

that faith with impregnable bulwarks, that guarantees its immunity from all possible dangers in the future, is the second. To lift up a mountain-weight of anxiety and apprehension from the heart of the nation is the third. These, then, are some of the grounds on which I respectfully appeal to the faithful of this diocese to give practical proof of their gratitude and affection to our noble Pontiff by contributing generously, according to their means, to the quinquennial collection now announced for him. If I am not grievously deceived in you—and I am sure I am not—I need not add another word to secure a brilliant success for this collection. I shall feel great pleasure in presenting personally your combined offerings to the Holy Father, and in bringing back to you the Apostolic Benediction. The contributions from each parish and the principal subscribers in each will be publicly acknowledged in the metropolitan and provincial Catholic newspapers.

## CANTERBURY CATHOLIC LITERARY SOCIETY.

Christchurch, June 15.

The following is a summary of the third and concluding part of Mr. Nolan's lecture on the civilisation of the Romans:—Meeting an objection that was raised by a member to the propriety of raking up the crimes of those ancient people, the lecturer said: "You must remember that the world to-day bears traces of the accumulation over four thousand years of the most terrible depravity. The museums and art galleries of the world are filled with the testimonies, the records and the movements of those wretched times; and the memory of their misdeeds has not yet died out. The traditions and usages of that sad world-full of horrors still hang like a sable pall over the world of to-day, and confront us at every turn. Such is the connection that binds all historical events together, that a great deal of what we should naturally expect to have died out in the long course of ages still survives and exercises its influence upon us. Thus we are influenced to-day, not perceptibly perhaps, but still not the less really for that, by the social and religious systems of those wretched people. Unfortunately a large portion,—poetry, their sculpture, and their paintings—have been preserved to us in all their nakedness and obscenity; their arts and sciences and history are made familiar to us in various ways. Their languages are still used in the world as modes of intercourse; their impious customs, manners, and habits are familiar to every educated youth; the nomenclature of our sciences, the divisions of our time, our best models in art, our different orders of architecture—aye, the months of our year and the days of our week have all come to us from the reeking source of unimaginable abomination and filth. Nay, most of the miseries with which the world is cursed to-day are the entailed inheritance of those times. Who, then, can say that we have nothing to do with the crimes of the ancient Romans? But it was not Rome alone who was guilty. That great empire enjoyed no exclusive pre-eminence in guilt. Greece, the most refined of all the nations of antiquity; Greece, from whose shores the rest of the world has been enriched with art treasures that have never been equalled; Greece who gave us Praxiteles and Phidias, and Zeuxis and Apelles, and Soion and Miltiades, and Xenophon, philosophers, statesmen, artists, poets, and warriors whose names time has not been able to obliterate; Greece, who has given the world such rich gifts as the Vatican Laocöon, the Olympian Jove, the Quirinal Horse and Attendant, the Dying Gladiator, the Venus di Medici, and a thousand others equally grand and beautiful. This same Greece was so corrupt in the day of her glory that when Themistocles hurried four naked courtesans to his carriage and made them draw him across the Ceramicus in sight of all the people of Athens, it excited neither disgust nor astonishment. But when Greece, as a nation was yet unborn, Egypt could boast of a high state of civilisation, but the filthy mysteries of Isis and Osiris were imported from that country to Rome and were amongst the foulest of her pagan rites and practices. The Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Persians, were all when in the zenith of their power, enjoying a very high state of civilisation, but we know, on undeniable authority, that all those nations, while in the enjoyment of every worldly prosperity, were at the same time living in a state of social and moral degradation of which we at the present day have no conception. In Syria fathers and mothers used to tie their children in sacks and fling them from the pinnacles of the temples, in honour of Baal and of Venus. In Crete and other places children were offered to the frightful Moloch, and burnt at the foot of the huge idol. In various parts of the Old Testament those practices are alluded to and condemned, notably in the book IV. Kings XVII.

You will, therefore, not be surprised to learn that all the nations of antiquity were swept away like chaff before the wind, when you have learned that all the loftiest works, and noblest achievements of the ancients came forth from the minds and hands of men whose cruelties and crimes far surpassed anything that we can conceive of them; men who elaborated nothing more perfectly than their grossly immoral superstitions; men who, in fine, invented a system of immorality and superstition that at one time overshadowed the whole world. What wonder then that they should all be swept away, that they should tumble down from the dazzling heights of their prosperity, power, civilisation and splendour, to those unsightly heaps and mounds of rubbish which are to be found around the cradle of our race, and of which serve to-day to gratify the curiosity of wealthy explorers, and to warn all future generations off the rocks and shoals on which they were wrecked.

