

received a fair trial, in accordance with the judicial customs of the time. They were allowed counsel—and the most learned counsel at that—to plead in their defence, a right which was not accorded to accused persons in British courts of law till the nineteenth century was far advanced. The punishment of the Cenci murderers (beheading, etc.) was less severe than was customary under English law at that period. A century after the execution of the Cencis, English women who murdered their husbands were adjudged guilty of petty treason and were sentenced to be burned alive. As late as the close of the eighteenth century the horrible torture known as the picket was in full force as a recognised official punishment in the British army. In 1797-98 this, together with the newly-devised torture of the pitch-cap, was practised on a wholesale scale, and without the formality of judicial procedure, upon the unfortunate Irish peasantry for the purpose of goading them into insurrection. As late as the year 1809 no fewer than six hundred offences were punishable by hanging under British law—from pocket-picking, killing a hare, forgery, and coining up to wilful murder. During the hunger troubles of 1816 children of ten years of age were slowly strangled to death by the common hangman for peccadilloes for which they would nowadays be, at worst, let off with a caution. And for long after that date—to use the words of Horace Walpole—the country was ‘one great shambles,’ and the people (says Erskine May) ‘were brutalised by the hideous spectacle of public executions.’ Those who have tears to shed for human woe can, in all reason, find abundant subjects to bestow them upon without having to go so far back as the year of grace 1599. And all this maudlin sympathy over such hideous and unnatural crimes as those of the Cencis reminds one of the blubbering and foul-spoken Sterne shedding salt tears over the carcase of a worthless mule.

AS regards the character of Pope Clement VIII., history has built around it a rampart CLEMENT VIII. which is proof against popgun attacks such as are volleyed off in the columns of country papers. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, even in its latest edition, shows its lings to Catholics here and there by distorting, or by giving a false coloring to, the facts of personal or ecclesiastical history. Yet it admits that the pontificate of Clement VIII. was an ‘exemplary’ one. ‘Clement,’ it says, ‘was an able ruler and a sagacious statesman.’ And again: ‘He died in March, 1605, leaving a high character for prudence, munificence, and capacity for business.’ The only blame that it attaches to his memory is the execution of the erratic friar, Giordano Bruno. And Bruno was executed, not merely for his geocentric theories, but—as a perusal of his trial shows—for serious crimes against the existing laws of the State. Ranke, the German Protestant historian, cannot be accused of any leaning towards the Papacy or the Catholic Church. He is, on the contrary, much given to that contemptible form of calumny which consists in hinting, suggesting, or directly imputing sinister or unworthy motives for actions whose intrinsic goodness is beyond the reach of doubt or cavil. Yet, after detailing the extraordinary labors of that great Pontiff, he says (*History of the Popes*, vol. ii., pp. 44-5, Bohn).—

Nor would he (Clement) permit himself to incur the blame of the slightest negligence in his spiritual duties. Baronius received his confession every evening. He celebrated Mass every morning at noon. Twelve poor men dined daily in the same room with himself, at least during the early years of his pontificate, and the pleasures of the table were in his case altogether out of the question. On Fridays and Saturdays, moreover, he fasted. When he had labored earnestly through the week, his recreation on Sunday was to send for certain pious monks, or for the Fathers of the Vallicella, and hold discourse with them on the more profound questions of divinity. The reputation for virtue, piety, and an exemplary life that he had always enjoyed, was raised to an extraordinary degree by such modes of proceeding.

On the same page the noted German Protestant author says that ‘Clement VIII. conducted himself on all occasions with enlightened deliberation,’ and that ‘he desired that nothing should be perceived in him but was becoming in itself and consonant with the idea of a good, pious, and wise man.’

It may be remarked that the infliction of monetary penalties for crime is part of the judicial system in every civilised country in the world. Why it should be made to appear a deordination in the case of Clement VIII.—who was also a temporal King—simply passes our comprehension. The story of the 300,000 crowns alleged to have been received by Clement VIII. as ‘quitrents or penalties for crime’ probably arose from the fact that in A.D. 1600—two years after the murder of Francesco Cenci—Clement distributed this precise sum among the poor (Rohrbacher, vol. xii., p. 734). He rescued one of the Cenci widows whose life was not corrupt, had her honorably married, and compelled her father to provide her with a suitable dowry. His respect for law is referred to in terms of warm commendation by Ranke (ii., 45). He was the terror of evil-doers of every degree, and spared not even the powerful families of the Cenci, the Santacroce, and the Massimi, when legal proof of their crimes was available. ‘The strength of the Papacy itself,’ says Ranke (ii., 46), ‘was immeasurably

increased’ by his personal virtues and by his fair and faithful and unselfish administration of his high office. And this is the man whose fair memory we are called upon to execrate out of mistaken sympathy for a little knot of wretched assassins of immoral life who met with their deserts over three hundred years ago.

