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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

THE AGGREGATE MEETING—THE CATHOLIC DEFENCE ASSOCIATION.

(From the Weekly Dispatch.)

With the usual easy modest assurance of all arrant quacks, the promoters of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill are justifying the necessity of the wrong they have inflicted, by pointing to the natural resistance of the wronged. It is said of Uncle Ben that he was so sure a shot that whenever the opossums saw the muzzle of his rifle, they called out "Don't waste your powder—we'll come down and go into your bag quietly, since we know we must go there at any rate." The *Times* is quite indignant that a whole nation, and part of another, with British blood in their veins, and Saxon notions in their heads, do not give up the ghost of their spiritual liberties on the mere issue from the Queen's printers of a sheet of what, in this case, may most literally be termed *fool's-crap*. The leading minister and the leading journal, having been engaged a whole session in little else than stirring up the bigotry of Protestantism, and insulting the keenest religious feelings of the Catholics, affect to be quite surprised that, after having maddened that theological fanaticism and pride of creed which all history shows to be the most dangerous of political experiments, and the one sacred subject with regard to which mankind fling behind them all fear of consequences, and all respect for other considerations, the "Papists" should not dutifully submit to insult and degradation when the revocation of the Roman Catholic edict of Nantes is embodied in an act of parliament. They anticipated that the battle was to be a *battue*; they forgot that Irishmen are *not opossums*, but *men*, with fiery passions, and a quick sense of injury, and that they are not only capable of bearing, but covetous of, arms. Their priests, who in all ages and all countries are the most powerful instruments of popular excitement and deeds of unhesitating daring, are at their head, leading them on, and at their ear, goading them on. "'Tis true, 'tis pity—and pity 'tis 'tis true." It would have been better had it been otherwise; but we must accept hard facts as we find them; and the duty as well as the function of the statesman is to deal with facts, not to defy them. There is no way, there never was any other way, of meeting the circumstances of our position, than that of recognizing them as actual entities, and making the best—not the worst of them. We have one nation Episcopal—another Presbyterian—a third Catholic, all bound up together in one United Kingdom. The two former have tried to extirpate the latter as Pharaoh did the Israelites, but with the like ill success. Oppression and confiscation have only made them grow the faster, and resist the more effectually. As we cannot (thank Heaven) crush them, we should have made up our minds to live at peace with those of whom we cannot get rid, and from whom we cannot separate without "restoring the heptarchy." And here it is but fair to keep in remembrance that it is by our compulsion that Ireland is chained to us. She has again and again agitated for and demanded a Repeal of the Union. She does not ask us to bind up her fate with ours. If there were a difficulty on principle in excluding Ireland from the operation of a bill which is not merely a badge of sectarian degradation, but of national vassalage, it was of our own making. We have insisted upon chaining her to us, and then we pretend to charge it upon the victim of the necessities of our own fancied policy, that her dangerous proximity requires the enforcement of an act of proscription. Justice, reason, right feeling, sound policy, equally cry out against a deed as unnecessary as it is perilous, and not less discredit to the sense of equity of the perpetrators, than insolent and overbearing towards its victims. We judge of other men by ourselves. If Ireland were to attempt to prohibit our use of the very name we chose to give to our spiritual instructors, there is no act of parliament to which England and Scotland would yield one hour's obedience. Can we wonder at, or blame that honorable pride and laudable spirit of national independence in others, which we regard as a virtue in ourselves? "The ides of March have come—aye, but not gone?" *The bill is passed—but we are only at the beginning of its consequences.* The Archbishop of Dublin's charge is the oracle of a prophet. The chief Protestant ecclesiastic in Ireland condemns the principle of the measure, and what is of more serious consequence, entirely reasons it down. The ablest statesmen, the most eloquent senators, the most experienced politicians of the country, embraced in the Peel party, have resisted it in every stage, with arguments which, in logic, although not in votes, are irrefragable. The chiefs of the Radical party have spoken and voted against it. It has, therefore, the support, not of the reason, but only of the fanaticism of the country. The

