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THE CLERICAL PARTY IN BELGIUM.

FAR-SIGHTED men in Belgium are beginning to feel some inward disquiet as to the future of their country. Not many days ago, one of the authors of the Belgian constitution said to me:—"We thought that to found liberty, it was enough to proclaim it, to guarantee it, and separate church from state. With pain I see that we were mistaken. The church, trusting for support to the rural districts, is bent on imposing its power absolutely. The large towns, which have been won over to modern ideas, will not give way without a struggle. We are drifting to civil war, as in France. We are already in a revolutionary situation. The future before my eyes is big with storms." The recent elections have brought out the danger more clearly. Those for the Chamber have strengthened the clerical majority, thanks to the votes of the peasants. The communal elections, on the contrary, have given the power to the Liberals in all the large towns. The antagonism between the towns and the country thus displays itself more and more.

Mr. Disraeli lately, in the presence of King Leopold II., congratulated Belgium on the forty years of liberty and prosperity that she has enjoyed, under the auspices of two enlightened sovereigns devoted to a constitutional system. The panegyric was deserved, but will it long continue so, and is there not some ground for fearing lest Belgium in her turn may fall into that condition of discomfort, into those periodical crises which afflict other catholic countries, and which sometimes even make us despair of their future? In any case, the circumstances which are to be observed here may be instructive for other nations. Already in Italy and Germany, when it is desired to establish by example the danger of religious corporations, they cite the religious corporations of Belgium. England likewise may profit by this study, considering the numerous points of resemblance existing between Belgium and Ireland. In both countries the soil is

made valuable by a large class of small cultivators entirely subjected to a clergy which lays claim to complete supremacy, and the question of public instruction is the principal object of party contention, because it is upon the direction given to instruction that the tendencies of future generations all hang. What does the catholic party seek? Of what means can it dispose, for reaching its aims? What dangers would its supremacy present? How may we escape it? What organization may properly be given to public instruction, so as to make it answer the wants of the people without becoming an engine of war in the hands of the clergy and of ultramontaniam? These are capital questions which concern Belgium and Ireland in the same degree.

The Belgian constitution proclaimed all the liberties consecrated by the laws and traditions of England. Freedom of conscience and opinion, freedom of instruction and of the press, freedom of association and of public meeting, have all been practised without any of the restrictions which in other countries, and notably in France, have too often made of all this liberty a mere mendacious phrase. The citizen, then, here enjoys the same rights as on the other side of the Channel. The constitution likewise decided the separation of the church from the state, as is now the relation in Ireland; only, by a contradiction to be explained by the necessities of the moment, the state bound itself to pay the ministers of religion, though without in any degree interfering in their appointment. The pope appoints the bishops directly, while the bishops appoint the incumbents and curates. Whoever they may be, the state is bound to pay them. If Rome chooses priests whose special mission is to undermine the constitution and the liberties which the constitution guarantees, that makes no difference; the nation has to support them, and to find them the means for fulfilling this anti-national office.

On the free ground furnished by the constitution of 1830, two parties dispute for power, the Liberal party, and the Catholic or Clerical party. On questions of finance, of the army, of commercial reform, men of both parties are not of the same opinion. The exact point which divides the two parties is this:—Ought we to countenance, or to resist, the influence of the clergy, especially in education?

The clerical party calls itself also the conservative party. It is so, in the sense of having with it the elements which connect themselves ordinarily with the past—the nobles, the peasants, and the priests. But it may be said, as its opponents contend, that it is a revolutionary party, because in its ecclesiastical leaders, it is hostile to existing liberties, and thus is on its way to revolution. The only programme and *raison d'être* of the liberal party is resistance to the encroachments of the clergy.

The catholic party is still composed at the present day of the

elements enumerated at the time of the Brabant revolution by the Governor of the Austrian Low Countries in a dispatch to the Emperor Leopold:—"The aristocracy, the priests, the monks, the populace, and the bulk of the nation, which is neither democratic nor aristocratic, but which is inflamed by the fanatical and insinuating teaching of the priests."

