

Current Topics

Hooliganism in High Places

If it be true—as an old writer so long ago observed—that ‘manners makyth man,’ Lord Hugh Cecil, Viscount Castlereagh, and the others associated with them in insulting Mr. Asquith and in creating the disorder in the House of Commons last week, must be accounted poor specimens of manhood. Not a single extenuating circumstance can be pleaded in their behalf. Outbursts of such a sort are understandable—and perhaps to some extent excusable—under the influence of sudden excitement or of some unexpected provocation; but in this case the outrage was gratuitous and unprovoked, and was planned and organised deliberately, in cold blood. Nor was there, from any point of view, any sort of redeeming feature about the display. There was neither cleverness, wit, nor point in the verbal missiles heaved at Mr. Asquith—nothing whatever to lift the exhibition above the level of bare, bald, brainless hooliganism. It was simply—as Mr. Birrell aptly described it—‘a cold-blooded, well-organised orgy of stupidity and ruffianism.’ At such a time, when the peers are, in a very critical sense, on their trial, the sight of a noble lord behaving like a sort of Parliamentary Bill Sykes is a spectacle for gods and men. There is a remedy—a very plebeian one—for ill-mannered lawlessness of that sort; and if there are any further ‘scenes’ by these scions of the nobility it may yet have to be invoked. It is indicated in the following sentence from that courtly English gentleman, Dean Hole: ‘The most devoted admirers of Sir Robert Peel would not venture to assert that in his wonderful prescience he foresaw a time when the mutual courtesies which always prevail among gentlemen would be ignored in the House of Commons, but they certainly may say of him that he provided the remedy, the only remedy, for this disgraceful rowdyism when he instituted the new police.’

The Revolt in Albania

The cable message which appeared in the daily papers the other day to the effect that Albanian women who did not flee to Montenegro were being outraged and beaten, and in some instances afterwards burned to death—the victims in several cases being nuns—goes to show that the young Turks are carrying out to the full the policy of ‘thorough’ which it was intimated some time ago they intended to adopt in dealing with the present insurrection. The revolt in Albania—a north-western province of Turkey, bordering on the independent State of Montenegro—has been going on for four or five months; but it is less than two months ago since the Mirdite tribe, the most powerful in Albania, took up arms and joined in the rising. According to the *Times* correspondent at Cettigne, they are able to place 10,000 armed men in the field. They occupy an almost inaccessible mountain district, and for centuries have maintained their independence, defying every effort of the Turks to subdue them, as they in former days defied the Roman emperors. The tribe are all Catholics. It would appear that their leaders, civil and religious, have counselled submission, and have done their best to hold the tribe back, but without success. Commenting upon the message from Cettigne, *The Times* says: ‘The Mirdites are much the largest of the Albanian tribes, and, unlike their neighbours, they are all of one religious faith, a circumstance which presumably adds to their internal cohesion. They are all Roman Catholics, and, like the Roman Catholics of Albania, they stand under the religious protectorate of Austria-Hungary.’

There is nothing in the demands of the Albanians which might not have been made the subject of reasonable discussion and negotiation; and with any sort of decent government there would have been no need for any revolt at all. According to a summary in the *Saturday Review* all the Albanians asked for was that (i.) Their local journals should not be subject to Turkish

supervision; (ii.) Albanian schools should be conducted by natives in the native tongue; (iii.) taxes raised in Albania should be expended in local administration. The situation is more serious for Turkey than at first sight appears. ‘Montenegro,’ says the *London Chronicle*, ‘is watching, wholly sympathetic with Albania; behind Montenegro is Italy, at heart equally sympathetic. But Italy is the ally of Austria, and by the side of Austria, in any emergency, is Germany “in shining armour.”’ The Austrian and German semi-official Press have counselled the Young Turks to come to terms; and the Austrian Press in particular are unanimous in demanding that something shall be done to prevent the Albanians from being overpowered. The general Austrian point of view is thus expressed in a Vienna paper: ‘In virtue of our protectorate Count Aehrenthal must lay before the Porte a positive programme of reform—for instance, the autonomy of Northern Albania under a vali; the permission to bear arms; freedom from taxation and from military service; the appointment of Christian officials; liberty of language and worship; and, above all, the cessation of the campaign. This he must demand and obtain, and that rapidly and strikingly; not in order to preserve European Turkey, which is the concern of the Turks themselves, but in order to preserve our influence over the Christian races of European Turkey.’ The Turkish forces have had some slight measure of success; but they show no disposition to push on with serious fighting along the Montenegrin frontier. If the struggle should be continued, it seems certain that Austria will intervene.

The ‘Outlook’ on Catholic Literature

Apropos of the mouth-filling overtures regarding *Ne Temere* which are to be launched at the Presbyterian General Assembly in November, our Dunedin Presbyterian contemporary, the *Outlook*, sanely and sensibly remarks that while overturing is well enough in its way, and while protection against the ‘Catholic invasion’—whatever that mysterious phrase may mean—should be ‘sedulously agitated for,’ the ‘Assembly would, nevertheless, be doing a much more practical service to Presbyterianism if it would ‘awake to the necessity for the right sort of literature being placed in the hands of the people’; and, in particular, if it would make a determined effort to circulate its own paper. In this connection, our contemporary is honest enough to pay to our present-day Catholic writers a tribute as thoughtful as it is true—a tribute, moreover, which carries added weight from the fact that the present editor of the *Outlook* is one of the best-informed and most competent authorities in the Dominion on all questions connected with general literature.

Our readers will thank us for quoting our contemporary in full. ‘This “simple faith in God and in his Saviour,” together with a sense “of death, of sin, of eternity, of salvation,”’ he writes in the issue of July 18, ‘is noticeably absent in the literature of the present day. Many of the most-quoted writers adopt a frankly pagan attitude to life, others are notoriously materialistic, and the only approach to the religious impulse to be found in modern first-class fiction consists in an attempt to solve the mysteries of a future life by dangerous dabbings in spiritualism and occultism. To all this, however, there is a notable exception—namely, in the case of the rapidly-growing army of Catholic men and women of letters. It is several years since Canon Sheehan—who ranks with Dr. William Barry as Catholic critic and litterateur of note—wrote these words: “I believe that we have not yet fully recognised the vast importance of literature as a means of conveying Catholic truth to the world”; but within the last decade the recognition has been amply made. The number of prominent modern writers who have embraced the Catholic faith is certainly surprising. Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, counted among the most cleverest men in London, and indubitably among the most widely read, are both Catholics; and in their essays, stories, and articles adopt the Catholic standpoint. Francis Thompson, whose