



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. I.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 1851.

NO. 24.

THE CATHOLIC QUESTION IN ENGLAND.

(From the London Morning Chronicle.)

The popular belief is, that the exigency might be safely and satisfactorily met by an enactment prohibiting—under the penalty of fine, imprisonment, or deportation—the assumption, otherwise than by Royal authority, of any episcopal title with a territorial designation. But an insurmountable difficulty meets us on the threshold. Is the enactment to comprise the entire empire, or be expressly limited to a part? The empire includes Ireland, Scotland, and the colonies, besides England and Wales. It cannot strictly and logically be called a Protestant empire, for it comprehends almost every variety of creed; and it is to be feared that the numerical majority (if her Majesty's Indian subjects are to count) are not even Christians. What is more immediately to the purpose, there are Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops legally recognised in Ireland and the colonies, and there are bishops of the Anglican Episcopal Church in Presbyterian Scotland, with territorial titles assumed without the authority of the Crown. This last anomaly was first pointed out by our learned correspondent, D. C. L.; and a few days since we published a document signed "W. Skinner, Bishop of Aberdeen, Primus, C. H. Terrot, Bishop of Edinburgh, &c., &c.," in which four out of the seven Scottish bishops endeavored to distinguish their case from that now in question, by stating that they do not hold or claim under any foreign prelate or potentate. But although this circumstance, combined with long usage, takes away all semblance of offence or disrespect, it does not in the smallest degree affect or vary the question of Royal prerogative. A Bishop of Aberdeen, *Primus*, elected by his flock or by his brethren, is as much a standing negation of the Queen's supremacy as an Archbishop of Westminster, *Primate*, &c., nominated by the Pope. Moreover, history teaches that the encroachments of subjects may prove more dangerous to the British Crown than any claim or threat of foreign domination—which is a mere *brutum fulmen* so long as it is indignantly repudiated in Great Britain.

Let us assume, however, that an exception will be made in favor of the Scottish Episcopalians. Let us also take for granted that Lord Grey will succeed in procuring a similar immunity for the colonies. But how are we to deal with Ireland, where any attempt to degrade the Roman Catholic Hierarchy would be the commencement of a civil war of the most inveterate and internecine kind? The Roman Catholic member for the county of Mayo uttered no idle threat when he said, "We will brook no insult to our faith; and any man or party that lays but a finger upon the hem of its sacred garment, will learn to rue the deep, enduring, and consecrated resentment of the Irish people." It would take a standing army of a hundred thousand men to keep down illicit episcopal titles in the Green Isle, and no sane statesman would dream of such a thing. So much, therefore, for one of the only two alternatives. Let us now consider the other. If Ireland is omitted, some reason must be alleged besides the fancied expediency of yielding to popular clamor, or of indulging a widespread feeling of natural irritation. Yet we really cannot so much as guess what other topic could be urged in favor of a penal law expressly limited to one of the three kingdoms, except that the Protestants are in a majority in England and Wales—a majority so overwhelming as to make a regular Roman Catholic Hierarchy an impertinence, and to render any effective protest or resistance, on the part of those who may feel indignant at its forcible suppression, an impossibility. In other words, the English Roman Catholics are to be punished for adopting or submitting to identically the same scheme or system of ecclesiastical government which is formally and deliberately permitted to the Irish—on the ground that the Irish Roman Catholics are numerous and turbulent, while the English are few and peaceable.

We should like to see the Prime Minister who would venture to use this argument. We shall be glad to know how long the Established Church of Ireland would survive the implied admission and the inevitable corollary. Dissociate her from her English sister, and she is lost. Concede that she must endure what that sister resents as "foul scorn"—and what thenceforth are her means of self defence and her resources for utility? Once modify your legislation with express reference to minorities and majorities, and where are you to stop? There will be something more than a theoretical or logical inconsistency—there will be a practical contradiction of the most palpable, tangible, and startling sort—in the contrasted spectacles of an English Chancellor trampling upon the Archbishop Cardinal's hat in St. James's, and an Irish Chancellor giving precedence to a Papist Primate of Ireland in Dublin Castle. In fact, we should be puzzled to say which set of politicians would be most wanting in wisdom and foresight

—those who should propose to retrograde to the penal laws of sixty years since, or those who fancy that they can limit their prohibitory enactments to one branch of the Queen's dominions, without an open defiance of common justice, or without scattering broadcast the seeds of future troubles in the rest.