History explains the power of the catholic party. It claims to be the true national party, and it is so in fact in this sense, that it has exercised for centuries a preponderating influence over the people, and that it is intimately bound up with its historic traditions. It was the axe and the stake of the Spaniards which made an ultramontane country of Belgium. In the sixteenth century the Flanders were, with Italy, the most enlightened and opulent country in Europe. Not only the towns, but even the villages had their local dramatic societies. These societies welcomed the ideas of the Reformation, and but for the persecutions of Philip II., the country was gained over to Protestantism. Spain conscientiously executed her work of repression. The most energetic spirits perished or went into exile. While Holland, profiting by this reinforcement, places herself at the head of the renewal of the sciences, in Belgium all intellectual life appears to go out. Plunged into a complete torpor, the nation remained alien to that awakening of intelligence which marked the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The clergy reigned supreme, while the Jesuits formed the minds of the youth. A fact or two will be enough to give some idea of the system. A writ of February 12, 1739, pronounced penalty of death and confiscation of goods "against all who should dare to compose, call, or distribute any books or writings impugning any point of our holy religion." In 1761 the very pious and very catholic empress, Maria Theresa, was obliged to publish a decree to prevent the carrying into execution of the Index declared against the works of Bossuet, which they wished everywhere to commit to the flames. A learned canonist, professor at the university of Louvaine, an ascetic, a saint, Van Espen, was forced to flee into Holland to escape the Jesuits, because he had defended certain Gallican principles. Since the end of the last century, Belgium has made two revolutions, but both times at the voice of the clergy, and to drive from the throne two sovereigns, Joseph II. and William I., who wished alike to favour the diffusion of light and to introduce freedom of conscience. In 1815 King William gave the Belgians a constitution which was without doubt the most liberal of any on the Continent. The bishops, who had already demanded at the Congress of Vienna the restoration of the tithe and the prohibition of the public exercises of his faith to a Protestant sovereign, published a "doctrinal judgment," condemning the new constitution, and their influence was so great that the

Notables assembled at Brussels rejected it by 798 votes against 527. What the bishops objected to in the constitution was that it consecrated freedom of worship, freedom of the press, the equal admissibility of Protestants to the offices and the sovereign jurisdiction of the state. To understand rightly the spirit of this episcopate, one should hear their own words:—"To swear to uphold freedom of religious opinions and the concession of equal protection to all faiths, what is this but to swear to uphold and protect error equally with the truth, to favour the progress of anti-catholic doctrines, and so to contribute towards the extinction of the light of the true faith in these fair regions There are, besides, other articles which a true child of the church can never bind himself to observe; such is the 227th, which sanctions the freedom of the press To swear to observe a law which assumes the catholic church to be subjected to the laws of the state, is to run the risk of co-operating in the enslavement of the catholic church. It is in reality, according to the expression of our holy father, the pope, to subject the spiritual power to the caprices of the temporal."

For a long time the confessors refused absolution to all functionaries who had taken the oath to the constitution. The clergy remained hostile to the Protestant king, and when William wished to oblige students in theology to pass through the philosophical college of Louvain, they resolved to overturn his throne, and they succeeded. The revolution of 1830 was a great mistake, exactly as the separation of England from Ireland would be a great mistake. The erection of the kingdom of the Low Countries, realising the aim once pursued by the dukes of Burgundy, had been the best work of the Congress of Vienna. The northern provinces, of Germanic blood, formed an obstacle to conquest on the side of France; the provinces of the south, of Latin speech, opposed themselves to conquest on the side of Germany. Belgium brought into the union her agriculture, her industry, iron and coal; Holland her colonies, her ships, her commerce. A state of between nine and ten millions of inhabitants with a budget of 400 millions was as strong as Prussia in 1815, and was in a perfectly good condition for self-defence. At the present moment Holland is looking with disquiet on the side of the east and Belgium on the side of the south, and there is no complete security for either of the two. The friends of freedom in Belgium, if they could have had support from the Protestants of Holland, might have offered triumphant resistance to ultramontanism. Isolated as they are, one may fear that they will end by succumbing. In fomenting the revolution of 1830 the Belgian clergy, then, committed a crime against the security of Europe.

