

THE POPE'S ANNIVERSARY.

MOST REV. DR. CROKE'S SERMON.

FROM the 'Dublin Freeman' of the 22nd of June we take the following eloquent sermon preached by the Most Rev. Dr. Croke, Bishop of Auckland, in the Cathedral, Dublin, on the celebration of the 28th anniversary of the coronation of the Holy Father:—

The twenty-eighth anniversary of the coronation of his Holiness Pope Pius the Ninth was commemorated yesterday, in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Marlborough street. The occasion evoked a signal manifestation of the devoted sentiment entertained towards the illustrious Head of the Catholic world by his children in the Irish capital. Long before the hour fixed for the ceremonial the Cathedral was filled with a congregation representing every class of local society. The poorest of our population united with its most distinguished members in rendering an equal homage of love and reverence to the Pontiff who so grandly fills the exalted chair of the Apostles. Hundreds of persons were unable to gain admission, and had to retire from the edifice sadly disappointed at their inability to take part in the expression of loyalty and religious faith of so special and emphatic a character. At twelve o'clock an outburst of superb melody from the choir, and the sudden rising of the vast assemblage, announced the entrance of the procession. It was preceded as usual by cross-bearer and acolytes, after whom walked the principal ecclesiastical dignitaries of the diocese. The Most Rev. Dr. Croke, Lord Bishop of Auckland, and the Most Rev. Dr. Crinion, Lord Bishop of Hamilton, each attended by his chaplain, followed, and then, with an interval of the clergy, came the Cardinal Archbishop, in full pontificals, and attended with the state customary at solemn ceremonies. The clergy and the aspirants to the priesthood who assisted took their places round the altar. His Eminence and the prelates advanced before the tabernacle, and having knelt for some time in prayer, were conducted to the thrones prepared for them. Pontifical High Mass was then commenced, the Cardinal Archbishop being celebrant. All that it is possible to say *apropos* of the occasion of yesterday was splendidly said by the Most Rev. the Bishop of Auckland, who preached the sermon of the anniversary. His lordship, who looked remarkably well, captivated his auditory from the utterance of his text to his beautiful peroration. We shall not further anticipate the pleasure of perusal than by observing that, effective as the course appears to the reader, its force and beauty were tenfold increased by the happy method of the orator, whose old reputation was more than sustained by his noble effort.

The Most Rev. Dr. Croke, Lord Bishop of Auckland, ascended the pulpit and delivered the following sermon. His lordship took for his text 1st Maccabees, ii. 50, 51:—"My sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenants of your fathers; and call to remembrance the work of your fathers, which they have done in their generations, and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name." Such, my Lord Cardinal, my Lord, very rev., and dearly beloved brethren, were the last words which the aged father of the Maccabees addressed, when dying, to his children. The heartless tyranny of the Ptolemies had but recently been exchanged by them for the equal domination of the great but wicked King of Syria; and, as each succeeding day of his oppressive rule brought some fresh disaster, some additional weight of woe, on the unhappy descendants of Israel, the spirit of that much favored but faithless people seemed as if broken for ever. At length, it appears, they caught courage even from despair; they arose in the majesty of their might and anger; measured their strength on the battle-field with the tyrant who had so mercilessly ill-used them, and achieved some of those memorable triumphs over oppression which history records with pleasure, and all generations of men hear of with delight. They fought not, however, for either fame or fortune; they fought only for the covenants of their fathers, for the freedom they had long since forfeited, the altars before which they were forbidden to adore; and, as the aged warrior whose martial genius first fired them into resistance, and who put forth the last efforts of his declining vigor against the enemies of his name and nation, was summoned to his dread account on High, he bequeathed, as we read, no other legacy to his children than the noble lesson contained in the text just quoted. "Be ye zealous," said he, "my sons, for the law, and give your lives for the covenants of your fathers." And, in truth, he could not have confided to them a more sacred trust or transmitted to them a nobler inheritance—the law of God and the traditions of their fathers, the faith which they had received from heaven, and the glory with which they had just covered it by their valor upon earth—creed, in short, and country, a double allegiance which cannot be forfeited without disgrace, nor preserved inviolate without honor. Now, brethren, it seems to me that the words of the dying Maccathias may be most fitly quoted here to-day in connection with the great and glorious Pontiff Pope Pius the Ninth, the 28th anniversary of whose coronation we are assembled in this church to celebrate. He has been zealous for the law, and has literally given his life for the covenants of our fathers; he has called to remembrance the works of the fathers which they have done in their generations, and "he shall receive great glory and an everlasting name." Suffer me, then, brethren, to pass in brief review before you the leading features of his illustrious Pontificate, and in doing so to establish those two important facts—that, while being most zealous for the law, our Holy Father, as a temporal ruler, has been the true friend and best benefactor of his country. I know not, indeed, brethren, if there be a more ample—there certainly is not a nobler or more exciting—theme than the Papacy, and of the Popes who have lived and died since the days of Peter, there is not even one, perhaps, whose private character was more amiable, whose public administration was more blameless, whose ambition was more divinely moulded, whose rule was gentler, whose love of liberty was more sincere or more conspicuous, whose aggregate of social worth was greater, yet whose career was more curiously chequered, more saddening, or more suggestive than that of

