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AMERICAN CATHOLICS, AND CATHOLIC (From the Metropolitan.

A great deal has been said and written about the Irish in America, and the subject will perhaps continue to be discussed, as involving one of those elements in the population of the United States, which must necessarily have their influence upon the national character, and be felt in the determination of political measures and in the administration of the Church. While some writers charge the Irish with adhering too strictly to their nationality in this country, and think that its interests, at least in a religious point of view, would be better promoted by a more American tone of sentiment and action, others are of opinion that, even granting these propositions, it is impolitic and dangerous to agitate such topics, and that the remedy of the supposed evil, if it exists, must be left to the natural course of events, and not be expected from any systematic effort to change the peculiar ideas and customs of an emigrant population. We do not intend to examine the ble of their high vocation, and more firmly root-merits of these different views, but to suggest the ed and founded" in the holy faith which they propopulation. We do not intend to examine the consideration of a subject which may perhaps fess. give a new aspect to the whole question about the Irish in America, and tend to harmonize the contending parties, by diverting the attention from disputed points of comparatively minor moment, and concentrating it upon a topic which of their profession, at all events are prepared for all candid and reflecting minds in the Catholic any emergency that may arise. It is supposed body, whether American or Irish, will admit to

be of grave importance. It is probable, that if the population of the United States were altogether free from the Irish element, and from all foreign composition whatever, the Catholic portion of the inhabitants would be still be viewed with the same fierce prejudices that now prevail so extensively among joy. We are far from being or wishing to aptheir fellow-citizens of other denominations. It pear alarmists; but we think that these sanguine is not opposition to foreigners as such, that has excited such a ferment in the public mind and given birth to a new political organization, the first systematic and powerful attempt to substitute a sectarian despotism for the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution; but it is the Catholicity of foreigners; it is the strength and deve-lopment which the Catholic Church in this country has derived in a great measure from emigration; it is her steady progress under the favorable circumstances of our republican form of gospirit, it is the idea of a foreign pope, the impression that the Catholics of this country are under the control of a foreign potentate, which is false, indeed, in a political or temporal point of view, though it is certain on the other hand that the spiritual supremacy of the Bishop of Rome is a fundamental article of Catholic belief. that it is very generally misunderstood by American Protestants, and is the great bug-bear against which their most active champions invariably direct their attacks. It is the Catholic Church, therefore, as such, in the constitution of which the spiritual headship of the pope is an essential element, that chiefly awakens the hatred of her enemies in this country. Her supposed foreign character, so falsely inferred from this circumstance, no doubt contributes to nurture anti-Catholic prejudice among the masses: but among the leaders of the sects, among those who are in the high places and who in a great degree regulate popular opinion on matters of religion, it is the Catholic Church as the representative of Christianity, as claimant of the divine prerogatives which belong to the Christian religion, that excites the anger and opposition of her adversaries. This hostile spirit can never be extinguished while heresy and infidelity remain. It is the essential destiny of the Church to be hated, calumniated, and at times persecuted by the sects; and although their rancorous opposition may appear for a time to be overcome, the fire is only smouldering under the ashes, and it will burst forth anew according to circumstances, and with a violence proportionate to the exciting cause .-It requires only a Maria Monk, a Gavazzi, or a Ned Buntline to stir up occasionally the inflammable material, and a whole community, nay, the whole country will be enveloped in a fearful conflagration. "You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake," (Matt. x. 22) said our Saviour to his disciples—" they will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God."-John xvi. 2.

If the foregoing observations are correct, it would seem that the efforts of Catholic writers might be very profitably directed to the elucidation of such topics, as would create a healthy and vigorous spirit in the Catholic body at large, in order to prepare it for those emergencies to which it is always liable in a country like this, where heresy and infidelity are predominant.-

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by removing prejudice to advance the interests of the true faith. But, whatever might be the advantages arising from such a policy, it cannot be denied that it is a point of infinitely greater importance to improve and elevate the condition of Catholics in general throughout the United States, whether Irish or American, English or German. In one case, it is drilling the whole army in the spiritual tactics which are the best guaranty of victory; while in the other, it is making but a brief truce with the enemy. Whether it be the lot of the Catholic Church in this country to continue the untramelled action which she now exerts, or to be hampered by restrictive or persecuting laws, is a contingency which no human penetration can foresec. But, whatever may be her condition hereafter in relation to the civil power, whether that of entire freedom as at present, or of oppression as in some other countries, the interests of religion and the prosperity of the Church absolutely require that the members of her communion should become more fully sensi-

