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The Westminster Congress and the Present Position of Roman Catholicism.

By the Rev. ARTHUR GALTON, M.A.

SINCE the various compromises and arrangements of the sixteenth century almost four hundred years have run. We have seen, during the course of them, the principles and theology of Trent working out their logical conclusions, and once more we seem to have reached a period of crisis, or of impending change; when, whatever happens, things cannot go on longer as they have been. Irreconcilable principles and incompatible beliefs, which Rome was able to suppress in the sixteenth century, were more than revived in 1789. Since then they have been menacing and skirmishing incessantly along the frontier between the Papal Monarchy and the Modern World. At last these rival principles have met face to face within those frontiers, and they are now battling for nothing less than the possession of the Church. Though we cannot discern as yet the fortunes of this war, we can have no doubt as to its causes; and we may discuss the present position and the future prospects of Roman Catholicism, not only in England, which is our chief concern, but in that larger world where the Papacy used to be much more powerful, and its adherents relatively so much more numerous, than it and they would seem to be at present.

The "present position of Catholics in England" was described by Newman in a volume published about half a century ago. He touched on it also, during the same period, in two of his more important sermons: in "Christ upon the Waters," preached in 1850 at the installation of the first Bishop of Birmingham; and in "The Second Spring," preached in 1852 at the first provincial synod of the new hierarchy. All these utterances are filled with hope, as they might well be, at the revived and wonderful prospects of the Papacy in England; for such hopes appeared sober and well founded when the conditions of English Romanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were

compared. Everything seemed to be going well, or even miraculously, when such a comparison was made. Catholic emancipation had been granted in 1829. "The few adherents of the Old Religion," "not a sect, not even an interest, not a body," "a mere handful of individuals who might be counted": such is Newman's imaginative and unflattering account of the English Romanists before emancipation; and he contrasts their position and prospects with those of the new hierarchy, for which he prophesies a long and victorious future. Nowhere else has Newman's rhetoric been so exuberant as in his prophecies about the second spring of the Papacy in England. Nor could his flowery words have seemed exaggerated, in those days, to any people within the Roman Church, or to many outside it. The Oxford Movement, if not still in its height at the University, was flowing triumphantly over the country. Many of its currents were set Romewards, and they were sweeping away men of talent, of position, and of promise. A sentimental, but wholly deceptive, medievalism was in fashion; and many people actually believed that in submitting to the modern Papacy they were climbing back into the medieval Church. The Church of England, as Newman thought, was given over to internal disruption and political attacks. All that he described and combated as Liberalism appeared to be in the ascendant. The newest messages of geology terrified nervous theologians, and the more terrible theory of evolution was thought likely to undermine the very foundations of belief. Against these enemies Anglicanism and Protestantism were judged by the Medievalists to be powerless. Many who thus despaired found a refuge, as they thought, in the supposed authority of Rome; and certainly the prospects of English Romanism were never so brilliant as in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. That brilliance, however, soon clouded; and in explaining the reasons we must digress for a little from England and its affairs.

As soon as the Papacy had recovered from the revolution of 1848, all its energies were directed towards maintaining its temporal dominions and increasing its ecclesiastical authority.

The latter of these efforts culminated, after many struggles and more disappointments, in the definition of Papal Infallibility. Authority seemed to have vindicated its claims, and to have achieved the goal of a long ambition; but this victory has proved more disastrous than any previous defeat. In the very hour of theological triumph, the Papal States were resumed by the Italian Nation, and the Bishop of Rome ceased to be a king. This was the smallest forfeit which Nemesis exacted; for the claim to sovereignty was not relinquished, and the Pope condescended to the *rôle* of a Pretender. He withdrew his adherents as far as possible from civil and public life. His representatives could not be trusted with education. There was a quiet but a sullen and an uncompromising war between the Court of Rome and the interests of the Italian people. The quarrel was disadvantageous to both, but it has inflicted irreparable losses on the Papacy. If the Italians had not been a patient and a tactful race, it would have been equally destructive to their religion.

