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GREAT MEETING OF THE CATHOLICS OF BIRMINGHAM.

(From a Correspondent of the Tablet.)

The extraordinary course of lectures recently delivered in this town by Dr. Newman, have received the sanction of the highest Ecclesiastical authority in the diocese, and called forth the warmest thanks of the Catholic body. As your readers are aware, the ninth and last lecture was delivered on last Monday week, when it was announced that a meeting of the Catholics of Birmingham would be held on the following Friday, for the purpose of testifying their appreciation of the great services rendered to the cause of religion by the powerful addresses of the Rev. Father Superior of the Oratory. The announcement spread with rapidity throughout the town and neighborhood; for three days before the meeting there was a continuous application for tickets, and thousands of Catholics were unavoidably refused admission. Before the appointed hour on Friday week last, the Corn Exchange was crowded by an enthusiastic audience, who evinced the utmost interest in the proceedings. At eight o'clock the Lord Bishop of Birmingham, accompanied by the Very Rev. Dr. Weedall, Dr. Newman, nearly all the Fathers of the Oratory, and other gentlemen entered the Exchange, and were received with loud and enthusiastic cheers.

Amongst those present were—Mr. John Hardiman, Mr. John Poncia, Mr. Thomas Summerfield, Mr. Thomas Lloyd, Mr. Powell, Mr. Parker, Mr. G. Edmunds, Clerk of the Peace, Mr. Whitegreave, &c.

His Lordship having taken the chair, he proceeded to address the meeting as follows:—We are assembled together my Catholic brethren, in this hall once more, for the purpose of expressing our gratitude for the services rendered to us and to the Catholic body of this kingdom, within its walls, by the Very Rev. Dr. Newman, whom but to name is to awaken the love and respect of every good Catholic. I do not think, and I am sure you do not think, that we ought to permit his remarkable course of lectures to terminate without expressing, in some way, the sense we entertain of their value, and our appreciation of their author. Nor ought the Catholics of Birmingham to show themselves insensible to the honor which Dr. Newman has done them, by delivering his lectures in this important town, especially as it is said that he was solicited to deliver them elsewhere, but that he preferred to address the Brothers of the Oratory in the presence of the inhabitants of Birmingham. Not alone have your minds been elevated and strengthened, and mine also, by great and animated instructions, but a vigorous enlightenment has been offered to those who stand opposed to us, as to the realities of their position towards Catholics, and of that of Catholics towards them; and many clouds of delusion, fraught with mischief to both parties, that have been conjured up between us, he has burst asunder—that is, for the eyes of all men who are disposed to look at the truth, for to others there is no remedy; and that many may be disposed to profit by these lectures, and to accept them in the same spirit of frankness and sincerity in which they were offered, it is our duty to pray Almighty God. For their author, availing himself of his peculiar advantages, and having intimate knowledge of the facts on all sides of the case, has, with the aid of his great powers of observation, given an exposition of the position of Catholics in this country for centuries past, as well as at the present moment, which they indeed have been keenly alive to, and I hope have, on the whole, patiently endured; but to which, until now, they had failed to give an adequate expression, or, at all events, had not brought it home to those whom it most concerns, to those, I mean, who hold in their hands the remedy to the trials under which we have been made to suffer. Just so the early Christians were systematically persecuted; their lives and doctrines were hideously falsified, and they themselves were persecuted in private as well as in public, by the propagation of slanders, and by the diffusion of erroneous opinions, when Tertullian arose, confronted the authorities of the empire, and the sect leaders, and the sophists of that time, scanned their whole course of proceedings, analysed it in its causes, searched through its wholesale injustice, and boldly remonstrated with the great empire of that day, for its blind and heartless cruelty towards so large a portion of unoffending subjects, against whom their sole accusation was, their fidelity to a God who had died upon a cross, and their love of teaching His doctrines—doctrines pronounced by those who then had the rule of public opinion, to be a gross superstition. Yes, there stood against them one charge more, and I shall express it in the language of a Protestant writer who was defending a British Queen against a public journal in the year 1730:—"The Primitive Christians (he says) brought persecution upon them in two ways—first, by spoiling the eating and drinking trade of the Priests of that age; second, by imitating to exactness, the degrees of Ecclesiastical