The steady progress of Catholicity in the United States in point of numbers, has led to the impression that the members of the Church, as a body, are all that they should be in virtue any emergency that may arise. It is supposed that their past success in building up churches, and establishing schools and other institutions, has removed the most formidable difficulties from their path. The triumphs already achieved are considered as the certain harbingers of more signal victories, and the future looms up before them glorious with every indication of prosperity and views and expectations betray a very grave delu-sion. The real prosperity of the Church in any part of the world does not consist merely in large or increasing numbers, in the multiplication of churches and institutions, or in the grandeur and beauty which our growing resources may enable us to bestow upon them. All this constitutes but the shell of religion; it may indeed, to a certain extent, be indicative of faith and of zeal for God's houor on the part of the Catholic body; but it is not an indispensable accompaniment, and possessed no external glory, while she displayed on every side a vitality which gave birth to the most heroic virtue. At a later period of her history we behold the reverse of the picture. In the fourth and fifth centuries, when she enjoyed a profound peace, when large accessions were daily made to the numbers of the faithful, when temples were erected at every point to the honor of the living God, the Christian faith lost much of its practical power over the popular mind, and, as St. Jerome expresses it, "ecclesia nunc potentior et divitiis quidem major, virtutibus vero minor facta est."—" The Church has become more powerful and rich in our days; but it has lost in virtue."-In vita Malach. tom. i., p. 41. It is a grave error, therefore, and a very common one in the United States, to estimate the progress of Catholicity amongst us from this outward stand-point. They who enter upon this interesting investigation should not forget, that 'all the glory of the King's daughter is within," -Psalm xliv .- and that the question is not simply whether the number of our churches, and clergymen, and lay-members is steadily increasing; but whether this outward expansion is accompanied by a corresponding vigor of the spiritual life, by a strong and invincible faith in the doctrines of religion, by a profound reverence for ecclesiastical authority, and by the general practice of that sober, just and godly living, which the apostle inculcates, as an epitome of the obligations incumbent on the professors of Christianity, and the basis of their hopes for the rewards of eternal life .- Titus ii. 12. The question, so far as the prospects of Catholicity in this country are considered, is not merely whether the churches are increasing in number, but whether they are sources of spiritual life and grace for those who frequent or ought to frequent them; not, whether accessions are continually making to the list of clergy, but whether the clergy are of the right stamp and possess the necessary qualifications for their holy and exalted office; not, whether we have large congregations or numerous conversions, but whether the people obey their pastors, whether they value their faith above

all human considerations, or as our divine Sa-

viour enjoins the obligation, "seek first the king-

dom of God and His justice," and whether they

achievements of art, with her numerous and wealthy clergy, and hosts of believers all united in the profession of the same faith, when the lust and avarice of a tyrant resolved to strike out the corner-stone of the religious structure? What has it profited the Catholic nations of South with magnificent temples, to have possessed so many conventual and other institutions, and even to have shut out from their social system the organizations of sectarianism, when the light of faith, practically speaking, has well nigh become extinguished among them, and they themselves yielding to the corrupting influence of worldliness, have become as it were a bye-word to the nations, and a fatal stumbling-block to those who are not in the cummunion of the Church? The external glory of religion did not suffice to check the assaults of heresy and infidelity in one of these countries, nor to prevent in the other that torpor and degeneracy of faith which has given birth to the most crying scandals, and almost ir-remediable abuses. Have we not the same evils to fear for the United States? If the Church continue to enjoy her present freedom, is there not some reason to apprehend, lest, with the enlargement of her boundaries and the increase of her material resources, the piety and faith of her children may be seriously affected by the growing sensualism and corruption of the age? On the other hand, if she be destined to pass thro' the fiery ordeal of persecution, will her children prove firm and invincible in the hour of trial ?-One of these battles they must inevitably sustain. In the event of a long contined peace in this country, the faith of Catholics, we mean their general adherence to that sound code of morals which is the only conservative element of social virtue, and can alone be effectual in improving our civilization, will meet with a formidable enemy in the increasing luxury and all devouring avarice of the times, while, if civil oppression be their lot, the sufferings and humiliations incident to such a condition, especially for those who once enjoyed all the privileges of freemen, will prove from among the children of men"-"Diminute impose. Men must become deeply convinced, sunt veritates a filiis hominum"-Ps. ii.-could that the study and practice of religion belong produce the horrors of the French revolution, it not only to children, but to persons of every age may be considered a more fearful calamity for a and condition in life; that as the dignity and nation than the violence of persecution; for, in happiness of individuals in all stations and profesthe latter case, where a strong and practical attachment to the Catholic faith prevails among a people, nothing short of an exterminating policy is shown to her teachings, she is essentially the can alter the state of things-this indeed may bring forth martyrs, while the decline of faith the most profitable object that can occupy their can only produce apostates. In the case of England, which lost her proud position among the Catholic nations of Europe at the time of the astrous revolution was occasioned more by the as the depository and exponent of revealed truth, it is, as history shows, that this was the principal and heavenly ministrations to a life of glory herecause that contributed at that period to the rapid after, should hold the highest place in our esdiffusion of heresy over the continent.