Towards that time a part of the clergy, and precisely the most active and intelligent part, allowed the breath of modern ideas to

reach them. Lamennais, Lacordaire, Montalembert, preached the alliance of Catholicism with freedom. They were followed by many Belgian priests. Among those who sat in the congress of 1830 many pronounced for a republic. It is thanks to this movement, that the catholics came to an understanding with the liberals to inscribe in the Belgian constitution all liberties, even those which had been condemned by the "doctrinal judgment" of the bishops in 1815. It was under the empire of the same ideas that the clergy in Ireland lent a hand to the organization of the mixed schools which they now seek to annihilate.

But before long the papacy, faithful guardian of the traditions of the church, lifted up her infallible voice to condemn the sacrilegious innovations of Lamennais, and consequently the Belgian constitution which had stamped them with its adoption. This constitution, as M. Veillot has energetically said, was struck dead in its cradle by the thunderbolts of the Vatican. Gregory XVI., in his famous Encyclical of 1832, pours his anathema upon freedom of conscience, "one of the most pestilent of errors," and on the freedom of the press, "very disastrous, very detestable, and never to be sufficiently execrated, that mortal plague, never to be extirpated until the guilty elements of evil perish utterly in flames." Pius IX. has always spoken in the same tone. In 1861, in his allocution of the 18th March, he condemns "modern civilization, whence come so many deplorable ills, so many detestable opinions; which even countenances faiths that are not catholic, and which does not repel unbelievers from public employments, and which opens the catholic schools to their children." In all the concordats made with purely catholic states Pius IX. has always stipulated the complete proscription of Protestants,¹ and, in fine, in the Syllabus he has traced the programme of ultramontane absolutism.

The very definitive attitude taken by the papacy has placed the Belgian catholics in a thoroughly false position, which, especially since the proclamation of infallibility, has become untenable. They stand between the Encyclical and the Syllabus on one side, and the Belgian constitution on the other. As M. Veillot has said, there can no longer be such a thing as liberal catholicism; "he who is catholic is not liberal, and he who is liberal is not catholic." Consequently, there have been formed two groups within the bosom of the catholic party. One attempts to escape from the harshness of the papal decisions by distinctions, by equivocations, or by silence,

(1) In this the holy father has only conformed to the dogmas of the church of which he is head. Bossuet, who was no ultramontane, spoke in just the same way: "The prince ought to use his authority to destroy false religions in his realm. Those who wish the prince to show no rigour in the matter of religion, because religion ought to be free, are in impious error."

and continues to protest its attachments to the constitution and to freedom. Its organ is the *Journal de Bruxelles*, and its principal adherents are the survivors of 1830 and the statesmen. It is governmental; it is this which furnished the members of the Malon ministry at present in power. It is prudent, and, being unwilling to provoke violent resistance, it opposes the exigences of the clergy. The clergy tolerates them, because unable so far to dispense with their services.

The second group is purely ultramontane. It has for leaders the bishops, for idea the Syllabus, for scientific organ the university of Louvain. It is this which disposes of the real forces of the party; for through the clergy it moves the electors. In each of the principal towns it has a journal which is upheld and inspired by the bishops; at Ghent the *Bien Public*, at Liège the *Gazette*, at Bruges the *Patrie*, at Antwerp the *Journal d'Anvers*. It will end by ridding itself of the nuance of the political catholics, because it alone holds a logical situation, and because it takes care to form all the youth of the country in its doctrines. The ultramontane party in Belgium has one merit which cannot be disputed, that of frankness. It attempts no concealment of the end at which it aims. This end is no other than that which the papacy has pursued ever since the middle age,—universal sovereignty, supreme domination. A professor at Louvain has recently formulated this ideal in a work entitled *Les libertés populaires*,¹ and it is inculcated in the minds of youth in every Jesuit college.

