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CATHOLIC INTOLERANCE.*



CATHOLIC Intolerance :— These words seem to have the proper ring, and so we shall not endeavor to separate them. Intolerant Catholics, like Whigs and Tories, Quakers and Puritans, Methodists and Capuchins, already appreciate their title, which is the offspring of hatred and contempt. Now in dealing with this subject, we will be forced to say many things, which we know are not in strict accordance with received Protestant notions of what constitutes intolerance, but which are none the less true, and as no offence is intended we hope none will be taken. This journal has on all occasions avoided saying aught which might be construed as the work of bigotry or prejudice, but we have never refrained from setting forth our ideas, in clear and unmistakable terms, on all questions which involved the defence of truth and equity, and we feel assured in saying that the history of Europe, during even the past twenty years, will justify what follows.

Among the numerous charges which Protestants are wont to urge against us and our religion, there is none more vulgar or more frequently repeated than that of our Intolerance.

Viewed through the medium of Protestant history and Protestant literature, facts seem to be against us, and so thoroughly have Protestant minds become imbued with the idea that Catholicism is synonymous with Intolerance—for with them the bare mention of the one always suffices to recall the other, that all attempts at explanation or extenuation have proved futile. Catholics are intolerant and that

is sufficient. No proofs are necessary. It is too well known to require proof. "Every book is full of it, it has been so ruled long ago." Is it possible that all we have heard and read about the Spanish and Roman Inquisitors, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Gun-Powder Plot, the Popish Plot, the statutes and persecutions of Bloody Mary, are but the work of Protestant prejudice and bigotry? Certainly not. The men who have described these acts of Catholic treachery and cruelty were honest men, men of worth and position, men whose names we have been taught from our infancy to lisp as the honor and glory of our religion. No, Catholics were intolerant when Protestantism was in its infancy, and would be as intolerant to-day were they placed in similar circumstances.

This is the opinion held by nine Protestants out of ten. They believe that all feelings of generosity or even common honesty are foreign to the Catholic heart. They see in every Catholic an indescribable, undefinable something which warns them to beware. And it is not the weak and ignorant only who hold such ideas, but men highly educated, men in high positions, business men, members of legislature, lawyers, judges and even divines. They are unanimous. They may differ as to the proper interpretation of a scriptural passage, but that Catholics are intolerant, that they delight in blood, that they enjoy the "shrieks and groans of agony and despair," all are agreed. Now why are Catholics thus stigmatized intolerant, cruel, bloody? Cardinal Newman in one of his lectures on the present position of Catholics in England, gives the reason in two words "Protestant Tradition."

* Read in the School of Theology, March 9th.