

Church of Rome. That Church tolerates no secret society, except that of the Jesuits, and the first sacrifice which would be demanded of a convert like Lord Ripon would be his withdrawal from the Craft. As the first pledge of his new obedience he has to abandon his honorable position in the Brotherhood, and to renounce a harmless and kindly association in which he might for years have held the foremost place. It was justly said that the reasons must have been overwhelming which could induce him to take so unwelcome a step, and they arise from nothing less than the important change in his religious convictions which we have stated.

Lord Ripon, it must be owned, is no ordinary convert. He has held high office in the State, and he was at one time deemed capable of the highest positions in public life. He is in the prime of life—in his forty-seventh year—and though he had in some respects disappointed expectation, a considerable career might have been before him. As Viscount Goderich he entered Parliament more than twenty years ago as a pronounced Radical, and then cherished that tendency to a speculative Socialism which seems sometimes attractive to the unquestioned possessors of great wealth. It is such a pleasant romance for a man who knows that in the ordinary course of things he will be the undisputed possessor of fifty thousand a year to imagine himself on a level with ordinary mortals! A little experience of life, however, dissipates this romantic tendency, and Lord Ripon soon settled down into a sober liberal, exemplary in his submission to the control of his successive leaders. After serving as Under-Secretary for the War Department and for India under the late Lord Herbert and Sir George Lewis, he was in 1863, as Lord De Grey, appointed Secretary of State for War. He held the office nearly three years, and in 1866, on the retirement of Lord Halifax, became Secretary of State for India. In Mr. Gladstone's Ministry of 1868 he held the dignified office of Lord President of the Council. Mr. Forster, who served as Vice-President, has often spoken handsomely of the work of his official chief; but the Lord President was chiefly conspicuous as head of the Joint High Commission by whom the Treaty of Washington was negotiated, and who arranged the terms under which the dispute respecting the Alabama was submitted to Arbitration. There is much to which exception must be taken in those negotiations; but the selection of Lord De Grey for so important a duty sufficiently indicates the favorable opinion which his colleagues were disposed to entertain of his capacity. His services in this character were, at all events, deemed worthy of some special recognition, and he was advanced to the dignity of a Marquis. His selection to preside over the Freemasons is an evidence of the social consideration which he commands, and his great wealth renders him an important member of the party to which he belongs, and of any association to which he may attach himself. He is, in short, one of the leading noblemen of England, who has discharged high political functions, and might have been called on to discharge them again. His sympathies have, at least in action, been given to the party of progress and enlightenment, and he would have been regarded until yesterday as a valuable member of the Liberal Party. This is the man who, in the full strength of his powers, has renounced his mental and moral freedom, and has submitted himself to the guidance of the Roman Catholic Priesthood. The first impression which will be produced on his friends and the public will be one of profound regret that such a career should have been thwarted, and that so much valuable influence is henceforth to be misused. Lord Ripon, we dare say, will still adhere to the party in whose service he has won his honors and his Marquisate. But a statesman who becomes a convert to Roman Catholicism forfeits at once the confidence of the English people. Such a step involves a complete abandonment of any claim to political or even social influence in the nation at large, and can only be regarded as betraying an irreparable weakness of character. To become a Roman Catholic and remain a thorough Englishman are—it cannot be disguised—almost incompatible conditions. We do not for a moment doubt that men who have been born and brought up in the Roman Catholic faith may retain their creed as a harmless and colourless element in their opinions. But when a man in the prime of life abandons the Faith of Protestantism for that of Rome his mind must necessarily have undergone what to Englishmen can only seem a fatal demoralization. We submit to many things if we are born to them, which we would never endure if they were imposed on us for the first time. But that a statesman, a man who has had twenty years' experience of the world, who has held high official posts in England, and been a prominent diplomatist, should submit himself to the yoke of the Roman Catholic Priesthood can only be due to some fatal obliquity of temperament. The principles of English life and of Roman Catholic religion are very difficult to reconcile, and when a man deliberately becomes a Roman Catholic he must be held to accept distinctly the principles of his new creed.

What, it will be asked, can be the causes which have been sufficiently powerful to induce a man of such experience and ability thus to abandon his moral independence? Lord Ripon has made no statement of his reasons, and it is impossible to be sure of