

CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC MISSION WORK.

We desire to call the attention of our readers to the following letter written by an Englishman, W. B. Cooper, for the columns of the "Sierra Leone Times," in regard to the work of Catholic missionaries in Africa, and then to the illuminating comments made upon the letter by the editor himself. Says Mr. Cooper, who, it is to be noted, is an Anglican in his religion:—

"Your issue of today gives an interesting account of the anniversary meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society. One of the speakers, the Rev. W. L. Forfeitt, from the Congo, makes a charge against Roman Catholic missionaries to which I would like to reply. Having worked in four British colonies in West Africa during the past seven years, I am bound to admit that the best and most lasting good is done to the natives of West Africa by the Roman Catholic missionaries. Any employer of native clerks will tell you that the best work is done by the boys from the Roman Catholic missions. This also applies to carpenters and other trades.

"I myself am a member of the Church of England, educated in the Birmingham Blue Coat School in the doctrines of that Church, but as a lover of fair play must raise my protest against the charges brought by Mr. Forfeitt.

"In Sierra Leone there are seven Sisters, domesticating, educating, feeding and clothing, about 500 native girls; five or six priests are educating the same number of boys, and the following incident will illustrate the veneration in which they (the missionaries) are held by all classes of the population, black and white. Father Brown, a dear old man of seventy-five years, died last May in Freetown. Every European (and many a native) store was closed on the day of the funeral. Most of the Europeans personally attended, including military and naval officers and men (all Protestants). I myself saw several Church and Non-conformist ministers. Nearly all the civilian white men were there, and deputations from civic authorities, Government offices, etc. If ever a testimony were needed to show the love and respect felt for the dear old man and his work, the attendance at his funeral was that testimony.

"From what I have seen of missionary work in Lagos, Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, I have no hesitation in saying that many of the methods of the Roman Catholic missionaries are worthy of imitation, and if the Rev. Mr. Forfeitt would have a little more of that religious toleration about which we hear so much missionary enterprise would meet with more success, and if the Church of England and Nonconformist ministers generally would show half the zeal and earnestness of the Roman Catholics, the latter would not be making such headway, not only in our colonies, but also in England.

"All Roman Catholic missionaries go out to remain until their health breaks down; and they receive no pay."

Upon this letter the "Sierra Leone Times" makes the following bitter comment:—

"Turning to the religious denominations, we regret to have to record that the aspect of affairs in them, with the solitary exception of the Roman Catholic denomination, has done more to contribute to the great and dangerous unrest pervading the country, which unrest equally dangerous proletarians are subverting to their own Machiavellian ends. . . . Beyond this consideration, we need only to chronicle the usual rounds of anniversaries, services of song, conferences, missionary sermons, and Sunday-school picnics, which have left no more impression on the inner life of the Church than does the breath on the surface of a first class mirror."

It will not be out of place for us to quote in this connection the following tribute to "the heroic works" of the Sisters of Mercy at Mafeking, South Africa,—the soldier nuns who, true to the tradition of their order, braved shot and shell and all the miseries of war at the call of duty." We are told: "Their deeds were glorious

then, not less glorious is their present work. In a heathenish land, and in the face of difficulties and obstacles, they have led the little ones to God's altar, and inspired us grown-ups with fresh ardor in the practice of our religious duties; they have built a convent and school, and are offering an education which equals, and in many respects surpasses, the high class schools of the Colony. They get no aid from Government, and are entirely dependent on their own resources."

These are samples of Catholic missionary work in Africa. Space alone prevents our giving more. The examples given serve to intensify our impression of the general vagueness of non-Catholic missionary work as compared to the practical result from Catholic endeavor.—Sacred Heart Review.

THE DIVORCE FRANKENSTEIN

Representatives of fourteen of the leading dissenting denominations met in New York last week, and in accordance with resolutions of the Interchurch Conference on marriage and divorce, presented a report and declaration. They say:

We are facing a condition in our country today which threatens danger to the most sacred things. Behind the monster of polygamy, behind the spectre of the divorce court, with its collusions, its corruptions and its contagion, stands the sad fact of the low ideal of marriage.

Marriage is the institution of God Himself. Reformation must begin here. Children must be taught it. Protected in purity, boy and girl, man and woman alike must be trained to look with reverent eyes upon the holiness of this estate; upon its mysteriousness as something higher and deeper and larger than can be measured or reached by the low ideas of convenience, of worldly advantage, of the gratification of passion, or by the light and easy estimate of the consent of the passing personal fancy and the mutual recognition of the civil contract.

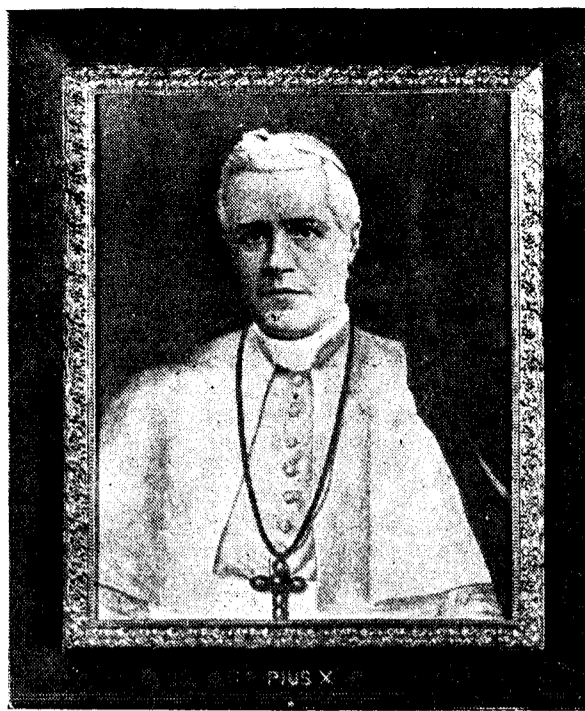
If marriage be, indeed, regarded as the institution of God, does not that fact make it sacramental? The reason why we have divorce among us is that this character was denied it by the prototypes of those who signed this declaration. Protestantism is the parent of divorce, and therefore it ought to put on sackcloth and ashes for all the sin and shame and misery which it brought into the world.

It is well, however, that the creators of this monster, or rather their successors, should feel alarm at the horrors it portends. Better late than never. It may be a sore task, it may be impossible, even, to check the growth of the awful cancer, but it is a healthy moral symptom when some united action is recommended. To effect any improvement a radical change in the laws of every state is essential. Marriage and divorce should, as things of God, be taken out of the hands of police magistrates. The State disclaims interference with spiritual things, no doubt, and if the Protestant bodies insist that marriage is not a spiritual thing it is hard to see how they can ask the State to take its hands off. This is the real trouble.—Catholic Standard and Times.

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