

one thing very clearly—namely, the extent to which Anglican writers feel assured the minds of their party are besotted by prejudice, when it is conceived probable that such glaring falsehood will pass current among them, and escape their censure. We give our contemporary fair notice that we will not let this matter drop. He must vindicate himself by publishing the names, or he shall be held up to public execration as an odious calumniator.

THE LAW OF MARRIAGE.

(From the same.)

The bill for the amendment of the law of marriage, which was introduced into the House of Commons last session, by Mr. Stuart Wortley (now Recorder of London), was, as our readers will recollect, delayed to so late a period in the Lower House, where it passed the third reading by a large majority, that it was never carried up to the House of Lords. In the ensuing session, we have reason to believe, the measure will be introduced into the House of Peers by an influential member of their lordships' house; the promoters of the proposed amendment of the law having resolved no longer to waste their strength in the House of Commons, but at once go to the House of Lords, where the Act of 1835, which first made marriage between a widower and the sister of his deceased wife absolutely void, originated. The bearing of this question upon the interests of the Catholic body will at once be seen by a perusal of the evidence of his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, who was examined before the commissioners appointed by the Crown to examine the Law of marriage in the year 1848. From the reign of Henry the Eighth down to the year 1835, marriage between a widower and the sister of his deceased wife was *voidable* only, and *not void*, and unless the marriage were called in question while both the husband and wife were living; it was valid to all intents and purposes. By the statute 5 and 6, Will. IV., c. 54, all such marriages are declared to be absolutely null and void from the beginning; and of course it is obvious that this law interferes directly with the discipline of the Catholic Church. The Church, as a general rule, forbids marriages of the kind mentioned, but she does not hold that they are contrary to the word of God in the new law, and, on consideration of special circumstances, admits them on dispensation. So that while the Catholic Church says that the sacrament of matrimony may lawfully be celebrated where a dispensation is first had, the law of the land says, that as a civil rite it is null and void! Two Catholics may be united together either in England or some foreign country, in lawful matrimony, according to the laws of Holy Church, and yet by the law of England their issue would inevitably be illegitimate. An anomalous state of things such as this could hardly have failed to produce mischief, and Cardinal Wiseman has mentioned numerous cases, where the greatest hardship and suffering have been occasioned by the present law; adding that the clergy are often placed in the most painful perplexity, between their duties to the Church and to the law. The marriage bill makes no alteration whatever in the laws of the Established Church, and that being so, we are at a loss to know on what principle of justice members of the Church of England claim to impose "their laws" of marriage on Catholics, Protestant Dissenters, and Jews. That there is no social argument of any weight against the proposed amendment of the Law, the report of the Commissioners we think amply proves; on the contrary the Commissioners report, that on social grounds an alteration of the law is imperatively called for.

CATHOLIC INTELLIGENCE.

CARDINAL WISEMAN ON CONVERSIONS TO CATHOLICITY.

On Sunday week a lecture was delivered by Cardinal Wiseman, at St. George's, Southwark, on the subject of conversions to the Catholic Faith. The lecturer commenced by showing that if there was one characteristic more than another which the present age was ambitious of obtaining, it was that of being an age of unceasing progress and advancement. In every department under the control of human activity there was a desire to advance, impatience of delay, and little or no reverence for experience. Everything was shifting and experimental, and nearly all were looking with anxiety towards the future. In the midst of all this change there stood one power which had stability for its very essence, which had the past to calm and guide it; and was secured by an unfulfilling promise. This was the Church of God—the Catholic Church—which in principle was unchangeable, which, admitting the great doctrine of infallibility as the basis of all its dogmas, prevented progress or advance in what related to the great truths once committed to it. Therefore it was that to many that Church was an object of hatred and offence. They saw that though the whirling, boiling torrent might go around it, and fret against it, yet it trembled not, and removed not, but remained as it was before—the rock of ages. Strange to say, while this was the only stable element, there was nothing in the age that was making more progress, or was always more completely up to the level of the development of the human mind. Literature and science, however they might advance, found Catholics in their foremost ranks, ready to compete with others in research, in intelligence, in practical wisdom. Colonies were planted in the extremities of the earth, where there could be no barrier to free and independent thought; the Catholic was there before, or with others, and before the infant Republic had assumed its shape, the Catholic worship was established in a pile which, perhaps, towered over the huts and cottages of the early settlers. To listen to the popular theories respecting the Catholic religion, one might believe

