

Correspondence.

[We are not responsible for the opinions expressed by correspondents.]

DR. BAKEWELL IN CONTRADICTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE N.Z. TABLET.

SIR,—In your paper of yesterday you published under the heading of "Canterbury Catholic Literary Society," the following paragraph:—

"Dr. Bakewell proposed a resolution censuring the Council of the Society because they let the rooms to a non-Catholic body—the National League,—his contention being that the League was condemned by the Holy See, in support of which statement he read numerous extracts from English papers, and from the *Dublin Mail and Express*."

I am a little surprised that even with your prejudices against England and Englishmen, you did not suspect that this paragraph must contain some gross misstatement. Was it in the least likely that an educated English Catholic would contend that the National Irish League had been condemned by the Holy See? Would he have read "extracts from English papers" to prove that it was? The statement is simply a falsehood. I never "contended" for any such absurd proposition. I may surely be credited with sufficient intelligence and education to prevent me from going before an assembly of Catholics and "contending" that the National Irish League was condemned by the Holy See.

Fortunately, anticipating some possibility of falsehoods like this being published, I carefully wrote out what I intended to say, and read from the manuscript my speech in support of my resolution. I send you an exact copy of the speech as read. It was met by a cataract of vulgar personality and abuse, but not by a word of argument, so that I had no need to reply. You can publish it if you like, but I don't suppose that you will like.—I am, etc.,

R. H. BAKEWELL, M.D.

Cashel street, Christchurch, Dec. 1, 1883.

MR. PRESIDENT.—The importance of the subject which I have to bring before the Society, and the necessity of carefully guarding the language I shall employ, has induced me to put into writing what I am about to say, so that there may be no mistake about the words I shall use, and also that I may not be hurried into expressions which I might afterwards regret. The motion which I propose expresses the regret with which the Society learns that the Council has permitted the use of our rooms by a non-Catholic and political organisation, and desires that no further meetings of that or of any other non-Catholic organisation may be allowed in our rooms. I need hardly call the attention of this meeting to the fact that our Society is strictly and exclusively a Catholic Society. More than this, by the rules we are required to be all practising Catholics, by which I presume is meant that we must all be Catholics who have at least complied with our Easter obligations, and not merely Catholics in name. All our meetings are by the rules commenced and ended with prayer, and we also have a Catholic priest appointed by the parish priest as chaplain. It will also be admitted, I think, without dispute, that the National League of Ireland is a non-Catholic organisation, intended to pursue certain political ends. My endeavour will be to show that it is neither wise nor prudent for us to permit the meetings of such an association in our rooms. 1st. Because, by so doing, we, to a certain extent, manifest our approval of an organisation which is viewed with great dislike by the large majority of persons amongst whom we have to live. 2nd. Because that organisation is, *rightly or wrongly*, looked upon by non-Catholics as one of which the Holy See disapproves. 3rd. Because, such being the case, we are seeming to set ourselves—an exclusively Catholic Society—in opposition to the expressed wishes and opinion of the Holy See. With respect to the first of these reasons I need not say much. It is perfectly notorious and indisputable that the Irish National League and its objects are viewed with detestation by Englishmen of all classes and of almost every shade of politics. (I read an article from the *Times* of Sept. 28.) Individually, I am one of the few Englishmen who advocate Home Rule for Ireland, not for the sake of Ireland, but for the sake of my native country. I firmly believe that Home Rule would lead immediately to the separation of Ireland from the British Empire, and, as an Englishman, I think such an event would be greatly to the benefit of England. I may also say that, believing as I do, that the majority of the Irish nation are in favour of recovering their national independence, and holding it to be a wrongful deed to keep any nation which, like Ireland, is geographically and ethnologically a distinct nation, under subjection by a main force, I should rejoice to see my country make some amends for centuries of misgovernment, by restoring to the Irish nation freely and frankly her independence. Whether such a result would be ultimately beneficial to Ireland is another question, into which I do not feel called upon to enter, and, indeed, I only make this confession of my political creed for the purpose of showing that I do not, as an individual, see anything wrong in the main object of the League. But I feel bound to say that I am in a very small minority. Very few, indeed, of my countrymen hold these views, although I think the number is gradually increasing. The vast majority consider the National League as merely a successor of the Land League, which they hold, and I share that view, as having been the cause of all the disorders and crimes which have disgraced Ireland for the last three years. Now, such being their opinion, is it wise or prudent for us who live amongst them, a small minority, owing our religious freedom to their tolerance, to provoke them into coupling the Catholic religion and the Catholic cause with an agitation which they abhor and an organisation which they view with detestation? We are here allowed the freest possible exercise of our religion. There is not a so-called Catholic

