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SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

(From the Spectator.)

Our great nation is in a fluster,—its clergy, who are meeting in all districts and addressing their bishops, who are addressing their clergy; its pillars of the state, like Earl Fitzwilliam and Earl Fitzhardinge, who are stimulating the people at town meetings and county meetings; its Dissenters, like the Wesleyans, who think that absolute toleration ought to draw the line at Roman Catholics; its people of every class, who, in duly setting forth their fervor, are calling upon her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, "Dei gratia" and (no end of flings at Mr. Shiel's unhappy florin!) Defender of the Faith. But fruit will be expected in due season after this abundant showering of addresses: a practical reply will be expected; and her Majesty will turn to Lord John Russell with the question, "What is to be done?"

This may prove rather perplexing, though the agitators do not much trouble their heads about it at this early day. It is scarcely manners to hint at the bill in the midst of the feast. One naive gentleman, "Armiger" by name, suggests that the Queen should issue a proclamation forbidding those whom it may concern to bear titles conferred by a foreign potentate. This really seems the most practical suggestion yet made in the sense of the agitators. It would look rather small. The reprobated designations are as much names of offices as titles; indeed more so, since as titles they can only be current by courtesy, and have no sterling value with the public at large. After such a proclamation, Dr. Ullathorne would be the Bishop—that is to say, the overseer of the Roman Catholics who happen to reside within certain boundaries round Birmingham and Nottingham; but the Royal authority would prevent his calling himself so. Of course he could not help other people calling him so, any more than the Bishops of Ireland could before they were recognized by the Lord-Lieutenant; when the only distinction they assumed was to put a cross before their names, like persons who cannot write.

Parliament will pass any law the Queen may desire or her Minister propose: but the law must have penal sanctions—will the Premier put the Papist Bishops in the stocks if they prove contumacious? Then, the excitable and priest-led population, "the numerous Irish immigrants in London and elsewhere," for whom Lord John was willing to extend the "ecclesiastical system" of Rome in this country, must count for something when the new penal law comes to be enforced; the rout of the Protestants at the Birkenhead pronouncement this week reminds us of that element in the problem. Ireland itself—the standing "difficulty" with every Government—is not to be overlooked: at least we believe Lord Clarendon confronts the Irish aspects of the question with an anxious not to say an alarmed countenance.

Lord John Russell's letter was a clever move in the political game; but, looking a little way beyond the immediate advantage of a rally for the session, one sees that it has its risks and drawbacks.

(From the Brighton Herald.)

If, whilst the country is in this feverish state, a general election should follow the defeat of Ministers, no man living can tell what the consequences would be. The Catholic would be contending, as it were, in a matter of life and death against Protestant, and Protestant against Catholic; and Dissenters, worked up as they would be, probably, by popular preachers and speakers, would make desperate efforts against both. This is a question it will be well for all moderate men to consider, for the peace and union of the United Kingdom may be deeply involved in it. Ireland has her millions of Catholics; there are some in the Highlands of Scotland; very many more in England—particularly in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the metropolis. Many of our colonies teem with Catholics. Lower Canada contains few others. There are many Roman Catholic Bishops and their flocks in Upper Canada, Halifax, New Brunswick, Prince Edward's Island, Newfoundland, Australia, Port Philip, Van Diemen's Land, the Cape, the Ionian Islands, Malta, Gibraltar, the Channel Islands, and a large portion of the ranks of our army are filled with Catholics. Any attempt, therefore, to pass more "stringent measures" against Catholicism, or its Church government, is a very serious—it may turn out a vital—question.

We feel it a public duty thus early, as it may seem, to call on men who possess more zeal than discretion to pause ere they throw the brand of discord among the people of these realms. Above all things, every man of ordinary capacity must be aware of the dreadful danger of raising popular tumults in days like the present. It is easy for zealous men to excite a mob; but once in motion—as it may be put in London—it is instantly joined by thousands and tens of

thousands of thieves, robbers—men who would not hesitate at murder or incendiarism—by abandoned characters of all ages and of both sexes, whose object would be rapine and plunder, havoc, and the indulgence of the most bestial appetites of our nature. An awful responsibility falls on whoever instigates a mob under any pretext, but most of all if it be done in the name of religion and of a God of Peace, Mercy, and Love.

