

If half a loaf is better than no loaf, as says the old proverb, why did they so patiently suffer under the *regime* of no bread at all, whereas the half loaf, if they will call it no more, excites them to revolutionary frenzy? The phenomenon is one to be remarked upon; it may be of interest after this to search for its hidden causes.

Argus.

A CONTROVERSIAL HORNETS' NEST.

Amongst the many associations for religious purposes extant in the British Islands there is, it seems, one calling itself "The Irish Church Missions." As there are several churches in Ireland, notably and most numerous the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church, besides others of varied denomination, it is, to the comprehension of an ordinary layman, somewhat of a puzzle to discover to which of them it is that, arrogating to itself the title of "The Irish Church," the missions may properly belong. The Fiji Islands mission is known to be a mission to the Fiji Islands,—and the American Church missions are certainly missions conducted by the American Church,—it is therefore possible that similar missions might be undertaken by an Irish Church. But as there does not happen to be an Irish Church in the Strand, London, where the headquarters of the missions are said to be situated, and as it appears from correspondence at hand that the object of the missions is to confer an "inestimable blessing" upon "ignorant Roman Catholic" inhabitants of a wild district in Western Ireland, the interpretation becomes inadmissible. There are in the Emerald Island, it is believed, some very extraordinary things; but as it is scarcely conceivable that any church therein would deem it necessary to send missions to itself, the only solution at all feasible is, that the term Irish is used to differentiate certain church missions of a Hibernian and possibly abnormal type.

A mission or missions having a higher object, or one more justly entitled to the gratitude of men than the conferring upon them of an "inestimable blessing," it is not easy to imagine. But, however powerful an appeal such may constitute, and however potent its efficacy in eliciting active and substantial sympathy from a generous public, the height to which it soars above the sordid process of computation seems to invite an ignoble sentiment of curiosity as to the nature of, or particular shape in which so great a benefit is usually bestowed. To be told by the numerous friends and admirers of the missions that it consists in the "plucking of brands from the burning," or the rescuing of souls from Egyptian darkness and bringing them into the bright light of the Gospel, if loftily vague, should, and mayhap would be sufficiently gratifying if only enquiry ceased at that point; but when it is learned that amongst a very large body of Christians in the island, and indeed beyond the limits thereof, an opinion extensively prevails that the operations of the missions are susceptible of an interpretation by no means in harmony with the sublime aspirations which efforts to convert the darkness of Egypt into Gospel effulgence would necessarily indicate, the effect is, to say the least, disappointing to well-meaning and possibly ill-informed enthusiasts.

The pronounced opponents of an institution which claims an exalted beneficence for its chief characteristic do not hesitate to aver that it is simply a device to procure, by means of questionable morality, the desertion by the Irish peasant of "the ancient faith of his fathers," and further, that relying upon the supposition that when men's stomachs are empty their religious sentiments are proportionately weak or uncertain, the missions by timeous supplies of food, clothing and employment, apparently augment the ranks of supposititious converts, or temporary perverts from "our holy religion." It must be admitted that this latter averment borrows a certain colour of truth from the fact that a principal field of the missionary labours in question is a district in which, during the most prosperous seasons, food is never abundant and seldom nutritious. To bring the whole force at the disposal of an assailant to bear upon the weakest point of attack in an enemy is a recognized rule in the science of war; and, although military tactics are not usually of a character to be associated with proceedings said to be identical with the teachings of the gospel of peace, the metaphor might be allowed if happily the armed intervention of magistrates and police were not among some of the concomitants of the "inestimable blessing," and if still more happily the imagination was not wont to call up visions of domestic strife, of parents arrayed against their children, brother against brother, neighbour set against neighbour, heart-burnings and uncharitableness, with all the impassioned fervour of the western Celt. To those excellent people who are hopeful respecting the future of the human race, it is the reverse of encouraging to witness so wide and so violent a divergence between two eminent sections of Christianity; and to observe how closely a noble phase of philanthropy may resemble or seem to fade into motives of the baser sort, even to wearing the aspect of a coarse and depraved system of bribery. That "poor, ignorant and benighted Connemara" might, if Protestantized, become a humble rival of prosperous Ulster need not necessarily be classed with remote possibilities of the future. Protestantism is not seldom the parent of *prosperism*, if such a word may be made. But as the benighted of Western Connaught, notwithstanding the allurements of "a full male and a bran new suit o' cloas," look coldly upon the "inestimable blessing," and commonly

