

expect the plain and unadorned truth from the cable-fiend when he sets forth to furnish items of Catholic news to the Antipodes. Here is the latest piece of simian folly which the plaguy wight has perpetrated. It came to our New Zealand dailies in the shape of a message dated 'Madrid, September 5':—

A Congress of Bishops is sitting at Burgos, despite an injunction from the Pope, and they passed a resolution of sympathy with the Carlists. The representative of the Pope, who presided, at once left the Congress, which was then brought to an abrupt conclusion.

Now (1), in the first place, this message, as worded here, did not come from Madrid. It is simply a summary supplied by some hack who does work of this kind for the Press Association, and who probably knows almost as little of the Catholic Church as the typical Protestant controversialist. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility, or even probability, of the original telegram from Madrid being as chock full of absurdity as the Press Association's summary of it. (2) Again: nobody acquainted with Catholic terminology would apply the word 'congress' to what was manifestly a council or synod of Spanish bishops. (3) Yet again: the blundering descendant of Ananias who manipulates European Catholic news was guilty of a particularly clumsy falsehood when he represented a 'congress' of Catholic bishops as being held 'despite an injunction of the Pope,' and yet with 'the representative of the Pope' presiding over it so effectively that his departure brought the proceedings 'to an abrupt conclusion.' If the Press Association will persist in dumping false reports of Catholic happenings into New Zealand newspaper offices, it ought to employ somebody that can at least lie plausibly. (4) Councils or synods such as are evidently referred to in this sadly bungled cable message confine themselves to passing decrees on matters of doctrine, morals, ritual and discipline. Apart from this we may merely refer to the signal improbability of a papal representative so far forgetting his duties and responsibilities as to permit discussion on the Carlist question, much less to formally put a resolution on the subject from the chair.

From time to time we have commented on cable-messages of this kind that, for their amazing fatuity, might have been concocted or edited in a padded cell at the Sealiff Lunatic Asylum. We smile at the vagaries of the well-meaning idiots who described a priest at a *Requiem* service as 'performing the ablutions by sprinkling holy water on the bier,' or who represented the acolytes as entering the sacristy 'bearing crucifixes and thurifers,' or who told all the world and his wife how Cardinal Vaughan wore 'an asperges on his head,' and how his master of ceremonies 'entered the sanctuary swinging a thurifer in his right hand.' Such miraculous stupidities are on a par with the paragraph in a London morning paper which a few months ago assured a confiding public that Mr. T. P. O'Connor 'invariably wears a sprig of shillelah in his button-hole.' These blunders are evidently unstudied and ingenuous. They contain no sting and are written in perfect good faith and deep earnestness by honest and upright imbeciles who fancy they know something about the solemn functions of the Catholic Church and are anxious to impart that knowledge to others. They fail in the attempt. And such failures add a piquancy to the sauce of life.

Other cable-blunders would be laughable too, but for the fact that there is too often a certain malignancy—subjective or objective—in their folly. A metaphorical stab with a jack-knife forms past of the cable-twister's antics. In other words, his tortured messages convey whole falsehoods or half-truths that are calculated or intended to throw discredit on the Catholic Church or some portion of it. Such were several of the cable messages that we have dealt with us from time to time for many years past. Such, in effect, was the manufactured story about the 'congress' at Burgos. To the same category belong the many evil tales sent round the world charging Catholic ecclesiastical persons or religious with serious crimes. Over and over again the accused persons have been acquitted of these charges. The cable-fiend cables the accusation. We have not yet met with one instance in which he has cabled the acquittal. Here are two quite recent cases in point that were blazoned forth under what some irreverent people term 'snorting' headlines in almost every daily, weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly secular paper from Auckland to Invercargill. One was a charge of cruelty against a Catholic Sister, who had ordered the caning of an obstreperous boy of ten who had been committed to St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum at Potadam, and had twice run away, and endeavoured to induce other lads to go with him. The cable-rigger furnished the New Zealand public with a bold charge of gross cruelty. It was stated as an absolute fact. No hint was given that it was a question of an untried (and denied) accusation. There was no suggestion of mitigating circumstances, no hint as to the real form of punishment. And, of course, the Press Association took particularly good care that the following additional particulars should never reach the secular papers of New Zealand: A prosecution was instituted. The charge of undue severity was promptly dismissed as quite contrary to evidence. An appeal

was lodged. The case was heard in a higher court. The rehearing resulted in the acquittal of the Sisters, and the expression of a judicial opinion that St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum is a model house of its kind. This judgment was delivered early in July. But not a hint has thus far been given to the people of this Colony by the Association, which went to the expense of spreading the calumny against a woman to every wind that blows over Australasia.

