

Religious Crisis in France

(Count Albert de Mun, in the National Review, London.) (Continued from last week.)

Higher education, which is the concern of the various faculties and not of exclusive appanage of the University. It was not emancipated till 1875, and then only to a very relative extent. Such, in a very small compass, is the history of education in France.

So soon as the third Republic was established it began its reaction against the seemingly definite measures of progress that had been attained. Its action was the result of a twofold influence: of the anti-religious passions which animated it from the very moment of its establishment, and of the Napoleonic tradition, the persistent influence of which I have already indicated. Twenty-five years have now passed since that first attack was made on the liberty of Christian education. Then as now political circumstances provide the necessary opportunity and justification for the campaign. Immediately after the election which resulted in the defeat of the monarchial and religious parties, Marshal MacMahon, who had been their leader in the fray was compelled to resign the Presidency of the Republic.

Intoxicated by success, the leaders of the Republican party, henceforth masters of the country, wished to retaliate on their adversaries. M. Gambetta, in a celebrated phrase, provided the new policy with a party cry which was destined to resound far and wide: "Clericalism, that is the enemy!" His notion was to present his policy to the country not as a policy of hostility to religion, but merely as one of repression directed against the electoral activity of the clergy. It certainly was an ingenious cry, inasmuch as it apparently spared the religious feelings of a large section of the population, but the perfidiousness of it was bound to be exposed before long. As a matter of fact, as events have proved in the past and now prove more clearly than ever, in spite of the cloak of pretense with which it is attempted to hide the truth, it is really Catholicism which is attacked under the name of Clericalism.

During the whole course of the campaign which was then initiated against the religious Congregations, it was the principle of the right to teach which came in for all the hard knocks. M. Jules Ferry proposed to deprive all the so-called "unauthorized Congregations" of that right; and though his proposal—which was not only repudiated by the Catholics, but also owing to the influence of M. Dufaure and M. Jules Simon, produced a veritable upheaval in the Senate, its painful effects were felt when the Government, as a substitute for actual legislation, issued prospective edicts against the members of the Congregations. These repressive measures were initiated in 1880, and marked the beginning of the religious crisis which was revived four years ago after a long period of calm.

In any case M. Jules Ferry had great statesmanlike qualities, and when, on the death of Gambetta in 1883, he became leader of the Republican party, he understood that no government of a country in which religious belief still possesses such a powerful influence could make shift with a policy of violent repression. He undertook the task of making possible to some extent the co-existence of the right to teach and of a powerfully organized system of State education which was to be completely secularized both as regards subjects and teachers, and devoted all his energies to the realization of that system. The party in power followed his lead and faithfully seconded his efforts. The execution of the task that he had undertaken was the great achievement of the Republic of that period.

While some of the new laws increased the strength, the prestige, and the authority of the University in every possible manner, others decreed and organized the absolute secularization of public popular education; that is to say, of the educational system to the maintenance of which the whole body of taxpayers contributes. The primary schools belonging to the State to which the ministers of religion had hitherto been given access, which in many cases were confided to the care of instructors who were members of the Congregations, and in which religious instruction formed part of the curriculum, were declared to be henceforth, in theory at all events, entirely neutral; that is to say, that though they were denuded of all sectarian characteristics, though even the idea of their duties toward God was no longer imparted to the pupils, though the moral instruction given was not allowed to be based on any form of definite belief, at all events assurances were given that no word should ever be uttered in those schools which might shock or alarm the faith of a child or of his family.

To put the matter in a sentence, the education proposed to the people by the State was denuded not only of all sectarian admixture, but even of the most elementary religious conception, assuredly an audacious proposition, and one which was well calculated to disturb and terrify all Christian consciences. We must note, however, for it is essential to a clear comprehension of what is taking place to-day, that the laws which from 1882 to 1886, gave effect to that proposition, proclaimed the liberty of private instruction, subject, however, to university control.

This was the system which eighteen years ago was forced after a series of memorable struggles, upon the Catholics, who after loyally fighting against its imposition courageously accepted the accomplished fact. Christian schools, founded by them at the price of considerable pecuniary sacrifices (rendered all the more notorious by the fact that the Catholics had of the same time to pay their share of the tax which provided for the support of the revival form of education), covered the country. Never has a finer example of devotion been seen; never was a more

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noble or generous use made of liberty, which, though curtailed and supervised, yet preserved its most essential feature.