In other countries there were similar quarrels on various pretexts, but for the same objects. The temper which had inspired the syllabus of 1864, and which proceeded logically to the definition of 1870, forced the Papacy into conflicts with nearly every Government, and with the whole spirit and principles of modern society. By Prussia the quarrel was fomented brutally and pursued stupidly. Bismarck was thoroughly outmanœuvred by Leo XIII., and the new German Empire was consecrated by another journey to Canossa. Imperial politics are still impeded and scarred by this defeat. In France the quarrel was conducted, and therefore has ended, differently. After an incessant warfare against the Third Republic, and everything which it represents, the French Church has been separated from the State, and the Papal jurisdiction is no longer recognized officially by the French Government. This momentous change cannot fail to influence the relations between the State and the Papacy in all other countries. It is the most grievous wound which has been inflicted on the Papal Church since the Reformation; and it concerns our present

inquiry because it is only explicable by the still more serious changes which, since 1870, have been maturing within the Church itself. These changes are due to two causes, both of which have been operating simultaneously. First among them has been the steady growth and the remarkable popular extension of the scientific spirit and of scientific methods. These have been applied, not only to the natural sciences, but to history, to language, to theology, to religious and political institutions, to criticism of all kinds, to human society itself, and to every department of thought and knowledge. The result has been nothing less than a revolution in men's conception of the universe, of their position in it, and of their attitude towards it. Against this unresting and irresistible growth of knowledge, the Papal authority and claims have not only been impotent, but they have been a positive disadvantage, a source of undeniable embarrassment and loss to the Roman Catholic Church, which has suffered more than all the other Churches together both from the influences which have just been enumerated and from the dead-weight of its infallible Pontiff.

And yet, during the same period, the Papacy has inflicted other and even heavier losses upon the Church. Since 1870 the Roman administration has become more autocratic and reactionary. It has been continuously narrowing and centralizing. The Papal authority has developed at the expense of the episcopate. The old independent name of bishop is, indeed, still retained for these now subordinate officials; but the administrators of Roman Catholic dioceses are in fact little more than Papal delegates, subject to various Roman Congregations, and liable as well to that occult influence of the religious orders which becomes ever more preponderating within the Vatican. Between the Papal bureaucracy and the interests of the regular clergy the position of a Roman Catholic bishop is most unenviable, while the prospects of the secular clergy are always gloomier and more precarious. These causes have produced, and will go on producing, their inevitable results; for institutions, no less than individuals, must suffer the defects

of their qualities and principles. Mr. Gladstone pointed out some of the dangers of Vaticanism in the relations between State and Church, but he scarcely realized the more devastating effects of Vaticanism upon the Church itself. These effects may be criticized, or deplored, or defended, or even gloried in as a privilege, but their existence cannot be denied. Since the sixteenth century everything has been sacrificed to a blind obedience and an iron uniformity. The Papacy may have gained, temporarily and apparently, by enforcing these principles; but life, and vigour, and variety, and growth, and progress have gradually though surely been destroyed. In all these qualities the Papalized Churches are practically bankrupt. These results are only too visible among the French Catholics, in spite of their advantage in belonging to the most intelligent and progressive European race. Nominal Catholics are only a minority of the French people; in politics, a small, an impotent, a credulous, a silly, and an ever-dwindling minority. Practising Catholics, again, form but a small section even of this minority. In all the other Latin countries, both of America and Europe, except Belgium, statisticians of every school give similar reports. And the losses of the Church are not only in quantity, but in quality. The education and intelligence of all these countries are either indifferent or hostile to the prevailing and reactionary clericalism, which is indistinguishable from official Romanism, but which must never be mistaken for Catholicism. It was hoped by many French Catholics that separation would give them a free Church in a free or a neutral State. The neutrality of the State has, indeed, been observed scrupulously; but the French Catholics find themselves less free than ever. They have exchanged a limited and clearly defined supervision by the State for an active and unlimited control by the Papal autocracy. They have no voice in the appointment of their bishops, no financial authority, no functions and no duties except to obey and to pay. The bishops have no initiative, no genuine responsibility, no real power, and no security of tenure; and the clergy are almost as dependent on their bishops as the bishops are on

