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THE NEW COURT OF DIVORCE.

(From the Tablet.)

The Government of Lord Aberdeen is in great favor with many Catholics, and they would consider it a very great calamity if that canny Presbyterian were to retire into private life. Gratitude is a virtue, and one of the most effective means of nurturing it into goodly proportions is a careful remembrance of benefits received. It is, then, with a view to the moral advantage of some among us that we now proceed to descant upon one of the latest services to Catholicism charitably rendered by the present Ministry.

A recent Bill introduced into the House of Lords as a Government measure proposed to legalise the present practise of dissolving valid marriages. The Lord Chancellor propounds the hateful scheme by a sneer at the Catholic dogma, and denouncing it as unfit for adoption by enlightened men. Not content with this invitation to licentiousness he insinuates distinctly a charge of hypocrisy against the Church.

He left his hearers under an impression that the indissolubility of marriage is not practically maintained among us. His view of the matter being that, while the Church taught the impossibility of dissolving the Marriage bond, she yet dissolved it by pretending that no bond had been entered into. The man had not one fact for his strange assertion, but he had the cool insolence, in his place in Parliament, to charge the Holy See with the most profligate corruption. This is the Chancellor of a Government eminently friendly to the Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland.

This is a question which touches only the faith and the honor of the Sovereign Pontiffs, and therefore not one of the Catholic Peers thought it worth his while to open his mouth. If the Lord Chancellor had insinuated anything against the loyalty of English Catholics, or had charged them with the great vice and sin of statesmen, Ultramontaniam, we should have heard indignant remonstrances against so calumnious a charge, and a clear assertion of their unbounded devotion to the Queen, and of their qualified respect for the Sovereign Pontiff. But faith and morals are not matters of such overwhelming importance as to disturb the rest of our Catholic peers, and not a voice was heard against the groundless accusations or the most immoral proposition of the Government.

This eminently Catholic Ministry is disposed to legalise adultery in the country. Hitherto those who had a mind to sin with a quiet conscience in that direction were obliged to get a private Act of Parliament for themselves. Now, our able and moral Ministers propose to extend this strange blessing to the great bulk of the people; but all the while under the hypocritical profession of giving relief to the poor man. A new court is to be constituted for the special purpose of dissolving marriages at a small cost to the suitor, compared with the expenses of an act of Parliament. The agents in this nefarious scheme, tell us that the mind of the country is made up on the subject, and that divorces from the marriage bond must be henceforward a legal process.—The will of the people is clear on the subject, and so let the law of God take care of itself.

The unblushing impudence of these people is something heroic. Their pretence is that a poor man is now debarred from the Parliamentary remedy, and that he is therefore unjustly treated. Now every one of these pretenders to justice knows perfectly well that the new court will be as inaccessible to the poor man as Doctors' Commons and the House of Lords. It is very well known that many of the poor find it very hard to produce the fees for their marriage, and yet we are gravely told that the new law is to help them to a divorce upon such terms as they can comply with. Does any body suppose that the new court can be set in motion for less than twenty pounds, or that it can ever pronounce a sentence, under ten times that sum? As for equalising the poor man with the rich, that is a mere pretence, for there is not a lawyer in England who does not know perfectly well that he is never likely to have a poor man for his client in a suit of nullity of marriage.

The bill is a boon to the rich, and thriving middle class which has no special parliamentary friends, but which is ever ready to enter the courts of law for interest or revenge. The men who make up the jury lists, who have thriving shops in town and ornamental villas in the suburbs, who are never seen in "a place of worship," and whose private habits are "sacred," that is, purely profane, these are the men for whom the new court is to be erected, and for whose special use it will work. The poor man is a cloak for the rich man's lust, and a flimsy excuse for a most gross and selfish job.

Surely this scheme marks an area in English profligacy. The Government proposes to erect a court

not to protect marriage, but to dissolve it. It is contrived for the express purpose of facilitating immorality, and is, in a word, no less than a reward for vice. Amid the peers of England, Catholic and heretic together, only one man lifted up his voice against the abomination. He is not a Catholic, but a Protestant. Lord Redesdale, to his great honor, protested not against the details of the scheme, but against the principle itself, and in this he seems to have stood alone. We confess it is with something like indignation and shame, that we find this to be the case. When Ministers are in danger Catholic peers run up from the extremity of the kingdom and give their votes; but when wholesale prostitution, is to be legalised, when the honor of the Holy See is ignorantly questioned, our patriotic peers give no sign of life.

It is a very short-sighted policy to leave this matter alone, and to comfort ourselves with the notion that it concerns Protestants only. Let the court once come into existence and it will revolutionise the ideas of the people. The sanctity of marriage, even in the Protestant sense, will soon be abandoned, and from the corruption of morals ensuing thereupon the Catholic population will contract the stain. If now men calling themselves Catholics persevere in the profession of Freemasonry, notwithstanding formal prohibitions, are we so stupid as to suppose that others will keep clear of this Coalition Court, when interest and passion combine to invite them within it? We are the minority in England, and in spite of our religion we contract the habits and manners of heretics. We grow up among them and with them, and imbibe their ideas. Protestant friendships, and Protestant services draw multitudes from the Faith into infidelity throughout the kingdom; but this evil will be infinitely increased when the individual's passions lead him to Protestant ways, and by the formation of new ties in error will render his escape morally hopeless.

