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THE "RAMBLER" ON IRISH CATHOLIC POLITICS.

It cannot be concealed that the affairs of British and Irish Catholicism, so far as they have any connection with political parties, and with the government of the day, and with the state in general, are in a condition eminently unsatisfactory. That they are better than they used to be only proves in what a miserable state they were in former times. It is difficult to conceive anything politically more baneful than our former position, which was simply a hand-and-foot bondage, not to the state, but to a party in the state; and that the party most radically opposed in its own principles to every thing that constitutes the essence of Catholicism. Disastrous and has often proved the legalised alliance between this or that national branch of the Catholic Church and the secular government, it was at any rate recognised, open, honorable; and the alliance was between the Church and that which ought ever to be the friend and the minister of the Church: But in this country, the accidents of political change had produced a traditional but unrecognised league between the natural secular leaders of Catholics and the Whigs—a party which of all others is most alien in its feelings to those which Catholicism creates. Guided by such leaders, temptations of the very worst kind were held out to us; and it was only by serving our haughty patrons with the abject servility of Oriental slaves, that we could expect a relief from the tyranny which Protestants exercised over us. With rare exceptions, every Catholic of rank, fortune, or education, was pledged to the Whigs. By intriguing with the Whigs, or through the Whigs, we were to be allowed to pick up the crumbs vouchsafed to us from the table of our masters. On condition of bartering our independence for the wretched wages, we were to be permitted toleration up to the point which our owners (for such they counted themselves) might think it expedient for their own purposes. In a word, the lordly and dainty-fingered Whigs found us useful in doing their dirty work against the Tories in conjunction with the Dis-senters, Radicals, and other lean and hungry expectants.

At length the times changed. With all the devotedness to political party, as distinct from that respect to the laws which is truly Catholic, that still lingers in many quarters amongst us, there can be no question that we are now comparatively a free-spirited, manly, and self-relying body. In 1851 a crisis came, and for a moment we were in terrible peril; but our most formidable nominal friends (though real enemies) lost their temper, forgot their own traditions, and vigorously drove us into freedom from their snares. If the Queen and Lord John Russell could have swallowed their mortification at the establishment of the Hierarchy, and resolutely devoted themselves to undermine us by intrigue, no eye could foresee the mischief they might have done us; but it was the old story once more: *Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.* And the only result of Protestant wrath has been the fostering of our independence, and the direction of our energies to the strengthening of ourselves from within.

Up to this time, nevertheless, the position of the Catholic cause in parliament has been anything but what it ought to have been. And what it is in parliament, that it is more or less, in all its relations with the state 'out of doors.' Whatever were the gains won by Emancipation in the House of Lords and Commons, we have been till very recently a nonentity. There has been no Catholic peer in the upper house both equal and willing to represent us in such a manner as to command the attention and respect of his audience. Something, either in the way of abilities or character, has always been wanting. The only man who has been listened to as a Catholic, and with a belief among the peers that he had Catholicism at heart above all things, was the late Lord Shrewsbury; but he was a Whig of that unhappy school which contrives to unite all sorts of virtues and defects in such a confused jumble as to neutralise the influence for good which their possessor might exercise. An earl, a wealthy man, and extremely liberal of his money, and in private unimpeachably moral and religious, his abilities were but moderate, and his notion of Catholic statesmanship was little better than a back-stairs intriguing. His power in the House of Lords was absolutely nothing; however much he might be personally respected, as a parliamentary advocate he never produced the smallest result, while in the secret ministerial chambers, both at home and abroad, he contrived to effect far more harm than good.

