

not to those merely partisan organs, of which we have too many specimens amongst us, which find relief after every political reverse in an ostrich-like hiding of the head. Such a paper as the *Times*, varying with the shifting current of upper middle-class opinion, and disclosing especially in its correspondence columns the unbiassed views of the ordinary citizen, supplies an unerring index to the health of the body politic. And in the modern view of history, the spirit in which a rumour was received by a nation (although that rumour afterwards proved unfounded), may be a fact of sufficient importance to be chronicled although the occasion that gave rise to it may sink into utter insignificance.

For example, few things now seem to us more trifling than the so-called "Acts of Aggression" on the part of Cardinal Wiseman, dealt with by Mr. McCarthy in his chapter on "The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill." Slight as they now appear to us, the historian would but ill perform his part if he did not give us a full account of the outburst of indignation that promptly responded to the appeal contained in Lord John Russell's famous Durham letter. We see in that great but aimless movement the evidence of a disturbed and unsettled state of the national mind as to the national religion; the premonitory symptoms of that struggle against Tractarianism which has survived all the original leaders of that school and is now being waged with unabated fury between Ritualists and Evangelicals. In a more benighted age the public wrath that found harmless vent in platform speeches, letters to the *Times*, and endless cartoons and squibs in *Punch*, would have expended itself in more active persecutions, and when the reaction came, it would not have been able to remove all trace of the contest as was done in 1871 by the simple repeal of the effete and foolish Ecclesiastical Titles Bill.

It is not too much to say that modern history is largely indebted to our caricaturists. The main incident of the week, or the chief topic of discussion, is presented in a striking way, and the attitude of the national mind towards it pretty clearly indicated. Looked at in this light, how strange an instance of the irony of fate was it, when the sudden outburst of Jingoism called forth a reproduction of all *Punch's* cartoons upon Lord Beaconsfield! With what a bitter smile must he have looked over

its pages and recognised the fact that the main current of opinion had steadily considered him as a man of broken pledges, and one in whom the strategist outweighed the statesman.

Of the contemporary criticism afforded by such means, Mr. McCarthy has made careful use. His sketches of leading politicians strike us as true as well as life-like, and he has not let his national predilections warp his judgment in estimating Irish orators and statesmen.

It is an interesting and curious fact that it is only men of the Liberal shade of politics who care to undertake the task of bringing our history books down to date. Such a writer was Washington Wilkes, who wrote the useful book called "The Half-Century," which covers the first half of the nineteenth century, in fact he was a little more of a partisan and less of a man of the world than Mr. Justin McCarthy. His work is adapted to fill the place of an introduction to the history now under review, and the two together form the most encouraging study for progressive minds, and the facts they relate explain sufficiently why Conservative historians prefer to draw their inspiration from more remote ages and to depict very different manners and contests in which their defeats have been less marked and conspicuous.

There are a few blots to be noticed in this work. It is hardly correct to describe Lower Canada as "*Western Canada*," and the epithet "*steepy*" as applied to the hilly streets of Quebec is picturesque, but we see no reason why it should displace its old and recognised relation "*steep*." Occasionally Mr. McCarthy indulges in fine writing. "Making the currents of the air man's faithful Ariel," is a description of electricity worthy of a penny-a-liner, and is objectionable as containing the worst faults of cheap journalistic composition. In the first place electricity is *not* an air current, and secondly the jingle of "*air*" and "*Ariel*" has a most unpleasant sound. We also notice the inevitable bull. Speaking of the attempt by Francis on Her Majesty's life, Mr. McCarthy tells us that he fired a pistol at her, and in the same breath he says it was not certain whether the weapon was loaded or not! Of course what he means is 'loaded with ball.'

We shall look forward with much interest to the remaining volumes of this work.