

POPISH LITERATURE AND EDUCATION.¹

WHILE the Roman empire continued, it may be said that Latin was the common tongue of the whole Western church. But after the empire fell, the modern languages of Europe gradually formed themselves and displaced the Latin in popular use, until it remained only the language of courts and scholars. But Rome, in her fear of change and blind fondness for prescriptive things, persisted in retaining all her creeds, hymns and liturgies in the old tongue, as well as the only version of the Scriptures accessible to Europeans. From Gregory the Great, near the end of the sixth century, a continued warfare was waged, until Gregory VII., in the eleventh century, finally triumphed by driving all the vernacular languages from religious worship, and imposing the formularies, with the dead language of Rome, on the whole church. The Scriptures could only be read, even by the clergy, from the Latin Vulgate. Even to this day, the prayers in which the priest leads the aspirations, or presents the wants of his people to God are in words unknown to them. No hymn echoes through "fretted vault or long-drawn aisle," which does not hide its praise in a tongue barbarian to those who join it.

The constant policy of Rome has also been to exalt this liturgy at the expense of the preaching of the gospel in vernacular languages. The mass is long and pompous; the sermons few, brief and trivial. The very structure of her churches betrays her contempt for this potent means of enlightening and arousing the popular mind, for they are not auditories in which to hear the words of instruction, but ghostly theatres for the display of superstitious pantomime. The altar and the chancel, the stage of the sacred mummeries, are the centre of all eyes, and not the pulpit, the pillar from which shines the lamp of life. Now the formation of a cultivated vernacular tongue is absolutely necessary to national improvement. The reason is obvious: there

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cannot be diffusion of thought, unless there is a language refined enough to be its medium, and the bulk of a people can never know two languages, one living and common, the other dead and learned, so well as practically to use them both. The consequence is, that when the literature of a people is in a dead tongue, knowledge is not the inheritance of the masses, but the distinction of the few; the native language of the people is left in its rudeness, and they remain as uncultivated as their speech. Hence, those who have first taught their countrymen to employ the native language of their homes and their daily life in literature, a Boccaccio and Petrarch in Italy, a Luther in Germany, a Wickliffe and Chaucer in England, have ever been regarded by thinking men as high in rank among the fathers of civilization.

But what ideas and topics so kindle the activity of the mind, and crave for its teeming productions the fitting dress of a cultivated language as the religious? Among every people, the first sentiments which attune for themselves the voice of eloquence, are the aspirations of the soul towards its God. The oldest regular compositions in the world are the inspired books of the Hebrews. The first poem in Greece was probably the Theogony of Hesiod. And there are no sentiments so potent to unloose the stammering tongue of an awakening people, and to form its utterance, as those proceeding from man's relations to his Maker. It is hard to conceive how Rome could have devised a more ingenious and efficient mode to prevent the cultivation of the modern languages, and thereby, of the mind of Christendom, than when she compelled all people to retain their worship and religious lore locked up in a dead language. Let us suppose that she had done for every tribe to which she gave Christianity what the primitive and Protestant missions have done, had seized their barbarous tongues and ennobled them by making them the vehicles of holy truth and sacred worship. Europe would scarcely have known the dark ages, but the glorious day of the sixteenth century might have followed the declining light of the Augustan era without an intervening night. It may be, indeed, that when the popes thus postponed the dawn of civilization, "it was not in their hearts, and they meant not so." When they commanded all people and tongues to speak to their God and to listen to his words only in a dead language, it was

in their hearts to magnify the venerable age and hoary unity of their communion. But the result is one among the numerous instances of that guilty fatality which seems to make Rome, in all her plans and policies, the instinctive and unerring enemy of all human welfare.

She has always been the enemy of a free Bible. What Chinese, Indian, Hindu version of the Scriptures have her missionaries ever given to those on whom they conferred the fatal gift of Romish dogmas? Her priests import cargoes of relics and rosaries, puppets and pictures, missals and vestures, but no Bibles. From that day when the language of her Latin Vulgate became a dead one in Europe to ours, in which we have seen her convulsions of helpless rage and storms of curses against the present glorious diffusion of God's word, Rome has never willingly given to the world a Bible in a vulgar language. She has permitted a few versions, as the French of Lefevre, of Etaples, and the English Douay. But it was only to countermine the influence of Protestants. Her people are only permitted to possess these partial versions, because else they would persist in reading the Protestant, and even her own are circulated as reluctantly as possible. No layman may read them without a license from his pastor, and no priest except at the will of his superior; and then none must dare to think on them for himself, or have an opinion of their meaning, except as his soul's masters dictate. In all her processes of education, her forms and "*fathers*" are taught in preference to the Bible, and no religious literature is desired except the literature of superstition. The thinking man cannot but see how hostile all this is to mental improvement. The Bible is the great school-teacher of mankind; its truths are of all others the most stimulating and fructifying, and its presentation of them the most successful. They move the secret foundations of man's soul, stirring the mightiest of his hopes and fears, filling the mind with vast and ennobling conceptions of an infinite God, a perfect holiness, an immutable truth, an immortal destiny. The Scriptures present examples of the most forcible reasoning, the grandest eloquence, the most burning animation, the sweetest poetry, the most tender pathos, and instances of most admirable virtue and goodness. In one word, they bring the mind of their reader into contact with God's,

