

“MODERN THOUGHT.”

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THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH AND CATHOLICS IN MODERN SOCIETY—“MODERN THINKERS” NOT WHOLLY ADMIRABLE.

It is a settled belief at the present day, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries of the globe, that this nineteenth century is the heir of all the centuries, wiser, better and more civilized than any that has gone before. In support of his belief, the average Englishman or American will point, and with legitimate pride, to such cities as Liverpool and New York, and to such works as the Pacific railway and the submarine cable. I admit the progress, and I admire the genius that planned, and the enterprise that accomplished those marvellous works; yet I make bold to say, that these things do not constitute civilization—that they are not to be accepted even as evidences of civilization. A city may enlarge its boundaries year by year, but if vice extends in proportion as its streets advance, who will say that its onward march is the march of civilization? The railway and the telegraph are agents merely—agents indeed of civilization, if used for good and lawful purposes. but agents of barbarism, if for bad and vicious purposes employed. If the railway be employed to convey the criminals of one country to another, yet comparatively free from crime, there to infect and pollute society, can it be said that, in such case, the railway is an agent of civilization? If the telegraph be employed to transmit lies from country to country, and from continent to continent [and that it is so employed we have constant proof], can it be said that, in such case, the telegraph is an agent of civilization? As well might it be said that the desert wind is an agent of health, when—

“Death rides upon the sulphury siroc.”

It will be said that, holding these views, I am the foe of enlightenment, that I would arrest discovery on its march, put a drag on the wheels of progress, and condemn society to stagnation. Let me remind those who so speak, that the greatest scientific achievements of the nineteenth century—the Suez Canal and the Mont Cenis Tunnel—have been accomplished by two nations, Catholic in religion, and in genius and character the least material in the world, France and Italy. No, my proposition is, that mere