



## "IT IS A LIE."

**Bishop Blenk's Retort When Publicly Insulted by a Ministerial Bigot.**

(Catholic Standard and Times, Philadelphia.)

Some weeks ago the secular press of the country published cable despatches regarding a sensational incident at San Juan, Puerto Rico, when Bishop Blenk publicly gave the lie to Rev. Mr. Vallmer, a Protestant minister, who had attacked the Catholic Church, making the charge that the world held the Church convicted of the backwardness and state of degradation in which Austria, France, Spain, Italy, all of South America, the Philippines and the West Indies were languishing and decaying.

A Puerto Rican correspondent of the "Daily Picayune," of New Orleans, Bishop Blenk's native diocese, sends the details of the incident to his journal, and they were even more dramatic and interesting than was indicated in the brief cable advices. He writes:

"The incident in the San Juan Theatre of June 26 continues to be the chief topic in the island. The entire island, Protestants as well as Catholics, are with the Right Rev. James H. Blenk, Bishop of Puerto Rico, in the manly stand he took in the matter. The Episcopal minister at San Juan, the Rev. Dr. Pratt, says that Bishop Blenk could not have acted otherwise in the public manner in which the church he represented was insulted. Other Protestant ministers in the island express themselves in the same manner and regret the violent onslaught made by Mr. Vallmer.

"The people resent his speech as a personal insult, aside from the insult offered to their religion, and the fact that the bitter attack of Mr. Vallmer was utterly uncalled for and that he used a public convention of teachers, called for the purpose of quietly discussing what was best for the educational progress of the island, to get in his bitter invectives against the Catholic Church, has served to bring down upon him the condemnation of the best people and ministers not of the Catholic faith.

TRUE VERSION OF THE INCIDENT.

"Briefly told, the true version of the incident is this: In the first place, the convention did not take place at Santiago, as extensively telegraphed over the United States. It took place in the theatre at San Juan, which was placed at the disposal of the Puerto Rican Commissioner of Education for that purpose. Dr. Groff, the acting chief of the Commission of Education in the island, thought that a convention of educators in which the best thought on the subject of education could be brought forth would prove vastly beneficial to the cause of public education in Puerto Rico and its better progress. He very wisely concluded to invite all the school teachers in Puerto Rico to be present as well as the various ministers of the gospel, some of whom are engaged in teaching. In making out his programme he modeled it on that of the national educational convention recently held in Charleston, S.C. As in that convention the question of religion in public schools formed a topic of discussion, he invited Dr. Saldana, a prominent local educator and scientist, to discuss that question.

"Among others invited to speak

on various topics were Bishop Blenk, Rev. Mr. Pratt, the Episcopal minister, and Rev. J. Vallmer, a Portuguese Protestant minister who had been engaged in teaching in Brazil, but who, after the American occupation of Puerto Rico, came to San Juan and opened a small school gospel room. He was never superintendent of education in Brazil, as extensively telegraphed to the United States. That has been strongly denied by the Brazil press. Indeed, the people of Brazil do not seem to know much of him. His remarks were distinguished, as the local press declares, chiefly for their assaults on the Catholic Church. As this is the religion almost to a unit of the Puerto Ricans, he failed to attract them to his cause.

A NOTABLE ASSEMBLAGE.

"The convention opened with great éclat on June 25. There was every prospect of a brilliant and interesting meeting. School teachers had gathered from all parts of the island, many of the clergy came to attend the deliberations and the utmost harmony and good feeling prevailed.

"Bishop Blenk was booked to speak on the morning of June 26. The theatre was packed to its utmost capacity. The Bishop took as his subject, 'Thoroughness,' and his sound and earnest views and advice, he himself having been a teacher for many years in the United States, produced a profound impression. As the San Juan papers said, 'The Bishop was thunderously applauded.' Dr. Pratt, the Episcopal minister, gave a most interesting and instructive talk without the least reference to religious bitterness, and, like the Bishop, was greeted with great applause. Other educators spoke on the subjects assigned them, and the morning session passed off with nothing to mar its interest or harmony.

"RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS."

"The evening programme announced that Dr. Saldana, a most distinguished scientist and educator, would speak on the subject of 'Religion in the Schools,' and that Rev. Mr. J. Vallmer would discuss 'Education in Brazil.'

