



To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO. XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1906

PRINCESS ENA: AN AUCKLAND TIRADE



GOODLY dose of soothing syrup would probably be about the best prescription to offer to the excited cleric who (as reported by the 'New Zealand Herald' of March 17) disgraced the Anglican pulpit of St. Mark's, Auckland, with an evil-tempered attack upon 'Princess Ena' and 'the Church of Rome.'

From such a quarter, Catholics were entitled to hope for better things. But in substance and in style, the preacher fell down to the level of his passing role—a role that requires no more knowledge or brain-power or literary ability than is found upon the street-corner or the Orange platform. It is easy (according to an old pamphlet of 1618) 'to pray, or rather prate, by the Spirit, out of a tub, against the King.' And, says Dr. England, 'a person needs no other qualification to write against the Roman Catholic religion than to be so disposed; and the abundance of the spirit becomes manifest in the vehemence of the phraseology. Little attention need be paid to facts, circumstances need not be examined, nor is it always necessary to have regard even to probability itself.' The direct attack upon the Catholic Church, and the necessarily implied onslaught on the Supreme Head of his own faith, were marked by wild 'vehemence of phraseology,' and by a lack of knowledge, of good manners, of justice, and of deliberation in statement that reflect the utmost discredit upon one who professes to be a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

We pass by, for the present, the elegant grimaces which the preacher made at 'the Roman Church,' and the question-begging epithets which he applied to its ritual as 'sensuous' and 'gratifying to the depraved taste of a decadent civilisation.' Here is his reference to the Princess Ena:—

'The Reformed Churches. . . acquiesce with scarcely a protest in the deliberate, formal, and public renunciation of her faith and her baptism by a Princess of the blood royal, in order to contract a marriage alliance with the Sovereign of a country that has been conspicuous for religious bigotry, intolerance, cruel and ruthless persecution. There has been no more terrible evidence of the decay of sturdy faith and patriotism in the British people. . . We, with all our boasting, are fain to strengthen ourselves by a treaty with a heathen nation, and an alliance with a nation that has fallen by ignorant superstition.'

The preacher (who seems to be on button-holing terms with the Almighty) assured his hearers that the marriage and conversion of Princess Ena are 'in conflict with the will of God.' The American world is blessed with the Second Elijah—the 'Prophet' Dowie. Auckland has given to us the Second Jeremiah. And he has taken down his harp and prophesied that the 'result' of the Spanish match will be 'disaster,' that the 'disaster' will be a 'catastrophe,' and that the 'catastrophe' will be something particularly 'signal and terrible.' We are not informed whether the coming cataclysm is to be German measles, or cholera morbus, or the seven plagues of Egypt or the crack o' doom. Such portentous predictions are, no doubt, very com-

forting to some minds. They are a safety valve for the superheated steam of religious and party passion, when it has reached dangerously high pressure. And they require little mental horse-power, and are cheap and easy—and harmless. Old Mocre's office-boy grinds them out annually like the shelling of green peas.

In the whole course of this hypocritical agitation, we have come across no more ill-mannered attack upon the Princess Ena. Her conversion (says this northern apostle of sweetness and light) is merely a means to a social end, to wit: 'a marriage alliance with the Sovereign' of Spain. Now, the Princess Ena's change of faith is a matter personal to herself—a matter between her conscience and her Creator. And the Catholic Church demanded and received from her, solemn assurances that she was led into the One Fold by the clear and vindly light of firm and true conviction. Short of clear and cogent evidence to the contrary, the solemn pledge made by this worthy young scion of a royal house must be deemed to be in full harmony with the inmost feeling of her soul. 'Knew thyself,' says the old Greek warning. Which a later poet rendered thus:—

'This famous "know thyself," it does but say: "Know thine own business" in another way.'

The Auckland Solon would have been much more profitably occupied in knowing and minding his own business than in assuming towards Ena of Battenberg the role of the Almighty—the Searcher of hearts. With an impertinence and a meddling indelicacy which ill become the cloth he wears, he intrudes into the privacy of her heart and conscience, he sits in judgment upon her inmost thoughts and motives. By necessary implication he, in effect, declares that she is selling her soul for a diadem, and that she is guilty of coarse-grained worldliness, callous deceit, and public hypocrisy. He rails at 'the Reformed Churches' for not having seen about preventing this 'alliance.' And (being on hobnobbing terms with the Deity) he confidently promises—as the 'result' of the Spanish union—'disaster' and a nameless 'catastrophe' of a 'signal and terrible' kind to the British nation. The preacher clearly expected King Edward VII. to play the autocrat and family tyrant, and prevent the Princess Ena (his niece) following her womanly affections to a union with her pious and manly young royal lover, and her conscience into the Old Faith of her fathers. And King Edward's failure to play this ignoble role is 'a terrible evidence of the decay of sturdy faith and patriotism!' The preacher's ideas of 'sturdy faith and patriotism' spell, in big letters, tyranny over the individual conscience. One scarcely expects so frank an avowal of intolerance from one who professes to damn intolerance to the nether pit. But the sweet jewel, consistency, seldom adorns the brows of those who go to the pulpit as Mrs. Brown went to the play—with 'an erratable temperature.'

Princess Ena is, from the religious point of view, marrying above her. She is leaving the turmoil of five hundred conflicting sects for the peace of the Fold that is one and undivided. But who authorised the Auckland assailant of the young royal lady to act the Almighty Searcher and Judge towards her conscience? The reverend preacher of St. Mark's, Auckland, stands by the 'right of private judgment' in matters of faith. On what grounds does he deny that 'right' to Ena of Battenberg? And why is he not afire at the recollection that the brother, sisters, and other relatives of King Edward VII. made a 'deliberate, formal, and public renunciation of their faith' when they joined the Greek and Lutheran Churches? Where were his 'sturdy faith and patriotism' when these things came to pass? And what 'disasters' and 'catastrophes' befell the British nation as the 'result' of these 'conflicts with the will of God'? And on what principle of consistency or common-sense does he, in the same breath, decry religious intolerance and deny religious tolerance to

HENRY HUGHES

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