



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. I.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 11, 1851.

NO. 48.

THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND.

(Concluded.)

Still less may we hope to make any impression upon the bigotry or ignorance of our fellow-countrymen; by pandering to that very bigotry and ignorance itself. The most short-sighted of all devices for the conversion of England, is the Protestantising of Catholicism. Failure and contempt are the only fruits to be reaped from a system of compromise.—While we attempt to deceive man, we dishonor God; and as we have no right to expect the Divine blessing, so we are quite sure, to fail of winning earthly honor. What Englishmen need is to see what the Catholic religion really is, and not to what extent it may be assimilated to Protestantism. We must not suffer ourselves to be deluded by the dreams of a few Anglican divines, who call upon the Church of Rome to return to a primitive purity, and to meet the Established Church half way. These men of books and fancies do not represent the English people.—England cares not a straw for such compromise. England knows too well that Catholicism and Anglicanism are two distinct religions, opposed to each other in mortal feud. She will not be deceived by a few men of books; and suppose that a reconciliation between the Church of Pius the Ninth and the Church of Queen Victoria is a possibility, or that there is any affinity between the Thirty-nine Articles and the Decrees of Trent. The popular mind cares nought for an arbitration between the two creeds; and the more each one of them attempts to copy the peculiarities of the other, and make itself look less like what it really is, the more undisguised is the contempt which Englishmen feel for the promoters of such folly. What England wants to learn is, which of the two religions is the true one, and not how far they are alike. And as England has scorned, rejected, and trampled upon Puseyism, even while listening to its expostulations, and granting much that it urged, so will she deride and turn away from every Catholic who tries to lull her watchfulness by suggestions that Popery is not so very Popish, and that Catholicism in England may lawfully be a very different thing from Catholicism in Italy and Spain.

Truth, be it ever remembered, gains nothing by being made to look like falsehood. The religion of Jesus Christ is much better adapted to win the hearts of men when left as its divine Author framed it, than when "improved" by a few suggestions from Luther or Calvin. Almighty God has promised no blessing to Anglicised Catholicism. Therefore, let us beware of encouraging the notion that the private judgment of individuals is a fit test of doctrine, because Protestants like to hear Scripture quoted for every thing. Let us beware of paring down our words of veneration and love for the Saints to that frigid decency which Tractarianism will applaud, and men of the world count harmless. Let us ever pray under an overpowering recollection that prayer is an intercourse between God and ourselves alone, and that Protestant objections to our devotions, or misapprehensions of their meaning, must be ignored and forgotten. Let us eschew all false nationalism, and take heed of pretending that we esteem the temporal authority of a king or parliament of higher importance than the spiritual authority of the Viceroy of Jesus Christ.—Let us never be ashamed of owning that we are Catholics, or entreat our clergy not to appear in their ecclesiastical dress. Let us cast off that odious conceit with which sometimes English Catholics have revered a British Protestant as something wiser and nobler than a continental Catholic. Let us bend all our energies to show to our fellow-countrymen what our religion is, when freed alike from the worldly-corruptions and Protestant latitudinarianism which sometimes dishonor its followers. Such a system as this England will at least respect. She will account us to be honest men while we pursue it; she will honor our courage, even while she fears our advances; for if there is one infirmity for which she has no compassion, it is cowardice; if there is one fault which she denounces, it is deception.