At first it seems strange that the papacy, which has not been strong enough to defend its temporal sovereignty at Rome, should come to rule supreme in a free state like Belgium. And yet that may come to pass quite simply and without violence, merely by taking advantage of existing institutions. The clergy, succeeding in sending a genuine clerical majority to the Chambers, makes itself master of all the powers, and the pope becomes the true sovereign. The electors obey the priests, the priests obey the bishops, and the bishops obey the pope; hence the pope is king; more of a king than Leopold II., for he disposes of the parliament which enacts the laws and votes the taxes.

The final object of the catholics is, and must be, the restoration

(1) "What God prescribes," says M. Perin, "and what he forbids—that constitutes duty and the necessary foundation of all laws. The infallibility of the power established by God to promulgate and interpret his law, provides the essential guarantees of all social liberty, while the fallibility of human powers exposes men to all kinds of bondage. However small the part taken by a man, in virtue of a right which should be peculiar to him, in determining the principles which form the spiritual order, the authority of these principles will be diminished." That is, when man wishes to govern himself freely, he falls into all kinds of bondage. Order can only reign when it is established by the infallibility of the vicar of God. The pope, then, ought to be sovereign.

of the régime which the Vatican declares to be the only legitimate régime; in other words, that which once existed in Spain, at Naples, and at Rome itself. But they will advance gradually and prudently. To go surely, they will first aim at getting into their hands all education; then at multiplying convents, which will guide the feeling of the country districts. Already the institutions for secondary and superior instruction belonging to the clergy number twice as many pupils as those of the state. Now that the catholic party is in power, it will give every vacant chair to a professor devoted to ultramontane ideas. In this way, institutions which the liberals created for the purpose of propagating the modern spirit, and to counteract the Jesuits, will serve on the contrary to prepare the way for the definitive triumph of ultramontanism. To supply primary instruction, the parishes have set up schools, but the law of 1842, conferring the inspection upon the priests and the nominees of the bishops, has had the effect of subjecting these parish schools to the clergy. The daughters of the well-to-do class are nearly all brought up in convents, while those of the humbler classes go to the Sisters of Mercy, or else to the parish schools directed by the priest. Thus the clergy already has in its hands the instruction of the aristocracy, of the common people, of the girls, and of a large part of the bourgeoisie. As soon as they have renewed, according to their own wishes, the teaching staff of the schools and universities of the state, they will be masters of the whole education of the country. Now, he who has the education, has the future.

The convents, being another instrument of ecclesiastical domination, multiply with unexampled rapidity. They are invading town and the country alike. In the large cities, at Namur, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Liège, they occupy whole quarters. They erect magnificent buildings, but they invest the bulk of their wealth in shares and bonds, so as to escape notice. In 1846 they counted 779 convents and 11,968 religious—that is to say, as many as at the end of the eighteenth century, when Joseph II. thought it urgent to reduce their number. The last census, that of 1866, showed 1,314 convents, with 18,162 religious. Within twenty years their number had nearly doubled, and since 1866 the rate of increase has not slackened. It is calculated that there must be two convents for every three parishes; and it will not be long before each parish has a convent of its own.

The laws, opposing the constitution of congregations into bodies corporate, do, it is true, place a certain obstacle in the way of their multiplication, and especially of their accumulation of wealth. But the laws are evaded,¹ though not without both difficulty and risk. One of

(1) Here are some of the ingenious subtleties by which the bodies under vows evade the laws of mortmain. The members of the corporation sign a deed of partnership by

the first measures required by the bishops from the ministers and the Chambers, as soon as they no longer have too violent opposition to fear, or as soon as they have crushed it, will be a law giving the convents a sure footing, and which shall thus favour their increase of power and number. This is what the catholic ministry already tried to do in 1859. On that occasion the explosion of the opposition was lively enough, and the dissatisfaction of the large towns unmistakeable enough, to compel the withdrawal of the bill, but the pure ultramontane party will no longer tolerate such manifestations. It will employ armed power to repress them, as it wished to do last November. It will sweep the citizens aside by grapeshot, and profiting by the terror inspired by a bloody massacre of this sort, it will stamp out the last elements of resistance.

