

supply merely the spiritual or moral wants of men, but it sought to provide those sources of knowledge which would make the Catholic people equal in learning, dignity, power, and influence to the professors of any other form of Christian belief. This had been the work of their Congress, and it marked the highest point of Christian faith and Christian progress. Not a word was uttered from the beginning to the end of the Conference

That Could Offend the Most Fastidious Non-Catholic.

In that manner they had given an example to others. It was often a shame and a scandal amongst Christian people that members came together, not to praise God or to advance the interests of humanity, but to revile those who differed from them in religious practices, and to impute to Catholics opinions they never held, and principles which they had never practised. Whilst each member of the Congress had a right to his own opinions on every question proposed, he had been careful to be mindful of the opinions of others. This example of fair play, of consideration, charity, and good feeling towards those who differed from them should be taken as a model by themselves and others; and it was further an answer to the charge sometimes made against Catholics that they were wanting in feelings of tolerance or charity towards other people. He hoped that the results of the Congress might be lasting; might be for the advancement of charity amongst men; for the vindication of truth in the Catholic Church; for the enlightenment of those who differed from them, and finally lead them to live as good citizens and good Christians in this fair land which God had given to them.

In the evening there was an immense congregation—computed at fully 10,000 persons—in the Cathedral when Father Perosi's oratorio, 'The Transfiguration,' was given by the choir, under Herr Otto Linden's direction. The Cardinal, the metropolitan, and the visiting prelates, and many of the clergy, parochial and regular, were in the sanctuary. This was the first presentation of the famous oratorio in the Commonwealth, and experts were not slow to give it as their opinion that very great credit was due to the conductor and the forces under his command—voices, orchestra, and organist. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament brought the ceremonies to a close.

THE PRIESTS AND PEOPLE OF IRELAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

PAPER READ AT THE CATHOLIC CONGRESS

By His Eminence Cardinal Moran

We are told by some writers of the present day that, throughout the century just closed, the Irish people have proved themselves wholly devoid of enlightenment and energy, without thrift or industry, without patriotism, without religion. Furthermore, it has been remarked that, at the close of the century, matters were far worse than at its commencement; everything had been stagnant, decaying, hopeless; and the climax of Ireland's misery may be looked for in the century now opening. Those writers assure us that the cause of this 'universal and national degeneracy' is not far to seek: the Irish are a priest-ridden people. For the decay, and degeneracy, and ruin that everywhere prevail, the priest is the 'universal cause omnipotent in Ireland.' Our Presbyterian friends, assembled in England a few months ago, at one of those meetings that bring the name of religion into disgrace, addressed to their co-religionists in Ireland the affecting utterance that 'the desolating power of priestcraft in Ireland is unexampled in Christendom.'

As attempts are made amongst us to scatter broadcast such calumnies against the Irish priesthood and the Irish race, I have thought that it might not be without interest for your Congress to take an accurate survey of the situation, to look at matters in their true light, to see what has been achieved by the

Priests and People of Ireland

during the 19th century. So far from those calumnious statements being verified, I am convinced that, precisely through the cordial union of the Priests and People, great difficulties were overcome, and great victories achieved. I do not know that any country in the world has, during the century, made greater progress—material, intellectual, industrial, political, and religious progress—than Ireland. Prejudices had to be overcome, and evils, the growth of centuries, had to be rooted out. All this has been but the beginning of the triumphs that marked the country's progress, so that for the century now opening we have the dawn of a bright era. On hearing the evidence, I think you will conclude with me that the Irish priests have proved themselves zealous and enlightened pastors, the unpurchasable champions of their nation's rights, and

that, taking all in all, the sons and daughters of Ireland are, beyond all question, the most enlightened, the most progressive, and the most virtuous people of Christendom at the present day. The secret of all the contention against Ireland is, that neither force nor bribe could weaken the confidence of the Irish people in their devoted pastors. It is the old story of the Grecian parable. The wolves, being assembled in grave session, issued a proclamation to the effect that the watch-dogs were the cause of all the trouble and hubbub in the fold. Remove this turbulent element, and peace and honor, with general contentment, will rule supreme. When considering the condition of Ireland in the last century, there is one factor that cannot be overlooked—and, indeed, its importance cannot be over-rated—that is,

The Penal Laws

which, far into the century, continued to oppress the energies of her Catholic people. In the history of Christian nations, there is nothing to be compared to the tyranny and oppression endured by the Irish Catholics under these Penal Laws. Living, as we are, in an age of toleration, and in an atmosphere of freedom, it is not easy for us to realise how merciless was the persecution, and how fearful were the vicissitudes that befell the Priests and the People of Ireland in those days. I will allow the impartial Mr. Justin M'Carthy, to sketch these laws:—

'Under the Penal Laws,' he says, 'the Catholic population of a Catholic country were deprived of almost every right that makes life precious. Dopping, Bishop of Meath, had proclaimed from the pulpit that Protestants were not bound to keep faith with Papists. Lord Chancellor Bowes and Chief Justice Robinson had proclaimed from the Bench that the law did not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Catholic. The Penal Laws certainly did their best to ensure that no such person should exist. In their own country Irish Catholics were shut out from every civil or military profession; from every Government office, from the highest to the lowest; from almost every duty and every privilege that can be obeyed or enjoyed by citizens. A Catholic could not sit upon the benches of the Lords or Commons of the Irish Parliament. He could not record his vote for the election of a member of Parliament; he could not serve in the army or navy; he could not plead at the Bar or give judgment from the Bench; he could not become a magistrate or a member of a corporation, or serve on grand juries or in vestries; he could not be a sheriff, game-keeper, or a constable; he could not give education; he could not receive education; he could not send his children abroad to be educated. If, in defiance of the law, he, a Catholic, did send his children to receive, in Continental colleges, that knowledge which was refused at home, he was subjected to a fine of £100, and the child so educated was excluded from inheriting any property in Ireland or England. Not only was the Catholic denied the practice of his own religion, but conformity to the Protestant faith was enforced by statute. Every Catholic was liable to a fine of £60 a month for not attending a place of Protestant worship, and at any time any two justices of the peace could call a Catholic over sixteen years of age before them, and bestow what property he possessed upon his next of kin, if he refused to turn from his faith. Any four justices of the peace could, without the formalities of a trial, send any Catholic refusing to attend Protestant service into banishment for life. Every Catholic priest in the country pursued his sacred calling under a penalty of death. Deprived alike of his civil and religious rights, the Catholic was further plundered of his property. No Catholic might buy land or inherit it, or receive it as a gift from Protestants, or hold life annuities or leases for more than 31 years, or any lease on such terms as that the profits of the land exceeded one-third the value of the land. Any Protestant discovering that a farm held by a Papist produced a profit greater than one-third of the rent, could, immediately upon announcing this discovery, dispossess the Catholic owner and seize the farm for himself.'

It Required the Most Heroic Fortitude

and heroic patience to enable the nation to endure under such unlaw. Edmund Burke tells of its oppressive and degrading results. 'The Penal Laws,' he says, 'were a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.' Mr. Goldwin Smith also declares that they 'will remain a reproach to human nature, and a terrible monument of the villainy into which nations may be led when their religion has been turned into hatred, and they have been taught to believe that the indulgence of the most malignant passions of man is an acceptable offering to God.' Mr. Lecky is not