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PROTESTANTISM

THE

POLAR STAR OF BRITAIN

“Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth : but how is it that ye do not discern this time ?

“Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right?”
Luke xii. 56, 57.

“Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man may take thy Crown.”
Rev. iii. 11.

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TO THE READER.

At this awful crisis, when Popery has assumed so menacing an attitude, that she appears ready to seize on the reins of the British Government, the following admirable Preface to the Rev. GEORGE CROLY'S Work on Prophecy is most earnestly recommended to the serious consideration of the British Public.

PROTESTANTISM, THE POLAR STAR OF BRITAIN.

THERE is the strongest reason for believing, that as Judea was chosen for the especial guardianship of the original Revelation, so has England been chosen for the especial guardianship of Christianity.

The original Revelation declared the one true God ; Paganism was its corruption, by substituting many false gods for the true. The second Revelation, Christianity, declared the one true Mediator ; Popery was its corruption, by substituting many false mediators for the true. Both Paganism and Popery adopted the same visible sign of corruption, the worship of images.

The Jewish history opens to us a view of the acting of Providence with a people appointed to the preservation of the faith of God. Every tendency to receive the surrounding Idolatries into a participation of the honours of the true worship, every idolatrous touch was visited with punishment, and that punishment not left to the remote working of the corruption, but immediate, and by its directness, evidently designed to make the nation feel the high importance of the trust, and the final ruin that must follow its betrayal.

A glance at the British history since the Reformation must show how closely this Providential system has been exemplified in England. Every reign which attempted to bring back Popery, or even to give it that share of power which could in any degree prejudice Protestantism, has been marked by signal misfortune. It is a striking circumstance, that almost

every reign of this Popish tendency has been followed by one purely Protestant ; and, as if to make the source of the national peril plain to all eyes, those alternate reigns have not offered a stronger contrast in their principles than in their public fortunes. Let the rank of England be what it might under the Protestant Sovereign, it *always* sank under the Popish : let its loss of honour, or of power, be what it might under the Popish Sovereign, it *always* recovered under the Protestant, and more than recovered ; was distinguished by sudden success, public renovation, and increased stability to the freedom and fortunes of the empire.

Protestantism was first thoroughly established in England in the reign of Elizabeth.

Mary had left a dilapidated kingdom ; the nation worn out with disaster and debt ; the national arms disgraced ; nothing in vigour but Popery. Elizabeth, at twenty-five, found her first steps surrounded with the most extraordinary embarrassments ; at home, the whole strength of a party, including the chief names of the kingdom, hostile to her succession and religion ; in Scotland a rival title, supported by France ; in Ireland, a perpetual rebellion, inflamed by Rome ; on the Continent, the force of Spain roused against her by the double stimulant of ambition and bigotry, at a time when Spain commanded almost the whole strength of Europe.

But the cause of Elizabeth was PROTESTANTISM ; and in that sign she conquered. She shivered the Spanish sword ; she paralyzed the power of Rome ; she gave freedom to the Dutch ; she fought the battle of the French Protestants ; every eye of religious suffering throughout Europe was fixed on this magnanimous woman. At home, she elevated the habits and the heart of her people. She even drained off the

bitter waters of religious feud, and sowed in the vigorous soil, which they had so long made unwholesome, the seeds of every principle and institution that has since grown up into the strength of the empire. But her great work was the establishment of Protestantism. Like the Jewish King she found the Ark of God without a shelter; and she built for it the noblest temple in the world; she consecrated her country into its temple.

She died in the fulness of years and honour, the great Queen of Protestantism throughout the nations; in the memory of England her name and her reign alike immortal.

Charles I. ascended a prosperous throne; England in peace, faction feeble or extinct; the nation prospering in the full spirit of commerce and manly adventure. No reign of an English king ever opened out a longer or more undisturbed view of prosperity. But Charles betrayed the sacred trust of Protestantism. He formed a Popish alliance, with the full knowledge that it established a Popish dynasty. He lent himself to the intrigues of the French minister, stained with Protestant blood; for his first armament was a fleet against the Huguenots. If not a friend to Popery he was madly regardless of its hazards to the constitution.*

* By the marriage contract with the Infanta, the royal children were to be educated by their *mother* until they were *ten years* old. But France, determined on running no risk of their being Protestants, raised the term to *thirteen years*. Even this was not enough; for Popery was afraid of Protestant milk, and a clause was inserted, that the children should not be suckled by Protestant *nurses*. The object of those stipulations was so apparent, that Charles must have looked to a Popish succession; and the stipulations were so perfectly sufficient for their purpose, that all his sons, even to the last fragment of their line, were Roman Catholics. Even the King's Protestantism was doubtful. Olivarez, the Spanish Minister, openly declared that Charles, on the treaty of marriage with the Infanta, had pledged himself to turn Roman Catholic.