country in the world in which the Church is so perfectly free as she is in the British colonies, or in which her property and spiritual privileges are so safe. One grievance alone we have to complain of, and that is that we are forced to pay for the support of the State schools, to which we cannot send our children. But what is that compared with the oppression and tyranny under which the Church labours in France or Belgium, or the spoliation of Spain, Portugal, or Italy, or the necessity, as in all these countries, in Germany, and Austro-Hungary, of being subject to State control and interference in the appointment of bishops? Now a strong feeling is arising and increasing every day amongst thinking people against the irreligious education system. Sensible people are beginning to see the evils of it, and there can hardly be a doubt that before many years are over our heads some modification of it will be adopted. That modification, if we are wise, prudent, and charitable in our language, cannot fail to be favourable to our claims. But if we make it clearly seen that Catholicism in this Colony means Irish nationalism, and that the Irish National League is virtually here an organisation continuous with the Catholic Church, we shall arouse a feeling of dislike and prejudice against us as Catholics of which we have hitherto had no experience. For allow me to say that I know of no part of the British territory where there is so little of what I may call social prejudice against the Church as there is here. I have been in a colony where national feelings divided Catholics and non-Catholics, and intensified into the bitterest hate the prejudices which naturally arise. In that colony, although the Catholics were the large majority, yet being politically the weaker, the Church had to suffer. In England I can safely say that the prejudice against Catholicism was, until a few years ago, most intense. But it was a religious prejudice; it was not a social one, or a national one. Owing to the spread of indifferentism, infidelity, and agnosticism, that prejudice has greatly subsided, and is now a thing of the past amongst educated people. But amongst the uneducated it still exists in a much stronger form than anything we have here. I now proceed to the second reason, which is that the organisation of the National League is looked upon, rightly or wrongly, by non-Catholics as one of which the Holy See disapproves. Here you must allow me first to quote the Papal Circular, and then from some English papers. (See *Public Opinion* of May 19 and 26; *Graphic*, Sept.) I say rightly or wrongly—it is not for me to judge which—these extracts show that Protestants think the Pope disapproves of the National League. When priests and bishops differ it is not for a layman to decide. But this I do know from my extensive perusal of the English papers, that the formation of this League under the leadership of Mr. Parnell, himself the associate of men like Gambetta, Rochefort, Clemenceau, is looked upon by non-Catholics as a proof that the Irish nation is breaking away from its traditional obedience to the Holy See. It is considered that after the strong disapproval expressed by the Papal Circular of the testimonial to Mr. Parnell, and after the prohibition to bishops and priests to take part in it, it cannot fail to be displeasing to the Holy Father to find an organisation, of which Mr. Parnell is the head, warmly supported by large numbers of Catholic Irishmen. Ultra-Protestants exult over this as a proof that Ireland is "breaking loose from the shackles of Romish superstition, and emancipating herself from the ecclesiastical yoke which has so long pressed her down." That there is some truth in this view is evident from what I heard in the church at Kumara on my recent visit to the West Coast. The priest (Father Walshe) complained that the box for Peter's Pence contained less than 10s, and said that no doubt this was owing to political reasons, but at the same time reminded his congregation that by refusing to contribute to the Peter's Pence, they were not injuring the Pope himself personally, so much as impeding the working of the Catholic Church. I believe that the Kumara congregation contributed £140 to Mr. Redmond's fund. Nevertheless, I make no doubt that many pious and devout Catholics have joined the League or contributed to its funds from the purest motives of patriotism. All that I assert is that on the face of it, and seeing what was said about the Papal Circular, and looking to the abstention from subscribing to Peter's Pence, it is not to be wondered at, if non-Catholics consider that the organisation is one of which the Holy Father disapproves. I now come to the third and last reason for moving this resolution. It is that, such being the view of non-Catholics, we—an exclusively Catholic Society—are seeming to set ourselves in opposition to the expressed wishes and opinions of the Holy See. In order to avoid, as much as possible, anything that may appear personal to anyone here present, let me put a case which will be similar to that we are considering. Let us suppose that a league or association were established in Alsace-Lorraine, having for its avowed object to obtain the reunion of those provinces to France by constitutional agitation, and not by force of arms. Such a league would of necessity comprise both Protestants and Catholics. It would have friends in France; in Paris the whole of the extreme Radical party would be in its favour so far as it went—they would go much farther—but they would be content to use it as far as they could. And suppose that in the present difficult and delicate state of the relations of the Holy See and Germany, the Holy Father were appealed to to use his influence to prevent bishops and priests from joining in this perfectly legitimate agitation. Suppose that, influenced by considerations into which we cannot presume to enter, he were to issue an encyclical prohibiting all bishops and priests from joining in the agitation and from favouring it in any way; and, then, suppose that directly this was done the Catholic laity of Alsace-Lorraine and of France were to take up the agitation most warmly, hold meetings (if such things were allowed, as of course they would not be), subscribe most liberally, and, finally, were to permit the rooms of exclusively Catholic Societies to be used for the purpose of the agitation—should we not say that they were creating a scandal?—That they were allowing their feelings as patriots to overcome the duty of respect and obedience they owe to the utterances of the Holy See; and that however much they might deplore the necessity that was laid on the Vicar of Christ to issue such an edict they should loyally obey them, not only in the letter, but in the spirit? Should we not applaud their self-denial, and rejoice in their faith and obedience if they did so? But I am putting a muc