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EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER TO THE RIGHT HON. DUNCAN MACLAREN, LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH, ON EDUCATION,

BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP GILLIS.

The following letter, though more particularly alluding to the difficulties under which the Catholics of Scotland labor, will not be devoid of interest to the Catholics of Canada; for the principles which His Lordship lays down, are of universal application, and to be insisted upon in Canada, as well as in Scotland. We copy from the *Catholic Standard*:—

My Lord Provost—“We can all see very clearly an injustice done to ourselves, although we cannot see so clearly an injustice which we do to other people.” If the *Scotsman's* report be a correct one, the above words were spoken lately by your Lordship, while reviewing in the Town Council the Lord Advocate's proposed Educational Bill for Scotland. There is much truth in those few words, my Lord; and as I believe them, moreover, to have been uttered by your Lordship in all sincerity, I am sure you will not deem any apology necessary on my part, for venturing thus openly to comment upon them here; if even to show how strikingly you yourself, whilst sitting in judgment on the Lord Advocate's measure, have been unconsciously led to exemplify the moral they convey. Of the Bill itself, as it ought to be, in as far as affecting the religious interests of the various Protestant Churches now at war about its merits, I presume not to speak. I leave to those whose privilege it is to differ from one another in religious teaching, to agree how they can best organise a homogenous system of popular education, in which that privilege shall be respected, while its practical inconveniences are satisfactorily disposed of.

I meddle not here, then, my Lord, with such mighty questions as, how far, as a general principle, it may lie within the legitimate attributes of a government to supersede the freedom of parental authority, and to control what is termed the education of a people; or, how far, where compelled to assume such authority, in order to prevent a nation from lapsing into barbarism, it may be easy for a government to satisfy all parties, before coming to a decision. I take the determination embodied in the Lord Advocate's Bill as “*un fait accompli*.” Whether rightfully and advisedly, or not, the country is clearly in for a parliamentary measure on education, for which all of us are to pay—and which ought, therefore, to be based, as your Lordship well observes, “on a fair principle.” The question, then, my Lord, now is, with us Catholics, as well as with your Lordship and the voluntaries;—what are we to get for our money? or, are we to be made to pay for what we don't want; nay, for that to which we conscientiously object?

I acquit you, my Lord, of all intention to injure others, for I believe you when you say, “The point on which I feel most interested, and most anxious that a satisfactory arrangement should be made to, is the religious difficulty, as it has been called, and called very truly—the religious difficulty which occurs in clause 27.” As a Christian man, you have stated your religious scruples in reference to this clause; and as a rate payer, you have grounded on said scruples your claim to be heard. Now, my Lord, in your fairness, *audi alteram partem*; and although “you have great objections to Roman Catholicism,” yet, in your anxiety “that a satisfactory arrangement should be made to in this religious difficulty,” pray bear with the recital of our conscientious scruples; since we, too, are to be rate payers, and feel no more inclined than you do, to pay for what we don't want, or cannot approve of.

Modify, then, as you may, clause 27 of the Bill, we tell you, my Lord, at the outset, that with us Catholics the religious difficulty inherent to the principle of a common school, never can be made to disappear; and that we never can, and never will, send our children to a school of which the master is not a Catholic, approved by his Bishop, or by those representing his Bishop's spiritual authority; and in which secular, as well as religious instruction, is not imparted to the scholars, in the unmistakable and untrammelled spirit of Catholic teaching. “Oh! the intolerant bigot,” methinks I hear some good people here exclaim; “this is ever the way with ‘Popery’; a popish Bishop's cry is in all ages the same—*aut Caesar aut nullus*.” My Lord, we Catholics have long been accustomed to hard names. In the present instance, therefore, I shall simply repeat what was said long ago, beneath the threat of an uplifted stick, “Strike, if you will; but listen.”