Ill-fortune suddenly gathered upon him. Distracted councils, popular feuds, met by alternate weakness and violence, the loss of the national respect finally deepening into civil bloodshed, were the punishments of his betrayal of Protestantism. The sorrows and late repentance of his prison hours painfully redeemed his memory.

Cromwell's was the sceptre of a broken kingdom. He found the reputation and influence of England crushed; utter humiliation abroad; at home, the exhaustion of the civil war; and furious partizanship still tearing the public strength in sunder.

Cromwell was a murderer; but in the high designs of Providence, the personal purity of the instrument is not always regarded. The Jews were punished for their idolatry by idolaters, and restored by idolaters. Whatever was in the heart of the Protector, the policy of his government was Protestantism. His treasures and his arms were openly devoted to the Protestant cause in France, in Italy, throughout the world. He was the first who raised a public fund for the support of the Vaudios churches. He sternly repelled the advances which Popery made to seduce him into the path of the late king.

England was instantly lifted on her feet, as by the power of miracle. All her battles were victories; France and Spain bowed before her. All her adventures were conquests; she laid the foundation of her colonial empire, and of that still more illustrious commercial empire, to which the only limits in either space or time may be those of mankind. She was the most conspicuous power of Europe; growing year by year in opulence, public knowledge, and foreign renown; until Cromwell could almost realize the splendid improbability, that, "Before he died, he would make the name of an Englishman as much

feared and honoured as ever was that of an ancient Roman."

Charles II. came to an eminently prosperous throne. Abroad it held the foremost rank, the fruit of the vigour of the Protectorate. At home all faction had been forgotten in the general joy of the Restoration.

But Charles was a concealed Roman Catholic.* He attempted to introduce his religion; THE STAR OF ENGLAND was instantly darkened; the Country and the King alike became the scorn of the foreign courts; the national honour was scandalized by mercenary subserviency to France; the national arms were humiliated by a disastrous war with Holland; the capital was swept by the memorable inflictions of pestilence and conflagration.

James II. still more openly violated the national trust. He publicly became a Roman Catholic. This filled the cup. The Stuarts were cast out, they and their dynasty for ever; that proud line of Kings was sentenced to wither down into a monk, and that monk living on the alms of England, a stipendiary and an exile.

William was called by PROTESTANTISM. He found the throne, as it was always found at the close of a Popish reign, surrounded by a host of difficulties; at home the kingdom in a ferment; Popery, and its ally Jacobitism, girding themselves for battle; fierce disturbance in Scotland; open war in Ireland, with the late king at its head; abroad the French King domineering over Europe, and threatening invasion. In the scale of nations England nothing!

But the *principle* of William's government was Protestantism; he fought and legislated for it through life; and it was to him, as it had been to all before him, strength and victory. He silenced English fac-

* He had solemnly professed Popery on the eve of the Restoration.

tion; he crushed the Irish war; he then attacked the colossal strength of France on its own shore. This was the direct collision, not so much of the two kingdoms as of the two faiths; the Protestant champion stood in the field against the Popish persecutor. Before that war closed, the fame of Louis was undone. England rose to the highest military name. In a train of immortal victories, she defended Protestantism throughout Europe, drove the enemy to his palace gates, and before she sheathed the sword, broke the power of France for a hundred years!

The Brunswick line were called to the throne on the sole title of Protestantism. They were honourable men, and they kept their oaths to the Religion of England. The country rose under each of those Protestant Kings to a still higher rank; every trivial reverse compensated by some magnificent addition of honour and power, until the throne of England stands on a height from which it may look down upon the world.

Yet in our immediate memory there was one remarkable interruption of that progress; which, if the most total contrast to the periods preceding and following can amount to proof, proves that every introduction of Popery into the Legislature will be visited as a public crime.

During the war with the French Republic, England had gone on from triumph to triumph. The crimes of the Popish Continent had delivered it over to be scourged by France; but the war of England was naval; and in 1805, she consummated that war by the greatest victory every gained on the sea.* At one blow she extinguished the navies of France and Spain. The death of her great Statesman at length opened the door to a new administration.† They were men

* Trafalgar, Oct. 1805.

† February, 1806.

of acknowledged ability, some, of the highest; and all accustomed to public affairs. But they came in under a pledge to the introduction of Popery soon or late into the Legislature. They were emphatically "The Roman Catholic Administration."

There never was in the memory of man so sudden a change from triumph to disaster. Defeat came upon them in every shape in which it could assail a government; in war, finance, negociation. *All* their expeditions returned with disgrace. The British arms were trampled in the *four quarters* of the globe.*

And, as if to make defeat more conspicuous, they were baffled even in that service in which the national feeling was to be the most deeply hurt, and in which defeat seemed impossible. England saw with astonishment her *fleet* disgraced before a barbarian without a ship on the waters, and finally hunted out of his seas by the fire from batteries crumbling under the discharge of their own canon.