If this is the Government for which Catholics have prayed, and for the success of whose members Nuns have made novenas during contested elections we begin to fear that more calamities are in store for us. The schemes of united education were wicked enough, but then the danger was visible; but here is a process by which the faith of all is to be gradually sapped, and which, in an unguarded moment, may lead a man to take a step from which he can never afterwards retire. The Government proclaims a general license to sin at a definite charge, like a license to kill game, and then announces itself as the friend of Catholic interests.

A HINT TO THE MAINE-IACS."

A Bill known as the "Forbes Mackenzie Act" was lately passed for putting a check upon Sunday drunkenness in Scotland. Like all other attempts to effect a moral reform by legislative action, this Bill has turned out worse than a failure. The Glasgow Free Press thus describes its effects:—

"Already the recent act is exhibiting itself as the cause of much public scandal, and as the cause of many wretched practices before unheard of. We will illustrate one of these, of which we ourselves were an eye-witness on Sunday last. It is indicative of the extreme lengths to which a portion of the drinking public will go in their contrivances for avoiding the operation of this act, that was to turn all Glasgow into a kirk, and, by a very summary chemical process, metamorphose sinners into saints.—Men are now beginning to substitute a pocket-bottle for the snuff-box; even those who hitherto looked upon the food of the olfactory nerves as an indispensable luxury to snuff-takers, must now see that the bottle will one day or other supplant the horn box, and instead of my neighbor offering me a pinch, he will offer me a nip of the mountain dew. Already this practice is resorted to, and we ourselves saw, on last Sunday, in the most public part of the city, and at the moment when the kirks were pouring out their congregations, 'of those only who are to be saved,' the bottle freely handed from neighbor to neighbor, and from acquaintance to acquaintance. Will the abettors and admirers of the act 'forcing' the people to such disreputable exhibitions, and scandalous practices, attempt to deny that all the good which might be effected by its operation for a century is more than counterbalanced by the evil generated by such practices as we now refer to. But this is only one of the devices and ingenuities resorted to by the masses to avoid the law as it at present stands. Let us only wait until the people develop their resources, and set their wits to work, and we be bound stratagems and dodges will be at a discount. They will find plenty means to avoid the law which becomes the primary cause of turning them into vicious hypocrites, and willful violators of the Act of Parliament.

True, we are gravely informed by truth-telling

officials, and red-tapered economists, that the Sabbath is respected, and that the Police offices are deserted since this act came into operation. But, alas, good souls, they reckon without their host. We tell these braggarts who cry 'peace, peace, where there is no peace,' that if the police offices be deserted, the Wynds and Alleys are not. Enter into these regions of profanation and debasement, and shudder as you contemplate the wretched outcasts therein congregated. Sacred Heavens, no human soul impressed with one particle of religion or feeling can view the scenes there presented without extreme pity, and painful emotions! There are huddled together, in disgusting positions, groups of old and young, males and females, debased, profligate, drunken, sweltering in the embraces of beastly prostitution—breathing an impure and foul atmosphere, and emitting blasphemies of the most hideous character. And why is this? Because the unfortunate wretches 'club' on Saturday night to get whisky for the Sunday. True, they are not in the Police offices, but it would be far better that they were.

"Again, look down the Green, and pass over the suburban roads on Sunday, and what will you see? Drunkenness in its vilest aspect—drunkenness that is not satisfied with indulging in its own beastly orgies, but that which will inflict damage and injury on the adjacent property, by breaking the fences, and trampling the vegetables—in a word, this bill promotes drunkenness in its most revolting aspects, and encourages illicit traffic after a most extensive scale. And for all other mercies vouchsafed to us by this measure, we are called upon to return thanks to Heaven.

"We cannot conceive more odious blasphemy, or an act of thanksgiving more hideous with profanation and insult, than that which was announced thro' the city by large placards, as being to take place in some one of the churches on Sunday last, 18th June—an act of thanksgiving to heaven for the benefit received through Forbes Mackenzie's bill. We wish the fanatical Thugs and puritanical Fire-worshippers, who assisted at it, great joy. We only regret the singular hollowness of their Christianity, at the same time that we advise them to emigrate to the valley of the Snow Mountains, and join in the sybalistic incantation of the gipsies of Grenada. Truly they 'halloo before they are out of the wood.' They return thanks for results, so far as known, unfortunate and disgraceful, and bless Providence for the further things this bill promises, whilst they are still unknown."

CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS IN REFORMATORY PRISONS.

(From the London Times.)