All this, at the same time, by no means implies that we ought to pay no heed to those more peculiarities of nations or individuals which have no connexion with a false religion. As it has pleased Almighty God to make no two individuals precisely alike, so there are certain deeply seated characteristics attaching to every separate race of men, of which it would be folly, and worse than folly, to take no account.—Climate, geographical position, past history, political institutions, commerce and literature; these and other such influences stamp upon our people certain definite features of character which demand our most careful attention. And when these things can be respected without the fostering some latent heresy or moral delusion, the wise Catholic missionary will never put himself into opposition with them. What he would do in Italy, or in Spain, or in France, or in China, he would never attempt in England; and what he would

count of little moment in a foreign clime and a Catholic country, he will sometimes bend all his energies to accomplish in the midst of established Protestantism, and beneath the political liberty and murky skies of Britain. All we plead for is, that the Catholic religion shall be exhibited precisely as she is, without caricature, or exaggeration, or diminution. We no more desire to see every minute continental custom or rite introduced in England, than we desire to see the Catholic clergy walk about in a Chinese costume, because they dress themselves like Chinamen in China. And so, on the other hand, we deprecate every modification of the ordinary Catholic system—of Catholic prayers and Catholic social life—merely because Protestants will take offence, and think evil of our religion.

Where, then, lastly, shall we turn for arguments, and for a practical system which shall open the eyes of England to the truth? Our reply is but one brief sentence. Let the Church claim her rights, and do her duty to her own children, and England will bow down and hail her as its mistress and its mother.—The human heart and intellect in England are accessible to those proofs alone which have ever been the credentials of the ambassadors of Christ. Let us put forth our claims, not merely by asserting them, but by showing that we alone can teach England what is the true word of God; by forcing men to see that without that gift of infallibility which all other religions disown, the religion of Jesus Christ is an actual mockery; and let us confirm our claims by those simple proofs to which our blessed Lord and the Apostles appealed as furnishing conviction to the most simple and the most ignorant. Whatever be our duty in a few exceptional cases, let us act towards the great body of the people on the example of Jesus Christ; what He did, let us do, and we shall share his triumphs. He came, at once claiming authority to be heard, pointing to his works of grace and love, trusting to his divine words to make their way direct to his hearers' hearts; and, if they would not thus be convinced, appealing as a last proof to the miracles which He wrought, He expounded his doctrines; He showed the Jews their blessedness; He commanded them to obey Him; and as tokens that He was to be obeyed, He said, "Go and tell what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them." This was the only proof He vouchsafed that He came from God; and with this proof we can still convince this unbelieving nation that we too come from Him, and, coming from Him, come from God. This is the only argument which the immense majority of men are thoroughly capable of appreciating; and as it has a divine origin, so also it is instinct with a divine power. It is an exhibition of that one "note" of the Church which alone can be rationally investigated and mastered by the whole of mankind. The holiness of the Church, which she thus proves herself to possess, is a mark of her divine origin, which goes straight to the conscience of the humblest of the sons of men, and is an unanswerable proof that she presents herself with a divine authority. The investigation of the other three great notes of the Church, her unity, her apostolicity, and her catholicity, requires a far larger amount of learning and acuteness than is possible, except to the studious few. Her "unity," indeed, may be to a certain extent appreciated, and, undeniably, it will ever be found most profitable to enforce it upon Protestants of all kinds, because they are not altogether without means for fairly testing the truth of what we allege. There is not a street in a country town which does not, as far as it goes, prove that the Catholic Church alone is One, both in doctrine and discipline. As far as his own limited experience can inform him, there is scarcely a peasant or mechanic in the land who does not perceive that while the variations of Protestantism are boundless, and its discipline little better than anarchy, Catholics do agree in doctrine, and submit themselves to a living and clearly ascertained authority. Thus far, therefore, the note of "unity" is one which can be urged upon Englishmen of all classes, with the most perfect argumentative fairness, and without claiming from them any irrational assent to our personal assertions.

