

RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS.

M. Lepère's circular to the prefects, reminding them of an old law about religious processions, and forbidding them to attend such demonstrations in uniform is one of those measures which show how ill French Liberals understand the true idea of liberty, and how little acquainted they are with the temper of a large section of the people over whom they rule. The Minister of the Interior should have been warned by the commotion which was caused last year when the prefect of the Bouches du Rhône took it upon himself to suppress the annual procession on Corpus Christi Day at Marseilles. The Marseillais are Radicals, but superstitious, and they strongly incline to the pomps of the Church. Their irreligiousness goes no further than this—that they are impatient of the ecclesiastical yoke under which they long lived, and rather grudge the money paid by the State and the communes to the Church; but if the “Budget des Cultes” were suppressed they would probably pay far more individually to the priests of their own free will than they do now. In this they—and one may say all the people of Provence—differ from the populations of Normandy, Picardy, Champagne and Burgundy, who are sceptics of the old sort, quite ready to disendow the Church and to let it shift for itself afterwards, without giving a centime towards its support. I know a Norman landowner who is a strong Conservative, and, outwardly at least, a zealous Churchman. Talking with him the other day about the policy of the present Government, he said that if the Republican party remained in power ten years there would be a separation between Church and State; and, as a result, three-fourths of the churches in France would be closed. As to the church in his own country parish, that would probably be shut up too, he added; and he for his own part would not subscribe to maintain it, because he was not going to contribute towards keeping open a place of worship for peasants who were too stingy or too faithless to pay their own shares. All he would do would be to join with other Catholics in supporting at Rouen a church to which only paying members would be admitted—a sort of club. If a Conservative talks in this style one can imagine the sentiments of the Liberals who make open profession of their unbelief. In the northern provinces—not including Brittany and French Flanders, which remain Catholic—and in those of the East, the Church seems to have fallen into a sufficiently distinct kind of contempt. The peasants, square-headed thrifty fellows, have noticed that the clergy do not deal equally with the poor and rich in the manner of dispensing sacraments. The fees for weddings, christenings, and mortuary masses have been steadily increased to rates which sometimes look extortionate; and, although a pretence is still made of performing ceremonies cheap for those who cannot afford to pay, yet the slap-dash fashion in which rites are galloped through for the poor is shocking to men who like equality, as most Frenchmen do. To take marriages, for instance—in which the female part of the community are so interested: a wedding with choral music at the high altar of a Parisian church costs about £60, and even in country towns the charge is about £12; while weddings for the lower classes in lateral-chapels cost from 3s. to 6s. But these lateral-chapel weddings are the dreariest things conceivable, solemnized as they are by clergymen who go through the service in less than ten minutes, and dismiss the married pair without a word of blessing or compliment in the mother tongue.

In the south of France the kindly feeling of the lower orders for the Church and its rites is a sentiment quite apart from the respect or want of respect entertained towards the clergy. The Provençaux cannot live without their crucifixes, scapularies, open-air Madonnas, and occasional religious pageants. In Normandy you will hardly meet with a religious procession once in the course of the year, except in the sea-coast fishing towns, where the sailors now and then call upon the clergy to bless their smacks or to inaugurate some new Calvary perched high on a cliff; but in Provence religious processions are constantly taking place, and those held on Corpus Day are often grandiose. Marseilles is especially renowned for the splendour of its Fête Dieu, the streets of the city being on that day filled with *reposoirs*, or altars loaded with flowers, with banners, garlands, and so forth. These displays speak to the imagination of this people, and in the enjoyment of them rich and poor take part alike. Therefore it is quite natural that they should desire to see them graced by officials in uniform. When the priests with their candles and banners are escorted by military bands, troops of cavalry, generals with their staffs, prefects in their coaches, and mayors with their sashes, the show becomes a very brave one indeed. But if official personages withdraw their countenance from religious demonstrations they virtually place a stigma on these things, appearing to imply that they are foolish superstitions, and the people are consequently put out of conceit with themselves if they attend to them. It may be said that M. Lepère has merely enjoined his subordinates to avoid appearing at processions in uniform, leaving them free to attend in private dress if they please. But this makes the matter worse: for a prefect who figured in a procession with his cocked hat and silver-laced coat on seemed only to be rendering a proper official homage to the Church; whereas a functionary who attends a procession in plain clothes must seem to be giving a personal allegiance to religion, and under the circumstances he risks being dubbed as a “Clerical,”

and loathed by the Extreme Republicans. This will be a bad change, therefore, for prefects of conciliatory mood, who liked to please all parties without self-compromise. On the whole, M. Lepère would have done better to allow his prefects to conform to the custom of their districts, which would have been the surest way of offending nobody. By yielding to that eternal French ministerial mania for regulating things he has converted religious processions into elements of discord, obliging some to keep aloof from them, and others to attend them, on purely political grounds; and thus he has added one more question to the long list of those on which his countrymen are so miserably divided.—*Pall Mall Budget*.

