

THE POPES IN HISTORY.

A Discourse by Archbishop O'Brien of Halifax.

THE SAVIOURS OF SOCIAL ORDER.

For more than ten centuries after Christ the social condition of the then known world was not unlike the physical state of the earth in the early days of its formation. Violent and opposing forces were at work, with the natural result of fierce outbreaks causing wide ruin and devastation, followed by intervals of exhaustion, rather than of peace, during which new combinations were effected, and order gradually emerged from chaos. The old pagan civilization was being rapidly dissolved by vice, and swallowed up in its own corruption. Its brutal instincts, however, survived, and offered a stubborn resistance to the hordes of outside barbarians that overran Europe from time to time during ten centuries. Wars, famine and pestilence swept over the face of Europe leaving in their track confusion, turmoil and fear. But in the midst of it all there was always one calm figure erect amid the universal ruin, and who fearlessly set to work after each upheaval to continue the interrupted task of forming into civilized and Christian nations the pagan tribes of Goths, and Huns, and Celts. One commanding personage there was able to stay the devastating march of some wild conqueror, by the subtle moral power that hedged him round, and to bring to some sense of humanity and justice the fiercest barbarian. That person was the Pope, the representative of the one unchanging and undying institution that survived the wreck of the Roman Empire, and successfully weathered the subsequent storms. What grander scene can history offer than that of Leo the Great going forth in the quiet strength of his moral greatness to confront Attila who boasted he was the scourge of God? Flushed with past victories and thirsting for the riches and splendors of Rome, the haughty King who had never yielded to an army was subdued and conquered and turned back by the words of the Pope.

According to historians the darkest hour in Italian civil affairs was towards the close of the Sixth Century. It seemed, indeed, as if no hope remained. But here again the grand figure of a Pope, one to whom even Gibbon awards a meed of praise, emerges from the surrounding darkness bearing light, and hope and security. Gregory the Great, for it is he who comes to the rescue of society, is equal to the crisis. Fortunately we have his many epistles, and from them we can learn something of his prodigious activity. Not only was he sending Apostles to England and safeguarding the interests of religion in remote parts, but he also undertook the duty of providing for the public safety. The Emperor of Constantinople was unable to aid his Western subjects. Pope Gregory, as we learn from his epistles, sent a Governor into Etruria, telling the people to obey him as they would obey the Pope himself; he appoints, also, a Governor of Naples, and wrote to the Bishops to take measures for provisioning and defending their cities. In a word he organized the people, infused hope and courage into their souls, directed with consummate wisdom all their operations and saved society from demoralization and, perhaps, extinction. Well might Ancillon, a non-Catholic historian, say: "When there was no social order the papacy alone perhaps saved Europe from total barbarism."

As is well known Popes were the ones who won for the Italian cities

their civic privileges, and ever strenuously upheld them. The evolution of the modern States of Europe from the social chaos, consequent on the dissolution of the old order was slow and often interrupted. From the Seventh to the Tenth Century, and even later, the only power between the people and their rulers, was that of the Roman Pontiffs. By expostulation, and threats, and even by harsher means when all else had failed, the Popes succeeded in curbing if they did not completely check the tyranny of Emperors and Kings and Barons.

Who has not heard of Gregory VII. or Hildebrand, the noblest, perhaps of the children of men? If you wish to test the scholarship of man or book, find out what he or it has to say about this great Pope. There is no surer touchstone of historic knowledge, and impartiality of judgment, than the career of Gregory VII. The fuming controversialist, and the superficial professor, as well as the fossilized enemy of rational human liberty, invariably denounces him, and with superlative childishness seem to think they have proved him a rascal by calling him Hildebrand. As a fearless champion of justice and morality he stands without a superior, and perhaps even an equal, in the pages of history. This is the verdict of accurate and unbiassed research. He was born in the early years of the Eleventh Century, and passed the days of his young manhood in those iron times when the tide of social and moral evils, the sad accumulation of long years of war and disorder, was at its flood. Abuses of various kinds were rife both in civil and ecclesiastical circles. Certain concessions made by the Popes in former years to civil personages regarding ecclesiastical benefices had been grossly misused to the detriment of religion. The lay power had thrust unworthy men into positions of eminence in the church and society was now reaping the deplorable effects. When Hildebrand became Pope in 1073, he resolved to do what only a Pope could do, viz., to purge and purify society, ecclesiastical as well as civil, by striking first at those culprits who were highest in rank. Stringent laws for the reformation of the clergy were enacted, and carried out with inexorable persistency. Then he attacked the abuses of the civil power; by which, especially in Germany, the laws of the church regulating the bestowal of ecclesiastical benefices were trampled under foot, and the interest of religion sacrificed to unholy usurpation. This, necessarily involved a conflict with the Emperor Henry IV., who had turned a deaf ear to the Pope's remonstrances and admonitions. But a principle was at stake—the good of religion and society, the best interests of civil liberty had to be vindicated, and the brave Pontiff would not shirk the battle. We cannot follow the story in detail; suffice it to say that Gregory persevered; neither difficulties at home, nor the invading armies of Henry could turn him from his purpose. In whatever part of Europe he found abuses he denounced them and took active measures for their extirpation. He reproved Kings and Princes, recalling them to a sense of justice and pointing out the safe road to moral and national greatness. He died, indeed, in exile, but he died victorious. He had freed the church from the usurpation of the State; he had purified the sanctuary, broken the despotism of the iron days, cleansed and reorganized society, and set firm and deep in the popular heart, the principle of, and the love for civil liberty. We are reaping to-day the fruits of his grand, inspiring, unconquerable courage.