THE
CONFESSIONAL
AGAIN.

THE Rev. Dr. Horton has probably the usual number of brain-cells. But they appear to be bulged out with nightmare views and scared apprehensions of what he is pleased to term the ‘evils’ of ‘Romanism.’ Under the stress of one of those attacks of no-Popery hysteria to which he has been subject with painful frequency of late years, he lectured recently on the confessional. His ungentle discourse reminds one of the parody that was published some years ago by the *Glasgow Herald*, with profound apologies to the shade of Tommy Moore:

There was a little man,
And he had a little soul
And he said: Little soul, let us try, try, try,
If it isn't in our reach
To get up a little speech,
Just between little you and little I, I, I.

Ordinary mortals are content to hold fast by the old-fashioned belief that ignorance of a subject is a bar to its proper treatment in pamphlet, book, sermon, or lecture. But Dr. Horton is no ordinary mortal. He evidently regards complete ignorance as the best qualification for dealing with a subject. The good little man in his little speech naively confessed that he had no practical experience of confession. He likewise pleaded ignorance of any theoretical acquaintance therewith, serenely assuring his hearers that he had never read any Catholic manual on the subject, ‘and if God gives me the grace,’ he piously added, ‘I never will.’ And with this scant mental equipment he launched forth in the style of the Slattery impostors on the sacred tribunal of penance, with a wealth of amazing blunders that render his previous confession of ignorance of his subject absurdly superfluous. His published lecture reminds one of what the chalk says in Kipling’s tale: ‘The blackboard told all I knew, and very much that I did not.’ All the polemical Doctor knew is stated in the one word: Nothing.

Following the example of the fraudulent and sensational adventurers referred to above, Dr. Horton attacks the confessional as being mimical to the virtue of purity. His statement has been repeated in the columns of a small religious weekly published in New Zealand. Happily, we are able to put the gross and unsupported assertion to the test. There is probably no country in the world where more frequent use is made of the confessional than in Ireland. On the theory of Dr. Horton and his colonial echo, Ireland should therefore present to the rest of the astonished world a spectacle of unexampled moral degradation. We will take the statistics of illegitimacy. These are, according to Dr. Leffingwell, a good test of the morality of a people living in the same country, under the same laws and customs, and with the same methods of collecting statistics. ‘The Registrar-General’s Reports for 1898 for the United Kingdom,’ says a recent and timely C.T.S. leaflet, ‘are open before us as we write; and from them we gather that the proportion of the illegitimate births for England is 42 per 1000; for Scotland, 6.8 per cent.; for Ireland, 2.7 per cent. Let it be noted that Ireland, where, assuredly, the confessional has full sway, stands in a noble pre-eminence, and that Scotland, the type of unswerving and unadulterated Protestantism, comes lowest on the list.’

But this is not all. Ulster is the most Protestant province of the Green Isle, its non-Catholic population being 52 per cent. of the total, as against 14 per cent. in Leinster, 6 per cent. in Munster, and 5 per cent. in Connaught. The Registrar-General’s returns give Ulster 3.7 per cent. of illegitimate to total births; Leinster, 2.6; Munster, 2.4; and Connaught, the most Catholic province in Ireland, only 0.6. But the most significant fact of all is this: that in Ulster the percentage of illegitimate births rises with the increase of the Protestant population and falls with the increase of the Catholic population in the various counties of the province. Returns from the separate counties have not been published since 1891. The following table is compiled by us from the statistics of that year:—

County	Total Population	Per Cent. Catholic	Per Cent. non-Cath.	Illegit. Births	Per Cent. Illegit.
Cavan	111,917	80.8	19.2	32	2.8
Donegal	185,635	76.9	23.1	60	3.1
Monaghan	86,206	73.2	26.8	38	4.4
Fermanagh	74,170	55.4	44.6	55	7.4
Tyrone	171,401	54.6	45.4	130	7.1
Armagh	143,289	46.6	53.4	139	9.0
Londonderry	152,009	44.5	55.5	143	9.4
Down	267,595	36.3	63.7	281	10.5
Antrim	428,128	24.6	75.4	560	13.0