Pius the Ninth. His predecessors did wonders, no doubt, for the world. I do not now speak of persecutions borne by them joyfully for justice sake; of nations brought by them from darkness to light and life; or of the mysterious agency by means of which they cast down for ever the idols from the Roman Capitol and raised the emblem of Christianity over the chief City of the Cæsars. This was but the direct fulfilment of their destiny, the accomplishment of their divine mission. I desire only to speak of them as members of the great human family; as rulers of a high-minded and historic people; as the guides and guardians of European civilisation for above a thousand years; and, viewed in that light, it is not too much, I presume, to say of them that their influence on the chief destinies of man was at once salutary and undoubted. They were the first who ruled by the force of public opinion; the first who preached the doctrine of universal fraternity; the first who announced the complete equality of man with man; the first who backed right and justice against the capricious exercise of arbitrary power; the first who governed for the benefit of the many rather than of the few, and who in turn received from the multitude a freer, a fuller, and a more faithful homage than was ever paid to the masters of the Roman Empire by their Prætorian Cohorts. Thus, at all events, brethren, it was of old; and though strangely the saying may sound in the ears of many, thus, too, it is, thank God, to-day. Time, indeed, that trifles with the stability of every earthly structure; that feeds, in fact, on the ruins of every human production; time that loves to see all that is beautiful fade away, that brings forth so many revolutions and infallibly achieves the overthrow of everything not divinely built up, has, I know, put its destroying hand upon, and swept away, perhaps for ever, some of the accidental prerogatives of the Papacy, but the Papacy itself knows nothing of decay. It has outlived all other institutions; it has witnessed the rise and fall of many flourishing States; it has survived all the dreams of pride, all the wanderings of intellect, all the corruptions of taste, all the convulsions, as well as the pacification, of empires; and thus, 'midst the endless fluctuation of human things, it alone can claim to be unchanged, still rearing prominently its hallowed head on high, and, like some primeval rock in the ocean, defying alike the fury of the surrounding elements and the destructive ravages of time. Yes, the Papacy knows nothing of decay. The Pope, to be sure, is no longer the accredited arbiter of Europe; but Pius the Ninth, for all that, is quite powerful as the mightiest of his predecessors, and the church over which he presides, far from exhibiting symptoms of approaching dissolution, is more compact, better knit together, more widespread, more respected, and influential to-day than it has been at any other period within the last 800 years. I have scarcely time, in proof of this, to name, but certainly not to describe to you, the memorable gatherings of the Episcopacy which at different periods within the last 20 years, have taken place in Rome. They fully attest the Catholicity of the Church, and the ready obedience of the chief pastors of Christendom to the present successor of St Peter. For these assemblages, whether designed for the definition of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady, the centenary of the Prince of the Apostles, or the canonisation of the martyrs of Japan, his Holiness issued no positive command. He spoke but a word—he merely expressed a wish to see his Brethren around him—and from the ends of the earth they came in crowds to pledge their allegiance anew at the shrine of Peter, and to lay their hearts' homage lovingly at their Father's feet. But of these Episcopal gatherings there is one that stands out prominently beyond the rest, the last of them all, the General Council of the Vatican, the most remarkable ecclesiastical event of our epoch, and the greatest glory of the reign of Pope Pius the Ninth. About 800 bishops attended that Council. They came there from the coral islands of the Pacific, from cities and Churches unknown to the ancients, even by name. They came there from Newfoundland and the two Canadas; from the plains of New England, the fertile valleys of the Mississippi, and the golden shores of California; from Chili and La Plata and the free Republics of the South; from the classic isles of Greece, as well as from the sacred plains of Palestine and Syria; from the shattered remains of the great patriarchates of the East, from Antioch and Byzantium, and from the sites of the fallen Churches of Africa and Asia. From the East and from the West they came. The Teuton and the Dane, the Celt and the Saxon; the descendants of the Northern Pirates and of the Latin Kings, were alike assembled there. There were 200 Italian Bishops or more; say 50 French, 48 German, a like number from the United States, nearly as many from Mexico and South America, 11 English, 21 Irish, and above 40 Spanish Bishops, to say nothing of the Bishops of the rapidly rising Churches of Australia and New Zealand that have literally sprung into existence during the Pontificate of the present Pope. And for what purpose was this great Council summoned? Was it, as it maliciously alleged by some, to disturb States, to give offence to statesmen, to set up, and, if possible, sustain claims to universal dominion, or to interfere in anywise with the legitimate powers and privileges of secular princes? No, brethren, but to contrive remedies against the manifold evils by which modern society is afflicted, and which threaten alike the destruction both of the altar and the throne. On the continent of Europe and elsewhere a school of evil teaching was, and is, notoriously open, and doctrines the most pernicious were preached and propagated by it, in defiance of all shame and reason, and to the sore detriment of law, order, and morality. The existence of God, the divinity of our Lord, the immortality of the soul, human accountability—in fact, all the fundamental truths of Christianity—are not only fearlessly canvassed by many of the rising youth of this generation, but are openly scoffed at and contemptuously rejected. At a banquet given, a couple of years ago, on a Good Friday, in one of the chief capitals of Europe, the first toast that was proposed and drunk was to the memory of the men who crucified Jesus Christ; and it is only a few months ago since I read, in another quarter of the globe, that, on the occasion of the installation of a famous French revolutionist into what is called "the Lodge of Light," he was asked, as is usual, what were the three great ends which he proposed to himself on entering the fraternity; and his answer was, to advance human freedom, to spread the doctrine of universal fraternity amongst men, and to wage war against God.