VOL. X.

ter how ill gotten, ill kept, or ill kept?

When we are taken by a stranger to our na-

ATHOLIC

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POLITICAL RELIGIONISM.

"We are, eminently, a religious people."

There is, probably, not one among our readers but has seen in print, a thousand times, the phrase we have just quoted. No two of them, it is likely, will trace it to the same source, and for the obvious reason, that it is to be found everywhere. It is common property, among the reviews, the magazines, and the penny-newspapers. It may be heard on Sundays and weekdays, in church, in Congress and lecture-roomin discourses, scientific and literary, sacred and profane. We cannot, for the life of us, say exactly how we came by it, ourselves. We may have found it in a President's Message, an undergraduate's speech, or Thanksgiving pro-clamation. Perhaps we owe it to Peter Parley's Geography, or one of Theodere Parker's "higher law" sermons. But let it have been taken whence it may, we are quite sure that it is firmly believed by a large portion of our countrymen set-off to the many short-comings of the nation. greater the delusion, the greater the risk of such consequences in assailing it. Nevertheless, there must be some difference, both in fact and principle, between piety, as an individual excellence, and the assumption of it, as a national vanity. To lift the veil of the one is by no means to invade the sanctity of the other, and it is hardly Italy, republicanise Spain, set France on fire, worth while to concern ourselves about the opi-nions of people, who cannot understand or will not acknowledge the distinction.

As to that part of righteousness which consists in humility, it is presumed that our national pretensions may be easily settled. There may be doubts as to the brightness of our light, but we cannot possibly be suspected of any desire to put it under a bushel. If our left hand is ignorant of what our right hand does, it must systematically avoid the ordinary sources of information. Not to hear the trumpets we are pernetually sounding before us, it is necessary to the street corners. Feeling conscious of the degree in which we possess the quality which ex- governed by others. Their vices and shortcom- privileges of sinners and the movidability of saints. dark ages have no votes, and the House of more righteons than other nations, because, con-

it, with the most abandoned national sinners .-Our instinct for a bargain, tempts us (it we beany others of the children of men, the dark, uncertain line, where the region of the tenth commandindignant repugnance to paying them, when inconvenient, the civilized globe surrenders the palm to us. Upon our reckless disregard of hu- done something towards demolishing the unworpeople) when there is question of gain, there is suggests itself as to the cause or foundation of feelings or our laws. When we talk of philanbought out with beads and burned out with whiskey; to the slave ships built and equipped in our proudest harbors, and the goods manufactur-When we discourse of morality, they remind us day detail-to the elaborate knavery so comcessity of concealment or excuse. Is there beneath the sun—they bid us answer—one Chris-

tional capital, and he asks us whether we see any reflection of our national purity there; can we answer, with truth, that we do? In the discussions of our legislators, the intrigues of our socalled "great statesmen;" the motives and measures of our rulers; our policy at home or abroad; do we see any signs that signify national rightequeness? And yet, unless our representative system be a failure, and the theory on which it is based a falsehood, the ruler chosen must be, in the main, the type of the people who choose him. "Bobissimus," the elect, says Carlyle, in his quaint way, is but "Bobus," the elector, in the superlative degree. The kind is altogether the same, so far as principle is concerned, whatever the case may be as to capacity. Can our readers call to mind a solitary project among the great American schemes for territorial expansion, already consummated or now projected, which owes its origin, in their conscientious especially at the North—and the fact which judgment, to mere patriotism or honesty or pure it assumes is generally regarded as a legitimate statesmanship? Will not impartial history detail hereafter-what every intelligent citizen In our deliberate judgment, however, there is no even now understands-the personal intereststruth in it, and we look upon its confident and the political aims and intrigues-the individual constant reiteration as a grievous, public ill. In or corporate speculations—the lust of plunder, saying this, we have no idea that we can escape notoriety and power—which were and are at the misrepresentation and misconstruction. The bottom of every plan of annexation or revolution, with which we have disturbed the peace or would pour out the blood of other nations, while degrading the civilization of our own? When we appropriated Texas, invaded Mexico, sent

Lopez to Cuba, or bombarded Greytown, (ges-

ta Romanorum!)—when we would stir up

Austria-letters, speeches, and all-answer us,

reader, we earnestly beseech you-was it or is

America" represent-law or gospel?

