



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND. (Continued.)

That great efforts have been made in various parts of Europe, especially through the untiring energies and zeal of one individual, to arouse all Catholics to pray systematically and daily for the conversion of England, is known to most of our readers. Many are the prayers which have mounted up to the throne of God in consequence of these efforts, and many are the communities, as well as private persons, who never cease to call upon Almighty God to hasten the day when this mighty nation shall be taught to choose between the worship of God and Mammon, and obey the faith it has so long reviled. But until recently little has been done to induce the Irish people to join in this noble and most Christian work, for the pure love of those who have been so long and so cruelly their oppressors. The madness of political contentions; the wild cries of the starving, the enslaved and the dying; the shouts of party; the indignant remonstrances of those who would fight for the poor and despised; and all those more worldly, though natural, and often lawful means, which have been undertaken for remodelling the relations of the two kingdoms, have absorbed the thoughts of the most sincere Catholics, and the Christian relation which Ireland bears to England has escaped our notice. That one most honorable, most Christian, and most efficacious instrument for the remedying of her wrongs, which is indeed in the hands of her Catholic sons, has been comparatively laid aside, and Irish patriots have forgotten that God wills the salvation of Englishmen as truly as He wills that they should do their duty to their fellow-creatures in Ireland.

May we not hope, then, that as the devotion proposed in the paper to which we are referring has already found a certain degree of footing in Ireland; it may be cherished and spread among her faithful children wheresoever there is a priest to preach the gospel of love, and to teach his people that glorious Christian duty, the returning of good for evil? May we not hope that they who have endured with such heroic patience all the pangs of hunger, disease, and death, may be brought to add to their virtues that one Christian virtue which is pre-eminently divine? Were it only for the sake of their own temporal well-being Irishmen might well devote themselves to pray and labor for the conversion of England. Were England a devout Catholic nation, could she, do we imagine, continue to treat her sister-island with an alternation of pity and anger, of liberality and reproaches, of fairness and dishonesty? Could she, as now, be content to do for Ireland only what she dare not refuse, and receive as infallible truths all those slanders against her clergy and laity which often work up her heavy, lumbering, practical popular mind into a very frenzy of rage and vexation? The first result of the conversion of England, or even of many Englishmen, must be a policy of fraternal love, towards those who of late have suffered almost as much from the chastising hand of Providence as from the senseless fury of man.

Nay, without waiting the full answer that might be hoped for from such prayers, it is impossible that the heart of England should not be touched by the sight of Irishmen praying for her conversion. It is a popular idea, indeed, with some people, that Protestants would only be irritated and made more hostile by the knowledge that Catholics were thus interceding with God on their behalf. They would take it as an insult, it is supposed, and close their ears more angrily than ever to the voice of divine truth. But this is a baseless fear. Amidst all the wrath such prayers might arouse, the hearts of all Englishmen who retain any love for what they know to be noble and Christian would be softened. A man who knows we are praying for him may be excited to a storm of passion if we make a boast to him of our zealous charity, and ostentatiously announce to him our profound pity for his blindness. But far different is the influence of a knowledge that he is prayed for upon a conscientious Protestant, when this prayer comes to his knowledge in the ordinary way of matter-of-fact, unobtrusive intelligence, and is not rudely thrown into his teeth. That the Protestants of this country would not, at the first tidings, be pleased to hear that the Catholics of Ireland were with one heart praying for their conversion, is very probable; but that no deep or lasting ill-feeling or increase of prejudice would be the result we are sure. There is scarcely an honest man in England who would not feel some little humiliation at the sight, and who would not after a while admit that much that was pure, and admirable, and worthy of cherishing, was to be found among a people whom he had been accustomed to regard as unworthy of his friendship, and fit only to be ruled with fire and sword.