At the same time the tacit consent of successive Ministers permitted the reconstitution of the proscribed Congregations, and the colleges which they had founded continued, in the hands of lay proprietors, their educational work with the assistance of some of the members of those bodies. The few Catholic universities, though limited to a curriculum devoid of all possibility of expansion owing to the fact that the conduct of examinations and the conferment of degrees was a State monopoly, succeeded in maintaining their various chairs. The ever-increasing confidence which they inspired in the middle classes as well as in the aristocracy, in republican circles no less than in those which still preserved the monarchial tradition, and the numerical increase of the pupils of the primary schools, bear striking witness to the existence of that moral and intellectual need to which, in the eyes of a large section of the population, educational liberty responds. The existence of that need was all the more self-evident owing to the fact that the futility of the effort which had been made, under cover of the neutralization of the Government schools, to reassure the Catholic conscience, became every day more flagrantly conspicuous. In spite of all philosophical efforts, of all pedagogical formulas, of all pamphlets, manuals and lectures, the impossibility of establishing for masters and pupils alike a clear and practical basis of morality, independent of all belief and all religious sanction, became clear to all. In the lecture rooms of the various faculties the diversity of doctrines was unceasingly on the increase; from the dreys of spiritualism to the various hypotheses of evolution and transmutation, everything had its turn; the so-called State method of instruction was in course of utter pulverization. In the colleges, education was thrown on its beam ends by this confusion of ideas and by the futility of official methods. A gigantic parliamentary inquiry, directed with authoritative ability and wide-minded impartiality by M. Ribot, the most eloquent parliamentary orator of the Moderate party, who was several times Minister, made clear to all eyes, at the very moment of the inception of the present crisis, the bankruptcy, so to speak, of the State education system.

In the primary schools the disease was of a still more aggravated form, more deep-set, more brutally defined. Only too often the teachers in the public schools, being subject to political influences of the most advanced type, violated every rule of neutrality to an ever-increasing extent. Outrages on the Catholic faith, even on the very foundations of religious belief, were innumerable; not moral instruction only but lectures on history, on botany, on zoology, provided at every turn the opportunity for an attack. Under every possible circumstance a declared hostility against every form of positive religion manifested itself in the ranks of the official teaching body. M. Ferdinand Buisson, one of our most conspicuous contemporary politicians, who, by virtue of his official position at the Ministry of Public Instruction, was for many years the real organizer of the so-called "lay" educational system, and who is today the ring-leader of the enemies of Congregational instruction, wrote a few years ago in an important book, entitled, "Religion, Morality and Science: Their Conflict in the Field of Contemporary Education," the following significant words: "In all this story about God and the world which Catholic dogma presents to us, there is not one single word which does not provoke, I will not say indignation, for, in order to be indignant, one would have to believe, but a mute and melancholy denial. . . . With its ideas about the necessity of redemption and of expiatory sacrifice the Christian and moral system presents nothing more nor less than a coarse ideal against which our consciences revolt, and which would throw us back two thousand years. The only possible result of all rational education must rest into the irreligion of the future."

Is there a single Christian worthy of the name, let alone a Catholic, who is prepared to accept such a theory as the basis of education, or who could conscientiously accept the consequences which it must have for his children?

It is certainly not in England that an affirmative answer could be given to such a question with any prospect of receiving the support of public

opinion. This is proved clearly enough by the recent education bill, which strongly maintains the principle of sectarian education, but at the same time, while favoring the Protestant churches, leaves the Roman Catholics in complete enjoyment of their liberty, and has, in consequence, merited and received their approbation. If the French Catholics, in view of the direction which was given to public education, failed to prevent the application of the new system to the country at large, were they not bound to demand complete liberty to give, in any case to their own children, that type of education which is in conformity with the tenets of their faith, and to provide them with instructors of a nature to guarantee the fulfillment? Every person of good faith, or who is in the least degree animated by a spirit of equity, will unhesitatingly recognize the fact that it was their right and their duty so to act, and as I have shown, the legislators of 1882 and 1886 proved that they understood, to some extent at all events, the existence of that duty by leaving the Catholics a small modicum of liberty, which they proceeded to utilize with a natural and legitimate alacrity.

