

OLD BELFAST. INTERESTING REMINISCENCES OF NORTHERN PATRIOTISM IN THE LAST CENTURY.

THE BELFAST OF TO-DAY AND THE BELFAST OF 1798—THE PROGRESS IN MANUFACTURES—PUBRICITY—THE REAL REASON OF THE CITY'S PROSPERITY—IN ELDER DAYS—THE VOLUNTEERS AND UNITED IRISHMEN.

Towards the end of the last century Belfast was described by a member of the Irish Parliament, more or less obscure, and we have no reason to doubt the truth of the description, from the honorable member's point of view, as "a nest of patriots as rebellious as a set of quills."

THE INTELLECTUAL TORY will tell you, and tell you with a degree of emphasis that is almost appalling in its solemnity, are due to "No-Popery and the Union." The scarcely less intelligent Whig, who prides himself upon the supposition that, though he is in Ireland, he is not an Irishman, will inform you, with a pomp and grandeur which are intended to overwhelm or bewilder the listener, that they are due to the "Anglo-Saxon" energy of its people, and their appreciation of the fact that Britannia rules the waves, and that Britons, on no consideration whatever, legal or otherwise, will ever consent to be slaves; while, now and again, perhaps you will meet with some superficial philosopher, who whippers in your ear that the above are both wrong, and that the property of Belfast does not depend upon either of these causes, but upon some theological doctrine, more or less startling, such as perhaps a vigorous belief in that phase of fatalism known as predestination.

The Tory, however, talks nonsense when he attributes Belfast's prosperity to the absence of Popery, for there are at least 75,000 distinctly-marked and strictly observant "Papists" among its population, some of them in the foremost rank of trades; and he talks no less nonsense when he attributes it to the Union, for Belfast was a rising and thriving community before the Union. The Whig, and, from an intellectual point of view, and far superior before that event to anything that has ever been since; while the gaseous old Whig who finds in his ethnological theories a solution for every social mystery, is little less away from the real explanation than the theological Rosicrucian who can decide everything by an appeal to the Shorter Catechism, or the Westminster Confession of Faith.

THE FACT is that Belfast is prosperous because it has had opportunities of becoming so which no other town in Ireland has had; and whatever its opportunities, or from whatever complication of causes its prosperity may have arisen, were Ireland as Ireland should be, and were she not so systematically robbed in almost every instance of the honor which is her due, the greatness of Irish industry and genius would not be disregarded in looking for an explanation.

It is not, however, of the overgrown, wealth-ridden, lust-hunting Belfast of the present that I desire to speak. I prefer fancying myself in the Belfast of one hundred years ago, when the "city" of to-day, with its 200,000 inhabitants, was only a small town with little more than 12,000; when wealth was less abundant than war, and when the name of Ireland was honored in it as it was honored in no other town in the land, when hopes which made heroes for the time were swelling in the hearts of its people, and their souls were expanding under the divine impulse of a new national life. I take a walk down a narrow laneway, known then and known still, as "Sugar-house Entry," to an old-fashioned tavern, where, in a small room, sit four men in deep and earnest conversation together. One of them is Wolfe Tone; the others are Henry Joy McCracken, Samuel Nelson and Thomas Russell. Look into that little room now—it is almost in the same condition as it was one hundred years ago; and you could hardly imagine that within its narrow limits was created and planned one of the greatest and most noblest national organizations that ever adorned and dignified the history of any people. For this is the birthplace of THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN; from this dingy retreat was first promulgated the gospel of Irish redemption in the great doctrine of the brotherhood and union of Irishmen of all classes and creeds, and flashed forth over the country, like a divine revelation, from the Causeway to Cape Clear, the vision of an independent Ireland soon to be realized. Here, on a certain evening in the year 1791, set Wolfe Tone and his three comrades, laying, as they fancy thought, in the new social foundation-stone of a nation. How near they were in doing so some of the grandsons of the Belfast people of a hundred years ago, whose first steps in the

way of polite culture are to put off or disguise everything in themselves that they suppose to be Irish, and to assimilate themselves in all things as far as they can, in accent, attitude, and attributes, to the true standard of Britannia's metal, would not almost shake in their West-end boots to think of. But they were near it all the same, and I question if even the great heart of Tone himself, grandly hopeful and heroic as it was, expected that the narrow circle of four who sat that evening around the table of that little room would be expanded so gloriously, or embraced such an area of patriotism and courage as it soon afterwards did. Within a brief period of the formation of the society, the number of United Irishmen in Belfast alone amounted to 2629, well supplied with arms and ammunition; and in county Antrim to 23,000, proportionately well-armed. These items are sufficient to justify the eulogy passed upon Belfast by one who has written in a loving and respectful spirit of what it and the men who dwelt in it were in those days: "Towards the close of the last century, Belfast was the advanced guard in Ireland of political progress." To Belfast is also due the origin of