Rome. The local authorities are suspected and thwarted incessantly by the officials at the centre. No organism can thrive under these conditions, in which the abnormal activities of the head have produced an atrophy in all the members. It is not surprising that Roman Catholicism is a failing cause, and that the priesthood is a discredited profession. Among other causes of failure, the diminution of the clergy is not the least significant and menacing. Quite recently, the Superior of the *Petit Séminaire* at Vouziers has said that in 1897 they had 236 pupils, in 1903 only 150, in 1906 not a hundred, at present only 54. Of these 54, only about 30 are ordination candidates; and, as the course of studies lasts six years, that standard, even if it be maintained, means a supply of only five priests annually for the diocese. This case is typical of what is going on throughout French Catholicism, not only in recruiting the clergy, but in all other departments of its organization. Quite apart from external difficulties, which are serious enough, the poor remnants of the old Gallican Church are afflicted internally by atrophy and blight, both caused by unwholesome principles and pernicious methods of administration. And the state of all the other Papalized Churches throughout the world is either worse than the state of the French Church or is approximating inevitably towards it. Some of the non-Latin Churches may possibly be saved in time; but only by a revolution within themselves, or by insisting upon a reformation of the Papacy.

In England, on a smaller scale, the same influences which we have been examining have produced very similar results. The Vaticanism which was introduced into England with the new hierarchy in 1850 has transformed English Romanism. The older English Catholics were, indeed, a small body, but in many ways they were select. They produced and they favoured men of learning, of whom they might boast a considerable number. They were sober and conservative in their beliefs. They were most loyal to the primacy of Rome, but they resented Papal interference, and they dreaded a Papalized administration. They had great sympathy with the old Gallican Church, and

an instinctive dislike of Ultramontanism. They were not far removed from our older and typical High Churchmen before they too were Romanized. Both in feeling and in blood, the former generation of Catholics was English, and the clergy were almost exclusively Englishmen. It was to a Catholicism of this kind that Newman gave himself in 1845; but it was not long before that change began, which was rapid in its growth, and has been overwhelming in its effects. This change may be both marked and understood by the disillusionment and isolation of Newman; and, later, by the bitter enlightenment and the pathetic recantations of Manning. The whole story has been explained with great clearness and skill, in "Modern Rome in Modern England," by Philip Sidney, whose premature and recent death is deplored by all who knew him, and is a grievous loss to those who are interested in the subjects which he unravelled with so patient an industry and treated with so admirable a candour. We can here only indicate some of the causes which have produced the effects we are trying to exhibit. Among these effects we would enumerate the following as most significant: a very large number of the Roman clergy who now minister in England, if not the majority, are either Irish or foreigners. The proportion of Irish and foreigners among the laity, especially in big towns, is also very large. The English element is not now preponderating in English Romanism, and it is always tending to decrease. Again, the proportion of regular clergy to the seculars is always increasing; and the religious communities themselves increase out of all proportion to the numbers and growth of the laity. They are an artificial and alien production. Objectionable and menacing as they are in many ways to the nation, they are an exhausting and a growing burden to the Roman Catholic community. The whole clerical body, moreover, is out of all proportion to the pastoral requirements of the laity. Churches and convents may multiply, the body of the clergy may increase, but the numbers of the laity do not increase proportionately. Absolutely, Romanists have, of course, grown with the population. Relatively, it is doubtful

whether their numbers are as large as they were under George III., and certainly they are less numerous proportionately than they were under Charles I. If we could obtain reliable figures, it might probably be demonstrated that English Romanism, in spite of all appearances, has been declining steadily in proportion to the general population ever since the Papal warfare against Elizabeth.