that the only atmosphere in which it could flourish was one congenial to the darkness and gloom of superstition and ignorance; that in order for it to reach its maturity and its perfection, fetters must be placed upon the mind, and the reasoning powers of man be chained down to servile obedience. Well, the experiment had been tried. France had declared itself a Republic, and the Clergy of that country would tell them that there had been a great gain to religion since the form of government was changed. And was it not strange that at this very moment, when their religion had been more harshly dealt with in this country than at any previous period within their memory—when it had been held up to contempt, and even execration—when from every extreme of the press, from every pulpit of the church and the meeting-house, from every platform of every city and county of the empire, there had come forth the most fearful denunciations—denunciations more terrible than any which even inspired writers had ventured to use respecting Heathenism—was it not strange that at that moment conversions should be multiplied, and persons of intelligence, and sense, and education, and high character, should be embracing, day after day, the religion of a sect which, like the early Christians, are everywhere contradicted? "Why is this?" was a question which everybody must naturally be asking himself. Of the fact there could be no doubt, and little did those who had been agitating the public mind know the calm and confident look with which the Catholic had gazed upon all that he had witnessed. The certainty which Catholics felt that their religion must and would make progress, not only in spite, but in consequence, of all that had been done to prevent it. He dated from all this warfare against the Church of God a period of progress far beyond what they had yet seen. Why, then, was the Catholic religion making visible progress in this country? One simple reason was this, that in every age and in every place where two systems of thought stood in antagonism to each other, the loss of one must be the other's gain. The Church established in this country by law was losing. He did not say that this was a test of truth, but it was a reality. If in politics or toleration, or anything else, which divided men into parties, one side was naturally losing ground, and the other as certainly gaining, that might be a transition from truth to error. But how stood the present case? The Catholic Church had lost at times—lost most deplorably; but even at that great epoch, when this country separated itself from the communion of the whole Catholic Church, there was a violent action, a wrenching off by force of one branch of the tree. The Reformation was the work of one generation or little more, and then it settled down with no farther power of progress, but rather, in later times, with a constant tendency to dissolution. In like manner, at the close of the last century, the Church of France sunk as a prey to infidelity; but there was no other system to gain ground—all was chaos and disorder—and no sooner did the time for building up arrive, than the Catholic Church returned to its place. It pleased God to keep a germ still alive in this country, which prevented us from being, like Sodom and Gomorrah, utterly destroyed. It was certain that for every one that the Catholic Church gained, the Church of England lost; there was a distortion of equilibrium, which passed from the one side going to the other, and weakening it. Moreover, from the Church of England, and not from the Catholic Church, had sprung that multitude of religious denominations which constituted so great a proportion of the population. Now, this was an important test of the truth of a religion. If it were in a state of constant loss and diminution, the question naturally arose, what were its future prospects? The Established Church claimed exclusively what had been so lately termed territorial jurisdiction; it claimed to have its Bishops considered the Pastors of the population of every city and every county. How did it discharge this tremendous responsibility? It was jealous of exceptions; it had again called upon Catholics, through its official organs, to join in communion with it, and had denounced them as schismatics, for refusing to do so; but had it come to them as the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, tracking them through the desert, and kindly offering to bear them on his shoulders, or promised to teach them the true Faith, unity of doctrine? What hope had they that if they joined this Church, she would do anything for them? Why, it was acknowledged that in this very metropolis there were hundreds of thousands of people who had no religion whatever. Were they to be cared for as they were? Were they to be loved and instructed as they were? Could the Church of England hope that she would bring the whole body of Dissenters and Catholics into her communion? No, and he would tell them why. He did not believe that there was in the Church of England the consciousness, the assurance, that what they were doing, what they were teaching, was the work of God. That assurance is an heirloom of the one only Catholic Church of God, and was incommunicable to any other body. The total want of power in the Established Church, was, then, one source of gain to the Catholic Church. There was a small phalanx of learned men who had left the Church of England after mature deliberation, though such was not the case, perhaps, of the great bulk of the converts. What was it that brought these men to the Catholic Church? Why, almost invariably the feeling that there was no common principle among their teachers to guide them under every variety of circumstances. They found, too, that there was no food for their souls—that there was none of the ardent spirit of piety circulated or practised which their souls longed for; and they at length found that there was no resource for them but to come to the Catholic Church, and there seek for all they had before sought in vain. The Church of England lost, therefore, not merely for want of fervor in itself, but by the actual defection of its most