"Dr. Saldana has a great reputation in Puerto Rico, and the same large and cultured audience assembled to hear him and the evening speakers. He had, he said, been requested to give his views on the subject of 'Religion in the Schools,' a subject which he was informed would also engage the attention of the national convention of the union in Charleston. Dr. Saldana said the subject was a vast one, so vast and so closely connected with the individual life of every child who asked for education that he felt his theme should rather be 'the necessity of religion in the schools.' The obligation giving the child a thorough, all-round education rested upon the educator. It was a sacred duty. This thorough all-round education must be threefold—the education of the body, the mind and the heart or soul.

"Dr. Saldana then referred to the results of education without religious training. Communists, anarchists, thieves in high places, absconding bank clerks and government officials, dishonest bookkeepers, robbers, fomenters of discord and sedition, public assassins,

immorality, disrespect for the most sacred duties to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves, all these were the results that could be directly traced to banishing religion from the public schools, for the public schools were the schools of the masses. The enlightened countries of the world and the highest educational thought was now being brought to bear on this subject and was seeking the remedy for anarchism, for communism, etc. They do not hesitate to say that it lies in the restoration of the thought of God in the schools.

DR. SALDANA'S PROPOSAL.

"I would not be true to my conscience," said Dr. Saldana, "nor to the trust that has been reposed in me, being requested to speak on such a theme, nor to the best interests of my country, if I would say on this platform that we should banish the thought of God from the hearts of our children. \* \* \*

"I propose to this august assembly of teachers and educators that after school hours the public schoolrooms be used by the ministers of the various denominations for the instruction of all children who are willing to attend the instructions and learn something of their respective religions. My proposition is a very broad and democratic one and in perfect harmony with the Constitution of the United States, of which Puerto Rico forms a part through its cession by Spain in the Treaty of Paris. The necessity of developing religious sentiments in the child under the direction of wise and competent ministers of the Gospel or those whom these latter should appoint is the necessity and crown of all education. In my opinion this could be easily done without causing trouble of any kind. I suggest that after the regular school hours the school buildings be put at the disposal of the ministers of every creed and of the children who are willing to receive instructions in their religion, or that this instruction be given by the teachers or by persons authorized by ministers of the Gospel as competent to do so.

REV. MR. VALLMER STRIKES A SNAG.

"Dr. Saldana was applauded in the echo. There was nothing in his discourse to call forth any discussion; he had submitted a broad, plain proposition, and it was received with the same broad spirit in which it was offered. His speech in nowise provoked the attack as cabled to the United States from Santiago. It had nothing whatever to do with it.

"Dr. Groff then introduced Rev. Juan Vallmer, a native of Brazil, a Portuguese Protestant minister, who would speak on education in his own country. It was evident from the embarrassed manner in which he began his discourse that Mr. Vallmer had come to the convention primed for the purpose of attacking the Catholic Church. He seemed very disconcerted at the presence of Bishop Blenk, having without doubt not calculated on the Bishop attending all sessions of the convention, especially after speaking in the morning. He opened under difficulties, but, growing bolder, drew a lurid picture of a schoolroom in Brazil; the causes he attributed to the conservative and monarchical element in Brazil, which

he said he is still ruled and guided by the narrow and bigoted views and traditions of the Latin race. But now that the liberal and progressive element was in power things were gradually changing for the better.

"This portion of Mr. Vallmer's speech consumed about half an hour; he was listened to quietly and respectfully. Emboldened, he continued with a general onslaught on the Latin race, its contaminated blood, its superstitions, its ignorance, etc., and turning directly to Bishop Blenk he wound up in the following words:

"With due respect to you, sir, and the clergy present, I cannot help speaking the truth in this matter, and that truth is that the world holds the Catholic Church convicted of the backwardness and the state of utter degradation in which Austria, France, Spain, Italy, all South America, the Philippines and the West Indies are languishing and decaying."

"IT IS A LIE."

"As he closed this sentence, Bishop Blenk rose to his feet and, bringing down his open hand with force upon the table, he said, with the deliberation and tone of voice which showed perfect mastery of himself, but absolute firmness in not yielding one inch to the accusation, 'Es Mentira—it is a lie. I will not sit here quietly and see the Church of which I am the representative in Puerto Rico traduced in this manner.'

"Vallmer advanced and said, 'It is not a lie.' Bishop Blenk faced him squarely and answered, 'It is a monstrous calumny and an infernal lie.' Then a profound silence ensued, and Vallmer attempted to proceed with his speech, but hisses greeted him from all sides. He stopped a moment, the Bishop still standing with his arms folded looking straight at Vallmer, with the sternest determination marked in every lineament of his face, and again Vallmer attempted to proceed. Then the audience, as one man, sprang to its feet, hissing him and shouting: 'Out with him! Down with him! Begone from here!'