THE SALVATION ARMY.

Religious revivals follow each other in quick succession, and are all much alike. The midland counties are at present occupied by a strange organization which calls itself the “Salvation Army.” The leaders tread consciously in the footsteps of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, and (perhaps without knowing it) are imitators of Savonarola. The commander-in-chief of the Salvation Army is a Mr. W. Booth, formerly a minister of the New Methodist Connexion. His campaigns have been described in a very interesting letter by a correspondent of the *Daily News*, who witnessed the capture of Coventry by the Hallelujah forces. In reading this description it is impossible not to be struck by the uniformity of motive, aim, and method which marks all popular religious movements. No one can deny that the aim is an excellent one, or that the means employed are powerful—and, indeed, perhaps the only efficacious means. It is when we ask for permanence of results that it becomes difficult to get an answer. Some of the consequences of every popular “awakening” are manifest enough. They are exactly the same as those which notoriously follow hiring fairs, and they add to the population rather than to the respectability of the country. But when we wish to learn whether many lives are permanently changed for the better, elevated, purified, and made more truly human, the evidence becomes intangible. The results of revivals are like those of “Spiritualism”; they somehow vanish and defy analysis.

Mr. Booth and his captains, colonels, and knights in psalmody of the Salvation Army have been stirred by the brutal aspect of too much English life. Labour, blasphemy, beer, wife-beating, rabbit-coursing, and dog-fighting really seem to make the sum of existence among millions of English people. There is no one so callous but he has occasionally asked himself if this must go on for ever, if hosts of honest enough people are to live their length of days in a kind of hell. The remedies of social busybodies seem hopeless enough. Museums, education, tracts, working-men's clubs, and mechanics' institutes do not go deep enough; they do not reach what is called the residuum. People brutalized by descent from many generations of ignorant labourers need excitement in their hours of leisure. Now a museum, even if one is an educated archaeologist, or what not, is the reverse of exciting. It interests the skilled and intelligent mechanic, just as it interests any other educated man; but how can it appeal to the Mr. Jackson who was widely known as “the Coventry Bear,” and is now a leader in the Salvation Army? Coventry Bears and Nottingham Lambs want something more stirring than, for example, the very creditable museum and picture gallery which the Nottingham people have lately established. Their old and habitual excitements scarcely need description. They are all connected with drink, and all are viewed through a mellow medium of beer or gin. There are betting, dog-fighting, and criminal assaults with violence, none of which conduce to the health of the social organism. All these pastimes are enjoyed in society—in the society of “brother roughs,” and they answer (at Coventry) to the pleasures of the London season. Any one who wishes to wean the Bears and Lambs from these enjoyments must provide some substitute equally exciting and gregarious. This is what Mr. Booth and his officers propose to do.

There is one form of spiritual excitement to which the Bears and Lambs are amenable. Like Dr. Johnson, they are “afraid of eternal damnation.” Though the idea is familiar to them as a mere decorative form of speech, and “a grand off-set to conversation,” it has also its reality. All religious revivalists simply make the people face this reality, then throw out the hope of escape, indicate the means, and set up a chorus. The process is perfectly simple; it is the process of the flagellants (bar the flogging, which is un-Protestant and un-English, except in the army) and of the *Piagnoni*. You produce alarm, reaction, hope, and all this in a crowd of friends and to a lyric accompaniment. There can be no doubt that the thing is exciting—as exciting as dog-fighting, and a good substitute for rough and tumble pugilism. The Salvation Army, then, has had recourse to these simple tactics.

The Army has some ideas of military method. According to the correspondent of the *Daily News*, when the capture of a town is determined on, skirmishers are first thrown out and a base is secured. A small band of brethren and two or more sisters, or “Hallelujah lasses,” as they are called, are detached on service. At the same time, or earlier, the general borrows or hires any large empty building, which he calls a Salvation Factory. The skirmishers start early on a Sunday morning, and occupy one of the squalid