

April

The Forum.

APRIL, 1888.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND THE PAPACY.

SOME years ago there was a general tendency to consider the papacy as an old-fashioned institution, whose influence over the affairs of this world was rapidly diminishing. True, the faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church continued to believe in the eternal duration of the supreme authority of the successors of St. Peter; but, at sight of the many dangers with which the mystic bark was encompassed, they could not restrain a cry of alarm, and each time that the voice of the pope was raised at the Vatican, it was to bewail the sad condition to which he was reduced by the ingratitude and perversity of the nations gone astray. More especially in 1870, when Italy took advantage of the defeat of the French to annex Rome and the remaining States of the Church, it was believed that the papacy had received a mortal blow. How erroneous this opinion was later events have clearly demonstrated. In 1876 I met at St. Moritz, in the Engadine, Count Arnim, formerly German representative at Rome. It had been his great object to prevent Bismarck's engaging in a *kulturkampf* against Rome, and he expressed himself to me as follows:

“The chancellor is of opinion that the suppression of the temporal power will weaken the pope's sway, and that it will now be no very difficult matter to overcome him; whereas just the reverse is the real truth. So long as the pope was in possession of territory, he had temporal interests, and could be in-

fluenced by threats or promises. Read the history of the papacy from the time of Charlemagne to our own day, and you will see how it has ever worked for the interest of its temporal domination. Did not even Pius IX. abandon for a moment the cause of Poland to please the Czar of Russia? In the event of any little misunderstanding with the pope, a frigate dispatched to Civita Vecchia, or a few troops sent to Bologna, gave his holiness subjects for reflection; but now that the pope is wholly disarmed, and that his power is solely spiritual, what course is left open for you to adopt if you wish him to yield to your views? You cannot seize upon his person nor imprison him. Such conduct would not only be odious, but it would be absolutely useless, for it would be making a martyr of him. For the future he is secure from man's attacks, and his moral authority is, in consequence, proportionately increased. The supporters of the papacy are strangely blind to their own interests in their wish to restore him his kingdom. At the present time, the 'prisoner of the Vatican' is entirely a free agent. Give him back his temporal power, and he will again be forced to submit to political requirements. Besides, how contradictory to make a king, like any other, of one considered as Christ's successor, who himself said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.'

The suppression of the temporal dominion of the popes is probably a definitely accomplished fact, for it is only the last application of the general historic law which has successfully done away with all the ecclesiastical principalities created during the middle ages, such as the bishoprics of Mayence, Cologne, and Liège; but the friends of the church need not at all regret this, for, as Count Arnim foretold, since the accession of Leo XIII. the role of the papacy has been ceaselessly increasing.

The Vatican is now one of the diplomatic centers in Europe, where the most important political business is negotiated. The pope interferes, either openly or by secret agencies, in the internal political movement of all civilized countries. The reason for this is evident. The majority of the inhabitants of nearly all the Roman Catholic countries, and very powerful minorities in Protestant lands, such as Germany and England, or in schismatic nations like Russia, obey the orders of their priests, who, in their turn, receive instructions from the bishops and the pope. It is certain that in countries where, as in Belgium, the Roman Catholic faith has held its ground, the pope possesses incomparably more authority than the king. The electors who decide the majority in Parliament obey his orders, and the choice of ministers is thus influenced.

The most important recent victory of the papacy is the one

brought about by the greatest politician of our day, Bismarck. The struggle entered upon against Rome, with a view to forcing priests to submit to the state regulations, was a mistake, for neither fire nor sword could be had recourse to to enforce the obedience of the bishops and the pope. Why, then, was the *kulturkampf* commenced? One of Bismarck's intimate friends, the German minister at Brussels, M. de Balan, explained the situation to me in this wise when the difficulty first arose:

“The German Catholics will never consent to the scepter of the Germanic Empire, which, since Charlemagne, has always been held by a Catholic, passing definitively into Protestant hands. As, therefore, the struggle is inevitable sooner or later, it is as well to enter upon it at once, for the nation is just now proud of its victory over the French, convinced of its own superiority, and ill disposed to submit to the orders of a few old Italian prelates.”

