

BOSTONIAN IGNORANCE OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

POPULAR agitation against Catholics in the United States seems to mark the years with double numbers, such as 1833, 1844, 1855, and that which has just expired has done something to merit a place in the category. The agitation of 1833 culminated in the burning of the Ursuline Convent at Charlestown by a mob, and it is strange that, in half a century of progress, the most enlightened city in the country still shows to the world that, in fifty years, it has learned nothing in some departments of human knowledge, and has thousands still slaves of ignorant prejudice, ready to be swayed and led on by fanatical appeals. The good people of Boston know a great deal more about electricity, early Greek art, the site of Troy, Egyptian antiquities, the mineral resources of America, methods of manufacture, than they did fifty years ago; but in regard to the Catholic Church, its organization, doctrines, worship and polity, they seem not to have learned an iota. And what is true of that city, which boasts of its superior culture, is true of many other places.

The intellectual attitude of the mass of non-Catholics towards us is one of the most curious problems in the world. When Catholics were few in this country, and foreign travel uncommon; when the Catholic religion was believed to be something that flourished in the Middle Ages, and disappeared in modern times; when, as a Lord Chancellor of England, once, putting the whole matter for that country, declared that Catholics, in the eye of the law, were not supposed to exist in England, one could understand to some extent that all knowledge about them might be supposed to lurk only among learned professors in colleges who studied the matter up in order to obtain a definite idea of the European nations during the Middle Ages; but when every large city has, in its churches, colleges, schools and charitable institutions, evidences that Catholicity is an actual and active reality; when town and village show the same in proportion, it is amazing beyond conception that people will wallow in ignorance, or rest on the narrow circle of old wives' tales handed down by prejudice, rather than examine for themselves. Although Catholic books and periodicals can be had on all sides, they are never examined; no effort is made to acquire information. Indeed, in many minds there is the latent, if unexpressed, idea that Catholic books are imbued with a kind of witchcraft; that they have some subtle power that blinds a person to

his better judgment if he touches them, and convinces him against his will and his reason.

Nearly fifty years ago Catholics in New York, who had been deprived, for no fault of theirs, of a share of the school money, asked its restoration, showing that in the schools of the Public School Society, a private corporation which enjoyed the monopoly, there were books and teaching so imbued with hostility or contempt for Catholics that they could not send their children to them. The Protestant clergy rallied to the support of the School Society, every old charge possible was revived against Catholics, and a new one, utterly false, that Catholics had asked to have the Bible banished from the schools, became a stock accusation, maintained to this day, and which still finds dupes to believe it.

So, this year, in Boston, an American priest called the attention of the School Board to a misrepresentation of Catholic doctrine by a teacher. That gentleman fell back on a history used in the schools, and continued to present his views of Catholic doctrine in more and more offensive forms, till the Board struck the book from the list and assigned the teacher to another department. Then, as fifty years ago, numbers of Protestant clergymen who, not without good grounds, consider the public schools part of their system and property, began a vehement campaign against the Catholic religion, denouncing it, and all who adhered to it, in every possible form. Many of the leading newspapers aided the onslaught. The whole matter became a political issue, and even women were stimulated to rush to the polls to save their religion, if not their lives and homes. And, in fact, they voted by thousands, knowing as little as the men what the merits of the case really were. If it has been right that Protestants should have exclusive control of the public schools, as they have had these many years, it must be equally right for Catholics to do the same when they can. A Protestant journal says: "It is abominable that this very denomination should be at the same time struggling to get control of their management, their text-books, and their teachers." If the control by Catholics would be abominable, that by Protestants must be, if both are citizens with equal rights.

What an indulgence is, as taught by the Catholic Church, could be as easily ascertained as what an electric dynamo is. The Catholic Church is an institution existing throughout the world. It has the decrees of Councils, defining its faith. It has dogmatic and catechetical works for the ordinary guidance of its priesthood and the instruction of the faithful. Any person of common sense would say: Let us examine these and take the definitions given there. But people of common sense seem few in number. Objections are made that the books used by Catholics in this country

are adapted for Protestant countries, yet books printed in Catholic countries might readily be had. If others averred that doctrines had changed, and that, in former times, different definitions were given, and different ideas and practices prevailed, still the fact remains that printing was invented in Catholic times, and that for more than half a century before Protestantism arose, and down to this time, presses have teemed with Catholic books. It would be the easiest thing in the world for any great library, like Harvard, to make a collection of Catholic books, showing what indulgences were held to be, at all times, and in all countries, from the invention of printing to the present time. This would be the best primary evidence on that point, as a collection of missals would be of the form of the liturgy during that period.

