

tions—swelled by incendiaries, liberated thieves, and the dregs of the city slums. These Associations were the political forbears of the Protestant Electors' Committee that played such a prominent part in the recent Federal elections in Victoria. As to its leadership and general management, the Protestant Electors' Committee was the Orange Society under one of the 'aliases' that it assumes when it desires to capture for passing political purposes those large sections of the Protestant community to whom the name and the associations of Orangeism are a byword of contempt and scorn. The object of the Committee was (like that of the Gordon mob and the Orange fraternity) the absolute exclusion of Catholics, because of their creed, from public life. 'If', said Mr. John Gavan Duffy, 'the views of the Protestant Electors' Committee are carried to their logical conclusion, there would be no Catholic member in the State Parliament, no Catholic member in the Parliament of the Commonwealth. Catholics would find it difficult to enter into the Public Service and impossible to obtain promotion when in'.

The small clerical canaille, the notoriety-seeking preachers of back-street conventicles, and the rest of the lewd fellows of the baser sort were, of course, in congenial surroundings in the ranks of the Protestant Electors' Committee. But it was a grave scandal that, as in a former No-Popery movement, a man of some rank—an Anglican archbishop, to wit—should lend the influence of his high and responsible position to a movement so fraught with evil to the peace of the community. As to the politicians, there are those among them on the other side of the Tasman Sea who (in Bacon's phrase) would set a house on fire to cook their eggs. One party-leader and his lieutenants—who, in the country's interests, would be much more usefully employed in cultivating carrots—allied themselves with the sectarian movement and spared no effort (though happily in vain) to rise to place and power on a wave of religious hate and passion. The temper in which the sectarians carried on their electioneering was not conspicuously better than that of the raucous and fanatical Lord George Gordon. Here is how a Sydney secular paper describes it:—

'On the G. Reid side, practically every candidate and every newspaper strove to raise the sectarian issue. G. Reid himself preached sectarianism always. His lieutenants shrieked weekly from Orange Lodge platforms. The most strenuous efforts were made to identify anti-Socialism with Protestantism, and to represent Deakin and Watson as the minions of Rome. Vague threats were circulated as to what was going to happen to Roman Catholicism if only Protestants rallied round the standard of G. Reid and voted Anti-Socialism. Horrible pictures were drawn of the Flames of Smithfield lighted on Manly hill and fed fat with Protestant victims if G. Reid were not given a majority. Is it a matter for wonder that these lies had the effect not only of attracting some Protestant sectaries, but also of detaching some Roman Catholic sectaries, who otherwise would have voted for G. Reid? That was bound to happen, and the responsibility for it rests with the G. Reid following and the G. Reid press.'

Here is how the same paper deals with the statement of Archbishop Clarke (a new-comer from England) that there is a 'solid, well-disciplined' Catholic vote in Australia, 'given in obedience to orders':—

'Laymen with a proper sense of responsibility for their statements will hesitate, however strong their prejudice against Roman Catholicism, to endorse this statement. Can Archbishop Clarke produce any proof at all of the existence of this well-disciplined vote? To be "well-disciplined" it must be taught, trained, drilled. That discipline necessitates a literature, meeting places, officers, exhortations, records. Can the Archbishop produce any? That there is, and always has been, an organised Protestant vote—the Orange organisation (though, as a rule, it represents only a small and contemptible fragment of the Protestant body)—IS known, because reports of its meetings and copies of its recommendations are constantly transpiring. Will Archbishop Clarke produce similar proof of the evidence of a Roman

Catholic electoral organisation, or will he fall back on the unbelievable explanation that a religion representing more than a quarter of the populace is able to drill its members into a solid, well-disciplined, obedient electoral body without allowing to transpire the names of any leaders, reports of any exhortations, minutes of any proceedings, copies of any manifestoes or circulars?'

'The solid "Roman Catholic vote," it adds, 'is a myth'. The same statement applies to the same story about the Catholic vote in New Zealand. On both sides of the sea, the tale is a mere political confidence trick.

'But', pleads Archbishop Clarke, 'you began it'. 'The plea', replied Mr. John Gavan Duffy, 'is not new. Every schoolboy uses it when he wants to lick a smaller boy and must have some excuse; and there is a somewhat well-known fable about a wolf and a lamb, which is in point.' If Archbishop Clarke had known the history of the Church Act and of Orangeism in Australia, he would, we ween, have hesitated before pleading that 'the other side' struck the first blow'. Coming to the immediate question, the plain facts were set forth as follows by the Archbishop of Melbourne in the course of a speech at the Christian Brothers' College, East Melbourne, on December 21:—

'In the first place, he had said that, for whatever unpleasantness had arisen in connection with the elections, Catholics were in no way responsible. He said that deliberately. The Catholics had absolutely no organisation, no political organisation of any kind, or had a thought of a political organisation, until the Council of Churches instituted a sectarian Registration Society. Well, the object of that was quite evident. The rights, privileges, and liberties of Catholics were aimed at, and, like sensible men, he believed some of the Catholic laymen undertook to provide for the registration of Catholics. No person could blame them, for they were only copying the example set to them. In the next place, Catholics had no desire, as far as he knew (and he was certain the members of the Registration Society had no such intention), of selecting any person, or proposing any person, as candidate until a sectarian committee was formed expressly for the purpose of putting forward candidates of sectarian mind, not on political grounds, and not because the men put forward were likely to become wise and good legislators, but because they were likely to become bitter anti-Catholics. It was not till then that the Registration Society selected three candidates for the Senate, and recommended them for adoption. In that they only followed the example set to them. Unless they wished to allow themselves to be completely wiped out, it was obviously their right, and many would say their duty, to resist the attempt that was made at suppression.'

The Catholic Archbishop's plea 'was' (says the 'Otago Daily Times' of January 11) 'well founded' in fact. So high an authority as the English Select Parliamentary Committee of 1895 on Orange Lodges declared in their report that 'the obvious tendency and effect' of anti-Catholic associations is to raise up associations 'among the Catholics in their own defence and for their own protection'. All this is natural and obvious. It is to the credit of the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities that they from the first deprecated the introduction of the sectarian issue, and that, after the fight was over, they were the first to hold out the olive-branch to their assailants. Archbishop Clarke has proposed a conference to deal with the subject. But in the same breath he has invited the Protestant Electors' Committee to prepare for the next State elections, and reiterates the fable of the 'solid, well-disciplined' Catholic vote. He and his party have sown the wind. The country will reap the whirlwind. And the Parson in Politics promises to be a more bitter curse to Australia than drought and fire and the locust plague.

A preliminary meeting was held in St. Joseph's Hall, Dunedin, on Tuesday evening, for the purpose of organising a men's branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Rev. Father Coffey presided, and the following officers were elected:—President, Mr. P. O'Neill; secretary, W. Rodgers; treasurer, J. Bernich.

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