

THE EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, May 13, 1870.

The following excellent article on religious intolerance and persecution in general, and on religious affairs in Utah, is from the Belfast (Ireland) News Letter, of the 15th of April.

"What a huge pile of crime has been reared by persecution, which some have described as the original sin of religion! What a mass of blood has been shed in the interests of faith, as educated intolerance or ignorant bigotry occupied the seat of power! From the promulgation of Christianity down to the present time and probably down to the end of time, conscience was, and is, and is likely to be burdened with penalties. Under every form of government, in every nation, and in every Church, we meet the tokens of torture trying to fortify creed—arranging the character and pretensions of that lofty system of faith and morals introduced by Him whose Death and Passion we this day commemorate. 'It is a sin,' was scarcely uttered when Judaism forged its dearest bolts for the Infant Church, doubly bent of its peace and its visible Head. Thenceforward, the system has never been missed in the world; and every succeeding age could comfort itself with the reflection that 'so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Now, we are quite prepared to hear immediate condemnation of the Papacy for its cruelty in this respect; and we join heartily in the condemnation, because it was very cruel, and its cruelty was sustained by the writings of a great man—St. Augustine. But we must not forget that the peculiar belief of that Church—its notion as to non-baptized infants, and its claim to be the exclusive depository of faith and salvation through that faith—imposed on its responsibilities from which we Protestants are exempt by our right of private judgment and our more scriptural and more expansive ideas about civil and religious liberty. These pretensions are still put forward by the Roman Church, very elaborately and very dogmatically put forward in the VATICAN COUNCIL OF THE COUNCIL NOW deliberating—but it is clear that the great body of the Church has been to think; and that the Pontiff and his curia, whatever his position or his position, cannot do as they please in the world. The limitation of ecclesiastical to the functions of their office, and the limitation of those functions, are among the most encouraging signs of progress in our time. So that, whilst at its primal see the pretensions of the Papacy are as extravagant as ever, and if accepted and encouraged would develop themselves as intolerantly as ever, it gives the world hope to find gigantic minds, representing millions of Roman Catholics scattered over the world, arraigning the claims of the Pope and his followers, and declaring their projects at variance with the conscience and intellect of the age. The greatest men in that Church, whose works will mould the moral form of mankind, are declaring for liberty, threatening rebellion, and denouncing assumptions which would lead out to, and justify, the use of the sword in the propagation of faith in any form.

But while we condemn the Papacy for its intolerance and all the woes in its train, we cannot excuse other Churches whose responsibility increased with the greater purity of their creed. If our memory be not at fault, the earliest and fiercest religious persecution was instituted by the disciples of Jesus—who, by the way, fell himself a victim to persecution on the other side—and just as Rome finds a warrant for her cruelty in the writings of Augustine, the origin of the bigotry and intolerance for which Spain has been notorious is traced to the Arian examples painfully set in that country. The beheading of Trinitarians in Spain was only inferior in degree to the tortures subsequently inspired when the supremacy of the Papacy rose over the ruin of the Roman Empire, and there was no public opinion to dispute its commands. So it remained during a long dark night of ignorance, but the Reformation came. Instead of the Church, the exercise of the right of private judgment generated many Churches, and instead of one huge system of intolerance, there were several minor systems, whose authors are reckoned among the greatest and godliest of mankind. It could scarcely have been otherwise, owing to the earlier confessions of the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and other Reformed Churches—we believe we may include the Independents as well as the Anglican divines—which contained damnable clauses more startling than those of any existing Reformed creed, and whose belief forced men to 'compel' the acceptance of their doctrines on all the world. As to the Lutherans, did they not banish those who fled from the fury of Mary of England; and were they not most intolerant and most exclusive in Sweden, and Germany, and wherever they got away? Did not the Calvinists deal very severely with the Baptists; and was not Sectarian sufficient evidence that religious liberty was under restraint? In England, Mary burned Protestants, and Elizabeth did the same with Roman Catholics. In that kingdom the intolerance of the Papacy was limited by the Protestantism against Roman Catholics, and now against each other. When in power the Puritans were severe, the Independents were severe, and severity marked the rule in turn of Episcopalian and Presbyterian. Persecution seems inseparable from religion when not under wholesome check. Such is the testimony borne to us from all times, and all lands, and all peoples, and all creeds; but, perhaps, the most extraordinary chapter in the whole narrative is that which presents the Puritans fleeing from England as a protest against intolerance, and behaving most intolerantly to rival Churches in their adopted home in the New World.

A Detroit negro prisoner, on his way to the penitentiary for larceny, was asked what he thought of his trial; he said: 'Fore God, when dat lawyer dat fended me made his speech, I thought shuah I was going to take my ole hat and walk right out of dat cot room; but when de other lawyer got up and commenced talking, I knew I was de biggest rascal on de top ob de earth.'

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