

LECTURE BY THE MOST REV. DR. MORAN.

"THE BANKRUPTCY OF LIBERALISM."

HIS LORDSHIP the Most Rev. Dr. Moran delivered his promised lecture in aid of the erection of a church at Port Chalmers, on Tuesday evening, in the Temperance Hall, the subject chosen being "The Bankruptcy of Liberalism." A number of the clergy of the diocese were present, and occupied seats on the platform, amongst whom was the Very Rev. the Vicar-General.

HIS LORDSHIP said that the subject of his lecture was, as had been announced, "The Bankruptcy of Liberalism." By this was meant that in all the professions it had made, Liberalism had proved itself a failure. Everyone who had paid attention to the history of the day would be aware that Liberalism was at present triumphant everywhere—it was unnecessary, then, to delay them in adducing proofs of this. It was in the name of Liberalism that they found all the old Governments of Europe had been revolutionised; and the object professed by those who had done this was to improve the condition of humanity. It was only from the time that Bismarck, for example, placed himself at the head of the National Liberal party in Germany that he was enabled to date his triumph. It was in the name of Liberalism that the provincial liberties of the States of Austria had been all sacrificed to centralism. In Switzerland, the historic liberties and independence of the smaller cantons had been all sacrificed to centralism in the name of the same doctrine. Cast their eyes anywhere, and they would find that this principle was now triumphant, not only in States which made open profession of it, but in others. Even Russia itself felt the presence and acknowledged the power of Liberalism. They might, therefore, take it as a fact that it was triumphant everywhere, and they found evidences of its triumph in the laws, constitutions, and politics of the day of the nations of the world. At the same time anyone who would observe the matter closely must come to the conclusion that, notwithstanding its triumph, Liberalism was a failure, or, in the words in which the lecture had been announced, a bankrupt. They would ask him what was understood by Liberalism, and it was the more necessary to give a definition of it when it was borne in mind that statesmen of different politics acknowledged themselves to be Liberals. Gladstone, for instance, was a Liberal; so was Bismarck; Minghetti, in Italy, was a Liberal. Those who brought back the kingly government in Spain for the most part called themselves Liberals. Many of the statesmen in France declared themselves to belong to the same party, and so it was everywhere. These men differed in politics, yet they were all Liberals. It was evident, therefore, that there were many shades of Liberalism, and this made it somewhat difficult to give a definition of it. At the same time it was not impossible to do so. They might in this instance do what certain philosophers did when they wanted to point out the characteristics of any race. They did not investigate mongrel races, but went to the pure stock, and studied there what were its characteristics. They were then enabled to say whether or not any other race is allied to this pure stock, from the features they may discern in it common to the original race. If they adopted the same plan, and went to the real Liberal and studied him, they would be enabled to discern the principle that lay at the foundation of this doctrine. It appeared to him that if they made such an investigation they would find Liberalism might be defined thus:—That doctrine which maintains the perfect independence of human liberty. Its charter may be considered to be the Declaration of Rights by the French Assembly of 1789. They would find these three principles laid down in three several articles: First of all, it was declared that man depended upon his reason alone, and was not responsible to any superior power; secondly, that every man has the right to reject Christianity, and endeavor to cause others to reject it; and thirdly, it was declared that Christianity in the eyes of the State was no more than a mere opinion, and was placed upon a footing only of equality with all opinions and errors. As he said before, there were a great many shades of opinions amongst Liberals; but he thought they all might be summed up in three divisions, and the race might be divided thus:—Radical Liberals, Moderate Liberals, and Catholic Liberals. He would speak of Liberalism so as to speak of the doctrine rather than of the men who professed it. Radical Liberalism was that which was straightforward and strictly logical—which avowed its principles, and did not recoil before any one of their legitimate, logical consequences. In the intellectual order it was free thought—the doctrine which taught that human reason depended upon itself alone; that a man was responsible only to reason, and not responsible for his acts to any higher power. In the religious order it was pure individualism; that is, it was the negation of all dogmatic teaching and of all priesthood. In the political order it was demagogism—that is, the right of the masses to change or destroy at their will and pleasure political institutions. And in the religious-political order, it was the subjugation of religious society—or the Church—to the State in everything. This was Radical Liberalism; and now he came to consider what was Moderate Liberalism. This undertook to hold the middle place between pure Radicalism and pure Catholicism, and rejected both equally. This Liberalism recognised, side by side with free thought, an authority which it called eternal reason, and it would not refuse to call this, if demanded of it, the reason of God, but, at the same time, of a God who only reigned, but did not rule. It placed Him in the position of a Constitutional Sovereign, and gave Him a ministry which was responsible, not to him, but to humanity. In the religious order, it admitted of worship, but left to every man the right to select a form for himself. He was to be at liberty to worship God, not in the manner God has appointed, but in the manner that recommended itself to his own judgment and reason. In the political order, this Moderate Liberalism recognised the necessity of authority to rule the masses, but handed over the exercise of that authority to the enlightened classes, and taught that this authority

