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## THE IRISH BOARD OF EDUCATION.

(From the Catholic Standard.)

When the present Earl of Derby, then Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, as Mr. Stanley, originated the system of National Education which has for more than twenty years prevailed in that part of the United Kingdom, he stated distinctly the objects contemplated by the Government, in a letter which he addressed to the Duke of Leinster. Scriptural, or religious education of any kind, did not form one of these declared objects. A fusion of the different denominations of Irishmen, a modification, if not a total eradication, of the prejudices that had theretofore involved them in perpetual conflict with each other—a removal of disastrous antipathies by a combined system of secular instruction, under which Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterians were to intermix as schoolfellows and grow up as friends—these were the grand objects which the Ministry of that day contemplated; and, in order to carry these laudable objects into effect, they invited distinguished ecclesiastics and laymen of each of the three principal religious denominations to become members of a public Board, under whose guidance and control the proposed system was to be worked. The Duke of Leinster and Archbishop Whately were among the first Anglican members of the Board: the late lamented Archbishop of Dublin, the late Primate of All Ireland and Lord Bellew were among the Catholic Commissioners; and the Presbyterians were represented by the Moderator of the Synod of Ulster (Mr. Carlisle), and Mr. Robert Holmes, the eminent barrister. The death of the two Archbishops removed the Catholic Episcopal members of the Board, and their place was supplied by the Bishop of Down and Connor and Dean Meyler. Changes were produced by time among the Anglican and Presbyterian members of the Board also; but throughout, care seems to have been taken that the proportion of each originally fixed should be maintained. On that score, at all events there could be no cavil raised. When the Board got into working order, the idea of engrafting religious education under certain restrictions and in a particular form upon the secular system sprung up; and, to give it effect, without risking proselytism on any side, the Board prepared as a class-book certain Scripture extracts which, while they avoided all controverted topics, imparted a useful knowledge of Scripture on those points which are believed in common by Christians generally. It was also laid down as a rule that, on certain days, a certain hour should be set apart for religious instruction, at which time the children were to be separated according to their religious denomination, to be instructed on religious matters as their parents or guardians should direct. Of this plan, however benevolently conceived and, in general, we believe, fairly carried out, we admit we never were much enamoured. Had the choice of a system rested with us, we should have infinitely preferred the plan on which the Catholic Poor School Committee have been proceeding in this country. But in Ireland there was no such plan in operation, and not the remotest chance of founding it or anything like it; and being at the time in a position to aid or mar Mr. Stanley's project, we freely own that we abetted it as in itself a beneficial measure, and especially as it extinguished that most odious conclave of hypocrites, perverters and deceivers—the Kildare Place Society. For five years we warred in defence of the Board against Mr. Jackson (now a very excellent Irish Judge), Mr. Recorder Shaw, Mr. Robert Daly (now Anglican Incumbent of the united Sees of Cashel, Early, Waterford and Lismore), and the mountebanks O'Sullivan and McGhee, who used to delight Exeter Hall with their invectives against the "Scripture-mutilating," "Bible-burking," "God-denying," "Soul-destroying" Board of Irish Education,—epithets which were applied especially to those Scripture lessons, and to Dr. Whately's tracts, which now have, all of a sudden, become so popular with the No-Popery-factions. At the period to which we allude, no terms of reproach were too harsh or too scurrilous to be flung at Dr. Whately by the party of Exeter Hall and their newspaper organs; and if any one wishes to cull a few of these rhetorical flowers as a bouquet for his Grace, we refer him to the *Morning Herald*, the *Standard*, the *Record*, the *John Bull*, and the *Dublin Evening Mail*, of any month for the nineteen years ended in December last. Since then, a change has come o'er the spirit of their dream; and they who held Archbishop Whately up to Protestant execration as a heretic, a Socinian, an infidel and a traitor to the Church of England are now disposed to canonize him as one of the best of the Reformation Saints. His Grace has established two huge claims upon their sympathy. He has circulated lies in aid of the anti-nunnery crusade,—he has had the meanness to publish in Parliament gross calumnies in support of Mr. Spooner's agitation, and then to shrink from the chal-

