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THE PRESENT AND PAST ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH THE REFORMATION IN IRELAND.

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE TABERNACLE IN NEW YORK, ON MONDAY EVENING, OCT. 17, 1853, BY T. P. MAGEE.

(Concluded from No. 14.)

I shall now, ladies and gentlemen, with your patient permission present to you the legislative and intellectual side of this indictment. The facts of this class I shall arrange under two heads—

I. As to the right of worship and discussion.

II. As to Education.

Every form of Protestantism set out with "private judgment," as its first principle. Had the British form (to speak of no other) been true to this assumed ground, we should have had a different story to tell of Ireland. But neither in the 16th, the 17th, nor the 18th century—until towards the close—was there any attempt to argue the question with the Irish priesthood or people. If there is any such attempt at fair discussion, from the reign of Henry VIII. to that of George III., I am not aware of it, and I will be obliged to any one who will point it out. There is no such thing; Protestantism never trusted to discussion or argument in Ireland; its faith was in firelocks, and its expectation in gunpowder. The order to "keep its powder dry," was given in substance by all its leaders and directors, before and after Cromwell.

Let me recapitulate a few facts. In Henry's reign eight noble Geraldines were executed for the faith; in Edward's four of the same family, and the chiefs of the O'Moores and O'Connors; in Elizabeth's reign, the family of Desmond was exterminated; the Archbishops of Cashel and Armagh, the Bishop of Mayo and a large number of Priests and Friars, (probably about 300) suffered death. In the same reign, as Carew, Hollinshed, and Spencer, prove, extermination was the invariable policy. On one occasion Skeffington executed 150 disarmed prisoners, and at Limerick, Raleigh and Lord Grey, put over 800 of the garrison—after they had surrendered—to the sword.

Under the Stuarts the same exterminating spirit, in all but a few brief intervals prevailed. The O'Neils and O'Donnells were extirpated, the Archbishops of Tuam and Armagh were in perpetual exile; and in 1605 all Priests and Jesuits were ordered out of the kingdom by December following. The greater part of the Sees were made vacant; in 1621, when, as Philip O'Sullivan writes, they were administered solely by "priests, clerks, or persons of the religious orders, for Vicars general." In 1622, the sentence of "premanuire" transportation was pronounced against all who would not take the oath of supremacy, and Archbishop Usher preached in the Castle Chapel, in defence of the decree; in 1629 the Catholics were driven by armed men from their secret chapels; about the same time several Catholic Aldermen of Dublin and Waterford, were fined and imprisoned for refusing to assist at the dispersion of their fellow-Catholics.

Of the Puritan legislation I have said, perhaps, enough. It may be thought, however, that it was the result of conquest and of war. No such thing. It was all coolly planned before-hand. "The solemn League and Covenant" formed between the Scotch and English Puritans in 1643, expressly swears them "to endeavor the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, and superstition," in the three kingdoms. For their time they seemed to have succeeded well. The Bishops of Ross, Emlay and Clogher, died on the scaffold; 30 Dominican monks, and fully two hundred religious perished by most cruel deaths; the Archbishops of Armagh, Cashel and Tuam, and the Bishops of nearly all the other sees died in exile. Out of some 30 Irish Bishops, only three died in Ireland, of a natural death.

In Charles second's reign, during what was called "the Popish Plot," Archbishop Talbot died in prison and Primate Plunkett on the scaffold. Many ecclesiastics of obscure name shared the same fate.

In three years of William III., from 1696 to '99, 495 secular and 425 regular clergymen, and several convents of nuns, were banished for life.