valuable supports; and there must be an inherent and radical defect in a system which threw off from itself whatever was most sound, vigorous, and healthful. But he should be doing an injustice to the Catholic cause if he represented it as gaining merely by the imperfection of other systems. That such was not the case would be evident on considering what were the instruments made use of in the work of conversion. It had often been said that a great many persons embraced the Catholic religion from a love of its ritual, its solemn functions, its imposing ceremonial, what was termed theatrical display by persons who understood not what they saw in a Catholic Church. It was, perhaps, a singular circumstance, that of those who were converted, by far the greater part, as far as his experience went, had never previously been in the least degree familiar, or even acquainted with Catholic rites and ceremonies. Many had not a single Catholic acquaintance, and had never spoken to a Catholic Priest in their lives, until they came to ask to be received into communion with that Church. A great number of persons who were converted lived at a distance from any Catholic place of worship; and constantly were they receiving letters from persons in the country, who were living in their families, and had never spoken to a Catholic, but who yet felt an earnest desire to become acquainted with Catholic doctrines, or even at once to embrace the Faith. He did not believe there had yet been one single convert brought to the Catholic religion merely by what was called the imposing effect of the Catholic ceremonial. Again, it was supposed that there was some strange art, some fascination, by which Catholics, and the Catholic Clergy in particular, coiled themselves round the mind of an individual, and dragged him into the Church without his having the power of resistance. On this subject a few simple facts would be better than any statements of opinion. He believed it to be a peculiarity of the present times that conversion was no longer, as it frequently used to be, external, but had its growth almost entirely within the mind of its subject. In former times it was the reading of a controversial work, or the hearing of a sermon, that induced persons to think about the Roman Catholic religion; there was disputation and controversy; now, the external work was little more than the individual's making a profession of Faith, and passing through the necessary steps. This, surely, did not result from any art of theirs; it must, humanly speaking, be the result of the working of the mind itself, of thought, reflection, inward conviction, and a careful examination of what was passing around. Humanly speaking, he repeated, for it was the grace of God, and that alone, which made converts to the Catholic religion. They were astonished at the strange visitations, the irresistible calls, which impelled men to come to the Church to seek, not for ease, not for happiness, but for salvation. But it would be said, "You are an easy religion; it holds out so many temptations." It would be difficult to convince men out of the Church how false that view was. If a Catholic changed his religion to-day, he had only to take his seat in the parish Church, and curiosity to know who the new comer was, was the only trial to which he would be subjected there. There was nothing compulsory on one who became a Protestant. On the other hand, what was the trial of the Minister who, after having been loved by his flock, and looked up to as his father, became a humble Catholic, submitted to confession, received absolution, and perhaps became dependent on the bounty of others? Was all this easy? Were there no sacrifices here? It was heart-rending at times to see the struggles through which the convert had to pass. Catholics well knew that they trusted far more for the conversion of any one, or for the conversion of a multitude, to the power of prayer, than to any amount of controversy, of lecturing, preaching, writing, or persuasion. If Catholics were asked to what they attributed the conversions which had taken place so frequently of late years in England, they would reply to the fact, that the whole Catholic Church was combined, week by week, in prayer for the conversion of England, especially in what the Catholics considered the most solemn and efficacious form of prayer—that which was embodied in sacrifices—prayer unceasingly offered up for the conversion of this once Island of Saints. He was glad that the eyes of the public were now opened with regard to most of the doctrines of their religion. Open, straightforward declaration was now the proper course for them, and he had no doubt that they would make satisfactory progress.—(From report in the *Daily News*.)

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

St. Jarlath's, Tuam, February 9, 1851.

"A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is like a dart, and a sword, and a sharp arrow."—Proverbs.

My Lord—During the age of the recent tempest which was evoked by the incantation of your inauspicious letter, it was not to be expected that your ears would have been accessible to calm and reasonable remonstrance. It would have been difficult to win attention amidst the stormy atmosphere with which your lordship took care to be surrounded; and even still, though the fury of the storm has subsided elsewhere, it is only that it may be worked to a more fatal excitement by the polemical acrimony which has been, even in this early stage, infused into the debates of the Legislature. Allow me, my lord, respectfully to inquire whether the condition of the people of the United Kingdom is so comfortable and satisfactory as to release its Prime Minister from all solicitude respecting their physical sufferings and privations, and to allow him full leisure to turn the House of Commons into a stall of theological debate, displaying but little of its light, and much of its noisy strife, while

warring against the shadowy phantom of Papal aggression.