THE CHELTENHAM RIOT.

(From a Correspondent of the Tablet.)

Cheltenham has long been noted for the bigotry of its inhabitants. The 5th of November was allowed to pass over quietly, though not without its more than usually violent sermons commemorative of the day, and an increase in quantity of gunpowder letting off. To this succeeded, on Monday, the 11th ult., a meeting at the Town Hall, when the most violent "No-Popery" speeches were made by Parsons Close and Boyd, Grenville Berkeley, the member for the borough, and a few other individuals of less note. The room being too small for the numbers assembled, Mr. Close, *Pon. Max.* of Cheltenham, promised the working classes another opportunity of meeting, which was fixed for Thursday, the 21st ult., at seven p. m. Parson Close, Mr. Grenville Berkeley, Mr. Morton Brown, Minister at the Independent Chapel; Mr. Lewis, a Baptist Parson; and F. Monro, Esq., were the great guns on the occasion. Constant allusion was made during their speeches to the spilling of Protestant blood; illustrations were given from the use of the bayonet, when the Duke of Wellington roused the guards at Waterloo by saying, "Up, boys, and at them," besides exciting their worst passions by referring constantly to the sword, &c., though they would not use such weapons. The meeting did not conclude till after the hour of ten had struck, when the mob, evidently directed by persons well dressed, marched, to the music of a band, to the High-street, and at the house of a tailor, named Hardwick, demanded the Pope, which he had made for the procession, with his attendant Bishops and Priests. These being denied them, the magistrates late that evening having forbidden the procession and the delivery of the figures, they demolished the tailor's windows, (which they did most effectually;) when, to allay the fury of the mob, a small figure was thrown from the windows, with which, after proceeding up the town with music, they returned along the High-street, till they came to the one leading to the Catholic chapel, down which they proceeded with cries of "No-Popery;" "Burn the Pope," and "Hang the Priests;" then deliberately commenced, with bricks and stones, the attack on the house and chapel. In the meanwhile, efforts are being made to force the doors of house and chapel; the figure is set fire to; the wooden rails are torn up in front of the chapel and house to increase the fire. Fire balls were attempted to be thrown into the chapel, the windows being broken; but fortunately they either went wide of the mark, or were driven back by the now broken frames. The arrival of the magistrates, with a large body of police, just as the chapel door was forced, alone prevented the total destruction of much property, and probably of the lives of our two Pastors, the Rev. Messrs. Glassbrook and Kendal, such was the fury of the mob and the madness to which they had been goaded by the so-called Ministers of peace and order. How the whole chapel and house escaped destruction is extraordinary, as a considerable time elapsed before the magistrates and police arrived, who, being armed with cutlasses, used their truncheons with considerable effect, and, being seconded by a numerous body of special constables, sworn in at the moment, the mob gradually gave way. The whole town was in considerable excitement the following day, and farther outbreaks were expected; but, thanks to heavy rain both on that and the following day, and a greater number of police from the country being brought into the town, and the assistance given by the special constables, no further outrage has taken place. Since this disgraceful affair and riot, the chief promoters of this display of bigotry seem utterly ashamed of their conduct, and are now trying to make amends by offers of assistance. Mr. Close has offered to repair the damage—a pretty good sign that he, by his violent speeches, has been the chief cause of this outrage. Mr. Grenville Berkeley, the member for the town, and Mr. Craven Berkeley, the late member, have each offered to head subscriptions, and many Protestants to contribute to repair the damage, which is considerable to both house and chapel. Deputations from Protestant tradesmen, to show their horror at the conduct of their fellow-townsmen, have likewise offered to defray the cost of the repairs. The magistrates, and many leading Protestants, have called on our good Pastors to express their sympathy, and to show their detestation of the dastardly conduct of the mob. The lessees

of the Old Wells' Spa kindly offered the use of their music-hall for the Sunday service. In fine, sympathy is exhibited by all parties, who now appear thoroughly ashamed of their conduct.

