

As intimated in our last issue, the Anglican diocese of Auckland has given birth to an organisation bent upon doing battle against 'the Romeward movement.' It is known officially by the somewhat processional title of 'The Laymen's League of the Church of the Province of New Zealand.' 'For short,' it styles itself 'The Laymen's League.' Its objects, as set forth in a Manifesto before us, are the following: (A) The Association of Lay Churchmen within the Diocese of Auckland for the purpose of Defending the Rights of the Laity against the encroachments of Ecclesiasticism in matters appertaining to Church Government and Church Ritual. (B) To Educate, by means of Literature, Lectures, and open Discussion, the Church people of the Diocese regarding the Dangerous Character of the Romeward Movement within the Church. (C) To devise and make known among Churchmen an Effective Mode for restraining and dealing with the evils referred to in "A" and "B." Thus far the Manifesto. Four-and-forty years ago the Church Association was formed in England for kindred purposes—chiefly to aid the Anglican bishops to suppress illegal ritualistic practices within their dioceses. It was a highly respectable and 'proper' and well-meaning organisation. But it had no more effect upon the on-coming wave of ritualism than had Dame Partington's mop upon the incoming Atlantic tide. Indeed, some of the bishops whom they wished to 'help' declined their services and encouraged ritualistic practices within their jurisdictions. There was more robust energy in the Kensit crusade that began some eleven years ago. He raised tornadoes in sundry very 'high' churches in and around London, memorialised Parliament, swept over the country in an anti-'Romanising' storm, relied largely on vehement pamphlet literature of an extreme No-Popery type, and violently disturbed ritualistic ceremonies wherever the opportunity offered. His performances served to focus public attention upon the whole question of the rubrics, the ornaments, the ceremonies, and the doctrines of the Church of England. But the violence of his methods, and especially the character of his pamphlets, created a feeling of revulsion in the minds of decent Anglicans of every type, High, Broad, and Low. And the net result of the Kensit crusade has probably been to help, rather than to hinder, 'the Romeward movement' in the Protestant Established Church. So true it is that the worst service some people can do to any cause is to advocate it.

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Time has yet to tell what is to be the character of 'The Laymen's League.' That is, so to speak, 'on the knees of the gods.' A perusal of the Manifesto gives, however, the impression that it is the work of earnest men who see, in 'the Romeward movement' within their creed, its drift towards an imminent spiritual shipwreck, and who raise their voices in heated warning and protest to those upon the bridge. With perfect truth they cry out that the reintroduction of Mass vestments, and all that they imply, and the teaching that the Anglican clergy are 'sacrificing priests,' and sundry other doctrines and practices, represent 'a movement to undo the main work of the Reformation.' There is, however, a whiff of Kensitite methods in the unnecessary violence of the language used at times by the authors of the Manifesto in regard to the Catholic Church. 'The corrupt beliefs of Southern Europe,' 'the canker of idolatry,' 'this pestilent thing,' 'the arrogance of a priesthood,' 'The danger that the restoration of that same superstition will plunge the Empire into a darker age of paganism.' And so on. These are lurid terms for even a Laymen's League Manifesto to apply to the teaching and worship of the vastly greater part of those that bear the name of Christian. From such a source one does not, of course, look for anything approaching accuracy of statement in matters of history and of dogma. Only the limitations of the writers render pardonable, for instance, the suggestion that the Catholic teaching in regard to the change of substance in the Eucharist dates from the Council of the Lateran. And what shall we say regarding the preposterous folly of the statement, apparently adopted by the authors of the Manifesto, that the chasuble is 'indispensable to' the Sacrifice of the Altar? To Catholics, the Manifesto of the Laymen's League presents many matters of interest. In the first place, it offers a curious comment on the futility of the Reformation principle of private judgment, and of the endless ways in which this has to be restricted, in its actual exercise, by creeds, articles of faith, civil laws, rules of ritual—and (among other things) by the agitational action of Laymen's Leagues. In the name of the general freedom of private judgment, the Protestant Church of England was bound hand and foot by the personal private judgment of Queen Elizabeth and her Calvinising divines. Many within her fold would wish to see her still bound, not alone in England, but in the colonies and the far outer rim of the Empire, by the same dead hands—