Catholics are encouraged and justified in resisting it, by the authority of the greatest English senators. Even Lord Stanley was taken conveniently sick when the wooden horse was introduced into the House of Lords. One hundred and three Irish members will be arrayed shoulder to shoulder in the very heart of our camp, to bring our legislation to a dead lock, and to rout party after party placed in power, on the pledge of giving effect to this law. The curry-powder Duke, a renegade to his faith, and an offender against the law of parliament and the privileges of the House of Commons, has done his little possible to show the naked corruption of the smaller agricultural boroughs, and to strengthen the demand for their transfer to schedule A, by issuing his commands to the serfs of Arundel, to elect a more obsequious flunkey in the place of his own son (what a caricature of Brutus!); but only to the effect of heaping disgrace on himself and his nominee, and drawing upon the object of his spite the honor of the choice of an independent constituency. To sum up all, a common danger and a common affront have, for the first time, driven the English into the arms of the Irish Catholics, and a population in the three kingdoms of eight millions, firmly bound together, by one faith and a mutual sense of wrong, take the field against distracted counsels and a divided and irresolute majority. Even the two rampant Protestants who contested Greenwich, were fain to pocket bigotry, which was found to be distasteful to the good sense of Radical electors. In a word, the law is already openly and unhesitatingly defied, and the authority of the three estates is kicked into the kennel, and dragged through the gutter. "John, Archbishop of Tuam," is a signature published in every city of Ireland, and to be found even in the columns of the *Times*. "Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland," with his sign manual, "boldly dashes through the act of parliament." The crazy Orangemen are again as rampant and riotous as in the palmiest days of the Roden era; and all this is the session's whole work of a man who aspires to the character of the capacity to govern these islands. Is it necessary to predicate the consequences? Need we say that no Irish jury will convict under this statute? Need we add, that a verdict of acquittal would be even the least embarrassing result to the government? It is, indeed, most strange that the merest pottering politicians, the wretchedest red-tape *Quidnuncs* that ever held the seals of office, have not even yet discovered the significance of Burke's proposition, that "you cannot bring an indictment against a whole nation." If all the houses in Ireland were gaols, they could not hold the number who are willing to become martyrs. If all the army were gaolers, there would not be enough to turn the keys upon the millions who are ready to become prisoners. The common sense of justice in the English people secretly whispers to them that an Archbishop, chosen and acknowledged as such by a whole people, wears the title by an infinitely better right, in reason as well as equity, than a Beresford or a Lee—the creature of Orange ascendancy, thrust into a fat living by the force of conquest, for the cure of tithe-pig bacon, in default of a cure of souls. And for what sort of Protestantism, and who are the Bishops, on whose behalf this English nation is dragged into a quarrel with its neighbors and fellow-subjects? A house divided against itself—men presented to the nation by the state as the only orthodox hierarchy, and who are all ignoring each other's titles, disclaiming each other's authority, excommunicating, exorcising, calling each other heretics. Hampden repudiated by his brother Bishop of Oxford, and his own Dean and Chapter—Canterbury disclaimed by Exeter as his metropolitan—Exeter, in turn, ignored by his own clergy. The one half accused by the other of being Papists in disguise; the one calling Rome a branch of the true church—another execrating it as Antichrist. Here Bristol and Gloucester kidnap the Horfield estate; there the Bishop of Llandaff lets out consecrated ground for the performance of a company of tumblers—gets himself elected on the profession of proficiency in Welsh, and keeps away from his diocese altogether to prevent his utter ignorance of the language from being found out; and yonder stands the Bishop of St. David's playing at battle-door and shuttle-cock with Archdeacon Williams, in the way of banging "the lie" from one to another, with as little ceremony as a couple of ballast-heavers in a Newcastle collier; and in the back ground may be seen in perspective the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter of Rochester, detected with their hands in the very pocket of charity, breaking their faith and trust to the dead, who charged them to be honest, and confided in their honor, filling their own purse with the spoil of the ignorant and the needy, and compassing the ruin of the meritorious citizen who found them out. "These be your gods, O Romans!" For this we are to stop the onward progress of Irish regeneration; to double our army, and swell the burden of