By the 9th of Queen Anne the tariff of blood was fixed, "for an Archbishop, Bishop, or other superior, £50 per head, for other ecclesiastics, £20." This tariff gave rise to the infamous profession of "Priest-catching," which was profitably prosecuted both by Jews, Huguenots, and native Protestants.—"Not a house of the Dominican order was left" according to Dr. De Burgo. Of 1800 clergymen ordained for the Irish Church in that generation "some three or four hundred lurked in holes and corners." The names of "Pool-an-Affrin" and "Glan-an-Affrin" the cave and the glen of Holy Sacrifice, may still be traced on Maps of Ireland. Thus much for the freedom of discussion and worship which Pro-

testantism permitted in Ireland. When people in the United States tell us "the Reformers" struck for the freedom of the mind, for liberty of thought, for progress and enlightenment, do they think we Irish have got no memories? no feelings? no sense of right and wrong? How much more true it would be for us to say—"we know Protestantism longer than you do—we know it in its political unity and concentrated power—and we say to you, it has been to us and to our fathers, a persecutor more ingenious than Domitian and more insatiable than Nero."

Let me proceed with its services to the cause of education and enlightenment in Ireland. Elizabeth confiscated the College of Youghal, James I. ordered the College of St. Nicholas at Galway (which had at the time 1300 students) to be closed; and in the same reign Archbishop De Bicknor's Seminary of St. Patrick's, Dublin, founded in the fourteenth century, was also closed. The schools of Armagh, of Clonmacnoise, and of Lismore, which had often averaged 3,000 pupils, were confiscated in the reign of Edward VI. and of Elizabeth. By the penal code of Anne no Catholic could teach school in Ireland without a license, and the condition of this license was swearing his own religion to be "superstitious and idolatrous;" no Catholic, under pain of felony, could send his child abroad to be educated;—none, under the like penalty, could remit money to pay for such education; and as if, to complete the fabric of iniquity, any member of a family informing upon its head for any breach of this code, would thereby be entitled to his estate, if any! How truly has Edmund Burke said of this code of Queen Anne—"It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people and the debasement in them of human nature itself as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." Henceforth let sectarian orators and authors, who glorify the enlightenment and civilisation of England, in contrast with the poverty and ignorance of Ireland—henceforth, I say, let them be silent. The truth of history will out, sooner or later; and if aught that I have said is not the truth, I challenge correction.

Instead of the famous schools and colleges of ancient Ireland, what did the Reformers give us? A single college at Dublin. And in that college, even till this day, no one professing the faith of four-fifths of the population, can hold a scholarship. It is not seven years since I heard the cause of a Catholic student pleaded with great eloquence, in the halls of Trinity. He had twice won his scholarship, and twice he was rejected. Many of the Faculty—among whom are some of the most honorable and learned gentlemen in the kingdom—would have gladly admitted him to his honors, but the statutes of the college were inexorable, and Mr. Heron was rejected.

I must not forget that other educational boon of theirs, the charter schools founded in 1733. Dr. Boulter, Primate and Premier, designed this system "for teaching the children of the Popish and other natives." He was liberally seconded by the Crown, the Irish Parliament, and by individuals. Their annual grants from parliament were nearly equal to eighty thousand pounds per year. In addition to this they had many bequests. A Baron Vryhaven left them fifty-six thousand pounds; the Earl of Ranelagh bequeathed them valuable real estate; an anonymous benefactor left them forty thousand pounds; and many other well disposed persons smaller legacies. The Incorporated Society was enabled to do a good deal, so far as money went. Still their schools progressed but slowly. In 1761, they had but fifty-two altogether, educating only two thousand and thirty-five children. In 1775, the society made a bye-law that "none but Popish children" should be admitted to the schools—thus avowing and insuring their proselytizing purpose. The treatment of the poor little Catholics in these places was inhuman to the last degree. Here surely was a vantage ground and crowning mercy for Protestantism. There were no other schools tolerated but their own, and their own had the public treasury for a revenue. If ever the Irish were to be converted, this was the time, and these were the means. But what was the result? The system not only failed, but in its failure demonstrated anew the utter hollowness and heartlessness of the Anglican schism. It escaped for a time unexposed. A Protestant parliament voted the supplies, ordered the reports to be printed, and took no further interest in the matter. At length, a great philanthropist, the humane Howard, visited Ireland on his circumnavigation of charity. The committee of parliament received him with respect, and many improvements in prisons and hospitals were made at his suggestion. He brought the subject of

* Parliamentary Reports, 1829, states that, from 1730 to 1820, they had received one million six hundred thousand pounds.