The division against the Government upon the appointment of Roman Catholic chaplains was one which will scarcely meet with the approval of the country. What danger is there to the Protestant succession, and to the established order of things in these realms, from the fact that a certain number of wretches who have been brought under the sentence of the law shall receive spiritual consolation from clergymen of their own persuasion? The recent vote of the house, if anything, is one for practical atheism. Surely, it cannot become a question whether or no the mind of a stupid, ignorant, boor, under a doom of death or a sentence of transportation, should be made a battlefield for rival theologians! The real point is, by any means at hand, and the reader the better, to bring him to some sense of repentance for his crimes, to fit him in some slender degree for a transition to another world if the scaffold be his fate, or to give him a chance of reformation if his sentence be only of a secondary nature. It is most emphatically the duty of the State to care for these things, if, indeed, the operation of human laws has any larger significance than the destruction of criminal life. The question is not between Protestant and Roman Catholic, but between Christian and non-Christian. We go so far as to say that spiritual assistance should be extended indifferently to all classes of Christian Dissenters who are willing to receive it. This difficulty, however, meets us at once—Dissenters, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, conscientiously object to the endowments for religious objects, or to Government grants. The refusal of the Wesleyan or of the Baptist, however, does not invalidate the claim of the Roman Catholic felon. The principle is not a new one. It has been in operation for several years at Millbank. In that prison there has been a regular allowance to Roman Catholic priests for attending the convicts. When a prisoner is once committed, he is compelled to declare whether he is a Roman Catholic or a Protestant. It is not optional with him to give or refuse attendance to the ministrations of his clergyman or priest. Whatever the answer may be, he is forced to attend Divine service. The Roman Catholic can

no more refuse compliance than the Protestant. Independently of his attendance at public worship according to the forms of his creed, the Roman Catholic prisoner is compelled to give ear to the private exhortations of his priest. What the result of these exhortations may be it rests not with the State to say; but, at least as far as the system went before the division of Monday night, any unhappy inmate of a prison under penal sentence was at least sure of spiritual instruction and consolation from the minister of that form of religion which alone carried terror or comfort to his soul. That system has been altered, to the great discredit of the House and the country.

Let us take the case of Mr. Spooner. Suppose that hon. gentleman to stand committed to the county gaol upon a charge of forgery, or of any crime within his compass—what kind of consolation would it be to him that Cardinal Wiseman was despatched down to Warwick under an order from the Home Office for his especial benefit? We all know what the result would be. The two men would fall a wrangling, and so much of Mr. Spooner's time as should be devoted to practical repentance would be wasted in idle argument. If the imaginary case be carried far lower in the scale of society, we shall obtain precisely the same result. The bigoted boor would prove a worse catechumen than the bigoted banker. Is a gaol, then, to be turned into a Protestant propaganda? In the name of common sense we most entirely repudiate such an idea. We want no "crime-Christians" or gaol Protestants. When a man has once fallen under the grasp of the criminal law, and has been committed to a prison, we can have but one object with regard to him—to send him back to society a less dangerous member of the community.

The division of Monday night was, in truth, a discreditable incident in the history of the present session. On many points mistakes may be made; and, really, with reference to minor questions, so matters be made straight in the long run, it matters not much for the space of one session. In the present case, however, we are dealing with a question affecting the eternal welfare of a numerous body of our fellow-subjects who are so unhappily circumstanced that they can scarcely care for themselves. The House has come to the conclusion that, as far as the community cares about the matter, they may die like dogs in the corner of their cells, or be turned off the drop without a single word of spiritual exhortation or counsel. We will not dwell upon the paltry amount of the sum asked—£550; for, of course, as a question of principle, it matters not whether it was one farthing or fifty thousand pounds; but still the resistance to so very slender a demand, and for such a purpose, does import into the transaction the additional element of shabbiness. Here we are wasting, every year, thousands upon thousands of pounds upon philanthropic quack who will take it upon himself to reform our prisons, and fit them once more for the respectable performance of every social duty; but we grudge a miserable sum such as this for the performance of services we are most anxious to secure for prisoners nominally of our own persuasion. Roman Catholic sit in the two Houses of Legislature, on the judicial bench, and fight our battles, whether on land or at sea, and yet we refuse to sanction a paltry grant of £550 to the Roman Catholic priests—poor men themselves—who attend the felons of their own persuasion in our goals. The triumph of Messrs. Spooner, Newdegate, &c., is a mere blunder of the most paltry kind, which will soon be made straight by the good sense of the people of this country.

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH GRIEVANCE.

(From the Midland Counties Gazette.)

The Law Church is the monster grievance of Ireland. The stronghold of ascendancy, it is to-day the cause of bitterness and dissension amongst Irishmen as it was for centuries the instrument of the most virulent persecution. Until it is uprooted from the land, utterly, removed, there can be neither peace nor happiness in Ireland, nor that true national concord, in the absence of which we can have but little expectation of the real advancement of the country. Men of all parties, and men most eminent in their parties, have in England denounced the Irish Church Establishment as a most unjust anomaly—as a monster grievance without parallel in current or past history. It is time that this monster injustice should be redressed.

We have been sufficiently long content merely to defend our imperfect privileges; it is time that we should demand the full recognition of our complete rights. Such privileges as we have already attained will be ever threatened and imperilled—our just rights will never be conceded to us while the Established Church continues an institution of the State.