At a meeting held last Saturday at the chapel-house, of the principal Catholics in Cheltenham, the Hon. Colonel Browne in the chair, it was unanimously resolved to appeal to the law, and oblige the county to repair the damage. This is a sad annoyance to the Protestants, as they wished to hush up that which will ever be to their disgrace. Cheltenham is the only town which has thus disgraced itself.

THE REV. MR. BENNETT AND LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

(From the Tablet.)

Lord John Russell, by this time, has "done penance" for his letter, and "penance more must do." First comes his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, with such a volley of unanswerable logic, good sound common sense, and plain English, as reduced the *Times* to babble confused generalities or feeble sneers. Joe Hume and Roebuck give Lord John a few preliminary kicks; the Dissenters—though a few of them foolishly joined in the cry raised by the State Church for its own interests—have begun to ask themselves some very sensible questions. It is very clear that, as a body, they are not going to be taken in; or to be induced, by the senseless bellow of "No Popery," to help in handcuffing themselves as well as the Catholics. The sermon of Mr. Newman Hall at Hull, and the speech of Mr. W. Biggs at Leicester, are, by themselves, enough to outweigh, with two or three months' time for calm reflection, any temporary fanaticism, such as, here and there, has brought Dissenting Ministers and gentlemen on the same platform with the proud and narrow minded Establishment, dignitaries and squires who hate their principles, and would disdain the very thought of asking them to their houses, or at least admitting them to their "society." The good sense of a whole body always checks, in the long run, the littleness or the mistakes of individuals, and so it is in the present instance. The people of England, the bone and sinew of the land, the operative and laboring classes, either are indifferent to the storm, or are on the side of justice. No man can doubt that fact who but glances at the columns of the *Weekly Dispatch*. No doubt it is true that the present agitation is highly dangerous to civil and religious liberty, because it is an agitation got up by the class which still, to a vast extent, has the making of the laws in its own hands. Each of the twelve thousand incumbents of the Established Church has it in his power to get up an "address" respectfully signed; and they are backed by nearly the whole force of the landed gentry. Thus, if the real people of England—if the Dissenters—if the manufacturing classes—if the great bulk of those interested in religious freedom, and not interested in the domination of a religious corporation over other religious bodies, chose to let themselves be overborne by the interested fanaticism of that corporation, why, the prospects of civil and religious liberty would be poor indeed. New John Bunyans may have to write new *Pilgrim's Progresses* in Bedford gaol, after, for some little time, the State Church and its politicians have "pined the flesh," or "fined the purses," of a few blameless and learned Catholic Prelates.

We hope for better things; and we have been greatly encouraged, not only by the above considerations, but still more by the letter Mr. Bennett, of St. Barnabas, has addressed to Lord John. It damages the Premier, perhaps, more than anything that has yet occurred, and shows him up in a very much meaner aspect than we suspect the public were at all prepared for. Lord John thoroughly despised the Puseyites; but even they, weak as they are, and overwhelmed by the torrent of public agitation, were, after all, not to be so desperately provoked with impunity. Mr. Bennett has turned round, and hit the Premier some very smart raps indeed. Never was there an instance in which a public man more shabbily, for mere political convenience, turned round on a party which he had encouraged with marked partiality. It appears that for six or seven years together Lord John was a regular hearer, communicant, and acknowledged parishioner of Mr. Bennett; he did not merely go to St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, as an occasional observer, but he was an avowed member of the congregation. Nor did he attend at the Puseyite Church, protesting constantly, as many may have done, against the "Popish" enormities he saw there, and now so passionately condemns. He subscribed to the Parish Schools—he sent sums of money for charitable purposes to Mr. Bennett; nay, he wrote letters to him, unsolicited, giving his advice, like a contented parishioner, as to any projects Mr. Bennett had in view. It seems when they proposed building the new Church, only three years ago (he it observed when they were "muttering the Liturgy," using the

sign of the Cross, hearing Confessions, &c., &c., just as they do now,) Lord John took the trouble to write a letter to Mr. Bennett, from Woburn Abbey, giving him money for the proposed Puseyite Church, and suggesting plans about it! Let us hear Mr. Bennett's very reasonable statement of this startling fact:

