

## THE NEW IRELAND.—XI.

### THE CHURCH.

BY SYDNEY BROOKS.

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OF all the questions that confront the inquirer into the realities of Irish life and conditions the most delicate and perplexing are those propounded by the Church. An Englishman especially has to burrow his way through whole mountains of prejudice and misconception before he can win to an even moderately unhampered view of the character, work and influence of the Irish priesthood. In England itself he has hardly a single chance of learning the truth. Somewhere in the back of the average Englishman's mind is a confused idea that practically all Irish priests are on the verge of illiteracy. He is told that the education they receive at Maynooth is of the most cramping and bigoted character and that it turns them out narrow, intolerant, drunk with power and unscrupulous in using it. He has been fed ever since he can remember on the preposterous fallacy that Home Rule means Rome Rule. He has heard of the oppressions practised by the priests, of how they wring from the poor the moneys that enable them to build magnificent chapels in the midst of a neighborhood of hovels, of their niggardliness in charity, of their exactions in the way of marriage and burial fees, of their lives of sloth and ease. He is inclined to put down three-fourths of Irish ills to the Irish priests. He regards them as the most dangerous kind of agitators. He ascribes to them the lack of moral fibre that is often charged against the Irish people. He is convinced that they and their power are the greatest of all obstacles to industrialism. He profoundly dislikes and distrusts their whole organization. He hears that no priest in Ireland will ever condescend to publish a statement of accounts, that the Catholic

laity are excluded from even the smallest share in the government of their church, and that, however praiseworthy individual priests may be, and however much credit they may justly claim for the miracle of Irish chastity, the priesthood, as a whole, is seditious, anti-economic and a blight upon the moral stamina of the people.

Before considering this indictment in detail, I should like to give a rough sketch of three priests whom I met in one of the northern counties. The first was Father M., the curate of a wayside village, a bustling, spectacled little man, some forty years old. I lay in wait for him at a railway station whither he was due to arrive from Dublin. What had taken him to Dublin? The very last thing that would have taken an English clergyman to London. Father M. had gone to Dublin to head a deputation from his district that was waiting upon the Chief Secretary for the purely secular object of procuring a government grant for a local railway. It was he who introduced the deputation and acted as its spokesman. All the details of the proposition, the engineering difficulties of the projected line, the route it should take, the cost of its construction, the resources of the districts it would tap, the objections brought against it by rival roads—all this the priest had at his finger-ends. He unfolded the whole scheme to me as we sat in the parlor of the only really comfortable rural inn I came across in Ireland; it was not—need I add?—kept by an Irishman. And then the talk went on to other things, to books and education and village banks and co-operative creameries. Father M. showed me a few volumes he had picked up that morning at the second-hand bookstores by the Dublin quays. He was, he admitted, somewhat of a bookworm. He had a library of nearly three thousand volumes. The reading habit had clung to him since the days of his professorship in an Irish Catholic college. He had even tried to popularize it among his people by allowing them to take out volumes from his shelves, but the experiment had not answered. Was it, I asked, mainly a theological library? By no means. The theological books reposed dustfully on the upper shelf; novels, *belles-lettres*, the classics, Darwin, Huxley and Spencer mingled below. But his great hobby was the co-operative movement. There was very little about agriculture that he did not appear to know—"and why shouldn't I, being a peasant's son myself?" He had started a village bank; he had started a co-operative creamery; and both were flourishing institutions.

Goodness and practicality beamed from behind the little man's spectacles. That he had not the polish of the drawing-room was true enough, but in competency, in genuineness, in enthusiasm and in sound common sense he would have taken a place anywhere. As he sped homeward on his bicycle, I had an immense conviction that his people were in good hands.

And then there was Father M.'s immediate superior, the parish priest, a gray-haired, hearty, all-knowing veteran upon whom I unceremoniously stumbled while waiting his curate's return. His door was ajar, and a voice from the depths of the house bade me come in when I knocked. I found him sitting in a bare, disorderly room, a glass of water and a loaf of bread standing on the table amid a litter of books and papers. He held forth for a while on land and farming as though he were one of the Estates Commissioners. Then he passed on to travelling and told me how he had just returned from a tour through Italy. "Rubbing up your classics, Father?" I asked him. He hoped in reply that they did not need much rubbing up, and I quickly found that they did not. He was strong on temperance, one of the leaders in the campaign which the Church has somewhat tardily organized against the most pervasive of Irish failings. "His own," as they say in Ireland, had nearly all taken and kept the pledge, and the local publican was hard put to it to make both ends meet. Remember, we were six miles from any railroad, in a district not indeed very poor, but quite remarkably isolated. And here was this priest, a real father to his people, reading the classics and fighting drunkenness. He came down to the roadway with me in the pleasant Irish fashion and chatted for a while with my driver, criticising his horse and passing his hands down its legs with expert familiarity—a most adequate man, in touch with every interest of his people. In a near-by town I found a day or two later another type of priest, or rather a variation on the Father M. type. He was, I should judge, about forty-five years old, a zealous antiquarian who had written many books and pamphlets on the round towers, old crosses, ruined abbeys and castles of the neighborhood. But that was merely a side issue in his busy, practical life. He was a firm believer and an untiring worker in the cause of industrial betterment. The Department of Agriculture, as I have had occasion to explain, co-operates with local committees appointed by the county councils

