



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 1855.

NO. 21.

VOL. V.

AN ESTIMATE OF THE CHANGES NOW TAKING PLACE IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

The present, distracted and humiliated condition of the Anglican Establishment affords a subject for reflection to Catholics, a subject which is very ably dealt with in the *Rambler* for the month of December. We (*Tablet*) make no apology for transferring to our columns the greater part of the article in question, which is written with great power and in the best spirit, and contains some valuable reflections, having an important bearing on Catholic politics!

"If we were capable of rejoicing in the humiliation of a powerful adversary, without regard to the well-being of our fellow-creatures, the present condition of our old enemy, the Established Church of England, must fill us with exultation. If, as our adversaries pretend, our only aim were a controversial victory, and the utter abolition of the pretences of our rivals, we might at this moment sheath our swords in content, and quietly watch their destruction at the hands of those who call themselves their friends.—Who, indeed, for generations past, have been our worst and most powerful opponents and tormentors, but the members of the Anglican communion? Who are they who have instigated every fresh act of persecution against us? Who have most fiercely resisted the abrogation of the penal laws? Who have banded themselves together, most eagerly to banish us from society, to forbid the perusal of our books, to fasten upon us old and long-refuted charges, to travel in foreign lands only to import new calumnies against our Faith, and to place a ban upon those who forsake all for the sake of joining us? Who was it that lately kindled the flames of passion against our Hierarchy, and at this moment is longing for the banishment of our Religious Orders and the reimposition of political disabilities upon us all? Who is that, in shameless oblivion of its own origin, and of the sources whence it acquired its wealth, and of the very title by which it claims to inherit the functions of the Apostles, is most busy in flooding the land with tracts and books denouncing us as the worst enemies of freedom, civilisation, and pure religion?—Who are they who, Sunday after Sunday, neglect no available opportunity of classing us with Turks, Jews, and Atheists; and after reading prayers taken from our Missal and Breviary, in surplices borrowed from our usage, and decorated with university hoods acquired by a residence in the colleges founded by our ancestors, mount their pulpits, and taking texts from that Bible whose very existence they owe to our care, proceed to make the walls raised by our fathers re-echo to denunciations of us and our iniquities, from the silliest and wildest vagaries of Low Church ignorance, up to the elaborate and plausible misrepresentations of learned Puseyism? Who are these but the Ministers of that vast institution, whose existence has for three centuries been bound up by most intimate ties with the name and constitution of England?"

"Who, then, would have a right to complain, if we exulted over the changes now taking place in the internal condition of our hereditary foe, and congratulated ourselves on the silent progress in her adherence of a systematic rejection of the very notion of dogmatic religion? Who, we say, would have a right to complain of us, if we thus acted in conformity with those principles which our adversaries impute to us, and sought—not man's salvation and the honor of Almighty God—but only a base, worldly, and selfish triumph, a logical victory, a controversial crown?"

"What a change it is, indeed, that is now going on in the English world, uprooting from the entire national mind the first elements of belief in Christianity as a system of revealed and unchangeable doctrine! For many years past this substitution of latitudinarianism for belief has been taking place among the various dissenting bodies. Those who have watched the various Nonconformist publications of the last quarter of a century, and observed the acts of the Nonconformist sects, will bear us witness in stating that a change of the most formidable and fundamental kind has come upon the prevalent opinions of British dissent. Its old Puritan leaders, and its later guides, who fashioned its ideas in the days of Wesley and Whitfield; would hardly know their descendants as their children at all; they have lost their old belief in the inspiration of Scripture, and their intense conviction that truth, as truth, is infinitely precious, and that religious ideas and practices are to be measured, not merely by the rules of philosophy and expediency, but by their accordance with the distinctly revealed doctrines of Jesus Christ. Of course, their interpretations of those doctrines were absurd enough, and their range of Biblical criticism was bigoted, narrow, and shallow; but still they held, as to a sheet anchor, that truth is truth, and the Bible inspired. Now they have become

"liberal," "tolerant," "philosophical," "critical," "enlightened," "benevolent;" in other words, they have lost those glimpses of eternity which once rejoiced their souls, and have acquiesced in the idea that it is better to criticise the Bible than to believe the Gospel.

"And now, at length, the tide of scepticism is surging up into the high places of the Anglican Establishment. We do not say for a moment that it is a professed or a conscience scepticism, or that the present increase in popular morality and religious profession is not, in its way, perfectly genuine and sincere. Nay, we would admit still more, that in some respects the intentions of the present day are better than those of the past; that if people's ideas on Christian doctrine are worse than those of their fathers, their ideas on morals are, to a certain extent, more really enlightened and Christian. But with all this, the fact is frightfully manifest that the Church of England is rapidly losing its grasp upon the relics of the Christian faith, which for three centuries it has, in some shape or other, preserved. Coincidentally with the advance of zeal and learning which we Catholics may fairly believe to be taking place among ourselves, our dominant opponent is parting with the last semblances of Catholicism which survived the shock of the Reformation."