In the House of Commons, the only men of note that Emancipation introduced were O'Connell and Sheil. The latter was a brilliant, and almost a powerful speaker, but he was a mere political partisan; he was known to the world to be personally a Catholic, but Catholic influence he had none, even nominally. The former, though he undoubtedly exercised a cer-

tain amount of power in the House of Commons, was only accidentally, and in certain incidental circumstances, an exponent of the wishes of Catholics as such. He was the leader of a political party, among whose aims the advancement of the Catholic cause held a subordinate place, and which numbered in its ranks many persons who rather hated the Pope than otherwise. O'Connell's parliamentary tactics were moreover identical with those of the old Whig school; his system was to strike bargains with the ministry of the day, buying and selling favors and support, and working upon the fears of those whom he desired to influence. The practical result we all know to have been little indeed, so far as Catholicism is concerned.

The first member of parliament whom we have had of any distinction and influence as a Catholic has been Mr. Frederick Lucas. Of him, even those who dislike him the most admit that he has met with a success far from common in an assembly of so peculiar a character as the lower house. When he was first elected for Meath, speculation was alive as to the figure he would make in his new sphere. Long before the Catholic public as a journalist, and the object of vehement distaste from some, and as vehement admiration from others, it was usually supposed that he would carry into parliament the defects as well as the merits of his newspaper writings. Those who hoped most from him could hardly have avoided fearing that he would ruin himself before the house by the same passionate fondness of personalities, and the same tendency to the extravagant exaggeration of one side of every question, which have marked his career as a journalist. Everybody who knew the temper of the house was certain that it would not for an instant endure anything like an article from the *Tablet*, however cogent its reasonings or forcible its language.

For ourselves, as we have never been among either Mr. Lucas's partisans or his enemies, we do not scruple to say, that long before he entered parliament we regarded his style of speaking as eminently suited to the House of Commons. The gladiatorial cast of his writing represents only a portion of his character. Nor is he really at home when he assumes the demagogue, and sets a few thousand people stamping, and clapping, and shouting themselves hoarse. He has none of the rollicking recklessness of the true popular orator. Of that jovial good-humor and relish for a row simply for the fun of it, without a desire to do anybody any serious harm, which enabled O'Connell to go through life as a demagogue with so few personal enemies, Mr. Lucas has none. The blows he inflicts are too serious to be forgiven; and that very conscientiousness which restrains him within the limits of orthodoxy and truthfulness, drives him to resort to the very extremes of personal abuse in order to make the impression he desires on audiences incapable of deliberate reasoning. His proper sphere is the House of Commons, where he has deservedly extorted the admiration and respect even of those who most disagree with him. He speaks seldom; when he does so, he speaks like a man who knows what he is about, and is in earnest in wishing to bring about certain positive, practical results. He avoids clap-trap and exaggeration; he has never dealt in personalities; and he delivers himself with that plucky courage and determination which are as acceptable to the house as mere vulgar bravado is offensive and intolerable. Above all, he is recognised by the house as a Catholic, not in name, but in reality. He may be a Tenant Leaguer, an anti-Ministerialist, or anything else besides; but his distinctive character is that of a Catholic who loves his faith, who obeys its commands, and who would sacrifice every other consideration if he believed it to interfere with Catholic interests.

With all this, Mr. Lucas and his followers have fallen into that very political system which he has spent his life as a journalist in denouncing in the old Whig Catholics. He has set up a theory, and endeavored to reduce it to practice, which is neither more nor less than the old scheme of employing political combinations in order to force concessions to Catholicism from the government of the day. The sole distinction exists in the terms of the bargain. O'Connell and his party, and the English Catholic Whigs and their party, struck bargains with the people in power, in consideration of which they gave them their support in political measures of various kinds. This new party of 'independent opposition,' as they term themselves, have as yet effected no bargain, simply because the terms they offer are such as no government will agree to. The principle of mixing up political manœuvring with the advancement of the Catholic cause is common both to Mr. Lucas and his old antagonists; and both together do but copy the old Radical party (when Radicalism was alive), of which Grote, Molesworth, and Hume were the leaders. Give us 'tenant right' and abolish the Irish Church Establishment, says Mr. Lucas to Lord Aberdeen, and we are yours. And he adds, happily

not on the floor of the House of Commons, but in speeches and articles innumerable, that Messrs. Keogh, Sadler, and a host more; are scoundrels and traitors to Catholicism, because, having joined these 'independent oppositionists,' they left him in the lurch, and thought that, after all, there is nothing like the loaves and fishes.