But as an instrument for carrying irresistible conviction to the judgment, and for winning the affections of the heart, the note of "sanctity" is unrivalled in its conquering power. It needs not the wisdom of the worldly-prudent, the accomplishments of the scholar, or the profound reasonings of the metaphysician, to be thoroughly mastered, and to be accepted with a homage as rational as it is humble.—Man knows, in spite of all sophists, that a religion which can conquer sin must be divine. Every false religion finds its strength in its imitation of this sanctifying strength of the Catholic Church. It is only because Anglicanism, Methodism, Presbyterianism, Socinianism, or any other similar creed, confers, or

seems to confer, a certain measure of holiness and peace of conscience on its adherents, that it makes its way among men. In the absence of that entire mastery over the temptations and sorrows of human nature which the Catholic Church alone can bestow, man, groaning, weeping, and struggling with his destiny and with himself, yields his respect and love to any creed which first presents itself, and claims to work those blessings which he knows that a divine religion must accomplish, or it would be no religion after all. And it is because the mind of England at this very moment has detected every one of the creeds of Protestantism in failing to accomplish this sanctifying mission, that it is preparing to give the Catholic Church a fair trial; and if she does what Protestantism has failed to do, England will bow down, and kiss the hem of her garment, and hail her as the one true Church of the living God. The incontrovertible fact that the Reformation has now had three hundred years' trial, and has left the enormous mass of the people to become practically heathens, has taught every candid man to question whether, after all, the Reformation was not a frightful curse upon this kingdom. Men turn their eyes around them, and behold millions upon millions of their fellows, including almost the whole body of the actual poor, lost in sin and desolation, so far as the Established Church and Dissent do ought to help them. While the elements of social dissolution are daily gathering strength, and a raging tempest threatens to engulf us together in the abyss, Protestantism stands aghast and powerless, now crying out that nothing is done, and that nothing can be done; now calling on the State to interfere and save men's souls; now denouncing the machinations of Papists; now confessing that, with all her abominations, Popery alone possesses the courage and the power to confront vice in its most hideous haunts, and alone seems to ride upon the storm, while every human institution is merged beneath the waves.

When, therefore, this country shall see our blessed Lord's description of His own works apply, in all their spiritual meaning, to the Catholic Church in England, England will own that with that Church alone Christ is still present. "Art thou she that has come, or do we look for another?" is the question that our anxious fellow-countrymen are putting, in their secret hearts, to Catholicism in England. And it is for us to take care that it shall be in our power to point out to her the miracles of divine grace which testify our mission from the Saviour of the world. It is for us to put forth all our hidden strength for the redemption of our own children from ignorance and sin; to make the blind see, and the lame walk, and the deaf hear, in London, and Liverpool, and Manchester, and in all those densely thronged spots where poor Catholics are congregated in all the misery, and almost all the vices, of heathenism. It is for us to reply, that though we can only appeal to a few miracles of bodily healing, yet that the miracles of grace with us are unbounded, and open to every eye. It is for us to grave upon our churches, and write in our books, and proclaim in our speech, these great and glorious words—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them." It is for us to be in a situation to say, that whatsoever there be most proud in man's heart, most acute and learned in his intellect, and most sinful in his soul, all this meets with its master and its remedy within our sacred pale; to point to the success with which, while Protestantism and unbelief are powerless to cope with the agonies of the time, we succeed in our efforts to preserve, guide, sanctify and elevate our children, upheld by that same mysterious charm with which, both in primitive and mediæval times, the Church fought the world and won the victory. Here is the weapon of controversy which we can wield with irresistible power. Here is the sword, tempered in the furnace of the love of God, which will smite asunder prejudice, and bigotry, and pride, and wordliness. Here is that argument which is not more simple than it is irrefragable; which is as truly in harmony with man's innate instincts as with the example of Jesus Christ and the practice of the Church in her happiest times. Here is the logical proof which requires neither study, nor learning, nor striking ability, to comprehend; for it is that one argument which, above all others, Almighty God himself has bid us enjoy, and which He himself has promised to bless.

