

ON THE EFFECT, ON THE MORAL STATE
OF ENGLAND,
OF THE
PROGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC
POWER.



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I NEED hardly assure your readers that I have no desire that they should meddle in politics; I do not do so myself, nor do I think that a Christian ought. He believes that God governs, and governs with a view to the glory of Christ, and that He will infallibly bring about His purposes. But it seems to me to be well that Christians should apprehend what they have to look for, and be prepared for it, if the Lord tarry. Did it not concern them religiously you would have no word from me on such subjects.

What I purpose doing is to review briefly the course of events, and state what seems to me their results. Parties are all alike to me; they are all alike guilty, and have all alike had their part in what is going on. Lord Derby it was who banished the Scriptures from Irish schools and set up the Irish national (really, Popish) school system. He stated that there was no proselytism, but that "the use of Scripture" was a fatal objection, because it was displeasing to the Priests. We must remember that politicians have no idea of principles, but only of existing influences to which they must be subject.

The next step was that of that most short-sighted man, however great a general he might have been, the Duke

of Wellington. I take no side with any party,—I distrust them all, but he was a Tory as they call it, aristocratic in principle. He, with Sir R. Peel, passed the Catholic Emancipation bill, so called, which admitted some sixty or seventy violent democrats into the house, and by that party (as it is well known), the reform bill of 1832 was passed; the majority of English members were against it. Now, for a state with a political machinery like that of England to work smoothly, a large portion of influential masses must not be outside its institutions. The Duke of Wellington declared the system perfect which did shut them out, after introducing elements which made it impossible to hold that ground. He thought to stem it by the House of Lords, and nearly brought on an open revolution; and Lord Harrowby and the waverers (as they were then called), gave a majority to the reform bill in the House of Lords. That bill was a revolution. That is, it was not an admission of excluded influences into existing institutions, but a total change in the institutions themselves. Democracy became ascendant, and possessed the power. The Lords' house became insignificant, and populous boroughs acquired the power once wielded by the land. Old habits modified the effect, but every one knows that this is what took place. The ancient institutions of the country were in principle overturned. With this, railroads and the commercial movement, and the refusal of landlords to increase the population on their lands, concurred to throw the population into the towns. Vaunted education ministered immensely to general infidelity, Satan in that being let loose in that respect, and by the growth of this and of dissent, which predominates in the great towns, the clergy were, on the one hand, thrown into ritualism and popish principles,

or, on the other, adopted infidel or semi-infidel principles; and (the bands of the establishment and its general hold on the population of the country loosened), infidel notions acquired a powerful influence over the mental activity of the country, and exercised a very great power in the governing body, the House of Commons. Morally speaking, the Protestant Church was gone, and rationalism and popery, in principle, divided the country. Evangelicalism became practically null in the Establishment.

In this state of things the democratic influence has acquired an immense accession of power by the new reform bill. It is an immense stride in legally revolutionising the country; checks, and balances, and reckoning on the English character and history is all nonsense. Power is put into hands which will use it. The forms are immaterial; they will probably be changed immediately or ere long.

But my object is to notice the effect on the state of society. God cares for the poor. But the poor have ceased to be so in the Scriptural sense of the word. They are masters. The effect on the masses and on the active minds of the country will be infidelity, exalting man. Even popular religious preaching will take this character. It will keep up the name of Christian, but will exalt man in its statements, not Christ:—despise government, says the apostle, presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Human reason, not God, will be the arbiter of good and evil. What already prevails so largely, will be open to a vast party in the country. The will of the people, confidence in man, his rights, his general perfectability, will be the banner of all this class. The aristocracy, on the contrary, having lost power will seek to compensate themselves (vexed and

dissatisfied in heart), by luxury and pleasure. To maintain quiet (principle having gone in both classes), and some influence—some barrier, against the strong will of the people, they will rapidly seek to increase the influence of the clergy—the only remaining one over those that constitute the bulk of those around. In the country it will be the body of the poor subject to priestcraft, and in the towns a very large increase of popery, so as to have an integral place in the population; the bulk of those who are not so, or who do not side with them, being infidel.

It may be thought that I have not sufficiently allowed for the influence of religious dissenters. It is, really, next to nothing, and will be always becoming less. Already exalting man is the system that most widely prevails, going on with the age. But there is another thing, they will join with the Roman Catholic in putting down the Establishment, which has little or no political hold on the country. The Episcopalian must then, as against dissenters, base itself on its distinctive character, in alliance with (if not in the form of) popery, successional grace and sacraments, and the clergy the only channels of it. I do not expect Protestantism nominally to cease, but it will be really infidel. You may find individual ministers, Independent or Episcopalian, preaching Christ, but the disruption that is taking place is a disruption into infidel radicalism or popular will, and popery in the aristocracy and in all that they can bring under its influence, as a check upon that will. I have no doubt that God will keep every faithful soul, and maintain every needed testimony, but it is well that Christians should know what is before them, as time goes on more rapidly, perhaps, than we are aware.

I do not look for violence, because I believe there is no courage anywhere to resist the course of events. I do not pretend to say how long it may take to bring these things about. God knows, and God holds the reins or looses them; but I have no doubt as to what is coming on. The Christian may walk in peace through it all, waiting for God's Son from heaven, and keeping the word of His patience: yea, having a specially blessed place of testimony in the midst of it all, but a lowly one, content to be nothing in a world which has rejected Christ, and is ripening for His judgment. Their part is to *keep His word* and not deny his name.

The result as to the western world will be, as known to students of prophecy, that the Babylonish or idolatrous power, with which the kings of the earth had committed fornication, will be utterly destroyed, and the popular will in the same sphere will give itself to the beast destroyed, with the false prophet, by the Lord Himself coming from Heaven.

The present result of what is now enacting will be: the aristocratic part of the community giving itself up to luxury and pleasure, and, with the dependent part of the population, to Popery; the independent and mentally active part to infidelity. The opposition to Popery will be infidel not Protestant. The general public effect will be a great and rapid increase of centralisation or despotic power, and loss of personal liberty. Individual personal independence of character will disappear almost entirely. Men must go with others to be anything. Protestantism having lost its integrity and energy, God allows infidelity as a check on popish power. If things go smoothly, I apprehend the first move towards centralisation will be the substitution of a paid for an unpaid magistracy; to

set aside, nominally, local territorial influence and gain efficiency, but throwing a vast increase of power into the centre of government, and being the first move towards despotism or central power as a counter-balance to multitudinous self-will or anarchy; personal liberty and independence being proportionately set aside. Other social questions, as primogeniture, will soon come in; the importance of money and luxury, the necessary consequence of its abolition, will rapidly increase, and the moral degradation and dissipation which go with it. All this will be modified by existing habits, no doubt, and the love of something aristocratic is inherent in the human mind,* but this will not materially affect the result.

* Liveries and armorial bearings are coming in in New York, and carefully studied genealogies where there are any.