dignities, flaments and arch-flaments, with the partition of dioceses, exactly agreeable to the division of the Roman empire; thus they gave great jealousy to the heathen Pontiffs of a rivalry of power, and from hence it came that so many Bishops went through that gate to Heaven—the narrow gate of martyrdom." How like, and yet, how very unlike, are the lectures we have heard to the celebrated apology for the early Christians? In their matter and their method they will bear but little comparison, for the lectures are as original as the apology; but how like they are in spirit and in purpose; and how our Very Reverend defender resembles the defender of the ancient Christians in his sweeping surveys of the field of contention, and in the close attention he gives to facts, in the elevation of his principles, and in the boldness of his remarks—in that fine irony also drawn forth at the contemplation of the reckless absurdities of hatred, whose chief power lies in the self-denial of the mind which uses it. I do not wish to run a parallel; but one thing especially strikes me in this resemblance—I mean that fine sensibility to right and wrong which cannot contemplate so complicated an injury, as that which Catholics have had to suffer without betraying how his own feelings have been wrung at such a spectacle, by the vibration of those feelings through almost every sentence that he utters. But how far, on the other hand, is our apologist from the gloom of mind which presaged the calamitous end of that early defender of Christianity? The cheerful light of his soul has been so heartily diffused over the gravity of his subject; he has illuminated it with so kindly and so free a humor; and, in the midst of the most awful subjects, he has dealt with us in a manner so familiar, that we felt we were listening to one who had imbibed, and deeply imbibed, the beautiful spirit of St. Philip Neri. Whilst we take our own profit from these lectures, let us hope that they will be well considered by that Protestant world whom they deeply concern. They may here learn from no unfair witness, how much their estimate of us is a delusion, and how much we are the victims of their misapprehensions. Let them consider how needless is this strife, how unjust, how mischievous, how useless for any purpose that they have before them, in so far as we are concerned. Let them understand that what they take us for we are not; and for the love of truth and justice let them not continue to slander us through unproved statements. And when facts are proved, for Catholics are men like other men, let them not attribute to us, as a body, or to any principle or rule of ours, what are the mere errors and follies of individual men. We have never thought of attributing the crimes and follies we daily read of in the newspapers to Protestantism. If a Protestant is charged with anything wrong, it is his own act: why then, if a Catholic, is it taken to be the act of his Church? What an illustration of this we had the other day. A Catholic teacher corrects a child; the fact is not only exaggerated, but it is argued that the teacher must be a Priest, because only a Priest could be capable of such an act. Soon after, a Protestant schoolmaster is brought up for the very same thing, nor does he appear to have been at all less severe, to say the least of it. The magistrate protects the schoolmaster, and the grand jury throw out the bill against him. Yet what remark has any Catholic made on the subject until this moment, and who ever thought of arguing that the schoolmaster must necessarily have been a clergyman of the Established Church? Our unity does not lie in an association of the faults and follies of individuals, but in our doctrine and our discipline. Nor are we responsible, to give another example, for the articles which may be found written in newspapers conducted by Catholics, as if they emanated from the Catholic body and its Ecclesiastical authorities, and necessarily expressed their views, and were not the mere views of individuals, and those commonly laymen. Protestants cannot realise that freedom and independence which Catholics possess in all that is not of the essence of Catholicity. Nor, to take the most recent example, are we in any way concerned, except to regret them, in such productions as the letters of Mr. Gawthorne. These letters, and such like things, do not exhibit the Catholic religion in practice, but so far as the case extends, they show a want of that religion. May I now take the liberty of saying a word upon what some persons, not, I believe, Catholics, have said as to the supposed severity and sharpness of the lectures. If—to use a familiar phrase—they were overdone, if they were exaggerated and over-stated, they would not lie open to a charge in this form. As far, then, as this is our impression, it must be accounted for in some other way. And my explanation is this:—When a surgeon lays his hand upon an inflammation or a tumor, it is not from his hand that the pain arises, but from the diseased member which he touches. And when his duty obliges him to use the probe, its application is severe in proportion to the depth

