

THE BOASTED PROGRESS OF POPERY—IS IT REAL?

Some publications in the Popish interest, boast of the very marked progress of Popery, and parade long lists of converts, many of them with high-sounding titles. Now the question is "Is the progress of Popery as great as it is represented to be." The subject has been of late carefully investigated, especially by Mr. Lumley, Honorary Secretary of the Statistical Society of London, and according to him, popery has not been making any extraordinary or alarming progress. We do not mean to enter into all his calculations. It is undoubtedly true that numerically the Roman Catholics have greatly increased in England, but that increase is in a great measure owing to the influx of foreigners, French, Italians, Belgians, Poles, Germans, etc., and to the great immigration of Irish Roman Catholics. The following is Mr. Lumley's conclusion:

"Individual cases of conversion, when the persons are of public note and distinguished station, have undoubtedly occurred recently; such examples have indeed, never been rare, and are found not altogether without reciprocity. But there is not the smallest ground for any real alarm as to the progress of the Roman Catholic faith among the English people, or that the English nation is about to return to the spiritual control and subjection from which their ancestors released them three centuries ago. The secessions from the Church of England have been matter of remark; but it will be seen that it is the Protestant Dissenters, and not the Roman Catholics, that have made an appreciable assault upon it."

Evangelical Christendom from which we quote, makes the following remarks:—

This may be substantially correct, and yet leave unimpaired the evidence we have adduced, that Rome is not only up and doing in England, but is making real progress. That matters might be worse is no proof that all is as it should be. If the most any one ventures to maintain is that in England, the head-quarters of the Reformation, Protestantism continues to hold her own against Popery, the fact is sufficiently serious. Be the causes what they may—secession from the Church of England or immigration of Irish and foreign Papists—the attitude of Popery is beyond question more imposing, the power of Rome is indubitably greater, in England at this moment, than has been the case since the seventeenth century. If there is a steady stream of Anglican Evangelicals into the ranks of Protestant Dissent, there is a stream which flows more intermittently, but at times with greater volume, of Tractarians and High-Churchmen into the Church of Rome. Nor are the accessions to Popery to be estimated by mere count of heads: if rank and talent stand for anything in the computation, the advantage will be largely on the side of Rome. Is it pleasant to think of these things? Is it altogether reassuring that the minority of Roman Catholics, so long dwindling in England, has, to say no more, ceased to diminish? Is it creditable to our Protestantism that it has not absorbed the Irish and foreigners who have taken up their abode in Protestant England? Our readers will answer, No, and will ask us what is to be done. Little or nothing, we reply, beyond deepening and clarifying our conceptions of Protestant truth as opposed to Romish corruption, and increasing our zeal in proclaiming an unpolluted, unimpaired, unobscured Gospel to all classes of the people. To look *principally* to the Legislature for aid in the conflict with Rome is the most fatal of mistakes. Essentially the struggle is one of opinion, and in battles of opinion even the *semblance* of force applied or invoked on one side confers an advantage on the other. It is by a courageous and throughgoing Protestantism that Popery can be effectually combated, and intelligent Protestantism has long since declared that, in civil and political relations, Roman Catholics stand on the same footing with