THE VOLUNTEERS. Here they first assumed an organized military form, and here, in the possession of one of its citizens, a sacred treasure, the roll of the first regiment, dated March 17, 1778, is still preserved. The Volunteers arose in this way. In the beginning of that year Belfast Lough was visited by the famous American privateer, Paul Jones, and the town had a narrow escape from pillage, if not destruction, at his hands. To provide against any similar contingency, the Government were applied to; but the troops to be sent were to be sent from Great Britain was fully occupied, and the Government could do practically nothing for its liege subjects in Belfast. Thereupon, says McNeill, in his "History of the Volunteers," the armed Protestantism of Ireland arose. It should be mentioned that none but Protestants were at first admitted to their ranks; but very shortly restriction was very shortly removed, and so purged of everything like sectarian feeling did they become that we find the Belfast volunteers, who were chiefly Presbyterians, for the purpose of showing their sympathy with their Catholic brethren, attending Mass on Sunday, May 30, 1774, where, it is recorded, they were entertained with a sermon by Rev. Dr. McDonnell, the distinguished author of the toast, "Religion Without Priestcraft."

In 1791 Belfast celebrated, by what was in those days, and for a place at that time so small, a monster demonstration, the anniversary of the "glorious French revolution;" and in the same year we find that the town was so little in Ireland, with the authorities that Mr. Bailin's "don't hesitate to shoot" was anticipated in the directions given to a troop of soldiers about to be quartered there, "not to spare leg, arm or life." There is nothing new under the sun, even in the annals of official cruelty.

CARDINAL GIBBONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE NATION.

Cardinal Gibbons answers, at the instance of the Philadelphia Press, the appended questions:— 1. Whether our Republic would last one hundred years longer; 2. What was the greatest peril that confronts us; and 3. Whether we were in danger of being bought up by foreign syndicates, and through such influences the form of government changed. The Cardinal says:—"To your first question I reply, not only fervently trust but also firmly believe that it will. You ask: 'What is our greatest peril?' I answer, a departure from those Christian principles upon which our very laws and institutions are based. As long as these Christian principles are maintained our institutions will, under God, survive and flourish. Our laws, which are only expressions of Eternal Law, will command our respect, and therefore our loyal obedience. On the other hand, every departure from those Christian principles upon which our social fabric rests, especially in respect of the marriage tie, and the freedom of popular suffrage, tends to loosening of the foundation stones of the Republic. One of the most admirable features of any system of government is the happy balance of Federal power with State autonomy, and so long as this golden mean is observed we shall possess strength, liberty and indestructibility as a great nation. In my judgment we need have no fear of foreign capitalists and foreign syndicates. Those who invest in our public lands and our business enterprises will naturally bring into closer acquaintance with our republican form of government, and there is little doubt that our institutions and our laws will gain upon closer acquaintance. Moreover, the present influx of capital cannot in the nature of things continue. The vendors will themselves soon be in competition with foreign investors, so as to obtain, in their turn, profitable investments. This influx of capital is, according to my view, a positive benefit rather than a peril to large areas of our undeveloped continent."

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DEFICIENCIES OF ENGLISH CATHOLICS.

REDEMPTION OF ROME.

On Sunday evening after Vespers the Rev. Walter Cooke Robinson began a course of sermons in St. John's Church, Duncaen Terrace, Ilkington. Dealing with the doctrine of the continuance of the Catholic Church, he said that that night they had to speak of Almighty God's greatest miracle. The Catholic preacher in England had always before him a tremendous difficulty, and it was this: The English mind was not a theological mind.

English people could do business well, they were uncommonly sharp, and had a great deal of common sense, and knew a good shilling from a bad one as well as any people under the sun. However, they could not have anything. Perhaps theology was not a national gift. The Spaniards had a theological mind unquestionably, and almost all the great theologians came from Spain. The Italian mind was a wonderfully theological mind, and if he were dealing with these people he would have as easier a task to fulfill than he had when dealing with Englishmen. Three hundred years ago heresy had so eliminated the Catholic sense from amongst Englishmen that it was almost impossible to teach them theology. He had heard a priest once say, throwing up his hands, "I perfectly despair of getting the faith into some of the lower orders of the people." He would ask them, then, to try and look into that matter with him, and to deal with the world in following him. Englishmen were generally tired at evening; their labors were very heavy, and he did not wonder at a man therefore taking rest on Sunday. English people had another characteristic, and that was, that they were fond of listening but not fond of preaching. Let them not think that they could come and hear the word of God, and go away without responsibility. He would put before them, then, two wonderful studies of history.