not mediately, as Rome would have it, through the dim, deformed transmission of a murky, human soul, but face to face. What education can equal it? In opposing an open Bible, Rome shows herself the great enemy of popular intelligence. The results of the Reformation illustrate this charge by contrast. Wickliffe, "the morning star of the Reformation," introduced the dawn by his English New Testament. One of Luther's first acts was to give the Scriptures in German to his countrymen; and this great work, with the attendant discussions, gave form to that language as a vehicle for literature, and generated a nation of readers.

But more, while Rome makes religious discussion the privilege of the hierarchy, Protestantism makes it the right and business of every man. Hence, its very nature is an appeal from the ghostly throne beneath which the conscience and reason lay crushed, to the great tribunal of the common understanding. The audience to which it speaks is the whole race. It restores to every man his spiritual liberty, and thereby his responsibility; it urges upon him the great issue between his soul and his God, and in urging, it elevates every man who will hearken to the level of his immortal destiny. Hence, the first work of the reformers was to throw open the Bible, create a popular religious literature, and invite all Europe to the work of examination, and thereby of self-education. To see how much the popular intelligence owes to this, imagine that our venerable English version were blotted out of existence, and along with it, all the noble thought which it has stimulated in Britain and America; and that in its place we had the corrupt, cunning Douay version of a corrupt Latin translation, only here and there in the hands of a priest or layman, whose superstition was known to be so dense as to permit no risk of its illumination.

The Popish prohibition of free enquiry and private judgment in religion is, if possible, still more fatal to the mind. The Council of Trent ordained that no one should presume to understand the Scriptures, except according to the doctrines of Rome and the unanimous consent of her Fathers. Rome enjoins on her children an implicit faith, which believes on authority without evidence. The faith of the Protestant is an intelligent conviction, the result of the free and manly exercise of the faculties

God gave him, guided by divine fear and help. The papist collects the *dicta* of Fathers and Councils, only to wear them as shackles on his understanding. The Protestant brings all *dicta* to the test of reason, and still more, of that *Word*, to which his reason has spontaneously bowed as the supreme and infallible truth. Rome bids us listen to her authority and blindly submit; Protestantism commands: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." Happily, the prohibition of private judgment is as impossible to be obeyed as it is absurd. In the very act of commanding us not to think for ourselves, Rome invokes our thought to comprehend the proofs of her command. In the very breath with which she tells us not to reason, she calls upon reason to understand the justice of the prohibition. In truth, the exercise of private judgment is the exercise of thought; for if the mind is to think at all, it must be its own free thoughts which it produces. If I *see* at all, it must be with my own eyes, and in such shapes and colors as they of themselves reveal to me. To command me to see only with the eyes of another, is to make me blind. And so, the attempt to banish private judgment from religion is an attempt to make man cease to think, or, in other words, to reduce him on that subject below the level of a rational being. If it were successful, man would no longer be a religious being, but a clever brute. And this is, indeed, the very ideal of that result in which Rome would most delight; to make men a docile herd of human beasts, incapable of insubordination, yet apt and skilful above other animals to toil for the pampering of her lordly luxury and pride. Nor is this mental bondage limited to sacred learning; it is also inculcated in secular studies, lest perchance the habit and spirit of free thought formed in the domain of human science should invade that of theology. The confines of every realm of thought are overspread with darkness, lest some side-light should gleam upon the foul delusions of her spiritual tyranny, revealing them to her victims. By how many odious restrictions, censorship, inquisitions and tortures is this despotism over thought sustained! How many prisons, racks and faggots have been employed to crush the freedom of the mind!

