

Current Topics

A Pointed Parable

There is high precedent for speaking in parable; and under the clarifying influence of an apt illustration many an intricate and tangled question has been unravelled and made clear as day. A happy instance in point has just been furnished by the Very Rev. M. J. O'Reilly, President of St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst, in the course of a controversy with the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Father O'Reilly is dealing with the well-worn and off-hand argument of those who say: 'The State has provided a thoroughly efficient and well-equipped system of schools. It is there for the Catholics, as for others, if they choose to avail themselves of it. If they do not choose to do so, that is their own affair.' This idea—the same in substance though differing in form—had been expressed by the *Herald* in these terms: 'Has it (the Catholic section of the people) the right to separate itself from the rest of the community in the education of its children, and then demand that the community at large shall support wholly or in part its separate schools?' And Father O'Reilly meets this venerable 'argument' with a neat and simple illustration.

'In order to render this position as clear as may be,' he says, 'I will make the following supposition:—Let us imagine, then, that the time has come for supplying every child in the State with a free breakfast. A measure authorising the necessary expenditure has been piloted through Parliament. A clause, inserted while the Bill was in committee, provides that the principal feature of this breakfast shall be a pork chop. The peaceful citizens of the community are astonished, as they sandwich their morning paper between coffee and hot rolls, to find that the Jewish Rabbi objects to this truly philanthropic measure. He points out in a letter to the *Herald* that the members of his faith have a religious loathing for pork in any form. The grounds of this dislike, he contends, are no business of the general public. The fact is, that it exists. And, as Parliament had no other end in view when putting the Children's Breakfast Act on the statute-book than the supply of free breakfasts to the children, he concludes by proposing that, if the Executive finds any difficulty about procuring a substitute for the pork, it can hand over the cost per capita of the pork to the Jewish citizens, on the understanding that it shall be devoted to the general purposes of the Act. The State will thus have given effect to its benevolent design, and the feelings of the Jewish citizens will be considerably spared. A few irreconcilable bigots are immediately up in arms, and aver that the adoption of the Rabbi's suggestion is tantamount to a State endowment of the Hebrew faith. The Christians of the State are invited to band themselves for a new crusade. But the hard-headed common-sense of the people refuses to take the men seriously, and the Jewish child faces the school day on a mutton, instead of a pork, allowance.'

The parable hardly needs any application. '*Mutato nomine,*' says Father O'Reilly, '*de te fabula narratur.*' The days of "Catholic ascendancy" will be back again, forsooth, if the Catholics are allowed the money for their mutton-chop, which they have already contributed to the State Exchequer, and which is only the equivalent of what the rest of the community get for their pork. Or, rather, it is far less than an equivalent, because even with a capitation grant for results the Catholics would still have to build and equip their own schools, though they contribute their just proportion to build schools for their fellow-citizens as well.'

A Jesuit 'Dynamiter'

Very few people—even at this distance—were deceived by the transparently false cable about the Jesuits throwing bombs at Lisbon during the recent revolution; and even the man in the street was shrewd enough to see that the story was got up as a mere pretext for taking violent measures against the Order. The charge has been so completely refuted that it may seem like slaying the thrice-slain to

further demolish the bomb-throwing story; but as one of the 'dynamiters' has been heard from in person it may interest our readers to have his very definite and explicit statement on the subject. It was given in the columns of the *Scotsman* of November 16 last. A correspondent—Mr. Stuart E. McNair, of Coimbra, Portugal—had written a letter to the Scottish paper containing the usual tissue of false charges and misstatements regarding the Jesuits. Whereupon Father Camille Torrend, S.J., took up the cudgels; and by the time he is finished there is very little left of Mr. Stuart E. McNair. Writes Father Torrend: 'I myself am one of these famous "dynamiters" and "bomb-throwing Lisbon Jesuits"; I was at Lisbon during the Portuguese revolution; nor is my name quite unknown in Portugal, and especially in Coimbra, where Mr. McNair resides. However, to make assurance doubly sure he may himself make inquiries about me at the Biological and Botanical Departments of the Coimbra University. I now challenge Mr. McNair to produce a single scrap of reliable evidence to prove that any Jesuit was ever seen firing on the mob or throwing bombs, or that bombs of their manufacture were ever discovered at Quelhas or Campolide. I sincerely hope he will be good enough to accept this challenge, and will not, like the *Mundo* and *Seculo*, which invented and propagated these calumnies, take refuge in silence. He must know (especially if he has read the *Times* of October 27) that before leaving Lisbon I challenged these newspapers to produce any such evidence. I also begged them in the name of journalistic honor to publish my indignant protest as a French citizen and no dynamiter or assassin, but hitherto my protest has passed unheeded. The only reference made to it by the editor of the *Mundo* (October 23) was to the effect that he could not answer so violent a challenge, that as a Jesuit I had no right to stay in Portugal, much less (save the mark!) to challenge him! I feel sure such a method of argument cannot commend itself to Mr. McNair. By the way, it might be good for this gentleman, when framing his answer, to remember that on October 5, that is to say actually two days before the attack he speaks of (October 7, at 8 p.m.) all the Jesuits at Campolide and Quelhas had been arrested. Of course, this may not be conclusive evidence at all, especially if Mr. McNair is one of those who believe that these same insinuating Jesuits had escaped through the 3-inch bore sewers of Campolide! (See *Saturday Review* of November 5; *Tablet*, November 5).

Father Torrend has also something to say regarding the alleged unpopularity of his Order. When an ex-resident of Lisbon—a Mr. Piper—was declaiming at Timaru a few months ago about the 'execration' in which the Jesuits were held in Portugal, we confidently affirmed that the statement could only apply to the Anarchist revolutionary element of the Lisbon populace and that the feeling referred to was certainly not entertained by the better classes of the Portuguese people. On this point Father Torrend's statement indicates that matters were precisely as we had supposed. 'Mr. McNair asserts,' he continues, 'that his "knowledge" of the Jesuit propaganda in Portugal for the past twenty years enables him to understand the execration in which that Order is held by the "common people." Does he mean by the common people to refer to the uneducated classes and to the anarchical and hooligan sections of Lisbon and of some of the other Portuguese towns, who are at the mercy of a vile, cheap press?—a press that is carrying on a slanderous propaganda against religion and religious. If so, he is quite right. But among the better educated and more refined classes, whose feelings Mr. McNair does not describe (although presumably he is one of them), this bitter feeling is far from prevalent. Now for one little testimony out of many to our sadly blackened character. Mr. McNair lives at Coimbra. Let him go to the University and ask for the well known magazine *Mycological Notes*, which is edited at Cincinnati by C. G. Lloyd. He will there find on page 157 what this celebrated scientist has to say about the work of Jesuits generally, and of the Portuguese Jesuits in particular; how, although himself a Protestant, he is convinced that no man possessed of any but the most superficial knowledge can withhold his admiration from the Order. May I conclude by hoping that Mr. McNair will now make a serious effort to get beyond his present