(From the Weekly Despatch.)

The tone of the rabid Protestant press begins to resemble that of a penitent tipsyarian, who replies the next morning to the reproaches of his wife, by saying that he "couldn't have been so very drunk, for he wound up his watch without breaking the spring, and didn't get his pocket picked." This tipsyarian party, as represented by the *Times*, is finding excuses for its debauch. "Making allowance for the extravagances inseparable from real earnestness of feeling," the *Times* apologises for all those "speechmakers, requisitionists, and deputations," who are now "quietly asking themselves whether they have been angered too precipitately, or carried a little too far." Indeed, the affair must have become very embarrassing, especially since the cause received the adhesion of two such personages as the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Winchelsea. This is the very step from the sublime to the ridiculous. Only imagine the *Times* being reduced to praising the "clear and unbiased good sense" of the curry-powder Duke! Only fancy the poor creature, whose charity, benevolence, and wisdom would, to keep up high rents, have staved off the cravings of a laborer's hunger with a pinch of luxury he never saw, becoming an authority for a great question of religious liberty! Only picture a letter from the Earl of Winchelsea occupying a leading space in the "leading journal," in which the Earl sets himself up for a prophet and a sage, who foresaw and foretold, at the time of the Catholic Emancipation, all the terrible fight which the old womanhood of England, clerical and lay, would have to endure! "These be thy gods, O, Israel!" "Dear me!" as the Americans say, "on'y think!" Can the Churchwardenhood and the Beadledom of the kingdom go lower! These things are not asserted as jokes, but looked up to for countenance. The Catholic Duke, we suppose, having abjured curry-powder, has taken to curry favor. We see that he dines at Windsor. Even the patron of the two-yards-wide Sun can taunt the Government with Lord John Russell's letter, and ask if a college maintained by a ruler who attacks the Roman Catholic religion as a "mummery," can be safe for Catholic students. Thus the very good that might be done is perilled by the obvious injustice, in other respects, of those who attempt to do it. The substance of education in Ireland is sacrificed to the shadow of Protestant defence against the ghost of aggression here. And the best of it is, that none of the ordinarily sane combatants on the Anti-Papist side dare to say what they would do. They are all for "religious liberty;" they all eschew "reaction." Not, of course, your Earls of Winchelsea, they are mad enough for anything—mad enough to think themselves reasonable, and all the rest of the world lunatics, the highest delusion of Bedlamites. The Popish prelates, in England, have taken titles, which the law does not forbid them to assume, after their brethren in Ireland, who have been received at Court with honors, and allowed precedence as dignitaries,—have taken, unapproved, titles which the law expressly forbids them to bear. It is impossible to get out of this dilemma. The deed is done, and cannot be undone, without going backwards; and yet it is to be undone, and we are to continue where we are on the road to religious liberty. The remedy is to be an impossibility. We cannot wonder that the *Times* should decline pointing it out, and excuse its followers for not attempting the task. Drop the matter as soon and as quietly as you can, is our advice.

(From the London Enquirer.)

The Anti-Papal agitation has taken much too strong a hold of the public mind, to pass off without producing consequences both important and permanent. It will prove, we fear, a more serious blow at the Union between England and Ireland than Daniel O'Connell was ever able to strike; and in England itself, it will probably lead to very surprising changes, political as well as religious. Already it has given prominence and influence to a class of men, whom the march of events during the last twenty years had completely left behind. The popular orators and oratory now are precisely such as, a short time ago, would have found no listeners out of Exeter Hall. The veriest rubbish of the Protestant Association, and the Orange Lodges, has been brought out of its obscurity; with as much interest and applause as if it contained the choicest treasures of argument and eloquence. It is not that the movement is not countenanced by men of eminent liberality and enlightenment. That is the most painful part of the matter.