of the wound and the vital strength of the part. And so, when mind acts on mind, truth alone is severe, and that in proportion to the depth and accuracy with which it searches out and brings to knowledge the errors and absurdities of men; but the sharpness is to be found, not in the truth spoken so much as in the nerves and soul of him who undergoes the merciful infliction. In the well-known allegory, a genius of a mild and gentle spirit looks down upon a plain, where multitudes of mankind are assembled; he holds a mirror in his hand, and calmly moving it over the multitude, wherever its reflection falls the effects are most astonishing and unexpected.

One class of persons remain unchanged, except by manifesting a conscious pleasure at receiving this light upon themselves. But others become a spectacle of the most painful mortification. They grow agitated, discover in themselves deformities; their proportions change; their old faces drop off, and they see themselves in new ones which are not at all improved, and many torment themselves at the discovery, and rage against the genius of the mirror. The story concludes by telling us that this mirror is truth, and we know the genius who has recently wielded it in a way to show that it has lost none of its marvellous qualities. To you, Catholic brethren, I have this advice to offer:—Be not satisfied with having heard these lectures. Have them in your possession. And here you owe new thanks to their Very Rev. author, for enabling you to have them in this place so cheap. Study them carefully—ponder their principles—weigh their arguments—consider the facts which they illuminate—wish and pray that those may do the same who need them most; lend them to such persons when you can do so; let them confirm you in your fortitude; and let them move you to a most earnest charity for your adversaries. For how plainly is it manifest that their calamity is greater than ours. We, after all, have but the cross and the contradiction which our Lord promised us, and which He himself bore far more heavily than we have borne them. But for those whose calamity lies in their misconceptions, and from whose prejudices we suffer injustice—oh! let us speak no more concerning them than has been spoken; but let us pray for them, and, for their sakes even more than our own, let our prayer be, that however true we recognise the descriptions we have heard, as far as the past or the present is concerned, they may not be true in the future. Before I conclude, I feel that I ought to press upon you the sound and solid advice with which Dr. Newman finished his lectures. Wherever a true, practical Catholic is known, he is respected, and imposes silence on the cavils of his adversaries. There are many ways in which a Catholic may discreetly let his neighbor know what a Catholic is, what a Catholic believes, and what a Catholic practices. Would to Heaven we had more of active prudence amongst us, and less of that sort which is passive. Make yourselves known in your own locality, in Birmingham, and amongst your own neighbors. Fit yourselves for this by thoroughly understanding the principles of your religion. I remember that the Bishop of Hobart Town, when a Missioner at Nottingham, did much to remove prejudice, and make Catholics known by encouraging a few well-instructed young men to explain their religion to everybody that showed a disposition to listen to them; and you can all of you lend books, and ought to have books ready for lending. A lending library is much wanted in Birmingham; I have seen how valuable such a thing is in other places. I think, in conclusion, we owe an acknowledgment to the press of Birmingham, for its general fairness towards us. Few provincial towns have a press so respectable and well-conducted; and it has always been open to our explanations when they were called for. To the Birmingham newspapers, I repeat, we are indebted for a fairness towards us which is rare in England, and it has been exemplified in the case of Dr. Newman's lectures. His Lordship, who was repeatedly applauded, sat down amidst great cheering.

The Rev. Dr. Weedall then rose and said—A resolution has been consigned to my charge, which I have accepted with great pleasure. Not that I have any inclination to appear prominently on these occasions; on the contrary, I have always avoided them; nor that I feel able to do justice, either to the object or the subject of this resolution, but I so thoroughly approve of both subject and object, that I will not decline the task. The resolution is to this effect: That the thanks of the Catholic Clergy and laity of Birmingham are due, and are hereby tendered to the Very Rev. Dr. Newman, for his course of lectures "on the present position of Catholicism in England;" and with this expression of their admiration of the lectures, they wish to join their sense of the honor conferred upon them by his having selected Birmingham as the place of their delivery.