the charter schools under the attention of Parliament. In 1787, they ordered an enquiry, and found that, of twenty-one hundred scholars reported, only fourteen hundred could be produced. Howard and Sir Jeremiah Fitzpatrick, inspector of prisons, served on the commission, and were examined. Both stated that the children "were in general filthy and ill-clothed;" that "the diet was insufficient for the support of their delicate frames;" that many of the schools "were going to ruin;" that many of the scholars "were without shifts or shirts, and in such a condition as was indecent to look on." Howard concluded his evidence by asserting that "the children in general were sickly, pale, and such miserable objects that they were a disgrace to all society, and their reading had been neglected for the purpose of making them work for their masters." This was the ripe result of Dr. Boulter's schools, which, however, lived on in their rottenness and pretences for half a century longer. The shameless tenacity with which they were defended, shows how entirely pride and prejudice were the guides and governors of the Irish establishment.

In 1834 we had "the National Schools" substituted for the old system, and in 1844, four provincial colleges were established by Parliament. Of the course taught in these colleges I am ignorant; it is enough for Irish Catholics to know, that they were condemned at Turin and at Rome, by the successor of St. Peter and the successor of St. Patrick. The services of the Reformers to the cause of education in Ireland are before you. Judge you of their value to mankind.

About the middle of the last century, Ladies and Gentlemen, all coercive means for the conversion of Ireland, were exhausted. Wholesale confiscation had robbed them of all property, save only their property in orthodoxy; the torture had gone out of fashion with the 17th century; imprisonment and exile had been found quite as unsuccessful. The old axe and block, were for the last time dedicated to Father Nicholas Sheehy at Clonmel, in 1776. By the census of 1747, the Catholics were discovered to be three millions and a half, out of a total of four millions and a third! It is indisputable that, up to this period—for the two hundred years after Henry VIII., every sort of Protestantism had been a failure in Ireland. James's Presbyterians, Cromwell's Independents, William's Huguenots, Penn's Quakers, Wesley's Methodists—all had been tried and all had failed to increase or multiply, or even to hold their own. I have sometimes thought the middle of the last century, the darkest spot in Irish History, but when I remember that then the long struggle of forces closed; that then even English statesmen confessed themselves defeated by Irish constancy; when I regard it, as a period of truce between the abandonment of one set of tactics, and the adoption of another, I am inclined to attach great importance to even ordinary affairs during the reign of the two first Georges. On the Protestant side stand Boulter and Chesterfield, on the Catholic side Wyse, Curry and O'Connor, the forerunners of a century of agitation. From the accession of George I to the first Catholic Relief Bill was nearly fifty years, but those fifty years, must not be considered, unimportant, or uneventful.

The new set of tactics, adopted in the last century, may be included under the general term—*Liberalism*—as those which I first described may be called the tactics of *coercion*. British liberalism was a sort of "after-grass," Protestantism. It grew up when the first produce of the English Reformation had been gathered in and it was chiefly cultivated by skeptics like Bolingbroke, who were, perhaps, indebted for their cue to France. Gallicanism, low Churchism, skepticism, Locke and Voltaire, alike contributed to swell its progress. It was a reservoir into which anything might flow that would; it was a bottomless gulph that rejected nothing. It first appeared in literature, and then made its way into politics, gaining most, among the party called "Whig," in England and Ireland.—Perhaps not more than two distinguished men of the last century, Burke and Johnson, were uninfluenced by the general popularity of *liberalism*. But now it has become necessary as the gift of speech to every public man. Lord John Russell is a liberal, Lord Palmerston is a liberal, and Clarendon is a liberal. What their liberalism means you may learn from Archbishop Cullen and Cardinal Wiseman.

This sort of philosophy was as great a stranger to the Catholic as to the Protestant mind. But as the Catholics were the parties most likely to be benefitted by it, and as it had a benevolent face, their lay leaders gradually began to grow liberal. We can trace the descent of this new disposition from Curry and O'Connor, to O'Connell and Dr. Doyle. The Munster prelates who, in 1765, condemned the ultramontane passages of Dr. De Burgo's book, and Fa-

ther O'Leary's writings, furnish proof that even some of the clergy were not beyond its influence.