Yet, in all that was written, said and printed during the heated discussion in Boston, no one seems to have taken this plain, common-sense way of ascertaining what Catholics hold an indulgence to be.

There are quaint little handbooks, like DeBurgo's *Pupilla Oculi*, 1510; the *Discipulus de Eruditione Christi Fidelium*, 1504; *Manipulus Clericorum*, 1530, printed for the use of the parochial clergy in England, France and Germany, which would afford any really honest inquirer a knowledge of what doctrine was then actually taught the people from the pulpit; but it is useless even to expect any such intelligent examination. Catholics puzzled at the mental phenomenon of intelligent people preferring darkness to light, and error to truth, can only pray that God would "take away the veil from their hearts."

The result of the Boston agitation was not commensurate with the energy expended. With the pulpit and press inciting the people, with women summoned to the polls, the effect was slight compared to other days. "Sometimes a convent, then a church we burn," did not hold good; but by almost superhuman exertion they succeeded in defeating a Catholic gentleman, who, after holding the office of Mayor of Boston for four terms, a duration well-nigh unexampled in the municipal history of that city, was defeated when a candidate for the fifth time; and they gave one more proof of the essentially Protestant character of the public schools by preventing the election of any Catholic to the School Board. As these same people are complaining of Catholics for withdrawing their children from the public schools, it was rather unwise to make their anti-Catholic spirit and management so distinctly apparent.

The spirit of hostility to the Church, which showed itself fifty or sixty years ago in the violence committed by the poor misguided dupes of men who should have known better, and had

hearts to teach them better, still prevails, and on occasion can be roused, but it is less generally diffused, and is diminishing in intensity. The sermons of 1888 led to none of the crimes caused by those of earlier days.

Protestantism is losing its hold even in New England. The population of Colonial stock are dwindling in numbers, and the churches show a decline greater even than proportionate numerical loss. The young rarely become church members, the Sunday School and Young Men's Christian Associations seem to supplant rather than aid the churches. Protestantism never was a religion, nor had the elements of one. It has no priesthood, no settled dogma, no essential act of divine worship. In our times the cold Calvinistic church service repels, as the Episcopal, with its new trappings, its vestments, its light, its spirit of gladness, seems to attract Protestants. The Methodists and Baptists have outlived their early energy. The decline is so distinctly felt that recruits for the ministry are few. Zealous men are studying and devising how to draw promising young men to the ministry; but no result has been reached. In many parts, especially in New England, where churches formerly had a large membership, it has dwindled so that they cannot secure ministers. There have been conventions to know what is to be done to save these churches. Where they are of the same denomination, congregations can unite, and so defer for a time the imminent dissolution. But in many cases there are four or five churches in a little town, each belonging to a different organization. "A township of 5000 population seldom has more than three churches," says a Protestant paper, "*one of which is Roman Catholic, and is always well filled*, and these churches will not seat more than 1200. The number of people at all the churches on any Sunday morning is scarcely 600." Schemes for a union of denominations have been taken up, and there is a journal, *The Church Union*, especially devoted to advocating such a blending together. The International Bible Lesson for Sunday Schools tends that way, and on Thanksgiving Day, which, in the memory of living men, saw every Protestant church well filled, it is now usual in many places to hold a union service; the most eloquent minister is selected, and he can barely fill one church, while several others are closed and empty. But effectual union is prevented by many minor causes, that of church-property not being the least. The questions of doctrine, church government and form of service present great difficulties; not a denomination has any for which any positive authority can be shown, but each clings to its own, as though a matter of positive divine revelation. With all the labor to effect a union, not a step has been gained, not even the different bodies of a single denomination have been

brought together. "You have had your Evangelical Alliance for nearly fifty years, you have had your famous Pan-Presbyterian Alliance for at least twelve years," wrote Rev. Dr. Dabney, when he proceeded to show that they had effected absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, the gradual disintegration goes on. So far as the Catholic Church is concerned, any union between it and the sects that have separated from it, and from each other, has, of course, become impossible. Men like Fénelon, Leibnitz, Bishop Doyle, believed it practicable, in their day, but what might have been possible in the seventeenth century, is no longer so.

There is a remarkable difference between the earlier Oriental heresies and those of the West now embodied in Protestantism. The former turned almost entirely on questions relating to our Lord; but each body, as formed apart from the Church, retained a hierarchy, priesthood, the Mass as the only sacrifice or public divine worship of the New Law, the sacraments and most Catholic practices. The Greek schism touched the Papacy as the continuous headship of Peter. For all or any of these bodies to unite with the Catholic Church again, required but little. If any body, like the Eutychians recently, who, after being fourteen centuries out of the Church, formally disavows, by an authoritative act, the particular heretical doctrine it has held, it comes back with its apostolic succession, valid orders, Mass and sacraments. All goes on externally as before, but they are Catholics. Even the Greek Church in Russia, Greece and Turkey could, by a simple act recognizing the supremacy of the Pope, restore millions upon millions to the unity of faith. It would require no change in the form of church government, or in the Mass, or in the administration of the sacraments, and very little even in the doctrinal teaching.