The reason, my Lord, why we never can agree with Protestantism of any shade, in the conducting of a common school, such as proposed in the Bill now

before the public, is, that our ideas on the subject of education are not only not consonant with yours, but are in many essential things, irreconcilably-antagonistic. The very point from which we start, differs “*toto celo*” from yours. For instance, the most incontrovertible maxim that could be inscribed on your school-room walls is that “Knowledge is power;” now, rather than admit without ample comment and restriction any such pasted adage amidst our school-room appendages, we Catholics would hang it up at once on a branch of the forbidden tree. With Protestants, again, education seems to be a divisible compound; a thing made up on the one hand of reading, writing, history, and geography, book-keeping, chemistry, vocal music, and the multiplication table; and on the other, of the study of the Scriptural books, and of the Shorter Catechism.

With Catholics, my Lord, education is held to be a widely different matter. Under no conceivable circumstances can education with us be ever disembodied from what we believe to be religion. It eats of its bread, it drinks of its cup, and even sleeps within its bosom. There are no separate chambers in the brain of a Catholic child, wherein to stow a part from each other, the treasures of secular and religious knowledge. Both must be harvested together, as is the stem of corn with the spike that crowns it; as holding by each other, organically, if I may so express it, and as hourly influencing, not the intellect only, but the heart and conduct of the recipient.—Ours again, my Lord, is a religion that cannot be taught from books only, or through the comparatively frigid medium of mere oral instruction. We too use catechism, it is true, but we require more than a bare exposition, or committal to memory of either catechisms, or Holy Scripture. Religion, in the Catholic acceptance of the word, is as a second breath from above; breathed, as it were, into the face of our every faculty, to carry new life into all. No power of the soul is allowed to escape its influence; it absorbs the whole of man, and moulds him into a new being. His understanding, his memory, his imagination, his feelings, his very outward senses, all are subjected to its heavenly spell. Hence religion with Catholics is daily taught, in acts which mix themselves up with the discipline of the school-room, as essentially as they do with the public services of the Church, the preparation for its sacraments, or the daily religious exercises that go with us to make up the sum of a Christianly spent life.

The educational training of a soldier is not that of a civilian; nor is the fashioning of a Quaker that of a Church of England Divine. Why, then, with all deference to the Church of Scotland, should a Catholic be cast in a Presbyterian mould?

Besides, my Lord, is the Protestant version of the Bible, may I ask, to be continued, as a school book, within the new common school you contemplate? Or is that hitherto essential feature of a Protestant school to be dispensed with for the future? I fear, my Lord, such a change as this would defy the united efforts of all the Voluntaries and secularists in creation. And would you, then, really make it incumbent upon Catholics, not only so far to pay for the printing of said version, but incumbent, moreover, upon their children to read it? No, my Lord, we Catholics will eschew the alphabet, rather than learn our letters in your Protestant Bible. As for our own, we venerate it too deeply, ever to allow it to be degraded to the level of a spelling-book, or to expose it to be flung about as a missile in school-room warfare, or kicked along the boards of a school-room floor. “All things,” at any rate, as that Bible tells us, “are not expedient for all” (Ecclesi. xxxii., 31); and you cannot but be aware, that there are many passages throughout the general Scriptures that were never intended for the forming of youth; and which, among the Jews, to whom the Scriptures were as dear as they can be to Protestants, were never permitted to be perused by youthful eyes.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that what I have said above, in reference to Catholic school practices, is in itself of little or no moment; and that, under the new system of common schools, Catholic children are not, at any rate, to have the Protestant Scriptures thrust upon their reverence; nor even to be called upon to live within the hum of the Shorter Catechism; in a word, that no bread is to be broken to them there, but of what is technically called “Secular Knowledge.” Still, my Lord, I fear we are about as far asunder as ever.

To select here, for illustration sake, two or three instances only of what are usually termed branches of secular knowledge—Geography, say, is one; History is another; Physiology is a third. (See Reports of Williams' Secular School.)