These reasons seemed plausible enough, especially as they sufficed to decide so far-seeing a politician as Prince Bismarck. Nevertheless, experience has shown his error. He was mistaken in his estimation of the power of the Roman Catholic Church, and of the means she possessed for subduing his resistance. He should not have forgotten that two sovereigns had already not only signally failed, but lost their crowns, in a similar enterprise. Joseph II., Emperor of Austria, wished to enforce a regulation that aspirants to the priesthood in Belgium should follow the course of studies at the University of Louvain. The clergy resisted this measure, and the revolution of 1788 followed. The King of the Netherlands, William I., attempted to enforce similar measures, and the revolution of 1830 ensued. Bismarck, finding himself incapable of resisting the clergy in the Catholic provinces of Prussia, and perceiving his mistake, turned completely and suddenly round. He made peace with the pope, and, over and above this, he contrived to become the abettor of the designs of his holiness, and an accomplice in his political plans. One by one he repealed the “May Laws”—those laws which imposed certain fixed conditions for the nomination of priests—then, in a quarrel with Spain respecting the Caroline Islands, he very cleverly referred to the decision of Leo XIII., thereby causing him to catch a glimpse of the bright papal dream of the middle ages—the pope the sovereign arbitrator in all con-

tentions between Christian people and Christian sovereigns. Recently, in permitting the re-establishment of all religious orders save the Jesuits, Bismarck made the pope his electoral agent. In the last election the Catholics received orders to vote for the ministerial candidates, thus assuring the adoption of the law which accorded to the emperor a fixed military budget for seven years. Although this law was clearly directed against France, the pope unhesitatingly supported it, and in this way became an arbitrator in the home policy of the German Empire, which only latterly was so bitterly opposed to him.

Another recent triumph of the papacy has been achieved in England. In order to induce the Irish to cease their opposition to the English Government, Lord Salisbury dispatches the Duke of Norfolk as an envoy to Rome, where he represents the interests of the Irish landlords. Even Queen Victoria almost prostrated herself at the feet of the pope, if we may believe the official gazette of the Vatican, which reports that her majesty expressed the wish "that the Catholic religion be permitted to prosper more and more throughout the vast British Empire." In the London "Times" of Dec. 27, of last year, we read:

"The British special mission to the pope presented the gift of her majesty. On receiving the massive basin and ewer of gold constituting the gift, the pope, with evident pleasure, remarked that they would serve for his jubilee mass. The basin and ewer were engraved with the inscription, 'To His Holiness Pope Leo XIII., from Victoria R. I., 1888.'"

Perhaps next spring we shall see the Queen of England and Empress of India kiss the toe of the sovereign pontiff. If Leo XIII. would consent to command the Irish priesthood to cease from supporting home rule, there is nothing that would be refused him; he might have a Catholic university, money for seminaries, and even an ambassador at the Vatican. Only it is doubtful whether the pope will allow himself to be purchased even at this price. It is, however, perfectly certain that Leo XIII. is an arbitrator in the Irish question, and that the future of England largely depends on his resolves. If he consented to act as desired, he would become an ally of the conservative party. At all events, his authority is admitted and recognized, and his influence is unquestionable.

In France, the majority in Parliament and the friends of liberty are anxious for the separation of church and state; but the republicans fear to support this, apprehensive, and justly so, that the republic might fall in the struggle against the national clergy and the pope, that its adoption would necessitate.

