

A PROTESTANT GOVERNMENT, CHURCH AND PRESS ARE A HEAVY CURSE TO HUMANITY.

WERE I to say that a Protestant Government, Press, Church and school are a curse and a heavy curse to humanity I should lay myself open to the imputation of folly, ignorance and impudence, if not of treason. I will not say such a thing as a matter of my own opinion. I will, however, bring forward others to say it for me. These others are men who are of great credit with Protestants, and who know the real character and tendency of the "Reformation" even better than the Protestants of our day do.

The following is from the pen of the magnanimous Luther himself, the great apostle of the Reformation; the apostate "monk who shook the world" by his revolt against the Church of God, as the fallen angel Lucifer shook heaven when, in the words of Milton, "He defied the Omnipotent to arms, and led his embattled hosts to war." After Luther had separated from the Church and had drawn many other unfortunates after him; after he had seen the baneful fruit of his unhallowed work, or rather the beginning of those evils which the Reformation was to bring on the world, he wrote as follows:—"Through the malice of the devil men are now more avaricious, more cruel, more disorderly, more insolent, and much more wicked than they were under Popery." Think of that now, ye Orange orators and luminaries, but don't publish it, mind.

Melancthon, another eminent Reformation man and fellow-labourer with Luther, in his impious work, says: "Among the 'reformed' communities men's whole time is devoted to drunkenness and intemperance. So deeply are the people sunk in barbarity and ignorance, that many of them would imagine they would die in the night were they to fast in the day." So much for the demoralising influence of the Lutheran Reformation in Continental Europe. I might quote more to the same purpose if your space allowed. But what about its effects in England, unhappy England, where it has flourished so long, and still flourishes in all its glory, or in all its shame and infamy rather?

A Mr. Stubbs, after he had made a tour in England in 1599, wrote a letter to the Lord Mayor of London of that day under the title of "Good Works." This letter gives a deplorable picture of the moral, or rather immoral, state of the people of England after the Reformation, and in consequence of that foul revolt against God and His holy Church. "I found," says Mr. Stubbs, "a general decay of good works, or rather a defection or falling away from God. For good works, who sees not that in them the Papists in former times were far before us, and we far behind them?" Mr. Stubbs appears to have been a Protestant, but an honest and candid one in judging between Protestants and Papists, and other creeds. Such Protestants are not common now-a-days. But what did the celebrated Erasmus think of the Reformation. He was a Catholic, and held fast his first faith till his dying hour. But he was a "reformer," and used to lash the "clericals" without mercy at the beginning of the Reformation movement. He was, in fact, what we now call a "Liberal Catholic," somewhat after the pattern of Mr. J. Sheehan, M.H.R. He was, however, a profound scholar, a prince among scholars, which perhaps Mr. J. Sheehan is not. At a later period of his life Erasmus deplored the course which he had followed in giving encouragement to the enemies of the Church. It is to be hoped Mr. J. Sheehan will follow so good an example, and say some day, "through my fault." Let us hear, then, what Erasmus, reformer, scholar, and Liberal Catholic, says about the Reformation of Luther. He was not prejudiced against it, but the reverse. Hear him: "Who are those gospel men (Protestants)," says he. "Look around and show me one who has become a better man. Show me one who was a glutton and is now become sober, one who before was avaricious and is now generous, one who before was impure and is now chaste. I could point out multitudes who are become far worse than they were before." Even the Orange Lodge and their spiritual director, Dr. Maunsell, must I think allow that this is pretty strong testimony against the Reformation. Things have not got better, but rather worse, in England among Protestants since Erasmus and Mr. Stubbs wrote. Erasmus adds the following cutting reflection:—"The Gospel now flourishes forsooth because priests and monks take wives in opposition to human laws and in despite of their sacred vows." The Protestant Bishop Burnet, in his history of the Reformation, speaking of the wicked state of England in Edward VI. reign, says: "The sins of England did at that time call down from heaven heavy curses." Are the sins of England less now than in Edward VI. day? I believe they are much heavier, or equally heavy at least, and are increasing; sins of intemperance, impurity and avarice more especially. In the face of all this it is an extravagant or unreasonable thing in me or anyone else to say that a Government, Church and Press, based and conducted on Reformation principles, are a heavy curse to humanity?

From the very nature of things a Protestant system of Government must be, in a religious and moral sense, a curse and not a blessing to the main body of the people of the British Empire, to the Catholic portion of them more especially—no inconsiderable portion. Why? Because the Protestant Reformation was based, as history tells us, on sacrilegious robbery, on heartless cruelty, oppression and shameless hypocrisy. Can anything really good ever be expected to issue from a religion and system of Government having such an origin and basis? Our present New Zealand system of State education is a direct outcome of the principles of the Protestant Government of this colony. It has been organised by a Government intensely Protestant, with the aid of a clever, bustling, nominal Catholic, and under the patronage, or dictation rather, of a Press intensely Protestant. What can we Catholics do to protect ourselves against such a system of education so supported, and which is injurious, not to Catholics only, but to all classes as a Christian nation? Unaided we can do nothing; we are prostrate and helpless. But, thank God, there are many religious and fair-minded Protestants who already feel disposed to aid us in our efforts to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of the present education penal law. The number of these good Protestants will, no doubt, increase as time goes on. They see, or will see, ere long, that our cause is really

their own. They, no less than we, are anxious that their children should be reared, so far as it possibly can be done, in Christian schools and under Christian influences—which they cannot be under the present system of public education. They, no less than we, are anxious that the finances of this heavily-burdened colony should be economically and judiciously expended, and not squandered recklessly on a system of education like the present, which is obviously failing to secure the main end of all popular education—the moral elevation of the masses;—nay, which is even having a directly opposite effect. It is breeding larrikins, that is juvenile blackguards and ruffians, in profusion.

