

THE ECCLESIASTICAL TRIAL OF MUGGINS VS. MANIPLE.

The recent action instituted against the Bishop of London arising out of the erection in St. Paul's Cathedral of a crucifix and a representation of the Blessed Virgin, recalls "The Prig's" description of the ecclesiastical trial of Muggins vs. Maniple, in his amusing book "How to make an Anglican Saint." It is as follows:

It would be useless to weary our readers with an account of the tedious preliminaries which precede an ecclesiastical suit in the Court of Arches. That so sacred a matter as the Canonization of Saints should be taken out of priestly hands and intrusted to a Court of Law was a source of great grief and sorrow to the members of the committee of the Society for the Propagation of Anglican Saints, but a sense of duty enabled them to bear up.

Mr. Maniple was anxious to find a Counsel imbued with a "Catholic spirit;" but against this Mr. Spinks, his legal adviser, protested most strongly. "The man for you," he said, "is Sinister. If you don't get Sinister you will do no good at all. I implore you to allow me to retain Sinister at once." Mr. Maniple demurred, but eventually gave way. Now Mr. Sinister was not exactly a man distinguished for his devotion to saints and angels. It might be even said that his devotion to the Creator of Saints and Angels was far from pronounced. Possibly he may have spent his nights in prayers and austerities, but if so, he scrupulously obeyed the precept against letting the left hand know what the right hand doeth. A remarkable article of more than doubtful orthodoxy, which had appeared in one of the monthlies, was attributed to his pen, but with what truth we are not in a position to state. He was considered a very fine judge of racing and female beauty, and he was an excellent diner out.

Mr. Maniple and his friends were recommended by Mr. Spinks to place their case unreservedly in Mr. Sinister's hands, and on no account to hamper him with any expressions of opinion as to the manner in which they wished it to be conducted. In a court of law it would become a purely legal question and personal feelings would have to be entirely subordinated to the technical exigencies of the trial.

Mr. Smiles persisted in speaking of Mr. Sinister as their *postulator*, and of Mr. Frumps, the leader on the other side, as the *promoter* (Devil's Advocate). "After all," said he, when they found themselves in the somewhat secular precincts of the law court, "we have only to fancy ourselves in the court delegated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. I declare, I rather like it."

The greater part of the first day of the trial was occupied by wranglings between Messrs. Trumps and Sinister over technical objections, and, to the horror of Mr. Maniple, it seemed at one time not unlikely that, on the ground of some legal quibble, his counsel would succeed in preventing the trial coming off at all.

At last Mr. Frumps got under way, we will not trouble our readers with his long speech in opening his case. For a day and a half he prosed away. He contended that there was no authority whatever for the addition of new saints to those already named in the Calendar at the beginning of the *Book of Common Prayer*. This took about two hours. Then he proceeded to show that even if such a thing were permissible a rector or incumbent could not do it without higher authority. After that he tried to prove that the four characters which had been selected were not saintly, quoting largely from histories and other books, as well as from their own writings in proof of this contention. Last of all, he argued, at great length that even if new saints could be nominated and an ordinary rector or incumbent had the power of so nominating them, and if the four characters chosen by the defendant were worthy of being honoured as saints the defendant had no right to erect the statues in his church without a special faculty.

He then called a number of witnesses to prove the offence. Most of these described the nature of the special services at Mr. Maniple's church, the statues, their position, and so on. Few of them escaped cross-examination by Mr. Sinister. Here is a specimen of it:

Mr. S.—"Are the statues attached to the pedestals?"

Witness.—"I don't know."

Mr. S.—"Are the pedestals on which the statues stand attached to the fabric of the church?"

Witness.—"I can't say."

Mr. S.—"Are the inscriptions beneath the statues on the upper parts of the pedestals or on the lower parts of the statues themselves?"

Witness.—"On the lower parts of the statues."

Mr. S.—"Will you swear that they are not on the pedestals?"

The witness would not like to swear that they were not on the pedestals, but he thought—Mr. Sinister did not wish to know what he *thought*. Did the witness know whether the statues always remained in the church, both by day and by night? He did not. And yet, said Mr. Sinister, he had sworn that the statues were *erected* in the church.

Did he understand the legal signification of the term "erected?" He did not. Then how could he swear upon his solemn oath that they were erected?

Then a witness described the first great function on the Sunday evening and the blessing of the statues. He had said that Mr. Maniple had sprinkled them with holy water. Would he swear that the water was holy? Could he define holy water? Was he prepared to say, on his oath, that he had seen any water at all? How far was he standing from Mr. Maniple? Did he or did he not possess the faculty of seeing through opaque objects?

After a week of this kind of thing Mr. Sinister rose to reply. He maintained that it had not been proved that either Hooker, Laud, Johnston or Hannah Moore had been venerated as saints at all in Mr. Maniple's church. Not a single witness had been able to swear what words had been used in the so-called blessing of the statues, so there was no evidence that they had been blessed. No hymns had been used except those to be found in the hymn book of the church, which he should produce. It was positively miraculous—

"Why, I do believe he is going to bring forward evidence of miracles in support of the saints' canonization," whispered Mr. Smiles.—That so trivial a case should have been brought into Court. As to the statues they could not be said to be "erected" in the church. He should call witnesses to prove not only that they were not attached to the pedestals, but that even the pedestals themselves were not fastened to the floor of the church.

With regard to the inscriptions, the only word objected to was that of "saint." Now he would read the definition of the word in a standard dictionary. It was true that one of the meanings given was "one canonized by the Roman Catholic church," but nothing could be clearer than that the defendant never pretended either of the four characters to have been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. Not one of them had ever been a Roman Catholic, and was he to be asked to believe that the Roman Catholic Church would canonize a person who had belonged to a Protestant church? Now there was not a grain, or tittle of evidence to show that the defendant had intended to use the word "saint" in the sense of canonization—Mr. Maniple groaned—much less in the sense of Roman Catholic canonization. There was already a statue of Dr. Johnson in St. Paul's Cathedral with an inscription far stronger than that used by the defendant.

Mr. Sinister put in as evidence a little book called "Romish Fallacies," by the defendant. Now this book was a very sore subject to Maniple. He had written it—it was but a two-penny pamphlet—before he had been ordained. The fact was that he had begun his clerical career as an Evangelical, like his father before him. During the last fifteen years he had developed into a High Churchman of a very pronounced type, and nothing galled him more than to be reminded that he had at one time been at the other end of the ladder. When, therefore, Mr. Sinister produced "Romish Fallacies" and began to read extracts from it, it was all Mr. Spinks could do to keep his client quiet.

After reading several passages Mr. Sinister said: "I think I have read enough to prove the innocence of the defendant with regard to any undue reverence to the dead, but I wish to call special attention to the last few words of the chapter from which I have selected my extracts. 'In short,' says he, 'the doctrine of saint worship is one of the most unscriptural and revolting of the many errors with which the Roman