

Switzerland is on the eve of civil war, and there England is reported to be hostile to the cause of justice and the Church. With regard to Italy, Rome is currently believed to have asked the aid of our Foreign Office—a belief which goes considerably beyond the facts. At all events the Pope has at the present moment a very great interest in keeping Lord Palmerston in good temper on Italian affairs, and changing the bias of his mind on the affairs of Switzerland.

Not merely petty temporal interests, but the greater interests of the Church might have seduced a weaker ruler into compromises and concessions under the pressure of these various difficulties. But this is the very time chosen by the Holy Father to prove to all the world how far his lofty mind soars above the miserable calculations of a temporary expediency; how devoted his great soul is to the one consideration of what is right; how resolved he is to brave all dangers, encounter all difficulties, subject himself to the burden of all responsibilities rather than wander one hair's breadth from the true path; how thoroughly he has bent himself to consider all questions on their own grounds; to deal with temporal affairs as with temporal, and with spiritual affairs as with spiritual; to decide Italian questions on considerations proper to Italy; Swiss questions on considerations proper to Switzerland; English questions on considerations proper to England; Irish questions on considerations proper to Ireland; and on no account, and under no pretence, to sacrifice one iota of the principles of Church discipline for any human bait which all the Powers of the earth united can propose to offer him.

Thank God, then, that the condemnation has come; but thank God also that it has been delayed. What the decision of the Holy See has lost in celerity it has gained in emphasis and meaning. If it had come in July 1846, along with the Amnesty, and before the Italian difficulties had commenced—it *might* have taken the colour of the Amnesty; it *might* have looked like a hasty concession to popular exigencies; it *might* have been set down as one out of many attempts to conciliate popular favour and play the part of an ecclesiastical tribune of the people.

Fourteen months, however, make a great difference in this respect. The Pope is no longer in the first fervour of his rule. Whatever bloom once decked his sovereignty has vanished from it. From the regions of public applause, *fetes*, triumphs, processions, and the unmixed popularity of a reforming Prince, he has long since come down to the hard and stern realities of government. He has lived to bear, at least in part, the pressure of internal difficulties. He has had invasions to meet; Kings and Kaisers to look resolutely in the face. The tramp of hostile soldiers has sounded

in his ears, and subdued whispers of popular discontent have not altogether escaped him. Whatever illusions may have shed a transitory glory round the earliest months of this Popedom have passed away, and what Pius IX. now does he cannot be suspected of doing from momentary impulse or from anything but the solid dictates of judgment and a stern sense of duty.

The good effects of this measure are not likely to be confined to Ireland. The Papal Rescript, will be felt as a decisive stroke struck in every kingdom of the globe. Some such act as this was necessary to complete the portrait which public events up to this time have drawn only in part of his present Holiness. How widely has the belief spread that Pope Pius IX. was in every sense of the word a *liberal* Pope; that his political acts, misread by infidels and revolutionists, afforded an index of his ecclesiastical dispositions; that his concessions to the spirit of the time fixed a deep gulf between him and the old Gregories and Innocents of the Popedom; that a new spirit was being breathed into the Catholic religion by the secular influence of the time; that as Clement XIV. showed himself liberal to the Princes—the earthly rulers of the day—and cut off from the Church its most illustrious order of defenders, so Pius IX., having shown himself liberal to the Democracy which has succeeded the Monarchic influence of the eighteenth century, would, on due opportunity, follow the example of that most questionable Pontiff by emasculating the Church; making the poison of the world freely to circulate in its veins; cutting off whatever element in it seemed unsuited for a base and vulgar popularity; sacrificing its most sacred principles of discipline at the nod of its debauched enemies; shaping and fashioning it at the whim and pleasure of that world which its function is to resist and to subdue; making it a laughing-stock to the wicked and a stumbling-block to its own children by parading it in fantastic masquerade costume, symbolical of everything the most remote from its real character.

How widely have these most delusive hopes spread! How fondly have they been nursed and cherished! In every country, amongst weak, or wicked, or ignorant men this thought has made its way—that in a liberal Pop: was to be found a traitor to his own Church, an Apostle of some made scheme of universal fusion, a destroyer of the antiquated dogmas of Christianity. In some quarters it was seriously hoped that Mysteries would soon be dropped out of the Papal religion if once an ecclesiastic of “good sense” came to be seated in St. Peter’s Chair. Others not less seriously flattered themselves that a “benevolent Pope,” as the wax-work exhibition has christened him, would put an end to the shockingly unphilanthropic doctrine of eternal punishment. Nay, some visi-