If the Government, and the Press which supports them in this education policy do not see this, they must be hopelessly afflicted with a judicial blindness. Our duty, as Catholics, in the meantime, is plain, to keep clear of Government schools as far as circumstances will permit, and to have our children educated in Christian and Catholic principles in schools of our own. Our Protestant friends and neighbours, such of them whose good opinion is worth having, we may rest assured, will respect us all the more for our doing so. However strongly and conscientiously Protestants may be opposed to our principles, or some of our principles, they all, at least, admire consistency, and despise the double-faced and temporising man, be he Catholic or Protestant. In the present age the Catholic religion and Christianity in general, I believe, are in greater danger than they were in times of open and bloody persecution. Fraud, gold and duplicity are what the Catholics and the Church have to fear rather than open force in our time as against their faith.

I often have a talk with intelligent men—English, Irish, Scotch, and Even Welsh—of the working class on the subject of our present Government school system. They invariably condemn it as impolitic and hurtful. One Protestant Irishman said to me that when he came to New Zealand some fourteen years ago, before these fine schools were set up, you got civility from the youngsters, but now you get nothing but impudence and "cheek," as he expressed it, and they are far worse in the neighbourhood of schools. By way of contrast to this I may mention a fact I saw recorded by the late Sir John Forbes, H.M.S. physician, in his "Notes of a Tour in Ireland"—a most interesting book, and highly to the honour of Irish Catholics, though Sir John was a Protestant himself. He said wherever he saw a number of particularly well-behaved girls collected on the roads or on the street, he made sure there was a convent school not far off, and he found he was right. I once said to a douce Presbyterian Scotchman in Auckland: "Now, do you really think schools from which all religious tuition is banished can possibly be called respectable?" He said: "No, I do not." "Then why do you support such a system?" His reply was "Oh! you see Sir George Grey, Sir George Grey—we were all mad after Sir George Grey, that is the reason." A Protestant mother of the middle class, who had a Government school at her very door, once said to me: "I would never, never send a child of mine to that school. The bad language the children use among themselves is 'something awful,' as she expressed it. "I would rather," she said, "make an effort to have them educated at home, or send them away to a boarding-school." For such schools as these, I say, the people of this colony are indebted to the Reformation, to Sir George Grey, Mr. J. Sheehan, and indirectly to the Protestant clergy, who have made no effort to prevent such a system of education as the present being established, but have rather encouraged it. Mr. McCulloch, in his "Statistical History of the British Empire," a standard work of reference, and within half a century ago, said it was a very common belief in England that the Irish of the humbler classes were grossly ignorant and uneducated; but this was a great mistake. If reading, writing, and the ability to perform the common operations of arithmetic, he said, be regarded as education, the Irish commonalty were then far more generally educated than the people of England. Many of the Irish boys in the very humblest ranks of life could calculate the angles and areas of the triangles of the Government surveyors, and did so for a half-penny a triangle. I doubt if many youths in the same rank of life in England or New Zealand could do that, even now. Mr. McCulloch moreover remarked that the Irish had a great passion for knowledge or education, and made great efforts to obtain it; that the many disorders so common in Ireland were not due to the ignorance of the people, but to the injustice they had suffered and the insults so often offered to their failings.—Note that Mr. Star, and Mr. Herald too.

From the hullabaloo made recently about education in this colony, one would imagine that schools for the people, good schools, were unknown in Christendom prior to the advent of Mr. J. Sheehan and other modern political luminaries such as he. What a gross mistake this is may be gathered by referring to the extract from Mr. McCulloch's work above made. If a boy or girl in the humbler ranks of life can read and write well, do simple sums in arithmetic, and know their Catechism, they are fit to go anywhere and do anything, like the Duke of Wellington's soldiers. After that they can educate themselves if they have a wish to learn more. Some of the greatest men in England—men who have laid the foundations of England's commercial prosperity by their important inventions—had little or no "schooling" in their youth. Had they been "crammed" in a Government school like those Mr. J. Sheehan and his friends have been the means of setting up among us, the probability is they would have been spoiled—their natural genius would have been cramped. This is not my opinion only, but the opinion of such men as Mr. Smiles, expressed in his able work entitled "Self-help," in which he maintains that popular education is being greatly overdone, to the injury of the public. Higher education with the "ologies" is all very well for the rich few, but not for the poor million who form the great bulk of the pupils in our Government schools.

Waiving the opinion of such men as Mr. Smiles, some of the most experienced English criminal judges have strongly expressed their conviction that schools such as Sir George Grey and Mr. Sheehan have set up in this colony are a positive curse to humanity—to the "human race,"—and are leading to an increase of crime and immorality of the worst kind among the people. But it is vain