He would call the first the City of Man, and then show them what a feat it was for the City of God to establish itself in its place. They knew that 4,000 years at least had elapsed before the time of our Lord's arrival upon the earth. Why did such a weary long time elapse before the coming of Christ? He could not answer that question fully. It had not been revealed, and therefore it was impertinent for any one to try and give a fuller answer to it. God, in His wisdom and foreknowledge, wished man's human intellect and will to do its best against Him. Why should man's will act against Him? Because human nature was fallen. How, ever, he (the preacher) would not go into that matter. The human intellect was prone to error, and the human will was prone to vice. Let them take the Roman Empire, which was pre-eminently the City of Man, as distinguished from the City of God. They could not, as students of history in all antiquity, find an empire equal in its splendor to Rome. Let them look at that beautiful city. How had it risen? It was the first city to live in, and that Oxford was the second. But, alas! it was only the other day that he was reading a letter from a dear friend, and he said, "Don't come to Rome. They have spoiled it; they have taken away I do not know how many antiquities." Anyhow it was the most interesting city of antiquity. Was there any power so perfect or absolute as the power of CAESAR? There never was seen an army equal to the imperial army of Rome. Even that great army—the German army—was not to be compared to the marvellous discipline of the Roman army. The jurisdiction was just and equitable. Even the foundation of modern jurisdictions was not to be compared to it. The law was just and strong for the redress of every grievance, and most extraordinary to say, there was a great toleration of religion. Rome tolerated all religions but one. That was then the bright side, the glorious side of Rome—the great city of man. Let them look at the dark side of it. Man talked of absolute monarchs. There was not a slave upon her that had not been one of tyranny, and would not be again. Men talked of the rights of every citizen, of wealth and dignity, and of putting the people in their places. Tyranny would never pass from the earth. But the tyranny of Rome was tyranny over the slave. Rome at one time had more slaves than free men by scores. A woman was called the chattel of the household, and was treated as such. God willed for the perfect establishment on earth of the great, mighty, self-sustaining of human nature. Then, and not till then, in the fulness of time, did He come. What was it that usurped dominion over the city of man, and planted itself in its streets and ways, and eventually obliterated it, notwithstanding its force? What was it that played upon the great assertion of human nature, and caused it to pass away, and live but a moment in history? A poor Child was born of a

woman in the darkest, most remote, and obscure corner of the Roman empire. That Child grew up and lived for thirty years an absolutely secluded life as a village carpenter. He went forth before the world and preached for three years, and was placed as the scorned of men on the bitter cross, and died a shameful death. He was put into a grave, He arose again and went to heaven, and nothing more was seen of Him. That was the foundation of the city of God.

WHY SHOULD HE GO FURTHER? Could they not see, if they put away prejudice, that that was literally a statement of the two forces, the one the city of man, the other the city of God, the one the temple of the beginning, and the other with its splendid series of prophecies fulfilled—the outcome of three empires that went before it. They had had the fact already that a Child was born of a poor woman; that, crucified and rejected of men, He had triumphed over Caesar, and had made him as a dead thing. Let them look into detail, and they would be able to bring the wonder of that into greater relief. The difficulties before the Christian religion were three, taking them in the abstract. The City of God was to establish a control over men. It was to subject the human mind to the obedience of the faith—that was to say, to forbid the exercise of private judgment, and to submit the intellect to teaching and authority of Christ. The self-will of the human intellect was almost impossible to overcome. What, then, was the aggregate human will of men all over the world? How could He say, "I command you to give Me your will," but He had done it? Father Robinson then proceeded to show the many difficulties which our Lord had to encounter in teaching His doctrines. Passing on to the establishment of the City of God instead of the City of Man, he said if men told him that reason alone and human experience could account for that establishment he would not believe it. No child of the faith would believe it. Sometimes as he read that beautiful study, the Church history, he thought of that game which young men now a days played—football. God Almighty let His Church down amongst men to be

crushed, crushed, and handed about, but not torn. Human nature, music, and faculty had tried its best to destroy it, and men learned they could not do it. Having dealt with the invasions against the Church he asked, Where was Protestantism at the present time? Where was the Catholic Church? Protestantism today was all sizes and seven. They had had plenty of it before them in England of late. What about the Law Court and the poor Bishop who was brought before it, and what about the pronouncement of the so called head of the Church? Did Protestants believe that pronouncement? They believed it if it suited them, but they had not yet made up their minds about truth. Protestantism was a mere pandemonium. There was a bit of bigotry in England still against the Catholic Church, and the Government would have no more support from him after what it did the other day. There were a great many other people, too, who would not forget what the Government had done. LET MEN GO ANYWHERE OVER THE FACE OF THE EARTH and they could not get away from the Catholic priest and the Catholic altar. Was it not wonderful, then, notwithstanding the terrible persecutions against the Catholic Church, that there was a shred of it left. But it was spread over the world at the present time in such vigor and life as it has never known before, and there never was a Pope who had such influence over people as the present one had. The Catholic Church had been kicked about for nineteen hundred years, and yet it was triumphant. He could think of no greatest miracle, and if he did surpass all these difficulties was it likely that anything in the world would overcome her?

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