lenge that was flung down to him, to enable the slandered parties to repel his imputations, and the public to test his veracity by giving names, places, and dates; and he has withdrawn from the National Board, or, as another version of the affair has it, rendered his dismissal obligatory on the Government, and, of course, there is great joy in Exeter Hall. 'Tis a pity his flight was not solitary, for then all the applause of the fanatics would have been poured out upon his own head; but his companions in retreat, Mr. Francis Blackburne and Mr. Baron Greene must necessarily receive their share of the eulogiums which the platforms and the press have in reserve for any person no matter what his character, who fills the gale of clamor against Catholicity.

Of the cause of this secession the public have been for some time aware. An objection was raised by members of the Board to the use of one of Dr. Whately's compilations as a school-book in the schools connected with the Board; and as the book is a very dangerous one for children to read, a large majority of the Commissioners, including some Anglicans and all the Presbyterians and Catholics resolved that the work should not be used during the hours of combined instructions, in any school where the parent or guardian of any child should formally announce his objection to its use. After much parley, this resolution was finally confirmed a couple of weeks ago, and the result has been the secession of the triumvirate already mentioned. Their places have since been filled up; and the Anglican Bishop Knox and the Tory Mr. Brewster will, we have no doubt, be as faithful guardians of the State Church interests in the National Schools as were Dr. Whately and Mr. Blackburne.

## CONVERSION TO PROTESTANTISM IN WEST GALWAY.

Oughterard, Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, 1853.

A year has passed since I appealed to the public in favor of the spiritual wants of the well known parish of Oughterard. It was just after my appointment to its extensive duties. When I undertook them, I feared, from what I heard, that the redemption of Oughterard from proselytism—humanly speaking—was almost irremediable. But a few weeks' intercourse with my parishioners convinced me of the contrary. I found, it is true, that more than three hundred—but less than four hundred—of my people had abandoned, but not abjured, the faith, and I learned from my most respectable parishioners that the lives of those comparatively few, antecedent to their change of religion, were immoral in various degrees, or lives of hunger, nakedness, and destitution in the extreme. At the first moment of my entrance upon the duties of parish priest, I placed myself and my people, with confidence, under the protection of the Holy Mother of God. I then appealed to the charity of the Faithful to assist me. I was not disappointed. I was enabled to build—through the aid of some friends in Dublin, and two or three English donors—a beautiful little chapel, five miles from here, in Glan, then notorious as the stronghold of "Jump-erism," and to have for five weeks in the parish a mission of the Fathers of St. Vincent de Paul.

The events of this mission have not passed from the memory of the Catholics of this kingdom. They will never cease to be remembered with gratitude by the inhabitants of Oughterard. One circumstance of it will make it be thought of with sorrow by those who take an interest in the "conversion" from "Popery" of "the uninstructed and benighted people of the west of Galway," and who pay so highly for it. Oughterard (and its many villages—scattered over a district eighteen miles in length and nineteen in breadth), pointed to with exultation, in letters and speeches at the Rotunda and Exeter Hall, as the eager receiver of the truths taught by the "Bible Readers"—lauded as advancing with giant strides towards the light of the Gospel—in fact, as "almost totally rescued from the thralldom of superstition, from the dark servitude of idolatry, which Rome and its priests, for centuries imposed upon it." This very Oughterard it is which has exhibited the most magnificent evidence of Catholicity during the missions. "Two thousand three hundred and seventy-five persons" (every one of whom was examined and answered satisfactorily in their Catechism) received the holy sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of the illustrious Archbishop of Tuam; a number unequalled on any former occasion, even in the Island of Saints, since the olden days of Catholicity, before the advent to our isle of the first precursors of the present proselytisers,—and one hundred and ninety-five poor creatures returned to the Church of their Fathers, confessing publicly with sorrow and shame, that, in the moment of their weakness, from want and starvation, they yielded to the bribes of the tempter.—

These wonderful circumstances were witnessed by the entire parish, and by members of Parliament, magistrates, and thirty-four clergymen of the dioceses of Tuam and Galway. Since then, during the present year, many other individuals, and some families, have returned to the old faith—a few on their bed of death—others on leaving the land of their fathers for ever; and others when their worldly circumstances improved. Of these things I can give proofs to those who, unprejudiced, seek the truth.

