

## THE IRISH AND ORANGEISM.

It is too late now to make any further attempt to put a stop to the Orange procession on the 12th of this month. It is decided upon, and must take place unless the Orangemen would lay themselves open to the charge of cowardice—and of that not even their fiercest foes can accuse them. That they have been driven to this mainly by the conduct of the Catholics is beyond question; who have threatened and bullied them in the streets and in the press; and the Catholic leaders and writers in papers have raised a spirit in their own party they can check or guide. The procession is legal enough, and that aspect of it is not worth discussion. And it cannot be made otherwise, whatever clumsy efforts may be made by M. Taillon and his friends. No law in that direction can be made useful and operative unless it be framed to include all processions, or else define—not what bodies shall not walk in procession—but what bodies shall. Such a one-sided and discriminating policy would be fatal to the peace of the Province, for it would be as unjust as absurd.

And the Orangemen must be protected by the proper authorities. Everybody can see that but the imbecile Mayor of Montreal. He said in the Council—and doubtless spoke in a wise way according to his own thinking—that he must not be expected to do anything which would seem to indicate his recognition of the Orange body—or words to that effect. So the poor man thinks that by wilfully shutting his eyes he can shirk a plain duty. Recognise the Orange body! What has the Mayor to do with recognitions? He has to preserve public peace and good order. If the Orangemen were an illegal order, their lives must be protected all the same. Actual criminals must not be slaughtered in the streets. If a man guilty of murder were to be threatened by a mob, the authorities would have to stand between that man and that mob. And now, if after so many warnings and appeals the Mayor refuse to take every possible measure for the prevention of disorder, and loss of life happen, he must be held responsible. So far there need be no puzzle about what is to be done.

But for some time past I have been asking why the Irish Catholics resent this Orange procession so furiously. I have not long known much of the Orange body; their party tunes I know nothing about; their sentiments I know but in part; their aim appears to me in my foolishness to be not very well defined. With Irish history I have had some acquaintance—that is to say, I have studied it for the most part as given by English writers, for only a few men have grace enough to hear with patience and candour “the other side.” I saw that respectable Irish Catholics fairly lost their balance of reason as soon as the subject of Orangeism was mooted. Calm over most other matters, they waxed furious over that. I asked one of them why, and got for answer something like this: “You Englishmen have no idea of the state of our mind with regard to Orangeism; you don’t understand it. It is not political, and it is not religious, and it is not social; and yet it is religious and political and social and everything else that can make one party hate another.” So I turned to books to find, if I could, how I should feel if I stood in the shoes of an Irish Catholic. And this, in brief, is the result of my reading:

As it is no use studying the history of a people with the hope of arriving at something like accuracy of judgment without making an effort to understand the social and political conditions of the country, and to trace the historical lines which mark the development of the intellect and character of the people.

And to that end this must be remembered. The Irish had a large measure of civilisation prior to the English conquest, which was attested by their architecture, metal-work, music, besides the piety and profound learning of many of their monks. To those monks England owed a great part of her Christianity, and Scotland owed her name, her language, and a large proportion of her inhabitants. But all the time Ireland was torn with disunions, which were made worse by the Danish invasion. Ireland never passed, as did the rest of Europe, under the dominion of the Romans. The worse for Ireland, but so it was. The Norman conquest of England was decided by one battle; in Ireland it was protracted over a space of four hundred years. Again the worse for Ireland, because the Normans did but settle there, adopting their laws and their modes of life—doing no good, but harm—becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves.

Of course atrocities were committed, for the laws were favourable—the killing of an Irishman was no felony, and the punishment for murder was not death, only a fine.

The English regarded the Irish as later colonists looked upon the Red Indians—as being beyond the pale of moral law. Intermarriage with them was forbidden by severe penalties, and the policy of England seemed to be to make a perpetual separation between the English and the Irish, and eventually to root the Irish out of their own land. During the reign of Henry VIII., the royal authority became something of a reality over the whole island—but Elizabeth waged a wild war of suppression there, which crushed the native population to dust and despair. The English leaders made treachery a practice, and torture a law. The war, as conducted by those wild beasts, Carew, Gilbert,

Pelham and Mountjoy, was a war of extermination—men, women and children were butchered. Famine was introduced to do work the sword could not reach. It was effectual. The story of their sufferings is as horrible as anything pen has described.