The means of action which the clergy has at its disposal are of nearly invincible power in a country which has preserved belief. There is first the pulpit, transformed into a tribune of political propagandism. From this the clergyman fulminates incessant attacks on the men of the liberal party and their principles: he depicts them as worthless because without faith, without morality, ready to shut up or burn the churches, and to massacre the clergy, as did their predecessors, the monsters of the French revolution. As the elections approach, none but political sermons are preached. If a tavern or a café in a village ventures to receive a journal not approved of by the clergy, it is marked as a bad house and loses both customers and character. The effect of this interdict is terrible; not a soul in the village dare resist the anathema.¹ The apprehension of being denounced from the pulpit fills everybody with dread, and breeds a readiness to absolute submission. The confessional is an agency of still greater power. By threatening

which they profess to hold their property in common, with the stipulation that the share of the partner dying first shall pass to the survivors. A civil company of unlimited duration is thus constituted, and when the number of the associates is reduced to two or three, these take care to take in new ones, so that the perpetual mortmain is kept up. To protect themselves against the claims of the natural heirs, the community makes each member execute a will, by which he bequeathes all that may remain to him to this or that member of the congregation, who has in turn to make a will in the same sense. A last guarantee is taken against the heirs who might have a claim to a *légitime*, such as a father or mother: this consists in deeds of sale, with the name of the purchasers and the date left blank, to be formally inserted after death if necessary. The deeds of partnership, the will, and the sale, thus form an effective arsenal of defensive weapons. It is in this way that the convents subsist.

(1) Here is a fact, which I cite as an instance. In a village in the environs of Ypres, a few liberals met once a week in a tavern to read a newspaper which one of them received privately. The priest got news of this, and at the appointed hour he went and strolled to and fro in front of the tavern, reading his breviary. Not one of the liberals ventured to present himself. The confessional is further employed for other ends. Not long ago in a village near Vielsalm, the curé wanted a calf for a dinner which he was about to give. The farmer with whom he was bargaining not consenting to part with it at the price offered, he refused him absolution.

to refuse absolution, the priest holds the faithful completely in his power, and there is nothing which he may not require. He refuses it to-day to those who continue to subscribe to liberal newspapers, although such journals make it a rule never to touch on religious questions. At Liège some ladies of high position lately founded a superior institution for young ladies. They applied to the bishop, that a priest might be allowed to give religious instruction. As the establishment would compete with the convents, the bishop declined to consent, and absolution is refused to the lady foundresses, as well as to all who send their children to the school. It is in the confessional that they obtain from mothers of families that their sons shall be sent to the Jesuit colleges and the university of Louvain. It is by the sacrament of repentance that the clergy procure those numerous legacies, which come in for the endowment of their congregations, and contribute to the foundation of new convents. At Ypres in Flanders they have introduced the system of confessional tickets, which is very effective, and which they will no doubt try very hard to make general. It consists in this. At the time of the Easter confession, which is compulsory, the confessor delivers to the penitents a ticket testifying that they have conformed to the prescriptions of the church. Then a delegate of the clergy goes from house to house to collect and verify these tickets, so as to make sure that each person has his own. Any who should happen to be out of rule would be singled out for animadversion, and if they carry on any business or trade would lose their customers and connection. Those who wish to have a ticket without going to confession, buy one from some individual who goes twice to confess at two different churches.