That the prayers of Ireland would be of especial efficacy with Almighty God; every Christian must concede. If there is any prayer which is acceptable to Jesus Christ, and accords with the spirit of his

prayers while on earth, it is a supplication on behalf of an enemy. The whole Christian world would scarcely present so glorious a sight as that of Ireland, trampled on, deceived, starved, and insulted even when most pitied and most bountifully aided, nevertheless ceasing not to entreat the God of nations to have mercy upon the land that smote her, and to bend the English soul to the love and fear of Himself. If there is any prayer which would be certain to convert England, it would be a prayer thus learnt from the pattern of the dying Redeemer of the world, who shed his blood and offered his supplications for the people of this haughty nation as truly as for that thief upon the cross beside Him upon Calvary.

It ought not at the same time to be forgotten, that English Catholics, from whom prayers for the conversion of their country are to be expected as an obligatory duty, are still far from uniting in these supplications as they ought to unite. With all that has been effected by the zeal and energies of those who have devoted themselves to spread this devotion, and with all the sanction and encouragement of the Catholic Bishops and clergy, it cannot be doubted that many are the individuals, and many the households, by whom no special daily prayers are offered up for this great end. To our eternal shame be it spoken, there are even those with whom it must be said that this devotion is what is called *unpopular*. Personal considerations have made some of us careless as to this paramount duty; and because we may not have altogether approved some of the steps that have been taken in its furtherance, we have forgotten that nothing on earth but incapacity can absolve us from habitually calling upon God for the salvation of those who are nearest to us in the ties of natural flesh and blood. May we not, then, hope that the example which is already being set before us by many Irishmen will stimulate our torpor and awaken our love; and that where nothing more can be done, at least one "Hail Mary" will be added to our private or household prayers, for the conversion of our beloved country?

Apart, however, from the necessity for instant and continued prayer, the question as to the *mode* in which the Catholic Church may best act directly upon the world around her is one which every day acquires a deeper interest. Wonderful and glorious as are the results which we have a right to expect from the united cries of the faithful on behalf of England, it cannot be denied that these results are to a certain extent, dependent upon the wisdom of the system we adopt for opening the eyes of Englishmen to the claims of the true Church; and the subject admits of being viewed in so many various lights, that a few suggestions on one or two of its most important bearings may not be uninteresting to our readers.

To thoughtful minds, indeed, the question will again and again occur: "How can we convince the great mass of the people that Catholicism alone is the true Gospel of Jesus Christ? What are the kind of arguments to which the general run of mankind are accessible? What rational and undeniable proof can be adopted, which shall be at once in strict conformity with the laws of sound reasoning, with the capacities of the various classes of this country, and with the pure spirit of Christianity itself?" Few of our readers have not at times put some such queries as these to themselves, and some of them may perhaps be hardly prepared for the views we are about to lay before them as a solution of the problem. We venture, nevertheless, to press the subject most earnestly upon those who may differ from us, and to entreat them to give a candid consideration to the remarks we have to offer.

First, then, what method for the conversion of Protestants may we regard as *not* adapted to the exigencies of the times and the relative claims of the Church and her adversaries? Of those systems which we cannot but account either useless or mischievous, the most prominent is that which is commonly termed *controversy*. By "controversy" we do not, of course, mean all appeals to the reason, the common sense and the good feelings of Englishmen; but that elaborate argumentation which is based on difficult Scriptural texts, recondite analogies, obscure historical facts, or abstruse philological and patristic investigations.—For the vast mass of mankind—for it must be remembered that we are speaking of the many, and not of the learned few—all such proofs, we are convinced, are often worse than a waste of time, toil, breath and patience. We do not believe there exists a congregation in the empire which is (except in a very few instances of its whole number) intellectually capable of entering into any such style of argument. The mingled stupidity and ignorance of man is profound. Most men know little; and they cannot reason, except in the roughest, simplest way. They can seize, more by instinct than on any argumentative grounds, a broad, mighty principle, and apply it to themselves, to their neighbors, and to religious ques-

tions, with a rude, vigorous, and effective decision.—They can go straight to the real question involved in a discussion, when fairly led to it; they can think like men, though not like scholars; they can follow the path which God has marked out for the poor, though they are only bewildered by an accumulation of learning and a logical display. But they can no more enter into the true merits of what is termed theological controversy, or comprehend a critical inquiry into a mysterious text, than a village blacksmith could manufacture the wheels and springs of a watch.