"In the meantime not only Catholics, but Protestants also, rushed forward to take Bishop Blenk by the hand and express their condemnation of the manner in which Vallmer had acted. Dr. Pratt, the Episcopal minister, walked straight across the stage and, extending his right hand to Bishop Blenk, said: 'Bishop, I am entirely with you in this matter. That man Vallmer's conduct and abuse of the Catholic Church is shocking and disgraceful.' The Bishop thanked him as he thanked the other gentlemen who crowded around him and prepared to leave the room. Then the audience stopped their hisses and shouts, and raising their hats the men cried out: 'Live Catholicism! Long live our Bishop!' and the entire assembly, Protestant and Catholic, with the exception of five or six persons, followed him from the hall."

WOUND BY THE SUN.

A clock is to be seen at Brussels which comes as near to being a perpetual-motion machine as is likely to be invented; for the sun does the winding. The method by which it works is described in The Optician.

A shaft exposed to the solar rays causes an up draft of air, which sets a fan in motion. The fan acts upon a mechanism which raises the weight of the clock until it reaches the top, and then puts a break on the fan till the weight has gone down a little, when the fan is again liberated, and proceeds to act as before.

As long as the sun shines frequently enough, and the machinery does not wear out, the clock will keep going.

## FOURTH CONVENTION OF MARITIME ARCADIAN.

The Fourth Convention of the Acadians of the Maritime Provinces assembled at Arichat, N.S., last week. A large number of delegates from Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the New England States were present. The town was splendidly decorated in honor of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whose arrival from Mulgrave, on the Canadian Cruiser Acadia, at 10 o'clock a.m., was signalized by a salute from two ancient cannon. An open-air meeting was held in the afternoon, when the Premier spoke in French and English.

HIGH MASS CELEBRATED.

At 10.30 o'clock High Mass was celebrated in Arichat Church, which was once the cathedral of the Diocese of Arichat. The celebrant was Rev. Father Cormier. The sermon was by Rev. Father Dagnau, the Superior of St. Ann's College and Provincial of the Eudis, Order in Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Lady Laurier and party, had been given seats of honor in front of the altar. About thirty priests including some high dignitaries of the Church, in their robes of office, were seated within the chancel. The sermon was an able effort, Father Dagnau being one of the most classical and eloquent speakers in the Dominion. The service ended at 12.30 o'clock, and dinner was served at the convent, which is an old, picturesque and well-laid out building. The dinner took place in the assembly hall where 500 people were seated at tables formed in the shape of a horseshoe. The cuisine was excellent. The proceeds were intended for the benefit of the convent, and for education in the place.

PROCEEDINGS ON THE LAWN.

At 2 o'clock the Shediac band led the large crowd of people to the lawn on the academy grounds, where a platform canopied with canvas had been erected. Amid great enthusiasm, Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier and other guests were conducted to the platform by Senator Poirier, President of the Acadian Convention, who read an address of welcome to the Premier. He referred to the first Acadian Convention, which was held in 1890, to the second in 1883, and to the third at Church Point in 1890; some permanent good had resulted from these three conventions, the last fruits being St. Ann College at Church Point, and the College at Caraquet, N.B. These were the most striking results of the convention, by the fact that their language, which they were using, was being restored through new legislation, by which French could be taught in their schools, and inspectors of their own language were given them, and to-day they are foremost at all Acadian sections, both in French and English. It was now Cape Breton's turn to share in these benefits. The work will be made easier in view of the good will that has always been shown by the Local Government of Nova Scotia, and particularly Premier Murray, who holds the interest of the French Acadians as much at heart as the Dominion Premier, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. With good-will much could be done. He would prefer good-will with bad laws to good laws with bad-will. The law is silent as to the teaching of French in the schools, but good-will has tolerated and encouraged it. Senator Poirier referred to the death of a prominent Acadian and Frenchman since the last convention, Rev. Father Lefebvre, founder of Memramcook College. Rameau de Saint-Pere, the historian of Acadie, Abbe Rousset, one of the greatest theologians of Laval University; Senator Arseneault, and Senator Poirier had died since the last convention. He invited all nationalities present on the ground to fraternize, and then introduced Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who made able and eloquent speeches in French and English.—Exchange.