It is no answer to all or any of this, to say that the world has done like things since time began, and that the very nations which marshal these facts and queries, for our condemnation, now, will find records of the same import thro' all of their own history. Even if the truth be a procession), but in all things and for all purso-it does not touch the question. In the first poses. They are made a civil and political States (as all the leading and not a few of the this permicious fallacy that we have endeavored keep carefully away from the synagogues and place—it is the American doctrine, that we govern ourselves, while the rest of the world are distinctively, of the State. They have all the sure of "the religious public" at home. The sought to make it clear that this nation is not alteth a nation, we have no scruple in letting ings, therefore, belong to their rulers—ours are They can take part in secular affairs of all sorts, it be seen that we are exalted. "We are an our own. They suffer, because kings go mad- as laymen, and fall back, when they please, on eminently, religious people"-though we say it we, for our own insanity. Their lustory, with their prestige and immunities as clergymen. who should not, and we do not care how soon the shame it brings, was made and acted for the rest of mankind are edified by knowing it. them; we are the authors of both shame and But what do they say of us-these Publicans story for ourselves. If we have the pride of whom we thank Heaven, so constantly, that we self-government, we must have its responsibili- Church, where the case of course is exceptional. are not like? They do not appear to be daz- ties. But, besides this-the inquiry is not, whezled, as they should be, by the effulgence of our ther we are as good as other people, but whether goodness. They do not find that we keep faith we are better than all. Our theory, our faith, and substantial power as in the United States. with them, the better for it, or indeed reduce it our boast is, that we are above the rest of the to much practical effect among ourselves. Let world-that we are more enlightened, more which attaches itself in a greater or less degree any iniquity be started, that is profitable, and civilised, more free, more moral, more pure, everywhere, to the priesthood, as such; we do we are sure, men say, to keep up in pursuit of more religious. If we fail in establishing the whole of this, we fail altogether-for this is the point and the essence of our pretensions and the lieve the world) to tread more frequently than only matter in dispute. It is superiority that we contend for, not equality, and it is superiority that we must make out, or beat an ignominious ment is suited to the dominions of the eighth. retreat. Our history, our institutions, our prin- or mind, who has seen its blessings fall happuly For generous confidence in contracting debts, and ciples, have made a poor business of it, if we are only no worse than the unblest gentiles. Assuming, then, that these reflections have

man life (and especially of the lives of other thy fabric of our national Pharisaism, an inquiry no check, our critics tell us, in our faith, our it. Whence does it come? What does it mean? We regard the whole of it as neither thropy, they point us to the Indian nations, more nor less than a well preserved legacy from fore, as to them, affords but a nominal restraint. the Puritans of the colonial age-the stalwart | Take away from the abolition party the support worthies of the Mayflower's time, who glorified themselves and their Maker together, perpetued, knowingly, for the slave marts, in the very ally coupling "the Lord and his saints." Time, of the temperance movement, as a public and centre of our most sanctimonious communities. trade and lucre-the growth of numbers and civilization-the cankers of luxury and prideof the gold hunting murders in California, the have sadly wasted the loftier and nobler qualities stock-jobbing forgeries in New York, and the which made the Puritan a hero in history. But consecrated polygamy of Utah; they ask if our his spiritual stiff neckedness and his Pharisaical eyes can be shut to the fraudulent bankruptcies temper have come down to his descendants unevery where-to the explosions of banks and the changed, and the heart of the nation which he flights of cashiers, which the newspapers every assisted in founding still beats, as his did, with the arrogance which humbles itself only to be the memorials which were presented to Congress monly successful in trade as to be above the ne- exalted. As ostentatious in forms as he was, when the Nebraska bill was pending? The reawithout the earnestness which dignified his errors, we have compromised for the absence of as the petitions, signed by thousands of clergytian land besides our own, where men could so practical righteousness as a nation by the most men, in their official names and character, extransgress and thrive, or where such things could scrupulous devotion to all its machinery. Exhappen and produce so transitory an impression, cept Scotland-where a man walks the streets and authority of God, and thundering the terrors or be received with an indifference so near akin on Sunday, as if the free air were iniquity and of his wrath against all who might dare to advoto toleration? We are republicans, they tell the sun-light mortal sin-there is no nation more cate the measure they denounced. A decent us, and struggle manfully, some of us, for the scrupulous than we, in reverence to the externals salutary doctrine, that the worst and most fool- of that day. Public recreation, even social in- representative government in general, requires ish of men is at least as good as the wisest and tercourse on "the Sabbath," we set our faces us to assume that there was not a man of ordibest-yet can we deny that money and place solemnly against. Conventions meet, where diare worshipped among us with more abject ser- vines, doctors and politicians rival each other in comprehend how unclerical and unbecoming such consequence of this, every day. The most im- tion of public policy, involving the guarantees of vility than rank and royalty elsewhere? Who attempts to flatter the public taste for its Judai- proceedings were—how utterly at war with every portant public interests are jeoparded and the the constitution and the horrors of disunion.—