After fifteen years of unquestioned exercise by the Catholics of their comparative freedom, the radical and socialistic section of the Republican party, taking advantage of the circumstances which had been brought about by the Dreyfus affair, and relying in a more violent form the movement which had been initiated by Gambetta and Jules Ferry, but which good sense and mature reflection had almost immediately toned down, suddenly imposed on the country a despotic and openly un-Christian policy, the direction of which was assumed, to his misfortune, by M. Waldeck-Rousseau. The law of 1901 was the expression of that policy, the only apparent object of which was to oblige all religious associations to apply to the Legislature for authorization on pain of dissolution and of seeing their property seized and sold; but in reality the spirit of the law went infinitely further. One of the principal orators of the Socialist party, M. Rene Viviani, gave this to be understood in the most frankly audacious manner when he proved the impossibility of taking steps against the congregations without at the same time attacking the Church for the reason that they are to one another "as the blood is to the flesh"; and he proceeded to repudiate the empty distinction drawn between clericalism and Catholicism, and to give back to the original meaning by pointing to the Catholic Church and saying: "That is the enemy." His speech was the dominating feature of the entire debate, and the light entered on a new phase. It passed above and beyond the congregations and involved not only the Catholic Church, but the Christian faith itself, and thenceforth the very foundations of spiritual liberty. When the debate ended, in the defeat of the Catholics and the Liberals, it was evident that it marked the inception of a war to the knife against Christianity and liberty. On the last day of the discussion I addressed M. Waldeck-Rousseau from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies, and gave vent to my gloomy forebodings in these words: "I wait to see what will happen so soon as the law is put into execution. In order to preserve your majority and to keep yourself in power you will be compelled, now that you have opened the flood-gates to let yourself be borne along by the tide, no matter how far it may carry you."

(To be Continued.)

A law was recently enacted somewhere against ladies trailing long skirts in the streets. Dr. Casagrandi, of Rome, has just tested the value of such daring legislation. He employed a number of women wearing long skirts to walk for one hour through the thoroughfares of the city, and after their promenade he took these dresses and submitted them to a careful bacteriological examination. He found on each skirt large colonies of noxious germs, including those of influenza, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and tetanus, and numerous other bacilli, which also were represented on each skirt. That women should willingly submit themselves to the filth, to say nothing of the possible danger of trailing skirts has long been a wonder to sensible people (say, the "Family Doctor"). The ordinary sticky mud which prevails in the streets of any city adheres closely the moment a garment touches the ground. It dries in the course of a few hours, and is then shaken off when the skirt is cleaned at home. Thus the vilest germs of the street invade the privacy of the best-kept house.

Primary Education

Principles of the English Acts Adopted. Rev. Prof. F. Droste, Boele, Westphalia, writing in The Catholic Times says the Prussian Diet has adopted nearly unanimously a resolution calling on the Prussian Government to introduce in Parliament a Bill on the Primary Schools, which embodies almost the same principles as the new English Education Act. The "Kölnische Volkszeitung," the leading German daily Catholic paper, gives the text of the resolution and the speeches made in Parliament on the occasion, as well as opinions of the Press. I shall not attempt to translate the text of the resolution verbatim, as it is very difficult reading in the German legal and Parliamentary language, but allow me to describe it for your readers as well as I, a foreigner, can. The Bill to be introduced in the Prussian Parliament will solve the important questions of who has to pay for the expenditure on the primary schools; that is to say, the expense of erecting, furnishing, repairing, heating, ventilating, and lighting the necessary buildings, the salaries of the teachers and attendants, the amount necessary for cleaning, books, baths, etc., for poor children, and so on; in one word, who will have to bear

