

CATHOLIC INFLUENCE IN HOLLAND

Holland is a Protestant country; that is to say, the majority of its population professes the Reformed religion (says a writer in *America*). Side by side with 60 per cent. of Protestants, there are 35 per cent. Catholics. Nevertheless, the Protestants are divided into two great parties—the Believers or Orthodox, and the Moderns. The Orthodox are again divided into many sections, of whom the Calvinists and Lutherans are the principal. The Moderns, on the contrary, are for the most part Rationalists, and have little or no belief.

The Orthodox Protestants strive to apply their religious principles to their political action, which results in their forming two political factions. One, the Anti-Revolutionists, of whom Dr. Kuyper is the head, and the Free Anti-Revolutionists, whose leader is Mr. Savornin Lohman. Like the Protestants, the Catholics make their principles affect their politics, so that both Catholics and Protestants find themselves in opposition to the anti-religious tendencies of the Liberals, who, on that point, are sustained by the Socialists. Nevertheless, each of the two Christian parties is too feeble independently of each other to make head against the Anti-Christians. This was particularly noticeable in the second half of the last century, when the fight was on against the Liberal School Law of 1857. Their helplessness made them see that the two Christian parties would be stronger if they stood by each other in electing Protestant or Catholic representatives, who would defend in Parliament the common interests of both sides.

Among the statesmen who devoted themselves most earnestly to bring about this coalition were Dr. Kuyper among the Protestants and Dr. Schaepman among the Catholics. Dr. Schaepman was a priest, and a member of the Lower House. He died but a few years ago. Nevertheless, their efforts to effect this coalition evoked a great deal of opposition among the Catholics. Their feeling in this matter was intelligible when we recall that the ancestors of these Catholics from the very beginning of the Reformation were oppressed and persecuted by the ancestors of the Protestants. On that account the coalition was denounced by its enemies as the Monster League, because it seemed so contrary to the nature of the two parties. But in spite of this opposition the union, especially since 1879, has become an accomplished fact, although no formal contract was ever drawn up. There is a tacit convention by which both sides agree to so combine their votes on a Catholic or Protestant representative. They are thus sure their interests will be defended in Parliament.

The first result of this co-operation was the victory at the polls in 1888, when forty-five Liberals, twenty-seven Anti-Revolutionists, twenty-six Catholics, one Conservative, and one Socialist were elected for the Lower House. The consequence of this election was the anti-Liberal Ministry of 1888, presided over by Mr. Mackay. But, unfortunately, in the year 1891, a law was proposed for the reorganisation of the army, in which the principle of personal service was involved, and that was the shoal on which this coalition was wrecked. Worse still, it also gave rise to a disagreement in the Catholic party. The anti-Revolutionists were for personal service, and a part of the Catholics against it. This gave rise to the Bahlman faction. Another party of Catholics followed the lead of Schaepman and rallied with the anti-Revolutionists. But before the debate on the military question was over the general elections of 1891 proved that the disagreement between the two Christian parties had ruined the majority, for the new House was composed of fifty-five Liberals and forty-five anti-Liberals. Mackay was replaced by Trenhoer Tak van Poortoleet. This Ministry revoked the military law of Mackay, and personal service was admitted only in 1898.

Nevertheless, in the course of time the coalition was again re-established, and in 1900 another anti-Liberal Ministry, that of Dr. Kuyper, took the reins of government. This Ministry did a great deal to repair the iniquities committed by the Liberals in dealing with the Christian parties. But its principal work was that of revising the school law as regards university and primary education. Catholics and Protestants could not send their children to the State schools because the so-called neutral education was, generally speaking, openly anti-religious. For that reason the two parties decided to erect private schools, both for the Protestants and Catholics. These schools, however, received no subsidies from the State; consequently, while supporting their own schools, they had, like other Netherlands, to pay their taxes for the public schools. Kuyper, however, revised the school law, providing that the universities and primary schools should receive a subsidy from the State. Private universities besides, would have the power of conferring degrees, which would have the same civil effects as the degrees obtained in the State Universities.