When, then, the hour has arrived when English Catholicism has accomplished her appointed duties to her own children, we shall expect to see the prayers for the conversion of England receive an abundant, and it may be, an instantaneous answer. When our children are all educated; when our churches are multiplied and our confessionals thronged, until not a Catholic remains who is not a wilful sinner solely through his own fault; when the terrible tokens that we think of the rich before the poor are swept away from our churches, and, still more, from our hearts; when the astounding ignorance of their religion, its

doctrines and its duties, which now prevails among so many of our better-conducted and more wealthy Catholics, is no longer our reproach and our sorrow; when our communions are increased tenfold; when the blessed Sacrament of the Altar is visited and adored by crowds of worshippers in every mission throughout the land; when the whole heart of our people turns with deeper and more tender love to the Mother of God, and ceases not to invoke her aid for the conversion of the nation,—then, and not till then, may we hope to behold the idols of mammon and heresy fall prostrate before the living God—then once more will the Philistines, when they enter into the temple of Dagon, behold their God dashed down upon the earth, and shattered into pieces before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts.

CATHOLIC DEFENCE ASSOCIATION.

(From the Dublin Freeman.)

If the present penal threats of the English Parliament should be the happy occasion of bringing about a real and lasting union of the Catholics of the kingdom in defence of their civil and religious rights, and we feel assured it will, we shall have cause to bless the Premier for the fanaticism which his memorable letter has created. No doubt the Whig party fancied that the vital energies of the Irish nation were crushed out by the terrible famine of the last five years. Otherwise we cannot imagine infatuation more intense than the attempt to involve Ireland in the results of an act, which, even if wrong, should extend its consequences only to England. What had the Irish people or the Irish Bishops to do with the creation of a hierarchy with episcopal titles in England? Why should the creation and residence of a Cardinal in England affect the position of the Irish church? English statesmen may attempt to delude the public by referring to the Synod of Thurles, and the influence of its teachings upon the educational systems with which they are endeavoring to debauch Catholic youth, and obliterate every feeling of nationality from their young aspirations. But, whether right or wrong in our conjecture, we cannot help feeling that the real motive of including the Irish Bishops in the penalties sought to be imposed upon English ecclesiastics, was to destroy one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the separate nationality of Ireland. It looks like a new feature in their policy of centralisation. Every separate landmark of nationality must be taken away one after another. The total amalgamation of the two countries, not for the benefit of both, but for the further aggrandisement of England, has been, and continues to be, the dearest object of ambition to successive British statesmen.

The abolition of the office of the Lord Lieutenantcy—the removal of the law courts—the removal or the extinction of the public charitable institutions of the Irish metropolis—are all but so many developments of this policy of obliteration. One grand monument remains, of some fourteen hundred years standing, with its foundations deeply laid in the Irish soil, defying the efforts of time and the storms of English hostility. Like an oak of the forest, spreading its branches wide, to shelter and protect its smaller neighbors of the grove, the Irish Church and its Hierarchy have been always found the best protecting agency against the repeated invasions of England even upon the civil rights of this country. The English government feels this. They hate to see this stumbling block constantly in their path. They well remember the power this Church wielded when guided by the immortal Liberator. Hence their wish to curtail its powers, and to cramp the free actions of its episcopacy and clergy. Hence their desire to blend it with the English Catholic Church, and thus obliterate the most splendid monument of the distinct nationality of Ireland.

These repeated attempts to annihilate the national landmarks should prove to all Irishmen the necessity of thorough union amongst themselves. As English interests are brought to play an antagonistic part with every national interest in Ireland, why not unite and foster and bring to maturity a spirit racy of the soil—a spirit of resistance to English bigotry and to English griping centralisation? Already has the English policy received a salutary lesson in the unpurchasable integrity and the determined boldness of the noble band of Irish members who have hitherto done battle against the insulting attack upon the Catholicity of Ireland. Backed up by the national will and aid of Ireland, we trust they will triumph, not only in the present, but in future warfare against the tyrannical doings of England.

The resistance to this last attempt will, however, prove more serious than was anticipated. The organisation for the "Catholic Defence Association" is progressing most favorably. Upwards of twenty members of parliament have already given their adhesion—eighteen of the Irish bishops likewise have joined the confederacy. In a few weeks more