taken such an oath, and I promised that he would get a writ for libel at once. I regret, for his own sake, that Mr. Potter did not take up the challenge, for I thought that a member of Parliament should be a man of the highest honor, a gentleman through and through. And I cannot conceive it to be part of a gentleman's code of honor to make such grave charges without being prepared to prove them to the hilt. My challenge would have given him the opportunity to prove these charges if he could; and I do feel deeply that the public of New Zealand have the right to have such a question openly debated before a Court of Law; for manifestly, if people exist in our midst who take such oaths, it is in the interest of the commonweal that they should be openly exposed.

Well, the answer of Mr. Potter has come, and I do not know whether it moves one more to anger or to laughter. To my challenge, Mr. Potter replies: "I regret that the pressure upon my time will not permit me the pleasure of indulging in a press controversy, but I have requested somebody else to undertake this matter." Really, Mr. Potter, did no one warn you, as you wrote those words, that you were exposing yourself to public ridicule? Too busy to defend your honor! For it was your honor that was at stake did you but see it. I accused you of using forged documents in your attack upon the Catholic Church. I gave you credit for believing those documents genuine, and, by my challenge, offered you a means of proving their genuineness. And you say you are too busy!

Too busy, forsooth, to make a mere statement saying that Father A.B. had taken such an oath, when you apparently had time to make a lengthy preparation before you spoke in the House! Or was the preparation done by someone else? Did Sancho Panza only speak the words and then call out to Don Quixote: "See what a 'mess' you have got me into; come and get me out of it"? No, Mr. Potter, my challenge stands, and will stand to your dishonor. If you really believe that I or any other priest in New Zealand have taken such an oath, you have a means at your disposal to prove your charges. Refuse to prove them, and you can but blame yourself if the public of New Zealand regard you as the tool of people, cleverer than yourself, who must have had a very low opinion of you when they selected you to bring out these forgeries once more.

Which is it to be, Mr. Potter? Will you stand to your guns or declare yourself a "quitter"!

Short as your letter is, you have succeeded in producing a new oath: "Would the gentleman deny that he or any other priest ever signed an oath requiring his loyalty to this country and Empire to give place to his loyalty to the Pope and the interests of his church?" Yes, Mr. Potter, I hereby solemnly deny that I or any other priest ever signed such an oath. This new oath can be made part of the challenge, too. The more oaths we have, the more will truth be served.—I am, etc.,

B. J. GONDRINGER, S.M., St. Patrick's College,
July 3.

The Sinking of the "Lusitania"

Some of our readers may remember that at the time of the "Lusitania" disaster we took the rather unpopular view that the people most to blame for the loss of life were the British and the United States Governments. On that, and on many other points concerning which later revelations proved that we were right, many of our critics did not by any means agree with us. Now comes Admiral Sims, noted for his active pro-British sympathies during the war, telling us that the German submarine crews were humane people and that the sinking of the great ship was for Germany a lamentable and unexpected tragedy. What he says we found confirmed in a German book which we picked up at the Presbytery in Invercargill recently. There it is explained that the big Cunarder was really

M. O'Donnell
in the Dominion.

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