Were there no particular grounds for apprehending the degeneracy of Catholic society in the United States, the general causes which have produced such a result in some other countries, would suffice to excite our just alarms. But, the growing materialism and luxury of the age and the peculiarity of our social system, furnish additional reasons for supposing our liability to the evil in question. It cannot be denied, that the American people are unequalled, save perhaps by the English nation, for love and pursuit of mamnaturally, by force of habit, increase, take a stronger hold upon the popular mind, and produce a corresponding alienation of thought and affection from spiritual things. We have only to compare the people of our day with the past generation or that which preceded it, to be conincreasing ardor for material objects is encouraged in no small degree by the particular structure of American society; for De Tocqueville has well observed, that in countries where social the comforts of life, because these comforts con-

casti gentem, et non magnificasti lœtitiam."- may rise, by his successful industry, to the most Isaias ix., 3; for it is not the outward or material brilliant circles of society. Hence, the enjoystrength of a Catholic people that will support ments of life are for Americans a prospect alits dignity, its prosperity or its influence, but the ways before them, an end which is always incitinward life that animates it. What availed to ing their ambition, and we may imagine how pow-England her noble cathedrals, those splendid erfully the continual aspiration after this end must operate, flattering as it is to the pride, vanity and other passions of the human heart. With such difficulties to contend with, we may conceive that it is not impossible for American Catholics to degenerate, and to become, like their brethren and that a much deeper attachment to their faith in some other parts of the world, languid in faith America to have studded one half of a continent | and altogether unfit for the great battles which Catholicity has to fight in these modern times .-There are reflecting persons who fancy that they already perceive in the Catholic body symptoms of this spiritual decline. The increasing want of reverence for the ecclesiastical character and office in the higher classes; the neglect of parents to instil virtuous sentiments into their children from the earliest age, and later in life to restrain their worldly desires; the general disregard of parental authority, and almost universal want of knowledge in regard to the relations between authority and obedience; the constant thirst after pleasure as an end of life; the loathing of religious instruction; the habit of divorcing secular affairs from the spiritual, as if the former were altogether independent of the latter; the practice of confining religion to external duties, and overlooking its essential spirit-these with other indications which cannot be mentioned here, prognosticate no good and will never secure a Catholic people against the dangers which we

have described. Under these circumstances, what is to be done? The answer to this question may be promptly given in those words of the Psalmist, "beatus populus cujus Dominus Deus ejus"-" happy is that people whose God is the Lord."-Ps. ii.-The only means of insuring a bright and glorious future to the Church in the United States, is the elevation of the popular mind to the true standard of Catholic sentiment. The god mammon must become dominant in the heart of the people. They must be made to know and feel the superiority of heaven over earth, of eternal things | sions, and therefore the interests of social order, depend altogether upon the practical regard that noblest, the worthiest, the most interesting and thoughts; that there are no circumstances in which it is lawful to be divorced from her authority-no business, no undertaking that must not teem and affection, and should receive from us every mark of obedience and respect. To produce this enlarged, active and lively conviction domestic fireside, must all concur, in their respec-

It would be irrelevant to our purpose to enter more fully into the means of accomplishing so desirable a result; our object is chiefly to show, that however laudable may be the views and momon, and this devotion to worldly interests must | tives of those who aim at the reformation of a us, a necessity of far greater moment, touching as it does the very vitals of Catholic society and combine with the varied appliances of religion to the pleasing fancy, that the people of this coundistinctions are clearly and permanently marked, wished, and to be solicited by the most carnest the aristocracy have no anxious aspiration after prayers. The most laborious and the ablest Catholic writer in America, has more than once enstitute as it were their very existence; while the deavored to represent it as an end to which we

of so exalted an end.

1857. Assuredly, if the Catholics of the United States be not fortified, by a better knowledge and more ardent love of religion, against the dangers that await them, far from becoming instrumental under God in the conversion of their fellow-men, they will not be able even to hold their own. We have no hesitation in asserting, that the Catholics of this country as a body are not half educated, considering the wants of their position and the great work that is before them, and more visible evidences of its heavenly power will be requisite, to gain the love of our proud and worldly-minded population.