When this was obtained, Kuyper wanted to propose a similar revision for the high schools, but before that the election of 1904 had thrown him out of office. Dr. Kuyper was then made the scapegoat of the Right, electors going to the polls crying out, 'Down with Kuyper!' The result was that the Left won by a small majority. Nevertheless, the Liberal Ministry of de Meester, which took the reins of government, could do nothing with its small majority. Besides, it was made up of men who had no

political ability, so that the Liberal party broke into many factions and on several questions were unable to agree.

The consequence of this was that the de Meester Ministry, after a precarious and pitiable existence of three years, gave way to the Ministry of the Right. But because Kuyper was so objectionable to the Liberal party, it did not seem prudent to put him at the head of the new Ministry. Mr. Heemskerke succeeded in forming a Ministry which had the complete confidence of the Right, and which had three Catholic members. At the beginning Heemskerke had but a small majority in the house, but because of his exceptional ability and prudence and vigor, he triumphed over the first difficulties. In 1908 his position was notably strengthened by elections for the Lower House when sixty members of the Right were elected against forty of the Left, and in the Upper Chamber there were thirty-two members on the Right and eighteen on the Left. The first solicitude of Heemskerke was to complete the revision of the school law for higher education, so that like universities and the primary schools they might receive subsidies from the State.

WHAT IRELAND WANTS

When Mr. John Redmond, M.P., visited the United States in the early part of October he wrote an article on the Home Rule question for *McClure's Magazine*, which has been summarised as follows by the *Irish News*:—

The Irish demand is, in plain and popular language, that the government of every purely Irish affair shall be controlled by the public opinion of Ireland, and by that alone. We do not seek any alteration of the constitution or supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. We ask merely to be permitted to take our place in the ranks of those other portions of the British Empire—some twenty-eight in number—which in their own purely local affairs are governed by free representative institutions of their own.

The moderate, even modest, demand has its root alike in historic title and in the utter and disastrous failure of the attempt since 1800 to govern Irish affairs by a British majority at Westminster. Historic title may count for little nowadays against superior force, but it is a potent influence in the hearts of Irishmen, and accounts for the passionate enthusiasm which has enabled them, in spite of suffering and disasters perhaps unparalleled in history, to preserve unimpaired the sentiment of their distinct and separate nationality.

'History proves Ireland's right to self-government,' Mr. Redmond declares; 'but, aside from that, her demand for Home Rule also has its root in the failure of England to govern her.'

'What greater test of good government is to be found than the test of population?' Mr. Redmond asks. 'In Ireland since 1841 the population has diminished by 50 per cent. In 1845 Ireland had three times as many people as Scotland, and half as many as England. In fact, Ireland had one-third of the whole population of the United Kingdom. In sixty years her population has gone down by four millions. Ninety per cent. of those who left her shores were between the ages of ten and forty-five.'

'Take the test of civil liberty. There has been a Coercion Act for every year since the Union, and even at this moment there is in existence on the Statute-book a special law applicable to Ireland alone, which enables the Lord Lieutenant, without any check whatever upon his arbitrary will, to suspend trial by jury, personal liberty, freedom of discussion, and the right of public meeting all over the country.'

'There have been since the Union three armed insurrections, and to-day admittedly the overwhelming mass of the people are thoroughly disaffected to the system of government under which they are compelled to live.'

The census figures show how Ireland's industrial prosperity was checked by the Act of Union. The following is quoted by Mr. Redmond from the report of the last Census Commission for Ireland:—'The number of persons engaged in Ireland in the production and distribution of textile fabrics has fallen away very considerably during the past thirty years. The totals recorded were, for 1871, 193,864, and for 1881 129,787. In 1891 there was practically no change at 129,884, but in 1901 the numbers employed had fallen 109,588.'

Referring to the returns for the latter year, the Commissioners observe:—'In this marked decline of over 15½ per cent., the males diminished by 8864, and the females to the extent of 11,432. Looking at the principal textile manufactures, we find that by far the most important industry in the country—viz., the flax and linen industry—has lost over 17,000, nearly one-fifth of its workers, while those employed in the manufacture of woollen goods have suffered a corresponding reduction.'

Education in Ireland, Mr. Redmond says, is admittedly 50 per cent. below the standard of every other European nation. Taxation per head has doubled in 50 years, and the civil government is the most costly in Europe.

Per head of the population, the cost of the present government of Ireland is twice that of England, and is far higher than that of Norway, Holland, France, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, Germany, or Russia.

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