

THE ARCHBISHOP OF MECHLIN ON MASONRY.

The distinguished prelate who fills the archiepiscopal See of Mechlin, in Belgium, has just issued a pastoral letter on the subject of Freemasonry, and recalls to the mind of his flock the anathemas so frequently hurled by the Church against members of the fraternity. "Let us not lose sight," says the venerable archbishop, "of the fact that Freemasonry is a secret society, not alone in the sense that it conceals its designs from 'the profane' world (to use the words of the sect itself), but in the sense that the initiated of the high degrees conceal the true purposes of Masonry from the members of the inferior grades, even though these latter may be great and august personages, clothed in the external dignities of the order. But, even these are not less guilty on that account, because they blindly engage themselves by an oath to carry out designs of which they are ignorant, despite the warnings of common sense, of conscience, and the Church. Further, that which Freemasonry hides from the knowledge of a large number of its adherents, it reveals clearly enough by its actions to all who will open their eyes to watch them. It reveals it also by means of the documents which are now and then issued from its council-rooms. Freemasonry, in its doctrine, often reduced to form, is the enemy of the Catholic Church. It treats with contempt all that has been venerated from the earliest ages of Christianity, and sets at nought the harmony of reason and revelation—of science and of faith. The very thing that stirred the enthusiasm of so many great men—that eternal religion, whose unbroken unity Bossuet has so splendidly proved; all this the lodges pretend to confound with merely human religions and opinions, and they are content to live in peace with Christianity, only on the condition that it shall renounce its Divine origin. The pretended respect of the lodges for worship is to be purchased only on this condition. The Catholic Church is excluded from this respect, precisely because it bears on its forehead the character of the unity of God—of the Father of all men and of all peoples. The lodges will not have a God living in revelation, or a revelation living in the Church. Whoever leagues himself in a lodge leagues himself in a society which blasphemes the Divinity of Christ and the universal Church. Can we, therefore, wonder that the Church should declare excommunication against those who join in Freemasonry?"