throughout the country. This priest served on his local committee with assiduity and intelligence; I believe he practically ran it. But he was far from confining himself to these more or less official duties. Any project of material improvement that stood a reasonable chance of success had his active support. When I visited him he had just organized and completed what amounted almost to a house-to-house canvass of his town for the purpose of raising \$50,000 to start a small linen-weaving mill, and of that sum \$30,000 had already been obtained. To encounter three such priests within the space of a week—alert, level-headed, well-informed, intensely practical men, each trying in his own way to leave the world a little better than he found it—would have forced the most unmitigated Englishman to revise some of his pre-conceptions.

I do not say that these three priests were typical of the whole body, and even if they were, it might still be necessary to insist that an organization is something very different from the sum of the individuals who compose it. One comes across, as a matter of fact, many priests in Ireland who make a decidedly less pleasing impression, who are bullies, agitators, not over-scrupulous and unwholesomely materialized. But, taking them as a whole, they are a remarkable set of men whose chief shortcoming, in my opinion, is not so much that they abuse their unrivalled authority as that they do not always direct it to the best ends. The sons, in the main, of peasants, small farmers and petty traders, educated in a seminary that is exclusively theological, it is inevitable that their horizon should be narrow, their stock of knowledge and of culture inadequate to the position of variegated and almost undisputed power in which they find themselves placed, and that their manners and style of living should sometimes fail to set an example of refinement and finish. But they are almost invariably gentlemen in the essentials, if not in the accessories, of character and conduct; they lead the fullest and most human of lives; I have rarely encountered any men in whom the social and hospitable instincts were more developed; and in their relations with women their record is absolutely without stain. "They are no anchorites," an Irish lady has written, "no austere possessors of a spiritual joy far removed from human sources. They are men and brothers to their flocks; they are open-air persons; they love the gayeties of the country and the people; they dine

out; they are leading—one had almost said *the* leading—figures at weddings and christenings; they are sportsmen; they love a race-meeting or a game of cards; they enjoy a good dinner and a glass of punch to follow. Yet it is in the midst of his social, and one may say material enjoyments, that the high vocation of the Irish priest is, to my mind, so manifest. I have looked on at and taken part in hundreds of card-games where priests were among the players. In all my experience, I cannot recall one instance in which a priest was greedy, ill-tempered or anything but a gentleman and a sportsman, winning and losing with cheerful equanimity, and displaying the utmost patience with other players less well-mannered and good-hearted than himself. I have seen them on the race-courses, dispensing their wonderful hospitality, spreading geniality as they went about among friends and neighbors, “putting their bit” in a sweepstake, and enjoying their losing or winning with the same cheerful equanimity as at the card-table.

The priest in Ireland has not to struggle for power; it comes to him as a birth-right. Not only is all education in his hands, not only have the Penal Laws bequeathed to him a distinctive sanctity, not only is his office regarded with a reverence not altogether free from superstition, but his domination over the secular affairs and interests of his people is such as even the Spain of three hundred years ago scarcely excelled. What is it, indeed, that the priest is not? Spiritual shepherd, teacher, politician, land agent, family lawyer, man of affairs—from the cradle to the grave he touches the realities of Irish life at every conceivable point. On such a matter the impressions of a casual visitor must necessarily lack that intimacy of acquaintance which can alone give them value. I fall back on the ampler knowledge, the wide and sympathetic elucidations, of one who, though a foreigner, has made a profound study of Irish problems and has also the advantage of being a Catholic. M. Paul Dubois, in his “*L'Irlande Contemporaine*,” is nowhere happier than in his analysis of the relations between priests and people:

