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Current Topics.

AT HOME & ABROAD.



HATEVER may have been the commotion stirred up or still to be stirred up, with respect to the re-establishment of the hierarchy in Scotland, it can hardly again happen that Great Britain shall be so violently moved by any measure proceeding from Rome as it was some thirty years ago, when the Pope resolved upon appointing bishops to English Sees, and the English nation suffered from a temporary attack of mania caused by this "Papal Aggression." The *Times* newspaper gave warning on October 26th '47 that, instead of Vicars Apostolic, who were the bishops of Sees in *partibus* appointed the administrators of English dioceses, such dioceses would be administered by bishops regularly elected to them, and called by their names, and that, moreover, one or two Archbishops were about to be created. In the January following the *Quarterly Review* improved upon the announcement thus made by stating that the Pope, by raising the modest Vicars Apostolic into bishops and archbishops, meant to prove that he had "power and authority both spiritual and temporal . . . in this, by law, Protestant realm of England." And, whether it was that he had been put on his metal by reading and digesting the article in which this was stated, or that in some other way his episcopal indignation had been aroused the Anglican Bishop of Durham, about eighteen months afterwards on the actual establishment of the hierarchy, wrote a letter to Lord John Russell, which never was published, but the tenor of which may be learned from the terms in which the reply of the noble Lord was couched. Lord John considered the aggression of the Pope on their Protestantism insidious and insolent. He had promoted the claims of Catholics to all civil rights, and had even wished their ecclesiastical system to be made the means of instructing the Irish immigrants into England, who would otherwise be left in Pagan darkness, but this might have been carried out in a very different manner from that which was now before his eyes. The documents which had come from Rome displayed an assumption of power, a pretension of supremacy over the realm of England, a claim to undivided sway inconsistent with the Queen's supremacy, with the rights of the bishops and clergy, and with the spiritual independence of the nation, unasserted even in Catholic times. However, although Lord John was choking with indignation, he was not at the same time overcome by alarm. He felt that England was strong enough to bear any outward attacks, and that her people had too long enjoyed the liberty of Protestantism to allow of the imposition of a foreign yoke upon their minds and consciences. This letter may be considered to have led off in the tumult. It was written on November 4, '50 : next day was the 5th, Guy Fawkes' day, and, to use a slang phrase, it was a terror. Anti-Papal saturnalia raged all over the country ; the "Abbot of Unreason," himself seemed to be present in a state of raving lunacy every where. Everywhere the Pope was overwhelmed with insults ; his effigy in many places was burned ; and equally with, or even still more than His Holiness, was Cardinal Wiseman considered worthy of reprobation, and reprobated accordingly. Expressions of hostility were continued thick and fast throughout the land. The mob were glad to find so good an excuse for riot and disorder : many enormities were actually perpetrated, and in one of the great-manufacturing towns an outrage was, at least, planned that cannot be thought of without a shudder. A good nun, who was there at the time, and who was informed of what was projected, declared that she would certainly be unable to restrain herself from facing the crowd and endeavouring to dissuade them from their purpose. Had she done so there can be little doubt that she would have encountered martyrdom, but fortunately some providence prevented the design from being carried out and the excellent lady was left to finish her career in peace and usefulness. At the Lord Mayor's dinner Lord John Russell and other Cabinet Ministers strongly condemned the action of the Pope ; a monster demonstration was made on the subject at York ; deputations from the Corporation of London, and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, presented addresses treating of the matter to the Queen,

and Her Majesty replied to them that it was her "determination to uphold alike the rights of her crown and the independence of her people, against all encroachments and encroachments of any foreign power." At the opening of Parliament on Feb. 4, '51, the Queen referred to these addresses, and repeated the assurance, she said :—"The recent assumption of certain ecclesiastical titles conferred by a foreign power has excited strong feelings in this country ; and large bodies of my subjects have presented addresses to me expressing attachment to the throne, and praying that such assumptions should be resisted. I have assured them of my resolution to maintain the rights of my crown and the independence of the nation against all encroachments, from whatever quarter they may proceed." Her Majesty added that a measure on the subject would be laid before the Parliament. Accordingly, on the 6th of the month, Lord John Russell moved for leave to bring in a bill to prevent the assumption of ecclesiastical titles, in respect of places in the United Kingdom, and after about a week had been spent in the debate leave was given by a majority of 395 to 63. On the 4th July following the bill was passed by the House of Commons. Such was the commotion which followed upon the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England, a commotion which, however, in nothing retarded the growth of the Church there, and which had so soon abated, that, in about fourteen years after, at the death of its chief victim, Cardinal Wiseman, his Eminence was found to have become extremely popular and to be universally regretted.

We perceive that at a late meeting of the Christchurch Cathedral Guild, a certain parson has been "*bummin' away like a buzzard-cloak*." This gentleman is a Rev. H. C. M. Watson, already celebrated in Christchurch for having confirmed in their disbelief in the doctrine of Eternal Punishment the hearers of one Mr. Cass, who lectured on the subject in that town some two years ago, and who was confronted there by this Mr. Watson, whose rather confused style of argumentation led his audience to conclude that he either had not studied the matter on which he essayed to dispute, or had not been capable of profiting by such studies of it as he had made, and that in any case if Mr. Cass were to be confuted, Mr. Watson was not the man to confute him. The Rev. parson has now again been holding forth unintelligibly, and so as to convince all persons of reasonable understanding that he has been talking of what he knows not an iota about. This time religious education has been his theme, and not content with deploring that the means of so educating the children of his congregation have not been placed by Government within his reach, and endeavouring to devise a method of obtaining such means, which would have been on his part a highly commendable step, he has gone out of his way to vilify and slander the Catholic system of Education, concerning which he knows nothing whatever. He argues that because a large proportion of the criminals of the colony are found to belong to a class of Catholics come from a country where Catholic education has been for ages restricted, and consequently not educated in Catholic schools, that therefore the Catholic system of education is inferior to the Protestant. A line of argument, however, quite in Mr. Watson's way, and most characteristic of his intellect. Mr. Watson, it would appear, is indignant against Catholics, because he attributes to them the expunging from the Education Bill of what he calls the "conscience clause." Had this clause remained in the Bill he would have been content with the measure, and satisfied that his duty was being done for him. Fully as well as he could himself perform it. By which we perceive that Mr. Watson's conscience is not very extensive or difficult to satisfy. He could then have been assured that in every house there would have been an open Bible. And that according to Dr. Dollinger, whose rebellion against Rome has made him a hero with the ultra-Protestant world, although he himself is far from being a Protestant, has caused the "greatness, purity, and freedom of Britain." That Britain is great and free we do not deny—the sterling qualities, the good common sense, perseverance and manliness of her people, together with her varied resources must have insured that in any case. That she is free also is undoubted, for that her constitution has amply made provision, but her constitution was founded on Catholic principles and in Catholic times. But that she is pure we dissent from completely. The country is on the contrary—full of impurity, and this, whose prevention, had the "open Bible" been of the value imputed to it, must have been its very first fruits, clearly proves that Dr. Dollinger has added another error of