In Italy the pope has forbidden his partisans to take part in any parliamentary elections, *ni elettori, ni eletti*, because they must not recognize the kingdom which has annexed the States of the Church; but in municipal elections the clericals, the *neri* (blacks), as they are called, often have the best of it, even in large towns like Rome and Naples. The old monasteries have been suppressed, it is true, but on all sides, thanks to freedom of association, fresh convents are springing up, which will very soon exceed the old ones, both in number and wealth. In Austria, the clerical influence has been successful in restoring to schools their former denominational character, and in placing them entirely under ecclesiastical supervision. At the same time, an active propaganda is being carried on among the Slavs of the Eastern Church, and great concessions are being made in order to bring them within the pale of Catholicism. They have been authorized to continue to use the orthodox Greek liturgy, and even their priests may marry, a privilege accorded to the members of the united Greek Church. In Spain, although the liberals are occasionally in power, the bishops have so much the upper hand that the doctrine of intolerance is enforced by the civil authority, and the ostensible practice of Protestantism is strictly forbidden. Recently two Protestants were imprisoned for refusing to salute a Roman Catholic procession in the streets, and others were some years ago condemned to hard labor for reading the Bible. *Autos da fé* still take place from time to time, but, fortunately, only books are consumed just now.

In many countries, such as the Tyrol, the Rhenane Provinces, Belgium, and Lower Canada, the real sovereign is not the reigning monarch, but the pope, who rules through the medium of his bishops and priests. The pope will be obeyed in preference to the laws of the land, unless these are in accordance with, and accepted by, ecclesiastical authority.

Nothing more clearly proves the prodigious vitality of Cathol-

icism than what occurred in France at the close of the last century. During the eighteenth century indifference as to religion was general amongst the well-to-do classes, and even amongst the nobility and the higher ranks of the clergy. The Revolution (1789-1793) neglected no means effectually to annihilate and wholly destroy the Catholic Church. Her possessions were confiscated and sold, and the sacred edifices dedicated to the goddess Reason; her priests were transported, shot, guillotined, or forced to swear obedience to the new constitution; and all religious festivals, including Sundays, were abolished. No more violent and systematic effort has ever been made to extirpate a worship whose most cultivated supporters were already very lukewarm in their adherence. A few unsettled years ensued, followed by Napoleon's signature of the Concordat and the reopening of all the churches. What happens then? The people flock to them, and to-day Catholicism is more truly living, more active, and more powerful, than it was a hundred years ago.

The jubilee ceremonies of the fiftieth anniversary of the pope's ordination seem to have been the consecration, the crowning point, of all the papal triumphs. Gifts and homage poured in from all sides, even from the Protestant Emperor of Germany, and from the chief of the free-thinking republic of France. The President of the United States sent Leo XIII., in his own name, as a jubilee gift, a magnificently bound copy of the American Constitution, where are inscribed all the liberties condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. Multitudes of pilgrims crowded the sacred edifice built by Michael Angelo, and when the pope, carried aloft on the *sedes gestatoria*, surveyed the throngs of the faithful surrounding him, he may well have thought that the moment of his universal reign was approaching.

Nevertheless, as has been already remarked, this important ceremony was far rather a manifestation of the spirit of tolerance and philosophy than a testimony to the power of Catholicism. The pope entering St. Peter's, adorned with the tiara sent by the Emperor William, grandson of Luther; using the basin and ewer of Queen Victoria, the successor of heretical Elizabeth; and wearing on his finger the ring presented him by the sultan, was indeed a strange spectacle, calling to mind the pantheism of the

Roman Empire, which admitted the worship of all gods in the Pantheon of Agrippa. The proof of this universal homage resides rather in the breadth of views of the spirit of modern philosophy than in the exclusive spirit of true Catholicism.

Struck by the grandeur of this papal jubilee, many eminent writers see in it the proof that the Catholic Church is destined to gather in all nations of the two hemispheres under Rome's authority, and thus to realize the ideal of a universal church; and she can, in truth, be aided by the two powerful movements which are now shaking and transforming the whole world, the democratic movement and the movement for social reform.