“Under Elizabeth and Cromwell, under the Penal Laws, the priest suffered with the people. He remained faithful to them unto death and martyrdom. Thus were friendship and union sealed between priest and people. The priest gained forever the gratitude and veneration of the people; he became their guide, their friend, their protector, and won

that title which he still bears, *Sagart a ruín*, the beloved priest. Nothing could be more touching to see than this attachment which still exists, this respect, this confidence, this intimacy between the priest and his parishioners. . . . He seems to be a king in his kingdom, affable, courteous, tolerant with non-Catholics, familiar with his flock; above all, 'popular.' He is in truth the father of his people, and no doubt a father who is sufficiently authoritative. He is the arbiter of their quarrels, the confidant of their secrets. To him they turn for advice whether in affairs of the heart or of the pocket. In return the people are ready to do him any service and to render him any homage. . . . There is no stiff haughtiness, no wall of stone separating them from their flock; they make themselves loved by their good grace and their ruggedness at need. . . . The Irish priest is not merely the spiritual shepherd, he is the guide and counsellor in temporal affairs. The facts of history have made him a leader, and often the sole leader, of the people."

But to all this there is another and less pleasing side. It has been stated with pungent illumination by "Pat" in his "Economics for Irishmen"; and I cannot do better than quote what he says:

"The world," he writes, "has hardly a more beautiful example of Faith than the gray patrician of fifty generations bowed for the blessing of the new-made curate, who may have started from the stable; but when that curate has 'got his parish,' expands his exclusive judgment on religion into his exclusive judgment on everything else, lays down the law on all things for patrician and plebeian alike, dictates his 'policy' to the statesman, his fees to the doctor, his voting to the citizen, their 'opinions' to the public, and so turns his sacred privilege into a secular weapon; then the highest things we know of are dragged into the dirt, and character, economic and otherwise, is sunk under a confusion of standards that tend to make the individual a machine rather than a man, with Heaven itself pressed into the process of human demoralization. That is what we have to-day in Ireland, at least in a measure large enough to assure our economic decay, and so helpless is 'the nation' against it that useful men, good Catholics, can have their dismissal dictated by the priest, and be driven out of Ireland for nothing more than uttering their opinions on lay matters peculiarly their own, admittedly in accordance with the liberty defined to them by their Faith."

And again:

"Nothing is more firmly fixed in the minds of many shopkeepers and their peasant customers than that the prosperity or destruction of their business is at the will of the priest, and I know numerous families that have been impoverished in this way, while others have risen from misery to wealth through the priest's partiality. In many places it is

enough to know simply that the priest does not wish the people to go to a certain shop. The wish becomes generally known in some way, and then down goes the shop, often the shop of a good fellow, while a pious ruffian prospers under clerical approval on the other side of the street. While it is accepted as if an article of Faith that the will of the priest means success or ruin to a man's business, how can we have the freedom that produces character or the character that produces economic progress?"

These are the views of an Irishman and a Catholic. I find them substantially endorsed in a letter I received a few months ago from an Irish Protestant, a singularly liberal and enlightened statesman, who has made many effective contributions to Irish well-being.

"Sacerdotalism," he writes, "is my bugbear, the one factor in the case that makes me sometimes despair. It shows no sign of weakening; on the contrary, I think it gathers strength. But it cannot last forever. The people hate and resent it; and though but few Irish return from the United States to settle in Ireland, American modes of thought must percolate into Ireland. My dread is that it will last long enough to neutralize the good effects of peasant proprietorship and other reforms; and that the influence of the priest in the legitimate field of faith and morals will perish along with his power in purely secular matters. The rebound into irreligion in a people such as the Irish would be very serious. It is a vast pity that we have in Ireland no Roman Catholic in a position analogous to that of the Duke of Norfolk in England, one who could represent at Rome the fact—I am sure it is a fact—that a revolt against religion will surely take place if the interference of the Hierarchy and the Priest in temporal affairs is not checked. . . . In what I have said about sacerdotalism do not misread me as applying it to all Bishops and Priests. I believe the majority are good though ignorant men, anxious for the welfare of the country and concerned only for the spiritual and moral condition of their flocks. But the militant temporal Bishops and Priests dominate the majority, and they have all the strings of the money-bags and of the press in their hands. If the Priests would preach and preach and keep on preaching (1) love of truth, (2) sense of duty, (3) the necessity of nourishing the body as well as the soul, (4) that stewed tea and white bread are poison to children, (5) the dignity of labor, and (6) cleanliness—Ireland would be a very different country in ten years."