THE COST OF PRIMARY EDUCATION,

and what will be the character of the instruction as to the denomination of teachers and pupils. Hitherto the expense of the primary schools in Prussia has been borne by the municipal, urban and rural corporations, if they were wealthy enough to do so; otherwise two or more (as a rule, village) corporations were combined in bodies called "school societies," similar to the old English School Boards in rural districts, the Government taking no part in paying costs. By the new Bill the school societies will be entirely abolished, and the municipal corporations will be the only bodies which will have to provide for all school expenses and requirements. In poor districts the Government will supply any deficiency, no matter what the denomination or the degree of efficiency of the schools. The payment of all school expenditure is to be made out of the general rates; there will be no more special school rates in future, if the Bill to be introduced becomes law. The second important principle of the resolution is to be embodied in a corresponding Bill and to be made the law of the land is, that all primary schools, if possible,

MUST BE DENOMINATIONAL.

That is to say, not only have the teachers to be of the same denomination as the pupils, but also the local matters who are, for the right, the clergy, the religious instruction, the history, and reading books—in fact all books that can be denominationally colored. The Feasts are to be kept and worship to be conducted in the church of the denomination, and so on. Everything must be strictly denominational. As to the teachers, they are brought up and instructed in denominational "teachers' seminaries." A representative of the Bishop is present at their final examination and examines them in religious subjects, and at their installation later on he swears them in. They are also continuously supervised by the parochial clergy with regard to their religious and moral conduct and their methods of instructing and treating their pupils in religious and moral matters. For the right, the clergy, the best possible denominational schools coreligionists—I mean the members of the same denomination in any place—will in future, by law, not have to pay a penny more than if they were undenominational. Hitherto where they escaped the need of extra payment it was only by favor. As readers of the Catholic Times know, two-thirds of the inhabitants of Prussia are Protestants and one-third is Catholic. Generally speaking, there are only these two denominations, as the few Jews and Old Catholics do not count. Moreover, some parts of Prussia are almost entirely Catholic. The denominations are mostly mixed in large towns and industrial centres. Therefore it is not very difficult in Prussia to make the primary schools denominational; not at all so difficult as in England; where there are more denominations. But still there are in Prussia, especially in rural districts with a sparse population, some cases in which it seems impossible to keep the schools strictly denominational on account of the heavy costs or the long journeys the pupils would have to make daily. As we saw, the difficulty is experienced in England, I need not say more about it. In such cases undenominational schools are more or less a necessity. In those cases, however, according to the resolution mentioned, the pupils of the different denominations must still have denominational religious instruction.

TO BE PAID FOR OUT OF THE RATES.

The teachers are ordinarily of the denomination of the majority of the pupils, but the teachers in the religion of the minority can, in such cases, be fully occupied with instruction in other school matters in order to keep down the cost of religious instruction. The resolution of the Prussian Diet speaks also about certain exceptions that are to be allowed. The Province of Nassau, which after the war with Austria in 1866 was annexed by Prussia, has always had undenominational schools. As the resolution for that reason wishes them to be continued as such, the Centre Party of the Prussian Diet, and with them the Catholic papers, ask why that state of things should be perpetuated simply because it has been so before and is therefore an historical fact. It will now be the business, not to say the strict duty, of the Catholics of Nassau to say if they prefer undenominational schools to denominational ones. Finally the resolution makes another exception, viz., for national reasons, the Polish population plays in Prussia much the same role as the Irish in the United Kingdom. The Prussian Government wants them to be Germanized, and for that purpose sends Protestants as Civil Service officials and as colonists to their country, in whose favor, although they are in a very small minority, undenominational schools are to be

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ed possible. That was the fearful time, when the Prussian National Liberals were in power in Parliament. But now they are so reduced in number and power that they themselves thought it a wise policy to take a part in forming and voting the resolution mentioned. The history of the development of the Prussian primary schools proves clearly that the Prussian Catholics, though in the minority, owe the favorable results achieved in Church and school matters entirely to the Centre Party. I was, therefore, glad to see several times a proposal made in your valuable paper to organize the English Catholics in the same way for the same purpose. On account of the smallness of the minority in which they are the English Catholics would not, of course, be able to send many Catholic members to the House of Commons; but there may be many constituencies where they have casting votes and where they can utilize them, as is done in many Prussian constituencies, when the Catholics are in the minority, to make the candidate who desires their votes promise to work and vote in the House of Commons for denominational schools.

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