The Christian Church, at its origin, was the most democratic of all institutions. All those in authority were directly elected by the totality of members, without any distinction whatever, either as regards electors or elected. She was, in fact, a republic, and an international one. If she will but return to her early origin, and act purely in conformity with her essential principles, her opinions will acquire greater power than any in the universe, and she will in herself realize the most perfect of democracies that could be conceived. All that the kings would lose, the pope, as chosen chief of this democracy, would gain. The boundaries of states would be no limit to the conquests of the church, for is she not essentially cosmopolitan—the famous circle without a center, whose circumference is everywhere? The church need but bear in mind the conduct of her founders and the precepts of her fathers, and be guided solely by these, and the incalculable force of social renovation, now only at its onset, will bear her along with it. Did not the apostles of old go so far as to have all their possessions in common, and do not all the sacred writers defend the rights of the poor of this world? What, indeed, is the gospel save good tidings to the destitute?

Recently several Roman Catholic bishops have called to mind these traditions of Christianity. Leo XIII., while still Bishop of Perugia, wrote as follows in his pastoral letter of 1877:

“In view of so large a portion of humanity prematurely worn out by pitiless cupidity, we may well ask whether the adepts of this godless civilization, instead of aiding our progress, do not rather send us some centuries backward to that period of mourning when slavery crushed so large a portion of the human

race, and when the poet sadly exclaimed, 'humanity lives only for a few privileged beings'—*humanum paucis vivit genus.*"

In Germany we hear just the same language. The Abbé Winterer, the deputy for Mulhausen, recently expressed himself thus in the Reichstag:

"The social question is very closely connected with the religious; the church has never ignored it. She did not ignore it when it presented itself as the slavery question, nor as the servitude question; and she cannot ignore it now that it presents itself as the wages and agrarian question, or, in other words, as the question of socialism. Were she to forget this, she would have to efface from the gospel the words '*misereor super turbam.*'"

Let us now listen to Cardinal Manning's language, which certainly would not be disavowed by the most radical socialist:

"The power of capital may be very fairly estimated by the fact that out of a hundred strikes not more than five or six terminate in favor of the workmen. Their dependence is so complete, and the privations of their families, composed of feeble women and children, so intolerable and imperious, that the struggle between living and dead capital is most unequal, and the freedom of contract, so often vaunted by political economy, does not in very truth exist at all. Under these circumstances does it not behoove the church to protect the workers who have accumulated the common riches of humanity?"

In America, Cardinal Gibbons, who recently saved Henry George's works from being placed on the Index, takes the same view as Cardinal Manning. He says:

"As it is a recognized fact that the great questions of the future will not touch upon either wars, trade, or finance, but will concern social life and the amelioration of the condition of the great masses of the population, and especially of the working classes, it is of the utmost importance that the church should firmly sustain the humane side of the question, and yield her support to those who claim justice for the multitude who compose the body of the human family."

Will the Roman Catholic clergy, under the guidance of their bishops, openly follow the course here advocated? Will they, like the early fathers, stand up to defend the working classes? Shall we ever see, as an eminent Roman Catholic predicts, a socialist pope denouncing, like Cardinal Manning, the tyranny of capital? According to some recent interpretations, the woman seated upon a scarlet beast, and arrayed in a robe of purple and scarlet, is the papacy, which, in order to reign over

nations and kings, is taking up socialism; and the beast upon which the woman is seated is the red democracy, which the pope will make use of to overcome all resistance. As the papacy is, at the present time, the most absolute autocracy in the world, it is probable that the same principles of authority will be upheld so long as the support of sovereigns continues to be of service; but, on the day that royalty is no longer of avail to the furthering of the projects of the Vatican, the people and democracy and socialism will be at once had recourse to.

