

A GLANCE AT THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

"The Queen's dominions have been parcelled out by a foreign potentate," said Lord John Russell in the House of Commons in the year 1851, when speaking of the Restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy. He might as well have said that Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace had been forcibly seized and occupied by Cardinal Wiseman. Yet so delirious was the outburst of national wrath at the first news of "the Papal Aggression," that no phrase was too fantastic, no statement too extravagant for the gratification of the popular appetite for revenge. We must not be too severe on the English prejudice. Trained for centuries to regard the Catholic religion as the mortal foe of all liberty, English Protestants might be excused for sincerely dreading an aggression which threatened to "enslave them again to the Church of Rome." Their wrath was all the fault of their education, not the fault of their natural brains, or natural heart. They have shown this by forty years of reparation. Their Ecclesiastical Titles Bill they quickly repealed. Their respectful treatment of Cardinal Wiseman was in the best taste. Their more than respectful treatment of Cardinal Manning—their almost affectionate recognition of his national services, has made it manifest that they only wanted to be disillusioned in order to do justice both to Catholics and to themselves. The English have been converted to common sense. Their conversion to the Catholic Church is quite another matter.

"In another ten years" said Cardinal Manning last June, on the occasion of the silver jubilee of his episcopate, "you will have to celebrate the first jubilee of the Catholic Church in England." Whatever the next ten years may bring forth we have reason to be profoundly grateful for what we may call the *social* progress, which the Catholic Church has made during the last forty years. Only they who have been born in a Protestant country know what is the full meaning of that word "social." We may go further, and say that only such Englishmen as are now old men,—old enough to remember fifty years ago, can appreciate the contrast between the present social ease, and the social misery of say, the year 1830. It is from this social point of view that we may commence our inquiry into the progress of Catholicism in Great Britain, not precisely measuring the spiritual progress by the social, but measuring the hope of future conversions by social gains.

Perhaps Englishmen are more influenced than are most people by the examples of persons in high estate. In the old days when there were only a few dozen of Catholic "gentlemen" scattered up and down a Protestant land, these gentlemen living very retired lives and being prohibited from taking part in official life to be a Roman Catholic was to be a sort of *rara avis*, a kind of interesting relic of the dark ages. The laws, the national religion, the social traditions were all in deadly antagonism to Roman Catholicism; so that a man who "turned Catholic," say in 1830, was looked upon with a very unpleasant suspicion. But just as in the days when our fathers were young men, it was thought a compassionate thing to be a Catholic, a thing excusable perhaps in the descendants of those Catholics who had wickedly resisted the Reformation, but disgraceful in an Englishman who had been surrounded from childhood by the enlightening influences of pure Protestantism, so now it is thought rather "in good form" to be a convert, because so many distinguished persons have been converted. The English take their fashion in religion, just as they take their fashion in toilet, from the classes whom they look up to as aristocratic. This is not said in sarcasm, but as a fact. It would not be true to say that Englishmen change their religion with any reference to the examples of other persons; but it is true to say that intellectually, morally, and therefore socially, they are respectful towards a religion which is "in the fashion." The conversion of six duchesses to the Catholic religion caused "society" to rather admire that "form of faith." That a Viceroy of India, an English Ambassador at Paris, a member of the Privy Council, and a Postmaster General should be not only Catholics but converts, were facts that caused society to try to reconcile the two ideas of official and Catholic consistency. But society,

as it is called, has had other auxiliary motives for esteeming the sincerity of conversions. Intellectually there has been no possibility of putting in the background a Newman, a Manning, a Fabre; or of questioning that the English Bar has furnished splendid Catholic testimony in a Coleridge, a Hope-Scott, a Westbury. Just as there was no resisting the "respectability" of the fact that one Anglican Church, that of All Saint's, Margaret Street, sent seven clergymen in one year into the Catholic Church, so was there no resisting the "respectability" of the fact that the aristocracy of the arts, of poetry, of journalism, of grave composition and of light humour, gave many of its best men to the Old Faith. We are speaking now only of social aspects; and in no country since the days of the Emperor Constantine has "respectability" paid more homage to faith than in the England of the last forty-five years.

It used to be told of Lord Beaconsfield that he had expressed his "sense of the fitness" of offering a seat in the House of Lords to Cardinal Manning. As that versatile and eminently "social" minister was chatting with half-a-dozen convert lords, he is reported to have approved the idea of a peerage for the representative Catholic Englishman of his day. We all know that the "Grandison" in "Lothair," and the Eustace de Lyle in "Coningsby," were meant for portraits of a Catholic dignitary, and of a young distinguished lay convert, Ambrose de Lisle. Such points are indeed only worth alluding to as showing that social influences were working warmly on the imagination of that most romantic of statesmen. As they worked on *his* fancy, so have they worked on the fancy of the majority of the thinking fashionable world of England. When we come to ask the question: Does this mundane, social influence do any good to the spiritual life of the Church? we shall touch upon a very difficult point indeed. At the present moment we are insisting only on the fact; the influences will be more apparent as we go on.

A most important groove of the "social" influence is the "literary," and let us see how this groove has helped Catholics. It was a thing unknown until within the last quarter of a century that Catholics should publish articles in non-Catholic periodicals in defence of their faith or of their philosophy. At the present day it is a common thing to see a first and a last article written by well known Catholic champions, while among the other articles are perhaps aggressive compositions in avowed hostility to the first article and the last. Cardinal Manning is always welcomed in such periodicals, and has necessarily done an enormous amount of good. Dr. St. George Mivart has rendered service to the Church by his voluminous contributions as a scientist, just as Lady Herbert of Lea and Lady Georgina Fullerton have purified the atmosphere of "popular" literature. It is perfectly well known that the editors and sub-editors and a very good proportion of the staff of the most widely read newspapers in London are either born Catholics or converts; nor does the fact cause the smallest uneasiness to the British mind, though fifty years ago there would have been a cry of "Jesuits on the press." The point to be here noted is that Protestant society in mundane sense is largely traversed by Catholic writings in Protestant reviews. Such a fact is quite exceptional to the present age. Our fathers, when they were young men, would have rubbed their eyes in their amazement and would have refused to believe that a Roman Catholic could plead his cause in their *literature* and actually receive his twenty guineas for very ably demolishing Protestantism at the expense of *their* serenity or prejudice.

Now we may touch upon another social aspect—the public part taken by Catholics in official movements, whether in the groove of education or philanthropy. It was a sincere compliment which Sir Francis Sanford paid to Cardinal Manning on the occasion of his Eminence's silver jubilee, when he said to him: "It has been my privilege to work with you for several years on the Royal Commission, I can only say that if that Commission result in good to the education of this country and, above all, to the religious education of this country, it will be mainly owing to the lead you took on that occasion. I feel from my very heart that if England is to remain a Christian country, so far as education is con-