Now I do not presume to blame our Fathers in '57, '93, or '29, for accepting the political alliance of what were called "Liberal Protestants." I think it was their duty to do so,—as far as they in conscience could. But I do blame them for becoming *liberalists* themselves; for boasting their personal independence of the Pope; for saying to every sect, "we are all equal in the sight of God;" for hoping heretics might be saved, and doubting that themselves might be damned; for, in fact, descending from the high and holy ground of the seventeenth century, and flinging their cross and Catechism behind them. I do believe that was going too far, and that even the triumphs of '93 and '29 were too dearly purchased by such subservience. I am not going to discuss the theological absurdity of liberalism, nor the proper distinction between the toleration of persons, and the toleration of false doctrines; I am only a lecturer on history, dealing with its facts; but I will say that, since I began earnestly to meditate on these subjects, it appeared to me that *liberalism* is the most dissipating, masculating, and destructive element that can possibly be introduced among a faithful and devout people. I am not, consequently, ready to worship this golden calf. I am not prepared to glorify all the British liberals of the last century. I am uncharitable enough to believe that they gave up the rack only when it was found useless, and ceased to confiscate only when there was no more property left to the Catholics. The Irish were tolerated when they could no longer be trampled; they were emancipated because they could not be eradicated.

In our own generation, even under the "liberal" regime, two pertinacious attempts have been made to "convert Ireland;" Lord Farnham's Reformation in 1826, and Dr. Plunkett's at the present time. The scene of Lord Farnham's labors was chiefly his own county of Cavan, and the time was one of scarcity. Like Dr. Plunkett he made a great noise, published wonderful reports, and excited the active co-operation of the British bigots. Exeter Hall rang with the triumphs of the parliamentary religion in Ireland, and funds were liberally subscribed for its propagation. But in a year or two the excitement cooled down, the missionaries gave up, and "the new reformation," as it was called, left no other fruit than a few volumes of controversial writings, and a considerable addition to the stock of Irish anecdotes.

The points of resemblance between "the reformation" of 1826 and that of 1853 are so many, that I feel quite at ease in predicting the same result now as then. Now, as then, the districts where the conversions are said to be most numerous are poor starved districts, and I do not think that the conviction which comes from hunger is likely to last longer than its cause continues. Everywhere else "the reformation" commenced in crowds, in cities, in courts or at universities. That an isolated peasantry, proverbial for orthodoxy, are moved at such seasons by conviction, and not by appetite, is impossible to be believed. The large items for food and clothing reported in the balance sheets of the undertaking, look very suspicious. Taken in connection with the extreme poverty of the places mentioned, they have the appearance of bribing the people to counterfeit a faith they do not feel; it looks like giving them garments in exchange for traditions, and so much food as an equivalent for so much doctrine. The Irish peasantry have a legend that when the old enemy of the soul attempts to buy and bind any one with a bond, the bargain is not valid till the victim eats and drinks with the Tempter. So it would seem to be with the modern Apostles of Connaught. They regard all who eat of their providing as their own for time and for eternity: they think they can put a noose upon the immortal soul by the help of the digestive organs! They dole out soup and scripture, psalmody and broken meat; they sandwich the Bible between two buttered crusts and then they glorify their wonderful success in fattening prize Christians for evangelical exhibition.

The "second conversion of Ireland" is very unlike the first. When Saint Patrick directed his course to Tara, he drew up his boat on the oozy banks of the Boyne, and proceeded alone and on foot through the wide plain of Bregia, chanting his hymns as he travelled. He sought out and stood face to face with Paganism, and God gave him the victory. Like the first apostles, he took with him "neither staff nor scrip," nor was he solicitous to secure post horses by the way. But the modern apostles set out in a very different manner. They set out, equipped with long purses and long faces. They kindle a fire wherever they go, and zealously prepare saving souls in a Protestant pot, which they hasten to deal out, in an evangelical ladle. A few pot-herbs and marrow-bones are their principal