Here is the other case referred to. The Press Association some months ago stated positively that one Abbé Flamidien, of Lille (France), had brutally murdered a boy. As usual, there was no indication that he was merely accused of the crime. The lie got a long start and was away around the world on seven-league boots while the truth was rubbing the sleep out of its eyes and preparing to draw on its house-slippers. But it has come lumbering along at last—in our European exchanges. Now it turns out that the accused was not an abbé (priest), but a brother of the Christian Schools—Brother Flamidien. The murdered boy, Foveaux by name, had attended the Brothers' extern school at Lille. Brother Flamidien had taught the lad's class on the evening when he was missed. On this ground alone he was arrested and charged with the crime. Strenuous and—to those accustomed to English trial by jury—shockingly unfair efforts were made by the 'juge d'instruction' to sustain the charge against Brother Flamidien. But it was all in vain. He gave conclusive proofs as to how he spent every moment of his time, and on July 11 was acquitted and set free, without a stain upon his character, by a full bench consisting of members of the Preparatory Chamber and the Chamber of Correctional Appeals. As the London *Weekly Register* says: 'The Court of First Instance has now dismissed the case against him, which utterly broke down on investigation. He leaves the court absolutely reinstated and justified.' But the *Register* adds that in England 'not nearly so much prominence has been given in the Press to the news of his acquittal as was given to the previous proceedings.' Just so. The American telegraphic agencies had sufficient sense of honour and manliness to give as wide publicity to the acquittal of the accused as they had previously given to the news of his accusation. The Press Association that serves these colonies has chosen, as usual, to adopt the cowardly expedient of suppressing the fact of the acquittal of the accused man.

As to the cable-riggers, our single protest is not likely to affect their tactics. But we venture to respectfully submit that their modes of dealing with Catholic news forms a fair subject for a joint and vigorous remonstrance by the Catholic hierarchy of New Zealand and Australia. We should need the income of a Hartley and Riley gold-dredging claim in full working if we were to promptly nail the silly or malicious tales that come over the cables reflecting on the Catholic Church, Catholic ecclesiastical persons, and Catholic institutions. Such a course is therefore barred to us. A few years ago, at the instance of the late Cardinal Sanfelice, we pilloried a Melbourne newspaper proprietor for the publication of a gross libel on the Convent of SS. Joseph and Teresa, in Naples (Italy). Should such cases of gross and unretreated calumny appear in future in the Press of this Colony, we shall consider the desirability of placing it in the power of the ecclesiastics, religious, or institutions concerned to see that their good name may not be blackened with impunity even in this far-off verge of the world.

THE last San Francisco mail brought details of the death of the notorious American infidel lecturer, Robert Green Ingersoll. He will, perhaps, be best remembered through the withering exposure which Father Lambert made of his ignorance, his shallow fallacies, his mellifluous sophisms—just as Dr. Hyde (the slanderer of Father Damien) will be known to posterity through the magnificent literary horse-whipping administered to him by the late Robert Louis Stevenson. Ingersoll's death was one of awful suddenness. In his later years he had expressed a wish that the end might come slowly, so that he might be able to watch its approach and to calmly contemplate its possibilities. But it came in the flush of health, and with the suddenness of a lightning flash. Though a successful lawyer, Ingersoll was no scholar. He did not profess to be a scientist, and even the rudiments of philosophy were 'a Hebrew speech' to him. He was not even a wit. He was merely a 'jokist'—a master of a certain kind of direct and rough (sometimes coarse) sarcasm, a buffoon skilled in all the quips and pranks and grimaces and by-play of the low comedian. With these he tricked out such of the exploded fallacies of Paine, Voltaire, and Co., as his untrained mind could get a partial grip upon.

His appeal was made to the ignorant and half-educated element of the community—to the shallow minds that are easily tickled and enjoy a horse-laugh, especially at the ten commandments, or at some coarse, if cheap, reference to Moses or the Deity. Among such people Ingersoll wrought unspeakable