From the standpoint of the Church itself, the Ireland of to-day must be nearly the ideal country. In the last sixty years, while the Catholic population has decreased by twenty-seven per cent., the number of priests, monks and nuns has risen 137 per cent. The Church thrives as the people dwindle, and its authority over



those who stay seems to grow year by year more intensive and meticulous. The Catholic who puts his Church before any mundane interest can only, I suppose, rejoice at this; can only feel that Ireland is fulfilling the highest national ideal as convents and monasteries multiply, as her missionaries scatter over the world, and as the temper of her people yields itself more and more to priestly guidance. But an onlooker must needs stand appalled at the drain of this huge establishment upon the economic vitality of the people. He sees towering edifices rising in the midst of hovels and he wonders where the money came from. He reads in the papers of an endless flow of bequests into the ecclesiastical exchequer, and he asks where the money goes. He hears from manufacturers of the hindrances placed in their way by the Church, with her restrictions and demands, and he is prompted to inquire whether Ireland is not a battle-ground of the age-long conflict between Catholicism and industrialism. He finds in the rural parts a people barely emerging from the anthropomorphic phases of belief and the twilight of superstition—shuttlecocked between terror and greed and penetrated with the listlessness of fatalism—and he is irresistibly driven to speculate whether for some of their shortcomings certain features of Irish Catholicism and of the policy of the Irish priesthood may not be at least as much responsible as the British Government itself. He sees the Hierarchy warring on and suppressing journals that refuse to subordinate to its interests whatever aspirations they may cherish for a united and regenerated Ireland, and he asks how freedom of thought can exist in such conditions. He regards the inordinate drink bill of the Irish people and wonders whither the spirit of Father Mathew has fled. He cross-examines the emigrants at Queenstown and begins to suspect that the policy of dragooning the people in their homes and diversions, if it has helped to make the Irish the most continent of nations in the single matter of sex, has also done much to blast the innocent pleasures and gayety of the countryside and to invest the prospect of escape into life with a new attractiveness; and the census figures of the United States and of England are there to confirm his forebodings that once free from the special atmosphere of Ireland and released from the confinement of a penitential code, the faith of but too many of the Irish emigrants will prove a fragile barrier against the seductions of freedom and the onswEEP



of an unaccustomed commercialism. The great and continuous defection from Catholicism of the Irish in America is a phenomenon at least as much explicable by the environment they have left as by that they have entered.

Nor are the inquirer's doubts resolved when he looks into the internal economy of the Church and learns to his stupefaction that no priest in Ireland renders any account of the money that passes into his hands and that the laity are inflexibly excluded from even the smallest share of Church administration. Yet the question still arises to plague him whether it is the people who do most to influence the priests or the priests the people. For the people have still in a sense the power of the purse; and an unpopular priest or one who tilts against local sentiment may find himself reminded of the error of his ways by a falling off in marriage and burial fees and in the proceeds of the Easter and Christmas offerings and of the half-yearly "stations" at which he collects his dues in person. It is in some ways an unhealthy system, whichever way the balance of influence may be held to fall. It materializes but too many of the priesthood, and it robs the laity of all real responsibility. In matters where the interests or passions of the people are strongly enlisted the priesthood is often powerless to restrain them; but then the matters in which the interests or passions of the Irish people are strongly enlisted are very few in number. The land, however, is one of them. The Church denounced the Land League and the Plan of Campaign and the crimes and disorders that accompanied them, but its denunciations were swept away in the torrent of popular passion. The priests at this moment are opposed to cattle-driving, but cattle-driving continues just the same. In the crisis that followed Parnell's conviction of adultery, again, the Church and the people came into fierce and bitter conflict, and, though the Church won, it was only after a struggle that for a time tore the country in twain. The Irish Catholic is by no means the most tractable of individuals, and Ultramontaniam will never find in Ireland a footing one-half so secure as in Spain or in Austria.

On the other hand, where their emotions or interests are not keenly engaged, the people accept the domination of the priesthood uncomplainingly. Education is a conspicuous case in point. The British Government and the Irish Catholic Church might