"For, unquestionably and radically Protestant as the Anglican Church has ever been, it is certain, as a matter of fact, that her individual members have in many instances been brought up to reverse certain elementary truths of Christianity which, in their natural and logical development, become nothing less than absolute Catholicism. These truths, taken generally, are three; and they constitute those very essential doctrines which are the object of the deepest detestation on the part of Protestantism, pure and unmitigated—namely, a veneration for the creeds, a respect for a visible Church as a Divinely organised body, and a belief in the doctrine of sacramental efficacy. Carry out these three truths to their legitimate consequences, and we have the Catholic faith; deny them, and we have Protestantism in its naked reality. And, partly from one course, and partly from another, the English Establishment has been the instrument of bringing up millions and millions of persons in an implicit conviction that all these three truths form an essential element of the Christian revelation; not only the Puseyite school, and its predecessors the Nonjurors, but everything that has been comprised under the term "High Church," has taken its stand against "Evangelicalism" and Dissent on these three principles. The immense numerical majority of Church-people, even when in connection with the most undisguised worldliness, have been taught from their childhood that the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian creeds were literally true; that to deny them, or to doubt them, was unlawful and altogether shocking; and that (for some unexplained reason or other) they did not stand on the same ground as mere human opinions, which anybody might accept or reject as he pleased. In the directest opposition to this system stands that of the Low Church party, always numerically in a small minority. The Low Church school has professedly and pointedly based its creed, such as it was, on private interpretation of the Bible. It has scorned and denounced with virulence the very notion of creeds, as such, handed down, from generation to generation, and commanding the acceptance of Christians in every age.

"Again, the doctrine of a visible Church, with divinely appointed rulers and Ministers, is as familiar to the English "Churchman" as his reception of the Ten Commandments. He looks down upon Dissenters not only as a low, ungentlemanly, fanatical race, but as being excluded from the visible community of the Faithful through their violation of the positive injunctions of Our Lord and His Apostles, and their want of a lawfully-ordained Ministry. No doubt his contempt is illogical enough, and the position he claims for himself is as untenable against Nonconformist anarchy as against Roman authority; but his principle that Jesus Christ did erect a visible Church, with its perfect organisation and Ministry, is true.

"So, again, with the Sacraments. The Dissenter and the "Evangelical" derounce as soul-destroying the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. With five out of six of "Church people" of all varieties this doctrine lies at the root of the Christian life itself, and to deny it is held blasphemous. Even with respect to the Holy Eucharist, false as is the Anglican theory with respect to the presence of Our Blessed Lord in the consecrated species, the High Church party almost universally recognise the existence of some mysterious blessing produced by the act of consecration. The idea of the communication of grace by means of material channels, so far from being strange or repulsive to their minds, seems the most easy, simple, and Christian thing in the world. The

very walls of their churches they in a certain vague way esteem "blest" and "consecrated," while the purely Protestant school scoffs with coarse indecencies at every such "superstition."

"And the result is what might have been anticipated. The transition from High Church Anglicanism to true Catholicism is found the most easy and simple process conceivable by those who practically carry it out. The foundations of the Faith have been partly laid in their consciences and intellects from their childhood. What they have needed to make them Catholics has been instruction, additions, developments, consistency; the strictly heretical element has never permanently rooted itself in their minds. Profound, undoubtedly, has been the ignorance to be removed from their minds, and severe the struggle against the various temptations which combine to hold a man back within the grasp of Anglicanism, but, on the whole, so far as principles are concerned, none of that radical change has been necessary, without which the adherents of the Puritanical and Dissenting schools cannot make a single step towards Catholicism.

"How difficult, again, it is to make a Dissenter or an "Evangelical" into a thoroughly good Catholic, in all its habitual modes of thought and feeling! How slow the process ordinarily is by which the spiritual and intellectual pride, the anti-sacramental prejudices, the coarse and unrefined feelings which prevail in those more consistent sects of Protestantism, are finally rooted out! Everything, literally, has to be begun afresh in the mind and in the conscience. The whole attitude of the soul is uncatholic; and unless under favorable circumstances, years pass away before any truly Catholic instincts have leavened the character so long habituated to the instinct of heresy.

"There is, moreover, another result which practically follows from the prevalence of the High Church views among Protestants, of the deepest import to the welfare of the country. Wherever they are conscientiously held, there the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism is more likely to be valid than among the "Evangelical" or latitudinarian schools. We entertain not the slightest doubt that a far larger proportion of the infants baptised by Protestants have been really partakers of the sacramental grace since the Oxford movement than before it. Even among those who abhor the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, many have been awakened by the Puseyite arguments to a more careful administration of the Sacrament, both as to its form and matter; and though it is to be feared that there are still a lamentable number of sham baptisms, it is undeniable that they are not nearly so numerous as they were a quarter of a century ago.

