

# Protestantism And Prosperity.

(From the Catholic Times, Liverpool)

Whatever else may be the outcome of Mr. Balfour's and Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal proposals, these two gentlemen have dealt a severe blow at one of the most venerable controversial arguments that Protestantism ever possessed. Heretofore it was quite customary for members of the Established Church, when engaged in religious discussions with Catholics, to point to the unquestioned progress and prosperity of the British Empire as proof positive that Protestantism surpassed in worth and beneficence any and every other form of faith. Compared with Catholicism its splendor shone with the glory of the noonday sun. Wherever the Catholic Church held sway over men there was poverty and wretchedness, backwardness or decay. The results of professing Protestantism or Catholicism could be seen at a glance, and no one with an eye could fail to see that, judged by the standard of common sense and worldly wisdom, Protestantism was immensely superior to its rival and foe. The argument was not very logical, perhaps, and the test certainly was one which no thoughtful philosopher would accept as conclusive; for what natural alliance, what necessary connection was there between supernatural faith and material prosperity? However, the argument did duty on scores of platforms, and as a theme for the pulpit was never hackneyed, because always flattering. Alas for arguments and premises which have no foundation in fact! All the logic in the world won't save them from Humpty-Dumpty's fate when he fell from the wall. This reasoning from Protestant material prosperity to Protestant religious truth has fallen on evil days. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain and scores of politicians beside lift up their voices and cry out alarmingly to their fellow-countrymen, warning them that England's prosperity has passed or is quickly passing away, and that, unless they adopt new fiscal methods, Great Britain's day is done. All this prophecy may or may not be true; it may be a wily dodge to escape the judgment of the country on their scandalous wickedness and mismanagement during the late war; but, at all events, people believe them, and a large following accepts their views as correct and asserts that they are warranted by facts.

If these things are so; if the prosperity of this country really has passed or is passing away, then with it has gone or is fast going the strongest, because the most popular, defence of Protestantism as a religious creed. No other argument in defence of the Established Church ever exercised an influence comparable to this. It was an argument which men could see with their eyes, handle with their hands. It met them in every place and in every form. At home and abroad, in town and in country, on sea and land, England's power and prosperity, her wealth, her progress, her industry, her genius, came before them in turn, and, as being material, were calculable and impressive. To the man in the street, they were the most imposing evidences that God showered His blessings upon the professors of the pure reformed faith, while He withheld His bounty from the credulous and superstitious believers in the senilities and fables of Roman doctrine. Logic and reasoning were equally powerless to remove from his mind a conclusion which he had drawn, unconsciously as a rule, from observing the facts. The weapons of the most acute controversialists were blunted against a conviction which he had sucked in with his mother's milk and fed afterwards with the strong food of his own mainly experience. All this is now changed. Protestant England is no longer prosperous, and if in the past her prosperity was indeed due to her Protestantism, then either her Protestantism has failed or to it her prosperity never was due at all. Which ever way the matter is looked at, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, in proclaiming England's approaching industrial and commercial ruin, have deprived the professional Protestant controversialist of the best weapon in his armory. Catholics may do well to keep the fact in mind.

Of course the argument never had

any validity. Perhaps the statement never was a fact. Certainly, if the signs of England's prosperity were conspicuous, and this may readily be granted, they were accompanied with other signs which forbade hasty and rash conclusions. The riches of this country were conditioned by poverty and misery such as probably no part of the world could match. If England and Englishmen could boast of possessing wealth, and comfort, and prosperity unequalled elsewhere, yet, side by side with these things, it would be easy, as Cardinal Newman said, to point out "the cold, cruel, selfish system which this supreme worship of comfort, decency, and social order necessarily introduces; to show how the many are sacrificed to the few, the poor to the wealthy, how an oligarchical monopoly of enjoyment is established far and wide, and the claims of want and pain, and sorrow, and affliction, and guilt, and misery, are practically forgotten." The prosperity of units was built on the misery of hundreds and thousands. Is such prosperity worth pointing to as a proof, one way or another, of the accuracy of that form of religious belief which is general among the prosperous and the miserable? What has religion to do with these things?

