

THE INTOLERANCE CRY

IRISH CATHOLICS VINDICATED

Mr. Swift MacNeill, M.P., delivered recently in the Inns of Court Hotel, Holborn, at a meeting of the Metropolitan branch of the United Irish League, London, an interesting lecture entitled 'Irish Catholics and Religious Intolerance.' Mr. S. M. Woods, J.P., an Ulster Protestant, took the chair, and there was a very large attendance. In the course of his lecture Mr. MacNeill said:—It may not be out of place if I state a few incidents in my own experience which demonstrate thoroughly the entire absence from the hearts and thoughts of the Irish Catholic people of anything approaching sectarian rancor or religious intolerance. Every one is aware that the statue of King William III. in College Green, Dublin, was for many a generation the outward and visible symbol of Protestant ascendancy. From the time of the Revolution till the beginning of the nineteenth century, November 4, which was the birthday of William III., was celebrated in Dublin with the greatest pomp. The Lord Lieutenant held a Court, and, followed by the Lord Chancellor, the Judges, the Lord Mayor, and a large train of the nobility and gentry, he paraded in state round the statue of William III. At the drawingroom the ladies appeared decorated with orange ribbons, and orange cockades were worn by the soldiers. Round this statue in days gone by many a fierce party riot raged, and on several occasions this statue was disfigured, and King William on horseback subjected to serious injuries and indignities. So far have all these ideas of bitterness in relation to the statue vanished that the Corporation of Dublin, a mainly Catholic body, regarding it as an old historic relic of a bygone period, have had King William repaired and remounted, and placed on a base made with stones from the old city walls of Dublin. Sir William Harcourt, when Leader of the House of Commons in June, 1895, referred to this action of the Dublin Corporation in terms of the very highest commendation. The Catholics of that Corporation, in their treatment of this statue, were, I think, following, albeit unconsciously, the traditions of the Catholic Corporation of Dublin who, in the reign of Queen Mary, rented seventy-four houses in Dublin and invited over English Protestant merchants from Bristol, and, when Mary's persecution ceased, sent them and their families back safely to their homes. Since the Disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church the Bishops of that Church are elected by the free will and choice of the clergy and laity. A Rev. Dr. Chester, the Protestant Rector of Birr, was elected Bishop of Killaloe. He was greatly liked by the people, both Protestants and Catholics, in his parish. On his return home after his election to the Bishopric

A Large Crowd of Catholics

met him at the station, received him enthusiastically, took the horses from his carriage, and brought him home in triumphant procession to his rectory. When a Dr. Gregg, a Protestant Bishop of Cork, was made the Protestant Lord Primate, he was presented with an address of congratulation by the Catholic Lord Mayor and Corporation of Cork. The late Lord Plunket, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, was a prime favorite with the Catholic people of Dublin. On his death Dublin went into public mourning, and his funeral was a demonstration of the grief for his loss and the great affection and respect in which he was held by his Catholic fellow-countrymen. A Dr. Reeves, a celebrated Celtic scholar, was Protestant Dean of Armagh. Community of tastes and studies brought about a very close and cordial friendship between Dr. McGettigan, the Catholic Lord Primate and Archbishop of Armagh, and its Protestant Dean. The Dean was made Bishop of Down. When the tidings of his death reached the city of Armagh, the bell of the Catholic Cathedral was tolled before the tolling of the bell of the Protestant Cathedral began. Only a few months ago my sister and I attended the funeral of a very dear friend, the Protestant Rector of Kingstown, near Dublin, which

is mainly a Catholic locality. All the shops were closed, and the air of sadness throughout the town spoke unmistakably of a great personal sorrow to its inhabitants. During the service in the Protestant church, which was conducted by the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, a passing bell was being tolled, and many thought it was the bell of the Protestant church and wondered at its tolling during the service. The passing bell, however, was the bell of the Catholic church, which was being tolled in token of the sorrow of the priests and people for one whom they regarded as a close personal friend. The idea of religious intolerance on the part of Irish Catholics is utterly baseless; and that it should be entertained is a grievous injustice to a people who are too strongly imbued with Christian feelings and principles to be uncharitable to others. The great volume of evidence collected so skilfully and laboriously by my gifted friend, Mr. Jeremiah MacVeagh, M.P., proves conclusively that the Protestant minorities in the large Catholic districts of Ireland have been uniformly treated with

The Greatest Kindness and Consideration

by their Catholic fellow-countrymen, and are living on the best of terms with their Catholic neighbors. The fear of religious intolerance is, in the rare instances in which it is an actual or not an affected apprehension, grounded on the recollection of the treatment accorded in Penal days by State Protestantism when in the ascendant to Catholics who were reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water; made serfs in their own land, robbed of their heritage, deprived of education, of the franchise, of admission to the learned professions, of the acquisition of landed property only because they were Catholics. That Penal system in Ireland was the result of a selfish policy of the privileged classes who then ruled not merely Ireland, but Great Britain, to secure their own ill-got power by sowing dissensions between different classes in the community. Archbishop Boulter, a Protestant Archbishop of Armagh, who for nearly twenty years was the virtual ruler of Ireland, used to say, 'When Catholic and Protestant unite, good-bye to the English interests'—meaning the corrupt interests of Englishmen who jobbed themselves and their relatives into sinecure places charged on the Irish revenue. Lord Chancellor Plunket accused the Irish Government of his time of halloing Catholic against Protestant, and Protestant against Catholic, in Ireland, with the object of the common subjugation of both. Religious intolerance is, in the words of Mr. Jeremiah MacVeagh, to be found only in the North-east corner of Ulster, where the Irish Tories and Orangemen predominate. It was this intolerance which inspired the opposition to the removal from the Statute Book of the Accession Declaration, known as the King's Blasphemy. It should not be forgotten that Mr. Walter Long, who is now succeeded in the leadership of the Ulster Orange Party by Sir Edward Carson, incurred the disapprobation of his followers because he was in favor of the abolition of this insulting declaration which his Majesty the King has been relieved from the pain of making. Mr. Long was given to understand that a visit he had intended to make to Belfast would be unwelcome in certain quarters—probably as unwelcome as the visit of Mr. Winston Churchill must have been in the same quarters. We may search in vain for any evidence, however slight, of religious intolerance in Ireland where Catholics are in power, but to the least observant a generous recognition of merit in their Protestant fellow-countrymen, and a hearty desire to place them in positions of trust and emolument if their talents fit them for such positions, and if they are in sympathy with

Irish National Aspirations,

are plainly unmistakable, palpable. Parnell, the Protestant historian, in his *Historical Apology for the Irish Catholics*, writes:—'The Irish Roman Catholic bigots! The Irish Roman Catholics are the only sect that ever resumed power without exercising vengeance.' Let us glance at the methods of civil and religious toleration as exercised by the persons who would keep Home Rule from Ireland on the ground that their own civil and religious liberty would be endangered. In Belfast, which has a Nationalist population of 95,000, and in