"Such, then, being the case as to the practical character of the various schools of Protestantism, we cannot view without the deepest apprehension the advance of the worst forms of unbelief amongst our non-Catholic fellow-countrymen. Our hearts being set, not upon our own personal exultation, or upon the growth of this or that political party, but upon the conversion of our adversaries, we look beyond all present and temporary manifestations of hostility or liberality towards us, and ask ourselves whether it will not be far more difficult to convert the disciples of this miserable latitudinarianism than to lead on the less heretical children of old-fashioned Anglicanism to that faith of which they are not wholly ignorant. We cannot overlook the fact, that while our political supporters have for the most part been of the self-styled liberal latitudinarian schools, our actual converts, in the present and all past times, have been almost exclusively from the high Church party in the Establishment. Everywhere where British Protestantism is known, in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America—it is that class which has been bred up to believe in the Creed, in Baptismal regeneration, and in the Apostolic succession, which has given the Church nineteen out of twenty of the souls whom she saved; and we entertain not the slightest doubt, that much as we have suffered from that class in the day of its prosperity, it will be as nothing to what we shall have to endure from that latitudinarianism and infidel party which has patronised us solely for its own purposes, and not from love to us or to God, but out of hatred to its own adversaries within the domain of Protestantism itself.

"A striking proof of the relative gains to be won from the Low Church and the High Church schools is to be seen in the comparative numbers of converts supplied to Catholicism by Oxford and by Cambridge. Oxford has ever been the one chief seat of Tory Church-and-King exclusiveness; turning up its nose at the vulgarities of Dissent, and the "superstitions" of popery; teaching baptismal regeneration, the absolute necessity of Episcopal ordination, and the sacredness of the Creeds. Cambridge, on the other hand, has worn the magic-cost of religious liberalism; admitting Dissenters and Catholics to its

colleges, abusing Oxford as bigoted and behind the age, loving geological theories more than patriotic dogmas, and claiming generally to represent the brains as Oxford has claimed to represent the cultivated refinement, of the English nation. But mark the practical results. For one convert that Cambridge has given to the Church, Oxford has given three or four; and even at this very day the dogmatic principle, as such, has more hold upon Oxford, with all the changes it has undergone, than upon any other place in the kingdom. But if under its new regime Oxford becomes what Cambridge has been, we shall have cause for lamentation, and lamentation only.

"Never, therefore, in our humble judgment, do Catholics commit a more serious error, in the way of practical prudence, than when they ally themselves with those who are in reality the most bitter opponents of our faith, for the sake of the fugitive gains to be obtained by their cold and offensive alliance. Little as we may think it, there is immense scandal caused to those who in their consciences more or less respect the Catholic faith, by the preference we have sometimes shown for those who deny almost everything of Christianity but the name. If we are wise, we shall judge every political and religious party by a far more searching test than its accidental or political conduct towards ourselves. And in as much as our desire is not political victory, or the humiliation of haughty adversaries, but the saving of souls, we should watch with rejoicing the spread of those principles which tend to make men Catholics even though accompanied with errors which practically influence them to an angry hostility against ourselves.

"So far from thinking that the changes going on in the condition of Anglicanism will render her hostility to us less formidable, and make the work of conversion more easy, we look upon these revolutions in Protestant opinion with most serious and anxious thoughts. We see in them the most urgent calls for renewed exertions on our parts, both in order to present an impregnable front to our adversaries, and in the way of supplying our own poorer members with every possible advantage, temporal, intellectual, and spiritual. They show that the hosts are gathering together, who are destined to a struggle with us totally dissimilar to any thing which we have ever endured in this country, and which will try our zeal, our faith, our learning, and our intellectual strength to the very utmost. What will be the accompaniments of that struggle, and its general character, no eye can foresee. Whether it will be rendered doubly trying by persecutions, by confiscations, or even by blood; or whether the scorn, the anger, and the argumentative craftiness of the enemies of the Faith will be their only weapons; of this we may rest assured, that it will be sharp and terrible, and such as can be resisted by nothing less than our whole moral and intellectual strength. We shall stand against it, not by means of political friendships, or parliamentary influence, or by our wealth, or rank, or magnificent churches and functions; but only by our learning, our acuteness, and by our grasp of the true solution of the problems of the time, vivified and guided by a single minded love of souls, and faith in the protection of him who vouchsafes to us the honor of defending his sacred cause."

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR.

A RETROSPECT.—The war has now entered into one of those periods of pause and inaction which, even in the most stoutly-maintained contests, much of necessity intervene. Winter has closed the Baltic against a further repetition of those maritime promenade which, with the little interlude of Bomarsund have employed the energies of one of the finest fleets that ever left the shores of England. The same cause has put an end to the campaign in Armenia, and Turks and Russians may there resign themselves for the next six months to a peace guaranteed by the imperious intervention of frost, snow and ice. On the banks of the Danube the flame of war has burnt out, the Turks having neither food, clothes, or military stores sufficient for a seriously offensive movement, and the Russians having betaken themselves by sea and by land to reinforce the army of the Crimea. At Sebastopol itself the allies are looking for shelter, ammunition, clothing, and reinforcements, and guarding against the possibility of being forced to gain, at equal risk and equal cost, another victory like that of Inkermann. The Russians seem becoming every day more sensible of the tremendous blow they have received, and, engaged probably in the difficult task of feeding and sheltering an army sent post for our annihilation without anything but the most portable means of destruction, can take no offensive measures. Both parties are recovering their breath for a moment before they close again in the mortal struggle. This, then, is no unsuitable time for collecting some lessons of experience out of the