almost seem, indeed, to have entered into a conspiracy for the intellectual enslavement of the Irish people. There is hardly a branch of Irish education in which Protestant England has not shown herself more Catholic than any Catholic Power on earth. Every national schoolmaster in Ireland, thanks to Great Britain, is the creature of the clerical manager, appointed, promoted and dismissed by him at will. Carry this system into the secondary and intermediate schools and higher up into the colleges, and the historical results follow; lay learning, even Catholic lay learning, is banned and boycotted; the teaching congregations swoop down upon and monopolize the whole field of instruction; the pernicious bait of result fees turns education into cramming, and pours thousands of pounds a year into the coffers of unaudited, irresponsible orders; the laity are excluded from Maynooth; mixed education, that great dissolvent of social and sectarian strife, is denounced as treason to the Faith; and the whole guidance, not alone of the beliefs and morals, but of the intellect of the youth of Ireland becomes a priestly, monastic and conventual preserve. To have placed Irish education absolutely under the control of the Irish priesthood is, in my judgment, the gravest of the many crimes and blunders for which British rule in Ireland is responsible. The blind cannot lead the blind, and an inexperienced, uninterested and uncultured priesthood is of all agencies the least fitted to guide the intellectual destinies of a nation. To none of its functions does the Irish priesthood cling so tenaciously as to its hold over the schools; in none is it less willing to admit the co-operation of laymen; and yet with none has it proved itself so little able to deal successfully. I freely grant that the Irish priests are set to work at what is probably the worst educational system in Europe, but no one who has looked into the matter at first hand or who has even been at the trouble to read the Inspectors' reports can doubt that the negligence, indifference and incapacity of the clerical managers have intensified all its defects.

If there were no other argument for Home Rule the state to which Irish education has been reduced by the operations of an arbitrary, anti-national and incompetent Board on the one hand and priestly mismanagement on the other would supply all the arguments that could be needed. It is one more illustration of the paradox that both Englishmen and Irishmen seem incapable of grasping, the paradox that one of the most stalwart pillars of

the Catholic Church in Ireland is Protestant England. If that were once realized for the fact it unquestionably is, we should not then have Ulster taking up, and Nonconformist England mechanically echoing, the cry that Home Rule means Rome Rule. It is English Rule that means Rome Rule. It is the British trick or policy of ignoring the Catholic laity in Ireland and of dealing over their heads with the Church direct that, as much as anything else, buttresses and perpetuates the temporal power of Irish Catholicism. Home Rule would eventually tear that power to pieces. Is there a country where the people, once masters in their own house, have tolerated indefinitely the domination of the Church in their schools and universities? The enfranchisement of the Irish mind will be, I admit, a process uniquely protracted, incalculably slow. But to doubt its inevitability when once the people are placed in charge of their own destinies is simply to write down all human history a lie. Home Rule, so far from spelling Rome Rule, spells Rome Ruin.

What, then, is the true attitude of the Church towards the master-question of Irish politics? Does the Hierarchy really and sincerely favor an autonomy which sooner or later would infallibly loosen and then destroy ecclesiastical control of popular education? Confronted with the choice between sacrificing its hold over the schools and sacrificing Home Rule, which would it choose? Is the Church in its secret heart Nationalist first and Catholic afterwards, or Catholic first and Nationalist afterwards? Finding in England and the English connection, and the political bargains to which that connection gives rise, an effective and durable bulwark against an educated laity already muttering in revolt, is it genuinely anxious to see the barrier torn down? These are questions that admit at present of no clear and decisive answer. Even to consider them is to find oneself launched on a vast and all but trackless but not necessarily unprofitable ocean of speculation. I think, however, that sooner or later the Irish intelligence will burst its clerical leading-strings and insist on mapping out for itself the lines of its future progress. Movements of discontent, in and out of the Church, are already vaguely discernible. The emancipation of the Irish mind—the most needed of all Irish revolutions—has already begun.

SYDNEY BROOKS.

*(To be Concluded.)*

## THE TARIFF MAKE-BELIEVE.

BY WOODROW WILSON.

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THE wrong settlement of a great public question is no settlement at all. The Payne-Aldrich tariff bill, therefore, which its authors would fain regard as a settlement of the tariff question, is no settlement at all. It is miscellaneously wrong in detail and radically wrong in principle. It disturbs more than it settles, and by its very failure to settle forces the tariff question forward into a new and much more acute stage.

It is so obviously impossible to settle the question satisfactorily in the way these gentlemen have attempted to settle it; it is so evident that men of their mind and with their attitude towards the economic interests of the country can never settle it that thinking men of every kind realize at last that new men and new principles of action must be found. These gentlemen do not know the way and cannot find it. They "revised" the tariff, indeed, but by a method which was a grand make-believe from beginning to end. They may have convinced themselves of the intelligence and integrity of the process, but they have convinced nobody else. The country must now go to the bottom of the matter and obtain what it wants.

It has gone to the bottom of it at some points already, and the process will be carried very far before it is through with it. In the first place, it is the general opinion throughout the country that this particular revision was chiefly pretence, and that it is the first time that we have had tariff legislation of this kind. The McKinley tariff bill and the Dingley tariff bill, whatever may be thought of their wisdom or of their validity as acts of statesmanship, were unquestionably frank and genuine. There was no concealment or make-believe about either their purpose or their character. No doubt many things were accomplished by