To Rome belongs the diabolical preëminence above all pagan priesthoods and political despots, of punishing with the direst

death which the human frame can endure, the crime of being too wise and truthful to believe all her absurdities. The Index of Prohibited Books, a stout volume composed of the mere titles of the works she has proscribed, gives curious evidence of her instinctive hatred of all human intelligence; for we find there, not only all the great works of her assailants, as we would expect, but of nearly all the great masters who have extended the domains of knowledge. Whether they wrote of Philosophy, Geography, History, Poetry, Rome could not forgive them the attempt to ennoble the minds which it was her purpose to enslave. When we read in the Index such names as these, which a few minutes' search has collected: Bacon, Cudworth, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Villers, Malebranche, Leibnitz, Locke, Bentham, Grotius, Bayle, Basnage, Burnet, Hallam, Mosheim, Brucker, Robertson, Selden, Sismondi and Milton, does it not seem as though Rome had designedly proclaimed herself the patroness of ignorance, by arraying against herself all that is most glorious in human intellect? To repress the free activity of the mind in religion is the most effectual mode to curb all expansive thought in every department. The truths of religion are the most pervasive and stimulating of all others. Christianity sits as queen and directress of all man's exertions, controlling every duty, modifying every relation, influencing every interest of humanity, ennobling and fructifying every speculation. The conscience is the central power of the soul, so that he who is fettered there is a slave in his whole being. When the conscience is chained, there can be no free development of the faculties by bold and manly exercise. The Reformation, says Guizot, was, in its mental character, but the insurrection of the human mind against the mental impression of Rome, which had weighed so heavily on the irrepressible activity of thought as to provoke a resistless reaction. How beneficent the impulse which every science and every institution received from that great movement. Roman Catholicism itself was aroused by the collision into a reaction, to which is due nearly all the subsequent activity which has rescued it from stagnating into barbarism. The attempt may be made to refute these conclusions, by pointing to the many illustrious men who, living and dying in the Romish communion, have helped to adorn every department of knowledge, human and di-

vine; or, by boasting of a few great *entrepots* of science in the old foundations of Popish Europe. "Was it not a son of the Holy Mother Church," it may be asked, "who first taught us the true theory of the stars? Was it not a Papist who gave to Europe a new world? Were they not Papists who exhumed the Greek and Latin classics out of the dust of the middle ages, and who have since produced the best editions of all the works of Christian antiquity? Did not Papists invent gunpowder, the art of printing, the mariner's compass, the galvanic machine? Yea, were not the very Reformers themselves, in whose pretended light and learning Protestants so much glory, reared in the bosom of Popery? And did they not acquire in her schools the knowledge which they ungratefully turned against her? How, then, can that system be justly charged as the mother of ignorance, from beneath whose patronage have proceeded the most glorious elements of human progress?" This is our reply: "True, the human mind, thanks to its benevolent Creator, has a native activity which despotism cannot crush, however it may curb it. It may be that Rome has been so far aware of this as not to attempt an impossibility—except once, when her judicial blindness provoked the triumphant insurrection of the Reformation. It may be that she has permitted or encouraged certain forms of mental activity, even to a high degree of cultivation, as a safe outlet for the indomitable elasticity of man's spirit, selecting those forms which were least important to his true welfare, in order that she might be able to suppress the most precious and fruitful exertions of the mind with sterner force. But these instances of mental activity in her subjects have not been because of, but in spite of her influences. But for the baleful paralysis of that system, they would have been a hundred fold more; and Papists have usually made their happy exertions just in proportion to the weakness of the hold which Romanism had upon their real spirit and modes of thought.

It is true, again, that the innate energies of some great souls among Papists have prompted them to attempt and accomplish mental exploits of high emprise, but Rome has usually resisted their exertions, and punished their success. *Roger Bacon*, the inventor of gunpowder, *was* a Papist; but the reward which his church apportioned him for his chemical knowledge and spirit

of free enquiry was a long imprisonment in a monastery on the charge of magic. *Reuchlin*, another son of Rome, introduced to Europe the long lost treasures of the Hebrew literature. This is true; and his church so appreciated his labors as to prompt the German Emperor to order the burning of all the Hebrew books in the realm, and the great scholar's pupils were nearly all found in the next generation among the Protestant Reformers. *Erasmus* also was a nominal Papist, who published the first critical edition of the Greek New Testament. But his work provoked a general howl of contumely and curses from the priests and monks of all Europe, some of whom charged him with committing thereby the sin against the Holy Ghost. Columbus did indeed "give to Castile and Leon a new world," but his theory of geography was the mock of all the popish clergy and doctors of Ferdinand's court, so that it was impossible for him to secure patronage for his enterprise, till the womanly piety of Isabella was moved in his behalf. *Galileo* also was a son of Rome, that great man, who revolutionized astronomy and mechanics, who first made the telescope reveal the secrets of the skies, and thus prepared the way for that wondrous science which, among its other beneficial results, has taught the mariner to mark his beaten track across the pathless ocean, thus making possible the gigantic commerce of our century. How did Rome reward him? She made him languish in her Inquisition, till he was bowed to the shame of denying the truth, of which the demonstration was his glory.