Now this system, we are convinced, is as pernicious to Catholics in Mr. Lucas's hands as it was in Lord Shrewsbury's. No good can come of it; and we shall be strangely surprised if it does not bring forth quite as much harm as the intrigues of decayed old Whig cliques. Indeed, it has from the first borne no fruit but veritable 'apples of Sodom;' and as time goes on, and events take that natural course which no parliamentary leader on earth can arrest, not only will the good which Mr. Lucas and others like him might do be lamentably neutralised, but internal mischief will result amongst British and Irish Catholics themselves of the most serious and lasting kind. If a Catholic member is to work upon the Protestant House of Commons for the benefit of religion, he must neither be the head nor a joint of the tail of any political party, out of office or in it. Of course, we speak of affairs as they now stand, when it is impossible for a zealous, devoted, and able Catholic to take a lead, either in the cabinet or in the general opposition. Nor do we pretend that it is, strictly speaking, the duty of every Catholic member to take no office, and assume no position which may diminish his influence as a Catholic. All men are not bound to devote everything they possess, whether in or out of parliament, to the advancement of religion. A man who cannot live without the pay of office commits no sin in accepting an inferior position, which, though it may perfectly harmonise with his secular politics, may depress him into a nonentity as a Catholic member. Viewing, however, the question as a religious one, we see nothing but evil about to result from this scheme of mixing up the defence of Catholic interests with the success of certain political demands. Indeed, it has already done so much mischief that many eyes must have been opened to the dangerous principle on which it is based.

The very first practical necessity which springs from its adoption is enough to make every wise man and zealous Catholic pause before he stirs another step. The representation of the Catholic cause is committed to the charge of men whose character and speeches can do nothing but prejudice it in the minds of those whom it is our business to conciliate. Once admit any question not strictly religious into a companionship with the Catholic cause, and your supporters become your most fatal enemies. Our ranks are swelled with a host of men, some Catholics (nominally), some not, but who all agree in employing us and our demands as tools for accomplishing their selfish ends. Those ends may be, in some cases, mere personal display, the vulgar ambition of notoriety, to be gained by speechmaking, scribbling, or blowing any loud-roaring instrument in a 'brass band.' To anticipate any gain to Catholicism, in the present temper of the English people, from the advocacy of such men as these, shows an entire misconception of the means by which mankind are affected. There is but one word which expresses the character of a certain portion of the advocacy which it has been our misfortune to undergo, and which has solely resulted from this contamination of Catholic interests with political schemes—that word is 'blackguarding.' We do not, of course, mention names; but the fact is only too patent that Mr. Lucas has or has had, in or out of parliament, certain followers, or certain coadjutors, of whose character as public men and 'orators' this word gives the only true description. The alliance of such men we hold to be pernicious to the last degree. They prejudice every right-thinking man among Protestants against us. They give the worst coloring to our best acts, and foster the too common notion that we Catholics—Bishops, Priests, and laymen—are a mob of low, cunning, selfish intriguers whom anybody can buy, if only he will not stickle at the exorbitance of the purchase money. We put it to Mr. Lucas and the truly Catholic upholders of this 'independent opposition party,' whether the position which the member for Meath has attained in the House as a Catholic is in the slightest degree owing to the support and companionship of any one of the partisans who hang on by his skirts, or who submit to his leadership, and warm themselves in the sunshine of his respectability. Is it not certain that if he had stood alone—that is, as an independent member, pledged neither to nor against the ministry, and unhampered by the "friendship" of Mr. —, and Mr. —, and Mr. —, he would have commanded not less, but far more of the respect of the house; and would have been looked upon only as a representative of Catholic energy, Catholic views, and Catholic knowledge, instead of having this noble character dimmed by suspicious of agitatorship, party

spirit, jealousy, and intrigue? And what is true of the member for Meath is equally true of every other member who has at heart, not this or that political move, but the welfare of British and Irish Catholics, and the advance of the true religion.