Great, indeed, is the error of those who measure the average intellects of mankind by their respectability. Men talk of an *educated* congregation, as if such a thing were not a mere oasis in a desert of universal ignorance. We fancy that because a congregation is *well-dressed*, therefore its brains are cultivated in the same proportion as its garments. The few, whether clergy or others, who are the really educated and cultured class, often marvellously overrate the facility with which their hearers and readers comprehend them. No man can take pains to investigate the question for himself, without learning the unpleasant truth, that if the learned and the able are really to make themselves understood, by the generality of mankind, they must humble themselves to a level which is both painful to their intellects and mortifying to their pride.

We only wish that those zealous persons who bring to bear upon Protestants a battery of learned disquisitions and irrefragable Scripture proofs, would take the trouble to inquire how much of all they have been at the pains to write or to utter, has been tolerably understood by those for whose benefit they have spent all their labors. We wish that those who entertain a high opinion of the knowledge and reasoning powers of the well-dressed and gentlemanly portion of society, would simply sum up a list of those of their acquaintances who can follow the steps of any close argument, who can define what is the real point under discussion, who know when they are properly answered, and when they are put off with a deceptive reply. We should like to see drawn up a catalogue of the explanations of common theological terms, such as are necessarily used in controversy, by those Protestants with whom we argue. As a general rule, they literally know nothing, whatever, to serve for a foundation to begin upon. They have learnt—some of them at least—to talk a sort of theological gibberish, and to quote texts, under the delusion that they affix definite ideas to the words they utter; but beyond this, they have little more than a few strong, though vague ideas of morals, and of what they suppose to be the characteristics of a divine religion and a true Church. And if we would go direct to their hearts, and infuse actual ideas into their minds, we must adopt a far simpler process than reconcile, metaphysical, patristic, historical, or Scripture reasoning. We must take noble and lowly, rich and poor, on one common ground, and bear in mind that few persons, until they become Catholics, have really any religious ideas or definite faith at all. They may have a multitude of words and very good intentions, but the depth of their positive ignorance is scarcely credible to those who have not made the incapacity of man their special study.

If, however, elaborate controversy fails to command the obedience of Englishmen, still less will they yield to personalities and irritating sarcasms. Not that satire, and an exposition of the follies and abuses of Protestantism, is not at times a most effective weapon in the hands of the Catholic; but that, for the most part, attacks upon the clergy and the clergy's wives, exhibitions of the absurdities of their professed creed, and abuse of them as wilful, stupid, and God-hating heretics, serve only to give scandal, and to arm their already prejudiced feelings with a triple armour of self-justifying indignation. Perceiving as we do, the hollowness of every shape of Protestantism, its inconsistencies, its self-deceptions, its worldliness, and its Pharisaism, it is difficult for us to realise the amount of wrath and disgust which result from our ruthless displays of its weakness and follies. Nothing demands a greater care and delicacy than the convincing a man of his own sins, ignorance, or stupidity. True though it be, that he is outrageously sinful, ignorant, and stupid, we shall never succeed in opening his eyes to his condition, if we adopt a mode of proof which is tantamount to saying, "Sir you are incapable of reasoning, you are too dishonest to look truth in the face, and your religion is all hypocrisy and deceit." These unpleasant truths must be gently insinuated; they must be well oiled with courtesy and consideration; they must be urged in the way of calm disquisition, and in appeals to an adversary's good qualities, to his sense of justice, to his love of truth, to his fear of God; and to his veneration for Christianity. All this, indeed, requires so nice a care and tact, that it scarcely ever happens that what

we may call the *personalities* of controversy do not work far more mischief than good.