To your lordship, the responsible adviser of the Crown, the care of her people is specially entrusted as to a faithful steward, that they be provided with food and the other material comforts of social existence in due season—a care sufficiently weighty for the shoulders of the most robust minister, without burthening himself with a superfluous solicitude for the spiritual requirements of the Catholic portion of the people, which every wise statesman would, as in duty bound, leave to their legitimate guardians—the Bishops and the Pope. How have the material interests of the country prospered under your administration? Depopulated villages and flourishing churchyards—poorhouses springing up, as the mansions of the gentry are falling down—Ireland wasted of her perishing people, which the instinct of self-preservation is pouring on the shores of England, and startling the minister with the fearful growth of that Popery from the image of which he recoils; these and similar results, alas! too palpable to require detailed recital, are the sad monuments which have risen during the period of your delegated power. If, then, the growing structure of Catholicity alarms you in England, you have been yourself one of its most successful architects—you have been furnishing its materials in abundance, by tearing up the rich and inexhaustible quarry of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Why not, then, close this quarry, by providing, if not for the prosperity, a state to which it would be presumptuous in them to aspire, at least for the ordinary comforts and bare existence of the people at home? As long as your lordship neglects this sound and necessary legislation, your surprise at the growth of Popery in England is unnatural; for it is springing from the neglected sufferings of Ireland, and is, therefore, in a great measure, the work of your own hands.

In this policy, however, you are but the unconscious instrument of a higher and more mysterious Providence, which turns to its wise purposes the most astute counsels of hostile statesmen. The very persecution which you menace—for, disguise it as you will, it is rank persecution—will have the effect of spreading and consolidating the Catholic Church, against which its rage is to be directed. The brute force with which your lordship is about to defend the falling ramparts of the Protestant Establishment, will not fail to awaken attention to the congenial instruments to which it has been indebted for its first erection.

The consequence of this historical inquiry will be an increasing to the ranks of Catholics, of these intellectual men whose researches, guided by humility and grace, will open to their view and their abhorrence those appalling scenes of lust, and cruelty, and sacrilege, and spoliation, by which, in an evil hour, that establishment was ushered into the world. With the increasing numbers of such converts, the tide of Catholic immigration to your shores will more than keep pace—an immigration sure to be as steady as the cruelty that continues to propel it will be untiring—until at length you hear the exiled Catholics of Ireland addressing you from every quarter of England, in the language of Tertullian—"We have filled your cities, towns, fields, armies, senate;" the "conventicles" alone we leave to yourselves.

Besides the sympathy we owe to the Catholics of England as members of the same body, were we not to be included in the community of penalties with which they are threatened, we feel an additional obligation to proffer their assistance resulting from your lordship's avowal that the Irish Church, still more than the English Hierarchy, had a share in producing this ministerial exasperation. We feel indebted to your lordship for this candid acknowledgment; and though the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, in his admirable reply to the Primate of Ireland, alludes, with a peculiar delicacy, to the increased suffering that may be brought upon the Church of Ireland, through the instrumentality of her sister in England, your lordship enables us to calm the anxiety of his Eminence on that score, and to take our share in the guilt or merit, as well as in the reward, of that provocation.

Yes, Ireland's noble repudiation of the Infidel Colleges; the consoling exhibition of the majesty of its ancient and unbroken Hierarchy in the Synod of Thurles; its firm and unconquerable resolve to erect a Catholic University, in despite of the poverty to which it has been consigned, as well as the obloquy of the nominal friends but real enemies of education—those are the crimes which have provoked your resentment more than the establishment of the English Hierarchy, if we are to judge by the foremost position which they occupy in your reported speech; and for those Ireland may well exclaim, "*Ego adsum qui feci*," nor refuse to share with the Hierarchy of England all the perils as well as the glory of the coming persecution.

But, my lord, the acts of that Synod should not have been distorted, nor its members held up to the reproach of the assembled Legislature. This is a privilege which even a Minister of the Crown should not enjoy. The address of that Synod, which, allow me to tell your lordship, was not the act of a mere majority, as reported in your speech, breathed neither sedition nor the instigation to any crime; on the contrary, it was fraught with most generous counsels to all classes of society; and if these counsels were more faithfully practised, society would be considerably improved. It is true, your lordship does not directly accuse us of a want of fealty to our Sovereign; but, by the insinuation of a contrast, you would fain impress on your hearers that the Primate and the present writer should entertain thoughts more consistent with respect to the Throne and Legislature. It is not by the warmth with which they may flatter the caprices of ministers the sentiments of allegiance and fidelity which men entertain for the Throne should be measured. Did I not appear to be officious, in speak-