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§ I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE main question which Mr. Gladstone has started I consider to be this:—Can Catholics be trustworthy subjects of the State? has not a foreign Power a hold over their consciences such, that it may at any time be used to the serious perplexity and injury of the civil government under which they live? Not that Mr. Gladstone confines himself to these questions, for he goes out of his way, I am sorry to say, to taunt us with our loss of mental and moral freedom, a vituperation which is not necessary for his purpose at all. He informs us too that we have “repudiated ancient history,” and are rejecting “modern thought,” and that our Church has been “refurbishing her rusty tools,” and has been lately aggravating, and is likely still more to aggravate, our state of bondage. I think it unworthy of Mr. Gladstone’s high character thus to have inveighed against us; what intellectual manliness is left to us, according to him? yet his circle of acquaintance is too wide, and his knowledge of his countrymen on the other hand too accurate, for him not to know that he is bringing a great amount of odium and bad feeling upon excellent men, whose only offence is their religion. The more intense is the prejudice with which we are regarded by whole classes of men, the less is there of generosity in his pouring upon us superfluous reproaches. The graver the charge, which is the direct occasion of his writing against us, the more careful should he be not to prejudice judge and jury to our disadvantage. No rhetoric is needed in England against an unfortunate Catholic at any time; but so little is Mr. Gladstone conscious of his treatment of us that in one place of his Pamphlet, strange as it may seem, he makes it his boast that he has been careful to “do nothing towards importing passion into what is matter of pure argument,” pp. 15, 16. I venture to think he will one day be sorry for what he has said.

However, we must take things as we find them; and what I propose to do is this: to put aside, unless it comes directly in my way, his accusation against us of repudiating ancient history, rejecting modern thought, and renouncing our mental freedom, and to confine myself for the most part to what he principally insists upon, that Catholics, if they act consistently with their principles, cannot be loyal subjects. I shall not, however, omit notice of his attack upon our moral uprightness.

The occasion and the grounds of Mr. Gladstone’s impeachment of us, if I understand him, are as follows:—He was alarmed, as a statesman, ten years ago by the Pope’s Encyclical of December 8, and by the Syllabus of Erroneous Propositions which, by the Pope’s authority, accompanied its transmission to the bishops. Then came the Definitions of the Vatican Council in 1870, upon the universal jurisdiction and doctrinal infallibility of the Pope. And lastly, as the event which turned alarm into indignation, and into the duty of