

Our Contributors.

A SCENE AT SIGNOR GAVAZZI'S MEETING.

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Above the entrance to the Exhibition are the words "Ars et labor in lætitia," a motto that suits others besides artists, for this week Padre Gavazzi has been in Venice, combining business with pleasure, by going sight-seeing whilst also holding at times large and enthusiastic meetings. One of these took place on Wednesday in the Chiesa Libera, Piazza San Marco, where the Scottish services are now being held. It was advertised for eight p.m., but as I entered the Piazza, the illuminated figures on the old clock tower told me that hour had struck, and it was five minutes more before I made my way into the church through the crowds that filled the square, sitting at its cafes or strolling about listening to the band. I had counted on the fact that Italian gatherings generally begin behind time, but for once I was wrong, for when I entered I found the church full, many standing about the door, and Padre Gavazzi already on his feet, opening up his subject, "Le Scuole Laiche," an argument for the separation of education from the Church, and the placing of it in the hands of the people—the abolition of clerical and the substitution of lay schools throughout Italy.

The audience was composed chiefly of men, who looked intelligent and intensely interested. Some of them were unwashed, having apparently just come straight from their work in the dockyards and arsenal. Amongst them were some soldiers, and in the back of the church, just within the door, as well as just outside of it, were some policemen. I was accommodated with a seat beside my friend Signor Beruatto, the Chiesa Libera minister, who presided, and so I was near the orator, and could also see the whole audience. I noticed in the third or fourth seat from the pulpit platform a young man, tall, thin, with a very pale face and a suspicious, anxious look about him, who was listening attentively. Signor Gavazzi, not mincing his words, after showing to what an extent the education of the young was still in the hands of the Church, asked the question, "Why should this connection of the Church with education cease?" and answered it, "For a world of reasons." He then began to advance these in detail. Amongst other reasons, he said, was this, priests were disqualified by their own education from being teachers. They were brought up in seminaries that have no touch with the life and spirit of Italy, many of them are reared in foreign colleges, as in the Trentina (unredeemed Italy), where they become more Austrian than the Austrians, more Papal than the Pope. The youth of Italy, to be made Italians, loyal and patriotic, should be taught to admire and revere and to know of the struggles of their fathers on behalf of Italian unity and liberty; but in all these things the priests have no part, no name nor memorial. The Italy of the Church is not the Italy of the people; the priests have no Italian education, and they cannot therefore impart one. They have no national spirit; their only spirit is that of their "bottega" (shop), their Church. Signor Gavazzi was gradually warming up to his subject. His actions, his expression, his splendid utterance, as well as his incontestable statements and sound arguments, were carrying conviction into the minds of his audience, who cheered and shouted their approvals—"Bene!" "Bravo!"

He was then proceeding to show that socially the priests are equally disqualified for being teachers—"They are celibates; they have no connection with family life; they have no wives and no children"—when our young friend, who had been listening uneasily for some time, advanced to the platform, and pale and agitated, objected to what Gavazzi had said, and to his going on.

Padre Gavazzi, carried away with his subject, did not notice the interruption for a moment, but as the man continued to speak he stopped. At once up started Signor Beruatto and demanded, "Who are you?" He told them he was an agent from the "Pubblica Sicurezza." Signor Beruatto denied his right to interrupt the meeting. The law was for the protection of freedom of public speech, not for its stifling. Again the agent turned to Padre Gavazzi and forbade his going on. Gavazzi gazed at him, the pale, thin, weak, round-shouldered, shuffling clerical agent looking