our taxes; to foment distraction among our subjects; to divide a house against itself; to cool our friends, warm our enemies, and peril even a civil war, or reduce the force of our laws to the authority of a piece of parchment, of no more account than the sheepskin of a drum, fit only to make a noise with, or beat to arms. When the minister who has brought us to this is our Hobson's choice of statesmen, it is time we made up our minds to save the salaries of office, and try to get on without a government at all.

(From the Morning Chronicle.)

To our own minds not the least portentous aspect of Tuesday's proceedings is the quiet and orderly character of the whole affair. When men feel deeply, and intend to act earnestly, they can dispense with bravado. A demonstration of blustering demagogues we could afford to leave to its noisy ineffectuality; but when a whole religion takes the calm and imposing attitude of moral resistance, we cannot afford to disparage its extent, its power, or its prospective importance. We cannot characterise the Rotundo meeting as other—barring some extravagances both of language and of assertion—than an unequivocal triumph. Its defiance of the Titles Bill was distinct and complete; the provisions of that measure were calmly and deliberately set at naught; the Bishops openly assumed their illegal titles; the breach of the law is at least undisguised; the challenge for prosecution is fair, plain, and decided; and the question is brought to a direct and most intelligible issue. The game must be played out. Parties on both sides are irretrievably pledged and committed. Mr. Tresham Gregg proposed to disturb the meeting, "escorted by some thousands of brother Protestants." His ignominious flight in a hack car, accompanied only by his three intended bottle-holders, in unnoticed contempt, betrays at least the utter hopelessness, in Dublin, of any counter-agitation. We do not by any means conclude that there will be no exhibitions of Orange zeal, but we may speculate upon its failure, as confidently as we prepare ourselves for its display. On either side we may well fear the excitement of the fiercest passions. Hereditary hatred will blaze up in its wildest forms; province will be set upon province—parish divided against parish. Social strife has already revived in its most aggravated character; and the peace and prosperity of Ireland are thrown back fully twenty years by this entire abandonment of the policy of Sir Robert Peel, which promised so fairly to reverse the curse that for centuries had brooded over a high-spirited and a noble land. And all this while the unsettled question of tenant right looms sullenly in the distance.

(From the Spectator.)

The probable effects of the attitude now assumed by the bolder leaders among the Catholics, upon the balance of parties and Ministerial tenure of office, if not the most permanently important of the speculations that suggest themselves, is that which lies nearest at hand. The Catholic body, at least that part of it which since the Leicester House compact has, with occasional bickerings, been a main stay of the Whigs, is now arrayed in hostility against them; Lord John Russell being the object of their most bitter dislike and vehement denunciations. One avowed object of the "Catholic Defence Association" is to influence the elections, with a view to return as many Catholic members as possible to the House of Commons, who may harass Ministers with the same obstructive and uncompromising opposition as that party did last session. While the Whigs appear to have broken irretrievably with their old Romanist allies, there are no symptoms of their having made much progress in the confidence and esteem of the ultra-Protestant party. The *tractique* of the Durham Letter has failed in so far that it appears to have left Ministers weaker and more embarrassed than before.

All things considered, however, there can be no doubt, that though the Catholics, by drawing up in closer order, may create much embarrassment in Ireland, and even extort concessions there at the expense of the Irish branch of the Established Church, they are powerless to alter the essentially Protestant character of English policy. The State in England will not recede from its claim to regulate in the last resort all merely temporal relations of the Church, such as territorial divisions, titles of honor and precedence, and ecclesiastical revenues.

To this end, however, the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill promises to contribute little. It was treated at the aggregate meeting with open scorn and defiance. The prohibited titles were heaped upon the Prelates with ostentatious iteration, as if to dare the Government to prosecute; and every one feels that the challenge will not be accepted. Not contented with thus showing the act to be a nullity, the meeting resolved that every effort must be made to obtain its repeal.

