

The Newark Riot—Letter from Bishop Bayley.

To the Editors of the Courier and Enquirer :

As a Catholic Bishop, and particularly as Bishop of Newark, I think I have a right to complain of the tone and substance of your leading Editorial of the 6th inst., charging "the ecclesiastical overseers of the Irish Catholic population of this country with tacit connivance at, if not assent 'to' the alleged attack from a Catholic Church upon a peaceable procession of American citizens."

The disturbance had taken place but the afternoon previous; the causes which led to it had not been examined into, and yet, upon the hasty and one-sided statement of a newspaper of this city, which now frankly admits that it was misled, you not only assume that the whole blame of the disturbance is to be laid upon the Irish Catholics of Newark, but you take occasion from it to arraign their ecclesiastical superiors at the bar of justice and public opinion, and to hold them accountable for all the violence committed, because "the Church permits its thunders to sleep, and the 'clergy neglect to use their influence to prevent such deeds from being done by those who call themselves its faithful.'"

If it had been true, as you assume, that "a peaceable procession of American citizens had been fired into by Irish Catholics from a church," I would agree with you that there is no condemnation too severe for such an outrage, and that whatever was afterwards done to that church was right and justifiable. It appears, however, from the sworn evidence before the Coroner's jury, from the unanimous testimony alike of Protestants and Catholics, that no stone was thrown or pistol fired by any person in or about the church—that the church, or any person connected with it, had as little to do with disturbing the procession as the Wesleyan Institute on the opposite side of the street. In fact there is no evidence that any person outside of the procession was armed with pistols or other deadly weapons.

But let that pass. I will allow that there is no blame to be attached to the two thousand Protestants (Irish Orangemen,) who marched in the procession, armed with pistols and daggers, displaying colors and banners, and playing tunes most offensive to the eyes and ears of Irish Catholics. I will allow that all the blame attaches to the man who threw a stone at them—I will allow, that on account of this, they were justified in shooting and stabbing persons and sacking the church—that "it is wrong and disgraceful to undertake to divide the culpability." I will allow all this—but I cannot allow, that because this or that man interfered with the procession, that the Catholic Bishops are to be held accountable for it. I cannot allow it, because we possess no such influence over each and every man who passes under the name of Catholic, as is attributed to us. It is entirely imaginary. There are good Catholics and bad Catholics. Over good Catholics—those who practice faithfully the duties of their religion—we possess a good deal of influence; for obedience to Pastors, those who have the rule over them, is regarded by them as a religious obligation. But we possess no such influence over bad Catholics; and, alas! the number in this country is becoming very great. There are many demoralized by herding together in our large cities, who, though they may be called Catholics, never practice any duty of their religion—who do not come near our churches—and are, in fact, entirely beyond our control. We deplore the acts of violence committed by such persons as much as any member of the community, but we have no power of being everywhere present when there is any possibility of a disturbance, to hold back the arms of every drunken, or evil disposed person, who may choose to throw a stone at, or otherwise molest either individuals or public processions. It is the Policeman, and not the Bishop, whose duty it is to be at the heels of such characters.

It seems to me that there is another side to this question which it would be well for the American people to reflect upon. The Catholic Clergy are daily insulted in the streets, as they pass along quietly in the discharge of their duties. Every week almost, we read of some violence committed against Catholic property. This certainly is not the work of Irish Catholics—and I believe that there are Bishops and Clergy in the country besides those of the Catholic religion.

But besides all this, and I say it without fear of contradiction, the Catholic Bishops and Clergy have done and are doing their utmost, and no man can do more, from the pulpit and in their confessional, in public and in private, as far as their voice can be heard or their influence reach, to inculcate principles of peace and charity—to teach the "faithful" to return good for evil—to bear with insults and injuries rather than to retaliate. I assure you that you did them a great injustice when you laid the guilt of these violences at their door.

I appeal, therefore, to your sense of right and justice, (and your journal has been hitherto distinguished for its high and impartial character) and to that of the American people to hold us blameless in this unfortunate occurrence. The slips which I enclose from two morning papers of this city, will show you that public opinion is righting itself here. I regret that the coroner's jury did not think it necessary to sift this matter to the bottom, for I am certain that when the whole truth is brought out, all will agree that a gross outrage has been committed, not only upon the Catholics, but upon the whole community of Newark.

J. ROOSEVELT BAYLEY, Bishop of Newark.

NEWARK, Sept. 8.