

Episcopalian Ascendancy in Ireland

Here (writes Mr. Jeremiah McVeagh, M.P., in 'Home Rule Notes') are a few figures in illustration of the Church Ascendancy in Ireland. They are very remarkable, and will repay study, for they prove that Presbyterians and Methodists suffer nearly as much under the Ascendancy as Catholics. The Irish Presbyterian ministers not only tolerate this system; they are not ashamed even to defend it. So long as the Catholics in their own land are 'down,' it matters not to the Presbyterians that the Episcopalians are 'up.' Such is their benighted notion of 'Civil and Religious Liberty'! According to the Parliamentary Return of 1910 there are 807 Episcopalian Justices of the Peace. But there are only 251 Catholic Justices, 157 Presbyterians, 38 Methodists, and 19 'various.' As to the Lords Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants of Counties, at least eight out of every ten are Episcopalians. The Irish Privy Council consists of 43 Episcopalians, 10 Catholics, 9 Presbyterians, and 10 others. The Stipendiary Magistrates include 41 Episcopalians, 19 Catholics, and 6 Presbyterians. The Judges of the High Court number 7 Episcopalians, 4 Catholics, and 2 Presbyterians; whilst the Land and Estates Commissioners consist of 3 Episcopalians, 2 Catholics, and 1 Presbyterian. The County Inspectors of Police are 37 in number, of whom only 4 are Catholics, and nearly all the others are Episcopalians. It may be added that when the Tories went out of office in 1905, the Assistant Land Commissioners, Inspectors, and Assistant Inspectors were constituted of 39 Episcopalians, 16 Catholics, and 12 Presbyterians; whilst the Recorders and County Court Judges included 10 Episcopalians, 8 Catholics, and 2 Presbyterians. The Liberal Government has since reduced the disproportion under the

last two heads. Last and least, there are 174 Irish Peers, of whom only 14 are Catholics, and at least 150 are Episcopalians.

Until the passing of Mr. Gerald Balfour's Local Government Act for Ireland, the Episcopalians also controlled, through the now defunct Grand Juries, the local government of nearly every county in Ireland. Even in counties where the Catholics formed 95 per cent. of the population, it was an event of the rarest occurrence to appoint a Catholic to even the most menial office. The appointment of a Presbyterian or a Methodist was even rarer. It was of this system that John Bright declared in the House of Commons: 'These Ulstermen have stood in the way of improvement in the franchise, in the Church, and in the Land question. They have purchased Protestant Ascendancy, and the price paid for it is the ruin and degradation of their country.'

The pen is mightier than the sword,
The rifle or the gun;
Ten thousand battles it has fought,
Ten thousand victories won.
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