(From the Tuam Herald.)

The vessel of Agitation is once more fairly launched in Ireland. The course Lord John Russell has chosen for himself and co-religionists, has left no alternative between defence and absolute slavery. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of recording the sincere gratification we feel at the bold and uncompromising tone adopted at the meeting by their Lordships, and by the members of parliament who spoke to the several resolutions. The agitation is not to be a mere defensive, milk-and-water thing, confined to a warding off of further disabilities, nor even to a repeal of the present Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. We want no superiority or ascendancy; but we must insist upon not being any longer kept in a state of degradation. The Archbishop of Tuam went to the root of all penal enactments against conscience—past and present. To prop up an alien religious establishment in its anomalous ascendancy, the Catholics and Dissenters must be held in bondage. There can be no lasting peace in Ireland whilst this bloated and sickly exotic thus requires to be watered by the blood and enriched by the spoils of a plundered Catholic population.

(From the Roscommon Messenger.)

The new association must be aggressive as well as defensive. If we have old rights to defend, we have also new rights, as sacred and as justly ours, to struggle for.

Catholics of Ireland, you are again called upon to prove your fidelity to that Church to which your ancestors adhered through centuries of bitter persecution. We know how you will respond to that call. The old Faith will ever be as dear, as sacred to you, as it was to your forefathers, who testified unto it even to the death.

The three estates of the United Kingdom have proscribed your creed. There is no mincing the matter, this law cannot be obeyed. It cannot be obeyed, for every Ecclesiastical act of your Prelates and of your Priesthood, will be a violation of its spirit and of its letter. This nullity—this enactment, insulting but impotent, must be expunged from the statute book, and for it must be substituted a law, not of toleration but of unqualified and universal freedom of conscience.

Catholics of Ireland, you owe it as a duty to your country, to your religion, to your God, to enrol yourselves in the ranks of the Catholic Association.

(From the Galway Mercury.)

The infatuation of the Whig government in supposing that the people of Ireland would surrender without a struggle in 1851, the liberties which they achieved by so much exertion in 1829, is a singular instance of the blind confidence with which tyranny often resolves upon courses which lead directly to its own destruction. Had any enemy of English power in this country set himself to devise the most effectual means of awakening the latent ardor of national feeling, and of arraying in one firm united band the peasant and the peer—the humble Priest and the exalted Prelate, he could not possibly have effected his object more successfully than by suggesting the course which the English legislature has adopted of its own accord. After this expression of the will of universal Ireland, the Bishops of the Catholic Church, both here and in England, may well laugh to scorn the weak inventions of the enemy. For the free exercise of our religion in Ireland we neither have, nor ever had any apprehensions. Indeed we should like to see the dastardly Whigs taking proceedings against the venerated Archbishop of Tuam or any other Prelate of the Irish Church. Any such attempt would assuredly excite a tempest which would overturn the power of the firmest ministry that ever guided the councils of the English nation, and shake the empire to its very centre. For our own part, we care not how soon the blindness of the government may lead them to make trial of the efficacy of their new law. The people of Ireland are prepared for the struggle, and do not fear the result.

(From the Belfast Vindicator.)

For the first time since the Kilkenny Convention, the Hierarchy, in a body, has hurled defiance at an act of parliament. We can now calculate to a fraction the nature of the resistance the law will meet. The minister has his opponents fairly before him. How will he treat them? Few now doubt the result of the conflict begun. A man soon passes away—a nation never dies. A minister may fall disgraced, despised, and spat upon; a principle never can.

(From the Dundalk Democrat.)

The Catholic Church in these kingdoms and the English government, are now fairly drawn up against each other. A crisis is approaching, and one of the powers must give way. The Catholic Church cannot, and will not yield up its rights. Fines and imprisonment may be imposed on its Bishops and Clergy; the rack and the gibbet may be called into requisition.