

'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the
N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

THE NEUTRALITY OF THE POPE.

A reader of these articles wishes to have the attitude of the Pope in the present war explained. He asks why the Pope continues to preserve a diplomatic silence, and why, especially, when morality and religion are being daily violated in Belgium which has been so faithful to God in the mass of its population, so noble in its King and its Catholic government, the Pope pronounces no judgment?

Before dealing with this very delicate question one point should be set down. The war has drawn out all the latent patriotism of the nation. Strong in the conviction of the justice of their cause, stung to indignation by the tale of bitter wrongs, men look at everything in the light of their passions and their interests. These feelings are sacred, of course, and these interests just; but it is as well to recognise that it is our feelings and interests which are concerned. And it is a happy circumstance for the sake of justice and truth, that there is, outside us and above us, some one who is not swayed by any of these feelings. He is likely to examine facts more cautiously, and to form judgments with greater calmness and independence, than is possible to us.

We say then in the first place that the present attitude of the Holy Father is fully in accordance with the universal character of the Papacy and the new conditions under which its authority has to be exercised. Even careless observers are beginning to see that the Vatican alone has been able to keep its international character, and to exercise it effectively. All other institutions have (very properly, of course) disappeared before the State and sacrificed their individuality to the State's supreme rights. Men, who a year ago were glad to forget the sacred ties of nationality and join hands with their brothers of other countries in various ways for the betterment of mankind, now stand in battle array on opposite sides. The Papacy alone is above these many divisions; it alone can prevent that absolute divorce between nations which our common Christianity forbids. 'Lord,' the Apostle said of old, 'to whom shall we go? Thou (alone) hast the words of eternal life.' And the Christian nations of to-day, in presence of the threatened breakdown of all civilisation may well ask: 'Round whose throne shall we all gather as brothers of Christ unless round the throne of the Fisherman who represents the Divine Master?'

Nor must we forget that though the power of the Papacy still dominates the world, it does not exercise the same authority as once it did. In the Middle Ages it was the uncontested head of the only form of religious life then known in Europe: men, at least tacitly, agreed that it was supreme among Christian peoples. It could speak, 'as one having authority.' At the present time it is in the eyes of Catholics the supreme authority. Its rights have not changed one jot or tittle, but they are not recognised as a plain matter of fact by a large part of Europe. And thus many look up to the Pope as a great moral force in the world, the greatest if you will, but refuse to take his directions as commands.

The Papacy of our days, as of past ages, is, therefore, if not the centre of union at least the meeting point of the different factions of men. But many flock to it not for reasons of faith and obedience, but compelled by the political interests of their respective countries. All roads lead to Rome, we know, but not all the roads are Catholic or even religious. God has interlaced the interests of morality and the interests of politics. This union works out for man's good, for temporal interests are often more attractive than moral ones. The Decalogue and the Church would, indeed, have been quickly forgotten if they had not in some way or other furthered even our earthly welfare. That being so, the head of Catholicism cannot but take account of the political situations affecting his subjects in different parts of the world. And if days come

when faith does not suffice to draw souls to himself, his duty is to go and find them in places where his presence and his services are still accepted.

WHAT IRELAND HAS DONE

IMPORTANT SPEECH BY THE IRISH LEADER.

Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., delivered an important speech before an immense audience in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on March 14. In the course of his address, Mr. Redmond said:—

I have been supplied by the Irish Government with figures, which they have most laboriously collected in every parish in Ireland, with reference to enlistment. These figures only go up to the 15th February, and therefore when I give them to you you will bear in mind that practically a month's recruiting has to be added to the totals. Up to February 15 there were Irishmen from Ireland with the colors to the number of 99,704. That is to say, in round numbers a month ago there were 100,000 Irishmen with the colors. Recruiting since then has not only gone on steadily, but has been accelerating its pace. According to these figures, which have been supplied to me, it is going on at the present moment at the rate of about 4000 a month. From December 15 to January 15 there were 3858 recruits; from January 15 to February 15 there were 4601 recruits, showing a remarkable increase. And I read with great interest in a Unionist paper in Ireland—what was before the war a Unionist paper in Ireland—a speech made by a gentleman who was in charge of a recruiting office which was opened in Grafton street, Dublin, by Lord Meath. This is what he said the other day:—

'He was connected with the recruiting office for the Irish Brigade in Grafton street, and though they were asked by Lord Kitchener not to give any further returns for publication he might mention that recruits were now coming in so rapidly that they had to increase their clerical staff. In Grafton street they were now getting daily over five times the number of recruits they got in the months of August and September last, and the men were coming in from all parts of the city and county. They were getting Unionists and Nationalists and Sinn Feiners.'

Volunteers With the Colors.

There were, Mr. Redmond went on to say, with the colors, according to these figures, on the 15th of last month 20,210 men who had been actually enrolled, disciplined, and drilled members of the National Volunteers, and there were at the same time on that date 22,970 Ulster Volunteers with the colors. Now, as I have mentioned this question of the Volunteers, allow me to dwell on it for a moment. They present one of the most extraordinary spectacles ever seen in the history of these countries. There are to-day in Ireland two large bodies of Volunteers. One body is called the Ulster Volunteers; the other body is called the National Volunteers. They are partially armed; they are partially drilled only, but they are all filled with true military sentiment and spirit. As it appears from the figures I have already given, many thousands of them—up to 50,000 between the two—have joined the army—either the old army as reservists or the new army as recruits: but I want to point out to-day that there are many thousands, outside the 50,000 who have joined, many thousands of these Volunteers who are not of military age and are not physically fit, and who are prevented from joining the army by just the same reasons as prevent thousands of people in this country, but these men are quite capable of home defence.

The Duty of Home Defence.

May I say also they are eager to be allowed to perform the duty of home defence. You may remember that on August 3 I made an offer in the House of Commons, which was really not so much an offer as an