From this unnatural alliance between gold and clay results further an internal scandal of the first magnitude. When men, aiming really at different ends, and animated by different principles, agree to act together for one professed purpose, in a very brief space circumstances inevitably arise which make them part company on the most unamicable terms. The forbearance and charity of the best men is, then, not a little tried; and as in such cases there are sure to be two sides to the questions on which they split, fresh divisions arise among the heartiest Catholics themselves, and a war of words and ill feeling begins, till we are sick to death of the miserable spectacle of disunion. We have had a specimen of this in the warfare between Messrs. Lucas, Moore, Duffly, &c., on the one side, and Messrs. Keogh, Sadler, &c., on the other, since Lord Aberdeen formed his government. The personal abuse which has been poured out in torrents on both sides—the recriminating parties being all Catholics—is as mischievous as it is wearying. The sole result is additional bitterness of feeling and heart-burnings; while the Protestant world is edified with the spectacle of Catholic Clergymen as well as laymen espousing with all the ardor of personal partisanship the opposite sides in electioneering contests. If any of our readers wish to know the kind of blessings we derive from the introduction of those fiery personalities, we recommend them to read a Dublin newspaper, called the *Weekly Telegraph*, a journal which is sold at a very cheap price, and has a large circulation. This paper, vehemently Catholic in profession, and, for all we know, sincerely so, has literally no aim but the personal abuse of Mr. Lucas. He is to it what the Pope is to a certain class of Protestants; without him their vocation is gone. And these scurrilities are calculated weekly by thousands among the Catholics of Ireland and England. Its conductors and proprietors have been so maddened by the attacks of Mr. Lucas and his party, that they seem to think no one can ever be tired with repetitions of what they think the infamous conduct of which he has been guilty. And this delectable dish is served up, if what they tell us is true, to nearly twenty thousand subscribers. A truly edifying relaxation for a pious Catholic on a Sunday after hearing Mass!

But, again, if these party tactics surround us with highly undesirable adherents, they as certainly prevent any cordial action of the entire body, or even of a large majority of those who are Catholics, and Catholics above everything else. As to getting all good Catholics to agree in the political measures thus tacked on the promotion of Catholic interests, it is a mere dream. We differ in our politics, and we always shall differ as long as we are good for anything. Here is this "tenant right" question, for instance.—The defence of the Catholic poor in the House of Commons is to be entangled, forsooth, with one of the most complicated questions of political economy. A question, moreover, of so peculiar a kind that any general enthusiasm about it is simply impossible.—Whether "tenant right" is really desirable or not, has nothing to do with the question. It is a very difficult, a very local, and a very dry subject to anybody but landlords and farmers, and every attempt to "get up" popular interest in it has to be speeded strongly with abuse and violence of language. Be this, however, as it may, it is, lamenable that our best advocates in parliament should stand pledged to oppose every government which will not grant a demand that no government ever will grant, and which throws an air of unreality and shamming over everything they say or do. Say what people will, the question is theoretically very difficult; while practically five persons out of six will say, "If the Irish attorneys are so stupid that they cannot, or so dishonest that they will not, draw up proper agreements between landlords and tenants, acts of parliaments can do nothing in the matter." As to the idea that any parliament will ever grant a compensation for money spent on land in times past, we may just as reasonably expect some fine morning to hear of a note arriving in Golden-square from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the following effect:—"My dear Lord Cardinal—Pray do me the favor to accept two thousand pounds a year out of my Archiepiscopal revenues. The next time you communicate with the Pope, be so kind as to present his Holiness with my most dutiful respects."

But worse than all is the false position in which this recent revival of the old scheme is certain to place its adherents with respect to the highest authorities in the Church. The quarrels now agitating Ireland on the subject of priestly interference in politics are the natural consequence of this jumbling of