started, prosecuted, elevated into a dogma, by a society which sets apart six days for Mammon | tical body, in a republican government, to usurp | such people and their doctrines have filled in the whose devotion to each is precisely in the same

proportion. Coupled naturally enough with our national Sabbatarianism and springing from the same source, is the display of our regard for the "reverend clergy." Of course nothing can be further from the purpose or desire of those who conduct this magazine, or more foreign to the objects of the work itself, than a diminution of the respect and confidence which is due to the most sacred of human callings. In its place, it is one of the most conservative and commendable of social tributes—at once a duty, a merit and a in their places, to vindicate in a broad, manly public good. But it has its sphere like all other virtues, and when carried beyond that may grow into an abuse and a great harm. This, it strikes us, is conspicuously the case throughout our country. The clergy are dragged into every arena and mixed up with every public movement .-They open and close all sorts of meetings upon all sorts of subjects, sandwiching all manner of speeches and resolutions between two prayers .-Congress will intrigue and quarrel over a chaplain as over a messenger or a doorkeeper. Not a plaster for chilblains, or a wash for pimples, but is recommended by a doctor of divinitynot a volume of bad poems, published by " a Lady," but is endorsed by a professor of theology or at least a deacon or a presiding elder. A Polish Count who is about to give to the press a learned treatise on the salt mines of Wicklitzka, (subscriptions payable in advance) has always at least a dozen certificates from the and let loose Kossuth and Saunders on devoted highest clerical authority, setting forth his competency for the task, his sufferings for his country, and his blood connexion with the Poniatowit because of our being "an emmently religious skis. There is not a word of caricature in this people?" Which of the twam does "Young —not an iota—it is an every day thing. And -not an iota-it is an every day thing. And any of these voluminous orators bring their what is the result of it? Is it that the Protestant clergy are forced and erected into a separate and distinct class—separate and distinct not merely in their official functions and peculiar duties, as the Catholic priesthood (whom no one thinks of inviting to ride, even on horseback, in

> It is the fashion of Protestant writers to dilate upon the extent to which Catholic countries are "priest-ridden." Omitting the States of the we do not believe that there is a nation in Christendom where the clergy exercise as much real And when we say power, we do not mean that not mean the influence of a pastor over his flock -of a counsellor over those who need counsel -of a physician over the sick whose wounds he heals. All this, the legitimate and safe and holy influence of the ministers of God, we recognize and reverence, as must every man, of heart on others, even if he has not been cheered by them himself.