At first religion had little or nothing to do in the matter. The Irish chiefs were generally indifferent to religious, or ecclesiastical distinctions; and the English were the reverse of zealous in that way. They were concerned for the suppression of the Irish race, and to that end the religious question contributed. Attendance upon the Anglican service was made compulsory—which service was celebrated in the English or the Latin tongue; the mass was declared illegal; the churches and their revenues were taken from the priests. The Church of the conqueror was forced upon the conquered, and the worship of their fathers and their mothers prescribed by law. It is not difficult to imagine what bitterness of soul that would create and foster.

Then the most shameful and shameless confiscations took place. Families were turned from home and lands to starve and die where they might. And in process of time by reason of those confiscations—by the policy pursued of planting English colonies in Connaught and Ulster—by the inquisition into defective titles, when under the flimsiest pretence rights were disallowed and gifts revoked—the Irish got the conviction that the war waged against them was not a war of and for nationality—not a war of races—not a war of religion, but an effort to drive them from the soil. And they loved the soil—it was their mother—and in the sacred cause they fought as the brave Scots had fought before them. The Irish were capable of becoming a peaceable and industrious people—capable of rendering obedience to law when fairly administered, and commanding a large measure of national prosperity, but their enemies could not understand that.

It is easy to trace the growth of religious antagonism and bitterness. By the legislation of Elizabeth, the Act of Uniformity was established in Ireland; the matter slumbered for a while, but flamed under James I., becoming a strife for altar and home—the Government of Charles I. found no reason for improvement, and soon the Irish grew zealous in the object of obtaining security and open recognition for their religion.

Then arose a new danger—the Puritan party had been formed—having no reason with Popery, but only fierce and fiery hate against it. There was no such thing as faith in toleration known among the Puritans, and their first object was to put an end to it.

Then came the great rebellion—the first thought of which was taken from the Scots when they rose in League and Covenant—due to no single cause, but representing the wrongs and bitteresses which had accumulated during two generations—that is to say, agrarian wrongs—religious wrongs—wrongs of confiscation—dating from the Act of Uniformity to the spoiling of the Irish College under Charles.

The story of the great rebellion of 1641 has been most unfairly told. Atrocities have been laid at the door of the Irish which were never committed—and generally it is forgotten that the English were responsible for the vast proportions to which it grew. By at once proroguing the Irish Parliament, and by passing a resolution in the House of Commons declaring that henceforth no toleration should be granted to the Catholic religion in Ireland, it drove many into the rebellion who else would have stood aloof. It was a time of horror, and thick darkness—crimes that to mention make the blood freeze in the veins were perpetrated—but they have been exaggerated out of all proportion, and the worst of them were not confined to the Irish. No Englishman can read the story and feel the risings of pride in his heart. On the contrary, there is occasion for shame. Occasion for shame when he remembers how Irish rebel and royalist sank under the sword of Cromwell—how horrible were the sieges of Drogheda and Wexford, and the massacres that accompanied them—when neither faith nor honour was regarded—and how that when the war ended in 1652, out of a population of 1,466,000, 616,000 had in eleven years perished by the sword, by plague, or by famine artificially produced.

The Cromwellian settlement did no good, but harm; for it laid the foundation of that deep and lasting division between the proprietors and the tenants, which is the chief cause of the social and political evils of Ireland.

I have not space to tell the story, of how the Act of Settlement came—and then a repeal of the Act,—and then the sweeping and violent injustice done under the infamous Act of Attainder, and so on, and so on, more and more in the same line. But the sum of it all is this:

A church was established, and its service imposed upon all, which was the church of a minority; in fact, of less than one-seventh of the population, and they belonging exclusively to the wealthiest class. And this remarkable establishment was supported mainly by tithes. It was absurd—an insult—an oppression.

Then came the establishment of the Charter Schools—for the purpose, as the words of the programme went, “to rescue the souls of thousands of poor children from the dangers of superstition and idolatry, and their bodies from the miseries of idleness and beggary.”