In your letter you enclosed an alms gift for that purpose, and then entered into details concerning the new Church. You were so good as to propose a specific plan of your own, which had, indeed, some advantages in it, but we thought not, on the whole, advisable. Though I could not agree with you in the idea which you suggested, still I was very thankful for your expression of sympathy, and especially as it manifested the fact that the good work intended to be done had been a matter of consideration with you. In that letter you go on to speak of the new Church in these words:—

"Will you permit me to say, that if I understand you rightly, the seats of St. Barnabas are to be all free seats; I think you are mistaken in not requiring some small payment (say sixpence a month) for at least half of them, I believe they would be more valued, and the money might be spent in keeping the seats clean, and warming the Church."

My lord, you can hardly imagine how gratified I was at the reception of that letter. I was so pleased to think that you could, in the midst of your laborious occupation, have been able to give our little church of St. Barnabas even a thought; and I wrote, in reply, that our idea was to make the church entirely free and open, on the ancient principle of churches, leaving the payments, necessary for the maintenance of the fabric, to the voluntary offerings of the people, which would be made at the Offertory. But this by the way. My object in reminding you of this letter, is to identify you with myself, and St. Paul's, and St. Barnabas', in knowledge, if not in spirit; to show that at that time you fully entered into the system of the Church which I advocated; that you did not object to my teaching; that you had no fault to find with my general principles and views. Could I at that time have been among those "insidious" persons whom you now would have the people to destroy, and get rid of?

Nay, yet more: on St. Barnabas's day, 1849, Lord J. Russell still regarded the Puseyites with such favor, that he promised to come in person to the church, and assist at the proceedings! Well, indeed, may Mr. Bennett ask Lord John—

If my course was insidious, why did you take part in that course? If I so murthered the liturgy as to disguise its language, why did you join in so glaring a profaneness for nearly seven years? If I practised "mummeries and superstition"—why did you come to join in them for nearly seven years? Why did you so far and so deeply join in them as to receive at my hands, so late as Ash Wednesday, 1849, the Holy Eucharist, yourself and your family? If I were one of those designated in your letter as bringing a greater danger than even the Pope, why then, my lord, was it that you said not all this before?

The following passage illustrates the religious history of Lord John, and his present position, in a still more curious light. There is a simplicity about the passage that almost amounts to fun, but the amusement soon gives way to grave indignation against the statesman who is capable not merely of the presumptuous insolence of expressing even an opinion on the conscientious convictions of large bodies of English citizens, but of the dirty treachery, and, at the same time, the inconceivable folly, dishonesty, and shortsightedness of which he has made so miserable an exhibition:—

My lord, I was always anxious, most anxious, as a Pastor of Christ, set over you in the Lord's congregation of which you were a member—I was always most anxious, secretly within myself, for your spiritual welfare and salvation. This cannot, I hope, be charged against me as any attempt at self-glorification, or claiming more in my duties than was required of me, our duty is so very imperative to "watch for the souls" of the flock committed to our keeping. I state the mere fact, that when I could not help seeing you, as I did, continually before me, subject to my teaching, hearing the elucidation of Gospel truth, and the Church's authority from my mouth, and joining in prayer and Sacraments from time to time—I state the mere fact—that a peculiar and awful sense of responsibility was felt to be kindled within me. It seemed as if great things might have been depending on the rightness of my teaching, and that the Church in her real beauty, and magnificence, and truth, might be lost, or not lost, by some mistake or want of judgment on my part. I know your temptations and dangers. I felt for you in the awful responsibilities of your high office, as the chief ruler of our country. I feared for you, and I prayed for you. I would never have told this, as now I do, but for the special and awful crisis which has, through your principal instrumentality, been brought about. But this now I will tell, known before only to God, that frequently, very frequently, in the lone night, and when you have been laboring in the House of Commons, I have been in the church where you worshipped, and by name, (of course, with others of my flock, according to their needs) have invoked the Almighty God of nations, that He would vouchsafe to guide your policy for our country's welfare, and our Church's blessing. Yes, often have I prayed specially on your behalf—often have I specially sought of God, that I might have grace in preaching, to win you to the deeper truths of our most holy Faith. It says this now,