Such men are in it, but they are following rather than leading. We notice efforts in various quarters, made by these parties, to check the violence of those whom they are acting with, but in such cases the violent are almost sure to have their own way. The result will soon appear at the elections. We shall see what professions or pledges are exacted from candidates. We shall be agreeably surprised if there are no instances of liberal men submitting to become the organs of prejudices which they regard with inward contempt.

The arbitrary spirit with which the prevailing zeal over-rides and tramples upon the rights of minorities, was very strikingly shown a few days ago, at a meeting of the Incorporated Law Society—a body composed of men of all creeds, and formed, we believe, solely to protect the interests and honor of the profession to which the members belong. The majority, however, determined to have its No-Popery resolution and petition without the slightest regard to the remonstrances of those who differed with them. Such a proceeding was nearly equivalent to a vote for the exclusion of Roman Catholic members, and it might with just as great propriety have been proposed and carried in a meeting of the shareholders of the North Western Railway. Any society, formed for any purpose, may be called upon, it would seem, to testify in behalf of the Queen's Spiritual Supremacy; and those who dissent must either retire or continue to give their names and contributions to an organisation diverted from its proper use, to an end which never could have been contemplated at its formation. This should be denounced as an intolerable tyranny. If it were to go on, no quiet refuge would be left anywhere for those who might hold an unpopular opinion. The Argus-eyed majority would pursue its opponents through all the employments and amusements of life. It would drive them from the public dinner-table, from the social club, from the reading-room. Every man who ventured to think, must either think with the multitude, or conceal his thoughts at his peril.

The popular crusade against Popery, however, though it may incommode Roman Catholics, will not do much to eradicate the ancient and deep-rooted errors of their creed. It will not do much, because it only threatens where it ought to persuade. It talks of penalties and prohibitions, as if such things had not been tried to the uttermost without success; and what is worse still, it shows by this talk a distrust in those means of evidence and reasoning by which the voluntary assent and obedience of free beings are won. At such opposition the leaders of Romanism will smile with secret scorn. They know that it will place them in the attitude of defending the rights of mind against force; and that it will thus enlist on their side many of the most potent influences of the age. Catholicism, we are strongly inclined to think, will come out of the present struggle with advantage rather than loss, unless its opponents repent in time of their treason against their own principles, and think of enforcing them by better means than Acts of Parliament.

There is a class of religionists, however, who may be thought to have more reason for apprehension than the Catholics. It is as likely as not that the chief fury of the storm will fall upon the heads of the Puseyites. No Roman Catholic place of worship has as yet witnessed scenes so disgraceful, as those which are now every Sunday enacted in the Church of St. Barnabas. The remonstrance of Mr. Bennett, addressed to Lord John Russell, against the brutality of the mobs who disturb the services of that church, is a pregnant commentary on the danger of all appeals to that coarse fanaticism which clothes malignant passions with an appearance of zeal for Christian truth. These outrages must be put down; but the popular hostility to Puseyism, which they indicate, will find vent in an attempt to expel the adherents of that doctrine from the Anglican Church. The latter, however, have much too firm a footing to be easily got rid of; and the inevitable struggle will not end without loosening and weakening every joint in the fabric of the establishment. We have often had to comment upon the falsity of the position occupied by the Romanising divines; but we have as often endeavored to point out that their opponents within the Church were equally open to the charge of inconsistency. The fact is, that no sincere man of any party can make out a good case for adhering to the Anglican formularies. If his tendencies be Romanist, how can he sign its Calvinistic articles? If he be a Calvinist, how can he employ its Popish Liturgy? If he be a Latitudinarian, how can he repeat its exclusive creeds and anathemas? In a word, every religious party in the Establishment is open to the same reproach of professing what it does not believe, because the system, as a whole, is made up of contradictions which cannot be embraced in the faith of any thinking man. Dr. Pusey clings to the Romanism which he finds in the Prayer Book, and, of