Geography, in itself, is, no doubt, a very innocuous pursuit. The most fiery zealot may beneficially cool his polemics, while leisurely travelling over a chart of the world; and the most timid maiden may there

wend her way unharmed, from Morocco to Siberia, or from Boothia Felix to Cape Horn. Still, as geography cannot well be taught without maps, and as its study would, at the best, be to a great degree a barren one, if altogether disjoined from that of the different races inhabiting the globe—their religion, their habits, their laws, and their government; it is not quite beyond the range of possibility, that alluring, for instance, as may be the fair lands of Italy in their reminiscences of art, a Protestant professor, of less imaginative power than constitutional loyalty, should feel more habitually inclined to dwell upon politics than painting; nay, make for himself abundant opportunities of mourning, in a general way, over the liberties of the subject, and, under cover of the Sovereign of the Roman States, of having a fling at the Pope. I mentioned maps;—why, my Lord, the very coloring of some among your Protestant maps, is intended to throw dirt upon the religion of a Catholic. (See those colored maps and diagrams, purporting to illustrate, through their different shades, the comparative civilisation of various countries.)

Yet, may not History be fairly taught to a Catholic child, although his instructor be a Protestant? Poor History! it has been sadly mauled. It will never be forgiven within a Protestant school, for making Martin Luther only three hundred years old. No, my Lord, History never can be taught fairly to a Catholic child by a Protestant teacher; for the very documents that go to establish the hereditary claims of the pupil, would throw the master out of court.

But Physiology, at least; surely that may be desecrated on by a Protestant schoolmaster, without wounding the delicacy of Catholic nerves? It may, my Lord, or it may not. Much, at any rate, must here depend on the tact, as well as on the moral habits of the teacher. Now, whatever the intrinsic value of religious tests, the Bill provides no safeguard against the schoolmaster being an unbeliever in those eternal truths which alone can control the conscience of man;—and in the not impossible case of his being such, what guarantee have you as to his morals?

There is another passage in your Lordship's speech on Tuesday last, which goes to justify an additional, and a very serious Catholic objection to the system of common schools: that which naturally arises out of the danger to be apprehended from the possible personal influence of the schoolmaster. In as far as any similar objection seems to have suggested itself to your Lordship's mind, you forewarn us of its occurrence, only as in connection with the duties of the teacher, while giving to his pupils what you technically denominate “religious instruction.”

You have “great objections” to Puseyism, because to Roman Catholicism you have greater ones still; and Puseyism lives so near it. You dread our influence, in a word, and you proclaim it openly; but you are far from having measured the extent to which that influence may be exercised through the agency of a schoolmaster. Without tarrying, then, to inquire what truth there may be in the family resemblance, or street proximity you seem to think you have detected between the *ism* of Oxford and the Catholic Church; let me open your eyes to the fact, that you very much underrate the danger you so “greatly dislike,” if you imagine that it is only while engaged *ex professo* in what you would call his “religious teaching,” that a Puseyite schoolmaster may have it in his power to damage in time the Presbyterian orthodoxy of the daily attendants at his secular lectures.

There are within the walls of a school-room, unseen attractions that draw mind to mind, and unwoven ties that bind heart to heart, a kind of freemasonry of souls, if I may so express it, that is incessantly at work, between age and childhood; whether the lesson happens to turn on Divine Relation, or the mechanism of a steam loom. The mental and moral faculties of a child are ever bent, as it were, on a voyage of discovery. The wide field of knowledge is before the little man, like an enchanting region he is anxious to explore; and in his daily excursions, his instructor is his guide. Hence a feeling of mutual interest naturally springs up between teacher and school-boy. The latter first learns to admire, then loves and trusts his master; and soon he becomes at his hands unconsciously susceptible of an occult yet real influence, that gradually imparts a coloring to a thought, and a character to feeling, and a weight to convictions, and leaves its mark upon a life; and of which it is impossible otherwise to speak than in the language of Scripture,—that it is, as it were, virtue or power, going out of the master, to mould into beauty, or to contort into ugliness; to heal or to kill. Depend upon it, my Lord, all this is to be dreaded from a Puseyite schoolmaster; and slender indeed will your protection be against the charm, if you have no other “safeguard” than to be able to say to him for one half-hour in the day; “We don't like your religious teaching; and

we therefore object to pay for it, the quarterly fees are three shillings, deduct threepence for conscience sake.” But all this schoolmaster influence, we Catholics, my Lord, believe to be as inherent to a Presbyterian pedagogue, as it may be to a Puseyite; and hence with us another strong ground of objection even to his secular teaching.