> But the power to which we allude is quite another thing from this. It is a power over the practical conduct of public and common affairs - a power, uncontrolled too, save by that public opinion which the clergy themselves, more than any other class, create and rule, and which thereof "the evangelical pulpit," and where would its torce be? In what would consist the strength political engine, if the countenance of the clergy were withdrawn from it? How much vigor would be left in the "Know-Nothing" organization, if the suffrages and support of the churches

> were to fall away from it? Can a rational mind require any further demonstration of the inordinate influence upon which we are commenting than that afforded by der cannot fail to remember the protests as well pressly assuming to speak by the appointment respect for the intelligence of Congress, and for nary position, in either house, who did not fully

miserable one day in seven. And all this is have clearly seen that it was the boldest and thropists, pseudo reformers, and place-hunting or most obvious attempt ever made by an ecclesiasas religiously as the one day for Heaven, and dominion over the constituted authorities, and enforce the dogmas of a sect or a party, as divine commandments. And yet how many, in either chamber, dared to meet the aggression as it should have been met, or to brave the religious organization which gave it countenance? Of the large numbers who must have entertained decided and intelligent convictions on the subject, how many ventured to express them? Did any of the "standard bearers" of this party or that; the "old men eloquent;" the "sages," &c., &c.—as the newspapers are wont to call and statesman-like way, the dignity of the civil government? It was easy enough to distinguish between the recognized rights of the memoralists, as individuals and citizens, and the any attempt to draw or to enforce that obvious distinction, save in the most tender and deprecatory way? There were elderly and most inspeeches—the superficial measurement of which defies triangulation—upon the defects and enormities, civil and especially religious, of all the nations of Europe. There were at hand distinguished advocates of "the great American doctrine," that we have the inalienable right to be born, married and buried as we please, all the world over, and that anything which contravenes this republican principle or denies its applicability to any man with an American passport, is sheer king-craft and priest-craft, the offspring of the dark ages and the Spanish Inquisition! Did "awfu' knowledge o' history," to bear on the three thousand parsons? Not a man of them, of course-and why? Because it is popular to and lampoon the Emperor of the French, on the has none, but the Nebraska hating mesheer cowardice and dereliction of duty-would influence at the polls accordingly.

> sibilities of the public will explain the toleraclass of doctrines commonly called "isms." In part, be at once laughed into a corner. In England. Punch would finish the best of them, in a received, by the public generally, with a respectful consideration, which puts them at once bevond the reach of any effective appeal to the popular sense of the ridiculous. How does this happen? Not, it must be confessed, because of mere secular opinions. The organ of veneration, except for things sacred or supposed to be cussed and advocated, generally before assemblages in the meeting-houses, and there is scarcely one that does not profess to involve some new and original view of the moral, religious and psychological nature of man. An odor of sanctity may be a humbug, a nuisance, or a treason, and makes both witches and cauldron respectable.-Men are afraid to say what they think, lest they than they say. They are chary of calling a charlatan by his right name, lest they be suspected of regarding everything sacred as a charlatanism. They feel bound to respect, or to treat with respect, every solema mountebank, for the itself for the crisis! mere reason that he is solemn-just as Mr. Carlyle insists that every man is a hero who is in earnest, whether he be a highwayman or pro-

The same dread of offending the religious sen-

speculating theologasters. How large a space political history of the last ten years, and how distinctly their power has grown to be recognized as a sign in our political zodiac, no intelligent reader can need to be informed.

Now, all these things and many others like them, which it were not enough to indicate, are commonly regarded as evidences of a a religious predisposition on the part of our people, and are supposed to reflect great credit upon the national character. We regard them, on the contrary, as serious evils, in themselves, and as anything but reputable in what they signify. They indithe leading politicians—did any of these stand up cate a false tone of morals, and a sentimentality, in regard to religion, which is incompatibility with genuine and healthy sensibility. In making our visible observances rigid, formal and essential, we have passed far into the region of national hypocrisy and vain glory. The abundance of prerogative they were reckless enough to claim our faith in our own surpassing righteousness, as a distinct and authoritative class. Yet, ex- has made us careless of good works and blind to cept for the purposes of personal defence, or in our many bad ones. Submission to considerathe spirit of personal recrimination, was there tions ostensibly religious, in the conduct of affairs that are peculiarly secular, has dragged Christianity into the dust of a thousand unworthy conflicts and sullied its purity by the contact fluential gentlemen in Congress, who had made of sordid motives. The recognition of clerical authority, in matters utterly unclerical, has often annihilated the distance between the pulpit and the hustings, making religion political instead of rendering politics religious. Under encouragements so manifold, cant has become a despot, with no limited rule. Thought, speech, and action, have fallen under a censorship-often despised and resisted, it is true, but always vigilant, acrogant and formidable notwithstanding.