evince a very decided preference for a state of partial starvation, which they seem to regard as in some sense an essential preliminary to a better world that is coming; the spectacle of "Protestant Proselytism," confronted by "Romish Intolerance," which may mean an intelligent resistance to what is looked upon as an unjustifiable innovation, is neither complacent nor specially edifying. Into the merits of the contending forces it is not the purpose of this paper minutely to enter. Suggested by an incident unpleasantly illustrating the consequences of thrusting the hand into a nest of the hornets of modern religious controversy, it proceeds to relate that Colonel Spencer, a relative of the ducal family of Marlborough, being connected with the distribution in Connemara of a part of the Relief Fund, instituted by the good Duchess, was the recipient of a correspondence from Lord Randolph Churchill, a younger son of her Grace, in which his Lordship felt himself justified in congratulating a certain committee receiving grants, that its members did not include "Mr. Corry, a gentleman occupying the unenviable position of head to a society known as the *Irish Church Missions*, whose object is to pervert the Catholic peasants by all sorts of bribes and unworthy dodges." It is doubtless fresh in the recollection of many readers of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR that Lord Randolph Churchill is the young nobleman upon whom, and upon whose family, Mr. Charles Stewart Parnell, the leading exponent of Hibernian Communism, made certain characteristic and cowardly attacks with fatal effect upon his (Parnell's) reputation for veracity. But Lord Randolph Churchill is otherwise and more honourably distinguished as having taken a high-class at Oxford, and for his consequent acquaintance with valuable methods of preparation for public life. His Lordship, however, cannot be said to have availed himself of lessons which he might have learnt from the humblest domestics of Blenheim in the practices and uses of discretion,—a quality no less advantageous in "the cool sequestered vale" than in the whirl of a public career. To speak of a society, the aim of which is to confer an "inestimable blessing," as the patrons of "all sorts of bribery and unworthy dodges," if direct and vigorous in style may perhaps not greatly exceed the latitude to which a writer might deem himself entitled when writing confidentially to his uncle. But Lord Randolph Churchill has been sufficiently long in the world to possess some knowledge of the extremely awkward and embarrassing consequences which have resulted from the fatal tendency, which some private communications seem to have, of falling under the prying eyes of an enquiring public. Upon the occasion referred to he was the temporary occupant of a building usually the residence of the Private Secretary of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the paper upon which his letter was written bore the copper plate heading appropriate to the correspondence of the above mentioned official. As there is nothing within reach calculated to throw any light upon the habits of Colonel Spencer, it is difficult even to offer a conjecture as to the mysterious agency by means of which the letter, a few days after its dispatch, fell into the hands of Colonel Biggs, who is not only an officer in the Royal Artillery but is also "an officer of the society." Feeling bound "in duty and honour" to forward to the Committee of the Missions a document in which they were dishonorably mentioned, Colonel Biggs before doing so "had the honour to request" an explanation from "my Lord." The hostile flavour of this colonel's communication carries the mind back to the olden times when probably "a friend" would have been the bearer of his missive. The presumed astonishment of "my Lord" having subsided, he probably thought he had disposed of the matter by simply declining all correspondence with the Colonel. So far as that gallant officer was concerned he seems to have thought correctly as the warrior disappeared from the scene but only to give place to a naval commander who if not the son of a Duke was at least the son of a Peer.

The scion of the Marlboroughs consequently next finds himself called upon by Captain the Honourable Francis Maud, who is now seen to be chairman and therefore head of the society and not some unknown Mr. Corry, to afford "distinct explanation" touching the "bribes and unworthy dodges;" learning at the same the alarming intelligence that "this committee cannot make light of such statements dated from the Private Secretary's Lodge." The solemn warning was, however, quite thrown away upon Lord Randolph Churchill, who whether the committee could not or would not make light of him, lost not a moment in showing how perfectly capable he was of making light of the committee. Again providing himself with the obnoxiously headed note paper, he assured "F. Maud, Esq." that altho' he happened to inhabit the Private Secretary's Lodge he was not then and never had been Private Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, thus unconsciously testifying to the prudence of the Duke his Father. Attacking the whole community of Hornets in their nest with a torch more blazing than any that had yet been applied, declining to have "anything to do in the way of this controversy either with you or your society or any one else" and stating that "a Colonel Biggs some how or other had got hold of a private communication from me to my uncle," and presuming that Colonel Biggs being an "an officer" was also "a gentleman," he became the object of a tremendous onslaught by the society headed by its chairman, from which he had to protect himself by bolting into "St. James' Club," Piccadilly. To ascertain whether the society may be composed of persons professing advanced Christianity there is but the slender evidence that