Again, England will never be converted by the mere outward show of the splendor of Catholic worship. Admirable and natural as is all that magnificence of ceremonial and artistic decoration with which the Church delights to approach her God, we may rest assured that the English nation is not in a state to regard this external beauty as a proof that she alone is the true spouse of Jesus Christ. Protestants will neither be conciliated, nor convinced, nor yet scandalized by it. They will quietly put it aside, as not being the real test of truth and error. If we obtrusively thrust it forward, and entreat them to come and view our gorgeous rites, they will count them either as a subtle snare or a theatrical *spectacle*. If, on the other hand, they see us paying little heed to the proprieties of divine service, and neglecting its glory, when it is really in our power to adorn it, they will despise us. In neither case will it convince them that ours is the one true Church. It will serve, indeed, the purpose of attracting them to look on and see what we do; but if we depend upon any such means for finally making them Catholics, most woefully shall we be deceived. English common sense knows perfectly well these two great Catholic truths, viz., that splendor of worship is no part of the *essence* of spiritual religion, and also that it is the right and natural *result* of spiritual religion, when it does not interfere with higher duties. Therefore, let us never for one moment fall in with the cant of the irreligious, and pretend that we do not love the splendor of the house of God, or admit that the gorgeousness of Catholic ceremonial is in the faintest degree unfavorable to the devotion of the heart; but let us beware of making Protestants imagine that we build superb churches, and arrange long-drawn processions, and lift up our voices in captivating strains, in order to please *them*, or for any other reason whatsoever, except the true one, namely, that the soul which loves God must delight to serve Him with all its faculties of both body and soul, and with all the gifts of grace and beauty which He has bestowed upon us in this lower world. So long as they behold us adorning the service of the Lord, for such a motive as this, they will be constrained to admit its undeniable excellence, and it will need no lengthy argument to teach them that their own meagre and frigid worship must be the product of a questionable creed. But the moment that they detect us in thinking of *them*, and not of God and of ourselves, in our elaborate ceremonial and costly buildings, that moment will they feel more convinced than ever, that "Romanism" is a religion of the senses and not of the heart, and a snare rather than a blessing to the soul.

(To be continued.)

CATHOLIC CONVENTS AND PROTESTANT CALUMNIATORS.

The obscure dotard who represents West Surrey has been attempting to vindicate himself from the charge of having, on a late memorable occasion, spoken disrespectfully of her whom the Angel saluted as "Full of grace," and whom all nations call "Blessed." This shows that even Mr. Henry Drummond is, upon cool reflection, less of a blasphemer than the first Minister of the Crown and the Speaker of the House of Commons. He, in the fury of rampant bigotry, let fall infamous words, of which he is now ashamed and repents at leisure: they, in the coolness of mere auditors, upheld the excited blasphemer, and deliberately sanctioned his gross delinquency. We accept his repudiation of the language too truly attributed to him, as an apology to society for the scandal he had given by his horrible allusions to the Mother of God; but we question if this recantation, will raise his character among the Evangelical Protestants of this country. The hatred borne by these to the Blessed Virgin is really incredible; it is absolutely satanic. We have been astounded by the sentiments and the language which of late we have frequently heard drop from the lips of Protestants—Episcopalians as well as Dissenters—on this subject; and it is our solemn conviction that Mr. Drummond's ferocious invective fell far short of the feelings of the Evangelicals.

That worthy person does not, however, withdraw or disavow his infamous calumnies upon Catholic convents. He still brands as "prisons or brothels" institutions in which ladies of the purest fame, the strongest mind, the noblest character, devote themselves to the service of their Redeemer, and the instruction of female youths in those fine arts and elegant accomplishments which adorn society. This man—and he is but the type of a very numerous class in this country—conceives that the burden of the Lord cannot be light, nor His yoke sweet; and that vows of chastity, offered to God, cannot be kept. He, doubtless judges by his own experience, and he cannot pronounce all Catholic ladies impure, without