

THE N. Z. TABLET ON FREEMASONRY.

THE following correspondence has taken place in the columns of our contemporary the *New Zealander*:

(To the Editor of the *New Zealander*.)

SIR,—My attention having been directed to a leading article in the *NEW ZEALAND TABLET* of the 21st ult., urging the Catholics of Wellington to denounce the Masonic demonstration on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the new Supreme Court buildings I beg to offer a few remarks upon that unwarrantable and uncharitable notice. I shall merely express my disgust as a citizen of a peaceful city, where it is hoped and devoutly wished by all sections of the different denominations, that the Sectarian strife of the old world and of past ages will never be tolerated in this young and fair country. Our system of education happily is so liberal in its nature that we have every reason to hope that the introduction of Sectarian differences is very remote, and I say all honour to the Hon. John Sheehan for his manly and impartial speech on the education question last session.

That it must be mortifying to the feelings of the writer of the article in question, that the peaceably inclined Catholics of Wellington did not act in accordance with the directions given them, to break peace, or the head of the Hon. the Attorney-General and all others who dared to assist at the public ceremonials so successfully brought to a close on Monday last, I cannot for a single moment doubt. It is admitted on all sides, that in Wellington, as in most places in New Zealand, perfect good harmony, and a sort of cosmopolitan feeling there exists between the Catholics of this country and all other creeds differing from them only in religion, but especially in this city. I have noticed from time to time, that in all and every case of universal charity, the Catholics with others go hand in hand—the late bazaar at the Academy of Music, as an instance, not excepted. My own experience in this and a neighbouring colony in which I have resided for over 27 years, has proved to me long since that Freemasonry has not been held to be so dangerous an association by learned Catholic divines and other eminent men of great public standing as this crazed writer in the *TABLET* would lead his co-religionists to believe it to be. I have had the distinguished honour of being intimately acquainted with the late Rev. Father Downing, an aged Catholic priest, who knew me to be a member and a ruler in Freemasonry, but he did not despise or denounce me nor my Order. The late lamented Right Rev. Dr. Sheil, Lord Bishop of Adelaide, a Catholic divine, with whom I worked during years upon local charities, knew me to be an active worker in the cause of Masonry, but he could not see in me, nor in the Order of Freemasonry, that repulsiveness or treacherous designs which the editor of the *TABLET* attributes to its principles. Next, the Rev. Fathers Madden and Macarthy: with both these good men I worked in the furtherance of a general charity. They were aware of my allegiance to Masonry, but did not shrink from me, as advised by this peace disturber of *TABLET* notoriety. And, finally, I have had the honour of being a member and connected in the same lodge with a certain judge, who presided in one of the Victorian Courts, and an Attorney-General, the former holding the office of Senior Warden, whilst the latter was Treasurer of the lodge, and both gentlemen being devout Catholics and attentive members of their Church.

To follow history, and relate how many pious popes and learned Catholic divines have belonged to and patronised the Order of Freemasonry, would be presuming upon your valuable space. My only object in addressing these remarks was to show to all of your Catholic readers that the Order of Freemasonry has been much, in this instance grossly, misrepresented, and unleservedly stigmatized and maligned, as it has been in all ages, by sometimes unscrupulous, at other times by designing persons.

But to the honour of Wellington citizens be it said, that the ceremony was a thorough success through the cognisance which they gave it. I am also proud to know that many of my Catholic friends would not allow themselves to be influenced by such an article, or the uncharitable protestation from the pulpit the previous evening.

Apologising for having trespassed so long upon your space, I am, &c.,

A. DIMANT.

(To the Editor of the *New Zealander*.)

SIR,—In your issue of the 8th instant appears a letter from a Mr. A. Dimant, who comes forth as a leader of the Masonic fraternity, and a denouncer of the article which appeared in the *Tablet* of the 21st ultimo, with reference to the Masonic demonstration to be held on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Supreme Court Buildings.

He terms the article unwarranted and uncharitable (I am surprised that he does not term it uncalled for), and expresses his disgust as a peaceful citizen at such an attempt to stir up old feuds and party strife of past ages in a young and fair country like New Zealand. Well, I agree with Mr. Dimant that demonstrations and the introduction of sectarian differences which have caused so much misery, disagreeableness, and trouble amongst our fellow-men at Home, should not be tolerated or encouraged in this young land; but Mr. Dimant forgets that the demonstration alluded to, and of which he took the prominent position of marshal, mounted on a grey charger (symbolical, I presume of a person mentioned in the Book of Revelation) is of that nature which prohibits members of the Roman Catholic Church from participating in, it being a secret society.

Mr. Dimant takes umbrage at the tone of the *TABLET* for coming forward and condemning that which Roman Catholics cannot join in. Why the ceremony should have been a Masonic one, to the utter exclusion of all other societies, I am at a loss to know. The Government stated in the House in reply to a question put by Mr. Walter Johnston, M.H.R., that they gave no authority for such a ceremony. Nevertheless we find a District Order advertised in the newspapers, calling out the Volunteer force for the occasion. If it is in the power of the Freemasons in New Zealand to issue such instructions without

the sanction of the Government, that fraternity had better take up the political government of the colony at once, and so be masters of the position *in toto*.