But, is there a Catholic people on earth that may be proposed as a model to their American brethren? Is there any Catholic nation that exhibits and has always exhibited that fervor and constancy of Christian faith, which is the richest element of a true civilization and the best safeguard of national dignity and popular worth? We unhesitatingly answer, yes: the people of Ireland stand out pre-eminently great in those traits of character which claim the imitation of Catholics in this country and throughout the world. There is something in the history of that people which raises it to a much higher level, than that at which we are accustomed to survey and estimate the nations of the earth. How through the long lapse of centuries, amid cloud and sunshine, and especially amid the dark storm of persecution which for ages swept over the land, the Irish have clung to the faith of their fathers and become bound to it perhaps by still stronger ties, is a moral phenomenon well worthy the study of the Christain philosopher, and suggestive of the most significant and practical lessons for any Christain people. Were we to say, that the writer of these remarks is not of Irish birth nor even of Irish extraction for several generations. back, and that he is far from thinking that the Irish people are destitute of faults, we would only assert what is necessary to forestall at least one objection from a rabid and inconsiderate crimust be dethroned and the true God substituted ticism. Let it be admitted that the Irish have in its place. The spiritual and divine element | their faults; but let it be admitted also, that as a Christian nation they possess superior and enviable qualities-traits of excellence that cast all other Christian nations into the shade. The over temporal, of God over the world. For Irish have their imperfections as well as other this purpose it will be necessary to give religion people: but how do these defects dwindle into remment, that have aroused the jealousy of her it may exist independently, of those sentiments and rekindled the fires of religious bi- and manners which form the substance and life of Church, and to barter away their spiritual birth- follow up the lessons of the catechism with a Catholic countries upon the globe, Ireland is the gotry and hatred. If any thing foreign has contributed to evoke this angry and denunciatory age and for several centuries after it the Church which of these evils is the more to be dreaded. Tributed to evoke this angry and denunciatory age and for several centuries after it the Church which of these evils is the more to be dreaded. The grounds on which they ized by an unqualified submission to the voice of If the decline of faith, the "decaying of truth rest, and of the various obligations which they their pastors, by a profound veneration for the priestly character and office, and by a warm and thorough appreciation of sacred things, especially the sacraments of religion, the sources of spiritual life. We may smile perhaps at the simplicity of the man who, stricken down by disease despatches a messenger for the priest of God, and upon being told by him that he should send for a physician, replies: "Och! you are the best doctor:" but these words contain a mine of wisdom, and are more than sufficient to confute all the sophistry of infidels and worldlings. Let it be remembered that the Irish know, emphatically, how to esteem and requite the services of their Reformation, it is not improbable that this dis- be subjected to her guidance; that the Church clergy, and will never under any plea whatever turn away a priest from their door who appeals religious apathy of her population than by the as the mother that brought us forth to a life of to them in the name of religion or humanity. tyranny and cruelty of the civil power. Certain grace and will conduct us by her vigilant care | Every thing that religion touches, is great and paramount in the estimate of an Irishman, and no human respect, no fear of the world will prevent him from showing this fond attachment which he cherishes for the blessing of the Church. It is this deep, sovereign and all-controlling love of of divine truth, the pulpit, the school-room, the their holy faith, that renders the Irish people great and admirable at home, and makes them, tive departments, with a zeal and fidelity com- after emigrating to foreign climes, the founders mensurate with their grave obligations and worthy of churches and other religious institutions, and the most zealous and generous co-operators in every effort of missionary enterprise. There is scarcely a corner of the inhabitable globe whither they have not penetrated, driven from their emerald isle by the ruthless hand of oppression; but, wherever they are found, there have they class in the community, there is a want amongst | erected, for the refreshment of their own hearts. and for the consolation of all who are travelling the gloomy pilgrimage of life, the cross of Christ, extending through the whole Catholic body, and the symbol of redemption, the pledge of immorthat the enlightened activity of the press should tal life. When we contemplate in the Irish nation that deep, warm, and abiding love of the vinced that all classes of society have greater meet this emergency, both in its present and pro-wants than were felt by their forefathers. This spective relations. There are those who indulge and discipline, and reflect that these extraordinary impressions of divine truth remain in all their intry will in course of time be aggregated to "the tensity and efficiency, after every machination of one fold under one Shepherd." This is unques- earth and hell combined has been exhausted in tionably a consummatiun most devoutly to be endeavoring to crush out Catholicity from the popular heart, we are led to think that Divine Providence has reserved for the Irish people some great and glorious mission; and, as in the times preceding the advent of the Saviour the family of adopt the requisite means to secure these advan- lower classes, aware of their inability to attain tages for themselves and all under their charge. rank, feel no incitement to the ardent pursuit of most active efforts. But, while he finds reason nal promise of a Redeemer, and to preserve amid-Without attending to these circumstances, we worldly enjoyment. But, in a country like ours to hope for this glorious result, he is "saddened the darkness of heathenism the knowledge and

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