The resolution having been seconded by Mr. Hardiman, was carried with acclamations, after which

Dr. Newman, on presenting himself, was received with immense acclamations. He said he knew perfectly well that he ought to look for praise to God alone, but he thought the present was an exceptional case, and he therefore took what had been said, and with all humility he would say it, as an act of God's love towards him (cheers.) It was a curious thing for him to say, though he was now of mature age, and had been very busy in many ways, yet this was the first time in his life that he had received any praise. He had been in other places, and done works elsewhere, before being a Catholic, but there was no response, no sympathy; it was not the fault of the people, for they could not respond. Some instruments could only make beautiful music, and some from their very nature could only make a noise. So it was with such a body as that to which he once belonged—they could only make a noise—no echo, no response, no beautiful music. But it was quite different when a person went into the Catholic Church. In conclusion, he entreated the prayers of those who heard him, as it was only the prayers of Catholics which could sustain him on this troubled ocean to that shore which they all hoped to reach through God's blessing (cheers.)

Mr. H. W. Wilberforce, brother of the Protestant Bishop of Oxford, moved the thanks of the meeting to the Lord Bishop of the diocese for his conduct in the chair.

Mr. Summerfield seconded the resolution, which was carried with applause.

His Lordship, on rising, was enthusiastically applauded, and three cheers were given for the "Bishop of Birmingham." He commenced by alluding to his diocese—that diocese of which he was Bishop—and it was in that capacity that they greeted him (cheers.) He was, alas! a proscribed outlaw—a rejected person (cries of "Never.") He was one dead, positively dead to the law, by the laws of this country (cries of "Shame!") Nevertheless, he lived, and they recognised his existence. What had been the result of the late agitation and law making? Those titles of which so much had been said would have been little heard of but for the agitation to which he alluded. With regard to the Irish, their habit had always been merely to salute their Bishops as the Most Rev. Dr. Murray, &c., but now, at this moment, an Irishman would consider it as treason to his Church if, in speaking of his Bishop, he did not designate him as the Lord Archbishop of Dublin, or the Lord Bishop of Derry (cheers.) In England the result had been that to the knowledge of every man had been brought a fact which otherwise might have been concealed—that there was in this country, rising and being developed, a power which could not be overcome—the power of that Church of which they had heard and read so much, and of which they saw the great works all around them. That had been the natural result of the agitation. It had also aroused drowsy Catholics and those who felt no zeal for their Faith—it had awakened in them a zeal and earnestness which they had not before—it had thrown Catholics more prominently together, and it had united the Catholics of England and Ireland, Clergy and laity, in a more intimate manner than was ever before known. Now, he had taken a notion that there had been special ingratitude in all this agitation; for, whatever vitality, as it was called, whatever signs of life, whatever disposition there was to do religious works in this country, whatever zeal was manifested for building churches, establishing schools, institutions for visiting the poor, or in any manner attending to the supply of what were called the religious wants of the people, was almost exclusively owing to the contact of Protestants with the Catholic Church. What would the Protestant church have been at that moment but for the presence of the Catholic Church, to keep it in something like life, energy, and animation? (cheers.) How could it go on protesting unless it had its enemy against which to protest? How could there be such places as Exeter Hall, and so many religious societies, and so many motives for collecting money, if they had not Catholicity and Catholics of the land continually to contend against? As, therefore, they were the salt of the Protestant life, as they were necessary to its existence, he thought it exceedingly ungrateful to treat them in the manner they did. Dr. Ullathorne went on to explain that what the Catholic Church wanted was not territorial titles; it was not to be called "Lord, Lord," for which they contended. It was not that which they desired or sought after. "Your Grace," and "My Lord," were the titles which the government readily gave to the Catholic Bishops of Ireland and the colonies, but they were not the titles they contended for in this country. In this country a Catholic Bishop was not a baron, nor did he hold, in any sense of the constitution of England, a territorial title; for a territorial title was one that emanated from the Sovereign; but Catholic titles, which, more correctly speaking, were designa-