was to be exercised by means of Parliaments. But it was not satisfied with teaching that Parliaments had the power to regulate liberty and the exercise of authority, but placed Parliaments over authority itself. In the religious political order, it would abstain from openly persecuting the Church—it would even favor her and endow her—but only on condition that the Church would admit its superiority, even in things purely spiritual, or relating exclusively to the soul itself. Lastly, he had to define what was meant by Catholic Liberalism; and here they found that it was not so much a doctrine as a tendency and a spirit. This did not deny any doctrines defined by the Church, or any clearly taught doctrine of Christianity; but it considered that these were not applicable to human affairs, at least in the present day. It professed a wonderful respect for the principles of Christianity—so great a respect indeed that it thought they ought to be kept under lock and key—they ought not to be permitted to be sullied by the profane breath of the world or of human affairs—that they ought to be respected and cherished, but ought not to be brought out to interfere with the course of human things. The next consideration was: What is the profession of—what are the promises made by—Liberalism? Liberalism commenced its career by promising a glorious future to its votaries. There was to be Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; education was to be spread abroad, and the material interests of man were to be promoted wonderfully; universal charity was to prevail; nations were to become as brothers, and wars were to be at an end. A glorious prospect was held out before the eyes of humanity; and now it was for them to see whether or not this had been realised. It struck him that anyone who had been an attentive student of Liberalism for the last seventy or eighty years would go along with him to the following conclusions:—In the intellectual order—and now he would use an expression that might sound harsh, but still he was convinced it was applicable to Liberalism—it had led to the systematic brutalising of reason. In the second place it had led to the degradation of science; thirdly, to the decadence of literature and art; fourthly, to the mutilation of the soul and the destruction of liberty of thought; and in the social and political order it had been the death of liberty. If these statements were true, it was clear that Liberalism was bankrupt, because it had been a failure in every promise and undertaking it had made. In the first place, then, Liberalism had led to the systematic brutalisation of reason. All who had lived for half a century, and who had studied the history of their own period attentively, will call to mind the fact that about the time when they were young, Liberalism made popular a certain doctrine which could be only designated as an exaggerated Spiritualism. From the very first Liberalism rejected all mysteries in reference to religion. But the Liberalism of which he now spoke, or that particular phase of it, was an exaggerated Spiritualism—a borrowed dream from Malebranche to the effect that reason was capable of a direct intuition of the absolute, and that by means of high culture it could attain to a transcendental knowledge of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful; it taught that Christianity had done its work well, but that the day of faith was now past and should give way to the day of reason. As Christianity succeeded to Judaism, and perfected and completed it, so this rational Spiritualism was to succeed Christianity to perfect and complete it. It was not to be anything different in substance, but only in mode—none of the truths hitherto accepted were to be rejected, but they were to be put in a new form and to be placed before humanity scientifically, so that the theologian was to be as the philosopher and the scientist. Reason was to explain, even in a scientific way, the sublime doctrines of the Unity and Trinity of God, the Incarnation, and other mysteries—it was to ascend above faith, which had a humbler kind of mission. Faith only professed to see these truths through a veil—it acknowledged an obscurity which it could not penetrate, and it accepted teaching upon authority; but reason was to go above this, and to have an intuition of all these truths—to see them directly and scientifically, and to demonstrate them as one would a proposition in Euclid. Some of them were old enough to remember when this was the fashion. Of course they would understand him as speaking not in reference to any particular country, but of the whole world. It was necessary in discussing a subject of this sort to take a very comprehensive view, and to generalise very much. He might say at the same time that he had principally in his mind France—the theatre in which this doctrine had been freely developed. At the same time his remarks were applicable to the other countries of Europe, in so far as they embraced Liberalism. Let them go from that state of things to what they found at present. Now, all that reverie was passed away, and it was not a question upon which reasonable men cared to waste a moment's thought. And what had succeeded to it? Pure Positivism. This was the doctrine which rejected all philosophy and reason itself, and which was the only doctrine outside of Christianity which had any power or influence at the present day. They would bear in mind that he had said Liberalism rejected mystery. This was a fundamental principle. Jouffroi, one of the most illustrious disciples of its first masters, saw he was obliged to declare that mystery lay at the foundation of philosophy. His words were—"We believe—that is a fact. But the question is, whether is our belief well founded or not." He, however, was sufficiently a Liberal to reject all the mysteries of Christianity; but he accepted as absolutely necessary the mysteries of reason. He recognised the existence of God, of a Providence, of a Creation, and of a soul, the union of the soul and body in the one personality, and of eternal rewards and punishments, and these he held—he (Bishop Moran) took him as a type of his school—as truths of natural religion—truths which he said reason itself established. After him came a representative man of another class—Littre, at present one of the members of the French Academy, who was raised to that position through what were considered his literary gifts. Littre said they could not admit the mysteries of reason, and he would have them no more than the mysteries of revelation. And what was the answer of Jouffroi to him? He admitted the difficulty, but could