

Fifeshire Journal

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POPISH AGGRESSION AND OUR DUTY REGARDING IT.

If ever there was a time since the era of the Reformation when Protestants were called upon to meet the aggression of Popery, the present is that time. It is now clear that the Papacy has ceased to be passive, and to content itself with full toleration for its doctrines and worship. From the Pope, though his Cardinals and downwards, Popery, is in a state of intense activity, and Great Britain is its chosen field of operations. There is a mission amongst us—a Popish mission—whose open and avowed object is to overturn all that was accomplished by our Reforming ancestors and restore, if possible, the iron despotism of the middle ages. Of the fact we see proof on all sides of us. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been expended during the last few years in the erection of churches, nunneries, and colleges. Scores of Jesuit missionaries and other seminary priests are prowling throughout the length and breadth of the land, busily prosecuting their work wherever they can find an opening, be it amongst the highest ranks or amongst the lowest. We hear the one day of half a million of money being about to be expended on a gorgeous cathedral in Edinburgh, of a size almost equal to that of York Minster, and with a spire little inferior in height to the cross of St Paul's, and next day we are told of inflammatory, and earnest address, by Father Ignatius to Irish emigrants, entreating them to seek service with Protestant families in England and there indoctrinate, if they can, children and fellow servants with Popish notions. In a word, the famous Papal Bull for the division of England into Popish dioceses is but one of the indications of a gigantic conspiracy, at the present moment going on, for the overthrow of Protestantism and the re-establishment of Popish ascendancy. It is high time, therefore, for the country to open its eyes to the impending evil, and to meet it in a becoming manner.

There are some who affect to despise and laugh at the alarm which recent Popish aggressions have excited. No danger, they think of a return to Popish ascendancy. The cause of Protestantism is so strong, from its intrinsic truthfulness and conformity to right reason, that it can afford to despise all Popish efforts! Language of this sort however must have its origin either in pure ignorance or stupid obstinacy. Surely a very slight acquaintance with the past ought to teach even fools that that the best of causes may be persecuted and kept under for centuries, and the worst elevated to honour and distinction, and this notwithstanding all the reasonableness of the one and the unreasonableness of the other. And what are the actual circumstances of the case? Is it not notorious that, almost without exception,

the nations of the continent—nations which are at this moment bristling all over with the weapons of millions of armed men – are avowedly the supporters of Popery in all its unmitigated intolerance, and boast, as their last achievement, of the restoration of the Pope himself to his capital! Is there a child among us who does not know that of eight millions of Ireland, five at least, if not six, are amongst the most bigoted Papists the world ever beheld, and so turbulent and discontented with the fullest religious toleration that it requires fully thirty thousand Protestant soldiers to keep them in order! Who is not aware of the fact that about a seventh part of the members of the House of Commons are Papists; that hundreds of highly educated men, some of them belonging to the most aristocratic and wealthiest of English families, have, within the last year or two, sought reconciliation with the Church of Rome; and that the numbers of Romanizing ministers in the southern Establishment, and in the Episcopal body in Scotland, have been so great as to justify the opinion, or at least the fear, that these bodies were becoming Papish altogether! And yet we are to stand still, trusting that our good cause will maintain its position, whilst we are doing nothing! It may be that they who speak in this style would not care though we were a Popish nation to-morrow; but, assuredly, if they deprecate such a consummation, it is far from being impossible, or even improbable, that some day or other they may have their eyes opened to discover that things have now proceeded too far to be easily arrested as they may be at the present moment.

Of all the strange sights which may be witnessed just now, the proceedings of Dissenters are amongst the strangest. Everybody knows that the founders of these Dissenting bodies were particularly energetic in the protests against the Papacy. Their prayers were the most earnest and persevering for the speedy downfall of the Man of Sin; their spirit so intensely Protestant that everything Popish was regarded by them with the utmost abhorrence. Indeed one of their great charges against the Established Church was its insensibility to the enormities of Popery. But what do we find now! In this country the Pope is discovering that his strongest supporters are amongst the motley bands of Protestant Dissent. We verily believe that at present his Holiness could easily raise a regiment or two of Scottish Dissenters to maintain, by force of arms, his right to parcel out the country into Popish dioceses, or join the French, in Rome itself, in upholding his tottering throne. Let any man read the speeches of even Protestant Dissenting ministers at meetings which they have lately held, and say whether we are exaggerating. The arguments which they use are precisely those which Cardinal Wiseman and Bishop Ullathorne have put in their mouths; and the whole strain and tone of their eloquence, except in a few trifling particulars, is such as would receive the cordial approval of these Romish dignitaries. In whatever way this phenomenon is to be explained, a very strange phenomenon is to witness—Popery and Dissent in

unison, the pretensions and the aggressive doings of the Pope and his bishops finding their most strenuous maintainers and apologists in the ranks of ultra-Dissenterism! We have often heard the saying that extremes do meet, but we never expected to see so marvellous an illustration of it.

We hold, however, the opinion that the time has arrived for all true Protestants, be their denomination what it may, considering seriously their principles, and adopting measures for securing their continued ascendancy. If any other proposition is more capable of demonstration than another, it is that the prosperity of this country is traceable to its Protestantism. Let us not therefore, suffer our national prosperity to be arrested. Far are we from maintaining principles of intolerance, or hindering any sect from believing and worshiping as they please. But when we know that there is a sect amongst us—a growing and powerful sect, from whom no toleration or mercy is to be expected should they ever recover their ancient power—a sect, with whom the persecution of all other religions is a sacred duty—a sect whose principles lead to the universal diffusion of ignorance and national degeneracy—it is the dictate at once of prudence and of patriotism to adopt all measures to protect ourselves and maintain the cause of truth and righteousness.

We have been witnessing with much interest the proceedings which have been taking place in various parts of the country upon this subject. Towns, parishes, counties, and corporations have all been lifting up an energetic voice. This has been particularly the case in England. We trust that what has been done in Scotland is only the beginning. We would press upon all Presbyteries, kirk-sessions, and other public bodies the solemn duty which lies upon them in the present crisis. Let Protestant Scotland, by a loud and unanimous voice, testify that she has not laid aside her hereditary antipathy to the abominations of the Man of Sin; that she loves bible truth, and value aright her privilege to study and judge of it for herself; and that please Heaven, she will never again succumb beneath Popish aggression. In this good work she may not be supported by those ultra-Dissenters who have made shipwreck of the faith of their fathers or those ultra-Liberals with whom Protestant truth and Popish error are quite on the level, and equally esteemed, but she will emit, on the whole a noble testimony and not unworthy of being compared with the declaration of other days.