It is not, however, my opinion that Roman Catholicism will ever become the universal religion. This high destiny can be reserved only for the primitive Christianity of the gospel. On the day that Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, but when true worshipers shall worship him in spirit and in truth," was founded the true religion of humanity, the eternal and universal religion, irrespective of nationalities, doctrines, and dogmas. The Sermon on the Mount can never be surpassed. In Christ's teachings, worship and dogmas have very little place. The love of God as the type of all that is perfect, love for fellow-men, and charity to all, this sums up the doctrine. "Be ye therefore perfect, as my Father which is in heaven is perfect," and "Love thy neighbor as thyself;" on these commandments, are we not told, hang the law and the prophets? The poorer classes who have abandoned Christianity will return to it again when they have once been made to understand that it brings them equality and freedom; whereas atheism and materialism simply sanction their slavery, sacrificing them to certain pretended natural laws. The gospel of Christ, the "good tidings" for the poor, would put an end to all our economic difficulties, if the spirit of brotherhood and charity therein taught were generally understood and practiced.

In spite of Macaulay's opinion and of the apparent spread of Roman Catholicism, the future does not belong to it. The two great countries which appear destined to acquire an almost limitless development are Russia, with Siberia and Central Asia, and the United States. The billion of inhabitants that these will count by the close of the next two centuries will be chiefly

Protestants or of the Greek Church. Is it likely, then, that they will be willing to recognize the authority of the Vatican and of a few old Italian prelates of whose existence even they are scarcely aware? Roman Catholicism cannot satisfy cultivated minds. Since the proclamation of the infallibility of the pope, which Bossuet rejected as blasphemy, it is in direct opposition to the most fundamental notions of what constitutes a state, and absolutely at war with all the aspirations of the modern man. It has become overloaded with dogmas which can neither be explained nor denied. They must be enveloped in mysticism, as they cannot bear the light of scientific discussion. Benjamin Constant proves that religion has always become transformed simultaneously with civilization; it is, therefore, impossible for it to remain unchanged. Any worship which does not keep pace with the progress of general instruction is soon only suitable for the uneducated classes, and is abandoned by the higher orders of society. Superstition then gradually gains ground, while the more educated portions of the community give way to incredulity. Is not this the state of affairs now in nearly all Roman Catholic countries? The simple Christianity of the gospel is not subject to these changes, because it is a pure ideal which is completely summed up in the commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself."

There is one dogma of the Roman Catholic Church which will effectually prevent its ever becoming the religion of a free country such as the United States. This dogma, which has been over and over again enforced by popes and councils, orders the suppression of heresy and heretics. Listen to what Bossuet says on this subject, and remember that he was hostile to ultramontanism, and not disposed to magnify the authority of the popes:

"I declare that I have always been of opinion that princes have the right to pass penal laws to compel heretics to conform to the rites and observances of the Catholic Church; and secondly, that this doctrine is a standing one in the church, which has not only followed, but also requested from princes, the enactment of such ordinances."*

* Letter dated November 12, 1700, being a debate with the Bishop of Montauban as to whether Protestants converted by the dragoons were to be com-

These doctrines are incontestable and admitted by all fervent Catholics. The fourth council of Lateran, which was ecumenical, under Pope Innocent III., in 1216, thus ordains, in Canon III.:

“If a temporal lord, required and advised by the church, neglects to rid his state of the heretical pestilence, the bishop must excommunicate him; and if he still refuses obedience, the pope must be informed, so that his vassals may be proclaimed free from their allegiance, and his land given over to true Catholics, who, after having expelled the heretics, may possess it without contestation in purity of faith.”