The clergy also begin to use the confessional as a means of obtaining decisions conformable to their own interests from the judges. If the magistrate shrinks from deciding in the sense desired by the church, absolution is refused to him. He then finds himself placed between his duties as an organ of the law and his obligations as a catholic. By this means, ingeniously used, the clergy will have the judiciary at their disposal.¹ They may equally aspire to make themselves masters of the executive through the confessional. In fact, if the sovereign is a devoted son of the church, he can only submit himself to its decisions. The Jesuit confessor dictating to

(1) A recent case made a considerable stir. A magistrate, M. Iweins, had decided in favour of the town of Ypres against a church fabric, which claimed the property of a certain Lamotte endowment. Last Easter the vicar of the parish writes to the magistrate, that if he does not withdraw his decision and make honourable avowal of his fault, absolution will be refused to him. The same communication had been made to the sheriff of the town. The magistrate proceeded to lay a complaint before the minister of justice, who advised the bishops to hush up the affair, and this was done. The example is instructive. Suppose the magistrates to be good catholics, then it is the clergy who give the judicial decisions.

Louis XIV. the revocation of the edict of Nantes is a perpetual example to follow. It is because King Leopold II. does not blandly obey the clergy, that the journals of the episcopate treat him with so little deference. The constitutional régime which has been developed in protestant countries evidently suits them only: in a catholic country confession spoils all its machinery, for it destroys the independence of electors, of representatives, of functionaries, and of the sovereign.

Another means of influence which the clergy do not neglect, consists in personal visits at times when the elections are approaching. The priest goes to see his parishioners, and imposes on them as a duty, under menace of spiritual penalties, to vote for the episcopal candidates. He addresses himself specially to the wife and the daughters; he speaks of refusal of the sacrament and of eternal damnation in case of disobedience, and the women, filled with pious alarms, use all their power to procure from the husband a vote that shall be pleasing to God and his ministers. It is impossible to form an idea of the importunities to which the rural electors are subjected. The bishops publish mandates directing the elections, and the priests are now beginning to follow their example.¹

The clergy are not content with resorting to the means of influence furnished by their ministry. They are no longer afraid of using propagandist instruments which at first they left to their adversaries. The catholic party has now everywhere electoral clubs, political associations, which hold meetings, launch addresses, prepare for the elections. On the day of voting, the catholic electors of the villages arrive in compact flocks, with the priest and his curate at their head, who take care not to leave them for a moment so as to keep them safe from all contact with unbelievers. In each locality they set up clerical associations for musical practice, playing at bowls, skittles, archery. Here the members are supplied with beer and tobacco at a lower price. They are now organizing conventual workshops to which they hope to attract the artisans. The aristocracy and the great landowners, belonging for the most part to the catholic party, drag after them a multitude of farmers who depend on them. The interference of the priests in marriages also gives them an ascendancy over many families. If a young man wishes to marry a rich heiress, he has only to get himself recommended by the director of conscience. The latter says to the mother that the young man has a good character, is religious, and is cut out for family life, and such testimony coming from so high authority exerts influence that is decisive.

(1) Here is a recent instance, quoted by a Flanders journal: "On a souvent signalé l'intervention des prêtres dans les élections, par le confessionnal par la chaire, par les visites aux électeurs. Voici mieux: M. Van Eycke, curé de Mouscron, adresse à tous ses paroissiens électeurs une lettre imprimée pour les engager à voter contre les libéraux."

It would take a volume to describe all the means of influence that the clergy set to work. The fact is that they have made themselves masters of the country. In the election of the 11th of June last, out of 19 arrondissements which had to elect deputies, 9 only fought for the liberals. In the 10 others the liberal party abstained. When the clergy have once won an electoral college, the pressure which they exercise is so strong that candidates are no longer to be found. This is the case nearly throughout Flanders. At present, in all the Flemish part of the country, comprising something like half the total population, there are no more than two liberal representatives, and they only keep their places by virtue of their personal popularity.