Oh! how long will the English people remain in darkness regarding our religious state and feelings? I know that many of them, who mean well, and act from a sincere feeling, would cease to be the dupes of the designing traffickers in God's Holy Scriptures, if they but knew the truth. Why should they believe what they hear of the religious changes in Ireland, without self-examination, and why believe, on the mere vague assertion of those who live and profit by their generous credulity? Let them but come to our chapels on the Sabbath, or on the festivals of our Church, and judge for themselves. Let them come, if not for justice sake, at least for their own sakes, lest hereafter they be judged without mercy for having prejudged the truth, and for having blindly persecuted it. Let them come to the "notorious" Oughterard, and see the heartfelt devotion of our congregation—still crowded, though emigration and starvation have thinned the land. They will behold many, the old and the young, who come fasting from their respective villages—five, six, seven, and nine miles distant—to receive the Holy Communion, and return again in the evening, still fasting, but still with joy and consolation. Let them go through our villages, not with a "convert" guide, but alone. The knowledge they will gain will be well worthy their labor, and will be a consolation to them in after life. They will find twenty-three villages (some of them populous and comfortable), respectively distant from Oughterard, two to nine miles, of those inhabitants, *not one*, even in their gloomiest days (those terrible days, when famine stalked the land as its master), *was* became a Jumper. Let them ask these people what their hopes in the Catholic religion are, and they will answer with an ardor of devotion, that will convince the questioner of its sincerity, that their hopes of peace here, and of happiness hereafter, depend upon their fidelity to the Holy Catholic Church. You, I say to the stranger, may meet on the public roads, some of the salaried teachers of the Bible, who are sure to watch your coming. Heaven knows it is a desecration of the Holy Word of God, to put its sacred volume in their hands, and to submit its pure and mysterious truths to the interpretations which their ignorance, or their passions, at the moment suggest. Heed them not for truth's sake, until you learn their moral antecedents, and the motives of their present idle profession. You may enter their schools, ostentatiously built on the highways, to catch your eye, but you will perceive, if you come to seek the truth, without prejudice, that many of the poor children speak not naturally from the heart, no matter what the violence of their prepared answers be against the doctrines of the Church of Rome and its professors. Alas! they must act this hypocrisy to obtain work, or other means of subsistence, for their wretched parents. Oh! English ladies and gentlemen, of what great immorality among us, are not some of you guilty! How can you claim to be Christian, being the patrons and supporters of this terrible system of bribing conscience, which makes man worse than *inhuman*? Can you blame us, or can the nations of Europe wonder, if we detest the English name, and think our hatred of it *no moral guilt*, as it is said, we do, by those who have examined our nation's feelings; since England has always persecuted (now more than ever, through its literature, its patronage, and wealth) that which we esteem dearer than fame, than life, or country—our Holy faith?

I have reason to be thankful to God for the fidelity of my poor people under trials and temptations the most severe. All my parishioners know that there are many poor creatures here, whose very looks tell a tale of long suffering from hunger, and some of whom, to my knowledge, have striven to support the lives of themselves and families, on one meal of turnips, mixed with Indian meal, in the day, and who have indignantly refused the gifts of the agents of the proselytisers, in the form of food, money, and clothing. Yes, they resolved to die with their children, rather than accept the relief, which was offered on the condition of sending their little ones to the schools of the proselytisers.