And this Index of Prohibited Books is found crowded with the names, not only of heretics, but with a part of the works of nearly all Rome's own sons, whose genius or learning has illuminated her history; a proof that their improvements were the offspring of fruitful nature, borne in despite of the novercal envy of Holy Mother Church. Upon the fact that so many of the benefactors of human knowledge, including even the Reformers, were reared under Rome, it may be said, so have the greatest liberators been ever reared under despots. Harmodius and Aristogeiton under Pisistratus, Brutus under Tarquin, the Maccabees under Antiochus, Tell under Rudolph of Hapsburg, Hampden, Pym and Cromwell under the Stuarts, and our own Washington under George III. With as much reason might we

argue hence, that despotism is the proper soil to nourish liberty, as infer from the instances of freedom of thought under Rome that they were her proper gift to the human mind. And finally, it is not a handful of particular cases which proves a general law: "One swallow does not make a summer." When we inquire for the general influence of a system, we consider not the few exceptions which exist under it, but the condition of the masses.

We trust this discussion has educed principles which, among other valuable applications, will enable us to value at their proper worth the merits of Roman Catholic education and scholarship. Ever since the Reformation urged the human mind forward on its great career of improvement, Rome has perceived that Christendom will no longer endure the shackles of ignorance, in which that tyrant church would be best pleased to bind the mind, and that men will no longer permit the boon of knowledge to be plucked openly away. Hence she has adopted the policy of *countermining* the intelligence which she fears, by becoming the patroness of a pseudo-education. And she has committed the management of this policy especially to the order of Jesus, the most slavish and most thoroughly popish of all papal societies. Hence the eager activity of this order in the establishment of colleges, especially to catch the children of Protestants; hence the boasts of superior scholarship, which have deceived many unthinking and ill-informed men. The treachery of all their pretended zeal for letters is betrayed by this question even; why does it exhaust its efforts on providing for the education of *our* sons, and the sons of other similar Protestant states, who least need their help, while the benighted masses of Ireland, Spain, Italy, the Danube are left unlightened? Why expend their exclusive exertions to educate heretics, while so many of the sons of their own church sit in Boëtian night? We *suspect* this over-generous zeal; we fear lest this education which they offer be the gift of another Trojan horse.

Our good, unsuspecting Protestants have especially been gulled by pretensions of peculiar classical and linguistic accomplishments. It is claimed that their Latinity, for instance, is to the best attainments of Protestant schools as Hyperion to a

Satyr. "Their pupils do not merely stumble through a slow translation of a Latin sentence: they can talk Latin. So thorough is their learning that the higher classes actually receive lectures in philosophy in that learned tongue." But look beneath the surface. That fluency is but the recitation of a parrot, accompanied with no thorough apprehension of grammatical principles, and leading to no awakening of thought. These Latin lectures on philosophy are but the slow mechanical dictation of some miserable syllabus of the contracted antiquated bare-bones of scholastic pedantry. It does not suit the purpose of Rome or Jesuits to do that which is the true work of mental training, to teach the mind to think for itself. That habit, so deadly to the base pretensions of the hoary deceiver, once learned in the walks of secular literature, would be too probably carried into the domains of theology. Hence, the Jesuits' policy is, to form in secular learning the desired mental temper of servile docility, inordinate respect for authority and impotence of independent thought, so that even mechanics, optics, chemistry, must be taught by the memorizing of *dicta*, not by the exercising of the understanding in their investigations. Then, if to this servile temper there can be added any accomplishments, by which the bondage of the mind can be concealed and a false *éclat* thrown upon the church, they think it is very well. The policy of Rome in her education is that of the lordly Roman slave-owner towards his bondsmen. To promote the amusement, the interest, or the pomp of their lords, slaves were trained to be masterly musicians, scribes, rhetoricians, and even poets and philosophers; but still they must exert their attainments only for their masters. And so would Rome lay hold on our children, the sons of freemen, of free America, and make them only accomplished slaves. But above all, does their system sap the very foundations of virtue and nobleness. It substitutes an indolent and weak dependence on authority for honest conviction, and policy for rectitude. It poisons the health of the moral being. He who is spiritually enslaved is wholly a slave, every noble faculty is benumbed by the incubus of spiritual tyranny, and the soul lies prone in degradation.