

CATHOLIC CULTURE AND ENGLISH SPEECH

(By the BISHOP OF NORTHAMPTON.)

The Bishop of Northampton's recent pastoral deals with a topic of present and perennial interest, thus (says the *London Tablet*):—

The ubiquity of the English tongue is an impressive fact which has "come home" to us very literally during the past four years. From all quarters of the globe, men of English speech have flocked to our shores, from Canada, from Australia, from New Zealand, from South Africa, and elsewhere; and last of all, but assuredly not least, have come the ever-growing hosts of the United States. It is conceivable that the British Empire may, some day, go the way of all other empires; that it may break up, as others have broken up, and that its world-wide sway may shrink to the humble proportions of its beginnings. But it is not easily conceivable that, within any calculable epoch, the chain of English speech, which now encircles the earth, will be severed: or that it will fail to grow stronger with the development of those young and vigorous nations whose vernacular it is, and who are evidently destined for future greatness.

This indisputable fact, flattering as it is to our patriotic sentiment, does not appeal so spontaneously to the religious sentiment of Catholics. For the English tongue, however closely identified with our ideals of democratic freedom, is hardly less closely identified with that evil thing which Cardinal Newman called "the Protestant tradition." Our literature and the habits of thought it engenders and fosters are frankly non-Catholic, even when they are not openly anti-Catholic. English theology is feeble and vacillating even when it happens to be orthodox; English philosophy is mostly sceptical and materialistic; English drama and fiction are mostly of the earth, earthly; and English journalism may be relied upon to be anti-papal.

The Latin tongue once occupied a similar position. In the early days of Christianity, Latin was the imperial language—the language of the Senate, the language of the Law, the language of official life, the language of polite society, the language of imperishable masterpieces in every department of pagan thought. For centuries the whole weight of Latin culture was cast against the servile religion of the Cross. As long as possible, the classical writers ignored it; and, when it could be ignored no longer, made their Latin the channel of the vilest calumnies and the most frenzied attacks upon it. Yet, in the course of Divine Providence, the Latin tongue came to be converted and baptised. It ceased to be the language of the court, only to become the language of the Church—the language of her liturgy, the language of her Councils, the language of her most illustrious doctors, the language of her Schools, the "lingua franca" of Christendom, from end to end, during the thousand years that Christendom remained one and undivided in faith.

Can it be "Converted"?

The conversion of the English tongue from the service of error to the service of truth is an enterprise no less important for the future of civilisation. The nations outside the sphere of Teutonic influence are already looking to the English-speaking peoples for leadership in the political and social reconstruction which must follow the return of peace. What sound shall the trumpet give forth? The old strain of crude "naturalism," with its appeal to our grosser and more selfish instincts? Or the clear call, which Catholicism alone can give, "to restore all things in Christ"?

Time was, and not so very long ago, when we might have despaired of making ourselves heard amid the hubbub of discordant and often hostile voices. Dr. Lingard complained, in his early days, that a Catholic writer could expect no notice except from the very limited circle of Catholic readers. He himself, by his epoch-making *History of England*, broke the blockade and encouraged others to follow him. Newman, a

much greater name, had already, before his conversion, caught the public ear; and, when he became a Catholic, continued to pour out volume upon volume, so matchless in style and so characteristically English in manner, that he is read, and must always be read, as a classic wherever our tongue is spoken. After these, more and more writers could be mentioned who have made their mark in various paths of literature and journalism, and have utilized their popularity to serve their creed; while the Catholic Truth Society, and several younger societies formed on the same model, have spread broadcast cheap but scholarly tracts, exhibiting the Catholic view of public questions as they arise. The boycott against us has been sensibly relaxed. We believe that it can be made to yield outright.

Statistics alone should give us courage. Out of a thousand residential Sees in the Catholic world, more than a third are located in the British and American dominions; and if many of these, at present, are like the cadres of an army before mobilisation, yet the Catholic subjects of these English-speaking Powers already number no less than *forty millions*, a total which will grow by leaps and bounds when the cadres fill up, as they are filling up rapidly everywhere. We have shown ourselves numerous enough and united enough, each in our own country, to vindicate our political rights. Are we not numerous enough, and can we not become united enough, to vindicate a hearing for Catholic views on reconstruction in the open field of public opinion?

War Lessons.

The war has taught us many lessons and provided many unexpected opportunities. We have learned, for instance, the methods and vital importance of "propaganda." In this, as in so many other ways, the enemy got the start of us; and before we realised what was happening, Prussia's agents had managed to capture the press in the neutral, and even to some extent in the Allied countries. Everywhere, in the early months at least, we found the Prussian legend in possession; and it is only now, somewhat late in the day, that our propaganda has overtaken the enemy's and begun to convert sympathy to our side. Is the "Manchester" legend, with its sordid belief in money and material efficiency, less noxious or more impregnable than the Prussian legend, or indeed very different from it? And should it not be possible to oust the one by copying the methods that have been successful in ousting the other? *Publicity* is all we want. Only secure publicity for the Catholic solution of the perplexing problems that confront mankind, and it will be instantly recognised as the right answer.

Another lesson of the war is the necessity of combination to ensure success. By isolated efforts we can hope to make small impression on the long entrenched front of the anti-Catholic tradition. But when we have learned to marshal and unify our forces, we shall not have to wait for palpable results. This is the ulterior object of our visit to the United States, and the justification of our lengthy absence from the diocese. The special occasion, as you are aware, is the episcopal golden jubilee of his Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, the last surviving Father of the Vatican Council, and, as his people call him, "the first citizen of the Republic." It is a privilege and an honor to be the bearer of our country's homage and congratulations to him. But we are expected to "improve the occasion" by cultivating cordial relations with our American brethren, with a view to winning the war, and co-operating with them in the re-fashioning of the world after the war. Held together as we are by the bond of faith; drawn closer, at this crisis, by the unique tie of comradeship in arms; animated by the same ideals of political and religious freedom, our unity of speech should sweep away the last barrier to combined action in the interests of the Church and mankind.

Meanwhile, beloved brethren, quite unforeseen opportunities of furthering the same cause are offered to the Catholics of the Homeland. In normal times, if we were very much in earnest about it, we should probably try to gather a Congress of English-speaking

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