The success of Great Britain, to our mind, was based, not on its Protestantism, but on its coal-beds, and still more on its insular position. Coal gave us command of steam, and, in consequence, control of the industries of which steam power is the dominant factor. We became the manufacturers for the world, which, not having, or not yet having found, coal supplies at home could not possibly compete with us. But time went on, and Belgium, France, Germany, Russia, America found that they could do for themselves what we had grown to fancy they must have done for them by us. Nor did its Protestantism save England in the stress of foreign competition. Having never affected this country's prosperity all along, it did nothing whatever in the day when it should have helped. As an argument, it had force; as a fact, it had none.

Material prosperity depends on circumstances and conditions quite outside the sphere of religion. Religion has its concern with the world of spirit; prosperity with the world of matter. Men may be morally bad and yet succeed in business; they may be morally good, and fail. A poor saint might make a very bad horse-dealer; and a good horse-dealer might make a very poor saint. Getting on well in this world is not always evidence of getting on well for the next. What has religion to do with commerce and manufacture? These are not the purviews of the Gospel. "Not till the State is blamed for not making saints, may it fairly be laid to the fault of the Church that she cannot invent a steam-engine or construct a tariff." Protestantism and Catholicism are equally powerless to effect worldly prosperity, and the truth of their tenets must be settled by arguments drawn elsewhere.

## Venerable Frere Benilde

According to "La Semaine Religieuse" of Montreal, the Christian Brothers, all over the world, recently celebrated the introduction before the Roman court of the cause for the beatification and canonization of one of the members of their grand order—Venerable Frere Benilde. This saintly son of the community Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle, was a native of Puy-de-Dome, France. He began life as a teacher of primary schools at Aurillac, Moulins, Limoges, Clermont, Montferand and Riom. During twenty-one years he had been director of the school at Saugues, Haute-Loire. It would be impossible for us to tell all the great work that he did. But it is said that he operated a perfect transformation in the

children of the places where he taught. He was born, according to the decree, on the 14th June, 1805, and his parents were Jean Romancon and Anne Chanty. In his sixteenth year he became a member of the Order of Christian Brothers, at Clermont. He took, in religion, the name of Frere Benilde. He died on the 18th August, 1862, in his fifty-seventh year, at Saugues. The ordinary preliminary investigation as to this Brother's reputation for sanctity was instituted before the ecclesiastical court of Puy; and thereafter it was taken to Rome and presented before the Sacred Congregation of Rites. And as according to the decrees of the same Sacred Congregation, dated 13th May, 1901, and 13th December, 1902, no obstacle existed to the introduction of the cause. On the 22nd April of this year His Holiness, the late Pontiff, Leo XIII., signed, with his own hand, the commission for the introduction of the cause. It is this great event that has been celebrated by prayers and religious exercises of a special devotional character and in accord with the hopes of the order in regard to the ultimate triumph of the cause and the final raising of one more member of their community to our altars. It is the duty of all Catholics to join in those prayers, for the glory of the Church and of God.

## An Order in Florence.

The brothers of the Misericordia are one of the sights of Florence. They are all men usually of good family, who devote their lives to the work of burying the dead and caring for the injured in any accident or taking the sick to the hospitals. They wear long black habits with a hood over the face having holes to see through, and they look like ghosts. They carry the sick in a sort of basket, and the dead in a coffin covered with a black pall, on their shoulders. One walks in front of them, with his face uncovered. When they pass, the people cross themselves and say a short prayer for the sick or dead. It is said that the grand duke was a member of this brotherhood, and that when the cholera raged there he worked with the rest. Some of the poorer people also join the Misericordia, and the guide says that you can tell a gentleman from a peasant by the feet. They do a noble, self-sacrificing work.—Exchange.

## THE INVENTOR'S WORK.

For the benefit of our readers we publish a list of patents recently granted by the Canadian Government through the agency of Messrs. Marion & Marion, patent attorneys, Montreal, Canada, and Washington, D.C.

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- Nos.
- 83,340—Elzear Dore, Laprairie, Que. Plow.
- 83,366—Pierre Vallee, Waterbury, Conn. Rail-joint.
- 83,463—Edmond Heroux, Montreal, Que. Door latch.
- 83,497—Pacifique Desorey, Windsor Mills, Que. Process of making wool fabrics.
- 83,898—Pacifique Desorey, Windsor Mills, Que. Forming machine for felt garments.
- 83,499—Pacifique Desorey, Windsor Mills, Que. Manipulating apparatus for felt stocking forms.
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"Willie, you may finish this piece of pie if you want it," said his mother. "It isn't enough to save." "Mother," said Willie, when he had finished it, "a boy in the family comes in very handy when there is a little bit of pie over, doesn't he?"

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