It was surely needless at this stage of historic development to spend time in proving the immense benefits con-

ferred on letters, arts and sciences by the Popes. Even the most prejudiced and bitter opponents of the Catholic Church have to admit with Guizot, that the world owes its learning as well as its civilization to them. From the earliest days there were Papal schools, and the office of Papal librarian is almost as old as that of the Pope. All the great universities of Europe, those of Oxford and Cambridge included, owe their foundations, either to the direct act of some Pope, or to his influence with Bishops and Princes. The academic degrees of B.A., M.A., D.D., and others were instituted by Pope Eugenius with the avowed object of stimulating studies. It is easy for us in the peaceful days of this century to cultivate a literary taste, and to sing the praises of education. Such action entails no sacrifice and exacts no self-denial. But to preserve, to develop and to hand down to posterity, through great educational foundations, during a ruder and more warlike age, literary culture required self-renunciation and a real love of learning. Name, if you can, even one modern educationist who deserves to be ranked with the Popes. When the calendar had to be reformed it was a Pope who did it, and it is a curious commentary on the astronomic lore of Englishmen that it took 150 years to enable them to catch up with Rome, or in other words, to adopt the reformed Gregorian calendar.

The acknowledged home and center of the arts has been, and is Rome. Under the protecting care of the Popes, they lived and flourished, when banished from other lands. The many treasures of art of every century, from the Fourth onward, still found in the churches of Rome are an eloquent testimony to the enlightenment and noble mindedness of the Popes of every age.

From this hurried sketch we can see what an important part the Popes have played in history, and how great and enduring have been the benefits conferred by them on humanity. All that we most prize and cherish—letters, art, civilization, liberty, are but the ripened harvest from fields tilled by their incessant toils, and wetted by their sweat and tears, and blood.

Nor has the glory of the Popes departed. Who, to-day, occupies so large a space on the world's stage, and rivets so closely the attention of mankind as Leo XIII.? Like his predecessors he is the foremost in seeking to solve the social problems of the times, and to him the mightiest sovereigns offer the homage of their admiration, and listen with respect to his prudent counsels. The cynicism of learned unbelief, and the materialism of the unreflecting, are gradually melting away by the representative of the old historic moral power, and men are beginning to realize that if any one can find a solution for the vexed social problems of our day it is the aged Pope, a prisoner though he be in his own palace. He will take his place in history with the great ones of his illustrious line.

What reasonable explanation can be given of the facts considered to-night? The Popes claimed and claim still, to be the viceregents of Christ, the supreme spiritual head on earth of a church founded by Christ, and against which the gates of hell should never prevail. If their claim be well-founded it would explain satisfactorily the commanding position they have ever occupied in history. If it be not well founded there is no possible explanation.

There is danger in neglecting a cold. Many who have died of consumption dated their troubles from exposure, followed by a cold which settled on their lungs, and in a short time they were beyond the skill of the best physician. Had they used Hickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup, before it was too late, their lives would have been spared. This medicine has no equal for curing coughs, colds and all affections of the throat and lungs.

ARCHBISHOP WALSH

The Archbishop of Dublin is Hopeful.

UNITY THE ONE THING NECESSARY.

The following letter from the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh deserves the widest attention:

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, DUBLIN,
February 15th, 1895.

To the Editor of the Freeman.

DEAR SIR—I send enclosed a check for £20, my subscription for the present year to the Irish Parliamentary Fund.

I cannot refrain from saying that in sending this subscription I am influenced by a feeling of awakened hopefulness. This feeling, I trust, is shared in by every Irish Nationalist who has read or heard of the result achieved in the good cause of amnesty, in the House of Commons last night, by the combination, now unhappily so rare, of all our Irish Home Ruler representatives into one effective force.

In such a cause, our representatives were, of course, in a minority. A minority is easily voted down. But even already, there are unmistakable signs that the strong vote on the side of the minority has told. English public opinion has been impressed by the united Irish vote. That is a great point gained.

Now has not the time come for some one to make a strong appeal to all our Home Rule representatives? Has not the time come for an appeal to be made to them in the name of the people of Ireland, and for the sake of Ireland, to try to work together—permanently, if it can be, but at all events, as a beginning, and by way of experiment, for the rest of this session—as they worked together last night?

Surely, with a little give and take, a basis of united action, satisfactory to all—for the purpose, at any rate, of an experiment such as I venture to suggest—could without much difficulty be found. For my part, I can conceive of no better ground for common action than that which was constructed for our Irish members by the statesmanship of their great leader, Mr. Parnell, in 1886. What was it that proved to be the chief effective moving force of the policy of Home Rule as a dominant factor in English politics in that year and subsequently? What else was it but the existence of a solidly united Irish Home Rule representation, the whole phalanx moving together for Parliamentary purposes as one man—every member of it bound, on the one hand, to his colleagues, and on the other, to his constituents, "to sit, act and vote" with the united body of his colleagues, or to resign his seat?

Possibly, in view of the present peculiarly delicate and intricate state of affairs, some other ground of action may commend itself to those on the spot as more likely to lead to practically useful results. But this is a matter of detail. The great thing is to have something practical done.

Unity is the one thing necessary—unity of action, and, as far as may be, unity of council. Unity will save the situation and bring victory to the Home Rule cause. Nothing else but unity amongst the champions can save that cause from crashing disaster.

I remain, dear sir, faithfully yours,
WILLIAM J. WALSH,
Archbishop of Dublin.

There is not a more dangerous class of disorders than those which affect the breathing organs. Nullify this danger with Dr. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL—a palmaris of acknowledged efficacy. It cures lameness and soreness when applied externally, as well as swelled neck and orick in the back; and, as an inward specific, possesses most substantial claims to public confidence.