The present pope, Leo XIII., strongly insists on the value of St. Thomas's works as the basis of philosophical and moral instruction. This “father of the church” is even clearer than Bossuet in his explanation of the true Catholic doctrine respecting religious liberty. He says:

“If heretics did not corrupt their fellows, they could, nevertheless, be suppressed. Secular justice can legitimately put them to death (*judicio seculari possunt licito occidi*) and deprive them of their possessions, even if they do not corrupt others; for they are blasphemers against God and observers of a false faith, so that they deserve more severe punishment than those who are guilty of high treason or of coining false money.”*

The papacy has always considered the destruction of heretics a triumph for the church. Before entering the *Capella Sistina* in the Vatican, you pass through a hall called the *Sala Regia*. On the walls are pictures by Vadari, representing the triumphs of the Roman Church. Four of these frescoes show the horrors of the massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's eve. Pope Gregory XIII. ordered the perpetuation on the walls of his palace of the memory of this crime, the anniversary of which drew tears from the eyes of Voltaire. The residence of the pope is the only place in the world where murder is publicly glorified.

Lord Acton, in his reply to the expostulations of Mr. Gladstone, maintains that the intolerance of the church is a thing of the past. Cardinal Manning is also of this opinion, and, as an

pelled to attend mass. Bossuet is of opinion that they should not be compelled, not from any consideration for their liberty of conscience, but out of respect for the mass. This curious correspondence should be read and considered in order clearly to understand the true spirit of Catholicism.

* “Sententiæ,” Lib. IV., D. 13, quest. ii., art. 3.

example of this, he mentions that the Catholics in Ireland have never persecuted their Protestant brethren. In a recent pamphlet on "Religious Persecution," Mr. John Lee proves that quite recently the ecclesiastical authorities in Ireland approved of violent measures being employed for the extirpation of heresy, and it may be objected to Lord Acton that Pius IX., a well-meaning and holy man, obedient to the doctrines of his faith, inscribed everywhere he could in his concordats that all dissenting worship should be suppressed.

When, in 1815, the King of Holland granted his new realm a constitution according freedom of worship, the bishops had it thrown out, because this spirit of freedom is directly opposed to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. When, in 1830, Belgium gave herself a constitution with modern liberties, Gregory XVI. condemned it on this account in a famous encyclical letter. In the concordat concluded with Spain by Pius IX., in 1850, one of the articles is as follows :

"The Catholic religion shall be maintained as the exclusive religion of the realm in such sort that the practice of all other worship shall be forbidden and prevented."

In the concordat with the republic of Ecuador, in 1862, there is the following stipulation :

"The Roman Catholic and apostolic religion is to continue to be the religion of the republic of the Ecuador. Consequently no other worship may be practiced nor any other sect tolerated in the republic."

When freedom of worship was proclaimed in Mexico, the encyclical letter of December 15th, 1856, denounced it to the world as an abominable act, destined to corrupt men's minds and to root out the holy religion; *ad populorum mores animosque corrumpendos ac detestabilem terrinamque indifferentismi pestem propagandam*. In Protestant countries, Catholics either dissimulate or deny this dogma of intolerance, but when they are masters they apply it in full force. One of their writers, the most highly approved at Rome, Mr. Louis Veuillot, says cynically:

"When there is a Protestant majority we claim religious liberty, because such is their principle; but when we are in majority we refuse it, because that is ours."

M. de Tocqueville, when speaking of the influence of religion in the United States, says :

“Nothing in Christianity, nor even in Catholicism, is absolutely opposed to the spirit of democracy, and there is much favorable to it.”

He very erroneously confuses Christianity and Catholicism. Christianity pure and simple, as at its origin, is wholly democratic, and is certainly highly favorable to the maintenance of democracy. Did it not in Holland and the United States found and support a free democracy? But Catholicism, the finished model of autocratic theocracy, inspired the despotism of Louis XIV., and of Philip II., resisted the French Revolution, and nullified its effects, and is now leagued with aristocracy for the purpose of re-establishing the old system everywhere possible.

A religion which accords to a human being the unheard-of attribute of infallibility; which is overloaded with customs and superstitions wholly contrary to the gospel; which is as far removed from the teaching of Christ as light from darkness; and which, above all, condemns modern liberties, and particularly liberty of conscience—such a religion as this is never likely to be adopted by the civilized nations of the future.

ÉMILE DE LAVELEYE.