But the Protestant movement carried with it few bishops, and abandoned necessarily the priesthood and the Mass. It has no episcopate with apostolic succession, no duly ordained priesthood, no sacrifice of the New Law, and now virtually no sacraments, even if there were those who could validly administer them. There is nothing on their side by which a union can be effected. They are mere secessionists, and to come back to the union must acknowledge the general government of the Church and its organization. They have not kept for three centuries what the Eutychians did for fourteen, but must recover it all, and that cannot be done without, but only within the Church. No Protestant body can come into the Church, though individuals can and do.

Providence is shaping events so that even in New England the faith is gaining a firm hold that would have been deemed impossible a few years ago. The fact that Boston has at four successive

elections chosen an Irish Catholic for Mayor; that in the School Board of that city there are even now eight Catholic members, shows a large Catholic body and influence in Boston; the more so as Catholic energy centring on the erection and maintenance of parochial schools, our people generally have come to the conviction that no really just and fair system of public schools is possible, and that the best devised system would constantly be made an instrument of oppression. Hence their interest in the public schools has decreased; they leave them to their fellow-citizens of other beliefs and unbeliefs.

The growth of the Catholic body in New England, by natural increase, by immigration from Europe and the descendants of more recent incomers, and by the wonderful influx of French Canadians who came at first merely as denizens, but now remain, become citizens and settle down to make the land their home. They have able leaders like Gagnon, their literary associations, priests, churches, convents, schools, they are bilingual, speaking both French and English, and increase rather than diminish the influence of their brethren in Canada. A recent estimate fixes the number of French Canadians in the United States at 800,000, five hundred thousand in New York and New England.

The whole Catholic population of New England by the latest data is, in Maine, 70,000; New Hampshire, so long bitterly hostile to Catholics, 73,000; Vermont, 50,000; Massachusetts, 715,000; Rhode Island, 150,000; Connecticut, 175,000; a total of 1,248,000 in a population of 4,000,000 in 1880. In Rhode Island the Catholic population is fully half that of the State; in Connecticut $\frac{1}{3}$ ths; in Massachusetts, $\frac{2}{3}$ ths; the rate in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont is smaller, ranging from one-fifth to one-ninth.

Now, supposing all Catholic immigration to cease, the Catholic gain would be steady. Of 6638 children born alive in New Hampshire, 2410, or four out of every eleven, were baptized in Catholic churches; in Vermont, 2235 out of 7350 born alive; in Massachusetts, 28,000 out of 42,735, fully two-thirds; and in large cities like Boston the Catholic baptisms have for many years exceeded half the number of children born. The births in Boston in 1887 numbered 12,137, while the Catholic baptisms were 7382, showing that more than half the new native population of that city is Catholic and of Catholic parentage. This proportion is all the more striking, as within a few years suburban towns of old Puritanic origin have been brought within the city limits. So, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, three Catholic churches, in 1887, baptized 463; in Manchester, N. H., of 1390 children born, 930 were baptized in Catholic Churches. In Connecticut it is 6700 out of 14,027, or nearly half, and in Rhode Island 3602 out of 6798, or more

than half. Taking all New England together, of 77,548 children born alive, at least 43,000 were baptized in Catholic churches. The Catholic body would, therefore, independent of all accessions by immigration from Europe or Canada, gain steadily. It is a common delusion that the majority of Catholics in the United States are of foreign birth. It was not so at the Revolution, and cannot be proved to have been so at any period. In 1880 the foreign-born population was some 6,300,000; the Catholic body numbered 7,500,000; and not more than half the foreign born can be regarded as Catholic; even allowing 3,500,000 as their number, this would leave 4,000,000 native-born Catholics in the country.

As the Catholic births far exceed the general average of the country, this native body is growing at the rate of 250,000 a year.

Let us consider New England under another phase.