How happens it that the liberal party has thus lost ground in a free country, and what means can be used to resist ultramontaniam? A grave problem, involving the future of catholic countries. The weakness of the liberal party comes from the fact of its having to confront a situation full of contradictions. Catholicism, having by the mouth of its infallible chief, condemned liberty and modern civilization, a good and sincere catholic can no longer defend these liberties. What can be done by one who would fain save them at all cost? Separate himself from the church? But neither people nor family could live without faith. So the liberal is forced to surrender his wife, his children, and the schools to the priests, whose influence he tries as hard as he can to combat. On one side he attacks him without cessation, and on the other he invites him, appeals to him, and has daily recourse to his ministrations. This contradiction is the deeply-seated cause of the weakness of the liberal party.

To make a way out from this desperate position, an association has been formed with the name of *La libre Pensée*, the members of which undertake to celebrate births, marriages, and burials, without the intervention of the clergy. This society counts a certain number of adherents, but it is not likely to extend, for not many people will go so far as to renounce publicly all positive religion. The only course would be to pass over to the reformed catholicism of Dollinger and Père Hyacinthe, or else to protestantism. Since the church proclaims as a dogma that she and modern civilization exclude one another, the plain conclusion for those who do not wish to sacrifice liberty is to quit the church that condemns it. But the time of great religious movements seems gone. The unconscious scepticism of our epoch has so enervated men's souls that they have not enough energy left to abandon a creed in which they have ceased to believe.

Not long ago it used to be supposed that the political influence of religion was about to disappear. Facts now clearly prove this to

have been a mistake. The action of religion on the fortunes of nations is immense and decisive. The constitution of the state ends by modelling itself after that of the church; or, if not, then the state remains a prey to periodical troubles. Protestantism resting on free inquiry and individual interpretation, the constitutional and representative régime is the political form that best suits the reformed nations. Catholicism realising the ideal of an absolutist organization, absolutism is the natural constitution of catholic nations: this is what Bossuet maintained, and he was right. The French revolution, and the men who have adopted its principles, like the Belgian legislators of 1830, thought they found a solution in separating the church from the state. Let the church, they said, govern itself in its own way within its own domain. The state will constitute itself on the base of modern principles within an independent sphere which it will make respected. The attempt has failed, because the clergy will not accept the separation of the church from the state. They mean to rule the state. It is necessary therefore either to submit or fight. The offered truce has been refused. But to fight against the influence of the church, it is necessary to attack its creed. This is what the philosophers of the eighteenth century did. That was the peculiar task of Voltaireanism. By spreading Voltairean ideas, you manage to hold ultramontaniam in check. Hitherto, that has succeeded in France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Only this success has cost dear, for in spreading scepticism you have weakened the moral spring, and so prepared that confused and morbid state from which catholic states have so much trouble in emerging. When we reflect on recent events and on the present situation of the Continent, we are driven to the conviction that the solution propounded by the French revolution has not succeeded. If the country preserves its faith like Belgium and Ireland, it will fall into the hands of the clergy. If it forsakes its faith, it will fall into anarchy, like Spain and Mexico. To-day the majority of the assembly in France is clerical, but let there come a radical majority, and religious struggles will unchain themselves afresh.

Could the Belgian liberals during the time they have been in power, have taken certain measures of defence against ultramontaniam, like Germany and Switzerland? The attitude taken by Prince Bismarck deserves the most serious examination. He must believe the peril great indeed, to expose himself to the numerous difficulties which will come upon him from this attack of the ultramontanes. The catholic bishops will not capitulate like Napoleon III. and his marshals. The hostility of the clergy will keep up the discontent of Alsace. The opposition of the Rhine provinces will grow, and even in 1844, at the time of the great battle on the occasion of mixed marriages, the Prussian government could not overcome

