

THE STORY OF IRELAND

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.—(Continued.)

Yes; the history of the world has nothing to parallel the disgusting baseness, the mean, sordid cowardice of the English and Anglo-Irish lords and legislators. Theirs was not a change of religious convictions, right or wrong, but a greedy venality, a facile readiness to change any way or every way for worldly advantage. Their model of policy was Judas Iscariot, who sold Our Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

That Ireland also was not carried over into the new system was owing to the circumstance that the English authority had, so far, been able to secure for itself but a partial hold on the Irish nation. It must have been a curious reflection with the Supreme Pontiffs, that Ireland might in a certain sense be said to have been saved to the Catholic Church by its obstinate disregard of exhortations addressed to it repeatedly, if not by the Popes, under cover or ostensible sanction of papal authority, in support of the English crown; for had the Irish yielded all that the English king demanded with papal bull in hand, and become part and parcel of the English realm, Ireland, too was lost to the old faith. At this point one is tempted to indulge in bitter reflections on the course of the Roman Pontiffs towards Ireland. "Hitherto" (so one might put it) "that hapless nation in its fearful struggle against ruthless invaders found Rome on the side of its foes. It was surely a hard and a cruel thing for the Irish, so devotedly attached to the Holy See, to behold the rapacious and blood-thirsty Normans, Plantagenets, and Tudors, able to flourish against them papal bulls and rescripts, until now when Henry quarrelled with Rome. Now—henceforth, too late—all that is to be altered; henceforth the bulls and the rescripts are all to exhort the broken and ruined Irish nation to fight valiantly against that power to which, for four hundred years, the Roman court had been exhorting or commanding it to submit. Surely Ireland has been the sport of Roman policy, if not its victim!"

These bitter reflections would be not only natural but just, if the facts of the case really supported them. But the facts do not quite support this view, which, it is singular to note, the Irish themselves never entertained. At all times they seem to have most justly and accurately appreciated the real attitude of the Holy See towards them, and fixed the value and force of the bulls and rescripts obtained by the English sovereign at their true figure. The conduct of the Popes was not free from reproach in a particular subsequently to be noted; but the one thing they had really urged, rightly or wrongly, on the Irish from the first was the acceptance of the sovereignty of the English king, by no means implying an incorporation with the English nation, or an abandonment of their nationality. In this sense the Popes' exhortations were always read by the native Irish; and it will be noted that in this sense from the very beginning the Irish princes very generally were ready to acquiesce in them. The idea, rightly or wrongly, appears to have been that this strong sovereignty would be capable of reducing the chaotic elements in Ireland (given up to such hopeless disorder previously) to compactness and order—a good to Ireland and to Christendom. This was the guise in which the Irish question had always been presented by plausible English envoys, civil or ecclesiastical, at Rome. The Irish themselves did not greatly quarrel with it so far; but there was all the difference in the world between this the theory and the bloody and barbarous fact and practice as revealed in Ireland.

What may be said with truth is, that the Popes inquired too little about the fact and practice, and were always too ready to write and exhort upon such a question at the instance of the English. The Irish chiefs were sensible of this wrong done them; but in their every act and word they evidenced a perfect consciousness that the rectitude of the motives animating the

Popes was not to be questioned. Even when the authority of the Holy See was most painfully misused against them, they received it with reverence and respect. The time had at length arrived, however, when Rome was to mourn over whatever of error or wrong had marked its past policy towards Ireland, and for ever after nobly and unchangeably to stand by her side. But alas! too late—all too late now for succeeding! All the harm had been done, and was now beyond repairing. The grasp of England had been too firmly tightened in the past. At the very moment when the Pope desired, hoped, urged, and expected Ireland to arise triumphant and glorious, a free Catholic nation, a recompense for lost England, she sank broken, helpless, and despairing under the feet of the sacrilegious Tudor.

(To be continued.)

TO WILSON.

(For the N.Z. Tablet.)

Although you speak wide words I will not hark again,
Your words like flutes have called me from my moor,
From road and blooming lane,
They made the way seem light across the blue sea-floor,
Till I should reach with song and speech your door,
And yet for all your words, I weary in the rain.

Was it for Slavs alone you spoke your dream out wide?
How have I failed your quest, what have I left undone,
That you to none beside
Should give their strip of sky, their hills, their streams that run?

Their bonds to mine are threads: their storm is sun—
And yet I hooded kneel, and wait upon your pride.

One hour you held the world like to a seed of grain
Within your hollowed hand, as no man hath before—
The hour comes not again.
'Tis not enough to speak, to speak, and nothing more,
When hands are broken on your stubborn door,
For all your flowing words my hood is drenched with rain.
—E.D.

THE CHURCH AND CLERICAL CELIBACY.

We have already in a brief note (says the *Fortnightly Review*) denied the slanderous report that the Neapolitan clergy had resolved in favor of abolishing sacerdotal celibacy. The *Month* (No. 659, pp. 380 sq.) administers a well-deserved rebuke to the London *Times* for having reprinted the slander from the columns of a disreputable Italian newspaper. It was not the first time that such a story has appeared in the press (says our esteemed British contemporary). The various anti-clerical news-agencies eagerly fasten upon, or readily invent and disseminate, any news of that kind that seems to reflect discredit upon the Church. But, judging from a Papal Letter mentioned in the *Catholic Times*, April 19, addressed to a Hungarian Archbishop, wherein the Holy Father sternly rebukes certain Hungarian clergy who have demanded or suggested the abolition of celibacy; judging also from a persistent rumor, very difficult to verify, concerning some priests in Prague whose demands are even more violently subversive of Catholic discipline; there seems no doubt that the shock of war has had its repercussions amongst ecclesiastics in these turbulent regions. It may be, furthermore, that association with Orthodox clergy and with those Uniat Churches which have been allowed by the Holy See to retain a married ministry, has weakened their attachment to the sacred tradition of celibacy.

"These occasional outbreaks," comments the *Month*, "need not surprise us. All through her history the Church has had to fight against strong human passions for the observance of this lofty ideal, which so befits the ineffably holy status and functions of the Christian priesthood. As lately as the beginning of last century an association was formed in several South German States to advocate the repeal of the law, and it required an Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI., in 1832, to bring the agitation to a close. It is, therefore, to be expected that in the present general upheaval a few discontented spirits here and there—it needs no more to hatch a press-canard—should be found to complain of a dignity which their lack of self-control has turned into a burden."

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