As a matter of course we have not discussed the questions here presented, for the mere sake of proclaiming and justifying our own views, or duninishing the patriotic self-satisfaction of our neighbors. The subject is one which is not by any means merely speculative. From the absurd assumption that this is a peculiarly religious bully Spain, write Hulseman letters to Austria, people, the practical deduction is every day drawn, that religion must enter, of necessity, one hand-while on the other no man who de- and should, of right, enter into all the phases of sires or expects to be President of the United our national life. It is for the sake of exposing power-an element not merely of society, but, led politicians do) can afford to risk the displea- to dispel a few agreeable illusions. We have ceding this, our fellow-citizens must concede that moralists are the masters of many. They held there is no more reason or rational pretext, here their peace therefore most devoutly—the great than elsewhere, for mingling religious considerstatesmen and the small-because they knew ations with the motives of political action. If that they dwelt among "an eminently religious there be any demonstration in history of the people," and that their silence-though in fact | evils of a connection between Church and State, it does not less demonstrate the evils of a similar be set down as becoming reverence and have its connexion between the political elements which represent the State, in a republic, and the religious elements, which, in a country of free opinions, represent or are substituted for a Church. tion, indeed the general and dangerons encou- It is the thing and not the name which is danragement, which is extended among us to the gerous. It is quite the same, which a literarchy control a monarch or clerical influence any other free country these would, for the most direct and rule our suffrages. The same bad consequence must flow everywhere from the same bad causes, and this must be true of us as week, with a wood-cut. Here, they not only of the rest of mankind, seeing that not all the enlist the support of numerous disciples, but are republicanism in the world can subvert the despotism of a logical necessity.

But there is a consideration to which we have not yet alluded, which gives double force to all that has been said. It is-that the religion of which we boast so much, as a national characany national predisposition of ours to respect teristic, is sectarian, even more than it is political. We are told that this is "a l'rofestant country," quite as often as we hear of its emisacred, makes no part of our national phrenology. nent religiousness, and in the same connection. It happens, because every "ism" has a fraction Priestcraft is only held to be dangerous, when of theology in it. Almost every one of them is it is "Romish," and the Catholic religion is the gotton up by a sect or a sect's leaders, or is only form of worship, Christian or Mormon, baited with a text of Scripture. They are dis- which may not be trusted with the school-book and the ballot-box-the hustings and the tribune. If any of our readers should be disposed to think that we put this proposition rather strongly, let them figure to themselves the effect upon the nation at large, had a Catholic Bishon and his is thus given to them, which inclines the public clergy presented the identical Nebraska Pronostrils reverentially upwards. The doctrine test, verbatint, to Congress, which went there with the signatures of three thousand Protestits advocates seifish schemers or pestilent fana- ant Ministers. What fonts of type would have tics, yet the soi disant religious, ingredient been exhausted, to head the telegraphic reports with capital letters and notes of admiration .--"Papal audacity!' "Unwarrantable interferbe supposed by their neighbors to think more ence!" "Clerical usurpation," &c., &c. What a luxury of indulgence there would have been for the odium theologicum! How the national cravat would have whitened with devout rage, and the national countenance have elongated

Suppose again—to go a little farther back that the Catholic Church instead of the Methodist Society, bad divided itself into the " Church phet-Dick Turpin or Joe Smith! We see the North," and the " Church South," upon a quesis there, bold enough to dispute the glory and cal observance, and men are socially and political system. Not opinions and political action of large masses of Suppose that the one division had proclaimed its supremacy of wealth all over our land—no mat- cally proscribed for refusing to make themselves a man who could perceive anything, but must the people absolutely swayed by sham philan- inability to hold communion with the other—