the resistance of the archbishop of Cologne. Still Prince Bismarck has behind him first a protestant majority, next he has to lean upon the German national sentiment, as well as German science—both of them equally rebellious against the domination of a few ignorant and stubborn Italian priests. But in Belgium whom could the ministry count upon to take energetic measures, when it could not even procure a revival of the law of 1842 on primary instruction which gave the uncontrolled inspection to the clergy? The Jesuits ought to have been proscribed, it is said. Good, but how drive them out, if they happened to be the stronger? Suppose Ireland governed by a separate parliament. On whom could an Irish ministry lean, to resist the exactions of the church? The single reproach that the friends of liberty could make against the various liberal ministries that have followed one another in Belgium, is that they have not done all that was necessary to spread instruction through all classes of the population. They ought to have decreed compulsory instruction, multiplied schools, strengthened the university teaching, spent millions like the United States to create an intellectual movement of such a kind as would have resisted priestly influence. They ought to have tried as hard as they could for a mixed school withdrawn from clerical inspection, as in Ireland.

The organization of university education has also left much to desire. In Belgium the state has two universities, one at Liège, the other at Ghent, which were established in favour of a certain opinion, and which count professors of all shades. Taking advantage of the complete liberty of instruction, liberalism has founded a university at Brussels, while the bishops have set up another at Louvain. The rivalry of these four institutions ought to have produced an intellectual life and activity of a kind most profitable to the progress of knowledge. That happy result has not been attained, because they adopted a detestable system of examination for conferring degrees. Diplomas are granted by mixed juries composed in equal proportions of professors of one state university and one free university. The candidates are questioned by their professors under the control of the professors from a rival university. Hence it results, to begin with, that the students content themselves with learning their note-books off by heart; next, that the professors thus controlled by their colleagues, have to conform to a uniform programme, and thus by degrees routine stifles initiative and the genuine spirit of research.

If we admit that to exercise certain functions, such as those of a doctor or lawyer, it is necessary to exact diplomas of capacity, it is the state itself or the bodies representing it, who ought to make sure that the appointed conditions have been complied with. That is a measure of police or protection; now only the public authorities have the task or the right to guarantee the life or the property of the

citizens. I can understand that as in America they should abolish compulsory diplomas and leave all careers free. I cannot agree that a private association should have the right to confer *degrees carrying with them the privilege of exercising certain functions*. The best system is that followed in Germany. There faculties of the universities grant scientific diplomas, but where the practice of law or medicine is concerned, a state examination is required, and it is the government which appoints the examining board. This is a right that the state cannot abdicate.

Finally, the example of Belgium proves that in a catholic and religious country, the clergy succeeds at the end of longer or shorter time in controlling the elections, and consequently the government also. This is what would infallibly happen in Ireland, if it were left to itself. In France too the number of convents increases; in the rural districts, as M. Ch. Dollfus tells us, and as the recent pilgrimages prove, superstition waxes thicker, but Voltairean scepticism will stand in the way of the clergy arriving so rapidly at the power they seek. Italy to-day finds herself in the situation of Belgium in 1830. The national sentiment is so powerful that it holds ultramontanism in check. One part of the inferior clergy is national. The part which is not so finds itself intimidated by the recent energetic measures, and would not venture to use the means of influence which the priests employ in Belgium. Opinion would not tolerate it. But if the Jesuits and the catholic party succeed in possessing themselves of education, Italy at the end of two or three generations will again fall back under the domination of papal supremacy. In countries where the government is in the hands of protestants as in England and Prussia, nothing ought to be done, beyond the limit of equity and law, that can possibly favour the purposes of ultramontane ideas, and on the contrary everything ought to be done to place obstacles in their way. Those energetic measures to which the Prussian government has had recourse, proves that it believes itself grappling with a most redoubtable foe. And in truth ultramontane catholicism—and since the promulgation of the decree of infallibility there is no other—is bent on making itself master, in order to cut up by the very roots the liberties which the church condemns. I do not know whether Belgium can ever escape from its grip, but if she has to succumb, at least let her foundering serve for warning to other nations, as the wrecked fragments of a ship that has struck on a rock mark for the navigator the peril he has to avoid.

EMILE DE LAVELEYE.