Place some of the old Puritan Fathers in Boston and other New England towns to-day. Irish Catholics, whom Ward, one of their ministers, characterized in his "Simple Cobbler of Aggawam" as "Bots of the Beast's Tail," would be seen by them filling the land with their descendants; Catholics of Portuguese origin, almost as hateful as Irish, swarm in all the fishing towns; German Catholics are found everywhere; the Catholics of Canada, for whose annihilation the old Puritan pulpits so constantly rang with appeals that every wall echoed them, now pour down like an irresistible torrent on their New England, conquered but conquering in turn. The Puritans of olden days would be appalled; but they would go to the meeting-houses to revive their spirits and the old religious ideas which they had founded. Here, surely, they would expect consolation and relief. They strenuously taught the doctrine of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Atonement, Baptismal Regeneration, the Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Church as the kingdom of God and a power in a Christian commonwealth; they believed in a Christian education of the young, and from the very primer where their little ones learned their letters they imbued them with these vital doctrines. But in the meeting-houses of to-day they would hear all these things ignored or derided and denied; and if they spoke of religious education in the schools, they would be crushed with sarcasm, taunt, ridicule and pretentious arrogance. They would leave the meeting-houses with sad and heavy hearts, and, looking up at cross-crowned spires, would gnash their teeth and regard the evil result as the work of these Catholic intruders who had come into their fair heritage. But, if mustering courage they entered the Catholic churches, what would be their amazement to hear every one of these doctrines boldly, fearlessly and plainly taught; they would see men called to adore the Holy Trinity, to look up to Jesus

Christ as our Redeemer, making atonement for us, wiping away original sin; they would hear the Scriptures read as the inspired word of God, not put on a level with the Zendavesta and the Koran; they would hear of baptismal regeneration, and constantly and steadily would hear the necessity inculcated of blending religion with education from the first dawn of reason. Would they not in utter amazement cast up their hands and cry: *Ergo erravimus?* "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice has not shined unto us:" "These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach." "Behold how they are numbered among the children of God."

They would turn from their degenerate descendants and admit that the house they had erected was built on sand, and that Christian hope was in the Catholic Church.

In sober reality such Christian truths as were taught in New England in old Puritan days are now taught there distinctly only by the Catholic Church. It is really continuing the work of the old Puritans.

Anti-Catholic prejudice has outlived the doctrines of the Protestant churches in New England and throughout the country. Secular education has bred a dry rot on the churches, and they are sensibly decaying. There is zeal in Sunday-schools, but these institutions, while made so as to attract and interest children, do not lead them to love and take part in the church service; they simply replace it for the young who, after growing up in Sunday-schools, are virtually strangers to the church, and find nothing there to interest them. It is as if our children were taught their catechism, but were never taken to Mass, and allowed to grow up ignorant of it and its meaning and consolations. As a matter of course, few would attend it.

In 1888 the anti-Catholic movement rose and fell in Boston; but did not spread through the country, although the old Know-Nothing organization has been revived and is active, with papers in several parts especially devoted to their cause; but every year the increasing numbers and influence of Catholics render their efforts less and less hurtful to the country. It will never again put a Presidential candidate in the field, but confine itself to underhand working in order to defeat an obnoxious candidate put forward by one of the two great parties, or beset enough Senators to prevent the confirmation of some Catholic nominated by the President.

The war on the parochial schools begun in Massachusetts may be revived and imitated elsewhere, but this seems scarcely probable. It failed in the first grand onset, and it will not be easy to rally the same strength again.

To all appearance the periodical attack on the Catholic body has passed, and if it is renewed in the last year of the century, it will, so far as human foresight can estimate the future, be feeble indeed, for the Catholic body, numbering twenty-five out of seventy-five millions, will be too respectable a minority to be easily crushed.

When we consider that Congregationalism was once not only the dominant, but actually the State Church in all parts of New England except Rhode Island, the refuge of the Baptists, the status of Congregationalism, as shown by the census of 1880, is perfectly amazing, in the decline which it shows. In Massachusetts, its very heart and centre, the descendants of the Separatists and Puritans have so fallen away from the faith and church of their ancestors, that only 91,787, or 5 per cent. of a population of 1,783,012 were members of the Congregational Church. In Connecticut, where Yale College did so much to save them, there were, indeed, 55,852, or 9 per cent. of the whole population; New Hampshire Congregational churches could boast of 20,547 members, being 6 per cent. of the population, and Vermont 20,117, being the same proportion. In Maine, so long an appendage of Massachusetts, there were 21,645 members of Congregational churches, barely $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. while the Methodists had 25,883 members, and the Baptists 21,165. The decline in Rhode Island amongst its dominant denomination was as marked, for, in a population of 276,528, the Baptist churches had only 10,839 members, about 4 per cent. of the population.

The evidence is unmistakable that the young people growing up do not and will not become members of the Protestant churches.

In other words, allowing for those under twelve years of age, at least 75 out of every 100 no longer regard the ordinances of the Congregational church as at all necessary means to aid them to save their souls. To the question: "What shall I do to be saved?" they will not take as an answer: "Become church-members."