The Romans then enjoyed, as I have said, no very great pre-eminence in guilt beyond the rest of the pagan world; but as it has been remarked in the course of these lectures that I have been needlessly severe with those people, I beg to call your attention to what has been said of them by a witness which none of you here will dispute. St. Paul writing of those people in the golden age of their prosperity, says, "For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the

likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the devices of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. . . . Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, covetousness, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, malignity. . . . Destructors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy." This is most assuredly a heavy charge-sheet drawn up against the highest civilisation that the world has yet beheld by a witness whose testimony is unimpeachable. But this is not the whole, nor is it the worst of the unmentionable with which the conquerors of the world were charged by the great Apostle who was sent to preach the gospel to them. We will draw the veil here; but so deep was the world sunk in sin at that age, that those words of St. Paul might be written of any nation on earth;—but no! allow me to correct myself. There was at that time in the far off western ocean, an island whose inhabitants, in the simplicity of their hearts, poured forth their orisons from grove and valley and mountain tops to the fire-god, which burned continually on their altars, and sent up their matins and their vesper song to the bright sun above their heads, emblem of that brighter, purer light which was about to be revealed to them. Pagans though they were, their lives were pure, nor could they be charged with the foul and unnatural crimes which have disgraced the name of Roman. Men brave as Coriolanus, simple as Cincinnatus, and wise as Solon, guarded their liberties, defended their laws, while women, chaste as Lucretia, and fair as they were chaste, roamed in perfect safety through each glen and glade and sunny slope of that fair land, for virtue was allied to bravery, and the sunburst of purity was the brightest and most glorious quarterings on the escutcheon of the nation. Children of a fallen race, they were prone to the frailties of humanity, but their souls had not been sullied by its vices. A brave and simple people, as stainless in their morals as they were generous in their nature, the charges which St. Paul brings against the Romans could never, at any time of their history, have been made against the Irish people. But if not, why not? Was it that the Irish people were cast in so pure a mould that they were proof against the contagion which had at those times infested the rest of the world? Not that, I think that on reflection you will agree with me that we can only attribute the true cause of their preservation from the evils and crimes into which other nations fell to the fact that they were never burdened with power nor cursed with wealth. National wealth is the consequence and result of national power and prosperity; therefore, I maintain that national power and wealth and prosperity, when not guided and governed by truly religious principles to be the great if not the one sole operating cause of national depravity and wickedness.\* When Rome was obliged to buckle on her strongest armour to conquer such little places as Sora and Algidum; when she regarded the conquest of Corioli as something worth giving a name to history; when she regarded Satrium and Corniculum as important provinces, places which in the time of the Cæsars were not large enough to make a pleasure-ground for one of her senators; when in great emergencies she could call her citizens from the cultivation of their little farms, to take the helm of state, as Cincinnatus was, her people were simple, brave and virtuous; but when Scipio overthrew Hannibal on the plains of Zama, and practically made Rome the mistress of the world, her people, intoxicated by power, corrupted by wealth, and enervated by luxury, yielded themselves up to every criminal enjoyment, rioting in sin, both publicly and privately, until at length "*panes et circenses*" became the wild delirious cry of a profligate and debased people. We have an almost parallel case to-day in the Italian states. The unification of Italy has brought about nothing so effectually, so perfectly, so absolutely, as the moral and social degradation of its people.

From all that you have heard you will, I think, now be prepared to admit that the study of ancient and modern history alike reveals to us the lamentable fact that, exactly as nations become wealthy and powerful, in proportion as they grow in opulence and luxury, so do they increase in social and moral depravity, so do they sink into infidelity and crime. The civilisation of the present day does not differ very widely in its aims, objects and tendencies, in its effects and consequences from that of the ancients, neither does it differ very widely from theirs in the refinements and luxuries that go to make it what it is. From the light which history has thrown on the subject we are safe in assuming that the constituent elements of pagan civilisation were not very different from those of ours, and as according to immutable laws, like causes produce like effects, it follows conclusively that had there not been some powerful restraining influence at work the whole human family would by this time have been more deeply sunk in crime and wickedness than it was 1800 years ago. As it is we have not a great deal to congratulate ourselves upon, and the words of St. Paul would, perhaps, fit us as aptly to-day as they did the Romans of his time. I ask, therefore, in all earnestness, are the advantages of wealth, of luxury, of civilisation in fact as it is commonly understood amongst us, at all commensurate with the dangers which we always and everywhere see accompany it in public and in private life alike? For example, we know that intellectual pride is essentially the vice of a civilised and intellectual people, and we also know that intellectual pride has led to some of the greatest evils with which the world has been cursed in modern times.

Man can no more exist without worship than he can without air, so when he shuts his ears to the voice of truth and refuses obedience to divine authority, when he feels that he has got on to a higher plane than the Church which presumes to dictate to his conscience, when he can see no reason why he should not be equal to the task

\* "We see her (England) cursed by a prosperity that has smothered in her heart every thought of God or heaven. Catholic countries, therefore, that are in comparison reproached with their poverty may well rejoice. Dives, under his purple and fine linen, and in the midst of his feasting, bears the marks of the outcast and displays them, but Lazarus, among his rags, shows signs that Abraham's bosom awaits him."—N.Z. TABLET, May 22, ult.

This expresses the idea exactly intended to be conveyed by this lecture.