

“The Struggle for an Irish Catholic University.”



OUR thoughts often turn to Ireland, the land of our forefathers. But it is impossible to think or to speak of Ireland without thinking or speaking of England, her ruler and too often her stern oppressor. The question most frequently asked by those who are acquainted with Ireland's history, is, how can England hesitate to grant the most just requests of those people, whom she has even given most freely to her half-civilized colonies, namely Responsible Government, and that but recently, only after a long and bitter struggle has she given to the majority of that country a university that they may call their own.

Therefore, gentle reader, bear with me while I discuss the struggle for this university. Ireland, history tells us was the university of Europe until Henry VIII. and his immediate successors, in the hope of exterminating the faith of the Irish, demolished their universities. Later laws were passed which prohibited all Catholic seats of learning and compelled Catholics to attend Protestant schools. But as time went on and circumstances changed, prudence obliged parliament to repeal these laws. After the repeal the education was solely in the hands of the clergy, not because they sought the monopoly of it, as many of "Our Friends" say, but because they alone were capable of teaching.

However, it was not long before both the Catholic clergy and laymen realized that the Catholic youth had to be trained to take his place in the different walks of life to prevent business from being entirely in Protestant hands. But they also realized that the accomplishment of this required both clerical and lay teachers. This requirement gave rise to questions of vital importance, viz.: where and how shall the lay teachers be obtained? Should they be taken from the Protestant universities of the country whose chief aim at this time was proselytism? Certainly not. But since circumstances demanded Catholic lay-teachers, common sense and justice demanded Catholic universities, from which these teachers could receive the necessary education.

This demand once realized was immediately attended to by the influential Catholics and by a few broad-minded Protestants of the country, who by continually agitating, succeeded in inducing parliament to listen to them. The result was that Mr. Bryce,