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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

AN EVIL PROPOSAL.

THE *Spectator* of September 13 throws, if not a new, a more vivid light upon the attempt undertaken for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rome and England. The *Spectator* tells us that both in England and in Continental Europe Rome is correctly regarded as a "reactionary force." As a reactionary force, moreover, our fiercely Unionist, anti-Irish, and anti-Catholic contemporary would make use of Rome. The *Spectator*, in short, in an article which leads up to the conclusion that, to quote his own words, "Insular England can defy, but Imperial England can no longer ignore the Vatican," proposes that, at any cost, the aid of the Pope should be secured to resist the separatist movement. To the passages in our contemporary's article referring to other parts of the world—for he deals with the Empire at large—we need not refer. It will be sufficient for us to confine our attention to what he says respecting the Australasian colonies. His information, nevertheless, as to details is not very correct—in some respects matters being even worse than he represents them. He errs, for example, when he tells us that "two archbishops and at least six bishops are Irishmen," the Irish element among the Australasian hierarchy, being, as might naturally be expected, more on a par with the nationality of Catholic settlers than that. His representation, besides, of the Catholic Church in these colonies as making an empty show for purposes of conversion is false, but he writes as an undignified enemy and the consideration due to what he says is increased by the fact that it is so. The *Spectator*, then, believes that a movement for the severance of these colonies is imminent. "That the Roman Church," he says, "will have an active hand in the matter is certainly probable, and, unless the central authority of the Vatican controls and restrains their action and policy, it may be guessed that the weight of the Australasian hierarchy may be thrown into the scale against the mother country." "Hence," he adds, "the fatuity of those Englishmen who strive to arouse popular feeling against diplomatic intercourse with the Vatican." It appears, therefore, that a very large use is to be made of Rome as a "reactionary force." "Already in the case of Ireland," says the *Spectator*, "an appeal from the action of the inferior clergy has had to be laid before Leo XIII. himself." This, however, is not sufficient for Unionist purposes, the appeal to Rome must be established for the whole Empire. As to separation, meantime, so far as regards the Australasian colonies, with which alone we are particularly concerned, we are unable to see why Rome should take any special interest in it. The *Spectator*, indeed, tells us that "if she sees it best to flatter in that way the new democracies, and so to identify herself with them she will also advocate, both secretly and openly, the separatist cause." But as things actually are, Rome is evidently no more favoured by the "new democracies" than she is by the Imperial Government. She is not more at liberty in these colonies than she is in the United Kingdom—nay, she obtains an aid and a countenance there that here are denied to her. In England, for example, as godless schools are not forced upon her under heavy penalties, as is the case among ourselves. Why, therefore, Rome should judge it advantageous to her to flatter the "new democracies" is not, at least as yet, apparent. As to the Catholics of these colonies, separation is probably a question that, like all others relating to political matters, would be differently viewed by them. Unless some important point of religion were involved in it, there would be nothing to bind the Catholic body together either in opposing or supporting it, and it is not likely that anything of the kind would be the case. The secular system, for example, would hardly be either aggravated or amended by the change. For our own part, we may say in passing, we believe separation to be anything rather than desirable or conducive to the interests of the colonies—but we admit that other members of the Catholic body may legitimately regard the matter from a different point of view. But why "Rome" should interfere and command Catholics of all shades of political opinion to unite in opposing such a movement, it is impossible to conceive—the more especially if, as the *Spectator* says, she should

see it best to flatter the new democracies by advocating the separatist cause. Are we to understand that the *Spectator* would offer an equivalent elsewhere for what might be sacrificed in the colonies? What, however, is quite clear is that among those who are advocating the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rome and England there are some at least who would make a tool of the Vatican—a "reactionary force," if it suited them—to carry out their own ends. If these people had their will the interests of religion would be subordinated to those of a political party. In every bishop appointed, whether in Ireland or in these colonies, we must discern a political agent. No proposal, in fact, more calculated to create divisions between the Catholic clergy, whether bishops or priests, and their people could well be made. The *Spectator's* article has the one merit, that it makes Catholics aware of what is desired, and leaves no room for further disguise.

THE revival of the effort for the conversion of ENGLISH INCONSISTENT land, in which the Bishop of Salford takes a leading EFFORTS. part, seems to coincide rather singularly with an effort, which, if we may judge by the ordinary

course of things, must appear to have a tendency in a completely opposite direction. The Bishop of Salford pleads for the aid he desires in bringing about the great object—that is, the prayers of the faithful—quoting by way of encouragement the predictions favourable to the event made by saints and people famed for their holiness. One of these predictions that seems to us particularly deserving of notice, we may remark in passing, is for example, that of a Jesuit Father named Mancinelli, who in the year 1608 had a vision in which it was revealed to him that, England would at last be converted, and would be made use of by God to do wonderful things for the exaltation of the Catholic faith among the Mahometan and heathen races—her connection with those races being, as we know, long subsequent to the date of the prediction. What seems to us, however, calculated to militate strongly against the conversion in question is the effort now being made, as we see plainly from the confession published by the *Spectator*, to bring the Holy See prominently before, not only the people of England, but the whole British Empire, as a "reactionary force,"—a power to be opposed everywhere to the march of freedom and enlightenment. In fact we have in this one of the arguments by which the enemies of the Catholic church principally misrepresent her, and which those who afflict and injure her most commonly quote in excusing their actions. Must it not serve to confirm such false reasoning in the eyes of English speaking Protestants, if an agreement were made by which the Vatican would become directly allied, as the *Spectator* desires, with the opponents of the popular cause. Under such circumstances the people would certainly judge by what came before their eyes. It would be vain to quote for them the doctrine of the Church, or the decisions of theologians—and thus a very formidable obstacle to their conversion would be erected. Fortunately Rome is wiser than those good folk who form such plans give her credit for being. She is not the "reactionary force" they believe and assert her to be, and as which they would make use of her. The situation is very well summed up for instance by the *Dublin Nation* in an article commenting on the proposal of the *Spectator* to which we have alluded. "The time," says the *Nation*, "has gone by when the interests of the Church could be forwarded by alliance either with Kings or the changing Ministers of shifting factions. The future, certainly in the English-speaking world, is with the people; and as the people takes its road the Church will be found by its side, neither obstructing in the interest of Downing street nor inciting to revolution in consonance with the wishes of Californian gold kings. Its sons have won their freedom throughout the Empire, and are prepared to defend it at Melbourne, or Sydney or Wellington, or Montreal, or Dublin. They will serve their Church best by serving their country, and they are the best judges of their respective countries' needs. Catholicity in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, and in Ireland will be best served, not by ear-wiggling in Downing street, but by its sons proving themselves worthy of a place in the foremost ranks of respectable and patriotic citizenship in those countries. That is as well known at Rome as it is here. Downing street has nothing to give. It helped the plunderers of the