But the fair fame of the British Empire was not to be thus cheaply wasted away. The ministry must perish; already condemned by the voice of the country, it was to be its own executioner. It at length made its promised attempt to bring Popery into the constitution. A harmless measure† was proposed, notoriously but a cover for the insults that were to follow. It was met with stern repulse; and, in the midst of

* The retreat from Sweden, 1807.—Egypt invaded and evacuated, 1807.—Whitelock sent out to Buenos Ayres, 1807.—Duckworth's repulse at Constantinople, 1807. All these operations had originated in 1806, excepting Whitelock's, which was the final act of the ministry.

† The granting of commissions in the army to Roman Catholics. Mr Perceval opposed this, as *only a pretext*; he said, "It was not so much the individual measure to which he objected, as the system of which it formed a part, and which was growing every day. From the arguments that he had heard, a man might be almost led to suppose that one religion was considered as good as another, and that the Reformation was only a measure of political convenience."

public indignation, perished the Popish Ministry of one month and one year.*

Their successors came in on the express title of resistance to Popery; they were emphatically "The Protestant Administration." They had scarcely entered on office, when the whole scene of disaster brighted up, and the deliverance of Europe was begun, with a vigour that never relaxed, a combination of unexpected means and circumstances, an effective and rapid success, that if a man had ventured to suppose but a month before, he would have been laughed at as a visionary. Of all countries, Spain, sluggish and accustomed to the yoke of France, with all its old energies melted away in the vices of its government, was the last that Europe could have looked to for defiance of the universal conqueror.

But if ever the battle was fought by the shepherd's staff and sling against the armed giant, it was then. England was summoned to begin a new career of triumph. Irresistible on one element, she was now to be led up step by step to the first place of glory on another; and that Protestant ministry saw, what no human foresight could have thought to see, Europe restored; the monarch of its monarchs a prisoner in their hands; and the mighty fabric of the French Atheistic Empire, that was darkening and distending like an endless dungeon over the earth, scattered with all its malignant pomps and ministers of evil into air!

It is impossible to conceive that this regular interchange of punishment and preservation has been without a cause and a purpose. Through almost three hundred years, through all varieties of public circumstances, all changes of men, all shades of general polity, we see one thing alone unchanged, the *regular*

* March, 1807.

connexion of national misfortune with the introduction of Popish influence, and of national triumph with its exclusion.

It might be possible even to show, that, as the time for the great trial of nations hurries on, England has become the subject of, if such a phrase may be permitted, a still more sensitive vigilance; and that, not to have sternly repelled the first temptation of the corrupt faith, has in our laterday been punished as a crime.

This language is not used to give offence to the Roman Catholic. His religion is reprobated, because it is his undoing, the veil that darkens his understanding, the tyranny that forbids him the use of his natural liberty of choice, the guilty corruption of Christianity that shuts the Scriptures upon him, that forces him away from the worship of that Being, who is to be worshipped alone in spirit and in truth; and flings him down at the feet of priests, and images of the Virgin, and the whole host of false and idolatrous mediatorship. But for himself, there can be but one feeling of the deepest anxiety, that he should search the Scriptures; and, coming to that search without insolent self-will, or sullen prejudice, or the haughty and negligent levity to which their wisdom will never be disclosed, he should compare the Gospel of God with the doctrines of Rome.

But, whatever may be the lot of those to whom error has been an inheritance, woe be to the man and the people to whom it is an adoption. If England, free above all nations, sustained amidst the perils which have covered Europe before her eyes with burning and slaughter, and enlightened by the fullest knowledge of Divine truth, refuse fidelity to the compact by which those matchless privileges have been given, her condemnation will not be distant. But, if she faithfully repel this deepest of all crimes, and refuse to place

Popery side by side with Christianity in the temple of the state, there may be no bound to the sacred magnificence of her preservation. Even the coming terrors and tribulations of the world may but augment her glory ; like the prophet in the mount, even in the midst of the thunderings and lightnings that appal the tribes of the earth, she may be led up, only to the nearer vision of the Eternal Majesty ; safe in the time of the universal trial, and when that time has past, to come forth from the cloud, with the light of the Divine presence on her brow, and in her hand the law for mankind !

Viewing in this faithful historical sketch what has been the unbroken course of Providence with this highly favoured country for near three centuries past, nothing but the most wilful scepticism can doubt that the patronage of Popery by the British people, or the British Legislature, would be followed by some tremendous national infliction, compelling us either to descend from the heights of prosperity and glory on which we stand, and retrace our steps to misery and shame, or else abandoning us to that final ruin which would leave England, like Judea, a fearful example of the despised long-suffering of God, and the madness of closing our eyes on his bounties, his visitations, and **HIS PALPABLE WILL.**

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