Against these temptations and persecutions of my poor parishioners, I now raise my voice to the Christians of the kingdom. I offer no apology in asking them to assist us. We are all brethren of the one family of the faith. I ask them not so much to assist the adult generation of Catholics in this parish as the young. Of the old and adult we are certain. My

people believe there is not one proselyte here, who is not a bribed pervert against his conscience. I ask them, in the name of all that is dear to them, to defend, to protect, the *rising generation*, and those yet unborn, from the machinations, of the impious, the infidel, and immoral, by giving them an early education—religious and literary. For this great purpose, I address this letter to the public.

M. A. KAVANAGH, P.P., Oughterard.

## SHYLOCK'S POUND OF FLESH.

The atrocious things that are done in the name of religion are a fearful argument in the hands of the infidel. The worship of God is, sadly often in our every day life, made the pretext of the most sinful offenses. In his name have been committed the greatest crimes that disgrace humanity. For the ugliest vice, for the lowest meanness, for the darkest pride, for the most disgusting hypocrisy, religion is made the cloak; and there is hardly one worldly excuse which men would dare to quote for the offenses which they hesitate not to commit *ad majorem Dei Gloriam*.

And if the sacred cause of religion has been made a pretext for the worst kind of vices of our nature, at all times and in all countries, we venture to say that the unenviable distinction is ours, that in no other nation is it made the groundwork of equally disgusting practices.—As example, we need only point to the vile system of Soup Proselytism, by which some of the most unhappy portions of our singularly unhappy island are disgraced and disturbed.—We cannot fancy an uglier picture to paint the set of well-fed mercenary of English bigotry who prowls about the country, tempting and corrupting the starving poor, abusing and helying the creed in which they worship, attacking and villifying their priests, exciting immorality and irreligion, and sowing discord, heart-burnings, and anger, wherever they put their foot. When we think of the glorious labors of the first preachers of Christianity—when we reflect on the toil and suffering, the voluntary poverty and mortification—the gentleness, charity, and angelic patience of the missionaries who have carried the cross to all ends of the world—and then picture this will-fed, sleek-coated, pampered, insolent set who violate peace and love, and propagate falsehood, malice, and evil passions, under the name of religion, we cannot help feeling a loathing for the one side of the picture as unbanded as our admiration for the other. If all liberal men could know the condition of the famine-stricken districts where this unholy system is now in operation—the sufferings of the population—the temptations that are held out to their miserable stomachs through the scent of their nostrils—the remorse and often reckless immorality, the fruit of conscious sin of those who yield to the temptation, they would abominate this Soup proselytism as a loathsome plague.

One of the latest examples of its workings is shown in an incident which took place in Tralee, Ireland, the other day. The case was a shocking mixture of the horrible and the ridiculous; and it would be irresistibly laughable if it were not painfully disgusting. A wretched starving boy had been induced, by the appeal which the tempting food that the apostles of soup are so well supplied with by their fanatic dupes in England made, to his gnawing hunger, to abjure his faith. But after some time a troubled conscience appears to have overcome his animal appetite, and he returned once more to the religion in which alone he believed. It seems the Soup missionaries had supplied him with some rags, he having been almost naked when he joined the confraternity; and as they could not get back from him the food he had devoured, they resolved to punish him by prosecuting him for running away with the clothes he wore. The rever. apostle, who had exhibited such singular regard for the welfare of the poor wretch's soul and stomach brought him up before the magistrates at petty sessions. The account says that the clothes which were made the subject of dispute would not do credit to a respectable scarecrow: a bench of magistrates exceedingly favorable to the proselytising parson, valued them at half-a-crown! The extraordinary case was tried, it was acknowledged by the witnesses for the prosecution that they had attempted to detain the defendant by force; but the magistrates ruled with the apostolic litigant and sentenced the wretched boy to a fortnight's imprisonment, and a fine of 2s. 6d., the price of the rags with which he had absconded.

Here is a specimen of apostolic charity.—Does it not carry us back in imagination to the days when the lowly twelve received their mission, and wandered forth among the gentiles, to meet the contempt and cruelties of the world with the patience and gentleness of charity.—Does it remind us of early martyrs who bowed meekly before the sword of the persecutor, and when they were smitten on the one cheek turned the other—who prayed for those that