still in the name of liberty of private judgment. But, even at its worst, is not the private judgment of Anglican bishops and clergy in New Zealand as good as that of (say) Cranmer at its best—that is, on the assumption that private judgment is (as it is claimed to be) a true principle in religion? Such a principle equally justifies affirmation and the negation of the same doctrine, and places the affirmation and the negation on the same plane of divine truth. It equally justifies 'the Romeward movement' and the Laymen's League opposition to 'the Romeward movement.' It has supplied an imaginary divine sanction for the dissensions, even over fundamental doctrines and practices, which have rent the English Protestant Established Church into rival fragments. Even the iron ring of State pressure and State creeds and State formulae has failed to prevent the centrifugal action of this same principle of private judgment, as opposed to a divinely constituted teaching and ruling authority, in religion. That cannot indeed be the Church of Christ which does not know its own mind on such fundamental points as the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist—which preaches at the same time a Real Presence and a Real Absence—and which has no authority whatever to enforce its teaching, even if it could make up its mind. The occasional pronouncements of the bishops upon ritualistic practices are, in these respects, pathetic in the extreme. They remind one of the reply given by the Philosopher of the Sandwich Islands, in his 'Answers to Correspondents,' to a puzzling query put to him by a young lady subscriber: 'The more I think on it, the more I can't tell. As near as I can recollect now, I think I don't know. Much might be sed both ways, and neether way be rite. Upon the whole, I rather reckon I would, or I wouldn't, just as I thought best, or otherwise.' Such 'yes-no' deliverances seem to be about all that is possible to prelates placed in such an unfortunate position. Meantime, Catholics view with hopeful and friendly interest the Romeward tendency of so many earnest and God-fearing and God-loving men in the Anglican fold. They are steadily familiarising their public with Catholic doctrines, Catholic ritual, Catholic devotion, and Catholic modes of thought. And, humanly speaking, a movement which has existed for so long, and which has acquired so great and increasing a momentum, and which is grounded upon a real need of so many pious souls, is not in the least likely to be appreciably delayed or restricted, much less brought to a standstill even locally, by the opposition, however well-meant, of the Laymen's League.

## Notes

### A 'Comic' Recitation

An esteemed priest, of New Zealand birth, writes to us condemning in terms of refreshing vigor a coarse-grained recitation that is, unfortunately, sometimes heard at Catholic entertainments. We refer to the one which depends for its alleged 'humor' on the baptism of the infant child of Irish Catholic parents, with — whisky. It is not easy to conceive how Catholic audiences could tolerate this effort to invade the Sacraments of the Church in search of a very poor joke, and to drag some of the most sacred rites of our faith into the spasms and jumps of the 'stage Irishman.' The line should be drawn—with voice or vegetables, or both.

### Those Marriage Agencies

The State Parliament in Victoria is at last about to take steps to suppress the nuisance of professional marriage agencies. Melbourne has been for years afflicted with those means of wedding in haste and repenting at leisure. So much we, in substance, learn from a recent Press Association cable message. The agent simply constituted himself a 'minister,' and got a few of his friends and acquaintances to sign a paper 'recognising' him as the 'head' of their sect. He was then empowered by the State to solemnise marriage, and forthwith advertised himself ready and willing to come to the aid of loving couples at 'cut' rates—gold ring included. The abuses to which such business agencies lent themselves may readily be imagined. The scandals in connection with them were ventilated full many a time and oft in the divorce court—they ended at times in the Yarra and the morgue. And the ending of them has been too long delayed.

Mr. J. Casey, mercer and hatter, Dunedin, notifies his patrons that he has removed into larger premises, opposite the Bank of New Zealand, Princes street....

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