such a pitiable object beside the grand old orator, a giant physically and intellectually, and all aflame with his subject. In tones of withering scorn he reminded him of the age in which we lived, that it was too late now to appear and stifle public speech, and that he knew what he was doing and saying, and what the law was, and indignantly refused to be stopped, clenching his words with a blow of his fist on the table that made the agent tremble. The audience were now on their feet in a state of wild excitement, cheering Signor Gavazzi and shouting with stentorian voices, "Avanti, avanti, fuori, fuori" (Go on, go on, turn him out, turn him out). But the civico-clerical spy had accomplices in the room, and in a moment two of the policemen I had before seen were at his side. There would have been a dreadful fray but for the splendid tact and conduct of Signor Beruatto. Everybody was speaking, when he shouted out in tones high above all others, "No one has a right to speak here but myself, my orator and the law. This man is not the law, he is simply an erroneous mouth-piece of it." (The agent said something to Beruatto about his being so described, and that he would call on him to account for it at the Questura, Signor Beruatto responding these were trifling details, and he was prepared to deal with them; but all this was in parenthesis.) Meantime his orator, in a high state of excitement, was exercising his right, and was continuing to speak. Signor Beruatto turned round to him and told him rather sharply (for it was not a moment for ceremony) to stop speaking and to sit down. Padre Gavazzi did so. He then commanded the audience to do the same, and, addressing them, he said: "When this man interrupted my orator he was saying, 'priests have no wives, no children.' These were his words, 'Vero o non vero?'" The whole assembly shouted out as with one voice, "E vero." Next of the "agente" he asked, "What can you see to object to in that?" The man was silent, and Signor Beruatto, turning to the three policemen, said they saw they had no ground for interfering, and required them to return to their proper posts, which they did. He then ordered the "agente" to sit down, pointing to a very conspicuously placed chair near the pulpit, and telling him to listen in silence, and trouble the meeting no more. The "agente" in part humiliated, objected to being ordered to do anything. Signor Beruatto again gave his command, adding, "In this my church, and in this matter, I must be obeyed." There was no help for it. The agent was in a dilemma. It was confusing and humiliating to be standing a contemptible figure beside two well-made, manly, popular leaders, and in the face of an indignant audience. He compromised matters by slinking back to his seat, saying something about the Questura on the morrow. The whole thing was cleverly managed by Signor Beruatto, especially in seizing upon the words Signor Gavazzi had uttered when the agent interrupted, and making a spear as if it were to these words that the objection was taken. Signor Gavazzi had said nothing that gave any one the right to complain, but the agent had foolishly chosen a bad moment to rise. He had evidently meant to protest against some previous statements, but had been too slow and hesitating in getting up; and then in ordering first his "orator," as he always termed him, and his audience to be seated, Signor Beruatto rendered it difficult for the agent to disobey him in this matter. Signor Gavazzi, resuming, spoke for another half hour, with even more fire and eloquence and power than before. As he afterward said to me, "The interruption was a shock of electricity both for audience and for speaker." He went beyond the scope of his proposed argument. Not content to demonstrate that the Church and priests of Italy could not be safe teachers, he went on to show that they were the direct enemies of Italy, and the worst enemies a free and united Italy had, closing his speech in a peroration of tremendous power and eloquence, in which he besought his audience never to trust the upbringing of their children to men who were in heart and life against their king, against their Government, against their laws, against their liberty and against their beloved Italy; and never to rest till they had separated between these clericals and education, and established "Scuole Laiche," throughout the length and breadth of the land. When he closed, the whole audience rose as one man, and cheered and cheered again, shouting "Bravo, bravo; bene, bene; Viva

Gavazzi! Viva Italia." Whilst the people were standing, Gavazzi secured silence, by spreading out his long arms and expressive hands and asking for a benediction on them, their king and their country; and then, before they began to move away, he said in a low voice and in a most impressive manner: "I cannot now say definitely if our meeting already announced will or will not be held, on account of the molestation to which we have been subjected to-night. I am now a veteran of seventy-nine years of age, and I have been for half a century before my countrymen, and this is the first occasion upon which I have been charged with being in conflict with the law. It is too late now to seek to charge me with that, or to seek to take away from me my liberty of speech. We must have public protection for our meetings against such interruptions." Signor Beruatto now appealed to his people to disperse peaceably and in order, so as to give the police nothing that could be laid hold of to be used against them.

The next morning I was glad to see that the newspapers took out and out the side of Padre Gavazzi. One article, entitled, "Fino a quando" (How long) says: "How long will the Italian questura [police] continue its foolish opposition to freedom of speech? How long will last these little scandals of the police, who should be looking after evil-doers—and of these there are no lack—always officiously interfering with things with which they have nothing to do?" After describing the scene, the writer adds: "Padre Gavazzi is one of the most venerable, the most liberal and most famous of Italian preachers. Lately he preached at Rome in the Piazza Sant' Angelo, in front of the Vatican, and no inspector of public security molested him. But that which is committed at Rome close to the Vatican is not permitted at Venice! It is high time that this hateful system should cease."

Curious to know whether the next meeting, which had been intimated for last night at the Church of Santa Margherita, would take place, and if so, how it would come off, I went there, taking care not to be late this time. Long before the hour for beginning the church was well filled, and ultimately it was crowded, although many times larger than that at Piazza San Marco. The only effect, therefore, of the interruption of the meeting of Wednesday evening was to give the orator a larger audience here, and to rouse him to surpass himself. His subject was "The Proposed Reconciliation between the State and Vatican," a subject that is being much spoken about in Italian and in English papers. This reconciliation Signor Gavazzi described as an impossibility.

The lecturer dealt specially with the temporal power of the Pope, the recognition of which, and the assignment to the head of the Roman Catholic Church of a part of the city of Rome, enter into the items of the proposed agreement. In an able historical survey Signor Gavazzi showed that the temporal power of the Pope rested neither on the voice of the people nor the voice of God; that its possession by him in Italy would be the undoing of the nation, and that to the demand that he should become possessed of a portion of the city of Rome, they had but one answer, and that in one word, "Giammai, giammai" (Never, never, never).

As always, Signor Gavazzi electrified his audience, rousing it to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, and, at the close, the whole assembly rose, waving hats and handkerchiefs, and cheering him to the echo. Whilst dispersing, many crowded to shake hands with the great orator, who is a politician and a patriot, as well as a pastor, and who is not only a power in the Free Italian Church, but a defender of the civil rights of the people, and a leader in the van of Italian Liberalism.

MANITOBA AND THE NORTH-WEST.

In the report of the Colonial Committee presented to the Free Church General Assembly, the following occurs:

The opening of the Canadian Pacific Railway is an event which cannot but enlarge immensely the already immense field of "Home Mission" work which the Canadian Church has with such admirable energy and success been endeavouring to overtake. So far from being its limit now, as it was so recently, Manitoba, with Winnipeg as its capital, is simply a halting-place by the way to vast regions beyond. The Dominion westward of Manitoba possesses already a population of about 220,000, and at several points there are signs