There has been a decline, too, since about 1870 in the attractiveness of Romanism to outsiders. The stream of converts which was so high in mental quality about the middle of last century, which was also large in quantity and conspicuous in rank for some twenty years or more, has lately fallen appreciably in all three respects. The Roman Catholic body is not recruited as it used to be by external adherents. If its numbers be tested again by church attendance, we are brought to similar conclusions ; although such attendance is enforced more stringently than in any other denomination, and is regarded by all practising Catholics as an indispensable duty in their religious life. The English Romanists, then, do not keep pace with the general population ; nor, as it would seem, with several of the other denominations. Moreover, they do not increase even as they should normally according to their own membership and the statistics of their marriages. The only possible explanation of these facts is that the leakage from them must be enormous, and continually growing.

On a superficial view, as we look round us, either in town or country, but especially in London, the Papal Church in England seems to increase and flourish. The Byzantine Cathedral of Westminster, with its elongated minaret, is one of the most conspicuous public buildings. The present florid Oratory is very different from Faber's modest chapel in King William Street. The Jesuit Church in Mayfair would hardly be recognized by those who knew it thirty years ago, when it was almost hidden away in the mews of Farm Street. And so it is with innumerable churches, convents, colleges, schools, and various other institutions scattered prodigally through the country

There has been an enormous expenditure in bricks and mortar, which has not all been paid off, and which as debt, or in mortgages, or in repairs and working expenses, is a very heavy burden on the Roman Catholics, and a perpetual drain upon their resources. But when we turn to the human element, we do not find a similar exuberance and strength. English Romanism has not been an expanding force, at any rate during the last thirty years; and it shows no signs at present of acquiring new powers of expansion. Like all the other Papalized Churches, it withers under the blight of Vaticanism; and is being drained, both in human beings and material resources, by the exactions of the religious orders. The dead hand of those orders lay heavy on the whole medieval Church; as it lay on all the unreformed Churches before the French Revolution; as it lay on many parts of Italy until 1870; as it lies heavy now in Ireland. To this burden, which has always been so destructive to Catholicism, there has now been added the benumbing hand of the Vatican, which has already crushed the episcopate, which enervates and emasculates the secular clergy, and which does not seem to administer lay affairs with any credit to itself or success to them.

It is possible, and even easy, as we have seen recently, to collect a vast assemblage, to make a striking show, to organize a gorgeous pageant. Cardinals and archbishops, prelates and monks, may be gathered from every quarter of the globe; but the question arises inevitably, what population, what vitality, do they represent? Are the countries from which they come in sympathy with them, or are they merely tolerated and customary survivals of a fading past? When the Roman Catholic Church is estimated, it is no longer possible to take any national statistics, and to say these millions represent the Catholics of any given country. The swelling numbers, which used to range so vaguely from 150,000,000 to 300,000,000, shrink on all sides and in every place whenever we can test them. We know that there are not anything like 30,000,000 of practising Catholics in France, nor 16,000,000 in Spain; and so of all the other countries. And we apply a similar reasoning

to the current statistics of English Romanism, which we believe to be far from flourishing, or from being likely to flourish, under its present conditions, and through the various causes which we have tried to explain: causes which we may sum up, shortly, as Roman; but which are also Catholic, in the sense that they prevail, and are at present still increasing, throughout the Roman Catholic Church, and not least among the English Romanists, who since 1850 have been absolutely prostrate under the benumbing hand of Rome.

Revival Memories: D. L. Moody's Visit to London in 1875.

By the Rev. Canon W. HAY M. H. AITKEN, M.A.

D. L. MOODY'S work during the two eventful years that he spent in the British Isles reached its culminating point in his visit to London in 1875. Probably his series of meetings at the Agricultural Hall was attended by a larger number of human beings than had ever before been drawn to any series of religious meetings in the history of the world. It was computed that somewhere about 20,000 attended the earlier gatherings; but as it was found that a very considerable number of those present each night heard most imperfectly, while many did not hear at all, and as this had a tendency to interfere with the stillness and solemnity of the services, it was thought expedient to make certain structural alterations which reduced the number of sittings to about 15,000. As, however, there was no diminution in the interest, this enormous accommodation proved quite insufficient, and hundreds night by night had to be denied admittance.

These huge gatherings were made up of "all sorts and conditions of men," from Cabinet Ministers and noblemen to costermongers and people from the slums. Mr. Gladstone, then in the zenith of his fame, was present, I believe, on several