Our Religion, my Lord, would be from home in your common school-room,—and with us, Religion ever sits at the master's desk; nay, even forms a part of our school-room furniture. There would be there, again, a class-book which our children could not conscientiously read; and for the printing of which their parents as decidedly object to pay, as you Voluntaries would do for a Puseyite catechism. There would be there, in fine, the influence of a Protestant schoolmaster; and the weakness, my Lord, is, you know, a common one to human nature,—we have all our dislikes.

Common schools, my Lord Provost, would be impossible amongst us, if from no other reason,—pardon my plain speaking—from the maniacal dread of Rome, which for the last some fifty moons, seems to have seized upon, and altogether warped for the time, the intellect of this otherwise rational and generous-hearted country. Let me put it to your Lordship thus. Are you prepared to satisfy us, that, supposing the Catholics of Scotland could, and did make up their minds to support this same Educational Bill, as you would have it amended; there would be an end at once to all polemical agitation and religious animosity throughout the land?—that all anti-popery newspapers would cease to appear?—that all anti-popery meetings would cease to be convened?—that all anti-popery advertisements would give up the ghost in the *gratis* Saturday sheet, and that all anti-popery placards would be banished from our walls?—that popular writers, with powers to depict the charms of peace, as with feather plucked from angel's wing, would no longer periodically pander to vulgar prejudice, and they too consent to dip their pen in the dirty puddle of sectarian strife; while clergymen editors would cease to interfere with *Punch's* province, and, with better than their present breeding, abstain from caricaturing due religious services of their neighbors? Will you satisfy us, my Lord, that, once this Bill past, Bible Societies will cease to speak about anything but bibles; that Tract Societies will no longer issue for the million, their delicate appreciations of Catholic persons and Catholic things; that the Reformation Society will forthwith wind up its accounts; that the great Protestant Alliance will break up its cohorts, and your platform champions of every recognisance turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles, and not exercise the nation any longer to war? Yet, with any thing short of such a wholesale change in national usage, do you candidly believe that the war-woop of religious discord will ever cease to reverberate from pulpit to hustings, and from parlor to kitchen, till it reaches at length the babes of the nursery, and the shoeless urchins of the streets? And is it in the face of such national pastimes as these, that you seriously contemplate a national Educational System, which is to include in its teaching Catholics and Protestants alike? All impossible things, it is true, become possible in a dream, and wise men sometimes dream with their eyes wide open. But if we Scottish Catholics are ever to be included in a National System of Education, of which the teaching is to be agreed upon and carried out “on a fair principle;” that system, believe me, will be reducible to practice, when Knox's name shall have found place in the Roman Calendar, and the Pope shall have signed the Solemn League and Covenant. Better far, my Lord Provost, fall back on our own Edinburgh—*Nisi Dominus frustra*; and pray to God in all earnestness, to build up for us walls for which we have no longer ourselves any adhesive cement. Or, if you can in any way contrive to fence round your own Zion, yours, by all means, be the city; we shall rest contented to dwell in the suburbs, nor complain of our quarters, provided the tax roll be equitably adjusted.

If while for ever clamoring against us for not educating our poor children, you still grudge us the modest allowance now distributed to our schools, because it comes, forsooth, out of the public purse—as if nothing ever found its way into that purse from Catholic pockets; let the fallen crumbs be picked up, and laid again upon your table; let us, if you will, have nothing from the public but public abuse; but let us not in our poverty be subjected to a double tax—taxed, in the first instance, to supply schools for ourselves, and taxed again to build up others for you, which our children could never enter. Deeply thankful as we feel for the unrestricted boon we are now in receipt of, at the hands of Government; let it, if necessary to quiet the “tender consciences” of Vo-