course, has to strain his ingenuity to reconcile it with the Articles. The Bishop of Gloucester is shocked at such laxity, and forbids Dr. Pusey to preach in his diocese. But how stands it with the Bishop himself in the matter of fidelity to his public professions? At a late meeting, the Bishop, in descending on the un-Christian claims of Romanism, with respect to the forgiveness of sins and other matters, said:—

"It is difficult to name—I cannot name—the whole extent of their assumptions, without being forced to repeat what I consider blasphemy. That a weak, fallible man should be the dealer out of the authority of the Almighty upon earth is, to those who know nothing of religion but that which the Word of God teaches them, to say the least, revolting—it is frightful."

The Bishop, it may be presumed, has not attained his present dignity without having, on some one occasion, performed the pastoral office of visiting the sick. If he ever paid such a visit, and if, in doing so, he attended to those rubrics which, at his ordination, he swore to observe, we should like to know how he dealt with the following passage in "The Order for the Visitation of the Sick," which is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer:

"Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, if he feel his Conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which Confession the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him; of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences. And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

What does the Bishop say to this? Has he who believes Our Lord Jesus Christ to be God himself, ever had the hardihood to say to a fellow-mortal, "By his authority, committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins?" Did it not strike him that there was something frightful, in the assumption that "a weak, fallible man should be the dealer-out of the authority of the Almighty upon earth?" Did he, perchance, employ the prescribed words in a "non-natural sense," or did he omit them in spite of his solemn declaration that he received the Book in which they are found as containing nothing contrary to Holy Scripture? In any case, what entitles the Bishop of Gloucester to throw a stone at Dr. Pusey? What entitles the Low Church Prelate, and the party to which he belongs, to stand up as legitimate possessors of the benefices of the Establishment? Evident it is, and palpable as the sun at noon, that if the Romisers ought to go out, the Evangelicals ought to go out after them. If the one class be unfaithful to its ordination vows, so is the other. The Church, in short, as at present constituted, is not one in which any man who has consistent opinions can honestly remain. But the Puseyites have quite as good a right to its benefices as the Calvinists. To reproach the former with eating the bread of a Protestant Establishment, assumes what is clearly not true, namely, that the Establishment is Protestant in the ordinary sense of the term. It is not Protestant, inasmuch as it practically impugns the Protestant right of private judgment, and prescribes practices which the Protestantism of continental Europe and America universally rejects. It is not Protestant any more than it is Catholic. It is only Anglican; but if, instead of deserving that title in the narrow sense, arising from an inconsistent and unbelievable creed, composed by Act of Parliament, it were to become Anglican in the large sense of embracing all the learning, ability, and Christian zeal of England, without violence to conscience, it might yet stand on a broader and firmer basis than it has ever done since Augustine first preached to the Saxons. We cannot do better than add upon this point an expression of opinion recently put forth by a writer whose authority must have a peculiar weight with Unitarian readers. The new edition of Mr. James Yates's masterly work on the Trinitarian Controversy, contains, amidst other new matter both valuable and interesting, the author's description of what the National Church should be. After recommending a change in the Terms of Subscription, and in the forms of Service, he says:—

"My own opinion is, that a National Church ought to be as comprehensive as possible, and ought consequently to allow of all such differences as may unavoidably arise among persons who nevertheless agree in essential and fundamental points. I think, therefore, that the Anglican Church ought to embrace both Trinitarians and Unitarians, both High and Low Churchmen, both the so-called Puseyites and the Evangelicals. The first requisite ought to be sincerity, and that those to whom the rest of their countrymen are taught to look up as spiritual guides should be neither hypocrites nor slaves. Although