The ideas of Mr. Dimant are like those of all others who are of his way of thinking—they are one-sided. He would not think it worth while to inquire into the pros and cons why Roman Catholics should not attend at a Masonic celebration. If that gentleman were Brother Terrible at the entrance door of the Boulcott street lodge, with sword in hand, would he not interrogate me as to my business should I make an effort to enter the lodge? I am inclined to think I should be rather roughly handled (within the lodge) should I prove to be a non-Mason.

The idea has got into Mr. Dimant's head that it must be mortifying to the feelings of the writer of the article in question, and to the rev. gentlemen in Wellington who, on the Sunday previous to the demonstration, advised their congregations to refrain from partaking in the ceremony, to find that they did not act in accordance with the directions given them. I think I am in a position to judge of the attendance of the Roman Catholic community better than the marshal of the Masonic body is, and I positively assert, without the slightest prejudice, that the gentlemen who have been traduced for their advice to their congregations have every reason to be satisfied that their directions were faithfully adhered to, with the exception of the few friends of Mr. Dimant.

Party ill-feeling and strife begins by the prohibition of a certain sect or class of people from participating in an indulgence or benefit which is legitimately or justly due to all. The Catholic population of the Colony pay the same taxes, rates, duties, &c., as the members of other denominations to the general revenue of the Colony, out of which the cost of building the Supreme Court will be defrayed, and why the laying of the foundation stone should have been entrusted to the Masonic Order is still a mystery. That body knowing, as well as the Catholic community themselves, that Catholics could not partake in the demonstration, it is an injustice to one seventh of the whole population of the Colony, who have just as equal a right to lay the foundation stone of any public building to the utter exclusion of all differing from them as that of the Freemasons.

Mr. Dimant says, "to follow history, and relate how many pious and learned divines have belonged to and patronised the Order of Freemasonry, would occupy large space." If there has been such a number of distinguished divines at one time of their lives belonging to the Order of Freemasonry, they, previous to entering Holy Orders, found out the error of their ways, and shook off the yoke of Masonic secrecy. The Earl of Ripon, the predecessor of the Prince of Wales in the capacity of Grand Master of the Freemasons of England, also abandoned that Order, and the history of Masonry can only too well tell the long list of names of all the distinguished personages, both lay and divine, who have found out that to belong to the Masonic Order is not only treacherous, but unjust to every man not belonging to that Order. Merit has no show in cases of application for a position in business, either mercantile or otherwise, when Masonry has anything to do with it, and the man of good practical knowledge is often rejected to make room for one of the Mystic Brotherhood with little or no ability. I have, on more than one occasion, heard Freemasons make use of the following expression—"Masonry is not the real genuine thing that people are led to believe it is," and I fully endorse that sentiment.

I should not have thought it worth while to reply to Mr. Dimant had he not mentioned the names of several clergymen who have long since departed this life, and by the tone of his letter would endeavor to lead people to believe that those gentlemen fully appreciated and believed in the Order of Masons. I do not hesitate to believe that Mr. Dimant is all that he professes to be, a very charitably disposed person, and the Order to which he belongs can indeed boast of many kind and philanthropic men, but he must not allow himself to be carried away by false notions that because he co-operated in the work of charity with Roman Catholic clergymen, and because those clergymen did not lecture and reprove him for belonging to a secret society that they endorsed what he follows. Nothing is more foreign to a R.C. priest than to lecture or talk on polemical subjects when engaged in works of co-operation with a benevolent or charitable society, which, I presume, Mr. Dimant alludes to as his experience in another Colony.

I regret I cannot sign my name, for reasons which would not prove satisfactory, holding as I do a position which might easily be filled by one of the Masonic fraternity.—I am, &c.,

Wellington, December 8, 1879.

CATHOLICUS.

ANECDOTE OF BEN. BUTLER.

HE was called on by a person who wanted to have a talk with him. "Mr. Butler," said he, one of my neighbour's cows jumped my garden gate and destroyed my flower beds. The gate was the height required by law. Now I wish to know whether I can obtain damages."

"Most assuredly," replied the widow's friend.

"Well, Mr. Butler, how much?"

"Oh, about ten dollars."

"But, Mr. Butler," triumphantly, "the cow was yours."

"Ah!" said Mr. Butler thoughtfully; and he looked unutterable things out of his bad eye. Then he turned to his desk, scratched off a few lines on a piece of paper, and handed it to his visitor. It was in the form of an account, and read as follows:

"B. F. Butler to Mr. ———, Dr., to damages caused by cow; 10 dols; Cr., by legal advice, 15 dols.; balance due, 5 dols."

"Mr. ———," said Mr. Butler, softly, you needn't hurry about the payment."—Exchange.

The London correspondent of the *Liverpool Courier* announces that Germany will shortly call a fresh monetary congress to be held in Berlin.